A CORPUS OF
REMBRANDT PAINTINGS
V

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Stichting Foundation
Rembrandt Research Project

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SMALL-SCALE HISTORY PAINTINGS

Springer

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REMBRANDT PAINTINGS

ERNST VAN DE WETERING

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Frontispiece:

V 19 *A woman wading in a pond (Callisto in the wilderness)*, 1654
London, The National Gallery

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Preface

This preface can perhaps best begin by explaining the rather puzzling title of the present Volume: 'The small-scale history paintings'.

In such paintings the figures were as a rule represented full length and engaged in some kind of action in a more or less clearly defined interior or exterior spatial setting. This demanded of the painter not only insight into complex compositional problems, but also an understanding of the possibilities of light and shadow, and the skill to render the appropriate gestures and affects. He had to have a thorough knowledge of the relevant Biblical or mythological stories and the associated costumes and other accessories. Moreover, he had to be a competent painter of landscapes, architecture, still lifes and animals. In short, the painter of such works in Rembrandt's time was considered to be an all-rounder. But it was also expected of him that he would be both inventive and possessed of a powerful visual imagination. Producing a history piece, in fact, was considered the most demanding challenge that a painter could undertake.

Unlike Rubens, for example, Rembrandt seldom had occasion to paint history pieces on a life-size scale. One can in fact best get to know Rembrandt as an all-round painter through his *c.* 75 small-scale history pieces, for it would seem that he deliberately chose this type of painting in order to develop further his abilities as an artist immediately after his period of apprenticeship. By analysing these works, therefore, one gets closest to Rembrandt's ideas about a number of fundamental aspects of the art of painting.

In Volume IV, devoted to his self-portraits, we tried to understand the figure of Rembrandt in the representation of his own appearance and how he saw himself in relation to his major predecessors and among those art lovers interested in his work. In the present Volume we approach Rembrandt *as an artist* most intimately through an analysis of his many small-scale history pieces (and the small group of genre pieces which are in many respects related to them).

The compilation of an oeuvre catalogue – which was originally the ultimate objective of the Rembrandt Research Project – is not in the first place a matter of getting to know Rembrandt as man and artist but rather of ordering and describing his painted oeuvre. However, in the work on these last two Volumes of the *Corpus* the thematic approach to this oeuvre proved to have great advantages. Not only has our knowledge of hitherto often unknown aspects of his work been enormously enriched, this approach also turned out to serve the original goal of the Rembrandt Research Project in ways that were wholly unexpected.

At the project's inception it seemed obvious that one ought to deal with Rembrandt's paintings in the chronological sequence of their origin. But because of the multifaceted nature of Rembrandt's production, that meant treating very different types of paintings all mixed together. Thus a portrait could follow a landscape which in turn followed a history piece which succeeded a self-portrait and so on. And yet initially there was much to be said for the chronological way of working: both the material properties and stylistic characteristics of Rembrandt's works seemed, after all, to change only gradually and to follow a logical development. Was it therefore not best to follow that development? Our work on Volume II, which was for a large part devoted to the many portraits that Rembrandt painted between 1631 and '35, taught us however that there were specific advantages in working with a larger group of paintings, in which Rembrandt had worked from very similar pictorial starting points. For example, we learned that in his rendering of the anatomy and lighting of the face, in the treatment of the background or in his handling of contours and contrasts, Rembrandt developed certain ideas, which he then often modified, together with skills that were in part rooted in these ideas. The insights thus gained also allowed us to avoid confusing Rembrandt's works with those of pupils or other associates involved in the production of portraits, or with later fakes or imitations. That, after all, was the aim which the Rembrandt Research Project had set as its priority.

This experience with the early portraits was one of the main reasons, following a methodological reappraisal of the whole project between 1989 and '93, for changing to a thematic approach.[1] It gradually became clear to us that with this thematic way of working we could get closer to Rembrandt's way of thinking and working in the face of specific artistic challenges. Initially we thought that these insights were no more than an interesting spin-off from our research on authenticity, but this spin-off became increasingly important as an additional tool in the ordering and sifting of the relevant part of Rembrandt's oeuvre.

On a more limited scale we had already had this experience in working on the first three volumes. Thus, work on Volume I produced insights into Rembrandt's use of materials, painting technique and workshop practice. In the Volumes II and III our insight developed into Rembrandt's teaching and the workshop production linked to it. But with the thematic way of working in Volumes IV and V there opened up much wider vistas that needed to be explored if we were to get a grasp on the relevant field of Rembrandt's activities. In the work on the self-portraits, for example, this led to the realization that we also needed to include in our investigation the etchings and drawings that Rembrandt had produced before the mirror if we wanted to understand Rembrandt's exceptional production of self-portraits and the great variety of functions of these works in their full compass. It was only through this integral approach that the realization dawned that others in Rembrandt's workshop were also producing 'self-portraits' of Rembrandt, an advance in our understanding in which a key role was played by research methods of the physical sciences to identify the relevant works.

What then are the fruits in the present Volume of our investigation of the small-scale history pieces?

The cataloguing of the oeuvre, naturally, had to take precedence in this Volume too. The second half of the book comprises 30 often very extensive catalogue texts

1 A detailed account of this reorientation can be found in the Preface of Vol. IV and on www.rembrandtresearchproject.org

relating to the small-scale history pieces that originated after 1642, including, for instance, the disputed *Polish Rider*. In Volumes I-III the paintings designated as authentic works were incorporated in Category A, while the works disattributed from Rembrandt were separated elsewhere in the book in Category C and those works whose attribution remained uncertain in a Category B. In Vol. IV and V all the works of the relevant kind that originated in Rembrandt's workshop were chronologically dealt with regardless of whether or not – or only partially – they were executed by Rembrandt. This integrated treatment of all the works of the group under investigation gave rise to a far more subtly differentiated picture of the activities in Rembrandt's workshop. This in turn indicated that a more penetrating investigation was needed of Rembrandt's teaching and the workshop practice that we had previously assumed. For this reason, in the present Volume attention is paid to the phenomenon of the free variants produced by pupils after prototypes by Rembrandt. Such 'satellites', we assume, were produced by pupils in the context of their training but also as an integral part of the production of saleable paintings, the proceeds of which augmented the master's income (see Chapter III). We anticipate that this phenomenon will lead to further new insights in the wider context of 17th-century painting in general.

The comparison of Rembrandt's prototypes and the pupils' variants based on them proved to be a unique opportunity to gain insight into the way Rembrandt thought as an artist. Such comparative analyses in Chapter IV clarified specific characteristics of Rembrandt's pictorial considerations and the criteria of quality based on them. In the wider perspective, these new insights could well be important for Rembrandt research and the investigation of Dutch 17th-century painting in general. This in itself is of interest because the factor of quality is usually dismissed as having no place in a scholarly art history and therefore plays only a diffuse role in the work of art historians – and consequently with the interested public.

The small-scale history pieces that originated between *c.* 1624 and 1642 were all dealt with in the first three volumes. Nevertheless, there was good reason to look at these paintings once again, if only to be able better to relate the paintings after 1642 to these earlier works. Moreover, a considerable number of problems had arisen over the attribution of these earlier works. Where a reassessment of these paintings had led to changing our opinion over their authenticity, the arguments articulating these new insights needed to be presented to the relevant art world. Rather than describing these changes in attribution in a section of 'Corrrigenda and Addenda', as in previous volumes, it was decided in this Volume to include the re-attributions in a survey of all the small-scale history paintings that we consider to be autograph (see Chapter II) and to account for our changed thinking there. Indeed, the number of re-attributions is so great that they are given special attention in a section below in this Preface (see Reattributions). This consideration at the same time provides the background to the decision to devote Chapter I of this Volume to what is referred to as Rembrandt's 'theory of art'.

That first chapter began as an attempt to explain why the small-scale history pieces have been taken as the theme of this Volume. The potential significance of this theme, however, only became fully apparent during the work on the chapter. When it did, the result was to suggest an alternative way of analyzing Rembrandt's works, wholly different from the stylistic approach that had led to so many disattributions that were now, in retrospect, no longer tenable. But the writing of that part of the book was so unpredictable that Chapter I only came to assume its title and the focus of its purpose during the writing of it. The piece began, as it were, to write itself. I must, however, offer my excuses to previous authors who have written on Rembrandt's presumed theory of art (or lack of it) for the fact that I could pay no more attention to their work.

It will no doubt surprise some that the study of documents which provides the foundation to this chapter is restricted to only two 17th-century texts. This deliberate choice was not merely dictated by the pressures of time, it was mainly determined by my desire to stay as close as possible to Rembrandt's language and likely conceptual apparatus. I consider the usual collation of all the concepts and ideas that were 'in the air' in a particular period to be an approach that obfuscates rather than clarifies our understanding.

As in Volume IV, here too it was decided, albeit in a rather late stage, to include in the book the etchings and drawings with histories. But this was a totally different undertaking from the inclusion of etchings and drawings with self-portraits in Volume IV. It meant that more than a hundred etchings and many drawings with histories (and some genre scenes) had to be given a place in the survey in Chapter II. Rembrandt's painted histories could in this way be placed in the context of his entire oeuvre in this area. This turned out to be a major – in fact *the* great – challenge, but it offered at the same time exceptional opportunities.

Unfortunately the world of Rembrandt research is largely compartmentalized according to the three media that Rembrandt used, the RRP being constrained to the paintings. In view of the extent of Rembrandt's oeuvre of histories it is of course impossible for us to deal with the etchings and drawings with the same thoroughness as the paintings. For problems of detail we could always count on the advice of the pre-eminent specialists, Peter Schatborn for the drawings and Erik Hinterding for the etchings, but desirable as it may have been it was at this stage of the Rembrandt Research Project no longer feasible to mount an interdisciplinary project. However that may be, the way in which the works in the three media are integrated and discussed in Chapter II is entirely the responsibility of the present author.

Bringing together the histories created by all three techniques in a roughly chronologically ordered pictorial atlas gave us – and we hope will also give many a user of this book – a new understanding of Rembrandt as artist. By systematically clustering the relevant reproductions on two (sometimes a multiple of two) pages, there emerge clear patterns in Rembrandt's activities that have seldom previously been recognized. One can regard the survey in

Chapter II as a biographical sketch of Rembrandt's thinking and exploring both in the workshop and also – as will become apparent – in the domestic circle during the 'long winter evenings' (see p. 219).

Anyone looking through Chapter II will note that the etchings are as a rule reproduced in mirror image. This decision requires justification. After all, some may find it a disturbing experience, but one can argue that, for anyone who wishes to understand Rembrandt's pictorial thinking, this was for the one time a very useful decision, since Rembrandt as inventor thought on the plate, and not on the (reversed) image of the print made from it. A defence of this decision is argued – convincingly, one hopes – in the introduction to the chapter and from time to time in the course of the chapter itself.

It is important for the user to realize that in the concise texts in Chapter II no attempt has been made to achieve in any respect a complete or even a balanced treatment of all the works reproduced there. The chapter is, as already said, not much more than a tri-medial pictorial atlas that is intended to give to the user of the book a new insight into the 'workshop' of Rembrandt's mind as a history painter. But it is also a first attempt to apply, whenever possible, the insights gained in Chapter I in the examination and ordering of these works – particularly the paintings. Also in Chapter II, the often neglected question of the *raison d'être* of the works shown is repeatedly raised and sometimes answered.

It will be clear to the reader, one hopes, that while the Chapters I and II cannot claim to be more than sketches they are nevertheless more than mere by-products of the investigation of authenticity, even though one finds little trace of their influence in the catalogue texts, most of which were written when the work on these chapters was first begun. The sympathetic reader, however, may still consider them the fruits of the thematic approach adopted in 1993.

Reattributions

It may cause some surprise that the survey in Chapter II contains eight reattributions of paintings that were disattributed from Rembrandt in the first three volumes of *A Corpus*. In several of these cases, an account is given in the relevant texts of how these regrettable disattributions came about (see pp. 154, 160, 168, 180, 191, 196, 206 and 220).

The very first sentence of the first chapter of the first volume of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* contains the kernel of the main explanation for the change of mind within the Rembrandt Research Project concerning the attribution of so many paintings. That sentence was a methodological statement to which the present author fully subscribed at the time. The relevant chapter is titled *The stylistic development* and contains a stylistic analysis of the paintings that Rembrandt produced in Leiden. The statement reads: 'The style characteristics one assigns to a work of art comprise a selection of observations and interpretations which is made with a particular purpose in mind.'

This proposition – formulated by Josua Bruyn, the first chairman of the Rembrandt Research Project – is remarkable in that it clearly implies that it is the *investigator* who determines which characteristics are significant in the work to be investigated. One has to imagine that the investigator makes a selection from the characteristics distilled by him from a group of paintings – in this case Rembrandt's Leiden oeuvre – on the basis of which either to determine the place of a particular work in the development of an artist or to decide whether that work falls in or outside that artist's oeuvre.

This same conception of stylistic analysis is to be found slightly differently worded, for example, in the article on style published in 1963 by J.S. Ackerman, in which he writes: 'Because our image of style is not discovered but created by abstracting certain features from works of art for the purpose of assisting historical and critical activity, it is meaningless to ask, as we usually do, "What is style?" The relevant question is rather "What definition of style provides the most useful structure for the history of art?"'[2] What is remarkable about this approach to the phenomenon of style – an approach accepted and practised since the early 20th century – is that it gives no ground to the actual choices and objectives of the artists concerned when deciding which should be the distinguishing characteristics of their work. It rejects the idea that the choices and aims of the works' author need be discovered. It is rather the investigator who 'creates' the relevant set of characteristics 'by abstracting certain features', which can subsequently be of use in the 'historical and critical activity' of the art historian.

In this context it is important to point out that stylistic criticism, specifically through the influential work of Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) was based on a set of criteria that was developed independently of the image in any concrete sense: that is, independently of the combination of actual entities – things and figures – depicted in a painting. It was rather a matter of the *'Vie des formes'* (the Life of Forms), an expression coined by Henri Focillon (1818-1943), who thought along similar lines as Wölfflin.

It is telling, and Wölfflin himself recognized as much, that the developments of this stylistic analytical approach – ran parallel to developments in the visual arts of the time – specifically the path to abstraction and the birth of expressionism, in which it was assumed that the artist and his pictorial language coincide. The conception of style entertained by the early Rembrandt Research Project was implicitly characterized by the model that was still widely held in the early 1960's, that the stylistic development of the artist would occur involuntarily, almost as a natural phenomenon which manifested itself more strongly the greater the artist. It was seen at that time to reflect a lack of integrity on the part of an artist if he deliberately changed his style – unless that change could be considered as an evolutionary one. The only artist in whose career such changes (after his cubist phase) were indulgently tol-

2 J.S. Ackerman, 'Style', in: *Art and archeology,* ed. J. S. Ackerman and R. Carpenter, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963, p. 165.

erated was Picasso, but then he was considered – also by himself – as a kind of genius child at play.

It will be clear that these two factors together form a dangerous mix: on the one hand the liberty of the art historian to extrapolate from the work of an artist such features of style as he or she considers characteristic (on the basis of his own preconceptions) and on the other hand the assumption of an autonomous process of development in an artist's style. The researcher or connoisseur could arrogate to himself the role of determining in retrospect how the artist *ought to have* worked and on this basis discard a work from that artist's oeuvre. This mix becomes even more explosive in Rembrandt's case when the researchers' intentions are focused on reducing the number of paintings attributed to him. This latter tendency was understandable in the context of the forces that had been operating in the art world. Specifically, the great and growing demand for paintings by Rembrandt (notably in the United States) had led to a concomitant expansion of his oeuvre. As Catherine Scallen demonstrates in her *Rembrandt, reputation and the practice of connoisseurship* (2004), the most authoritative connoisseurs around 1900 connived at each other's attributions and presented a joint face to the world as the defenders of both their discipline and Rembrandt's legacy. The result was that Rembrandt's oeuvre degenerated into an almost indescribable chaos – held together by a concept of genius according to which anything conceivable could be expected from Rembrandt. In the end it was one of this group of mutually promoting authorities, Abraham Bredius, who broke ranks and inaugurated a new era of a more critical attitude in Rembrandt's reception, increasingly aimed at reducing the size of what was considered to be Rembrandt's oeuvre.

The Rembrandt Research Project stood firmly in this tradition of reduction, a tendency which was enhanced by the trauma suffered by the Dutch art world following the Van Meegeren affair. Moreover, there were forces in play within the team of the Rembrandt Research Project which served to lend the influence of what Friedländer dubbed in his *Von Kunst und Kennerschaft* the '*Neinsager*' or nay-sayer an extra weight.[3] If one adds to the mix described above the belief in democratic collegiate decision-making, part of the pervasive ideology of the time, coupled with a strong desire within the group to reach consensus, then one has a good idea of the intellectual climate in which the work on Volumes I – III was conducted. However, it should be stressed that the most important factors in the development of a strong 'reductionist' tendency were the *a priori* notions assumed by the RRP concerning style, stylistic development and stylistic analysis.

My research on a particular facet of Indian Folk Art were crucially important for the change in my personal thinking on this point. Wölfflin, whose approach was so important to the Rembrandt Research Project, was convinced that the foundation of art history lay in stylistic analysis. He was so convinced of the universal validity of this approach that he also wanted to apply this method, for example, to Indian art. When, in the course of my research, I actually did this the results proved to be nonsensical. In fact, fieldwork conducted at my request by specialists in the local folk art turned out to deliver autochthonous categories by which the observed stylistic and the qualitative features concerned could be properly understood.[4] This may seem a far-fetched case to compare with that of the Rembrandt Research Project, but the specific – if not actually alien – nature of 17th-century thinking on the art of painting is just as strange as (at least one facet of) the 20th-century folk art of Rajasthan, which is partly rooted in the sophisticated Moghul culture. Thinking about the art of painting in Rembrandt's time is much more about the things, figures, effects, textures of materials and based on a clearer interplay between form and content – and above all on the visual illusion – than the *Vie des formes* tending towards abstraction and expression. It turns out that looking through 17th-century eyes is more different from a 20th-century gaze than the members of the Rembrandt Research Project and many others with us suspected.

As an alternative to the 20th-century stylistic criticism, therefore, there is justification for reconstructing Rembrandt's thinking about the art of painting in a way that one might compare with a cultural anthropological research project. In Chapter I, informants from Rembrandt's time and from his artistic cultural milieu are interviewed, as it were, to get an overview of the workshop culture of 17th-century Holland.

It was the heated discussions within the Rembrandt Research Project concerning one of the paintings which will be treated in the present Volume, the *Supper at Emmaus* in Paris (V 14), which eventually led to the re-appraisal of our entire approach to the problems of authenticity and Rembrandt's oeuvre. As will become evident in this Volume, this re-appraisal is still ongoing. This is by no means a cause for embarrassment, it is rather an intellectual feast.

The essay on methodology

In the Preface of Vol. IV it was announced that Volume V would include an essay on methodological aspects of the work of the Rembrandt Research Project. Since the brief discussion in the Preface of Volume I headed 'Some Reflections on method', such reflections have come to play an increasingly important role in the project – and with very good reason. Different positions taken with respect to method would eventually lead to the review of our entire way of working and the way we presented our insights and opinions, as briefly outlined above and more exhaustively in the preface to Volume IV. During this period of revision, work began for an essay with the work-

3 Max J. Friedländer, *Von Kunst und Kennerschaft*. The first German edition was published in Zürich in 1939; the edition used here is M.J. Friedländer: *On art and connoisseurship,* transl. T. Borenius, Oxford 1946 (4th ed.), p. 261.

4 E. van de Wetering, *Fighting a Tiger: stability and flexibility in the style of Pabuji Pars*, South Asian Studies 8, 1992, pp. 33-52.

ing title 'Reflections on Method II', for which, as a research assistant in 1993-94, the young Emilie Gordenker carried out valuable work researching and correlating the literature on the history and cognitive aspects of connoisseurship. With irregular intervals the essay was further worked on up to 2005 with the intention of including it in the present Volume V.

In the event this has not happened, for three reasons. In 2007 an article appeared in the Burlington Magazine in which Christopher Brown queried the more recent developments in the approach of the Rembrandt Research Project with a number of critical remarks.[5] This critique deserved a reply which duly appeared in the Burlington Magazine.[6] That article incorporated several ideas developed as part of the essay-in-progress. The second reason was that our treatment of the history of connoisseurship discussed in the essay had in the meantime been superseded by Anna Tummers' doctoral dissertation: '*The fingerprint of an Old Master: on connoisseurship of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish paintings: recent debates and seventeenth-century insights*.[7] The third reason to suspend – or even abandon – work on 'Reflections on Method II' was that digital methods of analyzing images have been developed in the recent past, while significant insights in the neurosciences now hold out the possibility of understanding some of the cognitive processes involved in connoisseurship; but we simply do not possess the new type of expertise that would be needed to pursue these possibilites. Moreover, some of our new thinking on methodological questions has already been presented in the Preface to Volume IV.

The team and the earlier history of the genesis of Vol. V

The origin of the present volume has a long history and many have been involved in it in one way or another. A great deal of the research had already been carried out by the 'old team' during research trips between 1968 and 1975. And from 1989 onward, after the publication of Volume III, Josua Bruyn worked on catalogue entries dealing with the small-scale history pieces painted between 1642 and *c.* '46. In the 90's Michiel Franken (for a while together with Volker Manuth) had been engaged in condensing the relevant RRP logbooks that relate to the paintings dealt with here and in collating and summarizing the existing data – in short producing the basic texts which served as the starting point for many of the entries. He also produced the catalogue entries on the Berlin *Susanna* (V 1), the Amsterdam *Holy Family at night* (V 5), the lost *Circumcision* from the Passion Series for Frederik Hendrik (V 10) and the Berlin *Joseph and Potiphar's wife* (V 22). Marieke de Winkel did important iconographic and iconological research, especially in relation to the *Polish Rider* (V 20) and the *Slaughtered Ox* (V 21). Karin Groen carried out investigations on the grounds using the methods of the physical sciences, and on other problems concerning the paint layers; while Peter Klein continued his dendrochronological analyses of the oak panels used by Rembrandt and related painters that had long been so important to the RRP. Jaap van der Veen contributed his detailed knowledge of the archival material relating to Rembrandt and his world.

On the title pages of the Volumes I-III the five members of the team always appeared as authors regardless of how much or how little each had contributed. In the Volumes IV and V the present author is given as the main author, giving rise to the impression that the Rembrandt Research Project now consisted of only one person. In reality that is by no means the whole case, as the above paragraph should make clear, although admittedly in certain respects the impression is correct. This calls for further explanation, and of a rather personal kind. What was it that changed with Volume IV? Why have those who contributed to the writing of Volume V, particularly to the catalogue texts, not given the status of co-authors rather than 'contributors'? Why were these who contributed chapters to Volume IV not accorded co-authorial status?

One reason is that if contributors were given co-authorial status, it would imply that they shared authorial responsibility for the contents of the books as a whole, rather than their own more specialist contribution. But in addition, and perhaps more importantly, there is clearly a problem in accounting for both the continuity of the Rembrandt Research Project through the major transition from the 'old' to the 'new' team in the early 1990's, and for the radically different approach taken by the latter. This new approach, and in particular the reattributions to which it led, were in fact the decision and sole responsibility of the present author. He therefore is alone able to account for the direction taken by the project since the early nineties and for the contents of Volumes IV and V as a whole. It is clear that it would be a misplaced responsibility for those researchers who joined the RRP later, and contributed to Volumes IV and V, to account for an earlier phase of the project or for the reasons for adopting the new thematic approach. Moreover, I was the sole remaining member who had studied virtually the entire painted oeuvre of Rembrandt.

In the light of this prehistory, to which my earlier, not entirely happy experiences with 'connoisseurship by committee' also belong (see the Preface to Volume IV, p. XIII, note 20) I considered it better in the context of the second phase of the RRP that only one person should assume the responsibility of expressing an opinion on the possible authenticity of a painting, or on doubts over the same.

5 C. Brown, 'The Rembrandt Year', *Burl. Mag.* 149 (2007), pp. 104-108.

6 E.v.d.Wetering, 'Connoisseurship and Rembrandt's paintings: new directions in the Rembrandt Research Project, part II', *Burl. Mag.* 150 (2008), pp. 83-90.

7 A.Tummers; '*The fingerprint of an Old Master: on connoisseurship of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish paintings: recent debates and seventeenth-century insights*, Ph.D. dissertation, Amsterdam, 2009. For comments on her approach, see p. 319 in this Volume.

The future of the RRP and its archives

This is the 42nd year of the Rembrandt Research Project's existence and the task which the RRP originally set itself of ordering and publishing Rembrandt's painted oeuvre has still not been completed. The intention was that yet another Volume would be devoted to the portraits and tronies after 1642 and to the landscapes and the large-scale history paintings (mainly paintings with half- or three-quarter length, life-size figures). Considerable work on these paintings had already been carried out by Josua Bruyn and members of the new team – Michiel Franken, Marieke de Winkel and Jaap van der Veen. Whether this will ever happen is for the board of the Foundation Rembrandt Research Project to decide. If work on such a volume were to be realized, one assumes that this would be undertaken from the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD) in The Hague where team member Michiel Franken is in charge of the RRP archive which has now been transferred there.

For the present author, however, as one involved in the RRP from the very first it would be disappointing to end the work on the project without being able to round it off by giving it the shape of a finished assignment. Moreover, it is at present barely possible for the unititiated to find a way through the forest of attributions, disattributions, revisions of the same and the more recently newly discovered works by Rembrandt etc. that are now distributed over the whole *Corpus*. There is thus a need for a manageable single-volume survey of Rembrandt's painted oeuvre based on the RRP's most recent insights, which a book of the Bredius/Gerson type would fulfil. There are in fact plans to prepare such a book under the responsibility of the present author.

Acknowledgments

It will be clear from the above that the task of finding the appropriate forms to acknowledge the contribution of others to such a long-term production as this volume is not simple. There are so many different kinds of support and input involved – material, critical, moral and professional, all of them essential, that to acknowledge adequately the debt owed to all those concerned is a daunting task.

The work of the project would not have been possible but for the support of the Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research (ZWO) – or as it is now known, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO); the University of Amsterdam, and its Kunsthistorisch Instituut; the Central Research Laboratory for Objects of Art and Science (now the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, ICN); the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD); the Rembrandt House Museum; the Rijksmuseum and many other museums all over the world which own works discussed and/or reproduced in this Volume.

We are very grateful to our additional sponsors: SNS Reaal, Essilor Benelux, Booz & Company and DSM. A number of individuals who wish to remain anonymous gave generous financial support to the Rembrandt Research Project at critical junctures when our finances threatened to turn dry.

In the realization of the book as such the essential work and control of detail with which Lideke Peese Binkhorst saw its production through to its final state was - like with all previous Volumes - enormously important. The input and editorial acumen of our translator Murray Pearson, who has been involved in the project since 1996, was also of great importance. Catalogue entries written before 1996, the majority in fact, were however translated by Jennifer Killian and Katy Kist. Margaret Oomen's indispensible work as assistant and secretary was always of major importance. Her intense involvement in the project over many years has been greatly appreciated. When in the last phase of the book's production she had to leave the project, her role was miraculously taken over at short notice by Carin van Nes, to whom we are enormously grateful. We are particularly grateful to Egbert Haverkamp Begemann, who has followed closely the work in progress with a keen critical eye throughout, and whose always wise comments have played an indispensible role in the evolution of the book's content. Peter Schatborn and Erik Hinterding were most generous in sharing their great knowledge concerning Rembrandt's drawings and etchings with us. The technical photographer René Gerritsen, whose expertise was widely employed and greatly appreciated, and the restorer Martin Bijl, with his sharply focused mind and broad experience, also became closely associated with the production of Volume V. Aryan Hesseling and Daniëlle Voortman prepared the many digital images for their function in the book with great love and enthusiasm. Last of all to become involved was Roel van Straten, who in an extraordinarily concentrated effort compiled the index and registers of this book.

Seeing this work into print required the skills and technology of the Pre Press Media Groep. We are immensely grateful for their tolerance over deadlines and for their generous allocation of time to the project. Special thanks are due to Jeanne Hundersmarck for the countless hours of meticulous labour she has devoted with Lideke Peese Binkhorst to get the book into its final form. We owe much to our publisher Springer, Nederlof Repro, Grafikon / drukkerij Ter Roye and Binderij Callenbach van Wijk.

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Hagen, Ed de Heer, Wouter Hugenholtz, Cecile van der Harten, IJsbrand Hummelen, Christoph von Imhoff, Theo Jansen, Hans and Reinette Jansens van Gellicum-van Haeften, Ruurd Juist, Jan Kelch, Bram Kempers, René Klomp, Gerbrand Korevaar, Friso Lammerse, Claudia Laurenze, Cynthia van der Leden, Walter Liedtke, Bernd Lindemann, Rob Lisman, Kristin Lohse Belkin, David and Mary Alice Lowenthal, Doron Lurie, Mireille te Marvelde, Peter and Sandra Mensing, Anthonie Meijers, Pieter Meyers, Monique de Meyere, Hotze Mulder, Otto Naumann, Petria Nobel, Andrew O'Connor, Antoine Oomen, Henk van Os, Cees Ostendorf, Ab van Overdam, Nel Oversteegen, Sijbolt Noorda, Ad and Marie-Jeanne Nuyten, Frans Peese Binkhorst, Harm Pinkster, Peter van de Ploeg, Wim Pijbes, Annet van der Putten, Adrienne Quarles van Ufford, Paul van der Raad, Katja Reichenfeld, Konrad Renger, Gezien van de Riet, Annetje Roorda-Boersma, Ashok Roy, Martin Royalton-Kisch, Nathan Saban, Alexander Schimmelpenninck, Wim Schot, Daria Shiskin, Jan Six van Hillegom, Jan Six, Leonore van Slooten, Eric Jan Sluijter, Hans Smits, Mieke Smits-Veldt, Burckhardt and Manuela Söll, Irina Sokolova, Hubert von Sonnenburg, Gilles and Sytske Stratenus-Dubah, Jan Strootman, Werner Sumowski, Dorien Tamis, Atty Tordoir, Christian Tümpel, Jaap van der Veen, Remco Verkerk, Martien Versteeg, Piet Visser, Christiaan Vogelaar, Lyckle de Vries, André van de Waal, Jørgen Wadum, Jan Wassmer, Gregor Weber, Thijs Weststeijn, Jonathan van de Wetering, Arthur Wheelock, Hermann Wiesler, Melcher de Wind, Hendrik Woudt, Manja Zeldenrust, Anthonie Ziemba, and the multitude of other well-disposed and friendly people who have assisted at different times.

Abbreviations of names of persons involved in the research for the catalogue entries

J.B.	Josua Bruyn	V.M.	Volker Manuth
P.B.	Paul Broekhoff	A.Q.v.U.	Adrienne Quarles van Ufford
M.F.	Michiel Franken	P.S.	Peter Schatborn
K.G.	Karin Groen	P.v.Th.	Pieter van Thiel
B.H.	Bob Haak	J.v.d.V.	Jaap van der Veen
E.H.B.	Egbert Haverkamp Begemann	M.d.W.	Marieke de Winkel
S.H.L.	Simon H. Levie	E.v.d.W.	Ernst van de Wetering

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Jb. d. Pr. Kunsts.	–	*Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, Berlin 1 (1880) –
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Essays

Chapter I

Towards a reconstruction of Rembrandt's art theory

The advantage of the small-scale history paintings

Rembrandt's most famous painting *The Nightwatch* is very large – the canvas measures 387 x 502 cm – and originally it was even larger, approximately 420 x 550 cm. But when one surveys his entire oeuvre, including the drawings and etchings, one finds that the majority of Rembrandt's works are relatively small, although most of these works, like the *Nightwatch*, also show full-length figures.

Of course, Rembrandt painted many other life-size figures beside the 34 individuals in the *Nightwatch*. These are to be found in his 75 single portraits, his 8 life-size double or group portraits, the 35 *tronie*-like figures and in his 30 biblical or allegorical works with a single, life-size figure. In the period 1634-'36 Rembrandt painted almost nothing but history pieces with life-size figures. And, of course, many of his painted self-portraits are also life-size.

All in all he painted some 190 paintings with life-size figures, 45 of which are history paintings, 30 of those with a single figure.

We therefore involuntarily tend to imagine Rembrandt working on life-size figures; whereas we think of him less obviously as the artist who (with endless patience) was also engaged in the production of a great many small-scale works. Indeed, he sat for countless hours drawing on paper or on some 270 often very small etching plates, roughly 120 of these with history or genre pieces and other scenes with small, full-length figures.

But Rembrandt also worked on many small-scale paintings with full-length figures, many more than is usually realized. Some 75 of these have been preserved; while we know of at least 10 more such paintings that have been lost. It will be argued in this chapter that these 85 or so relatively small paintings, almost all of them history pieces, and the approximately 120 etched history and genre scenes, together with a vast number of comparable drawings, constitute the real heart of Rembrandt's oeuvre. It is assumed that the great majority of his life-size portraits painted on commission (almost 1/3 of his painted oeuvre) and the etched portraits, however brilliant and however rich in invention many of these works may be, were produced for ultimately economic reasons, whereas there is reason to believe that the vast majority of his small-scale history pieces, in whatever medium, were not painted on commission.

The fact that Rembrandt's painted oeuvre from the first six years of his career as an independent master consisted *entirely* of works with small-scale figures is all the more remarkable because Jan Lievens was working beside him on large-scale paintings with (sometimes more than) life-size figures. Whether, as suggested, the two young painters shared a studio or not, there was in any case intensive contact between them (cf figs. 9 and 10). Despite the sometimes megalomaniac activity of Jan Lievens, Rembrandt must have been determined to work only on small-scale history and genre pieces with one or more figures. In those Leiden years he made at least 45 such works, an average of more than six per year, in addition to a few self-portraits, *tronies* and oil studies, and a swelling stream of etchings and drawings.

In this section, an attempt will be made to clarify Rembrandt's stubborn preference – especially in the first years of his career – for making paintings on a small scale. It will become apparent that this preference in fact provides a key – perhaps *the* key – to an understanding of Rembrandt's great ambition as an artist.

Constantijn Huygens' oft-quoted reflections on the scale of Rembrandt's and Lievens' paintings are particularly interesting in this context, but they give us no *explanation* for Rembrandt's initial choice of the small scale. On the occasion of his visit(s) to the two young painters, this avid art-lover noted:

> 'So off-hand I would venture to suggest that in verisimilitude and liveliness of affects, Rembrandt is the superior of Lievens. Conversely the latter wins through a grandeur in conception and in the daring of subjects and forms. Everything this young spirit strives for must be majestic and exalted. Rather than conforming to the true size of what he depicts, he gives his painting a larger scale. Rembrandt, on the contrary, would rather devote himself to a small painting and achieves a result on a small scale that one might seek in vain in the largest paintings of others.'[1]

One can think of different reasons why the young Rembrandt so consistently preferred to paint small-scale works at the start of his career.

Could he have done otherwise? After all, both his teachers, Jacob van Swanenburg and Pieter Lastman, also painted almost exclusively works with small-scale, full-length figures. One can therefore imagine that this was an essential element of Rembrandt's training – although it should perhaps be added that Lastman also taught Jan Lievens.

Or could Rembrandt's choice of the small format have been determined by mechanisms in the Dutch art market and Rembrandt's place in it? Perhaps there was simply too little demand for large-scale works. Yet the fact that Lievens painted mainly large-scale history pieces and life size *tronies* would seem to argue against such an economic-historical explanation for Rembrandt's choice.

Could it have been that Rembrandt's early patrons all coincidentally wanted relatively small-scale paintings, almost always with full-length figures? Here we encounter a complex problem: for it seems that Rembrandt hardly worked at all on commission during these Leiden years. The fact that no commissioning patrons are known of course does not necessarily mean that they did not exist. Various art historians have speculated, for example, that

1 This text is translated from *Mijn Jeugd-Constantijn Huygens*, translated from the Latin by C.L. Heesakkers, Amsterdam 1987, pp. 85-86. The Latin text reads: 'Ego de singulis sic perfunctorie pronunciare audebo, Rembrantium iudicio et affectuum vivacitate Livio praestare, hunc alteri inventionis et quâdam audacium argumentorum formarumque superbiâ. Nam et animo iuvenile nihil hic nisi grande et magnificum spirans, obiectarum formarum magnitudinem non tam adaequat libenter quam exsuperat; ille, suae se industriae involvens, in minorem tabulam conferre amat et compendio effectum dare, quod in amplissimis aliorum frustra quaeras.'

Fig. 1. Rembrandt, *Balaam and the ass*, 1626, panel 63.2 x 46.5 cm. Paris, Musée Cognacq-Jay (I A 2)

Fig. 2. Rembrandt, *Two old men disputing (Peter and Paul)*, 1628, panel 72.3 x 59.5 cm. Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria (I A 13)

the two largest Leiden works, *The stoning of Stephen* and the so-called Leiden *History piece* (see p. 150/151) could have been painted on commission.[2] I have myself suggested the possibility that the *Old man sleeping* [*Sloth*] in Turin (see p. 162) and three small *tronies* on gilded copper from 1630 were the results of commissions, though unusual ones. But in any event, these would seem to be exceptions.[3] On the other hand, paintings such as, for instance, the Paris *Balaam* and the Melbourne *Two old men disputing* (figs. 1 and 2) appear to have been purchased by art-lovers passing through Rembrandt's studio.

In the case of the former, we know for certain that it was not painted on commission. The *Balaam* can be seen as Rembrandt's answer to Lastman's *Balaam* (see p. 152). Its *raison d'être* would thus have been determined by 'internal artistic' motives. According to a letter from the Paris art dealer Claude Vignon, the painting was subsequently purchased directly from Rembrandt by the art-lover Alphonse Lopez. Lopez had made the journey to Holland in the service of the French king, in order to negotiate the acquisition of munitions, cannons and large ships. In all probability he travelled back and forth several times between Amsterdam and The Hague and in doing so passed through Leiden. In relation to the question of whether or not Rembrandt painted his Leiden small-scale paintings on commission, it is worth quoting the relevant passage from Vignon's letter. This letter, dated November 1641, was written (in Italian) to another French art-dealer who at the time was leaving for England and the Netherlands. Vignon wrote:

> 'If by chance the most illustrious gentleman, sig. Vandick [Anthony van Dyck] has arrived at your house, please give him my humble greetings and tell him that yesterday I made an estimate of sig. Lopez' paintings, among whom there are some by Titian. Also give my regards to sig. Rembrant in Amsterdam and bring me some of his works. Tell him that yesterday I valued his painting "The prophet Balaam", which sig. Lopez has purchased from him and will be sold with the paintings mentioned above.'[4]

2 Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt. Zijn leven, zijn schilderijen*, Maarssen 1984, pp. 36-39; Roelof van Straten, *Rembrandts Leidse tijd*, Leiden 2005, pp. 308-310.

3 E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's beginnings – an essay', in Exhib. cat. *The mystery of the young Rembrandt*, 2001/02, pp. 30-31; E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's self-portraits: Problems of authenticity and function' in *Corpus* Vol. IV (2005), pp. 89-317, esp. 168-171.

4 E.W. Moes, 'Een brief van kunsthistorische beteekenis', in *O.H.* 12 (1894), pp. 238-40: '… E se per sorte vi fosse arrivato l'illustre sig. cav. Vandick, lo saluti umilmento a mio nome, e dicagli, che jeri io feci la stima de'quadri del sig. Lopez; dove ce n'è di Tiziano, … e in Amsterdamme mi saluti anche il sig. Rembrant, e porti seco qualcosa del suo. Gli dica pure, che io feci jeri la stima del suo quadro del profeta Balam, che comprò da lui il sig. Lopez, , il qual quadro si vendrà fra quelli sopraddetti.'; see also Antopine Schnapper, 'Preface. Plaidoyer pour Claude Vignon'. Schnapper's text is included in Paola Pacht Bassani, *Claude Vignon 1593-1670*, Paris 1992, p. 65.

The words that are highly significant in this context are: '*which sig. Lopez has purchased from him*' ; but more especially, '*and bring me some of his [Rembrandt's] works*'.

From these words, one infers that Rembrandt had his paintings for sale and that they could be readily purchased from stock by passing art-lovers and dealers.

His *Two old men disputing* – Rembrandts early masterwork in the rendering of entering sunlight (fig. 2) – probably came into the possession of the wealthy Jacques de Gheyn III in the same way. De Gheyn was one of the best friends of Constantijn Huygens and his brother Maurits. It is very likely that the three of them paid one or more visits to Rembrandt's (and Lievens') studio and that the young De Gheyn – himself a gifted artist – bought the *Peter and Paul* on such an occasion. It would be listed in the inventory made in 1641 after his death.[5]

If one were to assume that the young Rembrandt produced his paintings primarily as articles for sale, there are several arguments that need to be taken into account which indicate that his priorities actually lay elsewhere and certainly not in the first place in the commercial realm.

– Paintings intended by a painter primarily as goods for sale tend toward a certain degree of uniformity, simply because that is easiest for both maker and purchaser – for the maker because he can profit from his growing routine in the production of a certain type of goods; for the potential buyer because the products of a particular producer meet his expectations. Rembrandt's early history pieces are however very diverse from painting to painting.

– Rembrandt was, as I have explained elsewhere, surrounded by a number of learned art-lovers who must have followed his progress with great interest, probably from the time of his apprenticeship onward.[6] The young painter must have experienced this interest as a constant encouragement to take up new artistic challenges. Constantijn Huygens' carefully considered text concerning the young Rembrandt conveys the tone of the admiration expressed by just one of those art-lovers. This admiration certainly indicates that Rembrandt was seen as a highly gifted innovator and not as the producer of commodities.

– More than a quarter of the works from Rembrandt's Leiden period turn out to have been executed over apparently rejected paintings, most of them of a wholly different conception.[7] This certainly does not suggest that the young Rembrandt's production was determined by commissions or by the routine production of paintings for the free market. It suggests rather that Rembrandt must to a considerable extent have been experimenting. Rembrandt's simultaneous activities as an etcher would seem to confirm this, an impression which is corroborated moreover by the fact that in a number of his most ambitious early paintings such as the *Judas returning the thirty pieces of silver* (see fig. 6), *The raising of Lazarus* (fig. 3) and *The abduction of Proserpina* (p. 82) Rembrandt introduced radical changes during the actual work.

– Comparing the 45 Leiden history and genre pieces, the astonishing developments in the way Rembrandt applied painterly and narrative means, developments accomplished within only a few years, confirm the idea of a questing and experimenting artist (compare figs. 5 & 6).

Pursuing this argument, it will become clear that for an artist of an exploratory and inquiring disposition a sequence of (relatively) small paintings with full-length figures provides the most suitable playground, not to say the best 'laboratory setting', for an intensive investigation of the possibilities of the art of painting. The explanation sometimes heard, that the relatively small format of Rembrandt's Leiden paintings was related to the possibly restricted space of Rembrandt's accommodation, seems far-fetched, particularly in the light of the argument developed in this chapter for his choice of format. Moreover, in any room in which he could have stood upright Rembrandt could have worked on a painting of – say – 150 cm height and greater width. And in any case, the text of Constantijn Huygens quoted above gives the impression that the small format was a deliberate choice by Rembrandt.

It may be significant in this context that in 1631, Rembrandt prematurely abandoned the work on what may have been his earliest painting with life-size figure (Eli instructing Samuel, Paul Getty Museum), a work that was undoubtedly undertaken as a commission and was subsequently completed by another painter, possibly one of Rembrandt's pupils, perhaps Gerard Dou.

Equally remarkable is the fact that Rembrandt kept what was probably his first really large history piece (a monumental *Esther and Ahasuerus* of 2.35 x 2 m) – begun around 1633 – for some 25 years in an unfinished state. Only in the late 50's did he allow a pupil to complete it with a free variant on the same theme on top of the original composition (see Chapter V, figs. 15 and 16).[8] It is significant in this context that he conceived his first completed multi-figure painting with life-size figures, *The anatomy lesson of Dr. Tulp* from 1632, along the general lines of a small-scale history piece probably completed shortly beforehand, *The raising of Lazarus* (figs. 4 and 3).

It is certainly not the case that Rembrandt shrank from the large format and the life-size figure because of any lack of competence. That is most convincingly affirmed by the impressive life-size portraits that he began to paint in sovereign fashion in 1631, in Hendrick Uylenburgh's workshop, the very first of which, such as the *Portrait of Nicolaes Ruts* (II A 43) and the *Portrait of a man at a writing desk* (II A 44) are among the most brilliant portraits he ever painted. Rembrandt was in no way afraid of the large format. When it was demanded, he immediately mastered it as have few others, which is spectacularly demonstrated by the above-mentioned *Anatomy lesson of Dr. Tulp* (fig. 4).

5 Strauss *Doc.*, 1641/1.

6 E. van de Wetering, op. cit.[3] (2001/2002), pp. 22-57, esp. 27-32.

7 E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt laughing', in: *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 2007, pp. 18-40, esp. 28-31.

8 E. van de Wetering, A. van Grevenstein and K.G. Groen, 'Esther voor Haman, toegeschreven aan Rembrandt', *Bulletin of the Rijksmuseum* 39 (1991), pp. 56-83.

Fig. 3. Rembrandt, *The raising of Lazarus*, *c.* 1630/31, panel 96.2 x 81.5 cm. Los Angeles, County Museum of Art (I A 30)

Fig. 4. Rembrandt, *The anatomy lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, 1632, canvas 169.5 x 216.5 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis (II A 51)

There is further evidence that Rembrandt must have attached great importance to the artistic advantages of working on a small scale in the fact that his sole major project undertaken as a royal commission, the painted *Passion series*, consisted of a series of relatively small (95 x 75 cm) history pieces with small figures (see p. 185). Had he executed the same compositions with life-size figures, these paintings would have measured something on the scale of 3.80 x 2.70 metres. One can infer from this alone that Rembrandt attached great importance to the space of the stage on which his figures acted; and that is only one of the many aspects of the art of painting over which he evidently developed his own ideas, in a relatively short time.

My hypothesis, which I shall develop below, is that painting small-scale history pieces with full-length figures was for the young Rembrandt the best way to make rapid advances in all facets of the art of painting, in pictorial as well as narrative aspects (compare figs. 5 and 6).

The basic aspects *(de gronden)* of the art of painting

Those who write the history of art often tend to regard changes in the 'style' of an artist, or an art historical period, as an autonomous process, as a sequence of stages in an *'evolution'* – comparable to the biological evolution of organisms. Another inveterate habit in traditional art historical thinking is to consider many changes in this 'evolution' as the result of *'stylistic influence'*. 'Style', however, is not the most adequate term by which to categorize the changing character of the art of the past. It is more a question of the *means* with which an ever more convincing illusion can be achieved, an illusion of life-like reality achieved by applying paint to a flat surface. In the case of the young Rembrandt, the changes in his use of such pictorial and narrative means are so many-sided and so abrupt that the style/evolution/influence model is incapable of explaining those changes (compare figs. 5 and 6). For this reason, an entirely new approach will be followed here which, in our view, provides a better explanation of these changes.

In the following, we shall investigate the possibility of a connection between the changes in Rembrandt's early ways of painting and the complex of categories regarding the art of painting that 17th-century painters and art-lovers called *de grondt* (the basis or foundation), or *gronden* (the basic aspects of the art of painting).

The Dutch term *'gronden'* in the plural, in connection with painting is used in a rarely remarked passage in a book written by Rembrandt's pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627-1678) almost twenty years before the publication of his widely familiar *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst* [*Introduction to the Academy of Painting* – henceforth referred to as the *Academy of Painting* or *Academy*]. Van Hoogstratens earlier book is an extended Dutch remake of Nicholas Faret's *L'honneste-homme; ou, l'art de plaire à la cour* which in its turn was based on Baldassare Castiglione's widely circulated *Il Cortegiano* from 1528, which one could call a book of etiquette. Hoogstraten's book appeared in 1657 under the title *Den Eerlyken Jongeling, of de edele Kunst, van zich bij Groote en Kleyne te doen Eeren en Beminnen [The Honorable Young Man, or the noble Art of making oneself honoured and esteemed by one and all]*.

Faret mentions the art of painting only in passing,[9] but, like Castiglione, Van Hoogstraten in his *Honorable Young Man* devotes a meaningful passage to painting. In Castiglione, this passage takes the form of a discussion over the question of which art, sculpture or painting, should be

9 *The honest man: or, the art to please in court. Written in French by Sieur Faret* [Nicholas Faret, *L'honneste-homme; ou, l'art de plaire à la cour*]. Translated into English by E.G., London 1632, p. 100.

Fig. 5. Rembrandt, *History painting (subject unidentified)*, 1626, panel 90 x 122 cm. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal (I A 6)

Fig. 6. Rembrandt, *Judas repentant returning the pieces of silver*, 1629, panel 79 x 102.3 cm. Private collection (I A 15)

given precedence, a theme which, referred to as 'Paragone', vexed people's minds in Castiglione's time. The philosophical discussion (conducted between a countess and her courtiers) included in this book would have an enormous impact over time. From that time on, it became obligatory to be able to converse on painting, painters and paintings in court circles, and subsequently in the wealthier circles of the bourgeoisie, first mainly in Italy but later also in Antwerp and Paris, and from *c.* 1625 in the Northern Netherlands as well.

The passage devoted to the art of painting in Hoogstraten's *Honourable Young Man* includes in essence the whole curriculum that the aspiring art-connoisseur should assimilate in order to be able to discourse in expert fashion on the art of painting. It also encompasses implicitly what the painter should know in broad outline in addition to his craft expertise. Only thus, according to Van Hoogstraten, would the painter be able to teach others (including 'Sovereigns and Princes') how 'to discourse well' over the art of painting. Van Hoogstraten follows this claim by giving a concise curriculum:

> '… I therefore advise that one should learn to understand in general '*de gronden*' (the basic aspects of the art of painting), to be familiar with its greatest Masters, and distinguish between their ways of painting; and in which countries, cities and palaces the best works are to be seen. For this purpose, [Karel] van Mander [*Het Schilder-boeck,* including *De Grondt der edel vrij Schilderkonst*], [Albrecht] Dürer [the four books on Proportions and the *Unterweisung der Messung*] and [Franciscus Junius] [*The Painting of the Ancients*][10] should be sufficient to ensure that you have no lack of topics of conversation.'[11]

In the context of this chapter, the phrase *'hare gronden'* ['its fundamentals or basic aspects'] is crucial. Hoogstraten's advice to read Karel van Mander's *Schilder-boeck* is sufficient to make it quite clear what he means, for Van Mander (1548-1606) (fig. 7) included in his *Schilder-boeck* a very detailed, rhymed text under the heading *Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const. [The foundation of the noble free art of painting* – henceforward *The Foundation or Grondt]* as the first part of his *Schilder-boeck* (fig. 8).[12] In this didactic poem, the author deals with a comprehensive series of aspects of the art of painting that were regarded as fundamental. It was this foundation that Van Hoogstraten refers to (in the plural) in his *Honourable Young Man* as the '*gronden*', the fundamentals.

As has been demonstrated by Celeste Brusati and subsequently (in more detail) by Hans Joachim Czech (fig. 11), Van Hoogstraten (fig. 12) would later deal extensively with these same fundamentals, in modified form, in his *Academy of Painting*[13] (fig. 13), in which, like Van Mander, he lays explicit claim to comprehensiveness when he states that he intends:

> '… to deal with all [apart from purely technical] aspects of the art of painting'[14]

For example, one cluster of *gronden* – basic aspects of the art of painting – concerns the knowledge of how to rep-

10 The *De Pictura Veterum* (1637) of Franciscus Junius the Younger was commissioned by Junius's patron, the Earl of Arundel, known as "the collector earl." For the earl's wife, the Countess of Arundel, Junius made an English translation under the title *The Painting of the Ancients* (1638). The book appeared in Dutch in 1641 under the title *De schilder-konst der Oude.*

11 S.v.H., *Honourable Young Man*, 1657, p. 26: '… daarom rade ik dat men hare gronden in 't gros leere verstaan, haar grootste Meesters kennen, en desselfs handelingen [stijlen] onderscheyden. Ook in wat Landen, Steden, en Paleysen de beste werken te zien zijn. Hiertoe zijn Vermander, Dureer (sic) en Junius dienstig genoegh om aan geen stoffe gebrek te hebben.'

12 Karel van Mander, *Het schilder-boeck, waerin voor eerst de leerlustighe iueght den grondt der edelvry schilderconst in verscheyden deelen wort voorghedraghen,* …, Haarlem 1604 (in the footnotes henceforth referred to as K.v.M. *Grondt*).

13 See Celeste Brusati, *Artifice and illusion. The art and writing of Samuel van Hoogstraten,* Chicago/London 1995, p. 317, note 40. Hans-Jörg Czech, *Studien zu Samuel van Hoogstratens Malereitraktat Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst: Anders de Zichtbaere Werelt,* doct. diss. Bonn 1999, pp. 254-256.

14 Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst. Anders de zichtbaere werelt*, Rotterdam 1678 [in the footnotes henceforth referred to as S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*], Aen den lezer (p. 2).

resent the human figure as an 'actor' in a painting. This knowledge involves the proportions of man, his various poses and attitudes, facial expressions, dress etc. Other *gronden* concern the art of drawing, and the conception of the painting as a whole: the invention and ordinance (i.e. the composition and grouping of figures in the pictorial space, e.g. in a landscape), knowledge on how to paint landscapes, animals etc. Other *gronden* concern the means by which to suggest space and organize the play of light and shadow in which things should be placed in a painting. The different properties of light are described in turn, and they too can be separately counted among the fundamentals, such as the different reflections of light, including glints and the gleam of shiny surfaces, which in their turn are important in the rendering of different surface textures. Yet other *gronden* deal with knowledge concerning the organization of colours in the painted image, the act of painting itself with its different types of brushwork, the nature and origin of the different pigments and the colours and their effects on the beholder as well as their symbolic significance (see the Tables in fig. 11 and p. 24).

As already suggested above in the case of 'light', each of the wider categories to which Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten devote their chapters (14 in Van Mander's *Grondt* or Books; 9 in Van Hoogstraten's *Academy of Painting*) is further sub-divided into sub-categories that must also have been considered as so many *gronden* in the 17th century.

Karel van Mander's didactic poem *The Foundation of the Art of Painting ['Grondt']*, published in 1604, was the first text in which this knowledge was presented coherently and in sometimes great detail. But that is not to say, of course, that Van Mander himself is the original author of all the knowledge found in his text. In fact, this book is more of a distillation of a great deal of knowledge and ideas that had survived in written form, beginning with the countless anecdotes from Classical Antiquity. More importantly, the knowledge set down in Van Mander's *Grondt* is grounded in a flourishing European workshop tradition to which Van Mander himself, as a painter, belonged. Van Mander's *Grondt* can be considered as a cross-section of a particular moment in this steadily developing tradition, a tradition of thinking and theorizing on painting which also left behind its traces in other ways, not least of course in countless paintings.

Thanks to its comprehensive and systematic ordering of an immense amount of knowledge, larded with the inevitable anecdotes and lengthy digressions, Van Mander's *Grondt* should not only be seen as a great gift for present-day art historians; it was also important for painters and art-lovers in Rembrandt's time. The fact that the art-lover Arnold Buchelius made extracts from it around 1620 and kept these in his file with 'res picturae' [matters concerning the art of painting]; or that in February 1630 a schoolmaster with an interest in art, David Stephansz. Beck, wrote in his diary: *'I read for an hour or so this evening in Van Manders Schilder-boeck.'*[15]; and that Van Hoogstraten recommends his *Honourable Young Man* to read Van Mander's *Grondt*, all indicates that Van Mander's didactic poem must have played a significant role in the Dutch art scene.

Jan Emmens has given some idea of the dissemination of that book in his *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst*[16]. He records that Abraham Bredius came across it in the inventories of eleven 17th-century artists, remarking 'A small but respectable number, when one thinks that one Junius' art of painting of Classical Antiquity, which had already appeared in 1641, was only for the first time encountered in the possession of an artist in 1676, and then of a very well-read artist living in Middelburg, the place where the book had already been sold for several decades.' Emmens also pointed out that Joachim von Sandrart based his discussion *'Von der Pittura oder Mahlereykunst'* (which constitutes a part of his *Teutsche Academie*) extensively on Van Mander's *Grondt*. One can only think that in Rembrandt's time there must have a been a vital culture of reading aloud and that by this means many could have benefited from the existence of the rare copy of a text like Van Mander's *Grondt*. It had in any case, sufficient importance for Wybrant de Geest de Jonge, an admirer of Rembrandt, to rework it in contemporary prose and in 1702 have it published under the title *Den leermeester der schilderkonst* [*The teacher of the art of painting*].[17]

We don't know for certain whether the young Rembrandt knew the book in any detail, but it is highly likely that he did. More importantly, thanks to Van Mander's *Grondt*, we have access to a fairly detailed framework of the ideas that could have been in the mind of any ambitious young painter of Rembrandt's time. That framework undoubtedly gives us a more comprehensive idea of Rembrandt's frame of reference than if we had to only rely on the analysis of Rembrandt's own works when trying to reconstruct his thoughts about art.

But in certain respects, Rembrandt's own 'fleshing out' of that framework would differ from Van Mander's. A great deal had happened between 1604, when the *Grondt* appeared, and 1624, the presumed year of the first known paintings from Rembrandt's hand. The Caravaggist movement had introduced into the world of art radically different ideas over light and shadow and a new conception of realism in art. The so-called Pre-Rembrandtists, in particular Pieter Lastman, had profoundly transformed ideas about the art of history painting. Developments in Haarlem led to new thinking about colour and monochromy (see pp. 103-105).

Rembrandt thus already thought differently from Van Mander in many respects. But that thinking need not have been determined solely by the reception of influences. A painter could search for his own, new, solutions. And Rembrandt certainly did! The way one could imagine an actively striving and searching young artist in the 17th

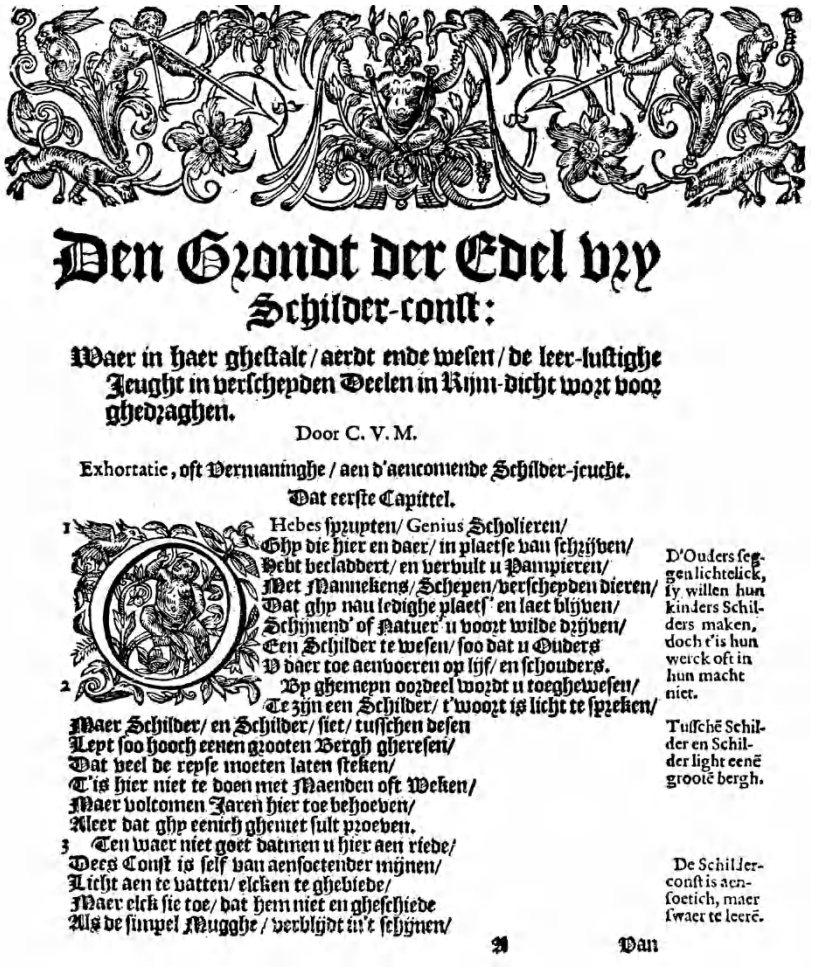
15 David Beck, *Spiegel van mijn leven. Een Haags dagboek uit 1624*, introduced and annotated by Sv.E. Veldhuijzen, Hilversum 1993, p. 54.

16 J.A. Emmens, *Rembrandt en de regels van de Kunst*, Diss. (1968), ed. Amsterdam 1979, pp. 117-120.

17 Wibrandus de Geest, *Den leermeester der schilderkonst* '[…] Formerly written in rhyme by Karel van Mander [...] now in prose [...]' *[Eertijds in Rijm gestelt door* Karel van Mander *[…] ontrijmd […],* Leeuwarden 1702.

Fig. 7. Engraving by J. Saenredam after Hendrick Goltzius, *Portrait of Karel van Mander*, 1604

Fig. 8. Titlepage of Karel van Mander's *Grondt*


Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-conſt:

Waer in haer gheſtalt / aerdt ende weſen / de leer-luſtighe Jeught in verſchepden Deelen in Rijm-dicht wooz vooz ghedzaghen.

Door C. V. M.

Exhortatie, oft Vermaninghe / aen d'aencomende Schilder-jeucht.

Dat eerſte Capittel.

1 Hebes ſpzupten / Genius Scholieren /
Ghp die hier en daer / in plaetſe van ſchzijven /
Hebt beſladdert / en verbult u Pampieren /
Met Mannekens / Schepen / verſchepden dieren /
Dat ghp nau ledighe plaetſ' en laet blijven /
Schijnend' of Natuer' u voozt wilde dzijven /
Een Schilder te weſen / ſoo dat u Ouders
Vp daer toe aenvoeren op lijf / en ſchouders.
2 Vp ghemeyn oozdeel wozdt u toeghewesen /
Te zijn een Schilder / t'woozt is licht te ſpzeken /
Maer Schilder / en Schilder / ſiet / tuſſchen deſen
Leyt ſoo hooch eenen grooten Bergh gheresen /
Dat veel de repſe moeten laten ſteken /
T'is hier niet te doen met Maenden oft Weken /
Maer volcomen Jaren hier toe behoeven /
Aleer dat ghp eenich ghenet ſult proeven.
3 Ten waer niet goet datmen u hier aen riede /
Dees Conſt is ſelf van aenſoetender mijnen /
Lieht aen te vatten / elcken te ghebiede /
Maer elck ſie toe / dat hem niet en gheſchiede
Als de ſimpel Mugghe / verblijdt in't ſchijnen /

D'Ouders ſeggen lichtelick, ſy willen hun kinders Schilders maken, doch t'is hun werck oft in hun macht niet.

Tuſſchē Schilder en Schilder light eenē grootē bergh.

De Schilder-conſt is aenſoetich, maer ſwaer te leerē.

A Van

century is penetratingly expressed by Samuel van Hoogstraten when, in his *Academy of Painting*, he relates that, during their shared time as pupils of Rembrandt, his fellow-pupil Carel Fabritius asked him:

> 'What are the sure characteristics and fruits of the mind in a young pupil, if he is ever to become a good painter?'

In the present context, two passages from Van Hoogstraten's reply to this question are especially interesting:

> 'That [after the young painter has finished his training] he should not only contemplate the dead body of art, that is merely to follow the fashion and do as others do, but that he should throw himself into the spirit of art: that is, investigate nature in all her properties.'[18]

With Rembrandt, as his early oeuvre of history paintings and genre pieces shows, this was not, however, merely an investigation of *'nature in all her properties'*, but also an investigation of art itself in all its properties. And indeed, the conclusion of Hoogstraten's reply reads:

> 'He [the aspiring painter] is envious that someone else knows something that he does not, he is ashamed to learn from anyone else anything that would decisively influence him, and tries to discover everything through his own labours.'[19]

The young painter of ambition *'tries to discover everything through his own labours'*. And that is precisely what the young Rembrandt seems to have done following his time as a trainee. Everything had to be researched and reinvented *'through his own labours'*. It is well known that, throughout his life as an artist and in an exceptional manner, Rembrandt persevered in this searching attitude, which entailed both his pictorial and narrative means constantly undergoing further transformations.

And what was the *'everything'* that had to be discovered?

18 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 11/12: 'Welk zijn de gewisse kenteykenen, en vruchten van den geest in een jong leerling, om een goet Schilder uit te verhoopen?'
'Dat hy niet alleen schijne de konst te beminnen, maer dat hy in der daet in de aerdicheden der bevallijke natuur uit te beelden, verlieft is. Dat hy niet alleen het doode lichaem der konst beooge, dat is trant te volgen, en te doen als andre, maer dat hy op de ziele der konst als verslingert is: dat is, de natuur in hare eigenschappen te onderzoeken.' […]

19 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 12: 'Hij [de jonge leerling] is nijdich dat een ander iets, hem onbekent, weet, hij schaemt hem van iemant iets indrukkender wijze te leeren, en zoekt alles door eygen arbeit uit te vinden' In this connection, see also the first lines of Book VI in Hoogstraten's *Academy*, p. 192.

As already said, Karel van Mander's *Foundation of the Art of painting (Grondt)*, with its claim to completeness, supplied a conceptual framework for considering the different aspects of the art of painting. In effect, it provided an overview of all the challenges entailed in such a thoroughgoing investigation of nature and art. My hypothesis is that the young Rembrandt took on all these challenges, one by one.

It should be emphasized in advance, however, that the striving for changes in the art of painting was dominated up to the early eighteenth century by the notion of progress – progress, that is, in the achievement of an ever more convincing and aesthetically more satisfying illusion on a flat surface.[20] The ideas of improvement and progress must also have been constantly in Rembrandt's mind.[21] As a collector he was able to admire older art, but at the same time he must have felt the urge to surpass Leonardo, Dürer, Lucas van Leyden, Titian, Elsheimer, Rubens, Hercules Segers, Annibale Carracci and other great predecessors and contemporaries.

In the following, it will be demonstrated how Rembrandt was engaged in the extensive project to *'discover everything through his own labours'* – if not, to renew the art of painting. What this entailed was that many, if not all *'basic aspects of the art of painting'* would be unsparingly interrogated by Rembrandt.

As suggested above, he must have considered the small-scale history piece with full-length figures the most suitable instrument for this goal. The actions in which the figures are portrayed force the painter to place them in an architectonic or landscape setting with all its associated elements; and consequently he is also challenged to arrange and illuminate the space, with everything in it, more effectively than his predecessors. The figures in a small-scale history piece appear to act within the pictorial space in a manner more true to life than in history pieces with life-size figures; this calls for a stage direction that concerns the stage itself – the entire setting of the scene as well as the costuming and acting of the figures. This was a task that demanded the most from the painter, and for this reason the small-scale history piece offered the best opportunity for improving on, if not for renewing all the *'fundamentals'* of the art of painting.

To demonstrate the potential of the small-scale history piece as compared to large-scale history painting, we need only confront two paintings with the same subject (figs. 9 and 10). One is a painting of 129 x 110 cm on canvas, with (more than) life-size figures cut off below the hip, the other a small panel (61.3 x 50.1 cm) with full-length figures. The two paintings may well have originated next to each other and at the same time. The large painting is by Jan Lievens, the small one by Rembrandt (fig. 11).

Both paintings represent the moment shortly before Delilah cuts off Samson's long hair, the secret source of his strength. Samson is asleep, his head resting in Delilah's lap. She is looking towards an anxiously approaching soldier, who will pass or (in the Lievens painting) has just passed her the scissors. In this and in other regards, both paintings have virtually the same content and emotional charge. But because Rembrandt is able to place the scene in a much more spacious setting, he can add several details without, at first sight, changing the content of his painting in relation to that of Lievens. Rembrandt's spacious 'stage' offers further possibilities: adding a second soldier which creates a chain of connections between the figures in the painting. And as a result the events can 'develop'. The spiralling composition, unwinding, as it were, from back to foreground, also contributes to this, and as a result Rembrandt also makes the acting of the protagonists more effective in a narrative sense.

The most important difference between the two paintings is that with Rembrandt the figures have much more space in which to move and are therefore perceived by the beholder as being in movement (the refined lighting effects and the atmospheric perspective contribute to this sensation), whereas the scene by Lievens works as the record of an arrested moment, confined in a narrow frame. But above all the range of pictorial means mobilized by Lievens is conspicuously more limited than the wealth of challenges that Rembrandt has taken on in his painting. In Huygens' words:

> 'Rembrandt, on the contrary, would rather concentrate totally on a small painting, and he achieves a result on a small scale that one might seek in vain in the largest paintings of others.' (see note 1)

In fact, a multitude of 'fundamentals' [*gronden*] are brought into play in Rembrandt's painting, many more than in the painting by Lievens.

From Van Mander to Rembrandt to Van Hoogstraten

In the following, the ten most crucial fundamentals of the art of painting will be treated separately:

drawing,
the proportions of the human figure,
the *houding* (comportment, posture and movement) of the human figure,
ordonnance,
the affects,
light and shadow,
landscape,
animals,
drapery,
colour,
the handling of the brush.

As a rule, this treatment each time entails a three-stage process (although the sequential order in my description of this process may sometimes vary). First, the relevant text by Karel van Mander is cursorily scanned and analyzed as far as this seems to be relevant in the present context. Then a few works by Rembrandt are discussed, specifically chosen so that Rembrandt's investigative approach to the relevant aspect is made clear – where necessary keeping in mind developments in the art-scene since the publication of Van Mander's treatise. And finally the same

20 E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt as a searching artist', in *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 79-123.

aspects in Van Hoogstraten's *Academy* are scanned and analyzed.

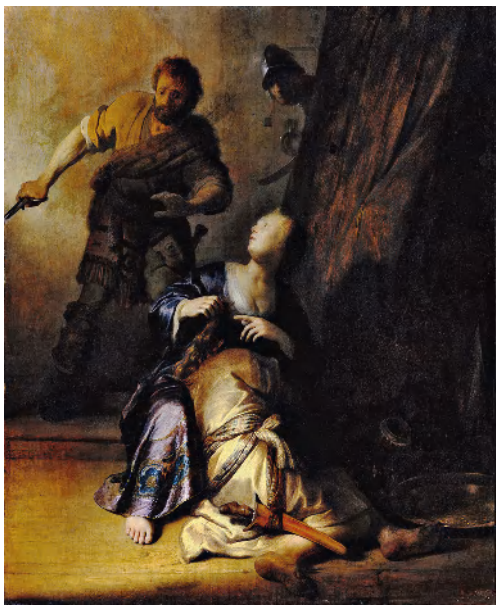
As demonstrated in fig. 11 and on pp. 24 and 25, Samuel van Hoogstraten basically dealt with the same 'gronden' in his book as Karel van Mander, whose *'Grondt'* he refers to explicitly as his model[21]. But Van Hoogstraten deals with the basic aspects of the art of painting in all cases in a strikingly different way from Van Mander. In the analysis of these differences, it will become apparent that a considerable number of the pictorial ideas and narrative procedures that Rembrandt developed, and which he must have taught to his pupils, are adopted in Van Hoogstraten's book.

However, Rembrandt's practical/theoretical ideas are found side by side with passages that reflect Van Hoogstraten's own quite different ideas, or ideas which clearly correspond with Van Hoogstraten's own practices. Rembrandt's presence in Van Hoogstraten's book is much greater than has hitherto been assumed. Consequently, one may regard Samuel van Hoogstraten's Academy as a source from which a considerable number of elements of Rembrandt's own, new ideas about the art of painting can be retrieved. My attention was first drawn to this possibility during an investigation into the roots of Rembrandt's 'rough manner', which was published in 1991.[22]

In a chapter under the title *'Van voorkoming, wechwijking,*

Fig. 9. Jan Lievens, *Samson and Delilah*, *c.* 1628, canvas 129 x 110 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 10. Rembrandt, *Samson betrayed by Delilah*, *c.* 1628, panel 61.3 x 50.1 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (I A 24)



21 C. Brusati, op. cit.[13], p. 221 note 9; S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 22: 'En op dat loflijke gedachtenis van onzen Vermander, wiens voorgang ons tot dit werk heeft aengeport.' ('And to that praiseworthy memory of our *Vermander*, whose precedence has spurred us on to this work'.)

22 E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's brushwork and illusionism; an art-theoretical approach', in cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, pp. 12-39.

en verkorting [*On (shapes) advancing or receding and foreshortening*]*'* Van Hoogstraten discusses two totally different ways of suggesting space and volume in a painting. On the one hand he summarizes in the margin the method he used himself as *'Verkorting door kracht van wel Koloreren te wege gebracht'* ['Foreshortening suggested by a proper use of colour (and consequently tone)']. Similarly when dealing with *trompe l'oeil*-painting, as he himself practiced frequently, he states more in general that *'ronding'* and *'uitheffing'*; literally *'rounding'* and *'raising'* should be achieved by meticulous observation of lights and shadows.[23]

Yet elsewhere in the same chapter, he strongly advocates a method which he himself never used, except perhaps in Rembrandt's workshop.

> '… I therefore desire that that which is to appear in the foreground be painted roughly and briskly, and that that which is to recede be painted the more neatly and smoothly the further back it lies. Neither one colour or another will make your work seem to advance or recede, but only the *kenlijkheyt* [perceptibility, being the roughness of the paint surface] or *onkenlijkheyt* [imperceptibility, being the smoothness] of the parts.'[24]

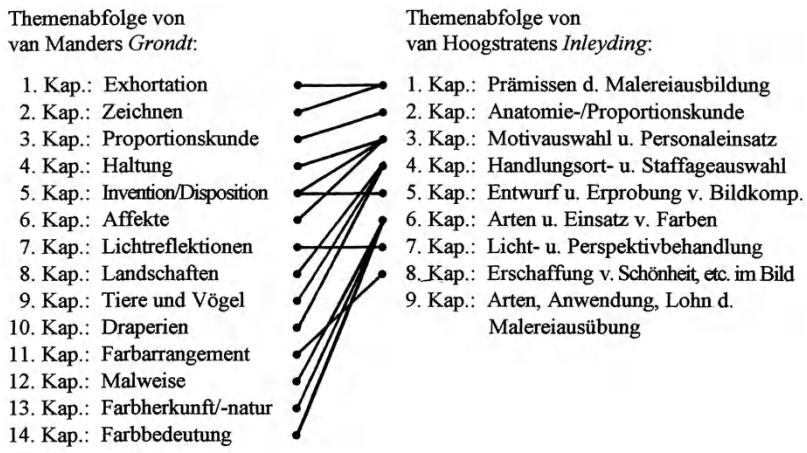
The second advice, completely contradicting the first, expounds a working procedure exclusively encountered in the work of Rembrandt and the pupils in his workshop who faithfully followed his manner. One finds this latter approach to the representation of space and foreshortening in the work of no other 17th-century painter – either within or outside the Netherlands.

What is so striking here is the decisiveness with which Van Hoogstraten advocates two totally different approaches to the challenge of a realizing a convincing illusion of space in a painting.

Given the occurrence of these contradictory ideas about the *peinture* related to spatial representation, it seemed safe to infer that Van Hoogstraten included at least one of Rembrandt's lessons in his *Academy of Painting*. The text itself, and the theoretical underpinning of the recommended method of working can therefore safely be considered a remarkably explicit fragment of Rembrandt's ideas about painting.[25]

On further investigation, however, this same phenomenon was found to recur more frequently in Van Hoogstraten's treatise. The ideas that Rembrandt taught must have made an extraordinarily strong impression on his pupils,

Fig. 11. Diagram made by Hans-Jörg Czech showing the correlation between the books of Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten



so strong in fact that Samuel van Hoogstraten, as one of these pupils, still counted these ideas as part of his repertoire of transferable knowledge many years after his own apprenticeship with Rembrandt and when he himself had come to think and work very differently.

It should be borne in mind that Samuel van Hoogstraten, apart from beginners' lessons from his father, had only one systematic training, the four to six years or so that he spent with Rembrandt. In Rembrandt's workshop, together with gifted, intelligent and ambitious fellow-pupils such as Carel Fabritius and Abraham Furnerius, he was given a profound initiation in the ideas on – and the practice of – Rembrandt's art of painting. One can see in Van Hoogstraten's earliest signed works what a radically determinative experience this immersion in Rembrandt's world must have been for him.[26]

Today, we find it remarkable that Van Hoogstraten fails to acknowledge in his book the source of his knowledge on 'perceptibility' [*kenlijkheyt*], this extraordinary theory of how to create the spatial illusion which was only put into practice by Rembrandt and his pupils. In the relevant passage the name of Rembrandt simply does not occur. Van Hoogstraten does mention Rembrandt several times elsewhere, but never as the direct *source* of the particular knowledge or insights discussed in his book.

Without a much more extensive investigation of the relation between master and pupil in general in the 17th century, it would not be justified to conclude from this omission that Van Hoogstraten looked back on his old master with little affection. In this connection, it may be rather telling that Van Hoogstraten seems not to have told

23 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 308.

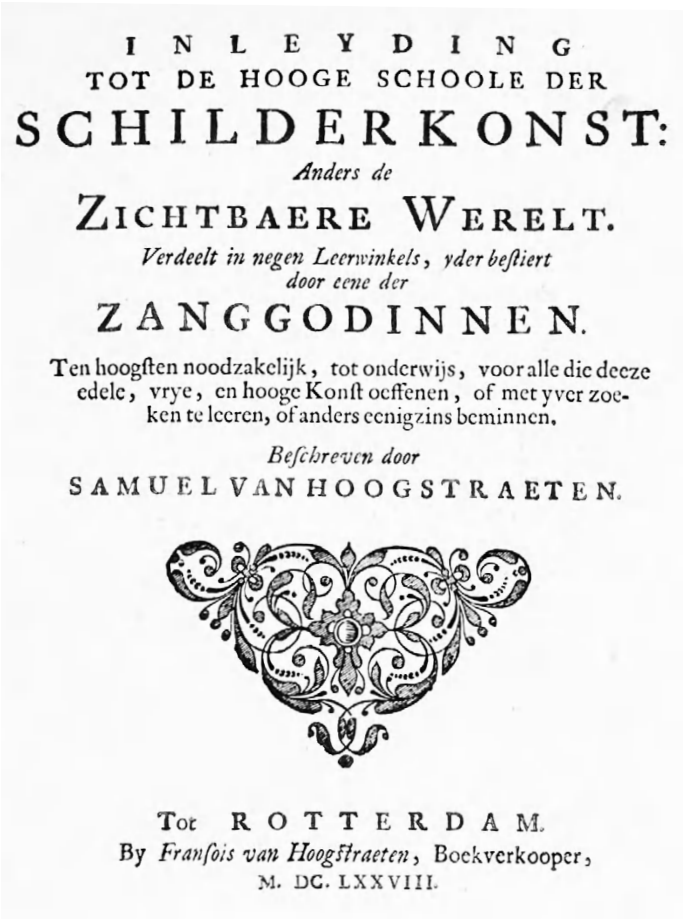
24 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 307: '[…] daerom wil ik, dat men 'tgeen voorkomt rul en wakker aensmeere, en 'tgeen weg zal wijken, hoe verder en verder, netter en zuiverder handele. Noch deeze nog geene verwe zal uw werk doen voorkomen of wechwijken maar alleen de *kenlijkheyt* of *onkenlijkheyt* der deelen.'

25 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 307/308. The whole passage reads: 'Wat is 't, als gy op blaeuw papier een blaeuwen Hemel met drijvende wolken in 't veld na 't leven tekent, dat uw papier zoo na by u schijnt te zijn, en het Hemelsch lazuur zo oneindelijk verre? 't Is om dat uw papier, hoe effen gy 't ook oordeelt, een zekere kenbaere rulheyt heeft, waer in het oog staeren kan, ter plaetse, daer gy wilt, 't welk gy in 't gladde blaeuw des Hemels niet doen en kunt. Daerom wil ik, dat men 'tgeen voorkomt rul en wakker aensmeere, en 'tgeen weg zal wijken, hoe verder en verder, netter en zuiverder handele. Noch deeze nog geene verwe zal uw werk doen voorkomen of wechwijken maar alleen de *kenlijkheyt* of *onkenlijkheyt* der deelen.' ('Why is it, when you draw outdoors from life, on blue paper, a blue sky with drifting clouds, that your paper appears to be so close to you and the [actual] sky's azure so infinitely distant? It is because your piece of paper, however smooth it may appear, nevertheless has a certain perceptible roughness, into which the eye can stare, wheresoever you choose, which is not possible in the even blue of the heavens. I therefore desire that that which is to appear in the foreground be painted roughly and briskly, and that that which is to recede be painted the more cleanly and more purely the further back it lies. Neither one colour or another will make your work seem to advance or recede, but the *perceptibility* [being the roughness of the paint surface] or *imperceptibility* [smoothness] of the parts alone.')

26 Sumowski *Gemälde* II, nos. 823, 824, 843-851.

Fig. 12. Engraving by J. Oudaan, *Portrait of Samuel van Hoogstraten*, AET 50, in his *Academy*

Fig. 13. Titlepage of Samuel van Hoogstraten's *Academy*


INLEYDING
TOT DE HOOGE SCHOOLE DER
SCHILDERKONST:
Anders de
ZICHTBAERE WERELT.
Verdeelt in negen Leerwinkels, yder beſtiert door eene der
ZANGGODINNEN.
Ten hoogſten noodzakelijk, tot onderwijs, voor alle die deeze edele, vrye, en hooge Konſt oeffenen, of met yver zoeken te leeren, of anders eenigzins beminnen.
Beſchreven door
SAMUEL VAN HOOGSTRAETEN.
Tot ROTTERDAM.
By *Franſois van Hoogſtraeten*, Boekverkooper,
M. DC. LXXVIII.

his own pupils about his apprentice period with Rembrandt. In the biography of Van Hoogstraten written by his pupil Arnold Houbraken, the latter writes this remarkable passage:

> 'He [Samuel van Hoogstraten] was born in Dordrecht in the year 1627. I do not know whether he also had other teachers in his early youth apart from his father, but I do know that he also learned the art of *Rembrandt van Rijn* (for in his book on the Art of Painting, on p. 257, he refers to the latter, *after the death of his father Theodoor, as his second master*), whose way of painting he practiced for a while and then gradually turned away from, eventually adopting a totally different way of painting.'[27]

Houbraken had to learn from his teachers' book that young Samuel was a pupil of Rembrandt!

Given 17th-century teaching methods there was no reason to idealize a pupil's relationship with his teacher.

It is thanks to Van Hoogstraten's book that we happen to know more about Rembrandt's way of dealing with his pupils than is usually realized. Three supplementary quotations from the first pages of Van Hoogstraten's *Academy of Painting* suggest a very tough discipline in Rembrandt's workshop. What he taught was law. Van Hoogstraten tells how:

> '… I suffered under my master's training, I even went without food and drink, quenching my thirst with tears, and did not leave my work before I had corrected the mistake pointed out [by Rembrandt].'[28]

Another passage throws light on the way in which Rembrandt dealt with questions from his pupils:

> 'When I sometimes annoyed my master *Rembrant*, by asking for too much for reasons [for the rational underlying particular rules], he had a very good answer: Just accept and apply in your work what you already know, and then the hidden truths that you now ask for will be revealed in due course.'[29]

27 Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en schilderessen*, 1753, Part 2, S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 155/156: 'Hy is geboren te Dordrecht in het jaar 1627. of hy ook nog andere leermeesters in zyn vroegen tyd buiten zyn Vader gehad heeft weet ik niet, maar wel dat hy ook de Konst by *Rembrant van Ryn* (want dezen noemt hy, *na de Dood van zyn vader Theodoor, zyn tweeden Meester*. In zyn Boek van de Schilderkonst p. 257) geleert heeft, wiens wyze van schilderen hy nog eenigen tyd aan de hand hield, en allengskens, zig daar van weer ontwende, en eindelyk een geheele andere wyze van schilderen aannam, …'

28 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 12: '… door meesters onderwijs verdrietich, my zelven zonder eeten of drinken met traenen laefde, en niet eer van mijn werk ging, voor ik de aengeweeze misslach te booven was.'

29 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 13: 'Als ik mijn meester *Rembrant* eens lastig viel, met te veel oorzaek vragen, zoo antwoorde hy zeer wel: Schikt u daer nae, dat gy 't geene gy alreets weet, wel leert in 't werk stellen, zoo zult gy de verborgentheden, daer gy nu na vraegt, tijts genoeg ontdekt zien.'

Fig. 14. S. van Hoogstraten, *Self-portrait*, 1644, panel 58.4 x 73.9 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boymans van Beuningen

That Van Hoogstraten found Rembrandt's answer *'very good'* becomes explicable once one is familiar with the pedagogical principles that underlay not only Rembrandt's method of teaching but also that of other masters. Van Hoogstraten summarizes these principles, which indirectly can also be detected in the production by Rembrandt's pupils, in the following passage. As usual, Van Hoogstraten also refers to other authorities, in this case Henry Nollius[30] and Verulamius[31]:

'You pupils [.....] should not only obey your masters, you should also believe in their teaching. Whoever wants to learn from the mouth of his Master (says *H. Nollius*) must imitate the same, without any querying it, until he has well and truly understood what has been taught. According to him [*Nollius*], many have a habit, as soon as they have heard something from their master, of subjecting it and its truth immediately to their own judgment, and of wanting to pronounce on it, before they have properly understood it; even though their conception and their judgment have not been put into practice. What is certain is that the art of painting lies in what is done well, not in what is well said. Therefore, I would insist, as *Pythagoras* did with his disciples, that pupils should maintain a five year silence and I recommend strict obedience, not so that they should remain inexpert in their art, but that they should thoroughly learn to apply what has been recommended to them. Pupils, says *Verulamius*, have an obligation to give credence to their Masters for a long time, and should defer their own judgment until they have command over the entire art and when that time has come they will be entirely free.'[32]

With such an insistence on the strict transmission of the basic aspects of the art of painting (*'gronden'*), it is not so surprising that the pupil should retain chunks of this teaching, stored literally and for the rest of his life in his memory. In the case of Samuel van Hoogstraten, this must surely have been why parts of Rembrandt's teaching could be 'precipitated', as it were, in the text of his *Academy of Painting*. In this connection it is also important to realize that books in Rembrandt's time were not coherent, systematically underpinned arguments, but rather compendious accumulations of knowledge, which could contain chunks of information that were often incompatible. The author's aim was more to display his knowledge, from whatever sources this knowledge derived. Gridley McKim-Smith points out this same phenomenon in her book *Examining Velasquez*, where she searches for a possible correlation between the technical information on painting in the treatise by his teacher, the painter and theoretician Francisco Pacheco, and the painting technique of his son-in-law Diego Velasquez.[33]

The way in which elements of Rembrandt's theory of art can be identified in Van Hoogstraten's text will be explicated in each of the following sections. Wherever possible, the relevant passages will be read against the background of Van Hoogstraten's own ideas about painting, which are to be identified by their correlation with his own manner of working. These ideas of his own are in every respect quite different from those of Rembrandt and, of course, predominate in the book as a whole. Yet as we shall see, Rembrandt nearly always seems to be present behind the scenes.

First however, we must deal with some general questions, the most important of which concerns the current confusion over the purpose and significance of the two treaties that are central to this effort to gain a better understanding of Rembrandt's ideas on the art of painting.

30 Henry Nollius (1619?). In 'The chymists key to shut, and to open' by Eugenius Philalethes, 1657, Nollius is described as *'that judicious and industrious artist'*. In 'Hermetical physick' (Latin print: 1619) translated by Henry Vaughan, 1655, he is decribed as *'that famous and faithfull chymist'*. Both authors translated his work from Latin to English.

31 Francis Bacon (1561-1626).

32 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 22: 'Gy Leerlingen hierentegen, zult niet alleen uwe Meesters gehoorzaemen, maer hen ook in't onderwijzen gelooven. Die uit den mont van zijn Meester wat leeren wil (zeyt *H. Nollius*) moet dat zelve naekomen, zonder eenige onderzoekinge, zoo lange tot dat hy het geenige datter geleert is, wel en te recht verstaet. Veele, vervolgt hy, hebben de maniere, dat zoo haest zy wat van haer Meester gehoort hebben, dat zelve strax haer oordeel onderwerpen, en van de waerheit, eer zy't recht begrijpen, willen vonnissen; schoon hun begrip en oordeel noch ongeoeffent is. Zeeker de Schilderkonst bestaet in wel te doen, en niet in wel te zeggen. Daerom zoude ik den leerlingen liever, als *Pythagoras* zijn Discipelen dede, een vijfjaerich stilzwijgen opleggen, en een striktelijke gehoorzaemheid aenbevelen, niet om dat zy onkundich in de konst zouden blijven, maer op dat zy eerst te degen het gene hen aenbevolen is, zouden leeren in't werk stellen. De leerlingen, zeyt *Verulamius*, zijn haere Meesters een tijd lang geloove schuldig, en moeten haer oordeel opschorten, tot dat zy de geheele konsten wech hebben, en die tijt gekomen zijnde, zoo zijn zy gansch vry.'

33 Gridley McKim-Smith, *Examining Velasquez*, New Haven/London 1988, p. 7.

Confusions over the meaning and purpose of Van Mander's and Van Hoogstraten's treatises.

It may seem strange that in the following sections I have decided largely to pass over the two most ambitious previously published commentaries on these treatises: Miedema's edition of Van Mander's *Grondt*,[34] and Weststeijn's exegesis of Van Hoogstraten's *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst*.[35] This calls for some justification.

It is useful first to consider more closely the full title that Van Mander (himself a painter) gave to his book on the art of painting, which in fact constitutes only a part of a larger work, his *Schilder-Boeck ('Book of Painting')*. The full title of his treatise reads: '*Basic aspects (De Grondt) of the noble free (liberal) art of painting: in which young persons desirous of learning are instructed in various aspects of her form, nature and essence in didactic verse.*'[36] (see fig. 8) The obvious meaning of this title is confirmed by the relevant part of the extended title Karel van Mander gave to his *Schilder-Boeck* as a whole, which reads: *'The book of painting, in which for the first time young persons desirous of learning the noble, free (liberal) art of painting is presented in various sections. Followed by three sections on the lives of the famous and illustrious painters of times ancient and modern* [Usually indicated as '*de Levens*' (*'the Lives'*)]. *Finally the interpretation of Ovid's METAMORPHOSES. And in addition the [recognizable] representation of [known] figures. Everything of service and useful to painters, Art- lovers and poets, and to persons of all status*.'[37] (fig. 15).

The titles both speak for themselves as far as they refer to the *Grondt*: that section of the *Schilder-boeck* was evidently meant to be a treatise of instruction for apprentices in the art of painting.

Miedema's *Grondt*

It therefore comes as something of a surprise that Hessel Miedema, gives the following as his own view of the nature of this text and the public for which it was intended: […] 'The didactic poem, [Van Mander's *Grondt*] is a very literary affair, of hardly any use for beginners, obviously intended for the knowledgeable lovers of art, and way over the heads of young pupils.'[38] This conception permeates Miedema's comprehensive and in many ways exemplary scholarly edition of the *Grondt*; it is however an assumption that is wide open to question. One may even wonder whether, in his effort to elucidate the *Grondt*, Miedema did not actually obscure the significance of this extremely rich

Fig. 15. Titlepage of Karel Van Mander's *Het Schilder-Boeck*, Haarlem 1604

source even further. This fear is confirmed, for example, by a remark made by W. Waterschoot in his book on Van Mander which appeared after Miedema's edition of the *Grondt*. On the basis of Miedema's authority, Waterschoot asserts that

> 'Den Grondt is not – as has long been thought – a technical handbook for trainees of painting, but rather an allegorical-moralising work in which, besides the principles of the art of painting, its philosophical and scholarly basis are also raised for discussion, together with astro-mythological and ethical implications.'[39]

Here, confusion over the term 'technical' is crucial.

One needs to look into the background of Miedema's manner of interpretation, not just to justify my serious

34. *'Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-const: Waer in haer ghestalt, aerdt ende wesen, de leerlustighe Jeught in verscheyden Deelen in Rijm-dicht wort voor ghedraghen'*, edition Hessel Miedema, Utrecht 1973, p. 71 (see also note 38).
35. Thijs Weststeijn, 'Schilderkunst als 'zuster van de bespiegelende wijsgeerte' *De theoretische status van het afbeelden van de zichtbare wereld in Samuel van Hoogstratens* Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst, *De Zeventiende Eeuw*, 2002 no. 2 pp. 184-207; *The Visible World. Samuel van Hoogstraten's Art Theory and the Legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden Age*, Amsterdam University Press, 2008.
36. *'Waer in haer ghestalt/aerdt ende wesen/de leer-lustighe Jeught in verscheyden Deelen in Rijm-dicht wort voorghedraghen.'* op. cit.[34], p. 71.
37. *'Het Schilder-Boeck waer in Voor eerst de leerlustighe Iueght den grondt der Edel Vry SCHILDERCONST in Verscheyden deelen Wort Voorghedraghen/Daer nae in dry deelen t'Leuen der vermaerde doorluchtighe Schilders des ouden, en nieuwen tyds/Eyntlyck d'wtlegghinghe op den METAMORPHOSEON pub. Ouidij Nasonis. Oock daerbeneffens wtbeeldinghe der figueren Alles dienstich en nut den schilders Constbeminders en dichters, oock allen Staten van menschen.'*, op. cit.[34], p. 27.
38. Hessel Miedema, 'Karel van Mander; did he write art literature?', in *Simiolus* 22 (1993), pp. 58-64.
39. W. Waterschoot, *Ter liefde der Const; uit het Schilder-Boeck (1604) van Karel van Mander*, Leiden 1993, p. 11.

Fig. 16. Giotto, *The massacre of the innocents, c.* 1305, fresco 200 x 185 cm. Padua, Arena chapel

Fig. 17. Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem, *The massacre of the innocents,* 1591, canvas 270 x 255 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum

doubt of the correctness of his view, but more especially to reach a possibly more balanced assessment of Van Mander's text.

Miedema's main reasons for not considering Van Mander's *Grondt* as a book of instruction for young painters is that much of what a young painter had to be able to master at that time does not seem to appear in the *Grondt*. As Miedema says,

> 'It [Den Grondt] was certainly not meant as a correspondence course to learn the trade. Painting was taught and learned in the workshop and a written treatise [like the Grondt] could at best be intended to provide the interested professional with some additional knowledge.'

The keyword here is 'the trade'. It was one of Miedema's a priori assumptions that *'Painting is a craft like any other'*.[40] Of course, pure craftmanship played an important role in the workshop practice and the apprentice training that was integral to it. Knowledge and experience of the materials used by the painter and the way they were handled was essential. But the art of painting and the skills related to it differ in one fundamental regard from all the other crafts (including sculpture and related plastic arts in which reality is imitated): they demand the ability to create a spatial illusion on a flat surface. This transformation by the painter of the three-dimensional reality into a two-dimensional image transcends craftsmanship; it demands that both the deformations of form or space seen from a single viewpoint, as well as the effects of incident light falling from one direction have to be rendered convincingly. This demands the solution to a large number of perspectival problems of various kinds (figs. 22 and 23).

Up to a point, the knowledge and experience needed for this could be obtained through the frequent copying of correctly rendered works by experienced artists. Indeed, Van Mander could profitably have added to his treatise an illustrated course of instruction in drawing, since he stressed the desirability of a book of examples for trainee painters. In his chapter on drawing Van Mander writes:

> 'Now a great master would perform a great service by bringing out in print, for the needs of you young men, an ABC primer on the principles of our art. I do not have sufficient means, for I am not sufficiently suited to the task; but others who do have the ability are unwilling. I fear the blame and they the effort. And so you, worthy young men, are deprived of such a useful matter. […] At school pupils learn from books the seven liberal arts; sufficient writings and books are devoted to young apothecaries and surgeons, to prevent them making errors. But for you, young painters, there has been nothing reliable that could fill you like new vessels with useful, informative material, capable of leaving you with a strong taste. For the time being, therefore, it would be best to find a good master, to become accustomed to a good way [of working] and to learn certain fixed gronden of designing, execution, outlining, modelling, and to get to know the placing of light and shadow.'[41]

40. H. Miedema, 'Schilderen is een ambacht als elk ander; verslag van een onderzoek rond Philips Angels Lof der schilderkonst en het zeventiende-eeuwse Noordnederlandse schildersgilde', *Proef* 3 (1974-1975), pp. 122-144.
41. K.v.M. *Grondt,* Cap. 2: '**6** … Nu grootlijcx waer een groot Meester te dancken,/Die in sned' uytgaef u, o Ieucht, ter jonsten,/Een A.b. boeck, van t'begin onser Consten./ **7** Ick valler te bloot in, als t'onbequame,/maer ander, ghenoechsaem zijnd' in't vermoghen,/Vallen te weygherigh, ick vreese blame,/En sy de moeyte, dus o Ieught eersame,/Wort u soo vorderlijck een nut ontoghen:/In ouden tijdt, die nu langh is vervloghen,/Was ons Const vervaet in verscheyden Boecken,/Die men om vinden vergheefs soude soecken./ **8** In Boecken leeren de Ionghers ter Scholen/De seven vry Consten, jongh' Apotekers,/En Chirurgienen, om niet te verdolen,/Zijn

Fig. 18. Rembrandt, *A woman wading in a pool*, 1654, panel 61.8 x 47 cm. London, The National Gallery (V 19)

Fig. 19. Copy after fig. 4 by an untrained artist, 2006, gouache on paper

In this connection it is also worth quoting the marginal annotation to this passage: *'Nothing has been written in our language up till now for the training of painters.'*[42] The question was whether the trainee in Van Mander's time – and subsequently – got to hear all that the master knew, and more crucially, whether every master had an adequate knowledge of all there was to know of the more theoretical aspects of drawing and painting, and whether he commanded the vocabulary to be able to communicate this knowledge intelligibly to his pupils. (As we shall see on pp. 26-27, Samuel van Hoogstraten would hint at this lack of expertise on the part of many masters in the introduction to his book.)

One has to bear in mind that the history of painting between between, shall we say, Giotto (according to Vasari, the originator of the true-to-life representation of reality after the 'awkward Greek style') and Van Mander's friend and admired colleague Cornelis van Haarlem had been a long one (see figs. 16 and 17). That history of the art of painting was an impressive succession of ever more refined observations and the representations of reality based on them, and theories concerning the visual properties of the visible world – what Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten called *'nature'* or *'the visible world'*. Over the course of the centuries, innumerable insights, but also special skills and tricks, were developed for the purpose of convincingly representing reality on the flat surface. These insights and methods were constantly revised and renewed and, moreover, were often considered as workshop secrets. The major significance of Van Mander's *Grondt* is that a great many such observations and pictorial innovations were collated in an orderly fashion, right up to the moment he began writing his book, offering a wealth of descriptions of particular aspects of reality to be rendered by illusionistic techniques. Naturally, Van Mander also dealt with more established, long-standing practices, but always referring to nature itself with the recommendation that the visible world must be constantly studied in all its opulence.

By describing in the *Grondt* different parts or coherent complexes of 'nature' Van Mander means to open the eyes of the young painter to the subtleties of whatever is visual and to stimulate him to represent *'nature'* faithfully. (One should also be aware of the extent to which people – and this of course includes the apprenticed student of

schriften, en Boecken ghenoech bevolen:/Doch voor u Schilder-jeught wasser niet sekers/In onse spraeck, om u als nieuwe Bekers,/Nutte leersaem stoffe maken deelachtigh,/Daer ghy van mocht houden den roke crachtigh./ **9** Daerom een goet Meester waer goet ghevonden,/Voor eerst, om goede manier aen te wennen,/En om te leeren seker vaste gronden/Int stellen, handelen, omtrecken, ronden,/Dagh, en schaduws plaetsen wel leeren kennen,…'

42. K.v.M. Cap. 2 (in the margin): 'In onse spraec was voortijts niet tot Schilders onderwijs geschreven.'

painting – in their daily lives tend to 'see' reality through the reductive operation of pre-established visual schemas (figs. 18 and 19). By doing his best to place these observations of the world – which were to be illusionistically rendered – in an art historical and aesthetic frame, Van Mander was trying to realize his intention to pass on to the '*young man desirous of learning*' the art of painting in its *'form, nature and essence*'.

As far as painting is concerned, the result of Miedema's insistence that the *Grondt* was essentially a product *'useful for brushing up knowledge one actually had already'* is to reduce Van Mander's text to an arbitrary collection of meaningless *topoi*, trivial facts and worthless advice served up by a '*country gentleman who was actually too dignified for workshop talk'*, as Miedema characterizes Karel van Mander in another context.[43] In fact Van Mander's *Grondt* was meant to be a written course for trainee painters supplementary to what they learned in the master's workshop, of course. One may even speculate whether the fact that *De Grondt* is written in rhymed verse might mean that the treatise, or at least parts of it, was to be learned by heart. This surmise is supported by the fact that, in his own book of instruction for aspiring painters, Van Hoogstraten adopted some of the rhymed advice from Van Mander's *Grondt* (for example, see p. 47). In short, I seriously question whether Miedema was correct in his view that the *Grondt* was not meant to be used by beginners, but was actually aimed at *'knowledgeable art-lovers'*. I assume here that when Miedema refers to those *'learning the trade'* he meant not only pupils in the first weeks or months of their apprenticeship, but also youths and young men in the course of their (usually remarkably long) training as artists. But since he specifically singles out the *'knowledgeable art lovers'* as the public for whom Van Mander's book was actually intended, I take it that Miedema basically meant to exclude all apprentices as the potential students of his book.

Art lovers did already exist in Van Mander's time; there is no doubt about that (p. 18 note 46, p. 23 note 74). But how had these art lovers become so *'knowledgeable'*? And what were they knowledgeable about? The fact that paintings are so often praised in Van Mander's *Lives* and yet this praise is as a rule unspecified by the author, leads Miedema to infer that

> 'His readers must have had enough knowledge to be able to judge for themselves, otherwise consulting Van Mander would not have made them much wiser.'[44]

But here Miedema simply overlooks the fact that in the *Grondt*, which forms part of the same book as the *Lives*, Van Mander provides an overwhelming abundance of criteria for judging paintings. These criteria, however, are largely related to the illusionistic properties of painting. And this is where Miedema's second *a priori* notion determines his argument: His view of the purpose and content of Van Mander's *Grondt* is strongly coloured by the 20th-century taboo – or rather anathema – against illusionism in the art of painting, which mainly has to be seen as a consequence of the invention of photography.

In 20th-century Holland there was only one painting over which one did not make a complete fool of oneself by exclaiming 'it's absolutely real!': that was the *Panorama Mesdag* (1881) – a gigantic cylindrical painting with the sea, beach, dunes and the village of Scheveningen, placed between a fake central dune with real sand and a real parasol-shaped roof that overlap the bottom and top of the painting in order to increase the illusionistic effect. In Van Mander's time when looking at a painting, whether on the easel or in a frame on the wall, art lovers were advised to remark either to the painter or to each other:

> 'That is not painting, it is nature; and those figures look at the spectators, but with so natural a look that you would swear they are alive'

or in the case of a still-life with fishes:

> 'Do you see those fish? Why, they would swim if you were to pour water on them!'

These are quotes from a chapter titled *'How one should speak of beautiful paintings'* in a manual for art lovers from 1635 titled: '*Collection of essays on the wonders of painting*'.[45] There is no essential difference here from the way in which Van Mander describes a painting by Pieter Aertsen (1508 – 1575).

> 'This man *(Pieter Aertsen)* used paint in a wonderful way, as far as these things are concerned [the reflected lights on different materials, discussed earlier in Van Mander's text]. Without exception, it appeared to be the very life; one almost wants to reach out to grasp a pair of plates standing in the dusk, where such a reflection strikes – just as one can see with an art lover in Amsterdam, with glowing affection.'[46]

Miedema's commentary on this passage is typical of the prejudice which results from the 20th-century anathema against illusionism in painting.

> *'It appeared to be the very life.'* This is one of the most frequently occurring formulaic terms of appreciation in Vasari's *Vite*, repeatedly adopted by Van Mander'.[47]

Van Mander's praise of a painting that he had seen himself and apparently admired is here reduced to a mere *'formulaic term of appreciation'* – an empty *topos*. The implication

43. Letter to the present author
44. Miedema, op. cit.[38], p. 60.
45. M. Merrifield, *Original Treatises on the arts of painting*, 1849 (reprint Dover 1967) p. 824/25 'Recueuil des essays des merveilles de la peinture', de Pierre Lebrun, peintre, 1635.
46. K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: '**54** Desen Man stelde wonderlijck de pijpen/Met de verwe, dese dinghen aengaende,/Het scheen al te leven, t'groen met den rijpen,/Men soude schier meenen met handen grijpen./Eenighe taillioore in't doncker staende,/Daer soo eenen teghen-glans in is slaende,/Ghelijck men mach sien met jonstigher vlamme/By eenen Const-lievenden t'Amsterdamme.'
47. Miedema, op.cit.[34], Vol. II, p. 532.

that Van Mander was incapable of expressing his own appreciation, but must rather have borrowed a formula from Vasari, effectively and unjustifiably renders Van Mander's enthusiasm inauthentic and meaningless.

As already said, the countless points of advice to painters in Van Mander's *Grondt* are interwoven with digressions on 'nature', or 'life' which should be imitated by the painter. Nature, after all, was '*the mistress of every painter*' according to Van Mander. In the same context, he referred to painters from the past who excelled in particular aspects of the illusionistic art of painting. It is precisely this approach which in the past century became a non-subject in art historical writings, just as it did in the practice and criticism of the art of that era. Up to Impressionism, however, illusionism was seen by painters – along with other factors, of course, mainly concerning content and aesthetic – as one of their most important challenges. In Van Mander's time (and also of course in the time of Rembrandt and Van Hoogstraten) the success of a painting was to a large extent measured by the success with which reality – in the sense of the visual impression of some part of the world, whether actually seen or imagined – was convincingly rendered: the painted illusion took over, as it were, the place of the reality itself. This situation is comparable with the way in our own time the photograph or film substitute for reality. If such a pictorial illusion was (or is) successful, the means by which it was achieved were not questioned – except by the painters, and nowadays by those involved in photography and other forms of imaging based on photography. And yet it is the *means* which demanded by far the most expertise and ingenuity on the part of the painter. It is precisely in this area that the art of painting in the West, beginning with the Classical Greeks, interrupted in the early Middle Ages and taken up again during the later Middle Ages and Renaissance, has most strongly developed. Ernst Gombrich once pronounced that the writing of the history of art has scarcely begun as long as these countless, constantly 'improving' means have not yet become the subject of detailed study.[48] To research this aspect of painting and write about it in serious detail, however, would mean that the present day art historian would have to attach significance to the quality of a painting being 'just like reality'. Presumably this explains why, in Miedema's commentary on Van Mander's text, this illusionistic aspect of the art of painting is given the *least* attention.

The question has to be asked what Waterschoot could have meant by his remark, quoted above, to the effect that, according to Miedema, the *Grondt 'is an allegorical-moralising work in which the philosophical and scientific basis of the art of painting are also discussed, as well as astro-mythological and ethical implications.'*[16] One of many examples may clarify what is meant here. In his chapter on *Drawing* Van Mander writes:

> 'Now, young man, […] in order to become wise in the art of drawing, you have to begin by drawing with great dedication the oval with the cross within it; very necessary in order to learn to set a face skilfully from all sides. For – shamefully – one sees many painters setting their faces wrongly; because they do not pay attention to the cross their efforts are in vain.'[50]

What Van Mander means here is demonstrated on p. 29, fig. 22. It is abundantly clear that this passage concerns the problems of representing the human head in various positions in correct perspective, one of the keys to the successful rendering of the human figure. But Miedema's commentary on this passage reads as follows:

> '*'het ey-rondt en t'cruys* [the ellipse and the cross]': The tilted ellipsoid with meridian and equator appear in German art books and also in Jean Cousin.
> Just as previously, after a complicated explanation Van Mander here makes a volte-face and addresses the innocent young trainee. Here too, one notes that he does this without short-changing the more informed reader. The emphatic repetition of *t'cruys* [the cross] would clearly seem to refer to the Christian doctrine of redemption. It is more difficult to make out precisely what role Van Mander attributes to the *"ey-rondt"*, but it seems likely to me that by this term he is alluding to the world. *'t'Menschen beeldt'* [the human figure] then becomes the microcosmos: the reduced reflection of the world, but under the sign of Christ's Cross.'[51]

Miedema evidently finds Van Mander's advice too simple to be taken at face value, yet it is advice which would undoubtedly have been useful to many of Van Mander's readers. This almost compulsive – and, in the view of the present author, fundamentally mistaken – search for deeper meaning behind Van Mander's instructive text requires a firm and comprehensive rebuttal. A publication such as this volume might not seem the right place for such criticism of the work of predecessors were it not for the fact that such a radical misinterpretation can have an enduring influence, as Waterschoot's summary of Miedema's vision demonstrates. The result is that one of the few extant, comprehensive texts on the historical Dutch art of painting can be deprived of its significance as an important source. This is not, after all, merely a question of details. As argued above, Miedema's assumption of the 20th-century taboo against illusionism largely deprives the text of its voice. The same is true of his vision of what he calls Van Mander's *'art-theoretical notions'*. This needs to be demonstrated before proposing an alternative to Miedema's approach. To this end it is worth listing once again the *gronden* as they are discussed in Van Mander's 14 chapters, for Miedema believed he could identify a structure *determined by art theory* in this sequence of chapters.

48. Ernst Gombrich and Didier Eribon, *Looking for answers. Conversations on art and science*, New York 1993, p. 177.
49. Waterschoot, op. cit.[39], p. 11.
50. K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 2: '**5** Nu Ionghers/…/Dats om in Teycken-const worden verstandich,/ Moet ghy beginnen met groot behaghen/Aen het -eyrondt, en t'cruys daer in gheslaghen,/Om een tronje leeren stellen ghehandich/Van alle sijden, seer noodich: want schandich/Sietmen veel Schilders den tronjen misstellen,/Niet lettend' op't cruys, te vergeefs sy quellen.'
51. Miedema, op. cit.[34], Vol. II, p. 428.

1. Exhortation or caution to aspiring young painters.[52]
2. On draughtsmanship and the art of drawing.[53]
3. Analogy, proportion or measure of the parts of the human figure.[54]
4. On the *houding* (comportment, and proper movement) of the human figure.[55]
5. On the ordonnance and invention of 'histories'.[56]
6. The depiction of human affects, emotions, desires and sorrows.[57]
7. On reflections and reflected light.[58]
8. On Landscape.[59]
9. On cattle, [wild] animals and game.[60]
10. On textiles, or drapery.[61]
11. On the choice and ordering of colours.[62]
12. On the application of paint by the artist.[63]
13. On the origin, nature, force and effect of colours.[64]
14. The symbolic meaning of colours, what can be indicated by them.[65]

According to Miedema, the scheme by which Van Mander divides his chapters reflects his art-theoretical thinking. To quote Miedema:

> 'The structure of van Mander's art-theoretical notions is emphatically evident in the didactic poem. It consists of 14 chapters, 11 of which have a very rigid structure, with three key chapters, respectively on drawing, on light and lighting, and on painting in colour. In between there are two sets of four chapters, the first four elaborating the subject of disegno, the other colorito. This scheme is of course not very surprising; it was derived from contemporary Italian art theory, which in its turn ultimately had its origin in the theory of rhetoric. A striking feature is the highly perfected composition of the whole work, with the chapter with the holy number 7 as a pinnacle, dealing with light in its divers aspects, from divine radiance down to earthly and even hellish flames, flanked by five chapters on aspects of drawing and design on one side and five others on coloring and the rendering of surface structures on the other.'

However, Miedema evidently sensed that he had stumbled over a problem which undermines the alleged beauty of this structure. In a footnote he describes these 'disturbances' as follows:

> 'The sophisticated numbering of the three key chapters, which should really be numbered 1, 6 and 11, was achieved by adding an opening chapter, no. 1, shifting the numbers up to 2, 7 and 12. The final chapters, 13 and 14, are probably leftovers from an earlier version, and were simply tacked on to the splendid edifice, although they did have the advantage of giving the complete work two times seven chapters.'

Miedema also creates a major problem for himself when he attempts to link Van Mander's design to the contemporary Italian art theory. His argument is seriously weakened, however, by his own admission that *'as far as we know, Van Mander had no awareness of the great Italian textbooks on the art of painting which had appeared some time previously: Lomazzo (1584), Armenini (1587).'* Miedema conjectures that Van Mander could perhaps have become acquainted with Alberti's ideas via a German 'adaptation' of Alberti's *De Pictura*, but he has to admit that *'Alberti's idea of painting as a science, with emphasis on geometrics and perspective, has not survived in the Schilder-boeck* (which includes the *Grondt*).[66]

Rensselaer Lee's description of the classical basis of humanistic art theory as a Procrustean bed[67] which could not accommodate numerous aspects of the art of painting is strikingly realized here. Without actually admitting it, Miedema saw that the Procrustrian nature of the humanistic art theory as such offered insufficient room for much of what Van Mander had written in the *Grondt*. Naturally, certain ideas – about human proportions and beauty and *welstandigheid* (comeliness), for instance – were influenced by classical norms. It could hardly have been otherwise in a culture which had been shaped to a considerable extent by the Renaisssance. But Miedema's interpretations carry the implication that 17th- and 18th-century readers of Van Mander's text had *fundamentally* failed to understand it. There is absolutely no indication, either in Van Hoogstraten or Sandraert, who both took Van Mander's text as the point of departure for their own treatises, or in Wybrand de Geest who in 1702 set the *Grondt* in prose, that these 17th- and 18th-century artists and writers had any inkling of an art theoretical substructure to the *Grondt* such as discerned by Miedema, or a mind for the kind of speculations that Miedema incorporated into his commentary. They must have understood this treatise in the first place as a text written with an eye to painters in training and for interested non-professionals who wanted to be able to discuss the art of painting in an informed manner. And just as today, there were quite a few of those – ever since the appearance of Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano* in fact, when being able to discuss art became a social imperative.

Miedema's interpretation of Van Mander's *Grondt* implies that only the learned commentator is in a position to understand Van Mander fully, and as a result further investigation of this text has been blocked. It would seem that, just as before Miedema wrote his commentary, the *Grondt* has reverted to the status of a 'lucky dip' from which one can draw occasional insights into 16th- and 17th-century ideas about painting.

Unlike Miedema, I am convinced that Van Mander's

52. 'Exhortatie, oft Vermaninghe, aen d'Aencomende Schilder-jeucht.'
53. 'Van het teyckenen, oft Teycken-const.
54. 'Analogie Proportie, oft maet der Lidtmaten eens Menschen Beeldts.'
55. 'Van der Actitude, welstandt, ende weldoen eens Beelts.'
56. 'Van der Ordinanty ende Inventy der Historien.'
57. 'Wtbeeldinghe der Affecten, passien, begeerlijckheden, en lijdens der Menschen.'
58. 'Van de Reflecty, Reverberaty, teghen-glans oft weerschijn.'
59. 'Van het Landtschap.'
60. 'Van Beesten, Dieren, en Voghels.'
61. 'Van Laken oft Draperinghe.'
62. 'Van het Sorteren, en byeen schicken der Verwen.'
63. 'Van wel schilderen, oft Coloreren.'
64. 'Van der Verwen oorsprong, natuere, cracht en werckinge.'
65. 'Bediedinghen der Verwen, watter mede beteyckent can worden.'
66. Miedema, op. cit.[38], p. 60.
67. Rensselaer W. Lee, 'Ut pictura poesis; the humanistic theory of painting', *Art Bull.*, 1940, pp. 197-269, esp. p. 201.

Fig. 20. K. van Mander, *The dance around the Golden Calf,* 1602, canvas 98 x 213.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum

text should basically be taken at face value. That is, the *Grondt* can be better read without attempts to find a coded art theory in its construction and hidden meanings in its content. Of course, Van Mander must have structured his treatise with a certain logic. What follows is based on a more direct understanding of this logic than that proposed by Miedema. (It is worthwhile here to reproduce one of Van Mander's own paintings, see also figs. 20, 60, 61, 90, because the rationale proposed here for his sequence of chapters in the *Grondt* can be read from it.)

Chapter 1. The book begins with an exhortation to aspiring painters. The context is obviously one of instruction.

Chapter 2. It is equally obvious that he then begins by expatiating on drawing. Drawing, after all, was considered, in Van Mander's words, the *'father of painting'*.

Chapter 3. In this chapter Van Mander discusses the proportions of the human figure. In historical texts on the art of painting it was usually considered self-evident that the human figure was the most important subject for a painter. It is therefore hardly surprising that this and the three following chapters are devoted to the rendering of the human figure.

Chapter 4. The standing, sitting, and moving human figure is dealt with.

Chapter 5. On the basis of the knowledge gained from chapters 3 and 4 the painter can now let his figures gather in all conceivable situations, and have them distributed within a pictorial space.

Chapter 6. Once these figures act out a specific situation, the various kinds of affects have to play a role.

Chapter 7. From this point up to chapter 11, Van Mander concentrates on the setting and the circumstances in which the figures in a painting find themselves. First of all he deals with the light in which a given scene is played out. The figures and objects now assume their plastic form through the effect of light and shadow. It is conspicuous that Van Mander (in contrast to Van Hoogstraten) situates his scenes exclusively in the open air. In this connection, it is telling that Van Mander's discussions of light never deal with its effects in an enclosed space – apart from a very brief laudatory mention of Dürer's rendering of sunlight in his engraving with *St Jerome in his study* (see p. 156 fig. 21).

Chapter 8. It is then logical that Van Mander should proceed in the eighth chapter to deal with landscape.

Chapter 9. Then follow those other living creatures that also populate the landscape, often independently of the chosen subject: animals.

Chapter 10. One might expect that Van Mander would have placed the tenth chapter, which is devoted to draped textiles, closer to his treatment of the human figure. After all, when it comes to textiles we tend to think of the dress of the protagonists. There could be two reasons why he deals with this theme only in his tenth chapter. a. In the mannerist tradition – which was largely based on the art of Michelangelo – the painted figure was essentially conceived as a nude (see for example fig. 17). In his *Grondt*, Van Mander in fact explicitly allows human figures to be represented either nude or clothed. Having observed that in other parts of the world people are mostly naked anyway, he states:

> 'But good sense, which here in life would call for virtuous shame, teaches us the decency of adding a modest degree of clothing.'[68]

This explains why, in the history pieces from Van Mander's time, *'clothing'* was more a matter of materials draped around the figure than of tailored articles of dress (see p. 99 fig. 112). b. Draped materials in such paintings had essentially two main characteristics: the fall of the material, and colour. The materials with which these figures were clad were mostly of an even colour so chosen that they harmonized with each other. This is probably why Van Mander thought it better to place the chapter on draperies immediately before the chapter that deals with colour.

Chapter 11. It is likely that in the eyes of Van Mander and his contemporaries not all colours in painting were of equal value.[36] The countless gradations in the mixtures of earth colours with white, black, and other additions, needed to paint the setting of a history piece were seen differently than the clear, scarcely broken colours with which the figures were clad often in accordance with decorum (see the section on *Colour* pp. 103-112). Pure red, yellow or blue, or mixtures of these, orange, green and violet and, of course, pure white were mostly appreciated for the sake of their own beauty.

Chapter 12. Once colour had been introduced, painting technique and the handling of the brush had to be discussed.

Chapter 13. It contains insights on the source, properties and so forth of the pigments used in painting.

Chapter 14. It comprises remarks on colour symbolism. This last theme leads to iconographic aspects of the painted image. Iconography is not discussed more specifically in the *Grondt* but within the wider context of the *Schilderboeck* it is dealt with in the *d'wtlegghinghe* (explanation) of the Metamorphoses of Ovid and the *'wtbeeldinghe der figueren'* (the way specific mythological, biblical and historic

68. K.v.M. *Grondt* Cap. 10: '**2**… Doch reden/ hier stierend'een eerlijck schamen/Aenwijst ons een middelmaets cleedts betamen.'

69. The Mayerne Manuscript, ed. Ernst Berger, *Quellen für Maltechnik während der Renaissance und deren Folgezeit (XVI-XVII Jahrhundert),* IV, p. 255; see also Francisco Pacheo, *Arte de la Pintura, Su Antiguedad y Grandesa,* Sevilla 1649, edited and translated by Zalura Veliz in: *Artists' Techniques in Golden Age Spain,* Cambridge University Press 1986, p. 44.

figures should rendered recognizably). This section in the *Schilder-boeck* correlates with Book IV Chapter 8 in Van Hoogstraten's *Academy of Painting.*

Observations on the pedagogical purpose of Van Hoogstraten's treatise

As mentioned earlier, it is thanks to the analyses of the structure of Van Hoogstraten's book by Celeste Brusati and Hans Joachim Czech that we know that Van Hoogstraten largely based the content of his *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst* on Van Mander's *Grondt* (see fig. 11 and p. 24). Indeed, there are even good reasons to describe Van Hoogstraten's book as an updated and extended *remake* of Van Mander's treatise (see below). When one analyzes further the similarities and differences between these two treatises, it becomes clear *how* and *why* Van Hoogstraten structured Van Mander's categorization of the *gronden* differently, refining and changing it in places (see p. 24). In as far as a number of these changes may be attributed (with the appropriate reservations) to Rembrandt's influence, they will receive the main attention in the following sections of this chapter. First, however, we need to concentrate in some detail on Samuel van Hoogstraten's book as a whole.

As in the case of Van Mander's *Grondt*, the book's full title should be scrutinized carefully, for in this case too this will illuminate the author's intentions. Van Hoogstraten titled it:

> 'Introduction to the Academy of the Art of Painting: Or the visible world. Divided into nine stores of lessons, each governed by one of the Muses. Most necessary for the instruction of all who practise or seek diligently to learn this noble, liberal Art, or who in some other way hold it dear.'[70]

There has already been much speculation over the precise meaning of some aspects of this title, specifically over the phrase *'the visible world.'* and over the role of the Muses. More important in the present context, however, are several other keywords in the title, confirmed by a host of passages in the book itself, which leave no doubt as to the book's purpose: it was mainly intended as a book of instruction aimed at those engaged in the learning or actual practice of the art of painting. In the first chapter of his book, Van Hoogstraten states that he was partly inspired by the academy founded in 1648 by King Louis XIV.[71] In his foreword *On the Art of Painting. To the Reader*, Van Hoogstraten explains why he calls his book an introduction:

> 'I early observed the evils in the teaching of art which I described above (see below p. #) and was moved to seriously consider whether there could be found a way, both for myself and for others, that would allow a gifted person to be admitted to the true Academy of the Art of Painting. In which one might learn all that belongs to art, and by practising it to make oneself a master. But the weight of this matter, and the time it consumes unprofitably but which is always involved in writing, as well as the jealousy that drives the golden Art of Painting to take complete possession of her practitioner, [all this] has so severely hampered my resolution that I have not dared proceed further than an Introduction to this Academy. An Introduction, I say: that is, as though we guide pupils in the Academy by taking them by the hand.'[72]

Abbreviating the title of the book to *Introduction*, as has often been done, is deliberately avoided here. The fact that Van Hoogstraten refers to his book as an *Inleyding* should be seen as a conventional expression of modesty, obligatory in the 17th century.[73] Moreover, the use of the word 'Introduction' as a short title for the whole of the book creates confusion, since the book itself also includes an introduction under the heading: *On the art of painting. To the reader.* I have therefore opted for the short title *'Academy of the Art of Painting'* or *'Academy'*. This also helps to make it clear that we are dealing with an educational institution, as it were – albeit it in written form.

For understandable reasons, Van Hoogstraten's book is mainly seen by the present day art historian as a potential source of 17th-century art theory. But the book's true nature becomes significantly distorted when too little consideration is paid to its educative side. It should be emphasized that Van Hoogstraten divided his *'Academy'* into nine *'Leerwinkels'* (stores of lessons). Once again he stresses that we are dealing with a book from which one was supposed to learn. This is further emphasized by the last explanatory part of the title emphasizing that the book is *'most necessary for the education of all who practise, or diligently seek to learn, or in some other way appreciate this noble, free and high art'*.

The way Van Hoogstraten saw the last category of readers mentioned in the title should be noted:

> 'Thus this, our Academy, is highly suitable for all Lovers of the Art of painting, even though they are inexperienced in the same, … Not that I wish to claim that my Academy will open the eyes of all art-lovers such that they will soon be able to judge art: that would be going too far; but they will, from our work, be able to understand more easily what it is that one must judge, and then with the help of an experienced

70. 'Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst: Anders de Zichtbaere Werelt. Verdeelt in negen Leerwinkels, yder bestiert door eene der Zanggodinnen. Ten hoogsten noodzakelijk, tot onderwijs, voor alle die deeze edele, vrye, en hooge Konst oeffenen, of met yver zoeken te leeren, of anders eenigszins beminnen.'
71. See S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 3.
72. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, *'Van de schilderkonst*, *Aen den lezer'*:'Ik deeze gebreklijkheden in 't leeren der konst al vroeg gemerkt hebbende, wiert bewoogen, om met ernst t' overweegen, of'er niet een weg te vinden waere, zoo voor my zelfs, als voor andere, waer door een bequaeme geest in d' oprechte Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst mocht geraeken. In welke men mocht leeren, wat 'er al tot de konst behoort, om zich zelven door oeffening daer in meester te maeken. Maer de gewichtigheyt dezer stoffe, en 't onprofijtelijk tijd verzuim, dat aen 't schrijven vast is, nevens den naeryver, die de gulde Schilderkonst port, om haeren oeffenaer geheel alleen te bezitten, hebben mijn voornemen geweldig doen inkrimpen, zoo dat ik niet verder als tot een Inleiding tot deeze Hooge Schoole heb durven komen. Een Inleiding zeg ik, dat is, dat wy de leerlingen als met der hand in de Schoole geleiden, …'
73. Weststeijn 2008, op. cit.[35]] p. 54.

> painter, be able to trace clearly and distinctly the virtues and failings that are present in a painting.'[74]

As a rule, Van Hoogstraten speaks with a certain disdain of the art-lovers who, according to him, will never really understand the art of painting.[75] At one point Van Hoogstraten even writes explicitly that:

> 'In the case of art lovers who have more money and power than knowledge [of art], you have to arm yourself with tolerant patience, as it is not always a good idea to punish them accordingly.'[76]

It is important to draw attention to this scepticism so as to avoid any temptation to seek (as Miedema did in his interpretation of Van Mander's *Grondt*) hidden meanings in Van Hoogstraten's treatise, meanings allegedly directed over the heads of the apprentice that only intellectual art-lovers (and, of course, later art historians) could understand.

The correlations between the treatises of Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten were first visualized in a revelatory scheme developed by Hans Joachim Czech (see fig. 11). In a table reproduced on p. 24 this scheme is further developed in order to clarify those points where the structure and content of the two books differ. Apart from exceptions like portrait painting and anatomy, which are only to be found in Van Hoogstraten's book, the same basic aspects of the art of painting are dealt with by both authors. It is primarily a consequence of Van Hoogstraten's urge to systemize that, particularly in certain sections relating to the art of history painting, he includes a considerable number of sub-chapters in his book.

As announced by its title, Van Hoogstraten divided his book into nine *'Leerwinkels'*. This number was evidently chosen mainly because Van Hoogstraten's had planned to link the contents of his book to the nine Muses. In his *'To the reader'* he gives a short summary of the book following this schema of the Muses. In the relevant passage Van Hoogstraten expresses the expectation that *'masters in art'* will also find his book useful. In particular, he is alluding here to the importance of the sorting and ordering of what had to be taught and how. Van Hoogstraten believed so firmly in the salutary benefits of this organization that he dared to state:

> 'For although they [the masters] may be better painters than we [meaning Van Hoogstraten himself], nevertheless they will not have had the inclination to categorize the aspects [of art] in the same way in order to be able to pass them on competently to another.'[77]

Van Hoogstraten dared to go even further in his conviction of the usefulness of his book for other masters when he continued:

> 'And apart from this [the usefulness of a systematic education of apprentices] they will be able to test easily their own works against our rules, how competently these works may have been executed. For until there are better arguments I boldly maintain that those paintings, however highly rated, that cannot stand the test of the Muses […] are to be considered as mere bagatelles, beneath serious consideration; as all right-thinking painters, I think, will agree with me.'[78]

Van Hoogstraten begins his recitation of the Muses and their demands with the test of

> (1) '*Polymnia* [Muse of music and dance] regarding that which belongs to the comeliness (welschapentheyt) of the human figure:'[79]

and then goes on to list the faults that will disqualify a painting from serious consideration, i.e. paintings

> (2) that fall short in the rendering of the emotions, and the movements of the limbs, as *Clio* [Muse of history] teaches;'[80]
> (3) or lack something in the fine elaboration of incidental aspects [accessories, landscape etc], of which *Erato* [Muse of (amatory) lyric poetry] speaks:[81]
> [or] (4) which do not have a pleasing ordonnance, as mentioned by *Thaleye* (Thalia) [Muse of theatre]:'[82]
> [or] (5) which are not painted according to the teachings [regarding brushwork] of *Terpsichore* [Muse of music and dance]:[83]
> [or] (6) where inadequate attention is paid to *Melpomen*'s [Muse of tragedy] shadows and daylight:[84]

74. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, 'Van de schilderkonst, Aen den lezer': 'Zoo komt dan deze onze Inleiding ook zeer wel te pas voor alle Liefhebbers van de Schilderkonst,…' 'Niet dat ik zeggen wil, dat deeze mijne Inleiding allen Liefhebbers de oogen zoo zal openen, dat zy zelfs strax van de kunst zullen kunnen oordeelen: dat zy verre; maer zy zullen uit ons werk gemakkelijk kunnen begrijpen, waer van dat men oordeelen moet, en dan zullen zy, het behulp van een ervaren Schilder, de deugden en feilen, die in eenig werk zijn, klaer en onderscheidelijk kunnen naespeuren.'
75. E.v.d.Wetering, 'Rembrandt's Satire of Art Criticism reconsidered', *Shop Talk, studies in honour of Seymour Slive*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 264-270. Reprinted in *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis*, 2008 pp. 2-13.
76. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 315: 'Gy moet u zelven met een verdraegsaem gedult wapenen, wanneer liefhebbers overkomen, die meer geld of gezach, dan kennis hebben: want ten komt niet altijts geleegen, dat men hen na verdiensten straffe,…'
77. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, 'Van de schilderkonst, Aen den lezer': 'Want schoon zy de konst by avontuuren in 't geheel beeter verstaen mochten, dan wy, zoo zal 't henlieden juist niet gelust hebben, de zelve zoodanig in leeden te verdeelen, dat zyze bequaemelijk aen een ander kunnen overleeren.'
78. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, 'Van de schilderkonst, Aen den lezer': 'En behalven dit ['t nut bij 't onderwijs aan de leerlingen], zo zullen zy haere eygene werken, hoe konstig die ook zijn moogen, zeer gemakkelijk tegen onze regels kunnen toetsen. Want ik houde onder verbetering stoutelijk staende, dat de Schildereyen, hoe hoog men ze ook waerdeert, die geen proef kunnen houden tegen de lessen [van de Musen]…', '…louter beuzelmart, en voor grollen te schatten zijn; gelijk alle rechtschape Schilders, meen ik, met my zullen toestaen.'
79. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, 'Van de schilderkonst, Aen den lezer': '…*Polymnia*, aengaende 't geene tot de welschapentheyt van een mensch behoort:…'
80. '… die te kort schieten, in 't vertoonen der lijdingen des gemoeds, en de doeningen der leeden, gelijk *Clio* leert;…'
81. '…of in 't aerdig versieren van bywerk mist, daer *Erato* van spreekt:…'
82. '…die de behaeglijke ordening niet en hebben, daer *Thaleye* van rept;…'
83. '…die nae de lessen van *Terpsichore* niet gecoloreert en gehandelt zijn;…'
84. '…daer [waer] de zorgvuldigheyt in 't schaduwen en daegen van *Melpomen* in mank gaat;…'

Correlation between Karel van Mander's *Grondt* and Samuel van Hoogstraten's *Academy*

KvM's *Grondt*	SvH's *Academy* of the art of painting	Not in KvM but present in SvH
1. Exhortation to the pupil	I 1-4 Exhortation/general introduction I 5-8 Drawing	
2. Drawing	II 7-10 Human proportions	II 1-3 Portraiture II 4-6 Anatomy
3. Human proportions	III 7 Historic etc. figures III 8 Affects III 9 Movement	III 1-5 Art and Artist III 6 On history painting
4. Posture and Comportment of the human figure	IV 5 Landscape IV 8 Costumes - Drapery IV 11 Animals	IV 1 Seasons IV 2 Location IV 3 Architectural decoration/ floors IV 4 Decoration, pictures etc. IV 6 Adjuncts, attributes etc. IV 7 Hair, beards IV 9 Weapons, heraldic arms, etc. IV 10 Household effects, cutlery etc.
5. Ordonnance, Invention	V 1-5 Ordonnance	V 6 Quoting/emulating other artists V 7 Reproduction prints/Copies V 8-9 Journey of SvH, travelogue SvH
6. Affects	VI 3 Colour VI 4 Meaning of colour VI 5-6 Breaking, mixing and colouring VI 8 Painting animals VI 9 Painting landscape VI 10 Use of the brush [Handeling]	VI 1 Encouragement/envy VI 2 Copying VI 7 Painting of hair/clothing
7. Light	VII 1 History of painting VII 2-6 Light and shadow	VII 7 Perspective (concise)
8. Landscape	VIII 4 Posture/Comportment/Movement VIII 6 The arrangement of colour VIII 7 The arrangement of Light /Shadow	VIII 1-3 Beauty in general VIII 5 Harmony (relations) of colours VIII 8 Suggestion of space, 'kenlijkheid' VIII 9-10 The fate of artists
9. Animals		
10. Drapery		
11. Choosing colours		
12. Handling of the brush		
13. Origin and nature of colour		
14. Meaning of colour		
Other section of Schilderboeck [15] Depiction of specific figures	IX 1-2 Different painting techniques and their history	IX 3 Nature as a painter IX 4 Fruits of the painter's labour
Other section of Schilderboeck [16] 'The Lives'		

(7) and where the charms and *graces of Calliope* [Muse of poetry and eloquence] are not found;'[85]

The two Muses not mentioned here are: (8) *Euterpe*, Muse of music, and in later classical times of lyric poetry, invoked by Van Hoogstraten in connection with the first Book in his *Academy* containing the exhortation to the trainee painter and dealing with Drawing, and (9) *Urania*, Muse of astronomy, in connection with the ninth Book dealing with the use and the different types of paintings and their techniques, and with the fruits of the painter's labour. Van Hoogstraten's obsessive need to structure the material thus played a major role in determining the content and organisation of his lessons and of the book as a whole. Time and again he informs his reader that he considers this to be one of the most important – if not *the* most important – of his pedagogical contributions.

Weststeijn's *Inleyding*

There is a particular reason for emphasizing the pedagogical purpose of Van Hoogstraten's book: it takes one to the heart of the reasons why, in the following sections of this chapter, little use is made of Thijs Weststeijn's exegesis of Van Hoogstraten's book.[86]

Weststeijn's insights, developed at length in his book *The Visible World. Samuel van Hoogstraten's Art Theory and the Legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden Age*[87], are the product of his quest *to 'chart the ways in which artistic forms and genres were invested with theoretical legitimacy'*[88] in the 17th-century, but in so far as the author claims to situate and elucidate Van Hoogstraten's book in this context, he demonstrably distorts that book's essential purpose.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, his approach is marked by two *a priori* assumptions which were also evident in Miedema's work on the *Grondt*. Firstly there is the 20th-century anathema against illusionism in painting; and secondly an assumption that the meaning of such a historical text lies not in a reading of the text itself, but as a means of constructing an ultra-textual, historical background.

Having staked his analysis on this approach, Weststeijn is led at the outset to a misreading of the very first lines of Van Hoogstraten's book, found in the introductory foreword '*On the Art of Painting. To the reader'*. The crucial opening of Van Hoogstraten's very first sentence reads:

'While there has been no-one recently who has been willing to describe the entire Art of Painting with all that pertains to it, …'[89]

Weststeijn reads this as meaning that:

'the author [Van Hoogstraten] justifies his project [the writing of his book] by stating that *the tradition of art theory* has been neglected;' (italics EvdW)[90]

The assumed equivalence here of the *'entire Art of Painting with all that pertains to it'* to the *'tradition of art theory'*, is wholly unjustified. Moreover, if one reads Van Hoogstraten's lines carefully, he writes that '*there has been no-one of late'* who has been willing *'to describe the entire Art of Painting with all that pertains to it'*, i.e. there has been no-one in recent times who has taken it upon himself to write such a book. The implication is that in the more distant past there had been someone who had taken on that task. Van Hoogstraten must have been thinking here of an existing book in the Dutch language, although in fact there had been no such book in any other language. Indeed, there had only ever been one book published which had tackled *'the entire Art of Painting with all that pertains to it'* and that was *Het Schilder-Boeck* of Karel van Mander, in which the author, to clarify the book's purpose, appended to its title: *'in which for the first time, in various sections, the noble, free (liberal) art of painting is presented to young persons desirous of learning.*'[91]

Van Hoogstraten was thus not concerned with the *'tradition of art-theory'* – whatever that tradition might encompass – but to write a book that fitted into a very different and in fact a rather short, tradition – that of the comprehensive instructional book for trainee painters, just as Karel van Mander had done 1604 – according to his own words '*for the first time*'. Van Hoogstraten is even explicit about this, that he considered himself to be a successor to Van Mander, transposing the old rhymed Dutch into the Dutch of his own day. The passage in which he asserts this reads:

'And so that the laudable memory of our Van Mander, whose precedent has spurred us to this work, should continued to be honoured, this verse must proceed by following [Van Mander] in our own Dutch language; in such a way that the truths dealt with above are appropriately reaffirmed.'[92]

This same misunderstanding of Van Hoogstraten's main concern permeates Weststeijn's publications (note 86) on the latter's purported intentions. In effect, he reads his own thesis back into Van Hoogstraten's pedagogical work: having taken as his point of departure the premise that the latter's main objective was to revive *'the tradition of art-theory'*, it would seem that he subsequently read everything actually written in Van Hoogstraten's book through the

85. '…en daar de *Gratien van Callio*pe uit verbannen zijn;…'
86. Thijs Weststeijn, 'Schilderkunst als 'zuster van de bespiegelende wijsgeerte' *De theoretische status van het afbeelden van de zichtbare wereld in Samuel van Hoogstratens* Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst, *De Zeventiende Eeuw*, 2002 no. 2 pp. 184-207; *The Visible World. Samuel van Hoogstraten's Art Theory and the Legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden Age*, Amsterdam University Press, 2008.
87. Weststeijn 2008, op.cit.[86].
88. Weststeijn 2008, op.cit.[86], p. 13.
89. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, *'Van de schilderkonst, Aen den lezer.'*: 'Dewijl 'er onlangs niemant geweest is, die de geheele Schilderkonst met alle haeren aenkleeven heeft gelieven te beschrijven,…'
90. Weststeijn 2008, op. cit.[86], p. 41.
91. K.v.M. *Grondt*, Fol.1: … 'waerin voor [het] eerst de leerlustighe Jueght den grondt der Edel Vry Schilderconst in Verscheyden deelen Wort Voorghedraghen'.
92. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 22: 'En op dat de loflijke gedachtenis van onzen *Vermander*, wiens voorgang ons tot dit werk heeft aengeport, geëert blijve, zoo moet dit vers in onze Hollantsche tael nagevolgt voor afgaen; waer in de bovengeroerde waerheeden niet onaerdich bevesticht worden.'

wrong lenses. This is already evident in the way he interprets another crucial passage of *'To the reader'*. After several remarks concerning the reasons why no-one else (after Van Mander) had written such a book, Van Hoogstraten explains that:

> 'the Art of Painting has come to be seen, in most people's eyes, as [just another] common art or craft: and as a result, thousands have strayed into art, or been led to it, without ever considering the difficulties involved, indeed, just as if they had taken up the cobbler's trade: entirely oblivious to the fact that this art [of painting] encompasses the entire Visible World; and that there is scarcely a single art or science that a Painter should remain ignorant of.'[93]

Perhaps this comparison between the way the art of painting had *'come to be seen'* and *'the cobbler's trade'* suggested to Weststeijn that in Van Hoogstraten's time the art of painting in general was seen as a simple craft, and the associated idea that the situation in Van Hoogstraten's time was comparable to the situation in the early Renaissance when Alberti's art-theoretical treatise *De Pictura* and other writings were required to emancipate the art of painting. In any case, some such idea is clearly implied by the subtitle of Weststeijn's book, where he speaks of the *legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden Age*, and underlies his assumption that it was Van Hoogstraten's intention to reanimate the *'tradition of art theory'*. And yet, when reading Weststeijn's publications on Van Hoogstraten , one repeatedly comes across the author's admission that he cannot, in any direct sense, find significant traces of the – mainly Italian – art-theoretical tradition in Van Hoogstraten's book. (As we saw, Miedema had the same problem with Van Mander's *Grondt*.)

That is hardly surprising, for when one puts Van Hoogstraten's complaint in the context of the history of painting in the Dutch 17th century, one sees a situation very different from that which governed the status of art in the time of Alberti. When Van Mander wrote his *Grondt*, the number of painters in the Netherlands was limited. The explosion of activity in this area only began in the 1620's. It is commonly known that a huge production of paintings then got under way, particularly in Holland. This dramatic change in the Dutch art world is described by Van Hoogstraten as follows:

> 'At the beginning of this century the walls in Holland were not yet so densely hung with paintings as they are today. However, this habit gradually crept in, more and more each day, which led some painters to get used to painting rapidly, yes, to produce one piece every day, be it large or small.'[94]

Indeed, the production of paintings had become a veritable industry, with many hundreds – according to Van Hoogstraten, thousands – of painters active in the small but densely populated Holland and with millions of paintings produced as a result.[95] There must also have been numerous workshops churning out works two-a-penny, innumerable third-rate paintings –so-called *'dozijnwerk'* – for the lower end of the market, that have since largely disappeared. But there also existed an upper stratum of more or less renowned masters, as one finds in Houbraken's *Grote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen* [*Great Theatre of Netherlandish Painters and Paintresses*].

Most significantly in this context, there arose a tendency towards specialization, not only in the widespread mass-production of paintings but also within the upper stratum. As will become apparent, this specialization was of great concern to Van Hoogstraten, who not only feared for the art of painting in general but was particularly afraid that it threatened the future training of painters.

A number of painters, including Rembrandt, had withdrawn themselves from these developments, attracting the better pupils – often from good homes – and were at the same time surrounded by a coterie of art lovers from the upper classes. The existence of this symbiosis in the superior echelons of the art world is alone sufficient to exclude the possibility that Van Hoogstraten was concerned that the art of painting and its practitioners *as a whole* stood in need of legitimation, or needed to be raised above the level of cobblers. It was the mass of specialists who had missed out in their training, and painters of a lower calibre who inspired Van Hoogstraten to his plan for a systematic method of teaching which, he hoped, would be widely implemented. He was in fact aiming at

> 'the thousands (who) have strayed into art, or been led to it, without ever considering the difficulties, entirely oblivious of the fact that this art encompasses the entire Visible World.'[96]

This was necessary, for he had observed that painters were mostly 'made' in a haphazard fashion. How?

> 'One placed the young man with one or other painter, or someone so-called, ostensibly to learn how to draw, which meant endlessly copying examples of [drawn or printed] figures 'mannetje nae mannetje' [one after another], and

93. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, *'Van de schilderkonst, Aen den lezer.'*: '…dat de Schilderkonst, by de meeste menschen, als een andere gemeene konst of handwerk is geacht geworden: en hier op is gevolgt, dat 'er duizenden aen de konst gevallen of gevoert zijn, zonder de zwaerigheden, die 'er in steeken, eens te overweegen, jae min noch meer, dan of zy een Schoenmaekers ambacht hadden by der hand genomen: zonder eens te weeten dat deeze konst de geheele Zichtbaere Wereld behelsde; en dat 'er naulijx eenige konst of weetenschap is, daer een Schilder onkundig in behoorde te zijn.'
94. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole* p. 237: 'In 't begin deezer eeuw waeren de wanden in Holland noch zoo dicht niet met Schilderyen behangen, alsze tans wel zijn. Echter kroop dit gebruik dagelijx meer en meer in, 't welk zommige Schilders dapper aenporde om zich tot ras schilderen te gewennen, jae om alle daeg een stuk, 't zy kleyn of groot, te vervaerdigen.'
95. J.M. Montias, 'Estimates of the number of Dutch master-painters, their earnings and their output in 1650', *Leidschrift* 6 (1990), pp. 59-74. A. van der Woude, 'De schilderijenproduktie in Holland tijdens de Republiek. Een poging tot kwantificatie', in: J.C. Dagevos e.a. (red.), *Kunst-zaken. Particulier initiatief en overheidsbeleid in de wereld van de beeldende kunst*, Kampen 1991, pp. 18-50 and 286-297.
96. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, *'Van de schilderkonst, Aen den lezer'*: '…dat 'er duizenden aen de konst gevallen of gevoert zijn, zonder de zwaerigheden, die 'er in steeken, eens te overweegen, jae min noch meer, dan of zy een Schoenmaekers ambacht hadden by der hand genomen: zonder eens te weeten dat deeze konst de geheele Zichtbaere Wereld behelsde;'

> having some success in this, he proceeded to the brush, and thus in time they became known by the ignorant as masters in the art, even though they themselves knew very little what the Art of painting actually was. The consequence of which is that the most fortunate have by chance happened upon a part of art that corresponds with their nature and with the fashion of the times, as a result of which they, although blindly, achieve good Fortune; while the rest, even more blindly, as though feeling their way, became lost: because the arrogance that attends youth for the most part makes them fall in love with their own work; and they, once they become adult, and boasting the title of Painter, are then ashamed to undertake further learning anywhere. Yes, it does not benefit many that they are naturally gifted with some ability, because through ignorance they devote it to completely the wrong ends, whereas, if they had been educated in the right way in the Hooge Schoole of this art, they would have found something that they could really excel in. And those who had no talent for the art would have become aware of this lack in good time and this would have led them rather to give it up and take up something else, rather than wear out their lives as bunglers in art.'[97]

This is the context in which one has to situate the origin of Van Hoogstraten's book and the reason why, as the title indicates, it should be considered straightforwardly as an instructive book. The ultimate aim was to help the young painter to be able to reach the *'third and highest stage'* in the art of painting, as Van Hoogstraten calls it, i.e. that of history painting[98], for which the painter must not only be able to paint that which Van Hoogstraten calls the (entire) *'Visible World'*, but must also be able to know and understand it. In the *Landscape* section of this chapter, a passage is quoted in which Van Hoogstraten contrasts the meteorological aspects of cloud formations with the way the *'common, simple-minded people'* misunderstand their nature. This, and the understanding of innumerable other such aspects of the world, including the history of mankind, is the knowledge [*wetenschap*] which according to Van Hoogstraten no painter should be ignorant of. Not that this knowledge was something outside the painter's world to refer to. On the contrary, it is a fund of knowledge which Hoogstraten's book encompasses and teaches.

For the art historian, or the historian of ideas, there are of course symbolic meanings to be uncovered and concepts of a more abstract nature to be distilled from any book like Van Hoogstraten's *Academy of Painting*. There is however, a difference between such a reading and selectively interpreting the text in order to elaborate an *a priori* assumption. The *terms* that Van Hoogstraten uses in fact refer to the actual subject matter of his treatise. Although Weststeijn's chapter headings – 'The Visible World; Pictorial Imitation; The Depiction of the Passion; The Eloquence of Colour; Painting as a Mirror of Nature; Painting as 'Sister to Philosophy'' – loosely follow those in Van Hoogstraten's *Academy*, his interest in these terms is profoundly different. In outlining his own academic project, Weststeijn writes that in his book that he:

> 'will discuss a number of terms used by Van Hoogstraten by explaining their place in the framework of epideictic rhetoric. Thus it will become clear that concepts like *imitatio* and *affectus* have connotations relating to general ideas about civic virtues …The proposed selection of terms is determined by the scope for linking rhetorical theory to elements of seventeenth century painting'[99]

But Weststeijn goes further than using Van Hoogstraten's text as a source of terms that will guide him into the renaissance humanist tradition and what he calls *'the tradition of art theory'*. This ulterior interest leads him to override Van Hoogstraten's own stated pedagogical purpose and to misrepresent the nature of that book.

What is particularly disconcerting in his essayistic approach is that Weststeijn has drawn on a wide range of sources, all with impeccable historical and philosophical credentials, and all of which relate in some way to the *conceptual terms* he chooses to focus on, yet without adequately attending to what Van Hoogstraten himself had to say about these *topics*. Weststeijn's treatment of the topics he elects to discuss boils down to a chain of loosely interwoven references and quotations, most of which cannot – without further corroboration – be assumed to belong to Van Hoogstraten's intellectual frame of reference at all. Weststeijn defends this procedure by claiming that

> 'Van Hoogstraten's treatise belongs to a genre of writing about art that by no means arose as an isolated phenomenon or as a rare combination of studio practice with theory derived artificially from humanist tradition. The genre draws its material in large measure from the same sources as the tradition of poetics, which flowered in a similar way from the fifteenth century onwards. The same sources also underlie related texts such as handbooks of rhetoric, courtiers'manuals that codified good behaviour, and related texts with more general ethical guidelines. First and foremost, Dutch art theo-

97. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, *'Van de schilderkonst, Aen den lezer.'*: 'Men heeft dan meest luk op raek echter Schilders gemaekt, en hoe? Men besteede de jeugt by d' een of d' ander Schilder, of die men zoo noemde, om quansuis het teikenen te leeren, dat was mannetje nae mannetje te maeken, en hier wat gelukkig in zijnde, zoo quam men tot het penseel, en dus kreegen zy metter tijdt by d' onkundige de naem van meesters in de konst te zijn, eer zy zelfs in 't minste wisten wat de Schilderkonst was. Waer uit dan gevolgt is, dat de gelukkigste by geval eenig deel van de konst hebben aengetroffen, dat met hunne natuur en den trant des tijds over een quam, waer doorze, doch als blindeling, tot een goede Fortuine geraekt zijn: terwijl de rest, noch blinder, en als nae den weg tastende verlooren liep: vermits de laet dunkentheyt, speelnoot van de jongelingschap, het meeste deel op hun eygen werk deê verlieven: en zy, nu volwassen, en met den naem van Schilder pronkende, zich schaemden langer ergens te leeren. Jae 't en baete veelen niet, datze van natuere weegen met een bequaemen geest begaeft waren, vermits zy die door onkunde geheel averechts besteedden, daerze, indienze te recht in de Hooge Schoole dezer konst waren onderweezen geweest, wel iets gevonden zouden hebben om treflijk in uit te munten. En die geene, die tot de konst onbequaem waren, zouden haer gebrek tijdelijker zijn gewaer geworden, en dit zoude hen liever by tijts hebben doen aftreeden, en iets anders by der hand neemen, dan haer leeven als breekebeenen in de konst te verslijten.'

98 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 78: '…op den derden en hoogsten trap (der Konst)…'

99. Weststeijn 2008, op. cit.[86], p. 19.

> ry can be studied as an offshoot of the older international tradition, and the present study will therefore frequently refer to older art theory, most notably to authors from Southern Europe. However, a different type of analysis can be arrived at by drawing on related texts that do not belong exclusively to poesis in the seventeenth century sense – epic, lyric, drama – but that describe specific social, scientific or philosophical subjects.'[100]

It is this use of arbitrarily amassed (fragments of) sources which lend to the book its tone of erudition and learning. In the end, however, one learns little about Samuel van Hoogstraten's own thinking as an artist and teacher in the art of painting.

The approach that I have adopted below to Van Mander's *Grondt* and Van Hoogstraten's *Academy of Painting* stands almost diametrically opposed to Miedema's and Weststeijn's. Moreover, where Miedema and Weststeijn presume to speak for Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten, in the following analysis I shall try as far as possible to let these authors speak for themselves.

There is yet another reason for including so many, often extensive quotations from the two treatises in the following discussion. For many in the art historical world it will be the first time that they are able to get to grips with these texts that are essential for an understanding of painting in the Dutch Golden Age. The original texts are difficult even for the (uninitiated) Dutch reader to understand – and in this case, to be initiated also implies an intimate knowledge of 17th-century workshop practice; for much of what both authors write is directly related to studio practice, with this important rider: that the term 'studio practice' does not refer merely to questions of paint, brushes, panels, canvases and so on, as both Miedema and Weststeijn seem to have thought, but more significantly to the means necessary to create a convincing painted illusion of each aspect of the *'Visual World'*.

It would be ideal to have both treatises available in translations, specifically in English, for then more art historians would be able to participate in this discussion. But since that is not (yet) the case, I at least quote profusely from those texts which, in my view, are relevant in the context of the present volume – whose main subject, after all, is Rembrandt. With the latter in mind, the texts have been selectively used but not, I hope, to the extent that the general tenor of either Van Mander's and Van Hoogstraten's discourse is violated.

Not only the choice but also the translation of these texts carries interpretative risks. In the case of Van Mander, Murray Pearson, our translator, was able to base himself on the almost always reliable 'translation' by Hessel Miedema. In comparison, the translation of Van Hoogstraten's texts was much more difficult. Paul Taylor's work in the field of Dutch art theoretical terms has shown how much must be done before an unambiguous translation of certain terms can be achieved. We have tried to the best of our abilities but the responsibility for any errors or inadequacies there may be in the translations of texts quoted from Van Hoogstraten's *Academy of Painting* is finally mine.

It may cause surprise that hardly any other sources have been cited in the following discussion of the *gronden*, and that secondary literature – as far as it exists – has been almost entirely omitted from consideration. But this excursion through Van Mander's and Van Hoogtraten's texts is in the end no more than a (necessary) attempt to get closer to the conceptual world of the all too silent Rembrandt. These two key texts probably cover much the greatert part of what Rembrandt *could* possibly think.

Before looking in depth at the most relevant of the *gronden* – discussed in the following sections, which are organized in the sequence in which Van Mander dealt with them – it will be as well to avoid as far as possible the use of the loaded term 'art theory'. Whether that is indeed the wisest choice is a question that will be discussed in the closing section of this chapter (pp. 129-139).

100. Weststeijn 2008, op. cit.[86], p. 65.

Drawing

The art of drawing – *'the generous foster mother of all the arts'*[101] and *'father of painting'*[102] as Van Mander calls it – is given a special place in both Van Mander's *Grondt* and Van Hoogstraten's *Academy of Painting*; but the two authors differ considerably in their conception of the way this basic aspect of the art of painting should essentially be understood and be taught to their pupils. In Van Hoogstraten's book, one sees once again the phenomenon already noted above: two completely different approaches seem to be recommended with equal enthusiasm, that of Van Hoogstraten himself and that of Rembrandt.

To demonstrate Van Mander's approach to the discipline and art of drawing I quote here only a few fragments, giving special attention to the passages that he devotes to the technique of draughtsmanship and to its use to reproduce the perspective projection distortions of reality which are inherent to the Renaissance and later Western art of painting. But first some remarks on the 'what' and the 'why'.

According to Van Mander, the drawing of the aspiring painter concerns

Fig. 21. Karel van Mander, *Study of a man*, pen and wash in brown ink, 17.6 x 12.3 cm. Formerly coll. J.Q. van Regteren-Altena, Amsterdam

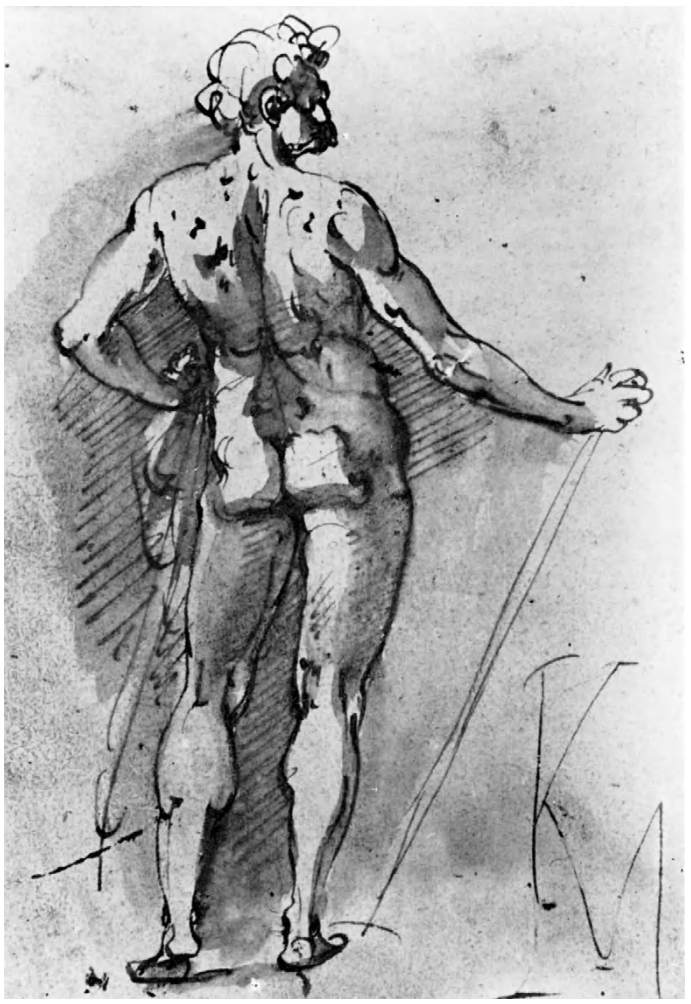


Fig. 22. W. Goeree, *Inleydinge ... Teycken-Konst*, 1668, p. 11

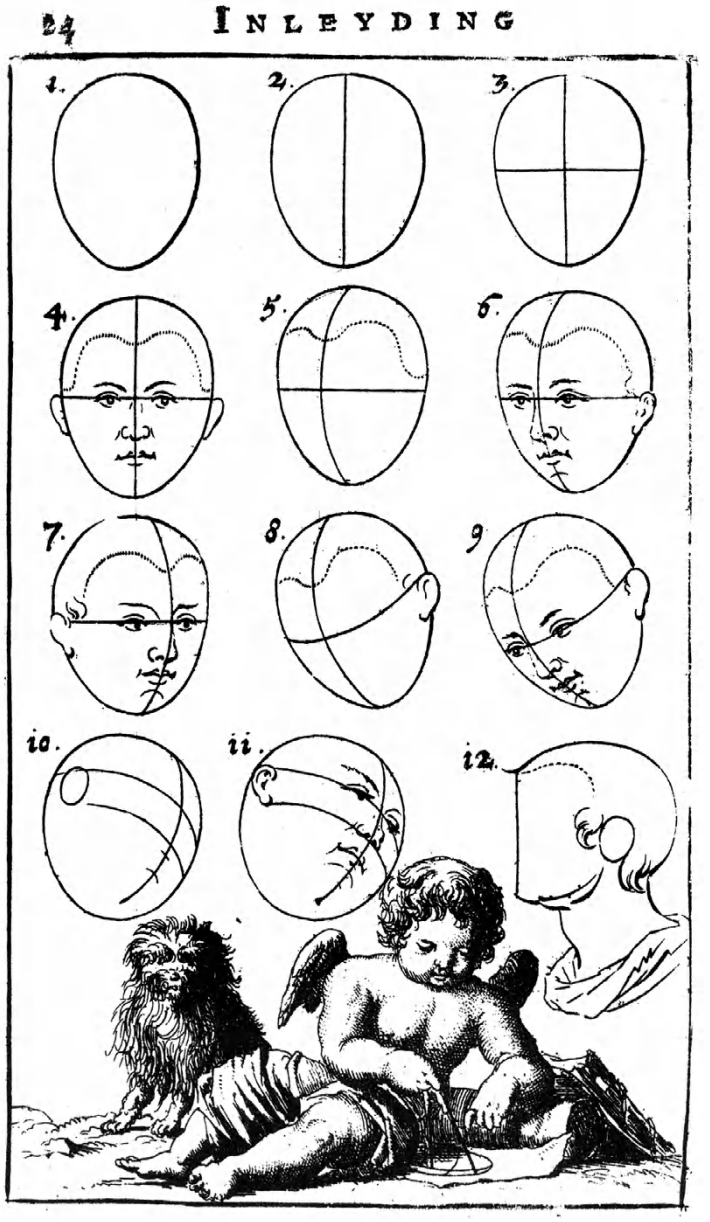


Fig. 23. A. Dürer, woodcut depicting an apparatus to render a perspectivally deformed body. Illustration from Dürer's *Unterweisung der Messung*, 1525 (rev. ed. 1538)

101 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 2: '**2** Sy is een Voedster aller Consten goedich'
102 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 2: '**4** Desen Vader dan van t'Schilderen, …'

'… in particular the human figure, the most important part of creation.'[103]

and

'Further one should not disdain to learn after existing works of art to place a figure in the correct stable position, without wobbling, on one foot, on which the weight of the body rests, as indicated in [the chapter on] the correct posture [see p. 49]; let the hip swerve out above the standing foot.'[104] (fig. 21)

A crucial passage in this chapter is the following:

'Now, young man, to pursue this way of working, in order to become wise in the art of drawing, you have to begin by drawing with great dedication the oval with the cross within it; very necessary in order to learn to set a face skilfully from all sides. For – shamefully – one sees many painters setting their faces wrongly; because they do not pay attention to the cross their efforts are in vain.'[105]

The significance of this advice – which is also elucidated at length and illustrated in Willem Goeree's *Teycken-Konst*[106] (fig. 22) – cannot be overestimated since it not only relates to the representation of the human head, but is also important for a proper understanding of the many other perspectival distortions, so difficult to represent, which the human body – seen as a composition of cylindrical and spherical forms – essentially undergoes in various positions (fig. 23). Having discussed these aspects of the art of drawing that he considered fundamental, Van Mander then laments:

'Now a great master would earn much gratitude if he should bring out in print an ABC-book on the principles of our art, for the benefit of you, young men. I stand before [such a task] without adequate means, because I am not sufficiently equipped for it; but others, who do have the ability are too reluctant. I fear the blame, and they the effort. And so you, honest young man, are denied such a useful matter. In older times, now long ago [in classical antiquity], our art was contained in various books that one would [now] seek in vain.'[107]

In order to do something about this gap Van Mander offers the advice:

'Therefore it would be good first to find a good master, to get acquainted with a good way [of working] and to learn certain basic ground rules in the placing [of the figure(s)], execution, outlining, modelling, to understand properly the placing of light and shadow, [and to learn] to draw delicately

Fig. 24. Anonymous pupil of Rembrandt, *Tobit reading the Bible to Anna*, pen and bistre, 10.7 x 13.8 cm (Ben. C 15). London, Victoria and Albert Museum

Fig. 25. Anonymous pupil of Rembrandt, *Tobit reading the Bible to Anna*, pen, 12.3 x 18 cm (Ben. C 16). London, Victoria and Albert Museum

103 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 2: '**4** Bysonder t'Menschen beeldt heerlijckst geschepen.'

104 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 2: '**6** Voorts nae handelinghe, is niet te versmaden/Een boots leeren stellen, vast sonder wancken,/Op eenen voet, die t'lichaem heeft gheladen,/Ghelijck in *d'Actitude* wordt gheraden:/Laet op den staenden voet de heup uyt swancken.'

105 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 2: '**5** Nu Ionghers, om nae dees mate te jaghen,/Dats om in Teycken-const worden verstandich,/Moet ghy beginnen met groot behaghen/Aen het ey-rondt, en t'cruys daer in gheslaghen,/Om een tronje leeren stellen ghehandich/Van alle sijden, seer noodich: want schandich/Sietmen veel Schilders den tronjen misstellen,/Niet lettend' op't cruys, te vergeefs sy quellen.'

106 Willem Goeree, *Inleydinge Tot de al-ghemeene Teycken-Konst*, Amsterdam 1697 (1668), Tweede Hooft-deel '*Van de eerste beginselen der Teycken-Konst*'.

107 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 2: '**6** Nu grootlijcx waer een groot Meester te dancken,/Die in sned' uytgaef u, o Ieucht, ter jonsten,/Een A.b. boeck, van t'begin onser Consten./ **7** Ick valler te bloot in, als t'onbequame,/maer ander, ghenoechsaem zijnd' in't vermoghen,/Vallen te weygherigh, ick vreese blame,/En sy de moeyte, dus o Ieught eersame,/Wort u soo vorderlijck een nut ontoghen:/In ouden tijdt, die nu langh is vervloghen,/Was ons Const vervaet in verscheyden Boecken,/Die men om vinden vergheefs soude soecken.'

Fig. 26. Rembrandt, *Flora,* 1635, canvas 123.5 x 97.5 cm. London, The National Gallery (III A 112)

Fig. 27. Rembrandt's workshop, brush in greys and black over pen and ink, 21.9 x 17.3 cm. London, The British Museum

Fig. 28. Samuel van Hoogstraten, title page of book 1 ('Euterpe de Reedewikster') of his *Academy of the Art of Painting*

first with charcoal and then with chalk or pen in the lit places so that it can barely be seen, and where there is shadow to draw with darker accents [douwkens].'[108]

For an example of this way of drawing, see Karel Van Mander's drawing (fig. 21). On drawing technique, Van Mander further advises:

'You can do everything: hatching and washes, according to the inclination of your talent; with fervent dedication, by copying [you must], exercise your hands in the use of charcoal and chalk, on paper, either grey like "ash" or pale blue, in order to produce heightened or deepened effects [by adding highlights or darker shadows]. But do not let those highlights or dark accents touch each other: leave the ground colour between them free. […] Be careful not to heighten too much. If you wash with colour extracts or inks in water, always try to ensure that they flow softly into each other; or if you work with charcoal or chalk, keep your quills with cotton wadding close at hand, so that [this way of working] allows the moderate tones to merge on either side, whether you are working after prints or after a sculpture that cannot move. Each can follow his inclination.[109] […] You can blur chalk tones by rubbing with cotton wool, or work softly in a fine granular surface [of the paper] without hatching or rubbing anywhere. If you want to advance in the art of hatching, increase the strength of your [hatching] strokes from thin to heavy, draw them from the top, whilst making sure to render muscles or other [relief features] well, as though all the Graces themselves were at play in [your drawing].'[110]

Van Hoogstraten's section titled *'Of the various different ways of drawing and the relevant necessary materials'* can be considered as the equivalent of the passage from Van Mander quoted above.

Although both Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten construe the 'how' in purely technical terms, in the essential part of Van Hoogstraten's lessons it seems as if two very different and, what is more, conflicting approaches to the art of drawing play equally important roles – an approach which is probably Rembrandt's and that of Van Hoogstraten himself.

But first, possibly echoing Rembrandt's teaching, Van Hoogstraten recommends that the practice of drawing after examples should not be a mechanical procedure but should be done with an investigative eye to the quality of the example being copied:

'Copy the things, not only as you see them before you, but investigate for yourself where their merit lies. Learn so from time to time to enrich your mind with beautiful things so that in turn you will be able to bring forth your own inventions.'[111]

108 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 2: '**9** Daerom een goet Meester waer goet ghevonden,/Voor eerst, om goede manier aen te wennen,/En om te leeren seker vaste gronden/Int stellen, handelen, omtrecken, ronden,/Dagh, en schaduws plaetsen wel leeren kennen,/Eerst met Colen dan met Crijen oft Pennen,/Aerdich trecken op den dagh, datment nouwkens/Sien mach, en daer schaduw valt harde douwkens.'

109 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 2: '**10** Ghy meught van als doen, artseren, en wasschen,/nae den lust ws gheests met een vierich pooghen,/In het conterfeyten in handen rasschen,/Tot Kool' en Crijt, op Papier graeuw als aschen,/Oft een bleeckachtich blaeuw, om op te hooghen,/En op te diepen: doch wilt niet ghedooghen,/Hooghsel, en diepsel malcander t'Aencleven/Wilt grondt tusschen beyden vry plaetse gheven./ **11** Niet te veel te hooghen wilt vlijtigh wachten,/Wast ghy met sapkens, oft waterigh' incktten,/Wilt op een soet verdrijven altijts trachten,/Oft werckt ghy met kool' en crijt, hebt u schachten/Met boomwoll' in, tot sulcx de meetse tinten/Doet weersijds vloeyen, t'zy of ghy nae printen/Doet, oft nae rondt, dat niet en can beweghen,/Elck doet geeren daer hy toe is gheneghen.'

110 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 2: '**20** Doeselen, dats crijt met boom-wol verdrijven/Meuchdy, of rueselich soetkens verwercken/Sonder artseren, of met yet te wrijven:/Wilt ghy in artseren constich beclijven,/Van dunne tot grof u slaghen wilt stercken,/Dats van boven af halen, met opmercken/Musculen, oft anders wel uyt te beelden,/Als of al de *Gratien* daer in speelden.'

111 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 26/27: 'Volch de dingen, niet alleen, zoo als gy die voor u ziet, maer onderzoekt zelf, waer in derzelver deucht bestaet. Leer zoo van tijt tot tijt uwen geest met schoone stoffen verrijken, om op uw beurte ook uwe vindingen te baren.'

Fig. 29. Rembrandt or pupil, *Joseph telling his dreams to Jacob*, pen and brown ink, wash, heightened with white, 17.5 x 24.5 cm (Ben. 526). Vienna, Albertina

What is striking here is that he again elaborates on the theme of the searching attitude that was discussed earlier and which is so typical of Rembrandt [112] (see p. 9). In the following, it will become evident that the advice on draughtsmanship closely matches what we know of Rembrandt's way of drawing and of his teaching of draughtsmanship based on it. Peter Schatborn has in fact already pointed this out.[113] It is reasonable to assume that we have here another of those 'Rembrandt-inserts' in Van Hoogstraten's text that refer directly back to his time as a pupil of Rembrandt. The advice to copy the best drawings – those of the master – in order to adopt his style of drawing would seem to confirm this. Research has demonstrated that Rembrandt's pupils tried to copy faithfully many of his drawings that are conspicuous for their exceptionally free hand (figs. 24 and 25).[114]

> ''t is [an artist's] good fortune to [be able to] copy very good drawings early on, in order to learn a good hand, for this way one discovers in a short time what it took others a long time to seek out. Otherwise one easily develops bad habits that are very difficult to give up.'[115]

Whilst copying, besides practising Rembrandt's way of drawing, great emphasis must have been laid on the study of Rembrandt's ordonnance, or spatial disposition. As Van Hoogstraten puts it:

> 'Above all, investigate the merit of a good ordonnance.'[116]

which shows that the drawing of histories predominated in this way of teaching, just as it did in Rembrandt's workshop. The following advice also reflects Rembrandt's

112 E.v.d.Wetering, 'Rembrandt as a searching artist', in: *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 79-123.

113 P. Schatborn, 'Introduction', in: exhib.cat. *Bij Rembrandt in de leer / Rembrandt as teacher,* Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis, 1984/85, pp. 9-13.

114 Such drawings can be found among the copies mentioned in O. Benesch, *The drawings of Rembrandt*, 1954/57, revised ed. 1973, Vol. II C 1-C 34; Vol. IV C 35-C 55; Vol. VI C 56-C 103.

115 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 27: ''t Is een groot geluk zeer goede teykeningen, om een goede handeling te leeren, al vroech na te teykenen; want zoo vint men in korten tijt 't gunt andere lang zochten. Anders vervalt men licht in een quaede manier, die men namaels bezwaerlijk verlaten.'

116 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 27: 'Maer boven al zoo onderzoek de deucht van een goede ordinantie.' See the section on *Ordonnance* below.

Fig. 30. Samuel van Hoogstraten, *The adoration of the shepherds*, pen and brown ink with brown wash over sketch in black chalk, some red chalk, 15.5 x 20.4 cm. Hamburg, Kunsthalle

teaching practice:

> 'Once you can draw competently and have developed a good eye, it will also do you no harm to copy multicoloured paintings in monochrome drawings.'[117]

(figs. 26, 27, 28; see for instance also III A 116 fig. 8; III A 120 fig. 4.)

However, what is most remarkable is the long discussion of sketching that follows. As Peter Schatborn observed in 1984, this text gives a faithful description of Rembrandt's way of drawing. The fact that neither Van Hoogstraten (once he had left Rembrandt's workshop) nor any other Dutch draughtsman (apart from Rembrandt's pupils during their apprenticeship) drew in this manner, forces one to consider the possibility that, as in the case of *kenlijkheyt* dealt with above (p. 12), we are also looking here at a 'Rembrandt-insert'.

> 'Plan on your paper the whole of whatever you have in mind, first in a loosely sketched design: and divide the same again in large-ish sections, whether you divide a figure into head, arms, body and legs, or distinguish between various distinct groups of figures, pay diligent attention to how much one large-ish section differs from another in size, and how a varied and graceful arrangement creates a unity. For you will find in [such sketchily executed work] parts that are roundish, square-ish, triangular, longish or oblique in their form. Observe these shapes then with a half-closed eye without paying attention to any detail. Freely ignore the individual parts in a face, whilst indicating with loose strokes only the hollow-like shadows of the eyes, nose or mouth which principally show; but do not do this too soon, [lest they are] not in their proper place. This way of sketching the whole is mainly used in an unforced manner, [but] what further concerns the rough sketching, it is the first foundation of good draughtsmanship and so important, that when the whole or the part has been indicated well and intel-

117 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 27: 'Wanneer gy uwe handeling nu machtich zijt, en uw oog wat verklaert is, zoo zal't u ook niet verscheelen veelverwige Schilderyen in eenverwige teykeningen na te klaren.' See also E. van de Wetering, 'The aged painting and the necessities and possibilities to know its original appearance', in: *Conservare necesse est, Festskrift til Leif Einar Plahter*, International Institute of Conservation (IIC) Nordic Group, Oslo 1999, pp. 259-264; also appeared in: H. Cantz (ed.), *Horizons. Essays on art and art research. 50 Years Swiss Institute for Art Research*, Zürich 2001, pp. 399-406.

Fig. 31. Rembrandt, *The raising of Jairus' daughter c.* 1650-52, pen and brown ink, wiped here and there with a finger or dry brush, 19.8 x 19.8 (detail). Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 1064)

> ligently, one often accomplishes as a result more than can later be performed with much work. And just as when one recognizes a friend at a distance, or on meeting him in twilight, one suddenly sees his figure and apprehends it with the mind, in the same way a rough sketch often gives the connoisseurs so great an impression that they are able to see in it more than the one who has made it.'[118] (fig. 31)

Rembrandt's drawings are usually left at this stage – a stage that his pupils took as models to be copied or paraphrased as if they were finished works (fig. 29). In the following, Van Hoogstraten surprisingly recommends almost the opposite of what he has just written. Instead of 'sketching' 'loose', 'free', the keywords are now 'careful and not too hasty' and 'begin with small steps'.

> 'But should you, O inquiring young man, try to succeed in the art, be careful and slow; for doing well is to make quick progress. But if you want to do everything in haste and seize everything by good luck, you will achieve only your misfortune, waste your work and your time, learn nothing and lose your motivation. Wherefore, *be careful and not too hasty.* For to learn the art of drawing, one must begin with small steps, and not leave anything before it has been well understood.'[119]

When one analyzes the signed and (sometimes) dated drawings by Van Hoogstraten after he had left Rembrandt's workshop, one is made aware that his *'careful and not too hasty'* advice matches Van Hoogstraten's own temperament as draughtsman and painter completely (fig. 30).

118 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 27: 'Ontwerpt het geheel van't geene gy voor hebt, eerst in zijn groote zwier, op uw papier: en schift dezelve wederom in grootachtige gedeeltens, 't zy gy een beeld in hooft, armen, lichaem, en beenen verdeelt, of verscheyde beelden in groepen onderscheyt, neem naerstich acht, hoe veel't eene gros van't ander in groote verschilt, en wat sprong en zwier alles tesamen maekt.
Want gy zult'er deelen in vinden, die rondachtich, vierkantich, driehoekich, langwerpich, of schuins van form zijn. Merk deeze gedaentens dan met een half schemerend oog aen, zonder op eenige kleinicheden te letten. Overzie in een tronie vry de byzondere leden, ten waer gy alleen met losse streeken de holachtige schaduwkens, van oogen, neus, of mond, die zich voornamentlijk vertoonen, aenweest; doch dat dit niet te vroeg, en buiten haer behoorlijke plaets geschiede. Deeze manier van in't gros te schetssen, is by de meeste op een onbedwonge wijze in't gebruik, [maer sommige hebben zich aengewent, met rechte streekjes, de voornaeme gedeeltens in vierkantachtige, langwerpige, en in hoekachtige formen, doch niet geheel toegehaelt, te begrijpen. Ik laet dit aen de keur des leerlings: maer] wat verder het ruw schetssen belangt, het is de eerste grontvest van't wel teykenen, en van zoo groot een belang, dat, wanneer het gros ofte geheel, wel en verstandich is aengeweezen, men daer door dikwils meer verrecht, als'er namaels met grooten arbeit kan werden uitgevoert. En even gelijk men zijn vriend van verre bespeurende, of by schemerlicht ontmoetende, strax als met het verstant zijn gedaente ziet, en bevat, zoo geeft een ruwe schets dikwils aen den kenders zoo grooten indruk, dat zy'er meer, dan dieze gemaekt heeft, in zien kunnen.'

119 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 28: 'Maer indien gy, ô leergierige jeugt, voorspoedich in de konst poogt te zijn, zoo zijt voorzichtich en langsaem; want wel doen is den wech tot ras doen. Maer wilt gy alles haestich, en by geluk aentasten, gy zult tot uw ongeluk mistasten, uwen arbeyt en tijt verquisten, niets leeren, en den lust verliezen. Dies, zoo zijt *voorsichtich en niet te haestich.* [Italics S.v.H.] Want om de Teykenkonst te leeren, moetmen met kleyne schreden beginnen, en van geen dingen afscheyden, voor men't wel begrepen heeft.'

The proportions of the human body

The idea that Rembrandt would have paid attention to any kind of systematic approach to the proportions of the human body may at first sight seem far-fetched. We usually associate such concerns with classicism, where submission to the rules of art was more the norm. Moreover, there is the much quoted passage from 1675 by Joachim von Sandrart, stating explicitly that Rembrandt

> 'was not afraid to turn his back on all our rules of art such as the rules of anatomy and human proportions […] asserting that one should solely bind oneself to nature and follow no other rules'.[120]

Sandrart was Rembrandt's fellow townsman between *c.* 1638 and '45 and must have closely followed the activities of his colleague and competitor in the Amsterdam art scene.

Rembrandt's representation of human figures in his works does indeed seem to have been determined exclusively by a free observation of the real world and by his power of imagination based on that. One would certainly expect therefore that this would hold for human proportions. At first sight this seems to be confirmed by a comparison of works such as those reproduced in figs. 32 and 33. The build and the proportions of the figures depicted in these etchings differ markedly from each other and apparently randomly.

But even if Rembrandt kept to no rule at all he could hardly have been unaware of the complexity of the question of human proportions. Merely the challenge of depicting adults in the company of children of different ages, such as he did, for instance, in the *Pancake woman* from 1635 (fig. 34), must have confronted Rembrandt with this problem in full measure. When one compares the tall stature of Christ in the *Hundred guilder print* with other figures in the crowd surrounding him (fig. 35) one can hardly avoid the conclusion that Rembrandt was fully aware of the significance of the different proportions he gave to the people he featured in his works.

A system of human proportions requires that there be regular ratios between the visible parts of the human body (see figs. 45-51). At this stage of the present argument, as a unit of measurement for expressing human proportions, I shall make use of the simplest ratio which has been employed ever since classical antiquity. This is the ratio between the length of the head (H, from crown to chin) and the length of the whole figure (body length – BL, including the head). Given Rembrandt's more or less sketchy way of working, and given the varied postures of the different figures, this ratio would not necessarily have been precise and in many cases no such calculations are possible. Nevertheless, allowing for a margin of error, this traditional ratio certainly provides a basic rule of thumb for investigating the way that Rembrandt dealt with human proportions.

Fig. 32. Rembrandt, *Death appearing to a wedded couple from the open grave*, *c.* 1639, etching 10.9 x 7.9 cm (detail) (B. 109)

Fig. 33. Rembrandt, *Beggars receiving alms at the door of a house*, 1648, etching 16.5 x 12.8 cm (detail) (B. 176)

120 'Demnach bliebe er beständig bey seinem angenommenen Brauch und scheuete sich nicht wider unsere Kunstreglen, als die Anatomia und Maas der menschlichen Gliedmaßen, (…) vorgebend, daß man sich einig und allein an die Natur und keine andere Regeln binden solle (…).' Sandrart 1675 (ed. Peltzer 1925), p. 202.

Fig. 34. Rembrandt, *Pancake Woman*, 1635, etching 10.9 x 7.7 cm (detail) (B. 124)

Fig. 35. Rembrandt, *Hundred guilder print*, *c.* 1648, etching 27.8 x 38.8 cm (detail) (B. 74).
See also p. 143

In the works mentioned above one finds a variation in the ratios H:BL of adult individuals between *c.* 1:6 (for the beggars in fig. 33) and *c.* 1:7.5 (for the couple in fig. 32). The *c.* 1:7.5 ratio is also found for Christ in the *Hundred guilder print*. For the small child in the foreground of the *Pancake Woman* (fig. 34) the ratio is *c.* 1:4. These considerable differences on the one hand, and the one correspondence on the other, suggest that the proportions of the human figure may indeed have been of interest to Rembrandt.

There are other reasons for assuming that Rembrandt must have been aware of the proportions he gave to his figures, reasons which will emerge in the course of this section.

First of all, in his *Grondt* Karel van Mander had devoted a chapter to the problem, under the title *Ἀναλογία, proportie of maat der ledematen van een menselijke figuur [Analogy, proportion or size of the members of the human body]*, implying that such knowledge was of importance for the painter. Rembrandt could have taken the idea from Van Mander's text that, apart from questions of practical use, a symbolic meaning could also be attached to the proportions of the human body, if only because Man, according to the Bible, had been created in God's image. In classical antiquity too, a symbolic or metaphoric significance was sometimes attached to the proportions of the human body, which could, for instance, be compared with a 'temple'. As Van Mander wrote:

> 'For according to him [Vitruvius] the human body and a temple are very comparable. This is in accordance with the words of the Lord, when he spoke of destroying the temple, alluding to the temple as his immaculate body. The form of the body of a righteous man, his unblemished body, is noble and marvellously constructed by nature with extraordinary ingenuity.'[121]

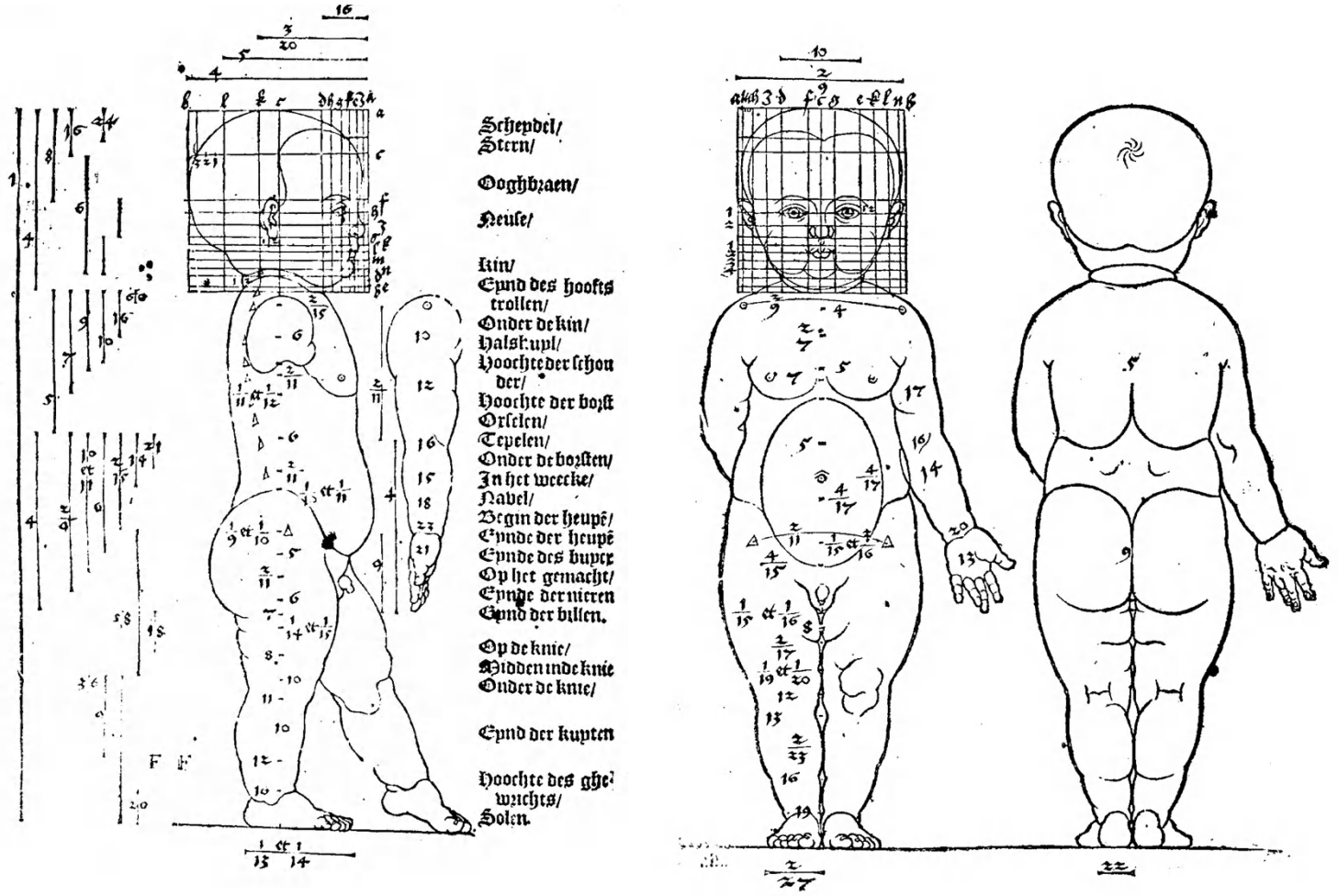
In Rembrandt's time the authority of classical antiquity still played an important role in this area. It was common knowledge that the Greek sculptor Polykleitos (active *c.* 450 – 420 BC) and Vitruvius (*c.* 80/70 BC – *c.* 25 BC), the Roman authority on architecture, had given a great deal of attention to this problem with the aim of providing a formula or canon of beauty. Their systems of relating the measurements of the different parts of the human body according to simple ratios had been transmitted over the centuries.
As Van Mander writes:

> 'Proportion, or the perfect mutual relation of dimensions, is (as Plutarch reports in this context) a beautiful and exalted adornment in nature. Vitruvius (who is, after all, naturally ingenious) called this proportion in architecture or in the human figure a constant agreement in the relations between the members [of the human body] or parts of the whole building when they are well designed, according to the rules of art.'[122]

121 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**2** Want nae zijn segghen zijn by een gheleken,/ Eens Menschen Lichaem, en Tempel bequame,/Dit accordeert wel met des Heeren spreken,/Daer hy seyde van den Tempel te breken,/En meende den Tempel zijn reyn Lichame:/De forme van eens Menschen lijf eersame/Is edel, en van Natuere te wonder,/Ghevoeght te samen met conste bysonder.'

122 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**1** Proporty, oft ghelijckmaticheyt puere,/Is (ghelijck Plutarhus verhaelt in reden)/Een schoon heerlijck cieraet in der Natuere,/Dees Proporty in ghebouw oft figuere,/Noemt Vitruvius (als Constigh van zeden)/Een seker over-een-comingh der leden,/Oft eyghenschappen als ghebouws in orden,/Als sy wel beleydt nae der Conste worden.'

Fig. 36. A. Dürer, *Van de Menschelijcke Proportion …*, 1622, Book I, pp. 64-65



As already mentioned, the most common relation between various dimensions within the human body was considered to be that between the length of the head and the whole body length. According to Van Mander, who closely followed Vitruvius in these matters:

> 'When one measures the length of the whole head, from crown to chin, one arrives at a one eighth part of the body's length; ….'[123]

He actually applied this ratio in his drawing of a man reproduced on fig. 21. As to the different ratios of various other parts of the human body, Van Mander provides a series of rules governing these relations. For instance:

> 'from where the hair begins to grow on the forehead to below the chin, [that part] which we call the face, is a tenth part of the whole body considered in its length; also the length of the hand, from [the point] where it bends from the arm to its extremity, i.e. measured to the end of the middle finger, will match and correspond exactly with the size of the face.'[124]

Two further examples should suffice to demonstrate the detail and thoroughness of his system, of which Rembrandt must have been aware

> '… the arm from the elbow joint to the end of the longest finger will always take one fourth part of the body's length, …'[125]

and Van Mander also rehearses here the common rule that is now more familiar to us from Leonardo's famous drawing:

> 'When a man lies flat and fully stretched, set the point of a long compass on the navel; then let the other point describe a circle, then you will just touch the toes and fingers.'[126]

123 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**4** Indien men de mate van den gheheelen/Hoofde meet, van kop tot kin, men sal vinden/T'achtste deel des Lichaems, ….'

124 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**3** Van daer t'hayr aen t'voorhooft begint te wassen,/Tot onder den kin, dat wy t'Aensicht nommen,/Is het thiende deel van des Lichaems massen,/In de lengde begrepen, oock sal passen/De lengde des handts, van daer sy can crommen,/Aen den aerem tot t'eynden uyt, en commen/Recht op de mate des aensichts, te weten,/Tot t'eynde des middel vinghers ghemeten.'

125 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**6** … Den arme van t'vouwen, oft elleboghen,/Tot t'eynden den langsten vingher, sal moghen/Altijt een vierde deel Lichaems bestrecken, …'

126 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**7** … Stelt op den navel t'punct van eenen langhen/Passer, daer eenich Mensch is plat gheleghen,/Gheheel uytghestreckt, laet dan gaen zijn weghen,/T'ander punct in't rondt, en een cirkel maken,/Iuyst suldy teen en vinghers eynden raken.'

Fig. 37. Rembrandt, *Mother and child, frightened by a dog*, *c.* 1635, pen and brown ink 10.5 x 10.1 cm (detail) (Ben. 403r). Paris, Fondation Custodia

Fig. 38. Rembrandt, *Woman with five children*, *c.* 1635, pen and brown ink 15.2 x 19.7 cm (detail) (Ben. 402). Formerly Bremen, Kunsthalle

Summarizing, Van Mander asserts that:

> 'The construction of the body has its fixed scheme.'[127]

However, the complexity of the interrelated proportions of all the parts of the human body that emerge from this doctrine of proportions was too much for the everyday workshop practice and certainly for an aspiring painter. Van Mander could see that.

> '… The working methods of the great painters or sculptors are all too unsuitable as footsteps for the young to follow. I have heard painters say: those who measure too much and keep measuring in the end never achieve anything special.'[128]

As a rule of thumb, Van Mander therefore proposes:

> 'to divide … from the person's head to the sole of his feet into eight heads, each head into four noses; that in my experience is quick and easy to measure.'[129]

Toward the end of his chapter on human proportions, Van Mander adds:

> '… now we turn to children: they are five heads high, but then correspondingly smaller [than adults]; there are three [down] to the loins, two for the thighs and lower legs.'[130]

to which he further adds the rule of thumb:

> '… Children (as Pliny says) have grown to half their length at three years of age'

and concludes

> 'Now, young painters, let this little [about human proportions] meet with your approval.'[131]

From the measurements given above taken from a number of Rembrandt's etchings one can infer that he did not adhere to Van Mander's time-honoured rule of thumb for the H:BL ratio of 1:8, nor his ratio of 1:5 for the child. Does this confirm Sandrart's remark that, when it came to proportions, Rembrandt worked entirely independently of any rule? It is a fact that to date the proportions of the human body in Rembrandt's work have never been the subject of any study. Apparently the question has always seemed irrelevant.

Apart from Vitruvius/Van Mander, however, there was another respected authority who could perhaps have been significant for Rembrandt: Albrecht Dürer. Ever since its publication in 1528, Dürer's work on human proportions had remained influential. At least, one gathers as much from Van Mander:

> '… Now there are [writers] who have assembled in books a great deal [of information] on proportioning; in particular Dürer, [who] cannot be bettered.'[132]

127 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**6** … Dus heeft t'Lijfs ghebouw zijn seker bestecken.'

128 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**10** … Groote Meesters oft Beeldtsnijders costuymen/
Zijn voor de Ieught al t'onvoeghlijcke spooren,/Ick hebbe den Schilders wel segghen hooren,/Die te veel meten, vast metende blijven,/En ten lesten niet besonders bedrijven.'

129 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**11** … Van des Menschen hooft op tot zijn voedtsolen/Acht hoofden, elck hooft van vier neusen zijnde,/Ick cort en gherieflijck te meten vinde.'

130 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**14** … Den Kinderen worden wy nu ghedachtich,/Vijf hoofden hooghe zijn sy in't vercleenen,/Tot schamelheyt dry, twee zijn dgye, en beenen.'

131 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**15** … Kinderen hebben (nae Plinij verclaren)/T'half ghewas van hen lengte ten dry Iaren:/Nu Schilder-jeuch, dit weynich zy u danckich, …'

132 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 3: '**9** … Nu zijnder die van t'Proportioneren/Seer veel hebben by een ghebracht in Boecken,/Bysonder Durerer, niet om vercloecken.'

Fig. 39. Rembrandt, *The naughty boy*, *c.* 1635, pen and brown ink and wash, 20.7 x 14.2 cm (detail)). Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 401)

But, despite this last laudatory remark, Van Mander approached the question of proportions very differently from Albrecht Dürer and no trace of the latter's ideas on proportion can be found in Van Mander's chapter just discussed. Dürer's '*Vier Bücher von Menschlicher Proportion*' [Four Books on Human Proportions] was published posthumously in 1528 in German and in 1534 in Latin. In 1622 a Dutch translation of this complex and richly illustrated book was published under the title '*Beschryvinghe van Albrecht Durer. Van de Menschelijcke Proportion. Begrepen in vier onderscheyden Boecken/zeer nut ende profijtelijck voor alle Lief-hebbers deser konste. In't Latijn ende Hooghduytsch, tot Nurenbergh ghedruct, … 1527 [sic] Ende nu in onse Nederlandtsche sprake overgheset, tot dienste der ghener die de konste beminnen, ende de Latijnsche ofte Hooghduytsche sprake niet en verstaen. Tot Arnhem, Ghedruckt by Jan Jansz. Boeckverkooper / In't Jaer ons Heeren 1622*' ('Albrecht Dürer's account of Human Proportions. Comprehended in four distinct Books / most useful and profitable for all Lovers of art. In both Latin and High German printed in Nuremburg.....And now translated into our Dutch language for those who love art but who understand neither Latin nor High German. Printed in Arnhem by Jan Jansz. Boeckverkooper / In the year of our Lord 1622').[133]

According to the 1656 inventory of his possessions, Rembrandt actually owned a tome with Dürer's *Four Books on Human Proportions*. One can hardly doubt that it must have been the Dutch translation, see also p. 137 in the present volume.[134]

In his book *The life and art of Albrecht Dürer* (1943) Erwin Panofsky included a masterly analysis of Dürer's work on the human proportions. Panofsky placed it in its historical context with such insight that it is enough here to refer the reader to his book.[135] For present purposes, it will suffice to take Panofsky's insights and the 1622 Dutch edition of Dürer's book as a basis from which to look for the possible influences of Dürer's work on Rembrandt in this area.

It is important to note first that Dürer's highly condensed texts in the first three Books, which deal specifically with human proportions, are almost exclusively restricted to discussions of his way of measuring and proportioning human bodies. (The fourth Book is devoted to systems of geometrising the human body in different postures.) At first sight it does not appear to be a book of instruction for painters. The Books originated, however, in the context of work on a never completed book which bore the working title *Speis der Malerknaben* [*Food for apprentices in the art of painting*], a book whose contents and function would have been comparable with the treatises by Karel van Mander and Samuel van Hoogstraten, which are analyzed in the present chapter. Dürer's unfinished book for the instruction of young painters was, however, conceived with a much greater ambition, as is testified by his *Four Books on Human Proportions* and the other fruit of this enormous effort, his *Unterweysung der Messung* [*Lessons in measuring*]. The title of the Dutch edition, which was owned by Rembrandt, stresses the book's usefulness. One can, therefore, well imagine that Rembrandt would have paid heed to certain measurements given in Book I, which at first sight would seem to be the most instructive of Dürer's *Books*.

In that Book the proportions of three types of men and women are measured, beginning with 'a thickset, rough peasant-type Man' and a 'sturdy peasant-type Woman' with the H:BL ratio of 1:7 (fig. 45), after which Dürer goes on to describe 'a Man who will be 8 times his head in height'[136] – thus conforming to the Vitruvian canon – and adds to this man 'a similar woman'. There then follow figures of 9 and 10 times the length of their head in height (fig. 46) (after which he deals with detailed measurements of heads and feet and a child, fig. 36). Whereas Van Mander holds the aspiring painter to the Vitruvian 1:8 rule, it is striking that in his Book I Dürer begins to differentiate between different types, a tendency that he develops further in Books II and III (figs. 47-49). In the course of his investigation, Dürer would measure hundreds of individuals. In Book II he deals with for a growing number of different types – up to 23 (figs. 48-49), while in Book III he develops methods to create endless variations on these types (fig. 47). From Book II onwards he has no further place for a regular H:BL ratio. He does, however, continue to make use of the possibilities offered by geometry. In this connection, Samuel van Hoogstraten's remark in Book 8 of his *Academy*, devoted to beauty, is telling. It is in fact a quotation translated

133 See also: Amy Golahny, *Rembrandt's reading. The artist's bookshelf of ancient poetry and history*, Amsterdam 2003, pp. 88-95.

134 Strauss *Doc.* 1656/12, no. 273: ''*t proportie boeck van Albert Durer, houtsnee'*.

135 E. Panofsky, *The life and art of Albrecht Dürer*, Princeton University Press 1943; edition used of 2005 with a new introduction by Jeffrey Chipps Smith, see esp. pp. 260-270. Panofsky's first investigations in this field were published in 1921 as 'Die Entwicklung der Proportionslehre als Abbild der Stilentwicklung', in: *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft* 14 (1921), pp. 188-219; and as 'The history of the theory of human proportions as a reflexion of the history of styles', in: *Meaning in the visual art*, New York, 1955, pp. 236-94. See Panofsky, *Dürer* (2005), p. XL, notes 13 and 10.

136 Dürer 1622, Book I, pp. 7, 11, 38: 'eenen dicken, groven boerschen Mensche'; 'een sterck Boerachtig wijf'; 'eenen Man beschrijven die zal 8. synder Hoofden langh worden'.

Fig. 40. Rembrandt, *Holy Family*, *c.* 1634, detail. Munich, Alte Pinakothek (II A 88)

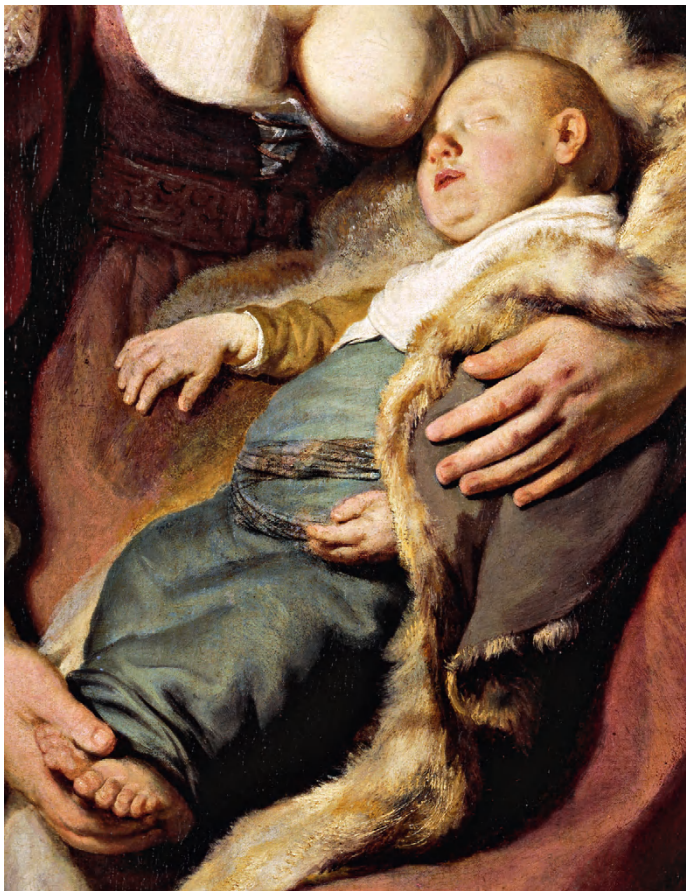


Fig. 41. Rembrandt, *The rape of Ganymede*, 1635, detail. Dresden, Gemäldegalerie (III A 113)

from Francis Bacon's essay *Of Beauty*.[137] Van Hoogstraten's text reads:

> 'One cannot say whether *Apelles*, or *Albert Durer*, was the crazier, one of whom [Dürer] wanted to make a figure of Geometrical proportions, while the other [Apelles, although it is usually Zeuxis who is named in this context] taking the best parts of various beautiful women [*schoonheiden*], thought he could form one [ideal figure] from them.'[138]

At this stage of my argument, it is important to note that Dürer's Book I ends with the measurements of a child. In contrast to the H:BL ratio of 1:5 given by Van Mander (cited above), Dürer's child measures 1:4 (fig. 36). Dürer represents only the proportions of a single child at just one particular stage of a child's growth. The reader may remember that the child in the foreground of the *Pancake Woman* of 1635 (see fig. 34) has the same H:BL ratio of 1:4. Conspicuously, in that very same period Rembrandt drew a large number of small children showing the same proportions (figs. 37, 38, 39). It may be significant here that the Christ child in Rembrandt's *Holy Family* in Munich from *c.* 1634 (fig. 40), and the *Ganymede* in Dresden dated 1635 (fig. 41), although somewhat foreshortened are, in Van Mander's words and in accordance with his rule, about 'five heads high'. Could this be seen as an indication that Rembrandt acquired or seriously consulted Dürer's book in the course of 1635?

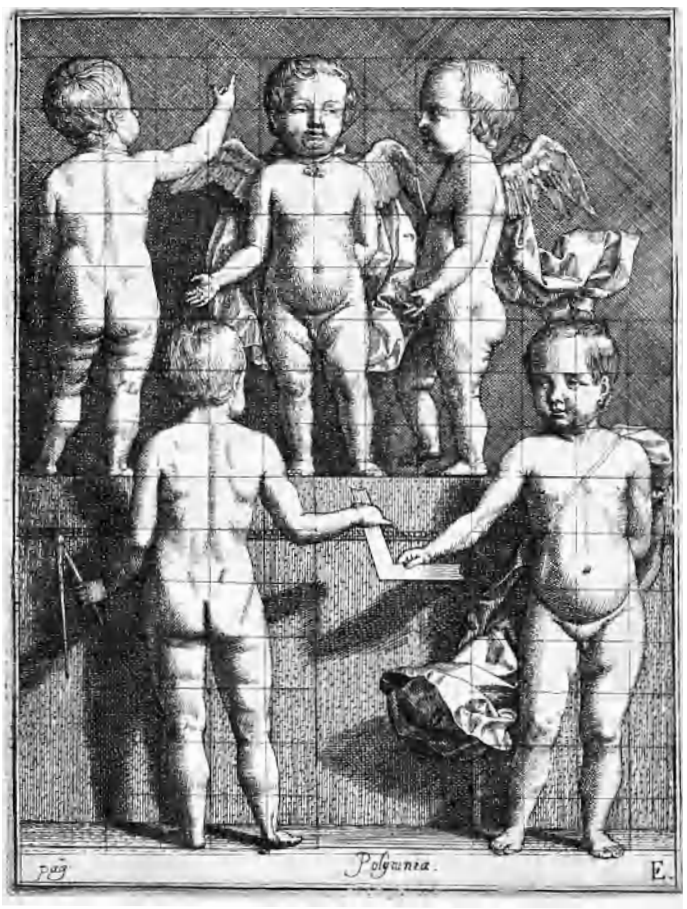
In his 1904 dissertation *Rembrandt und seine Umgebung*

137 Van Hoogstraten quotes Francis Bacon in his essay *Of Beauty* [in: *Essays, moral, economical and political by Francis Bacon, baron of Verulam, and viscount St. Albans*, London 1798, pp. 199-201]: 'There is no excellent beauty, that hath not some strangeness in the proportion. A man cannot tell whether Apelles, or Albert Durer, were the more trifler; whereof the one, would make a personage by geometrical proportions; the other, by taking the best parts out of divers faces, to make one excellent. Such personages, I think, would please nobody but the painter that made them. Not but I think a painter may make a better face than ever was; but he must do it by a kind of felicity, (as a musician that maketh an excellent air in music) and not by rule.' (I found the information on Bacon as the source of Van Hoogstraten's quotation in Anna Tummers' dissertation *The fingerprint of an old master. On connoisseurship of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish paintings: recent debates and seventeenth-century insights*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Amsterdam 2009, p. 188).
As will become evident below, Bacon had misunderstood Dürer's attempts. Dürer was not seeking the ideal proportions. On the contrary, he tried to do justice to the endless variation in human proportions, convinced that it is given to God alone to know ideal beauty.

138 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 279: 'Men kan niet weten of *Apelles*, of *Albert Durer*, grooter gek was, van welke de eene, een beeld van Geometrische proportien wilde maken, en d'ander de beste deelen van verscheyde schoonheden nemende, eene daer uit bestont te formeeren.'

Fig. 42. Rembrandt, *The pancake woman*, *c.* 1635, pen and brown ink, 10.7 x 14.2 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (Ben. 409)

Fig. 43. S. van Hoogstraten, *Hooge schoole* … p. 62



[Rembrandt and his environment], Valentiner saw in all these 1:4 children and in the *Ganymede* Rembrandt's small son Rombartus, who died at the age of two months in February 1636.[139] On the other hand, in his essay on Rembrandt's studio props, Bruyn believed he could identify an unknown putto as the model for Rembrandt's small children.[140] Here it is proposed that Dürer's first *Book on Human Proportions* (see note 133 and fig. 36) may provide the clue to the frequency with which Rembrandt around 1635 made drawings of small children with 1:4 proportions.

Fig. 44. S. van Hoogstraten, *Two women quarrelling*, 1650, pen and brown ink 18.5 x 14.2 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet

As already said, Dürer analyzed the proportions of a child in only one case. In view of the abundance of measurements made of adult individuals it is rather surprising that he did not attempt to establish the changes in length and concomitant changes in the proportional ratios in the growing child. Perhaps he did not consider the matter urgent. Apart from the Christ-child and comparable angels/putti there are hardly any further appearances of children in Dürer's own work. Painters who included children at different stages of development in their work were in practice very few. In the 17th century Jan Steen was one such exception, but Rembrandt had tackled this problem earlier, as can be seen in figs. 34 and fig. 42. Indeed, this may have influenced Van Hoogstraten to include in his sub-chapter on human proportions *two* putti at different stages of development, having H:BL ratios of 1:4 and 1:5 respectively (fig. 43). In a few works by Van Hoogstraten himself there appear differently proportioned children of clearly different ages (for example, a street scene with quarreling women from 1650, fig. 44).[141]

139 W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt und seine Umgebung*, Strassburg 1905, p. 29; Strauss *Doc.*, 1636/3. [Rombartus – born December 1635, died February 1636]

140 J. Bruyn, 'On Rembrandt's use of studio-props and model drawings during the 1630s', *Essays in Northern European Art presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on his sixtieth birthday*, Doornspijk 1983, pp. 52-60.

141 Sumowski *Drawings* III, no. 1111.

Fig. 45. A. Dürer, *Van de Menschelijcke Proportion* …, 1622, Book I, pp. 7 and 11; proportions of 'a thickset, rough, peasant-type Man' and a 'sturdy peasant-type Woman'

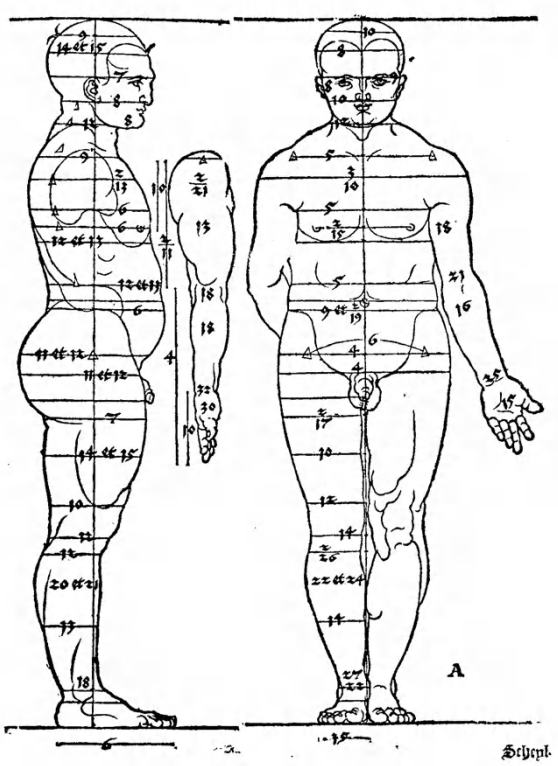


Fig. 46. A. Dürer, *Van de Menschelijcke Proportion* …, 1622, Book I, p. 38; 'a tall, thin man', 10 x the length of his head in height

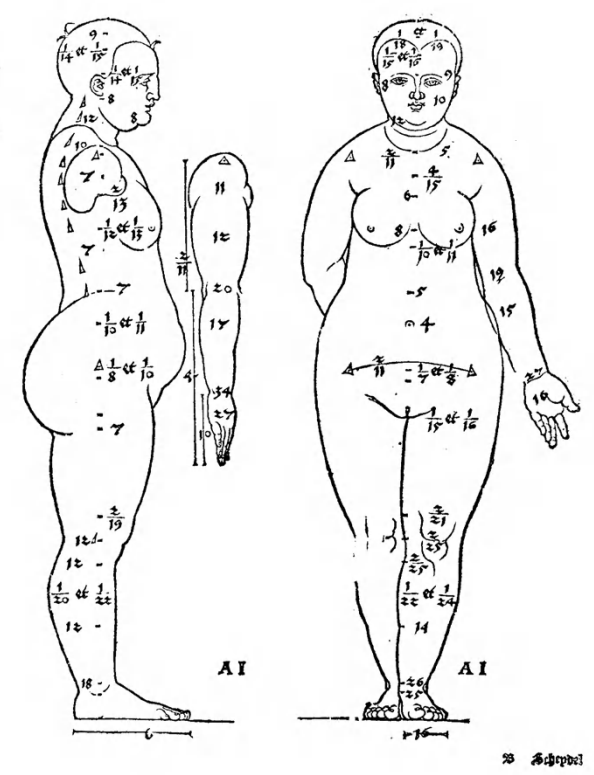
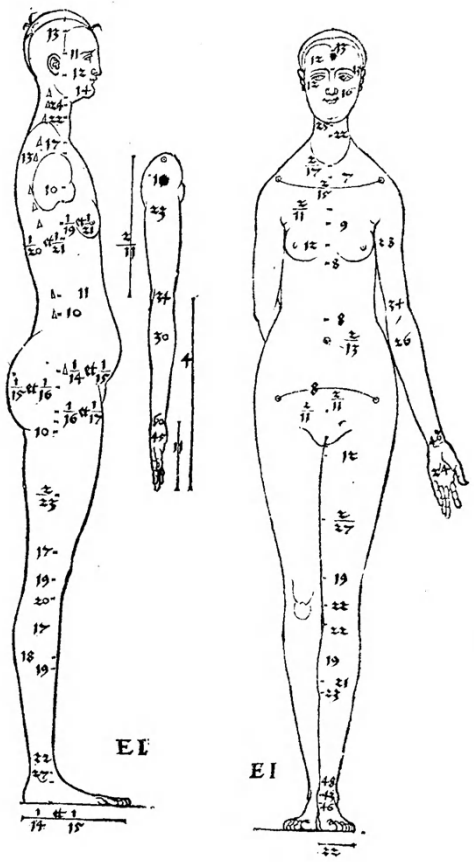


Fig. 47. A. Dürer, *Van de Menschelijcke Proportion* …, 1622, Book III, p. 212; 'tall woman' in proportions represented by the *"vervalscher"* method of production



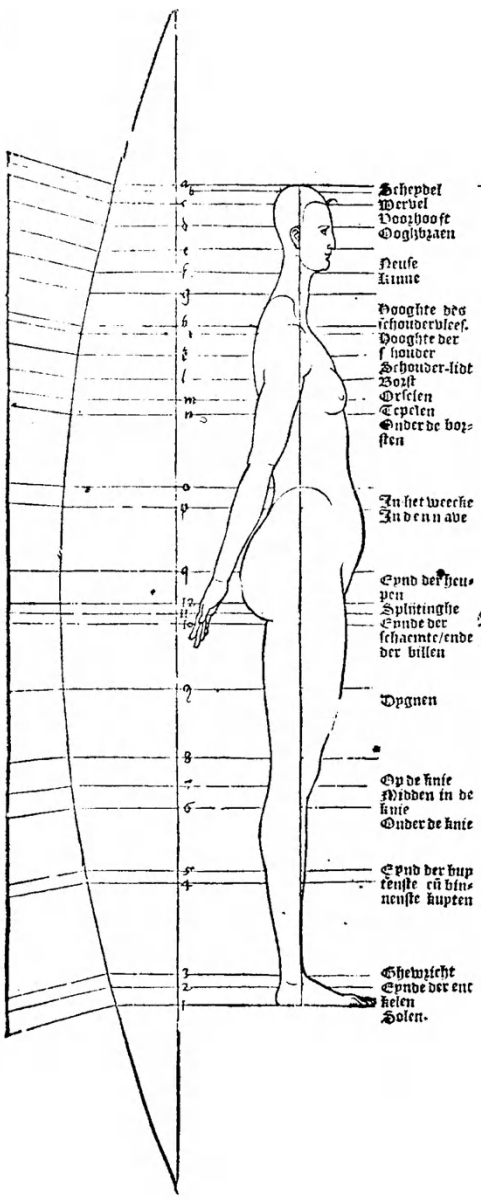


Fig. 48. A. Dürer, *Van de Menschelijcke Proportion* …, 1622, Book II, p. 71; 'a man of average height'

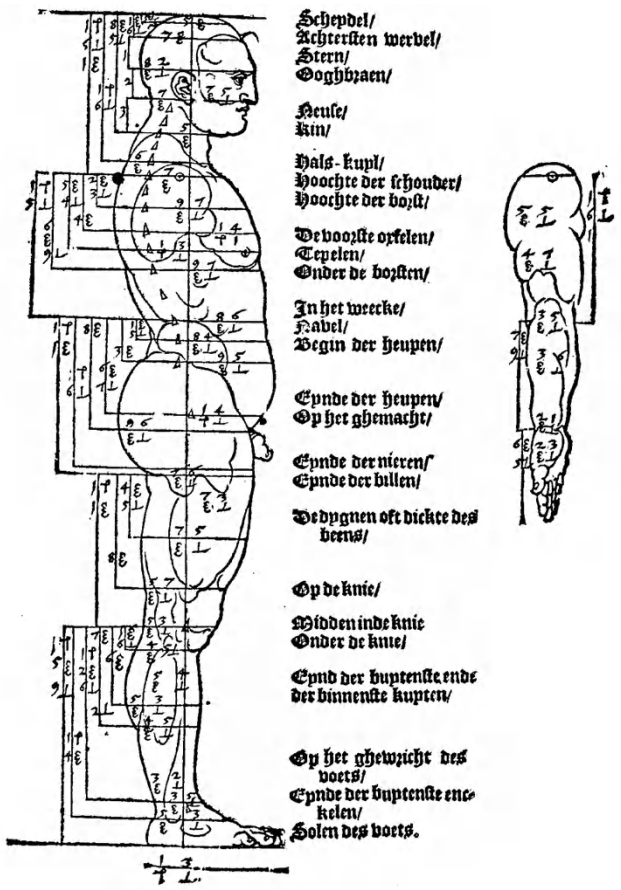
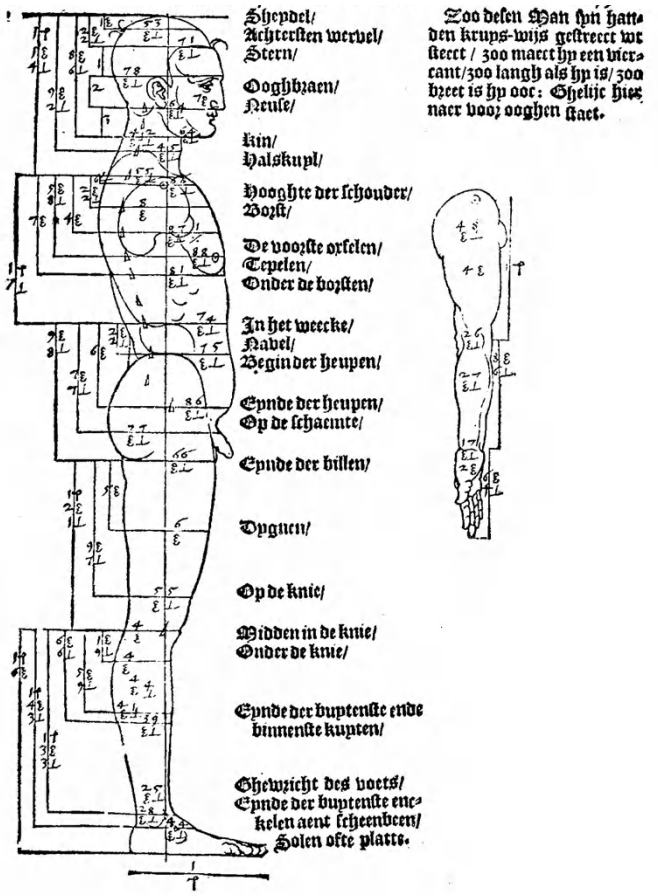


Fig. 49. A. Dürer, *Van de Menschelijcke Proportion* …, 1622, Book II, p. 79; 'another man of average height'



Dürer may have chosen a very young child for his measurements in accordance with the task, which in late mediaeval workshop practice was extremely common, of representing the Christ-child. As a cursory survey of the history of art on this point demonstrates, when it came to the question of the proportions of the Christ-child up to and including this period, chaos had reigned. His 1:4 child could have been meant to put an end to this chaos, although he makes no explicit claim to such an aim in his book. However, Hans Rupprich, one of the editors of Dürer's *Schriftlicher Nachlass* published in 1966, who analyzed all Dürer's earlier efforts to deal with the proportions of the child is convinced that Dürer's restricting himself to that single type of child has to do with his effort to codify the Christ-child's proportions.

Apart from the proportions of the small child, if Rembrandt learned anything else from Dürer, it was that the painter was free to choose the proportions of his figures as it suited a particular human type – from '*eenen dicken, groven boerschen Mensch*' ['a thickset, rough, peasant-type Man'] and '*een sterck boerachtig wijf*' ['a sturdy peasant-type woman'] (fig. 45) to 'a tall, thin man' (fig. 46) or a woman who is distorted with the help of a geometric construction as if she stands in front of a gigantic spherical mirror (fig. 47). But for Dürer the mean was ultimately the most acceptable solution. 'Between too much and too little there is a right mean; this thou must try to hit upon in all thy works.'[142] What Dürer sought were the proportions of a person of average size.

In Book I Dürer had restricted his measurements to figures with the H:BL ratios of 1:7, 8, 9, 10, but that first book – finished in 1523 – represents only an early stage in the development of his thought on the possible variations in human proportions. In Book II, which he began to work on much later, the first proportion measurements concern what Dürer calls 'an average man'[143] (fig. 48), followed by a woman which Dürer presents as follows: *'Now, after this man I shall describe an average [comparably proportioned] woman'*.[144] Dürer here abandons the H:BL system with whole number ratios derived from Vitruvius. Analysis of his measurements of these two figures shows that the man of this couple displays a H:BL ratio of *c.* 1:7.20, and the woman *c.* 1:7.35.

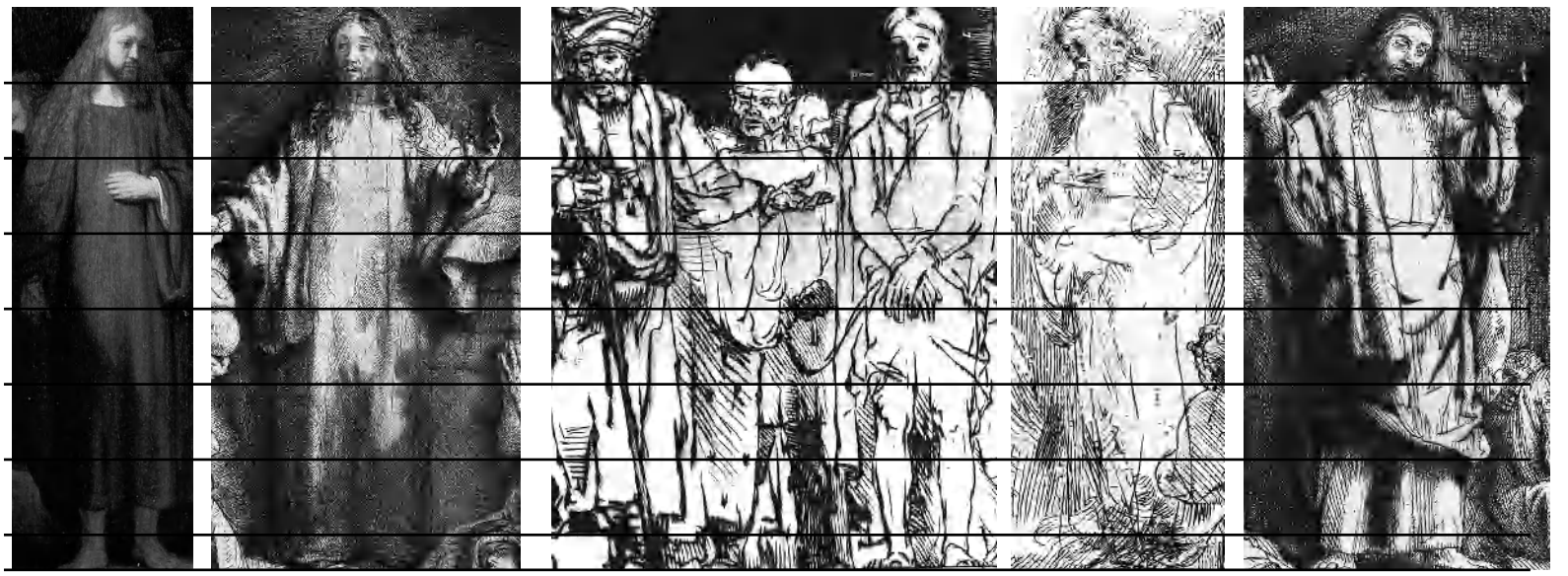
After what he calls 'average' people there comes a whole series of men and women that Dürer apparently also considered to be average. They fill all of Book II. These figures show only slightly different mutual differences in the measurements of the various parts of the body (compare figs. 48 and 49) and taken together an average H:BL ratio of *c.* 1:7.5. It is perhaps interesting to

142 Panofsky 2005, op. cit.[135], p. 276.

143 In the Dutch translation of 1622 (see note 133, pp 68-72): 'eenen middelmatigen man'.

144 In the Dutch translation of 1622 (see note 133, pp. 73-76): 'Nu wil ic volghens tot desen man een matigh wijf beschrijven'.

Fig. 50. Jesus Christ, '*average* [in height]' (*c.* 1:7.5)



quote Panofsky here: 'The Vier Bücher von Menschlicher Proportion – *translated into Latin by Dürer's friend Joachim Camerarius as early as 1532-34 and then into many modern European languages – laid the foundations of scientific anthropometry; but Michelangelo and a host of other Italian artists and theorists, in part misinterpreting Dürer's intentions but on the whole not without reason, called it a futile enterprise and a mere waste of time.*' [145]

It is important that this 'average man' is not presented as a new ideal, quasi Vitruvian norm. He is merely the result of measurements taken by one investigator, Albrecht Dürer – albeit from a large sample of individuals from his own environment. But these average men and women are no more than the product of a statistical investigation.

There was, however, one man described as of average height whose appearance was of the utmost importance for artists like Dürer and Rembrandt, and that was Jesus Christ.

During our first preliminary measurements it was found that not only Christ in the *Hundred guilder print* (fig. 4), but also the married couple in fig. 32 had a H:BL ratio of *c.* 1:7.5.

Whenever Rembrandt portrayed Christ full length, which happened a significant number of times, the approximate H:BL ratio of 1:7.5 was found each time (fig. 50).[146]

This remarkable constancy in the H:BL proportions of Christ in Rembrandt's works in which Christ is depicted standing full-length can be explained, but that explanation itself constitutes a forceful indication that the question of human proportions was one to which Rembrandt was not so indifferent as Sandrart suggested in his remark quoted on p. 35. Rembrandt probably thought he knew – as did the entire Christian world – what Christ had looked like. At any rate, there was a widely known, though spurious text, purportedly from the time of the Roman occupation of Judaea, which contains a detailed description of Christ's appearance. (Today thought to have originated in 13th-century Italy from painters' manuals giving a standard description of Christ's appearance.[147]) This text, a letter attributed to a (fictitious) Roman official by the name of Lentulus, is given below in the translation which Samuel van Hoogstraten reproduces in his book. Although only a single sentence is strictly relevant to the present purpose, the whole quotation is given to convey the sense of authority that the precise detail of this description must have conveyed to believers in Rembrandt's time.

'Whether it be truth or fiction', says Van Hoogstraten, 'Lentulus is said to have addressed the Roman Senate thus':

'Honourable Fathers! A man still living is known to us of great powers, named *Jesus Christ*, called by the people a Prophet of Truth, but his Disciples call him the Son of God, he raises the dead, and cures the sick. *In appearance he is noble, average [in height] but distinguished [aenzienlijk]* [curs. E.v.d.W.] his countenance instils great respect, such that his beholders must love and revere him; his hair is the colour of ripe hazelnut, parted above, in the style of the Nazarenes, smooth to the ears, but further below with round curls, shining yellow and falling from his shoulders; he has a smooth brow, his face is without spot or wrinkle, his cheeks are heightened by a pink colour, there is nothing on his body that could be censured; his beard is large and full, not long but forked in the middle; the gaze of his eyes shows simplicity, but tempered by maturity; his eyes are clear and awesome, never about to laugh, but more inclined to weep; he has straight hands, and his arms are exceptionally beautiful; he is a man of few words, and very well-mannered in all his dealings with others; and finally he is the finest of all men.'[148]

145 Panofsky 2005, op. cit.[135], p. 270.

146 Here, as in all other suggested comments on the way Rembrandt adhered to a constant ratio of head: full body length, allowance must be made for marginal differences of measurement, since one cannot assume that he calculated his ratios accurately using a ruler. Like Van Hoogstraten, he must have relied on the 'compass in the eye'.

147 Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Modern Apocrypha. Famous "biblical" hoaxes*, Boston, 1956.

148 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 105: 'Eerwaerdige Vaderen! ons is bekent en noch

According to this time-honoured description of Christ, he was

> 'of noble appearance […] average [in height] but distinguished'

Rembrandt faithfully and consistently follows the characterization of Christ as average [in height] in the sense that specific figures with whom his proportion may be compared, such as Peter in *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* (see cat. V 3), have the same proportions as Christ. Peter bows his head slightly, as a result of which Christ seems to stand out above him, in accordance with Van Mander's advice:

> 'The important figures must stand out [more prominently than the others], by having them standing on a higher level or sitting such that they rise above the others.'[149]

From the fact that Rembrandt's standing Christ figures always manifest the H:BL ratio of *c.* 1:7.5, and the fact that the Lentulus text describes Christ as of 'average height', we may infer that this was how Rembrandt envisaged the standard of a fine, well-built, man.

That the 1:7.5 ratio had acquired a certain currency in Rembrandt's own circle, without it being considered a canonical rule, would also seem to be shown by the fact that Samuel van Hoogstraten also gave his preference to this ratio, even though he subsequently gives his own reasons for this preparatory to his description of a print. Van Hoogstraten introduces as follows the measurements of two men, placed one behind the other, in three different positions, the foremost having a H:BL ratio of 1:7.5, the hindmost the traditional 1:8 ratio (fig. 51):

> 'But we shall take the trouble to measure a little more accurately a figure from three sides. The first, of a man whom we shall make seven and a half heads in height. I shall divide his whole length into fifteen half-head measures, or palms, […] We find remarkably that our body consists firstly of fifteen main parts: the head, the chest and the belly. Each leg [consisting] of thigh, shin and foot: and each arm of upper- and forearm and hand; which altogether makes fifteen.'[150]

In searching for the correct formula, however, Van Hoogstraten allows that others have very different ways of thinking about this question. Quite distinct from his own anthropometric approach (which was – like that of Rembrandt – based on Dürer's), some prefer to base their system of proportions on metaphorical associations. For instance, in the case of the 1:7.5 ratio:

> 'The *proportions* in a human body show a marvelous correspondence of the [different] parts, both in relation to themselves and to the whole. Some would like the ark, made by Noah under instruction from God, to have had [the same proportions] in common with the measurements of a human figure, laid stretched out on his back, for this is how the text reads, *three hundred cubits in length, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high:* which according to the proposition of our figures [shown] in the letter C (see fig. 51), would give a figure or form of fifteen palms length, two palms or two thumbs [inches] wide, whether from before or behind, and one palm and two inches deep, i.e. from the sides. It is true that this does not correspond with our figures here, since they are in one place wider and in another narrower: but the ark consisted of straight lines, and if one were to calculate in a human figure its widest and narrowest [measurements] together, one might thus possibly find the correspondence.'[151]

Just how arbitrary the chosen basis for a system of determining proportions must have seemed to Van Hoogstraten is apparent from the following rhymed example, intended to facilitate the 'young painter's' understanding. It follows on immediately after the text regarding the 1:7.5 ratio and is introduced by Van Hoogstraten as follows:

> 'But let us waste no more time here: for I wanted to be able to give young painters so short a report that they had finished before they knew it. I will give an example in this verse in which a figure of eight heads' height is outlined and divided in equal parts:

levende een mensche van grooter mogentheyt, met naeme *Jesus Christus*, een Profeet der waerheyt genoemt onder de volken, maer zijne Discipulen noemen hem den Zoone Godts, hy verwekt de dooden, en geneest de kranken. Van gedaente is hy edel, middelbaer, maer aenzienlijk; zijn gelaet is zeer eerwaerdich, zoo dat zijn aenschouwers hem moeten beminnen en ontzien; zijn hair is van rijpe hazelnoten verwe, boven, na gewoonte der *Nazareen*, gescheyden, en tot de ooren toe effen, maer voort nederwaerts rond krullende, geelachtich blinkende, en van zijne schouderen afwaejende; hy is schoon van voorhooft, zonder rimpel of vlekke in 't aengezicht; zijn wangen zijn versiert met Roozeverwe, hebbende niets aen zijn lichaem dat te berispen is; zijn baert is groot en overvloedich van hair, niet lang, maer in 't midden verdeelt; het opslach zijner oogen vertoont wel een simpelheyt, maer versiert met rypicheyt; zijn oogen zijn klaer en ontsachlijk, noyt bereyt tot lachen, maer tot weenen geneygt; hy heeft rechte handen, en zijn armen zijn overbehaeglijk; hy is spaerzaem in 't spreeken, en zeer manierlijk in al zijnen ommegang; en eyndelijk de schoonste onder alle menschen.'

149 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5: '**36** De heerlijcke Beelden sullen uytsteken,/In hoocheyt staend' oft sittende gheresen,/Boven die ander: en die hun aenspreken, …'

150 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 58: **'**Maer wy zullen de moeite neemen van een beelt van drie zijden eens wat keurlijker af te meeten. En voor eerst van een man, die wy zeven en een half hooft lang zullen maeken. Ik zal zijn geheele lengte in vijftien halfhooftmaeten of groote *Palmen* verdeylen, […]. Wy vinden, dat aenmerkelijk is, dat ons lichaem voor eerst in vijftien voornaeme deelen bestaet: als het hooft, de Borst en den buik. Yder been in Dgie, scheen en voet: en yder arm in boven-en onder Elleboog en Hand; 't welk vijftien samen is.'

151 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 57: 'De *maetschiklijkheit* in een menschelijk lichaem, is een wonderlijke overeenkoming der deelen, zoo onderling als met het geheel. Zommige willen, dat de Arke, die *Noach* uit het bevel Godts maekte, eenige gemeenschap zoude gehadt hebben met de maete eens menschen, die uitgestrekt op zijnen rug leyt, Want zoo luid den Text, *driehondert ellen zy de lengte*, *vijftich ellen de wijtte*, *en dertig ellen de hoogte*: 't welk, nae de stelling van onze beelden in de letter C, zoude uitmaken een figuer of gedaente van vijftien palmen lengte, van twee palm of twee duim breete, 't zy van vooren of van achteren, en van een palm en twee duim diepte, te weten van ter zijden. Dat nu onze beelden hier niet mede overeenkomen, om datze op d'een plaets breeder en op d'andere smalder zijn, is waer: maer de Arke bestont in rechte linien, en als men in een menschenbeelt zijn breetste en smalste te zamen reekende, zoo zoude d'overeenkomst mooglijk gevonden.'

Fig. 51. S. van Hoogstraten, *Hooge schoole* … 1678, p. 58

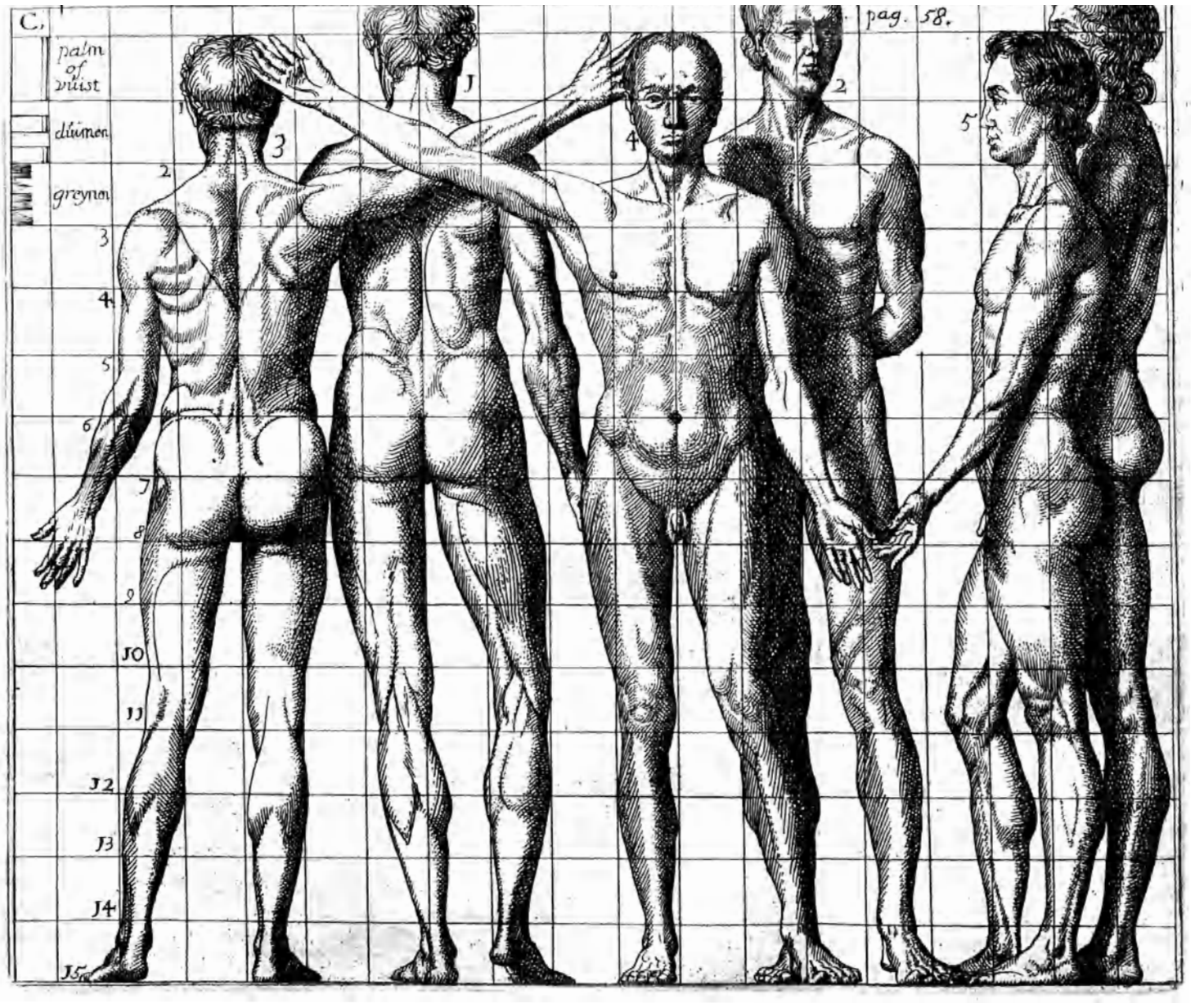


Fig. 52. S. van Hoogstraten, *The incredulity of Thomas*, 1649, panel 47 x 60 cm. Mainz, Mittelrheinisches Landesmuseum

One measures, according to the old way,
A figure eight heads tall,
First from crown to chin,
Then to [midway] between the nipples,
Third to the navel
The fourth to the pecker,
The fifth to half of the thigh
The sixth below the knee
The seventh to the shins
The eighth to the tip of the toes.'[152]

This verse is in fact an updated version of a verse in Van Mander's *Foundations*.[153]

Van Hoogstraten appears to use the 1:7.5 and 1:8 formulae interchangeably, with the sole difference that the 'eight heads' formula given in his verse is glossed 'according to the old way', thus corresponding to the Vitruvius/Van Mander standard. Rembrandt's choice of 1:7.5, which Samuel van Hoogstraten seems also to have adopted, should therefore implicitly be called 'the new way'. In this connection, it is interesting that, in his *Christ and his disciples*, painted while he was still working under the direct influence of Rembrandt, Van Hoogstraten gave his Christ figure the proportions of *c.* 1:8 (fig. 52).

Having tabulated series of measurements of the parts of the male and female body in a similar way to Albrecht Dürer, albeit much more concisely, he continues:

> 'This [i.e. the proportions of the figures illustrated in his etchings, see for instance figs. 43 and 51] should suffice here for example, he who would now put his [young painter's] mind further at ease, which I advise, should himself measure from life some [human] figures in the very light and simple manner proposed. For then he will observe what the difference is between a gross and a slender body.'[154]

And following a digression on the variable proportions of children of different ages (see fig. 43), he writes in the same spirit:

> 'He who puts his main practice into this part of the art, will see far enough through these spectacles [i.e. Hoogstraten's arguments and measurements] and it will be well worth his effort sometime to measure for himself living or dead (sic) children in their most important parts [i.e. dimensions]; and to see how they become more slender as they grow up. Children of three years, according to *Pliny*, have half their [future] length, but they become unequal [as they grow up.]'[155]

If it is all so flexible why does Van Hoogstraten nevertheless give such highly detailed drawings and tables in which he deals with all the parts of the human body? This was of course necessary because ideas over the proportions of the body embraced not only the ratio of head to body length, however fundamental that ratio was. A human figure is only credibly portrayed when, for example, the eyes are correctly placed in the face, or when the length of the arm in relation to the whole body, or the articulation of the finger bones with the hand, and the hand with the forearm etc. etc. is more or less correct. This interested not only Vitruvius, Dürer, Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten, it must also have interested Rembrandt, both in the context of his own work and in connection with the teaching of his pupils. For this reason alone it is important, thanks to Van Hoogstraten's text, to gain insight into the way in which the theoretical doctrine of body proportions was put into practice.

The way that Van Hoogstraten – and probably also Rembrandt – understood, and in all probability also used Dürer, becomes clear by the way that Van Hoogstraten quotes Dürer in his conclusion:

> 'Certainly he [Dürer] has shown that he took the investigation of *maetschiklijkheit* [i.e. proportions] seriously. And he answers those who question whether one should go to such trouble and devote so much time measuring all the figures in this way, since one often has to make [draw or paint] so many of them in a short time. I do not command it, but I teach the following, he said, that through diligence and hard work one should seek the confidence that rests on firm grounds: for no-one will demand the exact measurements of the body from such as have acquired wisdom as well as an assured hand. Because the eyes, being opened by art, begin to serve as a measuring rod, and the hand follows the art with a sure confidence, thus excluding mistakes. Skill follows on from this. And you, being steeped in knowledge, will not doubt what you do and will not soon need to move a point or a drawn line. Works of art that deserve praise are those that are not at all anxious, but are attractive and free, and are approved of

152 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 57: 'Maer laet ons hier geen tijdt mede verletten: want ik wilde wel dat ik de Schilderjeugt een zoo korten bericht kon geven, dat zy'er deur waren, eer zy 't wisten. Ik zal dan een proef doen met dit vaersje, daer een beelt van acht hoofden lang in wort afgeteekent, en in gelijke deelen verdeelt:
Men meet, nae d'oude gang,
Een beeldt acht hoofden lang,
Eerst van de kruin ter kin,
Voort tusschen tepels in,
Ten derden in den navel,
Ten vierden tot de snavel,
Ten vijfden halver dgie,
Ten zesten onder knie,
Ten zevenst' op de scheenen,
Ten achtsten 't eynd der beenen.'

153 K.v.M., *Grondt,* Cap. 3: '**12** … 'T'hooft van kop tot kin men voor een sal tellen,/Van kin tot mids tepels oock een van achten,/Van daer ten navel, voorts tot des gheslachten/Voort-teelich lidt is vier, d'ander vier moeten/Zijn, half dgie, knie, half schene, plant der voeten.'
('One counts the head from crown to chin as one/ from chin to midway between the nipples also one of eight/ thence to the navel, onward to the sexual parts/ the reproductive member is four, the other four [parts] must/ be to the half thigh , the knee, half shin, the sole of the feet.')

154 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 61: 'Dit zal hier mede genoeg zijn tot een proef, die nu zijnen geest verder poogt gerust te stellen, dien rade ik, dat hy zelf, op deze voorgestelde en zeer lichte manier, eenige beelden na't leven afmeet. Want dan zal hy 't onderscheyt, dat'er tusschen een grof en tenger lichaem is, gewaer worden.'

155 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 62: 'Die zijn voornaemste oeffening in dit deel der konst stelt, zal door deezen bril ver genoeg zien, en 't zal hem wel de moeite waert zijn, levende of doode kinderen zelfs eens in haere voornaemste deelen af te meeten; en te zien, hoedanich zy in't opgroeien verranken. De kinderen van drie jaren hebben, nae 't zeggen van *Plinius*, haer halve lengte, maer den vollen wasdom komt ongelijk.'

> by everyone. These cannot be produced by anyone inexperienced in the rules of art, even if they have obtained a freedom of hand. Yes, such a freedom should [actually] be considered as being fettered, because it leads to errors.'

The Dürer quote ends here. Van Hoogstraten continues:

> 'As far as we are concerned, I do not want to lead aspiring painters into too broad a side-alley. We recommend them to put on paper just a few figures, be it after the life or the best statues from classical antiquity, divided according to our method, into palms, inches and 'greynen' [one *greyn* is as long as a finger is wide] unless necessity demands a little more accuracy, which is seldom. So will their eyes, through this little opening [the exercise that Van Hoogstraten advises], find a measuring instrument which, lacking that of *Polikletus* [whose work on human proportions has been lost], will sufficiently support them, and enable them to look on nature with educated eyes. For he who wants to measure too much may forget himself.'[156]

The last – and most important – step in the practical application of what the young painter has learned in this way is appended to the passage on the varying proportions of children:

> '… So weighing everything carefully, I remain of my original opinion, that one must, through the habit of observation, see that one develops the compass in the eye: and that in [the matter of] making fine proportions one will achieve much more by doing than by talking: and that one will much better lead one's sight to judge well by learning from your faults rather than by always measuring.'[157]

And so we find ourselves where we began, with Sandrart's remark quoted on p # (note 1), on Rembrandt's position as to 'the rules of human proportion' and his assertion that one should bind oneself solely to nature. This excursion into the world of human proportion, however, may also have taught us that Rembrandt was certainly not indifferent to this question, but rather that – except when it came to representing Christ, whether as child or adult – the artist was free to choose the proportions of his figures freely, as long as he had the measuring instrument in his eye. He needed no authority (such as Van Mander) in this field. But if he needed to defend the choice he had made, he could refer to Albrecht Dürer's measurements and ideas as his authority for the choice 'to bind oneself to nature and follow no other rules.'

Fig. 53. Rembrandt, *A child being taught to walk*, *c.* 1656 pen and brown ink on brownish-cream paper, 9.3 x 15.4 cm. London, The British Museum (Ben. 1169)

156 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 63: 'Zeeker hy heeft betoont, dat hem het onderzoek der maetschiklijkheit ernst was. En hy antwoort de geene, die zeggen, of men dan zoo veel moeiten zal doen, en zoo veel tijdt aenwenden, om alle beelden dus af te meeten, daer men'er dikwils in kleynen tijdt veele moet maeken? Wy gebieden dit niet, maer dit leere ik, zeyt hy, dat men door vlijt en naersticheyt eenige gewisheyt, die op vaste reeden steunt, behoort te zoeken: want van zulk eenen, die die gewisheyt nevens een verzekerde hand verkregen heeft, zal niemant der lichaemen afmeetingen afvorderen. Want de oogen, door de konst bereyt zijnde, vangen aen een Regel te zijn, en de hand volgt de konst met een verzekert betrouwen, en sluit de dwalingen uit. Hier op volgt dan vaerdigheyt. En gy, van kennisse doordrenkt zijnde, zult niet twijffelen wat gy doen zult, noch lichtelijk een punt, of getrokken linie verzetten. Zoodanige konstwerken verdienen lof, die geensins angstich, maer lieflijk en vry zijn, en worden by yder een voor goet gekeurt. Deeze kunnen van geen onervaerene in de regels der konst voortkomen, al schoonze de vryheyt van de hand bekomen hebben. Ja zulk een vryheyt is een geboeitheyt te achten, dewijl ze tot dwalinge uitspat. Wat ons aengaet, wy en willen de Schilderjeugt ook in geen te wijden zijdweg leyden. Wy beveelen hen alleen eenige weynige beelden, 't zy nae't leven, of na de beste Statuën der ouden, op onze maniere verdeelt, in Palmen, duimen en greynen, op't papier te brengen: 't en waere de noodt iet naeukeurigers, dat zelden voorvalt, vereyschte. Zoo zullen haere oogen door deeze weynige opening een regel vinden, die haer, by gebrek van die van *Polikletus*, genoeg zal ondersteunen, en bequaem maken om de natuer met verlichte oogen aan te zien. Want die te veel wil meeten, mocht zich zelf vergeten.'

157 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 63: 'Dus dan alles wel rijpelijk overweegende, zoo blijf ik noch in mijn eerste gevoelen, datmen den passer, door gewoonte van opmerken, in het oog moet zien te krijgen: en datmen in schoone proportien te maken, veel hooger zal geraeken door doen, dan door zeggen: en dat men het gezicht veel beeter tot een goed oordeel zal brengen, door de misflagen af te zien, dan altijt af te meeten.'

The *houding* (comportment, posture and movement) of the human figure

It is telling that Karel van Mander gives separate chapters to the various basic aspects of the art of painting which in Samuel van Hoogstraten's *Academy* are integrated into the single, larger context of the most central theme of his book: history painting. One of these *gronden* is that of the *houding* of the human figure, with which we are concerned here. According to Van Mander's theory of art, the bearing or attitude of the human figure is a matter governed by a separate, autonomous aesthetic that is largely independent of the context in which the person is depicted. This approach to the human figure is of course characteristic of Mannerism, of which Van Mander was a (late) exponent (see figs. 54, 60, 90). In the relevant chapter Van Mander wants to

> '… establish definite rules and fixed laws, which through frequent close observation, nature with reason has made known to us, so that we do not find ourselves ignorantly following a design of postures without fixed measures, rules or prescriptions.'[158]

While it is true that Van Mander asserts that these laws and rules are revealed to us by *'nature with reason'*, it should however also be said that a significant number of these rules had already been laid down in the formulae of classical antiquity. In his long list of recommendations, a major role is given to *welstandigheid* – a natural and easy comportment – deriving from the bearing of head, shoulders, arms, hips and feet, especially in their relation to the vertical axis from the throat to the mid-point of the foot on which most of the figures weight rests:

> 'To construct a standing figure we can draw a straight line from above to below, as though with a plumbline. This will be established like the string of a bow to prevent the body deviating out of line; from the pit of the throat it must arrive at the mid-point of the ankle of the weight-bearing foot. So can we construct a firmly standing figure.'[159] (fig. 54 and p. 29, fig. 21)

Or, in other words:

> 'For see, the human figure can be compared with a pillar in its bearing and constitution; and because the head, as the heaviest part of the body, has to be borne by the body, the foot must correctly stand [directly] under it as a base; and thus [the foot] on which the weight falls, this bears the head so directly that, if one passes downward [from the head] one can draw a plumb line between the two.'[160]

Fig. 54. Karel van Mander, *The continence of Scipio,* 1600, copper 44 x 79 cm. (detail) Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

This rule, based on the observation of reality according to Van Mander, had been part of the aesthetic underlying the arts of sculpture and painting in classical antiquity, which had its renaissance at the hands of Michelangelo and Raphael, for example, and, according to Van Mander,

> ' can be observed in particular in the finely sculpted works of Giambologna.'[161]

Van Mander gives a detailed treatment of other rules, such as the following:

> '… , the face must be turned toward the arm that is extended forwards.'[162]

All these rules are applied in the service of the *welstandigheid* which is reiterated as the norm not only for standing figures, but also *mutatis mutandis* for figures sitting or in other poses.

158 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 4: '**4** ... Ghewisse regulen en vaste Wetten,/Die door veel deelen waernemich opletten/Ons de Natuer heeft vercondicht met reden,/Op dat wy onwetende niet en treden/In eenich stelsel der postueren, buyten/Ghewisse maten, rechten en statuyten.'

159 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 4: '**5** Om een staende Beeldt te planten, wy moghen/ Een rechte liny, als op loot ghewichte,/Van boven nederwaert brenghen ghetoghen,/Dese sal zijn als de Pese des Boghen,/Teghen t'uytswancken des Corpus ghestichte,/En sal uyt den keel-put af dalen dichte,/Tusschen den last-draghenden voets aenclauwen,/Soo moghen wy vast een staende Beeldt bauwen.'

160 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 4: '**6** Want siet, den Mensch end' een Colomne tsamen/Worden in standt en stellinghe gheleken,/En t'hooft als het swaerste let des Lichamen/Met t'lijf ondersteunt zijnde, moet betamen/Den voet voor Basis daer onder ghesteken,/En dan op welcken den last comt ghestreken,/Die draeght het hooft, soo recht, datmen in't dalen/Een lootstreke tusschen beyden mocht halen.'

161 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 4: '**12** … Is sulcken aerdt oock bysonder te mercken,/ Aen Bolongen wel gheschulpeerde wercken.'

162 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 4: '**11** ..., soo sal haer de troenge weynden/naer den arem, die men voor uyt sal seynden.'

Fig. 55. Rembrandt, *John the Baptist preaching*, 1634/35, canvas 62.7 x 81.1 cm (detail). Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (III A 106)

Subsequently Van Mander summarizes a series of less satisfactory postures and comportments.

> 'Thus we could enumerate yet more unsatisfactory comportments of a figure – as far as we know them; for instance when a figure sits with the feet splayed on either side and the knees consequently turned inward towards each other. That is not to be recommended; to achieve an easy comportment, it is better to allow the knees to spread out, and to have the heels turned inward. But to separate the feet of a woman too widely, whether she is standing or sitting, [but] mainly standing, is to sin against [the rules of] comportment, which demand that the feet should stand close together, for the sake of modesty. Further, one should sometimes avoid foreshortening faces or suchlike where the effect is ungainly; for too much of this produces a rather ungraceful effect.'[163]

Where subsequently the text deals with variations in age, sex and the depiction of activities and moods:

> '…., all figures should produce an effect befitting the strength and the spirit of each person, and also their activity, …'[164]

But all Van Mander's efforts in these case are in the last instance aimed at

> 'avoiding an ungracious pose.'[165]

Rembrandt's conception of the drawn, etched or painted human figure differs fundamentally. Far from following Van Mander's rules, his figures seem to be determined by a realism, based on observation, which eschews any form of idealization (figs. 55 and 58).

In not a single instance of his standing figures can one find any echo of Van Mander's advice on comportment or gracefulness. The classical principle of a taut standing leg, which bears the body's weight, and the other free leg appears to have been forgotten or, more probably, to been consciously disavowed. With Rembrandt, the plumb line that according to Van Mander's recommendation should run from the 'pit of the throat' to the mid-point of the weight-bearing foot usually finishes *between* the feet. The gracefulness advocated by Van Mander, which was in fact a Mediterraneaen ease (if not an indolent elegance) is foreign to Rembrandt's figures. They are all in action even when standing still, because they are participating in some action, part of some event. They seldom show an easy comportment and on the whole no gracious poses, but their postures are usually effective.

This effectiveness is emphatically recommended in Van Hoogstraten's chapter 9 in Book III. The title of that chapter – *Of the action in the Historical incident, the second part of the second observation* – immediately raises the question: what is the first and what is the second observation? And then what is the first part and what is the second part of the second observation? As so often, Van Hoogstraten here shows himself to be a somewhat pedantic teacher.

In this systematized framework, it would seem that the 'first observation' concerns the recognizability of the protagonists in history pieces, in which not only the whole figure, the face and hairstyle may be relevant, but also dress and attributes. As a history painter, Rembrandt was assumed to have had such knowledge.[166] As a teacher he must have emphasided its importance.

The 'second observation' concerns the role these figures – recognizably depicted – play in a particular scene from the story concerned. To get an adequate idea of this whole construct it is worth pointing out that Van Hoogstraten also distinguishes a 'third observation':

> '*Erato* [the muse concerned] will further teach us the third observation in its turn, and show us how one must characterize the time and the place and whatever else belongs to the situation, as required by the intended scene.'[167]

163 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 4: '**18** Dus moghen wy noch meer (naer onsen weten)/ Eens Beeldts onwelstandicheden hier nommen,/Ghelijck wanneer een bootse is gheseten/Met de voeten ter sijden uyt ghesmeten,/En de knyen inwaert nae malcander crommen,/Wort niet ghepresen, maer t'sal beter commen,/De knyen van een uytwaert te laten schieten,/En d'hielen inwaert, om welstants ghenieten./**19** Doch te maken de voeten van een Vrouwe/Al te wijt van een ghestaen oft gheleghen,/Sonderlinghe staend', is ghedaen ontrouwe/Teghen den welstandt, vereysschende nauwe/De voeten by een, van eerbaerheyts weghen:/Dan moet men oock mijden somwijlen, teghen/Welstandt trongen oft soo yet te vercorten,/Want sulcx te veel doet cleyn gracy uytstorten.'

164 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 4: '**40** Summa, nae Persoons crachten en ghemoeden/Sullen dan alle bootsen zijn bevonden,/Oock nae hun doen, …'

165 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 4: '**21** ... Om eenen oncierlijcken standt t'ontduycken.'

166 One example will suffice here: the passage concerning Christ. Van Hoogstraten writes that Christ – according to the witness of the Roman Lentulus – is described as noble, of average height, yet distinguished (see also p. 44). The description continues with details of the way his hair is worn, his beard, forehead, his complexion and so on.

167 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 121: '*Erato* zal ons dan wijders de derde waerneming op haer beurt leeren, en te kennen geven, hoemen tijdt, en plaets, en wat meer tot de omstandicheden behoort, na vereysch der voorgenome geschiedenis, moet onderscheyden.'

Fig. 56. Rembrandt, *Jacob mourning at the sight of Joseph's bloody coat*, *c.* 1635-37, pen and brush and brown ink, 17.4 x 15.5 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 95)

Fig. 57a + b. S. van Hoogstraten, *Sketches with studies for a 'Lamentation over Abel'*, *c.* 1646, pen and brown ink, 7.7 x 4.6 cm. Present whereabouts unknown (Sumowski *Drawings* V, no. 1170[x])

The 'second observation' under discussion here falls into two parts. Part one concerns the affects as shown by the facial expressions of the staged figures (see pp. 68-69); while the second part, under consideration here, mainly concerns the affects as manifest in the body postures and gestures of the protagonists involved in a scene, of which Van Hoogstraten says:

> 'Now that one has in mind a single figure, or many together, one must take care that one only shows a momentary movement, which principally expresses the action of the story; ….'[168]

Clarifying this further, Van Hoogstraten then adds:

> 'Here what is above all required is that the actions or movements of the bodies correspond with the excitement of the emotions, even where almost stationary situations are depicted, …'[169] (figs. 56 and 57 a,b).

The way different parts of the body play their roles in this can vary: for instance, the different positions of the head, or the multiplicity of gestures that can be made by the hands. Van Hoogstraten says that

> 'As far as the hands are concerned, all the deeds or actions are principally worked out by these, indeed the same movements are almost comparable to normal speech [see for instance pp. 152-153 and 166-167]. They desire and promise, they demand, they deny, they display joy, sorrow, regret, recognition, fear and horror : yes, even number, size, time and yet more than one can think of; …' [170]

In this language of gestures, according to Van Hoogstraten, the left and right hand and the different fingers have distinctly different significance. The body as a whole, the breast, even the breathing are all to be employed as means of rendering the protagonist convincingly.

Nowhere in the chapter in Van Hoogstraten's Book III quoted here is there any mention of the natural comportment or gracefulness that played such a major role in Karel van Mander's treatment of the standing, sitting or moving person – for Van Hoogstraten it seems that the effectiveness of the body language takes first priority just as much as it does with Rembrandt. With both of them, the issue seems to be solely

> 'That every movement should correspond with the impulse of the emotions, ….'[171]

Is this once again the transformation of one of Van Mander's *gronden* that we find in Van Hoogstraten? It would seem to be a transformation which could have stemmed directly from Rembrandt's influence, subsequently articulated by Van Hoogstraten in his *Academy of the Art of Painting* – and yet in the end this transformation seems to have gone too far for Van Hoogstraten. It is as though, in the eighth book devoted to Beauty, in the chapter titled *Guiding the Dance: the ease of comportment and graceful movement in*

168 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 116: 'Het zy nu, datmen een enkel beelt, of veele te zamen voor hebbe, men moet toezien, datmen alleenlijk een oogenblikkige beweeging, welke voornamentlijk de daed der Historie uitdrukt, vertoone; …'

169 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 116: 'Hier vereyscht dan voor al, dat de doeningen of beweegingen des lichaems met de lydingen des gemoeds overeenkomen, al waert zelf in byna stilstaende vertooningen, …'

170 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 117/118: 'Wat de handen belangt, door dezelve worden voornamentlijk alle daden ofte doeningen uitgewerkt, ja der zelver beweegingen zijn byna by een algemeene spraeke te vergelijken. Zij begeeren en belooven, zy vragen, zy weygeren, zy betoonen vreugde, droefheit, leetweezen, erkentenis, vreeze en gruwel: ja zelfs ook getal, mate, tijdt, en wat noch meer bedacht kan worden; …' (figs. 58 and 59).

171 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 116, second marginal text: 'Dat elks beweeging met de drift des gemoeds over een kome, …'

Fig. 58. Rembrandt, *Samson betrayed by Delilah*, 1629/30, panel 61.3 x 50.1 cm (detail). Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (I A 24)

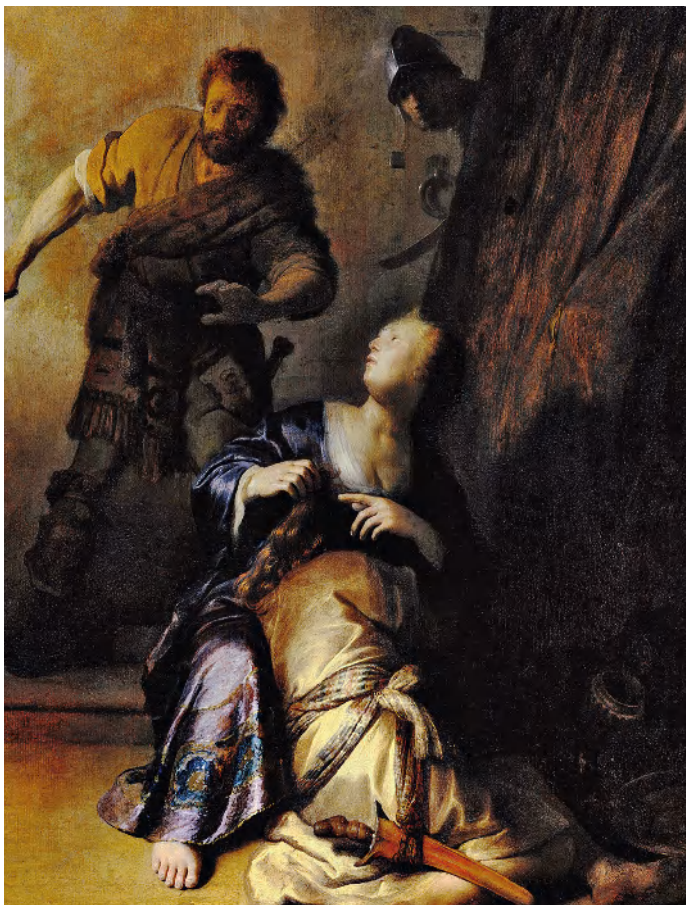


Fig. 59. Attr. To S. van Hoogstraten, *Manoah's sacrifice*, canvas 203 x 156 cm. USA, private collection (Sumowski *Gemälde* II, no. 834)

Paintings, or in other words Gracefulness in various actions, he feels compelled to reintroduce order into the school by the backdoor. There he writes:

> 'For even though one has fully understood the passions, and the physical actions, a skilled manner of rendering them is still required, to present the images as graciously as possible.'[172] (fig. 59).

And after discussing several historical individuals who moved extremely graciously he continues,

> 'If then this grace is so pleasing in living movements, how essential must it be considered in our art, where gracefulness is so important.'[173]

And a little further on Van Hoogstraten decrees that:

> 'Thus is it also with Painters, they do not stir the passions if they omit this gracious movement ('deze beweeglijkheyt'), and this will usually happen when they either ignore or fail to understand this art which we call the 'Guiding of the Dance'.'[174]

Nevertheless, Van Hoogstraten thinks that

> 'the practioner of art must turn to living nature to see how far he is permitted to go in movements.'[175]

But this latter advice is given in the context of 'avoiding stiffness [in a figure].'[176]

Thus, with regard to this basic aspect of the art of painting, this *grond* concerning the human posture, attitude and expressive movement, we also see how the ideas practised by Rembrandt and articulated by Van Hoogstraten in his book, are set out side by side with those practised and explicated by Van Hoogstraten himself, in such a way that it would seem possible to glimpse Rembrandt's own, personal art-theory.

172 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 292: 'Want schoon men de hartstochten, en de doeningen des lichaems al wel begrepen heeft, zoo wort'er noch een kunstige wijze van vertoonen vereyscht, om de beelden op't graesselijkst voor te doen.'

173 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 292: 'Is dan deze gratie zoo aengenaem in de levende beweegingen, hoe nootzakelijk moet ze dan in onze konst geacht worden, daer de bevallijkheyt zoo vorderlijk is.'

174 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 293: 'Zoo is't ook met de Schilders, zy beroeren 't gemoed niet, zooze deeze beweeglijkheyt overslaen, en dit zal hen gemeenelijk gebeuren, wanneer ze deeze kunst, die wy de Dansleyding noemen, of verzuimt of niet verstaen hebben.'

175 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 294: '… zoo moet een konstoeffenaer zich tot de leevende natuur keeren, en zien, hoe ver het hem in de beweegingen geoorloft is te gaen.'

176 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 294, in a marginal note: 'En stijvigheyt te mijden.'

Ordonnance and Invention

Although the 17th-century Dutch verb 'ordineren' [to bring order] and the cognate term 'ordinantie' (ordonnance), used with reference to the art of painting, are closely related to the present-day 'compositie' (composition), the concepts are not entirely identical. 'Ordineren' mainly referred to the disposition or arrangement of figures, animals or objects etc. rather to the formal organization – the ordering and division – of the image in its two-dimensional aspect. The difference can partly be explained by the fact that, in Rembrandt's time, the art of painting was always *primarily* conceived as the creation of a three-dimensional illusion on a flat surface, whereas in late 19th- and the 20th-century avant-garde movements the surface of the painting was increasingly considered autonomous in a two dimensional sense. But the difference between the two terms is gradual rather than clear-cut. In the following the term 'composition' will occasionally be used, but only in this formal sense.

The question of terminology, however, can become more complicated than this when it comes to discussing the arrangement of a scene. We know a text by Rembrandt himself in which he uses the word 'vervouchen' (see also p. 241), a term that would seem to be synonymous with 'ordineren'. Christian Tümpel translated 'vervouchen' as 'to compose', interpreting it as an art- theoretical term which refers to 'formal composition as well as iconographic organisation'.[177]

The word '(ver)vouchen' (or 'vervoegen') also occurs in another text that deals with the disposition of figures in a given scene. In discussing the question of whether or not Rembrandt consistently worked from nature Arnold Houbraken noted:

> 'In order to clarify this question concerning working from the life, I say the following […] one must have in advance a fixed mental image of the whole design that one wants to make, of which one cannot form a complete mental picture unless one knows and is familiar with what is required to make such a work of art as one imagines it: that is, the disposition ('schikking') of figures *and how they will go suitably (voeglijk) together* […] before starting to paint after the life.'[178]

Here the word 'voeglijk' is used in a way meaning 'suitability' rather than referring to composition or ordonnance. Houbraken appears to replace these two latter terms by 'schikking' [arrangement], a word that Van Hoogstraten also uses, but then it seems for aspects of Rembrandt's way of composing the relation of lit to shaded parts of the composition. In the following, the much more frequently used term 'ordineren' and ordonnance will generally be used and 'schikken' when Van Hoogstraten used it to discuss Rembrandt's way of dealing with light and shadow.

There are considerable differences between the texts that van Mander and Samuel van Hoogstraten devoted to the topic of ordonnance. Van Mander is as usual more prescriptive in formulating his advice, whereas in Van Hoogstraten's text there is a more ambitious reach; the problem is referred to in wider categories (with the appropriate terminology). And more importantly, Van Hoogstraten explicitly pays ample attention to the mental activity and the personal inclinations of the (aspiring) artist regarding this aspect of the painter's art. His text is of the utmost significance for our investigation of Rembrandt's art theory because, without actually mentioning his name, Rembrandt's way of arranging a composition is discussed by Van Hoogstraten on several occasions beside his much-quoted digression on the composition of the *Nightwatch,* where he does of course mention Rembrandt explicitely. Van Hoogstraten's text, often highly complicated, contains several passages that have not previously been remarked which throw light on Rembrandt's possible thinking where it concerns the compositional role of light and shadow. Moreover, these passages make us more clearly aware than hitherto of the specific criticisms with which these ideas came to be received by Rembrandt's contemporaries.

The fundamental significance of *ordinantie* as an artistic means was emphasized by the fact that Van Mander, in the title of his chapter, places *ordinantie* beside *inventie* [invention /creation] as of equal importance, in fact the essence of an artist's creation.

Van Mander begins with the proposition that *ordening* (ordered arrangement, or organization) is to be found everywhere in God's creation, from the highest to the lowest. He then continues:

> 'For painters, this *ordening* is also essential, because this is where the excellence and the strength of art come together, also perfection and spirit, as well as the thoroughness of the thought, attention and wide experience. This is why there are so few so supremely competent in invention [that we] hear them praised as exceeding others in fame.'[179]

An established way of thinking about the placing of figures in a history piece in relation to ordonnance was that of the six flexions or movements, an idea which Van Mander attributes to Dürer:

> 'But Dürer describes six ways in which the body can be flexed as: bent over or geniculate, bowed, turned, twisted, stretched

177 Chr. Tümpel, 'Jesus und die Ehebrecherin und Rembrandts Notizen auf Zeichnungen mit Historien', in: *Rembrandt – Zeichnungen in München, Symposium* ed. Thea Vignau-Wilberg, Munich 2003.

178 A. Houbraken, *De Groote Schouburgh* I, pp. 265-66: 'Om deze zaak aangaande 't gebruik van 't leven, nu nog wat klaarder aan te duiden, zoo zeg ik […] Daar moet voorafgaan een vast denkbeeld over het gantsche bewerp van 't geen men maken wil, waar van men geen volmaakt denkbeeld vormen kan, ten zy men weet en kend wat tot het maken van zulk een konstwerk als men zig voorsteld vereischt word: te weten de schikkinge der Beelden, en voeglyke werking onder malkander; om het model voor of daar na te schikken eer men tot het na 't leeven schilderen komt.'

179 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap 5: '**2** De Schilders is d'Ordinanty bevonden/Oock hooghnoodich, want daer in d'Excellency/En cracht der Consten t'samen leyt ghebonden,/Soo perfecty, gheest, als verstandts doorgronden,/Aendacht, universael experiency,/Daerom zijnder soo weynich van Invency/Volmaeckt, bequame, die wy hooren loven,/In famen ander gheclommen te boven.'

Fig. 60. Karel van Mander, *The continence of Scipio*, 1600, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

or contracted, and shifted. And he takes these six movements as the basis of his Fourth Book, upon which he then constructs various (in fact seven) contortions of the human body.'[180]

(Alberti had already written in such terms about the various (in fact seven) postures of figures in history paintings.[181])

Having then described the 'six different ways' (seven in Van Hoogstraten's *Academy*) in which figures can move their bodies in a painting Van Mander proposes that one must:

> 'always submit oneself to the magnitude of the available space, and avoid making the figures carry the frame, or cramping them as though in boxes (see also p. 148). Arrange your figures fairly freely, [to create] a pleasing effect; don't let your mind run loose, so that you make the parts so large that hands and feet end up in the frame, or [that you make your figures] lie uncomfortably twisted because you are forced to do so through lack of space: wipe them out and relocate them, as is always possible in art. Are you not free? Then don't make slaves of your people. Always maintain a freedom within the given surface and do not overload the spaces [between your figures] too much; but when you plan your invention, make sure you first reflect thoroughly, and with great attention, on the content of your proposed subject, by reading and re-reading [the story]; it can do no harm to print on your memory the essence of the story in question.'[182]

After this – and yet more – general advice there follows more specific, prescriptive advice:

> 'In the first place, by trying, you must discover the basis for the 'rightness' of the composition: when you fill both sides in your picture suitably with substantial foreground figures, architecture or other furnishings, and then keep the middle space free and open, there is so little that you could introduce that would not immediately enhance the attractiveness [of the image, fig. 61]. For our ordonnance [*ordinantie]* will cer-

180 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5:'**5** Ten eersten, om hoogh nae boven toe staende,/ naer onder nederwaert, ter rechter sijden,/Ter slincker, en van ons wijckend' oft gaende,/Dan teghencomend', in't rondt oock beslaende/ Circkelwijs de plaetse, …' (At first, upwards, standing upright,/then going further down, toward the right, to the left, and separating or receding from us, then coming towards us again, and also encompassing the place in the round, circlewise, …)
S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 117: *''t Was op, of neer, 't quam tot ons, of verzwond: / 't Ging slinx, of rechts, of draeyde zich in 't rond.'* (It was up or down, it approached us or disappeared [moved away], it moved left or right, or twisted round.)
'Maer de buigingen der leeden beschrijft Albert Durer zesderley, als geboogen of geknikt, gekromt, gewend of gekeert, gewonden, gestrekt of gekrompen, en verschoven. En deeze zes beweegingen stelt hy als de grontvest tot zijn vierde boek, daer hy dan allerley beroeringen der menschlijke leeden op bouwt.'

181 Alberti *De pictura*, Book II: 43.

182 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5: '**5** … doch t'allen tijden/Hem nae des percks grootte schicken, en mijden/Dat de Beelden de lijsten niet en draghen,/Oft datse benouwt als in kisten laghen./**6** Stelt u volcxken wat los, om een versoeten,/Laet uwen gheest soo wijdt niet zijn ontspronghen,/V dinghen soo groot te maken, dat moeten/In de lijsten loopen handen oft voeten,/Oft onbequamelijck ligghen ghewronghen,/Om dat ghy door de plaetse zijt ghedwonghen:/Vaeght uyt, en verstelt, nae der Consten gaven,/Ghy zijt doch vry, en maeckt u volck geen slaven./**7** Houdt u altijts liber binnen den percke,/En wilt u gronden niet te seer beladen:/maer als ghy u inventy stelt te wercke,/Wilt eerst wel grondich met goeden opmercke/Op dijns voornemens meyninghe beraden,/Met lesen, herlesen, ten mach niet schaden,/Vastelijcken drucken in u memory/Den rechten aerdt der voorhandigh' History.'

Fig. 61. Karel van Mander, *Christ blessing the children*, 1600, panel 47.5 x 39.1 cm. Frederikssund, J.F. Willumsens Museum

tainly have a fine character and satisfy our inclination, if we leave [open] a view in, or through, with smaller background figures and views of landscape into which your gaze can penetrate. For this reason we can sometimes have our figures sitting or lying in the mid foreground, with a view several miles into the distance beyond them. […] There are still many [other] ways in which one should try to arrange the composition well, and to spend some time [on this], patiently, without losing courage too soon, to arrange all the figures as they best need; as do the Italians, for example who praise ordonnance with different groups very highly – that is, small crowds or companies of figures, either standing, lying or sitting.'[183] (figs. 60 and 61)

Elaborating on the disposition of a scene by dividing its composition of the image with small groups, Van Mander then deals with earlier artists who did this.

'Tintoretto applied this [principle] a great deal, ordering [the pictorial] space with groups or accumulations. And Michelangelo´s *Last judgement* is also for the most part ordered by means of small groups; and yet some tarnish his reputation, not on account of the composition of the groups, but because, for the sake of the figures, he has gone astray in a matter concerning ordonnance, that is to say, there are no visual passages or conduits through which one can see in.'[184]

It is perhaps interesting in this context to point out that the changes to the format of the *Nightwatch*, particularly along the left edge, had the catastrophic consequence that the visual passage to the other side of a canal, which Rembrandt included in the original painting, has been lost (fig. 69).

Having observed that 'nature is beautiful because of its diversity'[185] Van Mander continues:

'Also in the history-piece, which is of great importance, the figures need to differ in the way they stand, their body posture, form, nature, essence and inclination. And just as we spoke of the seven [*sic*] directions [see note 178], so some figures will stand before us with both feet, or take a step forward, while others will be in profile, both face and body. Some, [seen] from behind, will show their heels, some [will] sit, [others] lie, crouch, climb upwards, sink down, stand up, kneel down; sometimes some [will] be in a posture as if they were falling, if that is what is happening, or secretly skulking; some [will be] looking upwards, leaning or shrinking into themselves. It may be necessary to paint clothed, half-clothed and naked figures mixed together (fig. 62).'[186]

There then follows a long digression on the way a history piece can be enhanced by various additions, incidental figures of different natures, ornaments, architecture, landscape, after which Van Mander explains that

'there are extravagant and there are sober history pieces, so that everyone can chose as he is most inclined. But good masters, of the very best [kind], usually avoid abundance or *copia* and delight in sobriety with little [detail]. […] Thus it is found that our greatest masters also learn to be more sparing, and

183 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap 5: '**11** Eerst suldy bevinden uyt ondersoecken/In u ordinancy welstants fundacy,/Wanneer ghy u perck alle beyde hoecken,/Bequamelijck vervult met uwen cloecken/Voorbeelden, bouwingh', oft ander stoffacy,/En dan de middelste vry open spacy,/Gh' en sult soo weynich daer niet brenghen binnen,/Of ten sal stracx eenen welstandt ghewinnen./ **12** Want ons ordinancy moeste ghenieten/Eenen schoonen aerdt, naer ons sins ghenoeghen,/Als wy daer een insien oft doorsien lieten/Met cleynder achter-beelden, en verschieten/Van Landtschap, daer t'ghesicht in heeft te ploeghen,/Daerom moghen wy dan oock neder voeghen/Midden op den voorgrondt ons volck somwijlen,/En laten daer over sien een deel mijlen.[…]/ **14** Men sal op veelderley wijse noch proeven/Wel t'ordineren, en wat tijdt versnoepen,/Lijdtsamelijck, sonder haest te bedroeven,/Schickend' alle Beelden nae het behoeven,/Oock als d'Italianen, die veel roepen/Van t'ordineren met verscheyden groepen,/Welck zijn hoopkens oft tropkens volck, te weten,/Hier ghestaen, gheleghen, en daer gheseten.'

184 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5, '**16** T'is veel t'ghebruuck gheweest van Tintureten/T'ordineren, soo met groeppen oft knoopen,/En Angelus oordeel is oock veel metten/Hoopkens gheordineert, maer doch besmetten/Eenighe zijn eere, niet om de hoopen,/maer dat hy om de Beelden hem verloopen/Heeft, in t'gheen d'ordinanty mach belanghen,/Datter niet en zijn insichtighe ganghen.'

185 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5: '**20** Door verscheydenheyt is Natuere schoone,…'

186 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5: '**21** Oock d'History, daer veel aen is gheleghen,/Haer Beelden behoeven te zijn verscheyden,/In stellinghen, bootsen, werckelijck pleghen,/Ghestalt, natuere, wesen, en gheneghen,/En soo wy van de seven weghen seyden,/Soo sullen eenighe bootsen met beyden/Beenen voorwaert, naer ons uyt staen, oft schrijden,/Ander met troeng' en lichaem van ter sijden./**22** Eenighe van achter sullen de hielen/Toonen, eenighe sitten, ligghen, cruypen,/Op climmen, dalen, opstaen, neder knielen,/Somtijts eenighe bootsen, ofse vielen,/Alst te passe comt, oft heymelijck sluypen,/Eenigh' om hooghe sien, lenen, oft stuypen,/T'behoefde wel datmen ghemenghelt maeckte,/Onder een ghecleedt, half ghecleedt, en naeckte.'

Fig. 62. Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem, *Slaughter of the Innocents*, 1591, canvas 270 x 255 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum

know how to give their works a beauty and graceful quality with few figures.'[187]

It is tempting to speculate on the possibility that Rembrandt may have been inspired by this text by Van Mander when, from 1627, he began to paint history pieces with a single figure (see pp. 156, 167).

According to Van Mander, with all the wealth of elements that he says can be introduced as required, 'diversity' must always be kept in mind.

'For the Graces are well pleased with variety applied with art.'[188]

This variety, however, must be sensibly ordered and well organized for the gaze of the beholder. As an example of 'variety applied with art' Van Mander explains the 'market stall' system of ordonnance:

'While some history pieces [on account of their] particular [subject] demand greater sobriety than others; there are also those in which it is more appropriate to set to work like the merchant who, with surprising skill, displays his wares on high shelves, or down below; so a few spectators of the event are introduced, on hills, in trees or on stone steps or holding on to architectural pillars, and also others in front, below on the ground. Further, it gives a history piece a more charming lustre if one introduces many and different faces, [the face] after all being the most important part of the body, and just as is often the custom in the world, [here too] putting the most agreeable and the most entertaining in front will not go amiss.'[189]

It can scarcely be doubted that in painting his first two multi-figured large history pieces and a sketch for a third equally ambitious composition Rembrandt made use of Van Mander's 'market stall' principle of ordonnance.

Apart from all this, there are other principles that play a role in Van Mander's chapter on ordonnance: that is, principles other than the those of ordonnance like the 'market stall' model and those concerning abundance and variety. Specifically, he emphasizes the hierarchical differences between the figures represented, and associated with it the maintenance of decorum.

Thus he advises:

'The important figures must stand out [more prominently than the others], by having them standing on a higher level or sitting such that they rise above the others; and those who address them humbly must show their deference or their distressed state. As with our [other] personages: to this end they must all be arranged, on all sides, and must gesture as would subtle actors.'[190] (Compare p. 203 figs. 131, 133)

But Van Mander never ceases to insist on the more pictorial formal aspects, leading him to articulate a warning and, with it, a prescription for better solutions, such as the following:

'In the ordonnance one must not allow arms and legs to get intertwined, nor make too much of a tangle of them, as though they seem to be fighting [with each other]; but [one must rather] have these parts follow each other in the right direction evenly and fluently. I have also often heard it praised in a history piece when the figures are mostly to be seen entire, not truncated.'[191]

187 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5 '**27** … Datter zijn Historien copiose,/En eensame, op dat yeder verkose/Het gheen daer zijnen sin meest toe mach dalen:/ maer goede Meesters van den principalen/D'overvloet oft Copia veel vermijden,/En in't weynich eensaem, weldoen verblijden./**29** … Dus schijnet dat ons groote Meesters leeren,/Hun oock veel totter eensaemheyt te keeren,/En met weynich beelden weten te gheven/Hun dinghen een schoon bevallijck aencleven.'

188 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5: '**33** … Want in verscheydenheyts ghebruyck met conste/Hebben geeren de Charites hen wonste.'

189 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5: '**34** Dan sommigh' Historien wel eensamer/Als ander vereysschen te zijn bysonder,/Oock zijnder om ordineren bequamer,/Daer men mach doen ghelijck den Cramer,/Die zijn goet ten tooghe stelt schoon te wonder,/Op hooghe borden, ter sijden en onder,/Soo maecktmen d'History beschouwers eenich,/Op heuvels, boomen, oft op trappen steenich./**35** 'Oft houdend' aen colommen der ghestichten,/Oock ander voor aen op den grondt beneden,/Noch doet het d'History lieflijck verlichten,/Daer in veel en verscheyden aenghesichten/Te brenghen, als t'heerlijckste let der leden,/En ghelijck als veel zijn des Weerelts seden,/t'Bevallijckst en t'vermakelijckste vooren/Te stellen, en sal niet qualijck behooren.'

190 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5: '**36** De heerlijcke Beelden sullen uytsteken,/In hoocheyt staend' oft sittende gheresen,/Boven die ander: en die hun aenspreken,/Vernedert, bewijsen ghehoorsaem treken,/Ter verworpelijcker plaets' en verknesen,/Soo voorts al ons personnagen, tot desen/Sy ghestelt zijn sullen aen alle canten,/Hun acten doen, als fijn Comedianten.'

191 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5: '**39** 'In d'Ordinanty en salmen niet vlechten,/Noch

With such advice one has to imagine a painting such as the *Slaughter of the Innocents* by Van Mander's friend Cornelis van Haarlem (fig. 62). But of course it is not merely a question of the disposition of figures in a history piece, and Van Mander demonstrates this with two examples:

> 'So as not to neglect the character of the art, when painting a figure or face [in a history piece] we should if possible ensure that another can be seen behind, even if there is almost nothing necessary or desirable. Because then – in dark stables, for example – the background figure can create the impression that he is retreating into the background and our foreground figure advancing [toward the beholder].' (fig. 63)

and

> 'In the history piece – as we have said elsewhere – we should also watch out in particular lest we bring many shadows close together; but we should also not let untempered dark colour be too abruptly and forcefully juxtaposed with clear light; [although this is fine] with intermediate tones. And then we must also [sometimes] bring together a large area of light and, just like the dark [colour], dissolve it in the intermediate tone.' [192]

(See also the section on 'Light and shadow' below, especially p. 79)

Van Mander continues with another remark dealing with purely pictorial issues:

> 'For a long time confusion reigned among painters, as [among] errant souls, so that from a distance their history pieces look as though they are [made of] marble, or like chessboards, because they apply black on white like prints from the printer. But now the Italian half-tones are coming into use: soft intermediate tones of mixed colours, which gradually fade and become blurred and with recession into the background.'[193]

Having dealt with the above pictorial issues, Van Mander comes to the content of the history piece, which he deals with by taking as his example a highly detailed 'ekphrasis' of a fictitious painting in the temple of Pales, as described by the poet Jacopo Sannazaro. It seems that the painting depicts a gigantic Arcadian landscape in which many different scenes surround a judgement of Paris.[194] Van Mander's description of this painting, which goes on for fifteen

Fig. 63. Rembrandt, *History painting*, 1626, panel 90 x 122 cm, detail. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal (I A 6)

verses of doggerel, compelled Samuel van Hoogstraten to one of his rare critical comments on Van Mander's *Grondt*:

> 'To actually visualize a history is laudable: but I cannot approve of so much irrelevant matters of minor importance as *Mander* gives from *Sannazarius* in a Judgement of *Paris*.'[195]

This complaint comes in the fourth chapter, titled *'Gematichtheyt in 't ordineren'* [Moderation in ordonnance], one of the seven chapters in Book V in Hoogstraten's *Academy of painting* devoted almost in its entirety to the topic of ordonnance.

Van Hoogstraten conveniently summarizes the different arguments of this extremely complicated Book in a single summary, organized as though it were advice and prescriptions from the Muse of comedy, Thalia herself, to the *'youthful painter'*, so that the latter would *'remember her lessons again in brief'*.[196]

In the following, this summary will be taken as our guideline. Briefly, it deals with

seer laten haspelen d'een door d'ander,/Armen en beenen, schijnende te vechten,/maer eenvloedich, ghelijckelijck, in rechten/Ganck laten die dinghen volghen malcander:/Oock heb ick veel hooren prijsen, als van der/History de Beelden veel t'eender sommen,/Gants onghebroken gheheel moghen commen.'

192 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5: '**40** Om den aerdt der Consten houden te vriende,/ Makende Beeldt oft troeng' alst mach ghevallen,/Soo sullen wy maken, datmen is siende/Een ander daer achter, jae al en diende/Oft en behoefde daer schier niet met allen,/Want dan sal moghen (als in doncker stallen)/Den beschaduwden achterstant te wijcken,/En ons voorbeeldt uyt te comen ghelijcken./**41** Oock behoorden wy sonderlingh te wachten/In d'History, soo wy elders ontblooten,/Dat wy over hoop veel schaduwen brachten,/Sonder soo schielijck te laten met crachten/Ons herde bruyn teghen claer licht aenstooten,/maer wel teghen graeuwen, dan eenen grooten/Deel vlack licht sullen wy oock t'samen hoopen,/Doent oock alst bruyn in't graeu verloren loopen.'

193 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5: '**42** Langh'heeft voortijts gheregneert een disorden/ Onder Schilders, als dwalighe ghesinten,/ Dat hun Historien van verre worden/ Aenghesien oft Marbre waer, oft schaeckborden,/ Bringende Swart op wit, soo Druckers printen:/ maer nu comen d'Italy Mezza tinten/ In u soo halfverwighe soete grauuwen,/ Die't achter allencx bedommelt verflaeuwen.'

194 *Grondt* ed. Miedema Vol. II pp. 483-484.

195 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 187: 'Een historie eygentlijk uit te beelden is prijslijk: maar ik en kan zoo veel oneygen bywerk, als *Mander* uit *Sannazarius* in een Vonnis van *Paris* aenteykent, niet voor goet keuren.'

196 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 198: […] 'zoo wil ik mijn Schilderjeugt haere lessen noch eens in 't kort erinneren.'

(1) the desirability of the frequent practice of *ordonanties*;
(2) the fact that every painter should preferably find those compositional solutions that come naturally to him
(3) that he must strive for unity of conception;
(4) that he should consider well what will suitably go together in the painting;
(5) that the painter must at the same time be neither too sparing nor too lavish ('te 'karig en uitbundig'), and
(6) must distinguish between the main subject (of a history painting) and secondary matters; and
(7) that he must ensure that the figures depicted are grouped in a manner attractive to the eye (*sprong*).
(8) Thalia then refers to the desirability that the painter should continue to develop in this area, and to consider
(9) the extent to which he may make use of the work of other painters.
(10) Finally, Thalia observes that it is desirable for the painter to disseminate his ordonnances (by means of copies, reproduction prints and suchlike) so that he can hear the judgement of others.

Where necessary, our discussion of Van Hoogstraten's summarized arguments will be supplemented and clarified with the help of passages from the seven chapters themselves.

(1) To begin with:

> 'She [Thalia] then desires that one should practice the art of ordonnance early on, because in this way one acquires a certain audacity, which is very necessary for a pupil.'[197]

According to his biographer and former student Arnold Houbraken, Van Hoogstraten demanded that his students should produce each week a (drawn) *ordinantie*[198]. Given the abundance of drawn 'histories' by Van Hoogstraten himself, it would seem that he too conformed to this discipline.

It is evident that practicing the art of ordonnance must have also had a particular significance for Rembrandt, not only as far as the training of his pupils was concerned but also the discipline with which he himself seems to have fuelled his own creativity. Among the many hundreds of surviving drawings in Rembrandt's manner depicting scenes from histories there are many examples which were the exercises of his pupils, often based on, or otherwise connected with, Rembrandt's own drawings.[199] In the case of many other such drawings, one can assume that they were done by Rembrandt himself, not as preliminary studies for intended paintings, but rather – perhaps in the spirit of Apelles' maxim 'not a day without a line' – as part of a regimen for maintaining the alertness and creativity of his powers of invention (see fig. 68).

Fragments of Van Hoogstraten's advice regarding ordonnance, intended for pupils, seem to relate straightforwardly to Rembrandt himself :

> 'The way to be sure and certain in ordonnance is to get used to making many sketches, and drawing many *Historyen* [scenes with several figures] on paper; because theoretical knowledge alone[in this area] will be of little use as long as you do not put it in practise. It will be of great advantage to a pupil, when he is tired of the brush, to resort in the evening to drawing 'History' scenes from imagination, sometimes introducing into it what he has gathered from actual observation of reality. But I advise him, that what he has designed in the evening he should revise and improve the next morning; …Sketch and 're-sketch'; and enact the events and each character in it first in your own mind; your paper can stand a great deal; and do not give up until you have discovered a nice ordonnance. Should it so happen, two or three of your companions can assist you; let them do a try-out, to see if they can together represent the main actors in the scene that you wish to render. Many of the great masters have benefited from such re-enactment [*Kamerspel*]. But this is necessarily part of the lessons of Clio [the muse of history], to see the actions and emotions; our Thalia teaches only the arrangement of the figures.'[200]

(2) Van Hoogstraten's second recommendation concerns mental exercises and personal disposition in the development of one's own ordonnance.

> 'She [Thalia] wants us principally to show things as they appear to be sown or planted in our imaginations, and then every painter's mind would bring forth such fruit as is his own and natural to himself, …'[201]

This idea is elaborated on in the main text as follows:

> 'Certainly the painters can be compared here with the poets, as these were warned by Horace:
> 'Should you want to write, then a subject should be sought,

197 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 198: 'Zij [Thalia] wil dan, dat-men zig al vroeg in de kunst van 't ordineeren oeffent, want hier door krijgt-men een zeekere stoutigheyt [moed, durf], die aen den leerling byzonder noodig is.'

198 Houbraken II p. 162 (see p. 70 note 241).

199 See also P. Schatborn et al., *Drawings by Rembrandt and His Pupils Telling the Difference,* in exhib. cat. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2009

200 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 191/192: 'Den wegh, om zeker en gewis in het ordineeren te worden, is, datmen zich gewenne veel Schetssen te maken, en veel Historyen op 't papier te teykenen; want de wetenschap [kennis op dit gebied] zal u weynich dienen, zoo gy ze door geen oeffening vast krijgt. Het zal een leerling zeer vorderlijk zijn, als hy vermoeit is van 't penseel, des avonts zich tot het teykenen van Historien uyt de geest begeven, daer in somtijts te passe brengende 't geene hy nae 't leven heeft opgegaert. Maer ik raede hem, dat hy 't geene hy des avonts ontworpen heeft, des morgens wederom overzie en verbetere; ….Schets en herschets; en speel de historyen, en yder personadie eerst in uw gedachten; uw papier kan veel uytstaen; en laet niet af voor gy een aerdige ordening hebt uitgevonden. Doch zoo 't u gebeuren mach twee of drie uwer gezellen tot hulp te hebben, laet hun eens een proef doen, ofze de voornaemste groep van de daedt, die gy wilt uitbeelden, eens te zamen vertoonen kunnen. Zoodanich een kamerspel hebben veel groote meesters te hulp genomen. Maar dit is nootzaeklijker tot de lessen van *Clio* [de muze van de geschiedenis], om de doeningen en lijdingen [de handelingen en emoties?] te zien; onze *Thalia* leert alleen de schikking.'

201 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 198: 'Zy [Thalia] wil, datmen voornaementlijk zulke dingen vertoont, als'er in onze inbeeldingen schijnen gezaeyt of geplant te zijn, dan zal yder Schildergeest zoodaenigen vrucht voortbrengen, als hem natuerlijk en eygen is; …'

> That is compatible with your strength, so as not to get stuck.
> Think what you are capable of, what you can handle,
> And thus you will lack neither a clear style nor ordonnance.'[202]

Van Hoogstraten summarizes this point of view as follows:

> 'that which suits us will come easily'.[203]

(3) The third advice, which Van Hoogstaten attributes to Thalia is that):

> 'she wants one to display purely and solely that which one is to represent, not as the foolish poets do, who ramble on about violent war in wedding songs.'[204]

What then follows is highly relevant for an understanding of the way Rembrandt must have been 'placed' in the art scene by his contemporaries. This is not a question of the 'classicist' critique, as it has so often been referred to since Seymour Slive and Jan Emmens, which was directed at Rembrandt after his death, with retroactive effect (see pp. 130-131). It is rather a neutral summing up of three different types of painter, each with their own kind of ordonnance. The first type is characterized as folllows:

> 'whatever subject he is dealing with, he enjoys making this appear marvellously attractive as though he found more pleasure in displaying an assortment of things together than [concentrating on] the [narrative and compositional] whole; [this type of artist exhausts himself] whether in lively movements, tronies, decor or ornament.'[205] (fig. 64)

With the second type of artist and his approach to the problem of ordonnance, Van Hoogstraten surely has in mind an artist working like Rembrandt – if not Rembrandt himself:

> 'Another [type of artist] will [give] magnificence to the same elements through a more strictly organized order by means of *schikschaduwe* and *beeldsprong* [shadow effects applied for compositional reasons and variety in the placing of the figures (see point 7 below)].'[206] (fig. 65)

That he must have had Rembrandt in mind here, or at least painters who worked in his chiaroscuro manner, is confirmed by the way Van Hoogstraten deals with the third type of artist he goes on to characterize.

> 'But the third type [of artist] esteems only a straightforward representation, freely organized [without forced ordonnance], and pretends to boast of true splendour, following the Roman gracefulness of Raphael and Michelangelo, and maintaining that the dignity [of the painting] is disrupted by the depiction of minor emotions: they consider that the highest form of painting deals only with heroic virtues; and that the deliberate manipulation of light and shadow is a feeble device, improperly [used] to heighten the beauty of the one by obscuring the other.'[207] (fig. 66)

By this third category of painters, Van Hoogstraten is undoubtedly referring to a trend that had already begun to dominate the Dutch art scene even while Van Hoogstraten was apprenticed to Rembrandt. One thinks of the painters who would shortly be selected to participate in the *Oranjezaal* project. The critical comment

> 'that the deliberate manipulation of light and shadow is a feeble device improperly used to heighten the beauty of the one by obscuring the other'[208]

was undoubtedly aimed at Rembrandt and his school. The way in which Van Hoogstraten presents this criticism, however, suggests that it is not so much a personal attack as the statement of a specific position in the 17th-century discourse on the problem of ordonnance, which he outlines in a relatively neutral tone. Indeed, he appears to be anxious to portray all positions fairly.

> 'As far as we [viz. Hoogstraten himself] are concerned, and as there are other different minds, we allow each the freedom to follow whatever he likes; and reject no tulip because it is not a rose, nor a rose because it is not a lily. We shall discuss [in this *Academy of painting*] the parts of art, and each may choose from them what he considers the most valuable.'[209]

Van Hoogstraten continues with a reiteration of the essence of this sub-chapter, that the choice of style [by a

202 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 175: 'Zeker de Schilders staen hier wederom met de Poëten, gelijk die van *Horatius* deeze vermaening hebben:
Indien gy schrijven wilt, zoo dient een stof gezocht,
Die met uw macht gelijkt, om niet te blijven steeken.
Denk wat gy draegen kunt, wat gy wel overmogt,
Zoo zal u klaere stijl noch ordening ontbreeken.'

203 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 175: ''t geene ons eygen is, zal ons licht afvloeijen.'

204 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 198: 'Zy [Thalia] wil, datmen 't geene men voorheeft uit te beelden, zuiver en enkelt vertoont, niet gelijk de dwaeze dichters, die in bruiloftsgezangen van fellen oorloog donderen.'

205 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 175: 'Dezen zal 't lusten, wat stof hy ook voorheeft, de zelve deur aerdige deelen wonder behaeglijk te doen schijnen, als of hy meer vermaeks had in 't vertoonen van een soorte der medewerkende dingen, als in 't gros van de zaek; 't zy in geestige bewegingen, tronien, toetakelingen of teujeringen.'

206 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 175/176: 'Een andere zal dezelve deelen door een gedwongener ordre, door schikschaduwe en beeldesprong wonderlijk vergrootsen.'

207 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 176: 'Maer de derde acht alleen een bloote en onbedwonge vertooning en bralt quansuys op 't ware groots, volgt de Roomsche zwier van *Rafaël* en *Angelo*, en houd staende, dat der dingen defticheit door 't uitbeelden der geringe lijdingen gekreukt wort: dat de Schilderkonst in top is, daerze alleen op heldachtige deugden acht geeft: dat het bedwang der lichten en schaduwen een brosse kruk is: en onrecht datmen, om het eene te verschoonen, het andere verduistere.'

208 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 176: 'dat het bedwang der lichten en schaduwen een brosse kruk is: en onrecht datmen, om het eene te verschoonen, het andere verduistere.'

209 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 176: 'Wat ons [Hoogstraten zelf] aengaet, wy geeven deze, en, zoo'er noch meer verschillende geesten zijn, yder de vryheyt haer behaegen te volgen; en verwerpen geen tulp om dat het geen roos, noch geen roos om dat het geen lely is. Wy zullen de konstdeelen verhandelen, een yder verkieze daer uit, 't geen hem waerdichst [het meest, waard om te gebruiken] dunkt.'

Fig. 64. Jan Steen, *Samson and Delilah*, canvas 134 x 199 cm.
Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum

Fig. 65. Rembrandt, *The blinding of Samson*, 1636, canvas 205 x 272 cm.
Frankfurt a.M., Städelsches Kunstinstitut (III A 116)

poet] and ordonnance [by a painter] is determined by the personal inclination of an artist:

> 'All that art displays, painting by painting, is an imitation of natural things, but the arranging and ordering comes from the mind [or spirit] of the artist.'[210]

The conception of 17th-century art that emerges here is not dominated by major movements in over-arching developments in style but rather outlines a situation apparently determined by forceful individual temperaments. One could count Lastman or Jan Steen as examples of Van Hoogstraten's first type; while Rembrandt would embody the second type, as well as those of his pupils who, mostly for a brief time, might be called his disciples. To the third type would belong the painters of the Oranjezaal (figs. 64, 65 and 66).[211]

(4) Van Hoogstraten's last-quoted remark (note 210),

> 'All that art displays, painting by painting, is an imitation of natural things, but the arranging and ordering comes from the mind [or spirit] of the artist'

would seem to be a convenient definition of the art of painting at a time when it was self-evident, and yet evoked amazement and admiration, that three-dimensional reality could be evoked on the flat surface of a panel or canvas.

The mental process involved in the 'arranging and ordering' of that illusion is an aspect of the creative process that repeatedly recurs in other forms in Van Hoogstraten's *Academy* – most pregnantly in his account of the painting contest in which the winner was the painter who first 'painted' his work 'in his idea, imagination or thought'.[212] (see also pp. 232/233).

This mental process is most clearly described in the passage which immediately follows the passage just quoted:

> 'the mind of the artist … first grasps the elements given in advance confusedly in his imagination, before he forms them into a whole, arranging them such that together they constitute what seems to be a single image.'[213]

Everything we know about the genesis of his paintings[214] indicates that this way of conceiving his works was typical of Rembrandt: the development of the ordonnance had first priority, just as Van Hoogstraten describes it above and in the following passages:

> 'She [Thalia] desires that one should first […] empty one's mind, and contemplate well the matter before one. […]. She desires that which will mutually befit [the various elements of the composition], that one should link [these] together and arrange [them] most fittingly in a unity; and that one should observe adequate proportionality *[maetschiklijkheit]* [in the parts comprising an ordonnance].'[215]

210 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 176: 'Al wat de konst stuk voor stuk vertoont, is een nabootsing van natuerlijke dingen, maer het by een schikken en ordineeren komt uit den geest des konstenaers hervoor, …'

211 In addition to Jacob van Campen himself, the painters represented were Gerard van Honthorst, Theodoor van Thulden, Caesar van Everdingen, Salomon de Bray, Th. Willeboirts Bosschaert, Jan Lievens, Christiaen van Couwenbergh, Pieter Soutman, Gonzales Coques, Jacob Jordaens, Pieter de Grebber and Adriaen Hanneman.

212 See also Van de Wetering 1997/2009, chapter IV, *The creation of the pictorial Idea*.

213 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 176: […] 'de geest des konstenaers …die de deelen, die voorgegeven zijn, eerst in zijne inbeelding verwardelijk bevat, tot dat hyze tot een geheel vormt, en zoo te zamen schikt, datze als een beelt maken: …'

214 Van de Wetering 1997/2009, Chapters 2, 4, 8.

215 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 198: 'Zy [Thalia] wil datmen […] zyn eygen gemoet eerst zuivert, en de zaek, diemen voorheeft, wel overweegt. […] 'tGeen malkanderen goed doet wil zy, datmen te samen koppelt, en op 't gevoeglijkst by een schikt; en datmen een behoorlijke maetschiklijkheit waerneemt.'

Fig. 66. Theodoor van Thulden, *The education of Frederik Hendrik*, 1648-50, canvas 300 x 200 cm. The Hague, Royal Palace Huis ten Bosch, Oranjezaal

Van Hoogstraten's account of his second type of artist (see above p. 59) implies that the use of *schikschaduwe*, the 'manipulation of light and shadow for compositional purposes', is also an aspect of this question of *maetschiklijkheit*, or proportionality. Indeed, Van Hoogstraten seems to say as much a few pages earlier where he speaks of *'arranging beautiful lights and large shadows in their place …'*[216] even though, according to the critics among the third category of painters mentioned above, this approach to ordonnance:

> 'was improperly used to heighten the beauty of the one by obscuring the other parts of a painting.'[217]

One witnesses the consequences of disrupting this arrangement of *'beautiful lights and large shadows'* in the tragic fate of Rembrandt's painting *The Mill* in Washington, where strips which originally showed dark tones have been cut off, particularly on two sides. Those who did this must presumably have thought that the dark parts could be removed without loosing anything essential since, after all, the part with *'heightened beauty'* still remained intact. What was overlooked is that 'large shadows' were also essential to Rembrandt's manner of creating a convincing (asymmetrical) composition while at the same time enhancing the *'beauty'* of the light parts (figs. 67a, b, c).[218]

Van Hoogstraten's fifth and sixth points of advice, which speak for themselves, are equally applicable to Rembrandt's way with ordonnance and can thus be seen as the formulation of other important aspects of his art-theory where the distinction is drawn between principle and secondary issues:

> (5) 'She [Thalia] demands that, in [the matter of] ordonnance, one should be neither too sparing nor too lavish, but that one should furnish a scene with the appropriate adjuncts:
> (6) And she teaches how one should divide the work in parts; so that the chief [subject] matter is given its proper eminence.'[219]

Fig. 67a, b, c. Rembrandt, *The Mill*, *c.*1645, canvas 87.6 x 105.6 cm. Washington, The National Gallery

216 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 190: 'schoone lichten en grootse schaduwen wel op haere plaets te schikken …'

217 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 176: 'en onrecht [een niet te rechtvaardigen praktijk] datmen, om het eene te verschoonen, [mooier te maken] het andere verduistere.'

218 E. van de Wetering, 'Die Mühle', in: Exhib. cat. *Rembrandts Landschaften*, 2006, pp. 84-103.

219 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 198: 'Zy [Thalia] gebiet in 't ordineeren noch te vrek noch te milt te zijn, maer wil datmen een historie met zijn vereyschte toestel verziet: en zy leert, hoemen 't werk in leeden verdeelen zal; opdat de Hooftzaek zijn behoorlijke grootsheyt hebbe.'

Fig. 68. Rembrandt, *Simeon's song of praise, c.* 1640, black chalk, white lead on rough packing paper, 14.4 x 15.3 cm (1:1). Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 575)

(7) A concept that is just as essential to Rembrandt's ordonnance as the '*schikschaduwe*' [the compositional use of shadow] is '*sprong*'. Van Hoogstraten's definition of this term is to be found in the seventh point in his summary with Thalia's ten advices:

> 'Further she [Thalia] indicates the way one should give the figures an agreeable '*sprong*' that is pleasing [to the eye], such that, whether high or low, together they create a 'shape' *[gedaente]* that is attractive to the eye, and there appears an interplay between them resulting from their diversity; not making the figures stand in hideous rows; and how to bring them together in pleasant groups and gatherings, avoiding the appearance of having being sown [in neat rows] and of uniformity.'[220] (fig. 68)

(For the function of animals (and children) in creating an agreeable '*sprong*', see pp. 96 and 214/215.)

Armed with this definition of '*sprong*' we can turn to Van Hoogstraten's passage on the *Nightwatch* (fig. 69), a passage that has often been quoted, but which, because his use of the term '*sprong*' there is unspecified, tends to remain somewhat enigmatic. Once this concept is understood, however, Van Hoogstraten's passage dealing with the composition of the *Nightwatch*, given below, becomes clearer.

Van Hoogstraten's text on the *Nightwatch* follows on from his account, quoted above (note 215), of the way the artist first grasps the parts of the image in a confused manner in his imagination, before he then

> 'forms them into a whole, arranging them such that together they constitute what seems to be a single image: and frequently arranges a crowd of figures in the scene of a History in such a way that there appears to be neither the least too much nor too little. And this one rightly calls an observation

220 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 198: 'Wijders wijst zy [Thalia] aen, hoemen de figueren een behaeglijke sprong zal geeven, dat is, datze, 't zy hoog of laeg, met malkanderen een gedaente maeken, die 't oog bevallijk is, en datze, door haere verscheydenheyt onderling schijnen te speelen; en geen walglijke rijen maeken: en hoemenze in aerdige groepen en troepen by een zal voegen, om de gezaeytheyt en eenderleyheyt te vermijden.'

of Symmetry [in the sense of balance between the parts], Analogy [in the sense of the proportional relations between parts] and Harmony.'[221]

There then follows the much-quoted passage on the *Nightwatch*, in which Van Hoogstraten's high regard for Rembrandt's masterwork mainly rests on his approval of the latter's ordonnance, in no small measure, according to Van Hoogstraten, due to the painting's graceful '*sprong*'. (see note 220):

'It is not sufficient for a painter to put his figures in rows next to each other, as one all too often sees here in Holland with its group portraits of militia companies. The real masters succeed in making their whole work a unity *[eenwezich]*, as Clio learned from Horatius:

Create each piece of work, as is proper, singly and as a unity.

Rembrandt certainly observed this in his piece on the Doelen in Amsterdam, although too much so, in the opinion of many, making more of the image as a whole, after his own preference, than of the individual portraits for which he was commissioned. However, whatever the criticisms, in my view this work will outlive all its rivals, being such a worthwhile painting because of its conception, so graceful in its *sprong*, and so powerful that, according to some, all the other pieces there beside it next look like playing cards. Even though I would rather he had kindled more light in it. Using Dutch words, we can call this [Rembrandt's] art of ordonnance an assured achievement of *medevoeglijkheyt* [balanced coordination, equilibrium] *overeendracht* [agreement, harmony], and *maetschiklijkheyt* [natural proportion between the elements of the composition]; without which all is confused and full of conflict.[222]

Van Hoogstratens discussion of the *Nightwatch* can be characterized as a circumspect mixture of high praise and critical asides, the latter originating not only from others but also from Van Hoogstraten himself. One finds:
– the praiseworthy unity that Rembrandt has achieved;
– according to some, however, excessively so, since he is judged to have subordinated the individual portraits of the *schutters* – for which he was specifically commissioned – too much to the large [unified] image, after his own preference

Fig. 69. Rembrandt, *The Nightwatch*, 1642, digital reconstruction *c.* 420 x 550 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (III A 146)

– the highest praise for the conception and the elegant '*sprong*'
– although it was certainly not everyone who thought that the other paintings (in the Doelen) looked like playing cards beside it;
– and it is a pity that too much shadow has been introduced into the painting. Here he is undoubtedly referring to the *´schikschaduwe´* discussed above- shadow that has a compositional function (see p. 59).

(8) In my commentary on the first point of Thalia´s (Hoogstraten's) summary (p. 58), it was already suggested that the exhortation always to practise ordonnance not only applied to pupils. As was said, the quantity of Rembrandt's drawings and Van Hoogstraten's with scenes drawn from mainly biblical stories can be taken as an indication that both painters never gave up this routine of practice. This surmise is supported by Thalia's eighth point of advice:

'She requires that one should persevere with this practise, and apply the means which advance this knowledge.'[223]

221 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 176: 'die de deelen, die voorgegeven zijn, eerst in zijne inbeelding verwardelijk bevat, tot dat hyze tot een geheel vormt, en zoo te zamen schikt, datze als een beelt maken: en dikwils een menichte beelden eender Historie zoodanich schikt, dat'er geen de minste te veel noch te weynich in schijnt te zijn. En dit noemtmen met recht een waerneming der Simmetrie, Analogie, en Harmonie.'

222 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 176: 'Ten is niet genoeg, dat een Schilder zijn beelden [figuren] op ryen nevens malkander stelt, gelijk men hier in Hollant op de Schuttersdoelen al te veel zien kan. De rechte meesters brengen te weeg, dat haer geheele werk eenwezich is, gelijk Clio uit Horatius leert:
Breng yder werkstuk, zoo't behoort,/Slechts enkel en eenweezich voort.
Rembrant heeft dit in zijn stuk op den Doele tot Amsterdam zeer wel, maer na veeler gevoelen al te veel, waergenomen, maekende meer werks van het groote beelt zijner verkiezing, als van de byzondere afbeeltsels, die hem waren aenbesteet. Echter zal dat zelve werk, hoe berispelijk, na mijn gevoelen al zijn meedestrevers verdueren [overleven], zijnde zoo schilderachtich van gedachten, zo zwierich van sprong, en zoo krachtig, dat, nae zommiger gevoelen, al d'andere stukken daer als kaerteblaren nevens staen. Schoon ik wel gewilt hadde, dat hy 'er meer lichts in ontsteeken had. Deze [Rembrandts] kunst van ordineeren zullen wij met Duitsche woorden noemen, een wisse treffing [bereiken] der medevoeglijkheyt, overeendracht, en maetschiklijkheyt; zonder welke alles verwart en vol strijt is.'
The following is an observation by Murray Pearson, our translator. In stating the terms of Rembrandt's 'art of ordonnance', Van Hoogstraten gives the old Dutch (*Duitsche*) words that correspond to the terms he has already used in the preceding passage: rightly called, '*een waerneming der Simmetrie, Analogie, en Harmonie*' . The key to understanding the original meaning of these terms of symmetry, harmony and analogy – especially 'analogy' – can be found in the classical aesthetic expounded by Alberti in Book IX of his *Ten Books Of Architecture* (1452).

223 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p 199: 'Zy wil datmen in deze oeffening volhart, en middelen in 't werk stelt, die deeze kennisse bevorderen.'

Thalia's last two points concerned the questions of

> (9) 'how much it is permitted to make use of the [example of the] work of others[224] and
> (10) [whether]]one should make his ordonnance public by publishing prints, to submit it to the judgement of others: and to be able in the future to avoid those failings that are pointed out with reason, whether by friend or foe.'[225]

These questions were so important for Van Hoogstraten that he devoted two separate chapters to them, titled *'How one should avail oneself of another's work'*[226] *and 'Disseminating one's art'*.[227] In the context of this text one need only point out that both questions deal with issues that must have been of the greatest concern to Rembrandt whereas for Van Hoogstraten, considering the nature of his own oeuvre, they must have been of slight importance.

With regard to the first point, practice and emulation with Rembrandt seem to have gone hand in hand – and, indeed, Rembrandt's engagement with the works of others like Rubens, Leonardo, Dürer, Lastman, Seeghers, Annibale Carracci et al. usually involved greater or lesser degrees of intervention in the ordonnance of the original works (see pp. 152, 174, 176, 177, 188, 199, 208, 244, 254). As far as is known, Van Hoogstraten did not engage in any such projects of emulation.

Thalia's tenth and last advice, to make his ordonnances publicly known by means of copies and especially in prints was also not followed up by Hoogstraten himself. It does, however, make one think immediately of the prints that J.G. van Vliet made between 1630 and '35 after paintings or designs by Rembrandt. Van Vliet must undoubtedly have made these prints on commissions from, and in consultation with Rembrandt, and later also with Hendrick Uylenburch (see pp. 172/173, 178).[228] However, as discussed in Chapter II one should also consider Rembrandt's own activities as an etcher in this context, in the first place the reproduction prints he made himself after two of his paintings (pp. 177, 178). But it is not only such reproduction prints after his paintings that Rembrandt would have considered as a means of making his ordonnances public; he must have seen many of his etched 'histories' that had no painted prototype in the same light (see p. 193 fig. 103, p. 229 fig. 203, pp. 246-249).

Seen in this perspective, there is thus a shift in the way the function of Rembrandt's etchings should be considered, which may also help us understand why, after Van Vliet's departure, Rembrandt did not contract any other engravers to produce prints after his paintings. A highly ambitious and conscientiously worked out print like the *Annunciation to the shepherds* (p. 193), may have been seen by Rembrandt as a better vehicle for disseminating his ideas on ordonnance and other 'gronden' than Van Vliet's prints. Such a view of Rembrandt's etching activities could partly explain why, in the period when he painted fewer small-scale history pieces, Rembrandt published more often ambitious etchings, either in series or singly.[229] The fact that these etched ordonnances were easy to reproduce in multiple copies and to circulate on the European art market contributed significantly to Rembrandt's fame, with the result that he not only would receive commissions from as far away as Italy but that the demand grew for etched as well as painted self-portraits – portraits of this *uomo famoso* (see *Corpus* IV).

Samuel van Hoogstraten's book V 'Thalia' devoted to ordonnance appears to be permeated with Rembrandt's ideas as they must have been drummed into the heads of his pupils during their apprenticeship. The book seems to throw a clear light on the ideas that Rembrandt must have held on this topic and therefore is a valuable source – not only of Van Hoogstraten's knowledge but, more importantly as a rich source of information about the training in Rembrandt's workshop; more particularly about Rembrandt's ideas about ordonnance and invention, and about the engagement of Rembrandt's contemporaries with these ideas as realized in his work.

224 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 199: 'Zy bepaelt, hoe wijd het geoorloft is, zich met een anders arbeyt te behelpen: …'

225 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 199: 'en eyndelijk raed zy [Thalia] [de kunstenaar] om in zijn eygen licht niet te verzengen, datmen zijn ordinantien met het uitgeeven van printen openbaer maekt, om het oordeel van anderen daer over te hooren: en om in 't toekomende [de toekomst] die gebreeken te mijden, die van vriend of vyand met reeden zijn aengeweezen.'

226 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 192: 'Hoemen zich van eens anders werk dienen zal'

227 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 195: 'Zijn Konst, openbaer te maeken.'

228 See also *Corpus* I, Chapter III.

229 See Chapter II, pp. 246-249).

Affects

The history painter must be able to make the facial expression of the protagonists' emotions – their affects – as visible as possible. Van Mander approaches this problem systematically. First he surveys what almost seems to be the totality of human emotions:

> 'Those who study nature give us different names for those things that are called affects: the first, before all others: love, [and then] desire, joy, grief and rage; distress and sorrow that assault the heart; faint-heartedness, fear, difficult to control; and pomposity and envious hate; suchlike are all known as affects.'[230]

He then enumerates the various parts of the face that can be 'affected' such that, in an combined (mimetic) play of the facial muscles they produce different facial expressions:

> 'These affects are not so perfectly or easily expressed as they are praised; in the first place by means of the parts of the face: ten or perhaps more, differing in aspect, namely: a forehead, two eyes, above them two eyebrows, and beneath two cheeks; further, between nose and chin, a mouth with two lips and all that is contained within it.'[231]

There then follows a survey of the ways in which facial expressions can, each in their own fashion, be manifested:

> 'The eyes of the figure, by opening wide, can indicate wisdom … ; a laughing mouth amorousness…. Now desire: one displays this by the eyes gazing intensely toward something.'[232] 'To be able to represent properly a happy heart, one that banishes sorrow, [I give the following instruction:] we should make the eyes half-close, the mouth open slightly, pleasantly and happily laughing; it is also necessary for us to consider the expression *laetae frontis* as the Latinists say: a glad forehead, one that is smooth and straight, not greatly wrinkled.'[233] 'And now to make a sad countenance, full of pity and inwardly disturbed feelings, without bursting into tears, as sometimes behooves, one should raise the eyebrows on the left side, with the eye half-closed and have the fold that runs from the nose into the cheek pulled toward it and become shorter; that is how one should render a downcast appearance.'[234]

What stands out in all these descriptions of the expression of affects is that they are so written that it appears to be expected of the painter that he will apply them as prescriptions.

In particularly difficult problems, for instance how to show convincingly the difference between laughing and crying, Van Mander exerts himself further to decribe as acccurately as possible the specific deformations of the face in these two expressions of emotion. And, only there does he admit the possibility that with these two affects we should 'study life'. He seems to mean by this that the painter should pay extra close attention if he sees someone laugh or cry:

> 'They are not wrong, who reproach us for being so poorly able to show the difference in our faces between laughing and crying. But if we study the life, we see that when laughing the mouth and cheeks are stretched wider and raised upward, while the forehead descends, and between the two the eyes are squeezed half-shut and pressed, so that they create wrinkles toward the ears. But weeping faces are not so round: the cheeks becomes narrower, and also the bottom lip and corners of the mouth turn down.'[235]

When we screen Rembrandt's Leiden and early Amsterdam paintings for the affects that Rembrandt has incorporated in these scenes, we encounter only some of the affects that Van Mander describes (see figs. 70-73). For such a painter as Rembrandt who must have had the ambition to be able to render a much wider range of human emotional states, and combinations of them, it would hardly seem that Van Mander's prescriptions showed the way.

Rembrandt's approach to the depiction of affects may be found in the text devoted to the affects in Van Hoogstraten's book. In the relevant passages, it is not the affects themselves that are listed, as they were by Van Mander, but rather the various situations in the historical narratives to be illustrated, in which the different protagonists might

230 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 6: '**2** De Natuer-condighe laten ons hooren,/Onderscheydelijck de namen der dinghen,/Affecten gheheeten, eerst en al vooren/ Liefde, begeerlijckheyt, vreucht, smert en tooren,/Commer en droefheyt, die t'herte bespringhen,/Cleynmoedicheyt, vreese quaet om bedwinghen,/ Oock opgheblasentheyt, en nijdich veeten,/Dees en derghelijck, al Affecten heeten.'

231 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 6: '**4** Dees Affecten, zijn niet soo gaer en lichte/ T'exprimeren, als sy wel zijn te loven,/Eerst met de leden van den aenghesichte,/Thien oft wat meer van diverschen ghesichte,/Als, een voorhooft, twee ooghen, en daer boven/Twee wijnbrauwen, en daer onder verschoven/Twee wanghen, oock tusschen neus ende kinne/Een twee-lipte mondt, met datter is inne.'

232 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 6: '**25** De ooghen mochten wel van dees figuere/ Ghenoech openstandich wijsheyt bewijsen,/…/Een lachende mondt, amoureusheyt puere,/ …./Nu de begeerlijckheyt, die doetmen blijcken,/ Met ooghen die ernstich yet bekijcken.'

233 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 6: '**28** Dus een blijd' herte, dat druck is verstroylijck,/Op dat wy dat wel uyt te beelden wisten,/Wy sullen d'ooghen half toe maken moylijck,/Den mondt wat open, soet, lachende, vroylijck:/ Oock behoefde wel, dat wy mede gisten/Op't woordt *laetae frontis*, der Latinisten,/Een blijde voorhooft, dat slecht is en simpel,/En niet belemmert met menighe rimpel.'

234 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 6: '**44** Om nu een droef ghelaet, vol medelijden,/En inwendighe passy, sonder storten/Der tranen, te maken, alst beurt somtijden,/Salmen de wijnbrauwen ter slincker sijden/Met d'ooghe half toe wat om hoogh' opschorten,/En laten derwaert trecken en vercorten/T'vouken, dat van de neuse loopt in wanghe,/Soo salmen uytbeelden een wesen banghe.'

235 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 6: '**36** Sy en hebbent niet crom, die ons verwijten,/ Dat wy soo qualijck connen onderscheyden,/In onse troengen het lachen en t'crijten,/Maer wy sien, als wy het leven bevlijten,/Dat door t'lachen mondt ende wanghen breyden/En rijsen, t'voorhooft daelt, en tusschen beyden/D'ooghen half toeghedruckt zijn en ghedouwen,/Makende nae d'ooren toe cleyne vouwen./ **37** Maer crijtende troengen soo niet en ronden,/De wanghen die smallen, oock neder dalen,/D'onderste lippen, en hoecken der monden, …'

Fig. 70. Rembrandt, *The head operation ('feeling')*, *c.* 1624, panel 21.5 x 17.7 cm (detail). Private collection (IV *Corrigenda* I B 2)

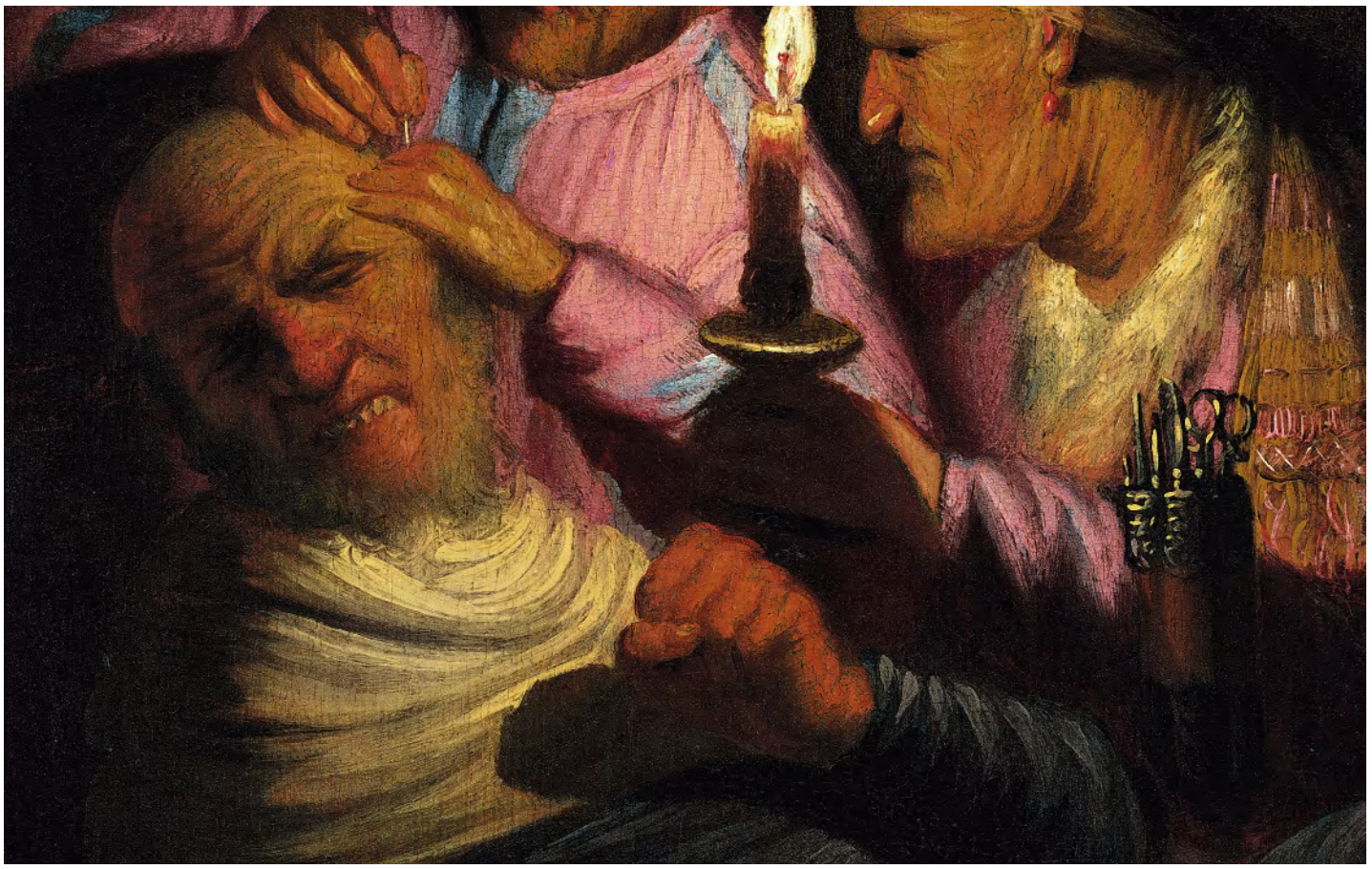


Fig. 71. Rembrandt, *Christ driving the money-changers from the temple*, *c.* 1625, panel 43.1 x 32 cm (detail). Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts (I A 4)

Fig. 72. Rembrandt, *Ecce Homo,* 1634, paper on canvas 54.5 x 44.5 cm (detail).
London, The National Gallery (II A 89)

Fig. 73. Rembrandt, *Samson's wedding,* 1638, canvas 126 x 175 cm (detail).
Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (III A 123)

Fig. 74. Rembrandt, *Rembrandt laughing*, 1628, copper 22.2 x 17.1 cm (detail). Private collection

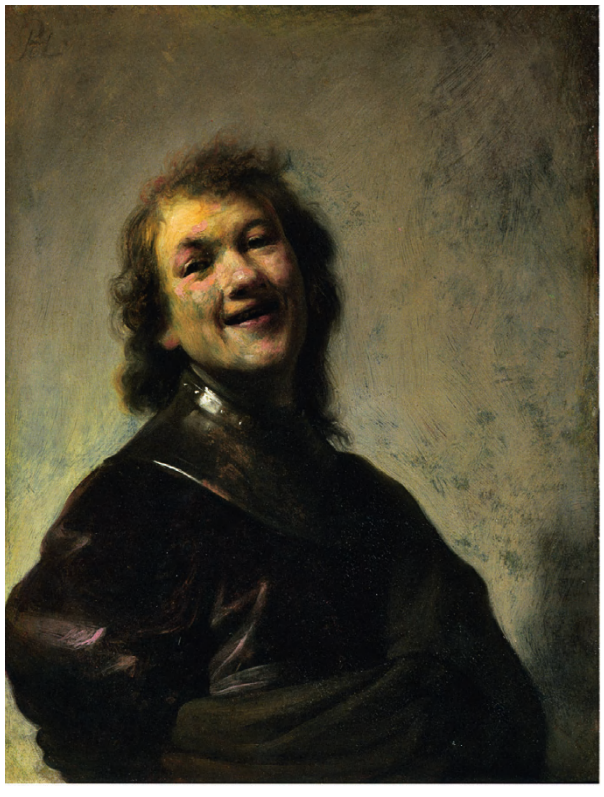


Fig. 75. Rembrandt, *Study of expression in the mirror (pain)*, 1630, etching 7.2 x 6 cm (B 13^{II})

Fig. 76. Rembrandt, *Study of expression in the mirror (astonishment)*, 1630, etching 5.1 x 4.6 cm (B. 320)

Fig. 77. Rembrandt, *Study of expression in the mirror (anger)*, 1630, etching 7.3 x 6.2 cm (B. 10^{II})

find themselves in various emotional states. This list is preceded by the advice that the painter should envisage the figures in these situations and the affects that these situations arouse:

> 'So having visualized the persons that you propose to depict, you may prepare yourself for the second observation (see *Attitude* p. 50), which concerns the deeds and actions in the histories. If there are offerings, feasts, triumphs, games, choral dances, running, hunting, fighting, shipwrecks, weddings, circumcision, baptism, dying, addresses, consultations, death and robbery, abduction, liberation and everything that can happen between people.'[236]

The visualization of the figures goes further in this text. After repeating yet again that

> 'It is for us to speak first of all of the range of the emotions, the afflictions of the soul, or the passions of the heart. You must learn, O young painter, to act out this the most artful role.'[237]

The advice to act out the various affects is further amplified and elucidated in the following passage:

> 'If one now wants to gain honour in this most noble aspect of art, the rendering of affects, one must transform oneself entirely into an actor. It is not sufficient just to make a history

236 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 108/109: 'Aldus dan de Persoonen, die gy voorneemt uit te beelden, u zelven voor oogen gestelt hebbende, zoo moogt gy u tot de tweede opmerking bereyden, welke verkeert ontrent de daeden en bedrijven in de Historyen. Als daer zijn offerhanden, Feesten, Triomfen, Speelen, Reyen, Renloopen, Jachten, Strijden, Kampgevechten, Schipbreuken, Bruloften [sic], Besnijdingen, Doopen, Sterven, Aenspraken, Raetplegingen, Moord' en Roveryen, Schakingen, Verlossingen, en al wat'er onder de menschen kan geschieden.'

237 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 109: 'Van de driften des gemoeds, lijdingen der ziele, ofte Hartstochten staet ons dan eerst te spreeken. Leer nu, ô Schilderjeugt, deze allerkonstichste rol speelen.'

Fig. 78. Rembrandt, *John the Baptist preaching*, 1634/35, canvas 62.7 x 81.1 cm (detail). Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (III A 106)

> feebly recognizable, *Demosthenes* was no less schooled than others when the people, despising him, turned their backs on him: but after *Satyrus* had shown him how to recite *Euripedes* and *Sophokles* with better tones and more graceful movements, and after he had sometimes locked himself away for three months at a time with half-shaven head, and had learned completely to imitate the actor, after that, I say, he was heard as an oracle of eloquence. The same would also be found helpful in the depiction of the passions of him you have before you, especially before a mirror, to be simultaneously the actor and the beholder.'[238]

Of all 17th-century painters only Rembrandt – certainly from 1628 onward – is known to have practised different affects in front of the mirror and at the same time portrayed them (figs. 74, 75, 76). In some cases one sees Rembrandt apply these studies in the mirror in his paintings (compare figs. 77 and 78). It is therefore highly probable that Van Hoogstraten had taken over the advice quoted above directly from his teacher.

But Samuel van Hoogstraten was himself also a teacher, and moreover one who considered that in this capacity it was his duty to pass on to his pupils all that he knew about the art of painting. That at least is the impression given by the testimony of his pupil Arnold Houbraken, who wrote in his own book with artists' biographies:

> '… that he was my teacher, and I owe to him the foundation of all that I know about art.'[239]

His knowledge about history painting and the exercises connected with it would have played an important role during his lessons. History painting, after all, demands almost all that a painter ought to know. Thus Houbraken writes of Van Hoogstraten's versatility, being a competent painter of *'buildings, landscapes, stormy seas, quiet waters, ani-*

238 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 109/110: 'Wilmen nu eer inleggen in dit alleredelste deel der konst, zoo moetmen zich zelven geheel in een toneelspeeler hervormen. T en is niet genoeg, datmen flaeuwelijk een Historye kenbaer make, *Demosthenes* was niet ongeleerder als anders, toen hem het volk walgelijk den rug toe keerde: maer sedert *Satyrus* hem *Euripides* en *Sophokles* vaerzen met beeter toonen en bevallijker bewegingen had voorgezeyt, en hy hem zelven met een half geschooren hooft somstijts drie maenden opgesloten, en geheel den komediant leeren nabootsen hadde, sedert, zeg ik, hoordemen hem als een orakel der welsprekentheit. Dezelve baet zalmen ook in't uitbeelden van diens hartstochten, die gy voorhebt, bevinden, voornaemlijk voor een spiegel, om te gelijk vertooner en aenschouwer te zijn.'

239 A. Houbraken, *De Groote Schouburgh*, Book II, p. 155: '… dat hy myn leermeester geweest is, en ik den grontslag van al wat ik in de Konst weet aan hem verschuldigt ben.'

mals, flowers, fruit and still lifes' (the latter undoubtedly in connection with his many trompe l'oeils).[240] Van Hoogstraten also painted portraits and history pieces, and evidently part of his lessons were devoted to the latter. In the context of the subject under discussion here and in the section on *Attitude*, the representation of the human affects and the postures associated with them (pp. 49-52), it is relevant here to quote Houbraken's lively account of Van Hoogstraten's approach to the teaching of ordonnance, affects and the comportment, postures and movements of the human figure.

> 'It happened that one of his disciples showed him the sketch of his ordonnance (as everyone had to do each week), but had given little attention to the correct working of his figures, which he had set down just randomly. He then said, *Read the text*; and asked, *Now does that look like the figure who says this?* and he answered *Yes*, then he [S.v.H.] usually said: *Just imagine that I am the other person to whom you have to say something like that; and then say it to me*. When they then gave his account according to the letter of the text, without feeling, with hands in pockets, or like wooden statues, he said: *pockets are made to carry your money so that it doesn't slip through the fingers*; and immediately stood up from his place and had the disciple sit down, saying: *Now I will show you, watch [especially] the gestures (Gebaarden), my way of standing, or the bending of the body, as I speak*, and indicated it (as the proverb has it) with finger and thumb.'[241]

To clarify what he meant by the word '*Gebaarden*' [gestures], Houbraken added to this passage the following note:

> '*Gebaarden*. To give his pupils a firmer impression of these gestures, and the power to move that ought to accompany an artful monologue, and in order to give his pupils a clearer impression and to get used of it; he chose the most able of his disciples (when he lived in the front house that has since become part of the brewery of Oranjeboom in Dordrecht, where he had enough room on the attic floor to put on a full-scale theatrical play) and gave each of them a role to play in their own, or in each other's theatrical play: to which they were allowed to invite their parents and close friends as spectators of the play, …'[242]

Conspicuously, gesture and body language serve as the most important means of expression in this account, whereas the facial expression of affects is nowhere mentioned. Nor does the advice to act out an emotion in front of the mirror – *'to be simultaneously the actor and the beholder'* – play any part in this account of his teaching.

The fact that affect plays scarcely any role at all in Hoogstraten's own works is very telling here. Where it did occur in his work (like on p. 41 fig. 44) it was an ineffectual grimace, demonstrating that Rembrandt's ability to make very different human emotional states legible in their faces expressions was quite exceptional.

It should be remarked that Rembrandt's efforts to depict the affects of his protagonists declined over the course of the 1640's, the very period that Van Hoogstraten was studying with him. This tendency correlates with an increasing calm in his works.[243]

240 A. Houbraken, Book II, p. 157: 'Gebouwen, Landschappen, ontstuimige Zee, stille Wateren, Dieren, Bloemen, Fruit, en Stilleven (dat hy zoo natuurlyk schilderde dat hy 'er velen door bedroog) …'

241 A. Houbraken, Book II, pp. 162/163: ''T is gebeurt dat een van zyn Discipelen de schets van zyn ordonantie (gelyk ieder alle week doen moest) aan hem vertoonde, maar weinig agt gegeven had op de regte werkinge der beelden, die hy zoo maar had neergestelt. Straks was het zeggen, *Lees den Text*; en gevraagt, *Wil dat nu het Beeld wezen dat zulks zeit?* antwoorde zy dan Ja, zoo was gemeenlyk zyn zegge: *Verbeeld u eens dat ik die andere Persoon ben, daar gy zulks tegen moet zeggen; zeg het tegens my*. Als zy dan de reden volgens de letter van den Text, zonder aandoeninge, met de handen in de zak, of als stokbeelden uitspraken, was zyn zeggen: *de zakken zyn gemaakt om dat het geld in 't dragen niet door de vingeren zoude druipen*; en stond met een van zyn plaats op en liet den Discipel daar zitten, zeggende: *Nu zal ik het u voordoen, let op de Gebaarden, wyze van staan, of buiging des lichaams, als ik spreek*, en beduide het (als het spreekwoord zeit) met vinger en duim.'

242 A. Houbraken, Book II, p. 163: '*Gebaarden*. Om van deze gebaarden, en roeringen die een Konstige Redenvoeringe behoorden te verzellen, zyne Leerlingen een vaster indruk te geven, en zig daar aan meerder te doen gewennen; koos hy de bekwaamste van zyne Discipelen uit (als hy woonde in 't voorste Huis, dat zedert aan de Brouwery van den Oranjeboom te Dordrecht getrokken is, daar hy op de ruime zolderingen gelegentheid had van een volkomen Toneel op te slaan) en gaf hun yder een Rol van zyne, of een 's anders Toneelstuk te spelen: tot het welke zy dan vermogten hunne Ouders en goede bekenden te noodigen, tot aanschouwers, van het Spel, …'

243 See E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt as a searching artist', in: *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 79-123. See also pp. 131-135 in the present volume.

Light and shadow

Samuel van Hoogstraten used these two closely related terms, 'light' and 'shadow', to refer to the content of the seventh Book of his *Academy of painting*. Karel van Mander's title of the corresponding chapter in his *Grondt*, on the other hand at first sight appears to be a list of synonyms indicating the same phenomena, *Over de reflectie, reverberatie, weerglans of weerschijn* (On the reflection of light: how light causes objects to become visible, how light rebounding makes [shiny surfaces] gleam or illuminates other objects). A large part of Van Mander's attention, moreover, was devoted to an attempt to explain the light and colour of the rainbow.

In varied succession, Van Mander deals with a long series of different kinds of illumination and the resultant different kinds of reflection. To give an example:

> 'In the setting sun one sees that different things appear much redder in colour, both the earth, stones and bricks and also people's faces: where the sun's rays strike them, or in that situation cause a less direct reflection, they are given a blush, a reddish, fiery, glowing colour.'[244]

Or:

> '… In the same way lightning, that herald of angry thunder, alters the dusk with a special blue-ish light and fleetingly reveals its own visible reflection.'[245]

The word 'shadow' hardly ever occurs in Van Mander's book. In a single case, when dealing with candlelight, Van Mander discusses the individual shadows cast by candlelight. This is the only time that the word 'shadow' appears in his chapter on light, and then only in the sense of cast shadows. The other time the word 'shadow' appears in *the Grondt* it is in the sense of the division between light and shadow on an object illuminated from one side. One finds this passage, already quoted above, in Van Mander's chapter on draughtsmanship where he deals with drawing on tinted paper.

> '… the placing of light and shadow, learning to draw delicately first with charcoal and then with chalk or pen in the lit places so that it can barely be seen, and where there is shadow to draw with darker accents.'[246]

On candlelight and the shadows it casts, Van Mander writes:

> 'Candles as source of light, which is after all not such an everyday subject [in painting], are difficult, and it is an art to paint them. But it is a good idea to have a figure in the dark in front, shaded from top to toe and the light only allowed to touch the contour of naked flesh, hair or clothing. Also, taking the light source as the mid- or starting point, the shadow has to seek its direction everywhere away from that point.'[247]

Van Mander employs the synomymous terms *weerschijn* and *reflectie* more specifically for those cases where the reflection of light of a particular colour affects the colour of the light that (indirectly) illuminates another object:

> 'We have left behind the dark nights and now find ourselves in full daylight, and in a pleasant season of the year, in green meadows. If we sit or lie there just to enjoy ourselves, reflection begins to do its work because, in our faces and other places where the skin is exposed, we take on something of the green of the foliage of the trees, of the grass and other herbs.'[248] 'In just the same way, reflection will do its characteristic work where faces or naked bodies stand in the shade against wool, silk or linen: as a result of the reflection that occurs, the flesh colour will assume either a yellow or red tint.'[249]

In certain cases, coloured or white reflection can influence the colour of surfaces that have the same colour.

> 'One also sees that where the one muscle passes over [merges into] another they reflect against each other: that is, of flesh tone against flesh tone.'[250]

Or:

> 'One also sees reflection evident on round pillars, as elsewhere, on [column] bases, white eggs and marble balls, all the more so when light objects are stood next to them.'[251]

244 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: '**6** In der Sonnen ondergangh sietmen blijcken/Veel rooder ghecoluert diversche saken,/Soo den grondt der aerden, steenen, en brijcken,/Als des Menschen aensichten van ghelijcken,/Daerse de stralen der Sonnen gheraken,/Oft alsoo een holder reflecty maken,/Wordense stracx een blosende rootachtich,/Vierich, en gloeyende coleur deelachtich.'

245 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: '**26** … S'ghelijcx den blixem van den fellen donder/Wesend' een voorbode, met een bysonder/Blaeuverwich vyer, doet de duysterheyt wijcken,/En oock metter vlucht zijn Reflexy blijcken.'

246 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 2: '**9** … Dagh, en schaduws plaetsen wel leeren kennen,/Eerst met Colen dan met Crijen oft Pennen,/Aerdich trecken op den dagh, datment nouwkens/Sien mach, en daer schaduw valt harde douwkens.'

247 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: '**34** Keers-lichten, als dinghen niet seer commune,/Vallen moeyelijck, en constich om maken,/Dan het staet wel, als men voor aen in't brune/Eenich Beeldt van de voeten tot de crune/Overschaduwt, t'licht latende gheraken/Slechs den omtreck van naeckte hayr oft laken,/Oock moet van het licht, als een punct oft steke,/De schaduw' over al nemen haer streke …'

248 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: '**50** Nu zijnd' uyt de doncker nachten gheschey-den,/Vindend' ons daer den dagh is in saysoene,/En den lustighen tijdt, in groene weyden,/Daer ligghend' en sittend', om ons vermeyden,/Soo begint den weerschijn zijn werck te doene,/Want wy worden deelachtich daer het groene/In onse troengen ende naeckte huyden,/Van het loof der Boomen, grassen, en cruyden.'

249 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: '**51** Desghelijcx, waer troengen oft naeckte lijven/Schaduwen teghen wolle, sijd', oft lijnen,/De Reflexy sal haren aerdt bedrijven,/T'zy wat gheel oft root, deelachtich beclijven/Sal de Carnaty met sulck wederschijnen: …'

250 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: '**51** Oock sietmen daer de Musculen verdwijnen/Teghen malcanders een Reverberaty,/Ghelijck als Carnaty teghen Carnaty.'

251 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: '**52** Aen rond' colommen sietmen oock ontblooten/Eenen teghen-dagh, als elders aen basen/Witt' Eyeren ende Marmoren clooten,/Te meer alsser lichte dinghen aenstooten, …'

Fig. 79. Piero della Francesca, *Madonna and Child, with saints and angels*, 1472-74, panel 248 x 170 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera

In another context Van Mander repeats that

> 'the [shadow] side [of columns] should rather catch a reflection.'[252]

The effect referred to in this latter quotation, viz. the effect of the reflection of (white) light into (colourless) shadows, would begin a triumphal progression in painters' studios in the late 15th century and arrives at its full development with Rembrandt and later, Johannes Vermeer.

A kind of light reflection to which Van Mander devoted special attention is closely connected to what is now generally called the 'rendering of surface textures'. This is concerned with the different nature of reflected gleams on shiny surfaces, or highlights on matt materials, that betray the varied optical properties of different materials (wool, silk, wood, earthenware etc.). The rendering of surface textures in painting is only very occasionally mentioned in written sources. It was, however, an extremely important part of the painter's practice, developed through observation and exercise, which, like much other specific knowledge, was mainly passed on during technical training in the workshop. The way in which Van Mander discusses it in the following passage is (as far as I know) unique in written sources on the art of painting:

> '[One sees reflections] also in gold and silver bowls and vases, in clear, transparent ice and glasses of wine, whose reflections make stains of colour on the tablecloth. The painter has to be alert to all of this.'[253]

and:

> 'One sees clear reflections and gleams mirrored and reflected on many more things; each of which is a special lesson whereby, through constant attention, one learns from nature, the painters' mistress: how gleaming fishes, pewter and brassware impart their reflections. Take, for example, the paintings by Lange Pier [Pieter Aertsen *c.* 1508-1575]. One almost wants to reach out one's hands and grasp a pair of plates standing in the dark, where just such a reflected gleam strikes … (see also p. 18).'[254]

When one surveys Rembrandt's oeuvre, the rapid changes and improvements in the way he treated light, when compared with Van Mander's rather simplistic ideas, can only be called astonishing (see Chapter II, pp. 148-151, 154-159).

In *The apostle Paul at his writing desk* (fig. 80) the various insights developed in rapid succession came together. The leap forward made in those few years is just astonishing. The painting in its present state is unfortunately disfigured by a strongly discoloured, probably extra-yellow tinted varnish. As a result, the cooler and warmer tones of the two kinds of light in the painting are not as well differentiated as Rembrandt must have originally intended.

In the *St. Paul* a candle is hidden behind the volume on the reading desk. The light streaming out in all directions from the invisible flame is extremely refined. The lit wall to the right registers the way the strength of the candlelight rapidly diminishes with distance. The three structural timbers – the supporting post, the supported wall beam and the diagonal member curving up from them – each get their own differentiated share of the candlelight.

The image is further enriched by the presence of a second light source, the parallel rays of a pale daylight entering from above left. The combined light effects caused by these two light sources give rise to marvels of complexity on Paul's head and particularly his hand. The

252 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: '**29** … Den anderen mach een weerschijn verkiesen.'

253 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: '**52** … Oock gulden, oft silveren schalen, vasen/Claer doorschijnich ijs, en gheschoncken glasen/Met wijn, die t'amlaken weerschijnich smetten,/Op al dit hebben de Schilders te letten.'

254 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: '**53** Aen noch veel meer dinghen, sietmen expresse/Glansen en schijnen teghenslaen en keeren,/Ghelijck daer van elcke bysonder lesse,/Aen de Natuere, der Schilders Meestresse,/Met vlijtighen opmercken is te leeren,/Hoe glansende Visschen, Tennen en eeren,/Malcander de Reverberaty deelen,/Exempel in langhe Piers tafereelen./ **54** Desen Man stelde wonderlijck de pijpen/Met de verwe, dese dinghen aengaende,/Het scheen al te leven, t'groen met den rijpen,/Men soude schier meenen met handen grijpen/Eenighe taillooren in't doncker staende,/Daer soo eenen teghen-glans in is slaende,/Ghelijck men mach sien met jonstigher vlamme/By eenen Const-lievenden t'Amsterdamme [named in the margin as Jacob Rauwaert].'

head and the hand are lit not only from the left, by daylight, but also from the right by the candlelight. The hand, moreover, catches yet a further reflection from the invisible page of the open volume, which is lit by both light sources. The almost indescribable – but precisely for that reason so apparently natural – play of light in the *St. Paul* is held in balance and simultaneously enhanced by the impressive simplicity of the image, a quietly seated man, dressed in a simple brown habit.

In the *Holy Family with angels* in St Petersburg (fig. 81), a painting whose origin Samuel van Hoogstraten must have witnessed in Rembrandt's studio, a wealth of light effects is bought together in a clearly defined space. Here, complexities of what Van Hoogstraten (no doubt echoing his master) called 'kamerlicht' (room light) are developed to their full extent (see pp. 75-80).

When one places Van Hoogstraten's texts devoted to light and shadow against Van Mander's pronouncements quoted above, what strikes one immediately is how far the realization of the artistic possibilities of light, shadow and reflection have progressed in the meantime. Rembrandt's advance in this area, as can be followed in Chapter II, clearly demonstrates that progress. One can scarcely avoid the conclusion that Rembrandt's continuing experiments with light, shadow and reflection, together with the ideas about human perception that are implied by these achievements, must have been of decisive influence on Van Hoogstraten's text.

At the opening of his Book on light and shadow, Van Hoogstraten announces that he will mainly concern himself with artistic aspects:

> 'We will bypass what the learned philosophers say about *lux* [light as source] or about *Lumen* [shining light], and will deal solely with light and lighting, in as far as they concern our art.'[255]

Earlier in this section it was noted that with Van Mander the terms 'shadow' or 'shadows' hardly played any role at all. (Cast) shadows were only mentioned in his treatment of candlelight. It is interesting that in 1604, two years before his death, Van Mander, who was the first to devote a text in printed form to Caravaggio in the 'Levens' (Lives) in his *Schilder-boeck*, does not use the term 'shadow' in his discussion of the latter's work (just as he never mentions the word 'light' when writing about Caravaggio). This is surely quite remarkable in view of the reception of Caravaggio from the 17th century to the present day. Only with the rise of Caravaggism did it become necessary to give thought to the phenomenon of shadow, but the level of this thought did not rise above the idea that Caravaggio was merely enhancing the degree of his *relievo*.[256] One finds nothing in the 17th-century texts comparable to the following remark by Samuel van Hoogstraten: *'The determination of shadows is studied according to the rules of perspective.'*[257] Van Hoogstraten demonstrates the proposition in a mathematical argument in a separate chapter titled *'Of the sun's shadows, and the directions in which they fall'*,[258]

The question of the relation between shadow and colour (*verwe*) is also raised; in fact the problem of dusk is dealt with as such:

> 'The colour changes that this causes depends on the degree of darkness. A little shadow gives correspondingly less change in colour, but full darkness renders everything the same, that is, completely invisible.'[259]

This was an old philosophical problem: what happened to the colour of an object when that object found itself (partially) in darkness. If one compares, for example, the paintings by Hendrik Terbrugghen and by Rembrandt on this point, it is evident that there were different ways of thinking about this, even among painters.[260]

Shadow in relation to light takes on a new significance, which can be indicated by asking the question: what is the absence of light? Does it mean that colour has gone as well?[261]

Elsewhere in his chapter on light and shadow Van Hoogstraten describes a phenomenon that had already been observed in antiquity, a phenomenon that Rembrandt must already have taken into account during his Leiden time when he painted cast shadows in candlelit scenes and, in a similarly concentrated way, scenes in daylight (see pp. 158/159).

In the context of this chapter, the observations on reflection in Van Hoogstraten's book are significant for the understanding of Rembrandt's thinking on this point. Van Hoogstraten knows of course the generalization postulated in Van Mander's treatise that all surfaces that we see are visible because they reflect light. He therefore also assumes that:

> '*Weerglans* (reflection) is in fact the rebounding of the light from all lit things,…'

Subsequently, however, he excepts from this definition a particular light effect that was briefly discussed by Van Mander, an exception made especially for painters in order to refer to this effect by the synonymous terms '*reflec-*

255 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 257: 'Wij zullen overslaen wat de wijsbegeerigen van *lux* (licht) of van *Lumen* (schijnsel) zeggen, en alleenlijk van licht en verlichtinge, zoo veel het onze kunst betreft, handelen.'

256 E. van de Wetering and M. van Eikema-Hommes, 'Licht en kleur bij Caravaggio en Rembrandt, door de ogen van hun tijdgenoten', exhib. cat. *Rembrandt-Caravaggio*, Rijksmuseum-Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam 2006, pp. 164-179.

257 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 264: 'De bepalingen van de schaduwen worden in de perspective geleert.'

258 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 269: 'Van de schaduwen der Zonne, en haere streekvallen.'

259 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 264: 'De veranderingen, dieze in de verwe maken, is na de maete van haere donkerheyt. Weynich schaduwe geeft na haere maete weyniger verandering in de verwe, maer de volle duisterheit maekt alle dingen gelijk; dat is, geheel onzichtbaer.'

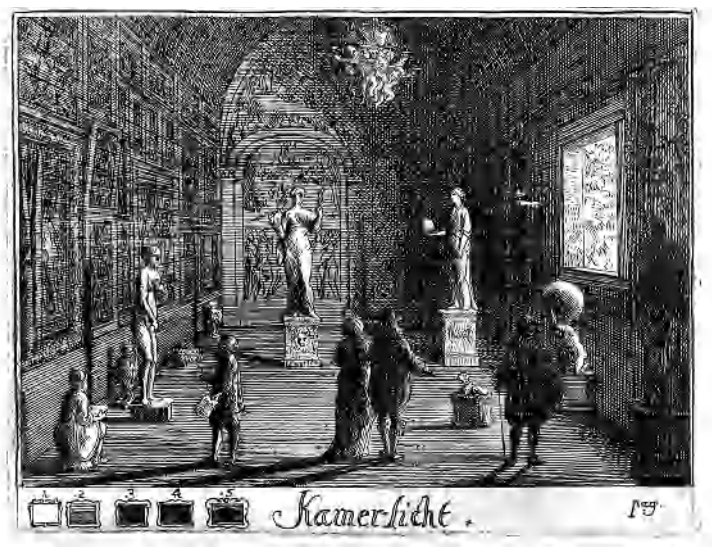
260 E. van de Wetering, 'Some remarks on light, colour, and form with the Dutch Caravaggists', in: R. Klessmann (ed.), *Hendrick ter Bruggen und die Nachfolger Caravaggios in Holland. Beiträge eines Symposiums im Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum Braunschweig, 1987*, Braunschweig 1988, pp. 45-50.

261 See Moshe Barash, *Light and color in the Italian Renaissance theory of art*, New York 1978, p. 160 and note 89.

Fig. 80. Rembrandt, *The apostle Paul at his writing desk*, *c.* 1629/30,
panel 47.2 x 38.6 cm. Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum (I A 26)

Fig. 81. Rembrandt, *The Holy Family with angels*, 1645, canvas 117 x 91 cm.
St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (V 4)

Fig. 82. Illustration in Van Hoogstraten's *Academy of the painting*



tie' en '*weerglans*'. Van Hoogstraten does this immediately following on from the definition just cited of '*weerglans*':

> '… but in art we only use the terms *reflectie* or *weerglans*, to refer to the secondary lighting that falls in the shadow.'[262]

We have seen that Van Mander explicitly mentions this phenomenon in relation to the painting of a pillar. But painters had much earlier made use of the effect that a lit object could serve as a source of light – 'secondary illumination', as Van Hoogstraten called it (see figs. 80, 81). This indirect light source is strong enough to illuminate the shadowed side of an adjacent object. One frequently encounters it in the Flemish and Italian paintings of the 15th century, for instance with Piero della Francesca (fig. 79). It even led to heated discussions in Italian studios. In this connection, Leonardo da Vinci wrote:

> 'The reflected lights from the illuminated sides rebound to the shadows opposite, more or less relieving their obscurity, depending on how near or far they are, and how bright. This theory (of reflection) has been put into practise by many, but there are many others who avoid it, and each side ridicules the other'.[263]

In the case of Piero della Francesca it was selectively used – in the architecture (and the egg) – but the Madonna and the *sacra conversazione* that surround her alone seem to be placed in a direct light which seems to be different from the light striking the architecture.

There can be no doubt that Van Hoogstraten's apprenticeship with Rembrandt influenced the way in which he engaged with the phenomenon of light and the reflections of light and the attention he devoted to it (see fig. 81). Thus he writes:

> 'Our *Rembrant* acquitted himself wonderfully in reflections; yes it seemed as if this choice for the secondary reflection of some light was his element, …'.

However, the way Van Hoogstraten follows on from this quotation seems extraordinary:

> '…if only he had better understood the basic rules of this art: for he who relies solely on his eye and on his own experience, often makes mistakes, which bring ridicule on apprentices, not to speak of masters: and all the more so since this certain knowledge is, for anyone at all interested in it, so easily acquired.'[264]

Anyone who wonders where this certain knowledge is to be acquired will soon become aware that it is only possible through Van Hoogstraten himself, in his *Academy of painting*. One finds in his book a telling predilection for pictorial values – such as the values of light, shadow and tone – numerically related to each other. In his pedagogical enthousiasm he [SvH] developed a system, which at first sight may seem rather complicated, if not pedantic, of degrees of the different light values and further links them to specific pigments. It is worth quoting this entire passage because, in a very direct sense it undoubtedly gives us access to Rembrandt's thinking about handling the complex relations between light and dark in interior spaces where light enters only through one window.

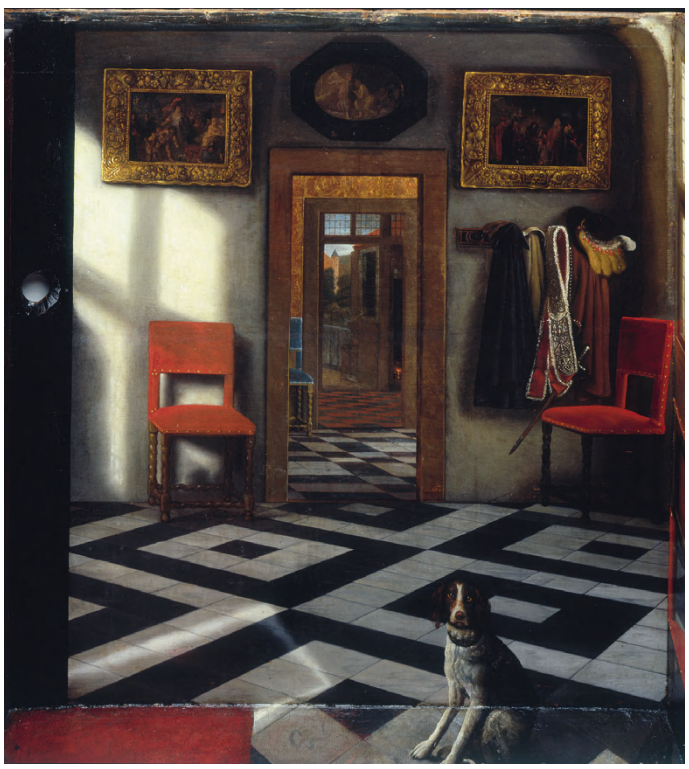
> 'One will find that light, falling in a closed room or building, unless it is unmediated sunlight, is darker than even the shadows cast in the open, where the sun shines. Because the latter, cast by the lit body, get more light from the sky and other illuminated things, than the illuminated objects indoors can enjoy from window or door. In which great Masters often go wrong, letting the lesser of the indoors exceed the more of the outdoors. In order to understand this well, let us say that the brightness of the Sun itself is a hundred, but its light that it sheds on the things that are illuminated by it, ten: the shadow in the open air five; the light within a room four; its reflections two; open shadows one and the hollow depths 0: that is, without light, or at least extremely dark.
> Here now, in order to have the mastery of his intentions, an artist may consider what is possible with his pigments and work out how many steps he can climb, beginning with his black or darkest paint, taking this as 0, extremely dark; to the first step 1[ratio 1] of illumination, say the value of red lake, umber or an alternative pigment with the tonal value of umber. To the second 2 [ratio 2] the height of red-brown, *ter-*

262 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 262: 'Weerglans is wel eygentlijk een wederomkaetsing van het licht van alle verlichte dingen, maer in de konst noemen wy maer alleen reflectie of weerglans, de tweede verlichting, die in de schaduwe valt.'

263 *Leonardo da Vinci*, *Treatise on painting "Codex Urbinas Latinus 1270"*, translated and annotated by A. Philip McMahon with an introduction by Ludwig H. Heydenreich, 2 Vols. Princeton N.J. 1956, p. 78.

264 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 273: 'Wonderlijk heeft zich onzen *Rembrant* in reflexeeringen gequeeten, jae het scheen of deze verkiezing van 't wederom kaetsen van eenich licht zijn rechte element was, had hy hem maer wat beter op de grondregels deezer konst verstaen: want die alleenlijk op zijn oog en gewaende ondervindinge steunt, begaet dikmaels feylen, die den spot van leerjongers, ik zwijge van meesters, verdienen: en zoo veel te meer, daer deeze zekere kennissen, voor die'er zich een weynig aen laet gelegen zijn, zoo gemakkelijk zijn te bekomen.'

Fig. 83. Samuel van Hoogstraten, *A peepshow with views of the interior of a Dutch house* (detail), *c.* 1650s London, The National Gallery



ra verde, or suchlike. To the third [sic!] 4 [ratio 4]. the power of ochre or vermilion. He will find enough to do using whites or lead-tin yellow or whatever can be found brighter, to reach at maximum light [ratio 5] for the gleams or reflections in a room. But since this is a matter in which we cannot be too precise, let us resume this [numerical] division. We leave the Sun beyond the reach of our paints and advise that nobody should break his head trying to imitate that light which our eyes are too weak to look at in nature. But suppose we intend to depict something either in- or outdoors, we shall do well to consider the following five degrees of light and darkening, just as we have indicated below under the illustration with 'room light' [*kamerlicht*] in five little frames [fig. #]. We say then, that the surface outside our work which we assume to be illuminated by the light is the maximum light, and that even the brightest gleams in that maximum light [still] have to be defined within the capacity of the very lightest pigments, such as white and lead-tin-yellow. I do not mean by this that whites or lead-tin yellow should be used for the highest lights in dyed cloths or something that is naturally brown, nor even the nude, for I consider that ridiculous; but I think one should only equate these pigments with the very brightest lights, and thus put them in the first grade. In the second grade we put the grazing tones, as half-lit, and equate these with our mezzotint, or half-tones of ochre, depending on the darkness of the ochre to be chosen. In the third grade, as only a quarter illuminated, we put the usual reflections and scumbles and transparencies, and everything that can be recognized in the shadows; and equate this with brown-red. We put the real shadows, which are nevertheless affected by some half-light, perhaps an eighth part, in the fourth grade, and compare this with umber. But the hollow depths, those bereft of all light, we put in the fifth and last grade, and equate these with our blacks and very darkest pigments.'[265]

This text is of the greatest significance, not only for an understanding of Van Hoogstraten's own work (fig. 83) but more especially of the work of Rembrandt himself, who, as one sees from many of his paintings and etchings, must have been thoroughly engaged in the problem of interior light – *kamerlicht* in all its manifestations (fig. 82). Van Hoogstraten's text quoted above, I am convinced, contains the key to understanding the discipline needed for painting or etching interior light, as Rembrandt and his workshop did in a considerable number of paintings. When comparing these works with similar indoor scenes by other painters (see V 28 fig. 12) it becomes clear that this was a veritable specialism, to whose development Rembrandt must have made an essential contribution.

Neither when we look at paintings nor in reality does it

265 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 267/268: 'Men zal bevinden dat het licht, vallende in een beslote kamer of gebouw, ten waer het onmiddelbaer door de Zonne wiert veroorzaekt, donkerder is, dan zelf de schaduwen vallende in de ope lucht, daer de Zonne schijnt. Want deeze van het beschenen lichaem vallende, hebben nochtans meer lichts van den Hemel, en andere verlichte dingen, dan de lichten binnens huis uit deur of venster kunnen genieten. Waer in zich groote Meesters dikmaels vergrypen, latende het mindere van binnen het meerdere van buiten overtreffen. Laet dan, om deze zaek wel te verstaen, gezegt worden de klaerheit van de Zonne zelf hondert, maer haer licht, dat zy aen de dingen, die zy beschijnt, gevende is, tien te zijn: de schaduwe in d'ope lucht vijf: het lichtste in een kamer vier: de weerglansen twee: de opene schaduwen een: de holle dieptens 0: dat is, zonder licht, of ten uitersten donker.

Hier mocht nu een konstenaer, om zijn voorneemen in zijn macht te hebben, met zijn verwen te rade gaen, en overleggen, hoe veel trappen hy beklimmen kan, beginnende van zijn zwart of duisterste verwe, als voor 0, d'uiterste donkerheit, tot d'eerste trap 1, van verlichting, stel lak, omber of ombers waerde. Tot de tweede 2. de hoogte van bruinroot, *Terra verde*, of diergelijk. Tot de derde 4. 't Vermogen van oker of vermiljoen. Hy zal genoeg te doen vinden om met witten of mastekotten, of wat noch klaerder mach gevonden worden, de glansen of spiegelingen van het uiterste licht vijf, in een kamer te bereyken.

Maer dewijl dit een zaek is, daermen niet te naeuwkeurich in kan zijn, zoo laet ons deeze verdeeling noch eens hervatten. Wij laeten de Zon buiten't bereyk onzer verwen, en raeden, dat niemant zijn hooft breeke met dat licht, daer ons oog te zwak toe is, om het in de natuer eens aen te zien, nae te bootsen. Maer't zy dat wy van voorneemen zijn iets binnen of buitens huis te verbeelden, wy zullen wel doen, als wy het in de volgende vijf graeden van licht en verdonkering aenmerken, gelijk wy't hier achter onder de plaet van 't Kamerlicht in vijf perkjes hebben aengeweezen [fig. 82]. Wy zeggen dan, dat het geene vlak van het licht, dat wy onderstellen buiten ons werk te zijn, bescheenen wort, een *volkomen licht* is, en dat des zelfs uiterste glansen, binnen't vermoogen van d'alderlichtste verwen, als witten en mastekotten, moeten bepaelt blijven. Ik meyne hier niet, datmen geverfde kleederen of iets dat van natueren bruin is, noch zelfs het blanke naekt, met witten of mastekotten moet ophoogen, want dat acht ik belachelijk; maer ik wil datmen deeze verwen alleen met d'alderklaerste lichten vergelijke, en haer dus met zijn gedachten in den eersten graet stelle. In den tweeden graedt stellen wy, als half verlicht, de schampingen, en vergelijken die met onze mezetinte, of halfverwen op de bruinte van ookers. In den derden graet stellen wy, als maer een vierdepart verlicht de gemeene reflexien of wederglansen, deurschijningen, en al wat in de schaduwe eenige kennelijkheyt veroorzaekt; en vergelijken die tegens bruin root. De rechte schaduwen, die echter noch eenich scheemerlicht deelachtich zijn, als misschien een achtste deel, stellen wy in den vierden graet: en vergelijken die met omber. Maer de holle dieptens, die van alle licht of wederglans berooft zijn, stellen wy in den vijfden en laetsten graedt, en vergelijken die met onze zwarten, en alderdiepste verwen.'

Fig. 84. Detail of fig. 81

strike us, as viewers, how great is the leap from one tonal value to another in a closed space lit by only one or two openings. Our brain automatically corrects for these tonal differences and we see, for example, all the white-plastered walls in such a space as white. One only becomes aware of these tonal leaps – which are necessary to make the suggestion of light in a painting convincing – by isolating a small detail from that (fig. 84), for otherwise the correction automatically operates immediately.

Another practical/theoretical problem, related to the one just discussed, which Van Hoogstraten must have encountered during his apprenticeship with Rembrandt is the problem of tonal relations within a space lit by a small, relatively strong source of light such as, for example, a dark room with a burning candle. After his above-quoted digression on 'interior light' Van Hoogstraten continues:

> 'This remark should warn us to be careful not to undertake more than the capability of our pigments permits. For if we set the tonal values too high, we shall fall short in the darkness, such as happens if, in painting a night piece, a burning torch or candle is given a prominent: because they do not have the strength to give the rest of the work its proper clarity. *Rembrant* has depicted the strength of candlelight to the best of his abilities in several dark prints [see figs. 85, 86], but if one covers these small lights, the rest of the work remains dark: just as, when someone shows us something by candlelight, we usually hold our hand in front of the light so that it does not prevent our eyes from discerning everything in as much detail and as recognizably as possible. And certainly, when one shows something special in a painting and wants it to be fully seen, it is worthwhile to hide the flame of the candle or torch behind something: for if left naked, it would need the capacity of our first grade of light only.'[266]

Rembrandt's etchings with a naked candle or a small window at first sight seem no more than curiosities. If, however, one analyzes one of Rembrandt's most ambitious etch-

266 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 268: 'Deeze aenmerking zal ons voorzichtich maeken, om niet meer t'onderneemen, als het vermoogen onzer verwen toelaet. Want als wy te hoog opheffen, zoo zullen wy om laeg te kort schieten, gelijk een gebeurt, die in 't schilderen van een nachtstuk een brandende toors of een kaerse voor aen stellen: want zy hebben de macht niet, het resteerende werk zijn behoorlijke klaerheyt te geeven. *Rembrant* heeft de maet van een kaerslicht in eenige bruine printjes nae zijn vermoogen uitgebeelt, maer als men die lichjes toedekt, zoo blijft de rest van 't werk donker: daer wy gewoon zijn, als men ons iets by de kaers laet zien, onze hand voor 't licht te houden, op dat het onze oogen niet en belette alles op 't klaerst en kenlijkst te onderscheyden. En zeker, wanneermen iets byzonders in Schildery vertoonen, en alles in volle kracht doen zien wil, zoo is 't ook wel waert, datmen de vlam van een kaerse of fakkel ergens doe achter schuilen: want die bloot laetende, zouden ze't vermoogen van onzen eersten graed van licht alleen behoeven.'

Fig. 85. Rembrandt, *Student at a table by candlelight*, *c.* 1642, etching 14.7 x 13.3 cm (B. 148)

Fig. 86. Rembrandt, *St Jerome in a dark chamber*, 1642, etching 15.1 x 17.3 cm (B. 105II)

ings, the *Jan Six reading by a window* (fig. 87) and if one focuses one's gaze on the interior of the room in which Six stands reading, it will strike one that the things there, the curtains, the painting on the wall, have been indicated in minimally modulated black. As with the night pieces by Gerard Dou and Gottfried Schalken, educated connoisseurs like Jan Six must have been aware that such *tours de force* in the handling of light and shadow and carefully calculated tonal values derived their significance – their raison d'être even – from the mastery with which such effects were realized.

Another text from Van Hoogstraten's *Inleyding* gives us insight into Rembrandt's thinking about the nature of the relationship between light and dark in a painting. First, however, we need to place this text in a broader context. For his purposes, Van Hoogstraten made extensive use of a book by Franciscus Junius (1591-1677), *De pictura veterum*, which was published in 1637 and appeared in English in 1638 under the title *The Painting of the ancients*, and in Dutch in 1641. In the text discussed below, Van Hoogstraten refers to Junius' account of how the Greeks and Romans already considered that the effect of light in a painting depended on the degree to which the dark parts were dealt with.[267]

> Van Hoogstraten goes on to say that Junius, in his comments on these ancient texts, 'disapproved of (too many) harsh contrasts between light and dark' and adds imaginatively that such paintings 'are like chessboards'.

He continues,

> 'Moreover, he [Junius] wants painters to use the power of shadows moderately.'[268]

Whatever Junius may have meant exactly, Van Hoogstraten's interpretation of that sentence is not that the shadow effect itself should be moderate, but that light and shadow should not alternate too frequently or dramatically. This is evident from the way he pursues his argument:

> 'I therefore recommend you not to mix up lights and shadows too much, but to combine them properly in groups; let your strong lights be gently accompanied by lesser lights, and I assure you that they will shine all the more beautifully; let your deepest darks be surrounded by lighter darks, so that they will make the power of the light stand out all the more powerfully.'

Then, specifically referring to Rembrandt's intentions, Van Hoogstraten adds:

> 'Rembrandt developed this virtue to a high degree, and he was a master in combining related colours.'[269]

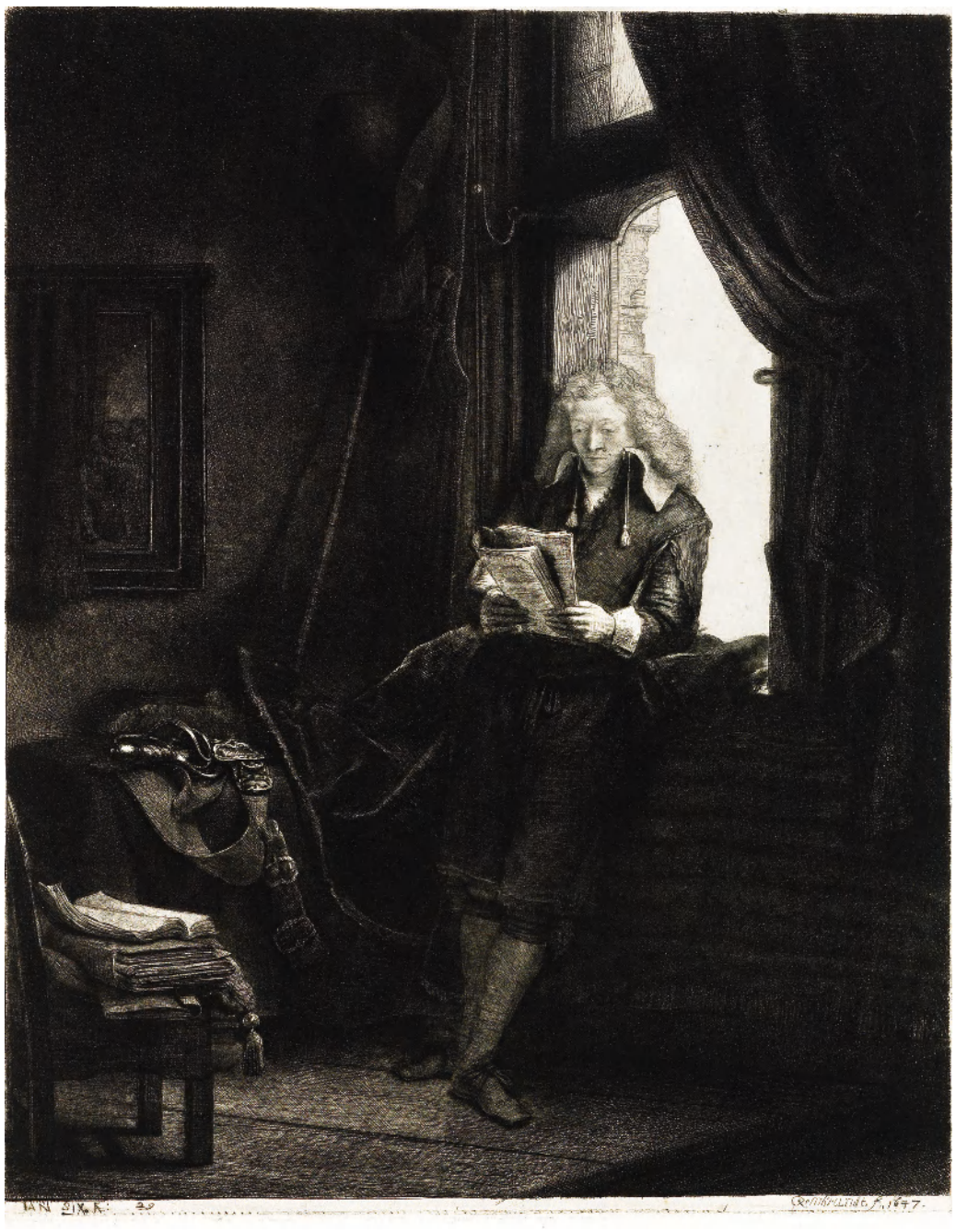
In the Dutch text, Van Hoogstraten characterizes these 'related colours' as colours that are 'friendly' ('*bevriend*'). Van Hoogstraten's text implies that as a rule the highest lights were placed by Rembrandt in a light surrounding,

267 Keith Aldrich, Philip Fehl, Riana Fehl (eds.), *The literature of classical art, De pictura Veterum*, (according to the English translation 1638), Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford 1991, Vol. I, p. 243.

268 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 305: 'En Junius, …, berispt de harde aaneenstooting van licht en bruin [donker], en zegt, dat dergelijke Schilderyen wel schaekberden gelijken. Vorder wil hy [Junius], datmen de macht van schaduwen matich gebruike, ….'

269 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, pp. 305-306: 'Daerom beveele ik u niet te veel met lichten en schaduwen door een te haspelen, maer de zelve bequamelijk in groepen te vereenigen; laet uwe sterkste lichten met minder lichten minlijk verzelt zijn, ik verzeeker u, datze te heerlijker zullen uitblinken; laet uwe diepste donkerheden met klaere bruintens omringt zijn, op datze met te meerder gewelt de kracht van het licht mogen doen afsteeken. *Rembrant* heeft deeze deugt hoog in top gevoert, en was volleert in 't wel byeenvoegen van bevriende verwen.'

Fig. 87. Rembrandt, *Jan Six reading by a window*, 1647, etching, drypoint and burin, 24.4 x 19.1 cm (B. 285[IV]).



whereas the darkest tones are flanked by slightly less dark tones. Because of this binding together of the dark portions of the compositions on the one hand and the light portions on the other, it seems that the viewer is enabled to grasp the light-dark structure of the composition at a glance, since the number of contrasts in a painting is thus drastically limited (p. 156 fig. 24 and p. 201 fig. 122). In developing this approach, the painters of the Baroque apparently based themselves on psychological insights obtained through empirical observation. When 'reading' a painting with too many contrasting passages, the eye feels compelled to explore all those contrasts one by one. The image which the viewer constructs this way is therefore *additive* in nature, while with Rembrandt the *synthesis* of the image takes place immediately, at a glance, so to speak.[270] The last-quoted passages concerning light and *'bevriende'* colours do not come from Van Hoogstraten's Book devoted to Light and Shadow but from his eighth Book on Beauty.

270 On similar ideas in Italian art theory, see M. Vasillov, 'Rhetoric and fragments of a high baroque art theory', *Marsyas* XX (1979/80), p. 79-29, note 13; Missirini has preserved the folllowing lost statement by Pietro da Cortona: 'Gli artisti in questo genere non pretesero che lo spettatore andasse minutamente esaminando le parti della loro tela: anzi per distorlo da ciò gli posero dinanzi gl'occhi un'insieme grandioso, armonioso, vivace, che ne lo appagasse con bella meraviglia, e sorpresa.' (Melchior Missirini, 'Memorie per servire alla storia della Romana Accademia di S. Luca fino alla morte di Antonio Canova', Rome 1823, p. 113.)

Landscape

At first sight Karel van Mander's text on Landscape does not seem to be about the art of painting at all, but more like a pleasant outing in the open air, taking his pupil for an early morning walk to look around and enjoy all there was to be seen. He extols the beauty and variety of nature whilst repeatedly exhorting the pupil, 'O, look there, …, just look …, look …, look …'[271] and each time pointing out different phenomena – now the wealth of colours and the change in that part of the sky where the sun rises, then the pale blue sky on the opposite side or the way in which the green of the dew-laden grass becomes darker in places where the hunters and their dogs have left their tracks. He also shows his pupil how the colour of the landscape in the distance takes on the colour of the sky above the horizon, and how the lines of the edges of the fields tend to converge toward a vanishing point on the horizon. These observations of nature thus gradually turn into well-meant advice to the pupil. These lessons should help him to paint a convincing and beautiful landscape – but not without having looked at the real world with attention.

In reading this text one cannot help thinking that landscape in all its forms must have been very significant for Van Mander himself. His own history paintings are almost all enacted in the open air. The extent to which Netherlandish landscape painters dominated this discipline should also be borne in mind. Looking back at the development of landscape painting, Van Hoogstraten would later write that their competence in this field was

> 'such that even the Italians must before long recognize that the Netherlanders surpassed them in landscapes. For even *Titian* was not ashamed to take a few of them home, to study this art from them. Which, together with his great judgement in imitating from the life, made him the best Landscape painter in the world.'[272]

Van Mander's *Grondt* is in fact the first treatise in the history of art to give so much attention to landscape, in which accurate observation of nature itself is combined with advice aimed at the execution of landscape paintings. The range and perspicacity of his observations and advice is impressive. To give an example, in the following passage he stresses the importance of being able to paint trees well.

> 'Now we come ..... to the shadowy area of the Hamadryads, that is, the trees, which, if they are well painted, make the whole work more attractive and embellish it – and otherwise [if not well painted] disfigure it. It is therefore advisable to acquire through practice a natural and competent way of painting foliage, in a good *'slag'* [meaning the right type of brushstrokes applied in the right 'rythm'] for herein lies the strength: you must be able to do that. 37 Even though one has constantly to try many ways – either after nature or after good paintings [by others], working on coloured paper, practising foliage with elegant movements with [diluted light or dark] inks, in the hope that with time one achieves one's goal; yet it turns out not to be an art that can be learned like [training] the muscles of the body; for leaves, hair, skies and draped textiles, all that is a question of spirited handling [of the brush], and [only] the spirit can teach one to produce it. 38 One can apply different kinds of foliage and one should above all use different colours: yellow-green for oak, pale leaves for willow [etc.]. One should not make the crowns of trees completely closed all round, as though they had been trimmed; and one should allow branches to grow from the trunk on all sides, most densely below, letting them thin out further above. 39 One must also learn how to give tree trunks their characteristic form, heavy below and becoming thin above, standing upright: thin birches, here and there white, chestnuts and limes and also the wrinkled bark of oaks, on which you should let bindweed and green ivy climb, and also the straight stems so useful [as booms] for stretching sails that the wind can then fill. And these must all be clothed with their green foliage. 40 Laying in your trees well is a good start, whether for [making] hazy woods or tall [single] trees: some yellower, some greener; and depicting the way, when seen from below, the foliage turns. But to avoid dryness [in the brushwork], do not make too finicky, small leaves. And also try, while you are painting the foliage, to show thin twigs running through it, sometimes growing upwards, sometimes bent capriciously downwards.'[273]

By Rembrandt's landscapes, one usually thinks of those landscapes that originated in the period between 1638 and '47 (fig. 89). In fact, his first significant landscapes

271 K.v.M. *Grondt,* Cap. 8: '**5** 'Ay siet doch eens,…', **6** 'siet,…', **7** 'siet,…', **8** 'siet…'

272 S.v.H. Hooge schoole, p.137: 'zoo dat zelf(s) d'Italianen al voor lang bekennen mosten, dat de Nederlanders hen in landschappen te boven gingen. Waerom zich ook Titiaen niet geschaemt heeft eenige der zelve by hem in huis te nemen, om hen die kunst af te zien. 't Welk hem, nevens zijn groot oordeel in het navolgen van 't leeven, tot den besten Landschapschilder van de Werelt gemaekt heeft.'

273 K.v.M. Grondt, Cap 8: '**36** Nu zijn wy ghecomen, om drucx verstroyen,/ Tot t'schaduwich rijck der Hamadryaden,/Dats tot de Boomen, die al t'werck vermoyen,/Als sy wel ghedaen zijn, jae gantsch vervroyen,/Oft anders ontcieren, dus waer te raden,/Een aerdigh' en fraeye manier van bladen,/Op eenen goeden slach, hem aen te wennen,/Want hier in leyt de cracht, dit moetmen kennen./**37** Al soudemen soecken op veel manieren,/nae t'leven, oft handelingh aenghename,/Ghestadelijck op grondighe papieren,/Met sap al wasschende bladers te swieren,/Hopend' ofmer al metter tijdt toe quame:/Doch, ten schijnt niet alst bemuysde lichame/Leersaem Const: want bladen, hayr, locht, en laken,/Dat is al gheest, en den gheest leert het maken./**38** Verscheyden bladers machmen wel ghebruycken,/Bysonder op verscheyden verwen vlammen,/Geel, groen eyck-loof, bleeck bladt van wilge struycken,/De Boom-toppen salmen niet gantsch toeluycken/Rondt, als warense gheschoren op cammen,/En over alle de sijden der stammen/Salmen oock laten uyt wassen de tacken,/Onder cloeckst, maer latens' opwaerder swacken./**39** Aerdighe Boom-stammen moetmen oock vinden/Die onder grof, en boven dun opsteylen,/Wit cale bercken, Kasboomen, en Linden,/Somtijts onderscheyden, en oock bewinden/Berimpeld' eycken schorss', en groen beveylen,/En oock de rechte stammen, nut om seylen/Aen te spannen, daer den windt in mach snuyven,/Dees al becleyden met hun groene luyven./**40** T'wel aenlegghen der Boomen vordert seere,/T'zy tot flauw Bosschen, oft groot in de hooghte,/Som geelder, som groender, maken dat keere/T'loof van onder over, maer niet te teere/Cleyn bladen en maeckt, om vermijden drooghte,En al makende t'loof, doet oock u pooghte,/Dees met telgherkens te doorloopen ranckich,/Som op som nederwaerts gheboghen swanckich.'

Fig. 88. Rembrandt, *The abduction of Proserpina*, 1631, panel 84.8 x 79.7 cm.
Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (I A 39)

were made earlier, in the period 1631-1634 (fig. 88, see also pp. 194/195, figs. 104 and 105). It is unusual to refer to these works as landscapes because all three include mythological scenes, which are usually taken to be their most important component part. A passage in Van Mander's chapter on landscape, however, may perhaps cause us to change our thinking about the *raison d' être* of these paintings.

'It is advisable to know the story [the history that you are going to paint] in advance – according to Holy Writ or the poets [of classical mythology], as it suits you – the better to adapt your landscape to it (see also pp. 194/195).'[274]

274 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap 8: '**41** T'waer goet, waert ghy u storyken voorweter,/ Schriftich, oft Poetich, naer u benoeghen,/Om u Landtschap daer naer te schicken beter,…'

Fig. 89. Rembrandt, *Mountain landscape with approaching storm*, 1640, panel 52 x 72 cm. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum (III A 137)

This remark might make us wonder whether, in the three Rembrandt paintings just mentioned, the landscape should not be seen so much as a background against which to set an episode from Greek mythology, but rather as three different, varied landscapes in which these scenes are enacted. In Rembrandt's execution of the *Proserpina*, unfortunately now in such a poor state of preservation, nature is present in an abundance and beauty that does remind one of Van Mander's nature walk with his young pupil, described above. The story of Proserpina, seized while out with her companions picking flowers, offered Rembrandt the opportunity to give to nature an additionally important role in his painting.

Less than ten years later his approach to landscape would change radically. Only in the landscape in Cracow (p. 209) is a 'history' still central to the composition, with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The landscape chosen for this also offers enough room to serve as a platform for the narrative episode. After all, the story occupies the whole wide landscape because the Levite and the priest who ignored the robbed and wounded Samaritan are already far in the distance, having looked briefly and *'passed by on the other side'*. But soon after this, as for the specialists in this area so for Rembrandt too, the landscape became a theme in itself, in Rembrandt's case an opportunity to explore a daring play between local areas of strong light and large areas of '*schikschaduwen*', i.e. shadow serving largely compositional ends (see p. 59).

There is hardly any trace of Rembrandt's thinking about landscape to be found in Samuel van Hoogstraten's treatise. There is, however, one passage that is significant in this regard, which will be discussed at the end of this section, a passage that throws light on Rembrandt's ideas on landscape at the time when Van Hoogstraten was apprenticed to him. But apart from this there are other reasons for paying particular attention to one of Van Hoogstraten's passages on landscape.

Van Hoogstraten twice discusses landscape at length, firstly in one of the three Books that are specifically devoted to history painting (see Table on p. 24) and once in his

Book on colour and the use of paint. One of these texts, despite the fact that it contains almost word for word quotations from Van Mander's digression on landscape, also bear Van Hoogstraten's own stamp and may be seen as a clear manifestation of the aims of his book. This passage demonstrates what Van Hoogstraten meant by the '*Zichtbare Wereld*' [visible world], especially as applied here to the many types of different landscapes. He exhorts his *'young painters'* to take in these landscapes and unflaggingly to consider everything, to record it all in sketches and to memorize it. When he turns to the clouds he advises investigating the connection between the way they move with the wind and the shapes they assume as a result

> 'for the artist's eye must also know things from the aspect of their causes, and must be free of the foolish delusions of the common people'.[275]

To clarify what he means by this he continues with a poem, which ends with the lines:

> 'A painter has rather better eyes; he knows both colour and shape, as well as light. And judges with more accurate sight'[276]

The long passage, quoted below, in which these ideas appear, is preceded by the following: after discussing a number of famous landscape painters, Van Hoogstraten informs the reader that he has paid these painters only brief attention

> 'because our aim is primarily to show nature to young painters, and only occasionally, where fitting, to stimulate them by means of examples [such as the famous landscape painters mentioned above].'[277]

What then follows is, according to the note in the margin, an exhortation to pupils to draw and to memorize the enormous richness of nature, followed by an exhaustive recitation of all its detail. It is as though Van Hoogstraten is giving here both an exemplary demonstration of what he means by his reference to the 'visible world' and at the same time of the knowledge ('*wetenschap*') the painter needs if he is to be able to render the 'visible world' in all its variety.

> 'Go then, O young painters! Into the forest, or up along the hills, to depict far vistas or richly wooded views; or to gather the abundance of nature in your sketchbook with pen and chalk. Go to, and try with steady observation to get used to never raising your gaze in vain; but as far as time and your tools permit, record everything as if you described in writing, and to imprint on your mind the character of things[278], so that you can draw on [this mental store] when you have no example from nature before you, with all this in your memory for you to use. Take care, that you depict each thing in its own character; because the broom-like Cypress and the twisted oak branch are very different from each other. The foliage of Lime and Willow differ too much; and so too are the trunks of Chestnut trees different from those of Beech trees. Observe what makes rocks, caves, trees, shrubs, trunks, reedbeds, flowers, foliage and branches distinct. Note the wide shadows where the thick branches press against each other, and indicate subtly where the clear sky glimmers in the treetops. Give accurate care to the clear foreground, done with thorns and thistles and broad bright patches, let them freely fill a corner of your work, clear and large, and render the distant views with a soft hand, which as they come closer should be more recognizably indicated, as they become larger against the background behind them. Let the crooked cart-track rise gently, either to the right or to the left, here soft and muddy, and further away up the hill, or in shifting sands or barren heathland, lying flat and even. [Make sure] that the ponds, where the ducks and white swans swim, are horizontal, and the brooks run downward, your buildings stand firmly and the hamlets are dilapidated and droll and lean to one side. Note the differences of weather and wind, and the times of year, […]; in May the trees are dense and sportive: whereas in autumn they shed their leaves: the buckthorn comes early in to leaf, the vine produces its fruit late; but the laurel and palm and the stiff-standing pine are green the whole year round. When you come to lay out a well-ordered garden with ornamental flowerbeds and through-vistas, plant lemon and orange trees and pineapples next to fences, place the peach and apricot trees against the north wall, cover the arbours with dogwood and let the sweet brier and myrtle weave through them. The planted garden must be well-ordered but the wilderness must be wild. In the forest plant your ground freely with thistles and docks, and various herbs. Embellish the clear brooks with boulders, and the mossy pools and ditches with duckweed, *Kanne* leaves and rushes. Let the brooks run rippling down seeking the valleys, an eventually losing themselves in a larger lake. But do you want to introduce great rivers into your work, with billowing waves? Then you should sometimes make clear the difference between salt and fresh water through certain characteristics, as *Neacles* did in his naval battle between the Egyptians and Persians: for when he was unable to show that the water of the Nile, which he intended, was not seawater, he painted an ass drinking from the bank, carefully watching a crocodile, inhabitant of the Nile; which was sufficient to let one know where it was. But if you are tired of pleasantries, and want to show the raging sea from a safe shore, let the waves become quite concave, and the dark billows threaten the ships. *Protogenes*, it is said, was a marine- and ship- painter up to his fiftieth year, but let us stick to the shore. One must also apply oneself diligently and with spirit, to observe the clouds carefully, and how their movement and their shape are correlated; for the artist always

275 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 140: 'want het ooge des konstenaers moet de dingen ook zelfs uit haere oorzaken kennen, en van de zotte waen des gemeenen volx vry zijn;'

276 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 140: 'Een Schilder heeft hier toe vry beter oogen;/Hy kent en kleur en omtrek, nevens 't licht,/En oordeelt met naeukeuriger gezicht.'

277 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p.137: 'want ons oogwit is voornamentlijk de Schilderjeugt tot de natuer te wijzen, en maer somtijts, als 't pas geeft, haer door voorbeelden aen te prikkelen.'

278 In this connection it is interesting to know that Van Hoogstraten in Book Five, pp. 100-106, describes his journey to Italy.

has to know things from the aspect of their causes, and is free of the foolish delusions of the common people; of which this verse speaks:

It also happens, when clouds begin to thicken
Or spread (spreyen) that the simple-minded are frightened
By images they see in the sky, which they see
As omens, where none are to be seen.
Certainly many wonders can be traced in cloudscapes,
whether there is a storm, or the clouds tear apart,
But the idea that one can discern animal or ship [in them]
Is a silly delusion of the rabble, such that those untutored
In our art, are deceived by idle notions;
A painter has acquired rather better eyes;
He knows both colour and shape, as well as the light,
And judges with more accurate sight.[279]

In this approach to landscape there is nothing of what we encounter in Rembrandt's work, whether as painter, draughtsman or etcher of landscapes. Whereas Van Hoogstraten's text – in as far as it concerns landscape – presents a catalogue, as it were, of the 'visible world', it is as though Rembrandt primarily used his painted landscapes more as a testing ground on which to experiment with his compositional ideas. After all, his ambition was always to be, not a landscape painter but a history painter.

There is, however, a passage in Van Hoogstraten's text in which he deals with an important aspect of landscape painting in a way that may stem from Rembrandt's teaching. This concerns the representation of space. In order to assess this properly we must first go back to Van Mander.

Karel van Mander's detailed advice concerning the representation of space in the landscape reads as follows:

'Look at the way the landscape in the distance tends to look like the sky, [it] becomes hazy and almost totally merges into the sky; standing mountains appear like clouds that move about. [Look] also at the way that in the field ditches, furrows [and all] that we behold converge in the distance from all sides to the vanishing point, coming together like paved floors. Do not find this tiresome, but maintain your attention here, because this gives your background a strong spatial effect.

I want you to pay attention to foreshortening and diminution, just as one sees in nature. Although it is not architecture, for which strict rules are necessary, even so you must be able to set your viewpoint or vanishing point on the horizon, that is to say on the upper line of the water. Everything below this is seen from above and the rest is seen from below.

You cannot execute the background too vaguely; [there you must] be less liberal in dark accents than in heightening the tone; remembering the thickness of the air, whose substance is blue and which, between [eye and object], is an impediment to sight. Not too excessively, one can sometimes show [the landscape] as though the sunlight streams through the clouds, falling on cities and mountains.'[280]

279 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole,* p.139: 'Tre dan, ô Schilderjeucht! ten boschwaert in, of langs de heuvelen op, om verre verschieten, of boomrijke gezichten af te maelen; of met pen en krijt de rijke natuer in uw tekenboek op te gaeren. Val aen, en betracht met stadich opletten u te wennen nooit vergeefs op te zien; maer, zooveel de tijd, of uw gereetschap, toelaet, alles als op te schrijven, en in uwe gedachten den aert der dingen te prenten, om daer na uit de geeft, wanneer u 't natuerlijk voorbeelt ontbreekt, u met u voorraet, in uwe geheugnis opgedaen, te behelpen. Zie toe, indien gy elk in haer eygen aert uitbeelt; want de beezemachtig Cipres, en den kronkelenden Eyketak gelijken elkander niet. Linden en Willigen loof verschilt te veel; zoo verschilte de stam des Kastanjebooms van de Beukelaers. Onderschey Rottssen, Grotten, Geboomten, Struiken, Stasmmen, Biesboffen, Bloemen, Lovers en Takken. Merk op de ruyme schaduwe, waer de dichte takken elkander prangen, en wijs zachtelijk aen, daer de heldere luchte inde boomtoppen schemert. Neem naukeurich acht op de klaere voorgront, met Doornen en Distelen en breede blaren bewerkt, laetze klaer en groot, vry een hoek van uw werk vullen, en beelt de verre gezichhten met een zachte handt uit, die naer u toe komende, even zoo kenlijker dienen aengewezen, als zy tegen de achterste vergrooten. Laet het kromme wagespoor, ofter rechter of slinker handt, zachterlijk rijzen, hier week en slikkerich, en ginder ten heuvel op, of in mulle zanden, of barre heyden, vlak leggen. Dat de wijers, daer de Waerden en witte Zwaenen zwemmen, waterpas, en de beekjes ten dale glijen, uw gebouwen vast staen, en de boere gehuchten vry koddich en bouvallich op zy leunen. Merk op onderscheyt van weer en wind, en op de tijt des jaers, gelijk wy booven vermaent hebben; de Mey geeft dik en sportelijk geboomt: de herft schut de blaren af : de Kruisdooren geeft vroegh loofwerk, de Wijnstok laed vruchten; maer de Lawrier en palm en steyle pijnboom zijn 't geheele jaer groen. Komt gy een wel geschikten tuin met sierperken en deurzichten 't ontwerpern, plant vry Sitroen en Oranjeboomen, en Granaetappels aen d' afschutsels, ley de Pers en Abrikoos tegens de Noorderwal, beklee de Prieelen met Kornoeljen, en laet 'er Neglentier en Mirte deurslingeren. De plantasiën moeten ordentelijk, maer de wildernissen wild zijn. Plant op uwe gronden in't wout vry Distelen, Dokkeblaen, an allerley kruiden. Laet de klaere beeken met keyen, en de mosachtige poelen en flooten met Enderkroost, Kannebladeren, en Biezen versiert zijn. Laet haer al krinkelende de dalen zoeken, en zich eyndelijk in een grooter plas verliezen. Maer bergeert gy groote Rivieren, daer de baren hol gaen, in uw werk te pas te bréngen? Gy zoud somtijts dienen door eenich merkteyken het zoet van het Zee water te doen kennen, gelijk Neacles dede, in zijn Scheepstrijt tusschend d' Egypters en Persen: want als hy 't water van de Nijl, dat hy voorhad, van geen Zeewater kon ondersscheyden, zoomaekte hy een drinkenden Ezel, op den oever, die van een Krokodi, bewonder van de Nijl, beloert wiert; 't welk de plaets genoech te keennen gaf. Maer lust u, zat van vermaeklijkheden, de woedende Zee, van een veyligen oever aen te zien,laet de golven vry hol gaen, en de donkere wolk de Schepen dreygen. Protogeen, zegtmen, was tot zijn vijftich jaer toe een Zee en Scheep Schilder; maer laet ons aen de wal blijven. Men moet ook zijn vlijt aenleggen in den geestigen zwier der wolken wel waer te nemen, en hoe haere drift en gedaente in een zekere evenredenheyt bestaet; want het ooggee des knstenaers moet de dingen ook zelfs uit haere oorzaken kennen, en van de zotte waen des gemeenen volx vry zijn; daer dit vers van spreekt:

't Gebeurte ook, als de wolken zich verdikken
Of sprejven, dat d' onnoozelen verschrikken
Van Beelden, die zy aen de Hemel zien,
Als teykenen, van 't geen noch zal geschien.
Veel wonders is gewis in 't zwerk te speuren,
't Zy als het stormt, of als de wolken Scheuren
Maer dat men dier of Schip daer uit bootseert,
Is domme waen van 't graeuw, dat ongeleert
In onze konst , door waenzicht wort bedroogen;
Een schilder heeft hier toe vry beter oogen;
Hy kent en kleur en omtrek, nevens 't licht,
En oordeelt met naeukeurüger gezicht'

280 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap 8: '**8** Siet al t'verre Landtschap ghedaente voeren/Der Locht, en schier al in de Locht verflouwen,/Staende Berghen schijnen wolcken die roeren,/Weersijdich op't steeck, als plaveyde vloeren,/In't veldt, sloten, voren, wat wy aenschouwen,/Oock achterwaert al inloopen en nouwen,/Dit acht te nemen laet u niet verdrieten,/Want t'doet u achtergronden seer verschieten./ **9** Op vercorten en verminderen letten,/Ghelijck men in't leven siet, ick bespreke,/Al ist geen metselrie, die nauwe Wetten/Behoeft, soo moet ghy doch weten te setten/Op den Orisont recht u oogh' oft steke,/Dat is, op des waters opperste streke,/Al watter onder is sietmen dan boven,/En t'ander sietmen van onder verschoven./ **10** Achter niet ▸

Fig. 90. K. van Mander, *The dance around the Golden Calf*, 1602, canvas 98 x 213.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum

Much of the attention in this text is given to the subject of atmospheric perspective and perspectival distortion in representing fields, ditches and furrows, which is in accord with Van Mander's own landscapes (figs. 60 and 90).

Van Mander also mentions in passing that it is sometimes ('not too excessively') to be recommended to let the sunlight stream through the clouds. In Rembrandt's painted landscapes, and among several of his etchings and drawings of landscapes, one sees the light effects so vividly enhanced by breaks in the cloud cover that the consequent play of light and shadow largely determines the composition of these works (see fig. 89).

Rembrandt, however, had no great interest in the geometrical perspective view of landscape that Van Mander compares to 'paved floors'. What he does pay a remarkable degree of attention to in a rather different way is a specific, horizontal flatness of parts of his landscapes from 1638 onwards, either painted, drawn or etched. Van Hoogstraten's text perhaps provides the key to understanding this. One should be aware of the fact that the young Van Hoogstraten was apprenticed to Rembrandt at a time when the latter was intensely engaged in the drawing and etching of landscapes and was creating several of his most important landscape paintings (see fig. 67 and cat. V 13 fig. 1).

When one reads Van Hoogstraten's text on distant views in landscapes, one finds that atmospheric perspective plays no specific role; he seems to take that for granted. Above all, he advises 'observing the plain recede in the distance'.

Although at first sight similar, Van Hoogstraten's equivalent of Van Mander's text (quoted above) in fact differs significantly where it comes to the visual impact of a landscape, even though he incorporates part of Van Mander's rhymed text in modified form. The difference is the new emphasis on the *flatness* of the landscape and not in the first place the depth, as with Van Mander.

'In the landscape one must first of all distinguish properly the grouds, plains, fields and meadows, each in its own character: and become early accustomed to seeing how the plain [*vlakte*] recedes in the distance.

Note how flat both meadow and field lie,
Running away as far as one can see. How
Nature paves the field! For though one has more freedom
In hill and dale than in vaulted halls
And courts, which are governed by stricter laws [of perspective],
Yet one must take notice in the Landscape
Of the fixed land [vaste grond], *which spreads out below the eye* [meaning below the horizon]
Or what descends down [to it], *as if from above* [the horizon].

After this set down also the hills, mountains, rocks and crags, dunes and dykes.'[281]

te flauw en meuchdy't beschicken,/Soo mildt in't diepen niet zijn, als in't hooghen,/Bedenckende t'blaeu-lijvich Lochts verdicken,/Dat daer tusschen t'ghesichte comt bestricken,/En gantsch bedommelt t'scherp begrijpich pooghen,/Spaerlijck salmen somtijts hier oft daer tooghen,/Als of de Sonne de wolcken doorstraelde,/En voort soo op Steden, en Berghen daelde.'

281 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 137: 'In 't landschap moetmen voor eerst de gronden, vlaktens, velden en weyden, elk in haeren aert wel onderscheiden: en zich al vroeg gewennen de vlakte in 't wech wijken waer te nemen.

Bemerk hoe vlak en Weyde en Akker leyt,
Verschietend' naer het zichteynd. Hoe plaveyt
Natuer het veld! want schoonm' in berg en daelen
Meer vryheyts heeft, dan in gewelfde zaelen,
En boven, die in naeuwer wetten staen,
Zoo heeftmen doch in't Landschap acht te slaen
Op vaste grond, wat onder 't oog verschoven
Zich uitspreit, of wat afdaelt, als van boven.

Fig. 91. Rembrandt, *The three trees*, 1643, etching 21.3 x 27.9 cm (B. 212)

The core of Van Hoogstraten's advice here is that one should 'become early accustomed to seeing how the flat land [*vlakte*] recedes in the distance'. He emphasized that point in a marginal note saying: 'pay special attention to the flat layout of the ground.'[282] This flatness [*vlakte*] is, as it were, the basis of the landscape, followed in importance by the incidental topographical features, such as the usual mountains, hills, rocks – but also 'dunes and dykes' (fig. 91).

If one looks with these eyes at, for instance, Rembrandt's etching with *The three trees* – with a dyke in the foreground and dunes in the distance – one is struck by the extraordinarily close attention that Rembrandt paid here to the flatness of the land in between. Van Hoogstraten's text opens one's eyes to the crucial significance of this horizontality in Rembrandt's landscapes. Everything else in the landscapes rests, as it were, on this flat surface.

It is the way in which Rembrandt constantly works out the basic horizontality of a landscape which is so gratifying to the beholder. This idea that the pupil had to 'accustom himself from early on to seeing the plain recede in the distance' must have been emphatically instilled by Rembrandt in his pupils (including, no doubt, the young Samuel van Hoogstraten) when, in the forties, he led them on sketching excursions through the landscape around Amsterdam (fig. 92).

That landscape, the typical Dutch polder landscape, was (and is) of course flat. It is no wonder that Rembrandt

Daer na dat ook de Heuvelen, Berge, Rotssen en Klippen, Duinen en Dijken, vast leggen.'
The poem included in this text is a free variant on verse 9 in Van Mander's chapter on landscape.

282 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 137: 'op 't vlakleggen der gronden wel te letten.'

Fig. 92. Rembrandt, *Six bridge*, 1645, etching 13.1 x 22.5 cm (1:1) (B. 208III)

emphasized this flatness, and not only in his teaching and in his own works with Dutch landscapes; his incidental hilly landscape in fig. 91 also demonstrates this flat basis, the conspicuous horizontal blue strip of water of the river in the distance, to which everything that rises above it seems to be related.

The emphasis on the horizontality of the 'ground' on which the image rests may perhaps explain the remarkable stability with which Rembrandt is able to place his figures on horizontal bases of his ordonnances – and not only in his landscapes. This essential interaction between the horizontal and the vertical may be considered as one of the main characteristics of Rembrandt's work and over the years may have become part of his personal theory of painting (see also pp. 230/231).

Livestock, (wild) animals and birds

In his 'Grondt' Van Mander devoted an entire chapter to the rendering of *'Beesten, Dieren en Voghels'* ['Beasts, Animals and Birds'], as the chapter is titled. Miedema's translation into modern Dutch reads *'Vee, [wilde] dieren en vogels'* ['Livestock, (wild) animals and birds']. Van Mander begins his chapter:

> 'For although one may be able to depict the members of the human body reasonably well and [although one may] think that one is rather special, it is more praiseworthy to be familiar with everything; therefore to be an exceptional painter you must be good in all things.'[283]

Consequently, by implication, the painter must also be good at painting animals.
Van Mander continues:

> 'We can now begin our instruction with domestic animals, and first of all with the most noble, [most] highly regarded kind of livestock, namely the obliging, courageous horse.'

The horse

> 'Horses display many [admirable] qualities; like dogs, they are faithful to their master and love him. Their high spirit cannot be broken. The horse defies fear, yes, and goes to meet armoured masses boldly and without hesitation. …'[284]

Naturally, Van Mander refers to the attention commonly paid to the horse in classical antiquity, and in the same context he mentions combat between mounted knights, mentioning:

> '…Pliny's own [lost] book on the horseback tournaments[285] in which he described and disclosed everything that serves the fine appearance of a well-grown horse.'[286]

One can speculate that it was the mixture of obedience, courage, fidelity and beauty that Rembrandt was trying to portray in the etchings illustrated in figs. 93-95. But the depiction of mounted combat also constituted a challenge to acquire – or to demonstrate – a certain mastery. Van Hoogstraten illuminates this aspect by reference to a classical text. The relevant quotation from his chapter on the portrayal of animals suggests what may have actually motivated Rembrandt to make these etchings as he did and also his large, similarly freely sketched etching from 1641 with a lion hunt (p. 218):

Fig. 93. Rembrandt. *The small lion hunt (with one lion)*, *c.* 1629, etching 15.8 x 11.7 cm (B. 116)

> '*Nisias* [a Greek painter from the 4th century B.C. discussed by Pliny, particularly admired for his skill in chiaroscuro] advised the great masters to undertake the representation of mounted combat; not only shooting, striking and fatally wounded combatants, but also the various states of walking, rearing, and collapsing horses, are discussed.'[287]

With regard to subject matter, these etchings by Rembrandt at first sight appear to be incidental occurrences within his oeuvre – all the more so because they are executed in a remarkably sketchy manner and the first three of them are neither signed nor dated. However, their existence is perhaps more intelligible when (as is the purpose of this chapter) one takes into account the fact that after his period of apprenticeship Rembrandt had begun to devote attention to all the '*gronden*' – the basis aspects – of the art of painting, and consequently also to the depiction of animals. As we shall see, his dedication to this project was quite remarkable. Until well into the 1640's, horses and asses, cattle and game birds and particularly dogs

283 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 9: '**2** … Want al canmen redelijck ten betame/ Wtbeelden de leden van t'Mensch lichame,/En datmen wat besonders meent te wesen,/Ghemeensaem in als zijn, is meer ghepresen:/Dus dan om wesen eenen sonderlinghen/Schilder, moet ghy fraey zijn in alle dinghen.'

284 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 9: '**3** Aen tamme Beesten moghen wy aenveerden/ Onderwijsich begin te desen stonden,/Eerst aen t'edelste der Vee, groot van weerden,/Dats aen de behulpsaem moedighe Peerden:/Edel (seggh' ick), want aen Peerden bevonden/Zijn veel eyghenschappen, sy zijn als Honden/Hun Meester ghetrou en hem sy beminnen,/Hun vry hoogh ghemoedt is niet te verwinnen./ **4** T'Peerdt bespot de vreese, jae t'gaet ontmoeten/Gheharnaschte scharen, stout, onbedachtich, …'

285 Pliny, *Nat. hist.* VIII, 162.

286 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 9: '**7** … Sou Pliny eyghen Boeck, van het Tournoyen/ Te Peerde, daer hy al wat tot eens moyen/Ghestalt des Peerdts dient, dat schoon is ghewassen…'

287 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 167: '*Nisias* raede den groote meesters het uitbeelden van ruitergevechten by de hand te nemen, daer niet alleen schietende, slaende, en doodelijk gewonde Ruiters, maer ook allerley gestaltenissen van loopende, steygerende, en nedervallende paerden, worden te pas gebracht.'

Fig. 94. Rembrandt, *The small lion hunt (with two lions)*, *c.* 1632, etching 15.4 x 12.1 cm (B. 115)

Fig. 95. Rembrandt, *A cavalry fight*, *c.* 1632, etching 10.8 x 8.3 cm (1:1) (B. 117)

would time and again be given a role in his small-scale history pieces. We shall not consider here the splendid studies of lions, the elephant Hansje, and pigs, which he produced whenever the occasion arose.

But, as will become apparent, this was more than an execution of the plan to pay the obligatory attention to all the *gronden*. Animals seem to have been assigned an important role in Rembrandt's ideas on ordonnance – and specifically where *'sprong'* was concerned (see pp. 95/96). The immobile animal, often placed in the foreground, had therefore to be carefully studied, as Van Mander does in the following passage. His long digression is primarily intended to help the (aspiring) painter to do justice to the characteristic build and splendour of the horse. Van Mander begins with the simple basic rules for depicting the horse, and then immediately adds the comment that it is extremely difficult in practice to depict horses satisfactorily:

> 'Shall I then show [you how] to draw three circles of a certain size, how one determines the croup, and the other the breast and the third serving for the barrel; and then create the curved neck to size and show the relation between them all, without differences of proportion? The desire [to do this] is as light as a feather; but the ability [to effect it] is as heavy as lead: wanting and being able [to do something] do not always dwell together in the same house.'[288]

What then follows gives us a good idea of the way in which the horse was appreciated in Van Mander's time, a form of connoisseurship in which aesthetic pleasure played a considerable role.

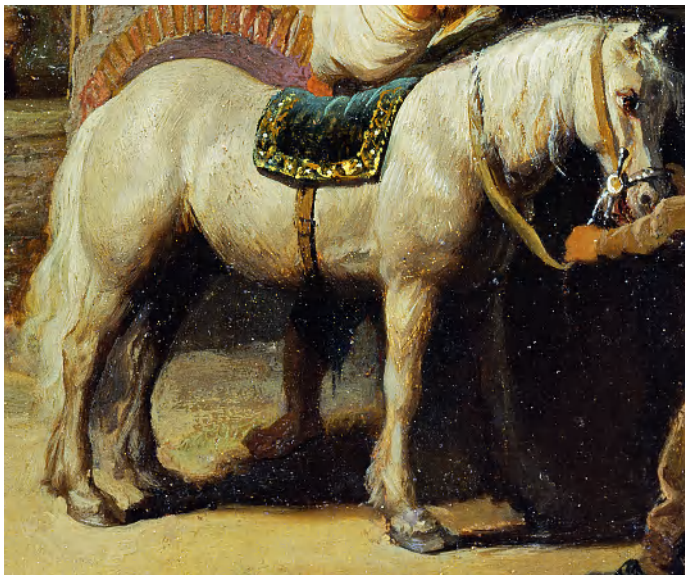
> 'If you have a good eye for the good appearance of a horse, make the horn of its hooves shine like jet, dark, smooth and high, and rounded; [make] the shanks short, neither too bent, nor too straight; the forelegs long and thin- looking; model the knees sinewy and well-veined, lean-muscled, so that they look like nothing so much as the legs of a deer. You can make the breast wide and plump, similarly the shoulders and loins. The flanks round, the belly short, the back straight, the hindquarters large; along the spine runs a groove. The neck must appear long and wide, full of small folds; the long mane [should] hang down on the right side; the tail, if it hangs freely, may touch the ground, or one can show it artfully knotted. The rounded croup must quiver with fatness, but the head should be small, lean and dry; we want the forehead of pure bone, and the ears, which are never still, sharp; a large mouth, large nostrils, and both eyes large and protruding. Subsequently each must do his best to give the hair its most closely matching colour – after all, there are many examples from reality.'[289]

The type of horse which Rembrandt painted in the beginning is sometimes rather less impressive than Van Man-

288 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 9: '**8** Wil ick dan wijsen, dry ronden te trecken/Op seker maet, en dat d'een zy de billen,/Het ander de borst, en laten bestrecken/Het derde voor't lijf, dan matich verwecken/Den boogschen hals, en wijsen sonder schillen/Proporty van als? Pluym-licht is het willen,/Swaerloodich t'vermoghen: Willen en conen,/Niet t'samen in alle huysen en wonen.'

289 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 9: '**10** De welghedaent des Peerdts nauw achte

Fig. 96. Rembrandt, *The good Samaritan*, 1630, panel 24.2 x 19.8 cm (detail). London, The Wallace Collection (II C 48)



der's ideal description (see especially fig. 96). It would be interesting to know whether the 'example from reality' that he depicted was more of a domestic beast than the majestic warhorse Van Mander details, or whether the gentler build and light coloured coat were primarily chosen for pictorial reasons.

Cattle

Both Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten also devote considerable attention to cattle. As with horses, for the benefit of the aspiring painter they deal with the characteristic features of the build and appearance of cows, bulls and oxen. Pliny's account of a performance by the painter Pausias (a Greek painter of the first half of the 4th century B.C.) is quoted by both. Van Mander relates this art historical information as follows:

> '… many years ago he [Pausias] painted first the sacrifice before the altar, where the oxen [that] stood [waiting] to be slaughtered [were seen] foreshortened. In this he knew how to deploy his art. Unlike others who painted them in profile and worked them up with highlights, he set his [oxen] very casually with the head facing forward and seldom or never [introduced] highlights, but achieved a plasticity and foreshortening with strong depths [dark passages], appealing with a living presence, [and he did so] without great difficulty and more naturally than [all the] others.'[290]

Fig. 97. J.G. van Vliet, *The baptism of the Eunuch*, 1631, in reverse 49 x 39.5 cm (detail) (B. II 12)

Fig. 98. Rembrandt, *The rape of Europe*, 1632, panel 62.2 x 77 cm (detail). Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum (II A 47)

Fig. 99. Rembrandt, *The Concord of the State*, *c.* 1637, panel 74.6 x 101 cm (detail). Rotterdam, Museum Boymans Van Beuningen (III A 135)

slaende,/Agettich blinckende d'hoorens der clouwen,/Bruyn, glat en hooghe maeckt in't ronde gaende,/Zijn sleghels cort, te crom noch rechte staende,/De voor-beenen langh, ranckich om aenschouwen,/Wel gheseent, en gh'adert de knien wilt houwen,/Magher ghemusschelt, jae dat het met eenen/Niet beter ghelijcken, als Herte beenen./ **11** De borst suldy breet en vet maken moghen,/De schouwers en t'achtercruys van ghelijcken,/De lancken rondt, buyck cort, rugg' ongheboghen./Groot lijf, langs t'rugh-been een vore ghetoghen,/Den hals sal langh en breedt vol vouwkens blijcken,/Een langhe maen, ter rechter sijd' af strijcken,/Den steert sal hanghende d'Aerde ghenaken,/Oft men sal hem fraey op ghebonden maken./ **12** Rondt sullen van vetheyt queken de billen,/maer het hooft sal cleyn zijn, magher en drooghe,/T'voorhooft niet dan been wy hebben en willen,/En d'ooren scherp, die nemmermeer en stillen,/Groote mondt, groote neusgaten, elck' ooghe/Oock groot en verheven, hier nae elck pooghe,/Om t'hayr bequaemlijckst zijn verwe te gheven,/Ghelijckmen veel voorbeelden heeft in't leven.'
Pliny, *Nat.hist.* XXXV, 126, 127.

290 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 9: '**37** … Tot exempel, die eerst over veel Iaren/ Schilderde d'Offerhande voor d'Altaren,/Den Ossen om slachten staend' in't vercorten,/Daer wist hy zijn Const fraey in uyt te storten./ **38** In plaetse dats' ander sijdelings stelden,/En verhooghden, al licht steld' hy de zijne,/Met den hoofde vooren, en niet oft selden/Verhooghende, maer met diepens ghewelden,/T'ronden en t'vercorten, lustich van schijne,/ Bracht hy te weghe sonder groote pijne,/Aerdich boven ander, …'

Fig. 100. Rembrandt, *The rape of Europe*, 1632, panel 62.2 x 77 cm (detail). Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum (II A 47)

Fig. 102. Rembrandt, *The angel appearing to the shepherds*, 1634, etching 26.2 x 21.8 cm (detail) (B. 44^{III})

Fig. 101. Rembrandt, *Nocturnal landscape with the Holy Family*, 1647, panel 33.8 x 47.8 cm (detail). Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland (V 13)

Rembrandt demonstrated his mastery in painting a bull and (in the middle ground on the hilly shore) a herd of cows in the *Rape of Europa* from 1632 (fig. 100), the foreshortened cows depicted much as Pausias is said to have painted the sacrificial oxen. Here, it would seem, is his answer to Pausias. In the *Rest on the flight into Egypt* from 1647 (fig. 101) Rembrandt again depicts such a procession of cattle in the middle ground, this time following a herdsman with a lantern. But this time they are shown in profile, walking through the night on their way to join the other herdsmen with their cattle.

It is worthwhile to reproduce such scenes here as details taken out of their context, for in this way it become clear just how penetratingly Rembrandt envisaged the attitudes and behaviour of animals before he portrayed them in his drawn, etched or painted histories, which he undoubtedly did largely from his own imagination. The panicked, stampeding cattle in the *Angel appearing to the shepherds* (fig. 102), for example, witness to the power of his imagination. When Arnold Houbraken, in his biography of Rembrandt, reflects on his own statement [I 262] that Rembrandt posited 'the fundamental rule' of '*everything to be*

Fig. 103. Rembrandt, *Balaam and the ass*, 1626, panel 63.2 x 46.5 cm (detail). Paris, Museé Cognacq-Jay (I A 2)

Fig. 104. Rembrandt, *The angel departing from the family of Tobias*, 1641, etching 10.3 x 15.4 cm (detail) (B. 43^{II})

copied from nature, and that anything else was suspect to him'[291] he nevertheless had to admit later that there were

> 'also many emotions [that] do not last long enough; the essential characteristics rapidly change their appearance with the least change of feelings, so that there is hardly time to sketch them, let alone paint them, and as a result one can think of no other way for the artist than to imagine it and to retain that mental image'[292]

– an observation which is certainly applicable to Rembrandt's cattle in fig. 102 .

The ass

Nowhere in his chapter on the depiction of animals does Karel van Mander mention the ass. It is therefore all the more conspicuous that Van Hoogstraten devotes to it a highly detailed passage, part of which is quoted below. Rembrandt portrayed the ass with a special empathy. Balaam's ass, with its facial expression and talking mouth, displays an almost human emotion, even as the animal remains an animal (fig. 103). The same is true, for example, of the ass which, along with the members of Tobias's family, reacts in its own way to the miraculous departure of the archangel Raphael (fig. 104). The plodding ass that has the honour of carrying the Holy Family on their flight into Egypt appears in several works in Rembrandt's oeuvre (fig. 105). It is this sympathetic and admiring image that predominates in Van Hoogstraten's text following:

> Cornelis Agrippa[293] thought 'the ass so deserving of praise […], that he almost raised it to [the status of] a Saint in Heaven.'[294] 'And indeed,' continues Van Hoogstraten, 'one cannot be completed[ly accomplished] in history painting, whether sacred or secular, unless one portrays him sometimes … our Ass has penetrated to the innermost chapels and highest altar pieces of Europe: he is painted as attendant at the holiest of all births, he carries more than St Christopher in the flight into Egypt, and triumphantly bears the Saviour of the world over palms and spread garments, he speaks to Balaam in his own language, and is the normal saddle-horse of the Patriarchs.'[295]

291 Houbraken I 262: 'enkele naarvolging van de natuur, en alles wat daar buiten gedaan werd was by hem verdagt.'

292 Houbraken I 264: 'Ook blyven vele gemoedsdriften zoo lang niet in stant; want de wezenstrekken straks op de minste veranderlyke aandoening van gedaanten verwisselen, zoo dat'er naauw tyd is van naschetsen, ik laat staan van te schilderen, en by gevolge kan'er geen andere wyze bedagt worden waar door een konstoeffenaar in dezen opzigt zig bedienen kan, dan door een enkele bevatting en vast denkbeeld:'

293 See for Cornelis Agrippa p. 101 note 316.

294 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 171: 'Het zoude, by *Simson*, een groote ondankbaerheit zijn, dat wy den Ezel, wiens naemdraeger ons zoo trouwlijck verzelschapt, vergaten, daer hem *Kornelis Agrippa*, die op ver na zoo veel niet in hem gehouden is, in zijn Onzeekerheit der wetenschappen, zoo loflijk gedenkt, dat hy hem by by nae tot een Sant in den Hemel verheft.'

295 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 171: 'En voorwaer, men en kan niet volmaekt in historien, zoo heylige als onheylige, zijn, ten zy men hem ook somtijts kon- ▸

Fig. 105. Rembrandt, *The flight into Egypt*, 1654, etching 9.3 x 14.4 cm (B. 55)

It is therefore rather surprising to find that the ass makes no appearance in Van Mander's prolix account of animals in art when in Van Hoogstraten's book it is dealt with so comprehensively. Indeed, the passage quoted above, with its reference to Agrippa, is only a fragment of his long (albeit often rather rambling) text on the ass. Van Hoogstraten's esteem for the significance of the ass can perhaps best be explained by the loving attention that Rembrandt bestowed on this animal in his work. Van Hoogstraten himself displays only the feeblest talent in this area (fig. 106). In the opening of Van Hoogstraten's chapter 'Of animals' one finds the following sentence:

> 'Above all one must practise naturalness in beasts, so as not to miss their appearance and their character: …'[296]

A glance at his drawing of the *Flight into Egypt,* reproduced here, is sufficient to demonstrate that the words quoted above, which one assumes must have been frequently uttered by Rembrandt, bore no fruit in Van Hoogstraten's own case.

Other animals

Van Mander (and likewise Van Hoogstraten) of course saw that it was impossible to deal as thoroughly as this with the whole range of the animal kingdom and so he ends his chapter with the words:

> 'Who can satisfy your keen desires, young men, and here portray all the animals: not only lions but [also] terrible monsters and dragons! Nothing is better than to refer to nature, so as not to make any mistake: you can find examples everywhere. Pay attention to the way each [animal] lies, walks, steps and turns. But ensure that the handling of paint is always in character.'[297]

Fig. 106. S. van Hoogstraten, *The flight into Egypt*, pen and brown ink, 17.8 x 24.7 cm. Budapest, Szépmüvészeti Museum

Fig. 107. Details of Chapter II, figs. 11, 105, and of B. 43, 69, 37, 49 and 74

Surveying Rembrandt's oeuvre, one is struck by the attention with which he studied animals and so often incorporated them in his histories and other works. Over the course of his life he became an unequalled master in drawing out 'the appearance and character' of many different kinds of animal, which one often finds depicted in a very striking manner (e.g. the splendidly characterized

terfeyte. … onzen Ezel is tot in de binnenste kapellen, en hoogste altaertafels der Europers ingedrongen: hy wort geschildert als opwachter in de alderheylichste geboorte, hy draegt meer dan *Kristoffel* in d'Egyptische vlucht, en voert al triumfeerende 's werelts Heyland over palmen en gespreyde kleederen, hy spreekt *Biliam* aen in zijn eygen tael, en is 't gewoone rypaert der Patriarchen.'

296 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 163: 'Doch voor al moetmen in beesten de natuerlijkheit betrachten, om in haere gedaente en aerd niet te missen: …'

297 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 9: '**47** Wie can u hongherich begheeren spijsen,/O Ieught, en hier alle Dieren afmalen,/Niet alleen Leeuwen: maer om verafgrijsen,/Monsters en Draken, niet beters dan wijsen/V totter Natuer, om niet te verdwalen,/Waer ghy eenich patroon meught achterhalen,/Merckt hoe elck light, loopt, stapt, oft wandelt,/maer maeckt dat alles zy aerdich ghehandelt.'

Fig. 108. Rembrandt, *The visitation*, 1640, panel 56.6 x 47.8 cm (detail).
Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Art (III A 138)

family of peacocks in (fig. 108). In particular, we encounter dozens of dogs in his work, which make one wonder to what extent this is a reflection of the ubiquity of dogs in Rembrandt's society or whether Rembrandt felt a special empathy with this animal (fig. 107). Apart from the horses, cows, asses, dogs and peacocks there are the pigs, cats, birds of paradise (at least, their legless, stuffed hides) a flying eagle and a (dead) bittern. From the moment that he saw one in the flesh, his lions are superb. This had not yet occurred when he made the etchings with lion hunts reproduced above (figs. 93 and 94). Similarly, once the famous elephant Hansje could be seen in Amsterdam, his elephants are also unrivalled.

From all this, one can infer that Rembrandt considered the close study of different animals, and the characterization based on that study, to be an essential *'grond'* of the knowledge demanded of a painter. But was that his only goal? Certainly not: the carriage of the Moor who was baptised had to be harnessed to horses, just as the chariot with which Pluto, god of the Underworld, abducts Proserpina. According to tradition, Mary rode an ass on her journey into Egypt, just as tradition prescribes that the Good Samaritan carried the wounded man to the nearby inn on his horse. There are thus multiple reasons why animals needed to be depicted.

But as the illustrations in this section show, once he had decided to incorporate one or more of them in his works Rembrandt needed to know exactly what the animals looked like.

However, one may ask oneself whether in every case that was strictly necessary for narrative purposes. If one wonders whether one of the Pharisees who plied Christ with trick questions had a dog, the Bible gives no clue. And yet one of the Pharisees listening to Christ preach has a dog with him (fig. 110). Nor do we know whether Joachim, the father of John the Baptist, had a dog, but Rembrandt shows a dog in his company (fig. 108). Could this recurrence of animals in his works, which would at first sight seem to be unmotivated, be explained in any other way than that they belong to the 'obligatory' cast of a history piece?

Superficially there would seem to be no help to be gained on this point from the sources. But if one places the phenomenon in an art-theoretical frame, which we know Rembrandt must have considered to be important, then several possible explanations present themselves. The first possibility is related to an aspect of Rembrandt's way of composing. We know that Rembrandt must have considered the *'sprong'* that Samuel van Hoogstraten referred to, especially in the context of the *Nightwatch*, as essentially important for his ordonnances. It is worth quoting Van Hoogstraten's definition of the term '*sprong*' once more. He advises that

Fig. 109. Rembrandt, *The baptism of the Eunuch*, 1641, etching 17.8 x 21.3 cm (detail) (B. 98^{II})

Fig. 110. Rembrandt, *Christ and the woman taken in adultery*, *c.* 1659-60, pen and brown ink (colours added by a later hand), 17 x 20.2 cm. Munich, Graphische Sammlung (Ben. 1047)

'one should give the figures an agreeable 'sprong' that is pleasing [to the eye], such that, whether high or low, together they create a 'shape' [gedaente] that is attractive to the eye, and there appears an interplay between them resulting from their diversity; …'[298]

Once aware of the significance of 'high and low' in this context, one is struck by the fact that Rembrandt often introduces different levels into the 'stage' upon which his scene is played out, with figures of more or less the same height placed higher or lower with respect to each other (pp. 214/215). But in addition, he could also realize the placing of the (main) figures in 'high and low' by other means, for instance where applicable by having figures lie on the ground, kneel or sit or having them bend over. But Rembrandt must also have seen the inclusion of children in a scene as a welcome possibility of enlivening the *sprong*. That was probably the most important reason for Rembrandt placing four children (the two girls, the boy with the powder horn and the child on the other side of the canal) between the adults in the *Nightwatch* (fig. 96). Similarly, one may also see Rembrandt's frequent introduction of animals in his paintings in this context, particularly dogs – there is also a dog in the *Nightwatch*! – but also horses with riders (fig. 109).

One may also see the dogs that are often shown in movement in Rembrandt's small-scale history pieces (and in his etchings and drawings with histories) as a conbtribution to the *'meest ende natureelste beweeglijkheid'* that he striving for.

Another art-theoretical category may be relevant in this context. In his chapter on ordonnance and invention, Karel van Mander makes the following statement about diversity (*'verscheydenheyt'*):

'When many diverse things are well executed in one image, it is a pleasure to see'[299]

One finds the same idea in the following passage by Alberti, where the inclusion of dogs and other animal for the purpose of creating diversity in a painting is mentioned explicitly:

'I would call an image most profuse if in exactly the same place there were old men, adult fellows, growing youths, children, mothers, girls, babies, cattle, dogs, birds, horses, sheep, buildings and activities all jumbled up together; I shall praise each extravagance provided that it is in keeping with the subject […..]. I should like to see this extravagance adorned with some diversity, but seriously and moderately by truth and honesty'.[300]

One can trace the line of this thinking back to classical antiquity, in authors such as Aristotle, Quintilian and Cicero. But this is not to say that Rembrandt's attention to *'sprong'* is little more than the unoriginal result of an assimilation of classical rhetoric. Here it is essentially a matter of manifesting, each time differently, the human need for variation coupled with coherence.

298 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 198: '… hoemen de figueren een behaeglijke 'sprong' zal geeven, dat is, datze, 't zy hoog of laeg, met malkanderen een gedaente maeken, die 't oog bevallijk is, en datze, door haere verscheydenheyt onderling schijnen te speelen;'.

299 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 5 in the margin of verse 33: 'Als veel verscheyden dingen by een wel ghedaen zijn, ist een goet vermaeck te sien.'

300 Leon Battista Alberti, *De Pictura*, Book II, 40 'Dicam historiam esse copiosissimam illam in qua suis locis permixti aderunt senes, viri, adolescentes, pueri, matronae, virgines, infantes, cicures, catelli, aviculae, equi, pecudes, aedificia, provinciaeque; omnemque copiam laudabo modo ea ad rem de qua illic agitur conveniat.'

Fig. 111. Rembrandt, *The good Samaritan*, 1633, etching
25.8 x 21.8 cm (B. 90[I])

Drapery

Karel van Mander devoted an entire chapter in his *Grondt* to draped textiles under the title *Van Laken oft Draperinghe* [On textiles or drapery], whereas Van Hoogstraten would at first sight appear not to have gone into this aspect. But considering the matter further, one finds that he did, in fact, write about it in a very different context and in a wholly different way from Van Mander.

In two of the nine chapters of his *Academy of Painting* Van Hoogstraten has passages devoted to what would seem at first sight to be a kind of historical and costumological study of dress. The most comprehensive passage is to be found in the fourth 'book', devoted to history pieces, which contains sections on associated relevant matters, including an extensive digression titled *Van Bekleedingen* [On dress] dealing with historical dress and clothes worn in distant lands. A second (shorter) passage on textiles is found in the chapter on paint and painting, in which Van Hoogstraten deals succinctly with a number of subsidiary topics in the art of painting, including the painting of textiles. Once again it is mainly a treatise on dress. Only once does Van Hoogstraten write about the rendering of folded materials, 'drapery' in its proper sense:

> 'True grace comes from the [inclination of the painter's] spirit alone, especially concerning natural[-ly painted] hair, clouds, and loose draperies'[301]

but here he is repeating an observation also found in Van Mander (see p. 81).[302]

The fact that Van Mander paid almost exclusive attention to what Van Hoogstraten calls 'loose clothing' is undoubtedly related to the fact that, in 16th-century painting, drapery had an important pictorial function; and in that sense Van Mander was a typical representative of late mannerism, the stylistic period in art in which the human body and its covering drapery had a specific aesthetic function and was therefore extremely important in the painted image (see figs. 62 and 112). This is why Van Mander attributed the greatest significance precisely to the fall and pleating of different materials. He writes:

> … the satisfying appearance of materials, if they are to please, mainly consists in beautiful folds, done with understanding.[303]

and:

> 'Pay attention particularly, not to [make a] blunder in rendering noble, elegant, characteristic drapery. For this you also need a combination of colours.'[304]

Van Mander's distinctions in his prescription for the intelligent rendering of the play of the folds refer clearly to the specific aesthetic criteria that, in his view, draped or wrapped garments should satisfy:

> 'Draped garments should not be fastened too low round the loins and should not hang incorrectly; one should pay close attention to the tightening and the fall [of the material], to the way folds protrude outwards and recess inwards, the way they are curtailed and disappear, as they naturally tend to do.'[305]

It is also evident from some passages that Van Mander's conception of folded textiles is based on the fall of loose lengths of textile draped on or around a figure:

> 'Let the folds arise out of each other like braches growing from a tree. Avoid baggy folds, so that no pockets would be found *if one were to stretch or tighten it* [italics EvdW]. And make sure one can always see where the folds or creases begin and where they remain, as one sees in reality.'[306]

Van Mander scarcely devotes a single word to a historically, costumologically, or ethnographically informed representation of costume; it is primarily the varied 'music' of the fall of drapery that seems to interest him (fig. 1).[307]

Of course he does not completely ignore the fact that textiles are usually processed to make clothing; but he deals with this in extremely summary fashion:

> 'On this matter, the painters must take good care to depict everyone dressed according to his status.'[308]

When he then goes into the necessary fashion and elaboration of the dress, one again has the impression with Van Mander that it is the decorative qualities of the various details of costume, the 'artistic fabrications', that mainly engage his interest.

> 'What can I further explicitly show you, where you have to lace halfway to the thigh, slash or tie in a bow, collars and ruffs,

301 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 229: '*De rechte zwier komt uit den geest alleen, Van aerdich hair, gewolkte, en losse kleên.*'

302 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 10: '**8** … Doch is Laken meer als loof, hayr, oft baerden,/Een gheestich soecken, jae versierich vinden,/Met een aerdich varten, schorten en binden.'

303 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 10: '**26** … maer altijt in schoone/Verstandighe ployen bestaet voor allen/De schoonheyt des Lakens, om wel bevallen.'

304 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 10: '**33** … Lett op alles wel, om niet mis te tasten/In't groot cierdeelich aerdich wel draperen,/Waer toe u noch hoeft der verwen sorteren.'

305 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 10: '**9** Een Laken salmen te leeghe niet schorten/Om de lenden, noch niet hanghen t'ondeghen:/Wel lettend' op t'spannen en neder storten,/Op uyt en in gaen, wech schieten, vercorten/Der ployen, nae sy van aerdt zijn gheneghen,…'

306 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 10: '**12** Ghelijck als uyt den Boom wassen de tacken,/Laet de vouwen uyt malcander beclijven:/Sack-ployen vermijdt, datter in't ontpacken/Des Lakens ghevonden niet worden sacken,/Wanneer men dat mocht uyt recken oft stijven,/En maeckt datmen altijt mach sien waer blijven/En beginnen u vouwen oft pinsueren,/Ghelijck men dat sien mach in der natueren.'

307 Marieke de Winkel, in her book *Fashion and Fancy. Dress and meaning in Rembrandt's paintings*, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 226-7, gives her opinion that where drapery was concerned Karel van Mander particularly favoured the approach of such early sixteenth century artists as Lucas van Leyden et al.

308 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 10: '**3** … in desen/De Schilders wel moeten op alles letten,/Elck soo nae den staet ghecleedt uyt te setten.'

Fig. 112. Karel van Mander, *Moses striking water from the rock* (detail). Present whereabouts unknown.

Fig. 113. Rembrandt, Copy after a Mogul miniature (detail), *c.* 1654-6 (Ben. 1193).

Fig. 114. Rembrandt and pupil, *Christ and the woman of Samaria*, panel 63.5 x 49.5 cm (detail). New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Lillian S. Timken, 1959 (V 24).

> skirts and tails with adequate insight; [and how you] have to make wreaths, cutouts, plaiting and knots – here tied up, there open, with placards over and under garments and laces, cloaks, veils and a thousand [other] artistic fabrications?'[309]

If one examines the rendering of materials and clothing in the early (and also later) works by Rembrandt it looks as though he made very different choices than Van Mander. In painting, etching or drawing the enormous quantity of different garments that appear in his works, there is a huge range of variation in the costuming of his figures. Rembrandt, after all, began with the ambition to become a history painter. We know from Philips Angel's *Lof der schilder-konst* [*In praise of the art of painting*] that Rembrandt was admired by his contemporaries for his efforts to render the scenes that he painted with historical accuracy.

> 'It is to be prized above all […] to occupy ourselves by diligently scouring the musty old books to acquire a knowledge of histories. If we want to depict the same in drawings, prints or paintings we must add to that knowledge our own deep reflections, the better to enrich them with the freedom granted us, without doing injury to the sense of the histories and to the greater adornment of our work, just as the Ancients did and as many of today's celebrated spirits still do, such as the far-famed Rembrandt.'[310]

We know from one of Houbraken's informants how much attention Rembrandt paid to the correct details of particu-

309 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 10: '**21** Wat sal ick u voorts noch wijsen met handen,/Waer ghy sult rijghen, doorsnijden, oft stropen,/Bordessen, colletten, slippen, en panden/Tot half de dgien, en met cloecke verstanden?/Kranssen, uytsnijdtsels, doortrecksels, en knopen/Al maken, hier opghebonden, daer open,/Op en onder Cleers borstlappen en bindtsels,/Mantels, wimpels, en duysent fraey versinsels?'

310 Based on the translation by Michael Hoyle in 'Philips Angel, "Praise of painting"', in: *Simiolus* 24 (1996), pp. 227-258, esp. 246. Philips Angel, *Lof der Schilder-konst*, Leiden 1642, pp. 46-47: 'Het is ten hoogste prijselijck […] neerstich de oude vermufte Boecken te doorsnuffelen en kenisse van Hystorien te bekomen, neven welcke kennise dan als wy de selve willen door Teyckeninghe, Plaette, of Schilderije uyt drucken, onse hooghe naghedachten moeten voeghen, om onse gheoorloofde ryckheyt daer te beter onder te menghen, sonder krencken van den sin der Hystorien, en meerder vercieringhe van ons werck, ghelijck de Oude ghedaen hebben, en vele vande tegenwoordighe vermaerde Geesten noch doen; als, daer is dien wijt-beruchten Rembrant.'

Fig. 115. P. Lastman, *The expulsion of Hagar*, 1612, panel 48.3 x 71.4 cm (detail). Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle

Fig. 116. Rembrandt, *The expulsion of Hagar*, 1637, etching with touches of drypoint 12.5 x 9.5 cm (B. 30). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

lar items of costume. Rembrandt *'could spend a day or two arranging a turban to his taste'*.[311] His efforts to represent the costumes and accessories of his figures as historically and ethnographically authentic as possible (figs. 113 and 114) (and as convincing as possible in their particular narrative context) led naturally to an approach that would subsequently dominate the texts on costumes in Samuel van Hoogstraten's book.

One cannot avoid the impression that it was Rembrandt's teaching in this area that had a decisive influence on Van Hoogstraten's writings on textiles, since in Hoogstraten's own limited, small oeuvre of history pieces one sees no essential interest in the specific costuming of his figures.

Thanks to recent art historical research,[312] we know how intensively Rembrandt must have sought out what information there was on costume, mainly from 16th-century prints and other visual material (such as Mogul miniatures), with an eye to his own work. This led to an approach in which drapery, in the sense of the fall of the material, became subordinate to aspects of costumology.

One might think that the latter would be a self-evident requirement of every history painter. Surely Rembrandt would have already learned this during his apprenticeship with Pieter Lastman, who was after all a history painter famous in his time. But a confrontation of comparable biblical scenes by Lastman and Rembrandt (see figs. 115 and 116) demonstrates that for Lastman the drape of garments worn by the figures was of much greater importance than it was for Rembrandt, who gave his protagonists costumes of an astonishing diversity of fashion and decoration and only in certain cases, specifically with the cloaks, depicted a 'free' and not always realistically accurate drapery.

As a rule, Rembrandt displayed an unusually strong interest in the workmanship of the costumes and the way his figures are dressed in clearly distinctive, very different layers of clothing. In this regard, his way of working betrays what one might call a clothier's or couturier's mentality – or an almost obsessive need to differentiate and faithfully reproduce the details. To give an idea of the

311 Houbraken I, p. 261.

312 C. Tümpel, 'Ikonographische Beiträge zu Rembrandt I und II', in: *Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen* 13 (1968), pp. 95-126; 16 (1971), pp. 20-38; C. Tümpel, *Studien zur Ikonographie der Historien Rembrandts*, Diss. Hamburg (1968) in: *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 20 (1969), pp. 107-198; S. Dickey, '"Met wenende ziel … doch droge ogen": Women holding handkerchiefs in seventeenth-century Dutch portraits', in: *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 46 (1995), pp. 333-367; S. Dickey, *Rembrandt: Portraits in prints*, Amsterdam 2004; V. Manuth, 'Zum Nachleben der Werke Hans Holbein d.J. in der Holländischen Malerei und Graphik des 17. Jahrhunderts', in: *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, 1998, pp. 232-335; V. Manuth, 'Dürer ein Dandy? Beobachtungen zum Kostüm des Kunstlers', in: *Aus Albrecht Dürers Welt. Festschrift für Fedja Anzelewsky*, Turnhout 2001, pp. 165-171; Marieke de Winkel, op. cit.[307].

Fig. 117. Rembrandt, *Samson's wedding*, 1638, canvas 126 x 175 cm (detail). Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (III A 123)

Fig. 118. Rembrandt, *Christ presented to the people*, 1655, drypoint 38.3 x 45.5 cm (detail) (B. 76[III]). London, The British Museum

way artists could be judged on this point, I quote Samuel van Hoogstraten:

> '*Andries Verochio* was the first Italian to discover [how to depict], women's coverings and head decoration in a lively manner. *Rafael of Urbino* gave a chaste gracefulness, but *Rosso* and *Salviati* added more fantastic elements.'[313]

It is interesting to note how Samuel van Hoogstraten explicitly distances himself from the 'drapery'-thinking of Karel van Mander:

> '*Vermander* rates highly certain images by *Pieryn del Vaga*, which are nicely and cheerfully made, and enfolded with thin silks, yet nevertheless naturally showing their nudity. But in showing the body one must use great modesty, so that the garments, as garments, also preserve their nature with a certain ample splendour. On the other hand, all superfluity is to be disapproved of.'

and:

> 'It is ludicrous and hateful to dress a small body in an immoderately loose, billowing garment. The most appropriate garment is one that does not raise dust, nor flaps about under the feet and gets trodden on, according to *Simachus*.'[314]

What is remarkable is that Rembrandt seems to have made a well thought-out plan for the way each of his figures was to be dressed, specified in figs. 117 and 118. Such a plan must have been comparable to the highly detailed description given by Van Hoogstraten of the Russian way of dressing:

> 'The coats of [Russian] citizens are in general a dark bottle-brown, or a steely green, provided in front and down at the division with loops and long tassels, and on the back with a wide collar. Their undercoats are of a woollen or perhaps silk material, on which, behind in the neck, stands a square velvet collar,… The shirts of the rich stand out an inch at the neck and wrists, embroidered with silk, gold or pearls: at the ends of the collar hang two pearls or gold or silver buttons. They all wear large hats, indeed those of the Knezen and Bojaren almost an *elle* high, of fox or sable: others of velvet

313 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 148: 'Van vrouwehulselen en teuijeringen was *Andries Verochio* d'eerste onder de Italianen, dieze geestich uitvond. *Rafael Urbijn* gaffe een zeedige bevallijkheit, maer *Rosso* en *Salviati* hebben'er meer vremdicheits toegevoegt.'

314 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 149: '*Vermander* prijst zeer eenige beelden van *Pieryn del Vaga*, welke aerdich en vrolijk toegemaekt zijnde, en met dunne zijdekens omvangen, nochtans het naekt natuerlijk vertoonden. Maer in dit vertoonen des lichaems moetmen groote bescheydenheyt gebruiken, dat de kleederen ook als kleederen haere natuer met een zeekere ruime grootsheit behouden. Daerentegen is alle overtollicheit misprijsselijk.'
'Het is bespottelijk en haetelijk een klein lichaem met een onmaetich flodderend' kleet te omhangen. Dat gewaet is aller gevoeglijkst, dat geen stof en verwekt, noch onder de voeten slingerende vertreeden wort, zegt *Simachus*.'

> stitched with *litsen* of gold and pearls, and lined with black fox.'[315]

The importance of the reliability of these costume-historical and costumological details is emphasized in the following text in 'Van Bekleedingen':

> 'Now that you may know how important this matter is for a Painter, to know the dress of all kinds of people, listen to what *Agrippa* says in *his Vanitie and Uncertainty of the Artes*, when he refers to the veneration and the belief, that paintings inspire. The Augustinian and Regular monks, he says [Henry Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535)], took their dispute over Saint *Augustine's* dress to the Roman Pope, to know whether he had worn a black jerkin over a white tabbard, or a white on black, but neither being able to adduce certain evidence, the Roman Judges referred this matter to the Painters, to seek the truth in old paintings, to show the verdict there. What think you then, should one not take great care over what costumes one paints?'[316]

As with other Rules dealt with in the chapter under consideration, one is struck by the fact that, compared with Rembrandt, in his own practice as a painter Van Hoogstraten seems to have had only a very modest interest in matters of costume. It would therefore seem that the enormous difference between the way Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten deal with textiles and their rendering is due to Rembrandt's influence, and thus to take Van Hoogstraten's writings on this topic as representative of Rembrandt's ideas and vocabulary.

315 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 152: 'De bovenrokken der [Russische] burgers zijn in 't gemeen fiool donker bruin, of staelgroen, voor en onder aen de splitssen met lutssen en lange quasten, en op den rug met een breede kraeg verzien. Haer onderrokken zijn van wollen, of wel van zijde stof, daer achter in de nek een een vierkante sammette kraeg op staet, … De hemden der rijken steken om hals en handen een duimbreet uit, gestikt met zijde, gout, or paerlen: daer aen d'einden der halskragen dan twee paerlen, of goude of zilvere knoopen,van af hangen. Zy draegen alle groote mutssen, ja de Knezen en Bojaren byna een elle hoog, van vossen of sablen: andre van sammet met litsen van gout en paerlen gestikt, en met zwarte vossen gevoedert.' Van Hoogstraten based this description on: Adam Olearius, *Vermehrte Newwe Beschreibung Der Muscowitischen und Persischen*, Reyse Schleswig 1656.

316 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 152: 'Nu op dat gy weten moogt, van wat belang dit stuk, van aller volken kledy te kennen, voor een Schilder is, zoo hoor wat 'er *Agrippa*, in zijn Onzeekerheyt der konsten van zegt, als hy de ontzachbaerheyt en 't geloof, dat de Schilderyen hebben, aenwijst. De Augustiner en Regulier monnikken, zegt hy [Henricus Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535)], twistten over de kledy van den Heyligen *Augustijn*, voor den Roomschen Paus, te weten,of hy een zwarte palsrok op een witten tabbaert, of een witte op een zwarte gedraegen hadde, maer beyde niet zekers bybrengende, zoo verbleven de Roomsche Rechters dit stuk aen de Schilders, om uit de oude Schilderyen de waerheyt op te zoeken, en daer uit het vonnis te wijzen. Wat dunkt u, of men dan niet wel mach toezien, wat kleederen men uitbeelt?' Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, *De incertitudine et vanitate omnium scientiarum et artium liber, et de nobilitate et praecellentia foerminei sexus libellus*.

Colour

DEDICATED TO ERIC JAN SLUIJTER

Both Van Mander in his *Grondt* and Hoogstraten in his *Academy of the Art of Painting* devote considerable attention to colour. To some extent their approaches are closely related: for instance, both give extensive treatment to colour symbolism. Both also devote separate chapters to colour combinations – attractive and otherwise. In Van Mander's *Grondt* the relevant chapter is titled 'Of the Sorting and [combining] of Colours' [Van het Sorteren, en byeen schicken der Verwen], while the corresponding chapter in Hoogstraten's Book VIII is titled 'Of the Matching, Gradation or Combining of colours' [*Van de Tuiling, Schakeering, of byeenschikking der verwen*].[317] Both authors illustrate their ideas on the combination of colours by reference to nature – in the first instance to the suitably arranged bouquet of flowers.

In other regards there are significant differences of approach between the two authors, as will become apparent. Moreover, these differences would seem to provide a telling insight into Rembrandt's thinking on the subject of colour. This is particularly the case when it comes to broken and mixed colours. Van Mander, of course, wrote his text long before Rembrandt began painting, whereas Van Hoogstraten was writing with strong recollections of Rembrandt's teaching. A comparison of several passages from the texts written by these two authors together with a few other late 17th-century texts explicitely relating to Rembrandt's use of colour, may therefore give a clearer picture of the background of Rembrandt's ideas on this topic. The insights thus gained may also help to explain the decline of Rembrandt's popularity among potential patrons.

For Van Mander, pure colour was the norm, which is only to be expected, since in Mannerist painting, of which he was a late exponent, bright, bold colours – in well-chosen combinations – were used, specifically of course in the attire of figures in the paintings (fig. 119). On this subject he writes:

> 'Yellow and blue […] combine well with each other: in this way you can combine colours in *your drapery* [curs. E.v.d.W.]. Red and green also go together wonderfully. Red with blue, for a change, are also well matched. Purple does not pale next to yellow; green is enlivened [by standing] next to white, and white goes with all colours …'[318]

Whereas in 1624-'26 Rembrandt was still working with such combinations of strong colours (pp. 150/151), he soon radically changed his approach to colour. His contemporary, the painter Joachim (von) Sandrart, discussed the general trend in Rembrandt's dealings with colour after this turn, emphasizing the importance of Rembrandt's contribution in this area to the art of painting in his time:

> 'This can be said in his [Rembrandt's] praise, that he understood how to break colours most intelligently and skilfully [corresponding to] their own properties, and subsequently how, out of the abundance of nature, to represent reality faithfully and harmoniously and with a lively simplicity. As a result he opened the eyes of those who, according to the general habit, are more dyers than true painters, on account of the fact that they crudely and brazenly combine colours in all their harshness and rawness, so that they have nothing in common with nature, but look more like the boxes of pigments in the shop, or like strips of material from the textile-dyers.'[319]

Indeed the use of broken colour was an extremely important matter for Rembrandt. This is evident not only from the passage quoted above in which he is praised by Sandrart, but in addition from the fact that Rembrandt's former pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten devoted two chapters of the Sixth Book of the Academy to the theme of broken and mixed colours. Rembrandt's interest in the use of broken colours begins quite early and initially, as is argued below, with a specific aim in view, which was concerned neither with colour as such, nor with the fidelity to nature of his use of colour. From 1627 on, convincing light effects assumed the highest priority and it is my thesis that his colours were broken in order to subordinate them to the interplay of light and shadow.

The shift that one can observe in the work of the young Rembrandt from clear, saturated colour to broken colour in pursuit of enhanced light effects did not happen all by itself. As is generally known around 1625/26 – that is, before this turn had begun to make itself felt in Rembrandt's work – a tendency toward monochromy had developed among Haarlem painters of landscapes and still-lifes, in favour of a greater role for light which, at the same time, contributed to an atmospheric sense of space. This change can be seen in landscapes of Pieter de Molijn and Pieter Santvoort and in the still-lifes of Pieter Claesz. and Willem Claesz. Heda. In these cases, however, it is a matter of the type of paintings in which the elements of landscapes and the objects of still-lifes were specifically chosen for their subdued colour in reality – cool and warm greys and browns, subdued green and broken yellow. As a result, tonal relationships that sustained the light effects arose in a quite natural manner.

317 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 302.

318 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 11: '**7** Het geel en blaeuw voeght dan wel d'een by d'ander,/Dus meuchdy u laken in't verwen schicken,/Oock root en groen lieft wonderlijck malcander,/Het roode by t'blaeuw, op datmen verander,/Voeght hem oock wel, t'purper sal niet verschricken/By t'gheel te staen, het groen sal hem verquicken/By wit, jae wit schickt hem by alle verwen, …'

319 *Joachim von Sandrarts Academie der Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste von 1675. Leben der berühmten Maler, Bildhauer und Baumeister.* Edited and annotated by Dr. A. Peltzer, München 1925, p. 203: 'Dieses dienet zu seinem Lob, dass er die Farben sehr vernünftig und künstlich von ihrer eignen Art zu brechen und nachmalen darmit auf der Tafel der Natur warhafte und lebhafte Einfältigkeit mit guter Harmonie des Lebens auszubilden gewust, wormit er dann allen denen die Augen eröfnet, welche dem gemeinen Brauch nach mehr Färber als Mahler sind, indem sie die Härtigkeit und rauhe Art der Farben ganz frech und hart neben einander legen, dass sie mit der Natur ganz keine Gemeinschaft haben, sondern nur denen in den Kramläden gefüllten Farben Schachtlen oder aus der Färberey gebrachten Tüchern ähnlich und gleich sehen.'

Fig. 119. K. van Mander, *The adoration of the shepherds,* 1598, panel 36 x 46.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, on loan from Rijswijk/Amsterdam, Instituut Collectie Nederland

Fig. 120. A. Brouwer, *Five men fighting, c.* 1632, panel 22.7 x 30.7 cm. Munich, Alte Pinakothek

The same is true of the genre scenes painted by the influential Adriaen Brouwer, who was already active in Haarlem before 1626, subsequently for a brief time in Amsterdam, and soon afterwards in Haarlem again. In Brouwer's interiors with ordinary, common people – dressed in greys and browns and sometimes a muted red – there is also a clear tendency toward monochromy in favour of convincing light effects (fig. 120).

Of course, this Haarlem trend was not the *consequence* of the choice of subjects, whether they be landscapes, still-lifes or genre scenes, that merely incidentally led to predominantly tonal constellations. As already said, it was a matter of a new approach to the possibilities of achieving a credible rendering of light and atmospheric space, albeit an approach assisted by the deliberate choice from reality of the subjects to be painted.

The point about the young Rembrandt (and Jan Lievens) in relation to this development is that they were themselves striving for the same result in their *history paintings*. If we considered the trend under discussion as solely a stylistic development, it would not be especially noteworthy, and in that case the two young Leiden painters could be seen as mere epigones of the Haarlem avant-

Fig. 121. Rembrandt, *Judas repentant returning the pieces of silver*, 1629, panel 79 x 102.3 cm. private collection (I A 15)

garde. The significance of their contribution, however, was that they did not allow their *choice* of subject to be influenced by the tendency toward monochromy – particularly not in Rembrandt's case.

A glance at the work of Rembrandt's teacher in the field of history painting, Pieter Lastman (see p. 152, fig. 15) – or at Rembrandt's own Leiden *History piece* from 1626 (see p. 151, fig. 10) – is sufficient to realize that the colours of costumes in such works could not be subordinated to purely artistic aims as one might wish. Strong colours had a significance that went beyond stylistic trends in painting. The significance of strong, pure colours in history pieces was explicitly explained by Van Mander:

> 'The attire must for everyone conform to his standing – that is, according to the status [or prestige] that the persons enjoy: kings in purple, with ornamented crown; and light-hearted youth demands that it be cheerfully adorned with exquisite, clear, shining colours. With maidens, for example, white tends to suit very well. Painters should in general pay attention well to this piece [of advice] to ensure that everyone is shown attired according to his status.'[320]

To overstate the case slightly, one could say that the Haarlemmers and Adriaen Brouwer chose the reality that best suited their artistic purpose, whereas Rembrandt subjected the reality he wished to paint to his artistic choice. A glance at the *Judas repentant*, the first worked out test of Rembrandt's new way of painting to emerge after a long struggle, should make clear what is referred to here (fig. 121). When one looks from left to right , that is, along with the light streaming in, one is struck by the way the broken colours – the light grey wall, the pale blue-green strip of material on the wall that functions as panelling, the broken white of the paper, and pink-yellow of the tasselled cloth on the book on the table and the fine pink-yellow decoration of the tablecloth – create a refined harmony that contrasts strongly as a whole with the dark zone in the

320 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 10: '**3** Elck na zijnen staet, dats nae de persoonen/In eeren zijn, wil de cleedinghe wesen:/Coninghen ghepurpert, gheciert met Croonen,/En de blijde Ieught lustigh haer verschoonen/Wil met blinckend' verwen schoon uytghelesen,/maeghden wil oock t'wit wel voeghen: in desen/De Schilders wel moeten op alles letten,/Elck soo nae den staet ghecleedt uyt te setten.'

foreground. The colours of the garments worn by the first figure that meets the eye as it travels from left to right adds to this effect over almost overcharged working of light. These are the overgarments of the left-most priest – a light yellow cloak with a light orange-ish cape. As the eye moves to the right it encounters the other priests wearing increasingly darker attire. The fourth from the left is dressed in black. Only the subdued red cloak of the priest gesturing dismissively toward Judas still provides a red colour accent, carefully held in check. The loosely independent reflections of light from shiny materials, and the subdued flesh colour of Judas contrasted against deep shadows, bring detail to the right-hand part of the painting, which has largely been kept dark for the sake of its convincing light effects. The colours and tones are all subordinated to a composition defined in light and dark.

Rembrandt would bring this way of working to its fullest expression in *Christ in the storm on the Lake of Galilee* (fig. 140), or in the *Nightwatch* (fig. 69). In the case of the *Nightwatch*, for instance, (see the previous quotation from Van Mander) the colour of the protagonists' costumes should have been determined by decorum, but Rembrandt has sacrificed colour to the doctrine of 'light and shadow at the expense of colour'. It is a consequence of this approach, however, that the light had to be compensated for with three to four times as much shadow, so that some of the figures became almost totally dark-monochrome, while in general the colours for the costumes worn by the protagonists – whatever their rank – were chosen in accordance with and basically subordinated to their place in the structure of light and shadow, thus strengthening the effectiveness of that structure. As far as earning him important commissions during his lifetime was concerned, this choice would be fatal for Rembrandt. This must have been what Gerard de Lairesse meant when he later wrote:

> 'Nonetheless one notices that he [Rembrandt] is not imitated, or only by a few who, like their Predecessor, perished …'[321]

Lairesse is probably referring here not only to Rembrandt's pupils who in most cases turned their backs on Rembrandt's way of painting; he probably meant primarily that Rembrandt had hardly any influence beyond his own school, for the direction he chose with its all too emphatic connection between light, shadow and colour proved to be a dead end. The cul-de-sac into which Rembrandt had led himself had the consequence that commissions for works in public buildings – such as the Oranjezaal or the new Amsterdam Town Hall – were either withheld or, if they were awarded, the delivered work was eventually rejected. Decorum dictated the rules of such painting: strong colour, at least in the costumes, and clear visibility throughout the painting were demanded as a precondition in such works (see figs. 6 and 7).

It is worthwhile here to anticipate the end of this story, because what Arnold Houbraken later called the *'return to clear painting'*[322] – the colourfulness of what too easily was generalizingly indicated as classicism – was already in full swing when Hoogstraten wrote his book. What constituted the essence of the colour scheme in history pieces – the colours of the protagonists' dress – had reverted after the Rembrandt episode to the richness of the virtually unbroken colours that Van Mander prescribes in the passages quoted earlier. Once more, colour in a history piece is employed to underline the valour of the men and the beauty of the women.

Hoogstraten would have often heard Rembrandt talk about what must have engaged him intensely from 1627 onward: the use of broken colours – but then in the sense that Sandrart had in mind when he referred to Rembrandt's important contribution in this area.

The question of broken colours is not just a matter of mixing colours. The fact that a mixture of blue and yellow produces green does not mean that the blue or the yellow is 'broken'. Breaking a colour means that it has become less strong and less saturated by mixing with other pigments. Mostly, however, it remains a shade of the same colour. The revealing text in the margins of Hoogstraten's first chapter[323] on this subject (titled *Of the mixing of colours*) reads:

> '*Of the breaking of colours, called Corruptie* or *ontwordinge*'

According to the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* the word *corruptie* at that time also carried negative connotations, of having been tainted or damaged, while the other term that Hoogstraten uses, *ontwording*, was more or less equivalent to perishing, decaying or expiring.

Just how difficult – but at the same time attractive – Van Mander found it to take the step from the use of saturated to broken colours is evident from a passage in his *Grondt*:

> 'I remember that a group of young painters worked in the Belvedere. Raffaellino da Reggio did his figures in many light, half-tones, instead of the clear colours to which others were inclined; but no bees seeking honey ever hastened towards thyme as fast as our eyes flew to his work before [that of] others.. '[324]

Here it was a matter of 'light half-tones' [lichte grauwkens]. To a certain extent this holds for Rembrandt's first paintings with their preference for light broken colours. One thinks here of Mary's blue cloak in the *Flight into Egypt* in Tours (see p. 154, fig. 18); the colours in the Berlin

321 G. de Lairesse, *Groot Schilder-boek*, 1707, V. Book, Chapter 22, p. 325: 'Evenwel bespeurt men, dat hy [Rembrandt] niet nagevolgd word dan van weinige, welke noch eindelyk met hunnen Voorganger te gronde zyn gegaan; …'

322 Houbraken II, p. 21: '…wanneer het helder schilderen weer op de baan kwam.'

323 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 223: 'Van de breekinge der verwen Corrupsie of ontwordinge genoemt.'

324 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 11: '**12** My heught dat een deel jonghe Schilders wrochten/Op Beluideer, Raphael da Rezzo dede/Veel lichte graeuwkens zijn volck aen, in stede/Van schoone verfkens, die andere sochten:/maer geen honichsoeckende Biekens mochten/Hen soo rasschen nae den tijm, als ons ooghen/nae zijn dinghen voor ander lustich vlooghen.'

Rich man (see p. 155 fig. 20) or *The old men disputing* in Melbourne from 1628 (p. 156 fig. 24) and also the broken yellow of the cloak of the priest on the left in the *Judas* (see fig. 121). In Rembrandt's later work, where a strong red costume had to be shown (as in the Philistine with the halbard in the *Blinding of Samson* (fig. 65) and in the 'schutter' with his musket dressed in red, standing to the left and in front of the girl in the *Nightwatch*), the amount of red required was highly restricted by the fact that the greater part of such figures was cloaked in shadow (see fig. 69). Only after *c.*1645 did he sometimes introduce sonorous red passages in the foreground, and always in draperies, a new turn in Rembrandt's dealings with colour that Van Hoogstraten must have witnessed, for example in the St Petersburg *Holy family with the angels*. Nevertheless, Rembrandt continued to give priority to the effects of light at the expense of colour and detail (fig. 122).

As well as the question of broken colours, Rembrandt must inevitably have given thought to the mixing of colours kept in shadow. This would seem to be reflected in a detailed passage from Van Hoogstraten's treatise quoted below. Mixing the ten or twelve pigments available to him and his contemporaries in all possible ways gave a richly varied instrument for the rendering of reality in all its varied gradations of colour. In Van Hoogstraten's eyes, the range of colours at their disposal was virtually complete. One finds in Van Hoogstraten's book a theory concerning the mixing of colours, perhaps based on his lessons with Rembrandt, which explains this richness:

> 'The mixing of two colours, in cases where these are related *[bevrient]*, does not produce another intermediate colour, which resembles them both *[die na beyden aert]*, like green from [mixing] yellow and blue, or purple from blue and red: the same as can be seen in the mixing in the Rainbow. On the contrary, conflicting colours almost totally destroy each other, and produce nothing but a dull greyness, as can be seen in the mixing of green and red. I say a dull greyness, but one could call grey everything that is not red, yellow or blue. No. This agreement and conflict of colours gives us the ability to colour almost everything seen in nature, administered so that nothing other than a well practised eye is needed in order to observe nature with discernment. The judgement of the colour between the extremes of our pigments is here most important if it is to determine things in nature.'[325]

Van Hoogstraten must also have been very interested in problems of colour in the context of his own work and must have looked for alternatives to Rembrandt's way of handling colour (fig. 123). There is a rather long, at first sight cryptic passage in which he seems to be trying to combine Rembrandts approach to colour with his own ideas and with the general developments in this area that are discussed above.

> 'Further, whilst it is highly unsuitable to overcharge the whole work with the afore-said delightful colours, so it will be praiseworthy when, foremost and most importantly in the work, one makes each colour as beautiful as possible (in painting, says Plutarch, one hides the dark and sad colours and brings the light and gaiety to the fore or above) so that they stand out with a force and brightness both collectively and compatibly with each other. However, I do not want the colours to appear just as light as dark, as in a dream; but as in good music sometimes the note rises, and sometimes there is the droning of a deep bass, so one may make white cotton cloth coil playfully with blue silk, and brilliant gold goes with all pigments. As the pale moon struts with gilded stars in the azure sky, so shines the ripe grain in green fields. With regard to the figures who are more of secondary importance than necessary for the story, one must attire them carefully such that the eye is not distracted from the principal work: not that one should put them all in shadow, or dress them all in mourning clothes, but with a skilful dexterity one must thereby creating a good balance *[welstant]* in the main work; whether [by ensuring that] those in the further distance slightly lack the clarity of those in the foreground , or only catch a reflection, or are deprived of the main [source of] light.[326]

In the passage placed in italics, Hoogstraten advises the method that Rembrandt had used with the costumes in his *Judas* or *Christ in the storm on the Lake of Galilee* that is, to adapt the choice of colours of the clothes of the protagonists to their place in the pictorial scheme of the figures involved.

Hoogstraten's advice to apply each colour at its purest 'in the foreground or the main part of the work' was practiced by himself – a fact that did not escape the well-informed viewers of his work. Reading the criticism of Samuel van Hoogstraten's handling of colour by his own

325 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 224: 'De vermengelingen van twee verwen, indienze elkander bevrient zijn, brengen geen andere middelverwe uit, als die na beyden aert, als groen uit geel en blaeuw, purper uit blaeuw en root: gelijk de vermengingen in den Regenbooge te zien zijn. Daer en tegen zullen de vyandige verwen elkanderen byna geheel vernietigen, en niets anders dan een graeuwachtigheit voort brengen, als te zien is in't zamenmengen van groen en root. Een graeuwachtigheit, zeg ik, maer zoo mocht men alles, wat juist niet root, geel, of blaeuw was, graeuw noemen. Neen. Deeze overeenkomst en strijdigheit der verwen heeft ons 't vermogen van byna al wat in de natuer gezien wordt na te koloreeren, toegebracht, zoo datter niets anders als een wel geoeffent ooge, om de natuer met oordeel aen te zien, van nooden is. Het oordeel van de verwe is hier het voornaemste, indien maer het dingen in de natuer tusschen de uiterstens onzer verwen bepaelt is.'

326 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 304: 'Wijders, dewijl't zeer wanschiklijk zoude zijn, het geheele werk met gemelde vermaeklijke koleurkens te overlasten, zoo zal't prijslijk zijn, dat men, in het voorste of voornaemste van 't werk, yder verwe op zijn schoonst maekt (men bedekt in't schilderen, zegt Plutarchus, de duistere en droeve verwen, en brengt de lichte en blyde voor of boven) op datze met een gemeene en met malkander verdraegsaeme kracht en gloejentheit hervoor dringen. Echter wil ik niet, dat de verwen juist eeven licht, eeven bruin, als een droom verschijnen; maer gelijk een goede muziek somtijts den toon verheft, en somtijts met een diepe bas dreunt, zoo machmen spierwit lywaet by blaeuwe zijde dartel doen krinkelen, en schitterend gout by alle verwen passen. Zoo praelt de bleeke maen by gulde starren in d'azuure lucht, zoo blinkt het rijpe graen in de groene velden. De figuuren, meer tot bywerk, als nootzakelijk, zal men voorzichtelijk zoodanich kleeden, dat het oog in het opslach van het voornaemste werk niet en wordt afgetrokken: niet datmenze juist alle zal beschaduwen, of in den rouw kleên, maer men zal met een kunstige behendicheit door haer een welstant in het hooftwerk veroorzaken; 't zy zy in verder afstant de voorste klaerheden eenichzins missen, of alleen een weerglans ontfangende, van't voornaemste licht berooft zijn.'

Fig. 122. Rembrandt, *The Holy Family*, 1645, canvas 117 x 91 cm.
St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (V 4)

Fig. 123. S. van Hoogstraten, *The young mother, c.* 1672, canvas 48 x 40 cm.
Hannover, Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum

Fig. 124. G. van Honthorst, *Allegory on the marriage of Frederik Hendrik and Amalia van Solms*, 1648/50, canvas 300 x 750 cm. The Hague, Royal Palace Huis ten Bosch, Oranjezaal

pupil and biographer Arnold Houbraken leaves a rather strange taste:

> 'As far as his [Van Hoogstraten's] Histories are concerned, they are thoroughly praiseworthy, *welstandig*, and with a good *houding* [the spatial effects achieved through skilful choice of colours and tones], and art-lovers have never raised any complaint against them, as that the colours in the costumes especially, are used too singly and unmixed, and in the latter years of his life, in order to flatter the ignorant, sometimes introduced things in his paintings which, in his Book on the fundamentals [gronden] of the Art of Painting he had denounced.'[327]

Where colour in painting was concerned in general, Hoogstraten specifically stated his credo in his book:

> 'Natural colouring alone is praiseworthy'[328]

which is to say that colour in the painting should approximate as closely as possible to the colour in reality. This must also have been Rembrandt's credo because, as Sandrart explained, naturalness could only be achieved through the use of broken colours – for otherwise the colours (of the costumes) in paintings look more like 'the boxes of pigments in the shop or strips of textile from the cloth-dyers'. Hoogstraten may well have taken over Rembrandt's credo in so many words himself. The notion that only a colour scheme which corresponded precisely with reality was laudable was not a self-evident one. It was well known – and was apparently a topic of discussion in the workshops – that there were – and had been – painters who allowed themselves a range of colour that did not correspond with reality.

> '… over which many, in despair [over whether they would ever succeed in achieving natural colours] merely accustomed themselves to a way of colouring in order to carry their drawings through into paintings; without paying heed to any naturalness at all, as though the use of colour [*kolorijt*] did not matter. No-one should hold it against me that I dare to mention such illustrious names as *Kornelis van Haerlem*, *Bartolomeus Spranger*, *Julio Roman*, and the great *Michel Agnolo* as having almost totally overlooked [natural] colouring.'[329]

That Rembrandt strived for fidelity to nature in his use of colour can (still) be seen in his paintings. His contemporaries must also have perceived as much. Gerard de Lairesse, for example, quoted with approval Rembrandt's admirers who said:

> '…was there ever a Painter who came so close to nature in the force of his colouring [*coloriet*], …'[330]

The colours in the *Judas* also approximate to 'nature'. The same holds for the colours in the (eventually rejected) *Claudius Civilis* (fig. 125, 126) and would also have been true of the colours in Rembrandt's proposed painting(s) for the Oranjezaal had he been invited in 1648/50 to par-

327 A. Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, pp. 158/159: 'Wat zyne Historien aanbelangt, die zyn doorgaans prysselyk, welstandig, en van een goede houding, en de konstkenners hebben 'er nooit iets tegen gehad, als dat de koleuren, in de kleederen inzonderheid, te enkel en onvermengt gebruikt zyn, en hy in de laatste jaren van zyn leven, om onverstandigen tot zyn voordeel te vleyen, somtyds dingen in zyn stukken gebragt heeft, die hy in zyn Boek van de gronden der Schilderkonst wraakt.'

328 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 225: 'De natuerlijke koloreeringe is alleen lofwaerdich.'

329 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 225: '… waer over veele als wanhoopende [of zij ooit een natuurlijk coloriet zouden bereiken] zich alleen een wijze van koloreeren gewenden, om haere Teykeningen in Schildery te brengen; zonder op eenige natuerlijkheden te letten, als of de kolorijt hun niet aenginge. Niemant duide 't my ten euvel, dat ik zelfs vermaerde mannen noeme, Kornelis van Haerlem, Bartolomeus Spranger, Julio Roman, en den grooten Michel Agnolo hebben 't koloreeren byna geheel over 't hooft gezien.'

330 G. de Lairesse, *Groot Schilder-boek*, 1707, V. Book, Chapter 22, p. 325: '…was 'er ooit een Schilder die de natuur in kracht van coloriet zo na kwam, …'

Fig. 125. Rembrandt, *Claudius Civilis, c.* 1661, canvas 309 x 196 cm.
Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (Br. 482)

ticipate in that project (fig. 124). But apparently the invitation never came. It would seem obvious to assume that those who selected and invited the participants in this megaproject, found that Rembrandt's paintings would simply not fit into this rich ensemble notwithstanding the standing he enjoyed in the international world of art-lovers: too little clear colour, too much detail dissolved in shadow. One can almost hear one of the members of the committee saying, in the words of Samuel van Hoogstraten when quoting certain theorists:

> '…that the Art of Painting at its greatest is that which deals solely with heroic virtues: that the forcing of light and shadow in a scheme is a brittle crutch: and it is unjust to heighten the beauty of the one by obscuring the other.'[331]

In this passage, the painter-theorists whom Hoogstraten quotes could scarcely not have had Rembrandt in mind. This is an unremarked passage in Hoogstraten's chapter on ordonnation in which the 'classicist' faction is allowed its advocacy (see also the section on *Ordonnance* pp. 53-64).

But Van Hoogstraten did not necessarily share this implicite critical attitude towards Rembrandt's way of using colour in relation to light and shadow:

> 'As far as we [viz. Hoogstraten himself] are concerned, and as there are other different minds, we allow each the freedom to follow whatever he likes; and reject no tulip because it is not a rose, nor a rose because it is not a lily. We shall discuss the parts of art, and each may choose from them what he considers the most valuable.'[332]

He did, however, make clear why Rembrandt 'perished', in the words of Gerard de Lairesse (see note 321) as a result of his refusal of Van Mander's precept, that:

> 'The [colour] of the attire must for everyone conform to his standing, that is to the status [or prestige] that a person enjoys.' (see note 320)

For Rembrandt art – 'de konst' – took precedence over the wishes and status of his patrons. This is not part of the subsequently concocted Rembrandt myth or the associated 19th-century cult of genius. It could well be one of the keys to an understanding, not only of Rembrandt's enduring fame as an artist, but also of the criticism that, in his own lifetime, may have led to him getting hardly any official commission.

331 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 176: '…dat de Schilderkonst in top is, daerze alleen op heldachtige deugden acht geeft: dat het bedwang der lichten en schaduwen een brosse kruk is: en onrecht datmen, om het eene te verschoonen, het andere verduistere.'

332 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 176: 'Wat ons [Hoogstraten zelf] aengaet, wy geeven deze, en, zoo'er noch meer verschillende geesten zijn, yder de vryheyt naer behaegen te volgen; en verwerpen geen tulp om dat het geen roos, noch geen roos om dat het geen lely is. Wy zullen de konstdeelen verhandelen, een yder verkieze daer uit, ´t geen hem waerdichst [het meest, waard om te gebruiken] dunkt.'

Fig. 126. Detail of fig. 125

Handling of the brush

In the twelfth chapter of his *Grondt*, titled *Van wel schilderen, oft Coloreren [On painting or colouring well]*, Van Mander deals with numerous technical aspects of the art of painting, both in the Netherlands and in Italy, and not only techniques of oil painting but also aspects of the fresco technique. Preparatory drawing and dead colouring, the use of cartoons and choice of pigments are discussed in the same chapter.

In the context of this section's main topic, the handling of the brush, it may be relevant to look at the various widely distributed remarks that Van Mander makes on the painter's 'handwriting' and the resulting paint surface, particularly in the technique of oil painting. These aspects are given most attention here because they play a prominent role in Rembrandt's work. They are also given far more attention in Samuel van Hoogstraten's *Academy of Painting* than in Van Mander's *Grondt*. Yet Van Hoogstraten's lengthy and thorough treatment of the handling of the brush and differentiation of the brushwork is conspicuously at odds with the fact that such visible and characteristic brushwork is hardly ever found in his own painting. This stark contrast suggests that Van Hoogstraten may not be communicating his own ideas so much as transmitting the teaching he had earlier assimilated, and that we may in fact be touching here on a vital part of Rembrandt's own ideas on this issue.

Of the few (scattered) passages in which Van Mander describes differences in the way of handling the brush, the most extensive is that which he devotes to the first lay-in of a painting – a subject that Van Hoogstraten ignores in his chapter on *Handeling*. After recording how some painters sketch their intended painting

> 'which stood already painted in their mind's eye as is proper' – freehand, directly on the support,

Van Mander writes that they

> '…go at it directly with the brush and paint, boldly, without giving themselves much trouble. And thus these colleagues, while painting, lay in their images deftly in dead colour; sometimes they also quickly re-work this dead colour to achieve a better composition. Thus those who are highly inventive work boldly and improve a fault here and there.'[333]

He then continues, referring to certain unnamed painters whose bold handling of the brush was also manifest in the final paint surface. It should be borne in mind that Karel van Mander's first teacher, Pieter Vlericks, had worked in Tintoretto's workshop during his stay in Italy (fig. 127). It would seem that Van Mander is hinting at this Venetian painter, his pupils and assistants when he writes:

> 'So they see to it that their work makes lusty progress, and as a result honourably execute their intentions. This is how the Caesars in the art of painting proceed, who are constantly increasing in art and expanding their realm by their daring painting; but although one can learn to handle paint boldly in this way, with no inhibitions, yet this manner of working is not appropriate for everyone.'[334]

When it came to the final execution of a painting, Van Mander actually favoured the smooth surface of a fully worked-out painting. This is shown by the way he praises his famous Netherlandish predecessors for their smooth execution.

> 'There are others who, with much effort and labour, construct their images from dozens of sketches or drawings and then neatly and clearly draw on the first paint layer [*primuersel*], going even as far as the fine detail, what they have in mind, using a thinly prepared, fluid paint, or they draw neatly with pencil and wipe it spotlessly clean.
> [They draw] everything very unambiguously and precisely, to some extent the internal detail as well as outline, without putting a line wrong by mistake. This is no bad thing and indeed cannot go wrong; rather it gives a considerable result while painting. And so that it will look well in every way and not fade, they apply their colours well blended and each in its place.'[335]
> […] 'These [painters]' (Van Mander had just mentionend in this context Dürer, Brueghel and Lucas van Leyden, as well as Jan van Eyk - fig. 128 -, 'the greatest of them all') 'all maintained this thinness. They introduced their colours pure, neat and clear and' (here again Van Mander returns to the Venetians) 'did not load the panels [with paint] as they do now, when one can almost blindly feel and trace by touch the whole work on all sides; for in our time the paint is applied so roughly and unevenly that one would almost think that they had been sculpted in stone relief.'[336]

333 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 12: '**4** Fol. 46 … t'ghene nae behooren/In hun Ide' is gheschildert te vooren./**5** En vallender aen stracx, sonder veel quellen,/Met pinceel en verw', en sinnen vrymoedich,/En dus schilderende dees werck-ghesellen,/Hun dinghen veerdich in doot-verwen stellen,/Herdootverwen oock te somtijden spoedich,/Om stellen beter: dus die overvloedich/In't inventeren zijn, doen als de stoute,/En verbeteren hier en daer een foute.'

334 K.v.M., *Grondt*, Cap. 12: '**6** Iae vorderen alsoo hun werck met luste,/Hun voornemen uytvoerende met eeren,/Dit mach wel voeghen de Schildersch' Augusten,/Die in Consten toenemen sonder rusten,/En in stout schilderen t'rijcke vermeeren:/Doch al canmen aldus vrymoedich leeren/Met de verwe handelen sonder schricken,/Wilt het nochtans met yeder soo niet schicken.'

335 K.v.M., *Grondt*, Cap. 12: '**7** Ander zijnder, die met veel moeyten swaerlijck/Wt schetsen oft teyckeninghen met hoopen/Hun dinghen te samen rapen eenpaerlijck,/En teyckenen daer nae suyver en claerlijck,/Volcoomlijck wat sy in den sin beknoopen,/Op t'primuersel, met een verwe, die loopen/Can, dunne ghetempert, oft treckent netlijck/Met Potlloot, en vaghent reyn onbesmetlijck./**8** Iae alle dinghen seer vast en ghewislijck,/Soo wel binnewerck als omtreck by maten,/Sonder een trecksken te falen vergislijck,/Dit en gaet niet qualijck, noch vry niet mislijck,/maer comt in't schilderen grootlijcx te baten,/En op dat het allesins wel mocht laten,/En niet versterven, hun verwen sy mede/Wel ghetempert gheven yeder haer stede.'

336 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 12: '**20** Op dees edelheyt dees t'samen wel pasten,/En leyden hun verwen schoon, net en blijde,/Ginghen de penneelen soo niet belasten,/Als nu, dat men schier blindelijck mach tasten/En bevoelen al t'werck aen elcker sijde:/Want de verwen ligghen wel t'onsen tijde,/Soo oneffen en rouw, men mochtse meenen/Schier te zijn half rondt, in ghehouwen steenen.'

Fig. 127. Tintoretto, St George, 1558, canvas 157.5 x 100 cm (detail). London, The National Gallery

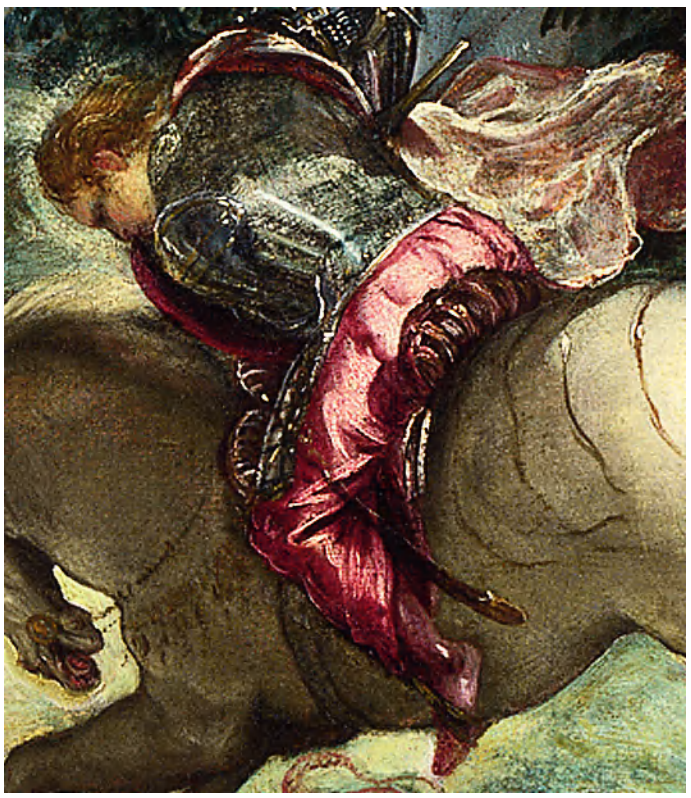


Fig. 128. Jan van Eyck, *Women at the tomb, c.* 1430, panel 71.5 x 69 cm (detail). Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen

When it comes to the question of the 'fine and the rough manner' of Titian, as it has been much discussed in Van Mander's time, he restricts himself to paraphrasing Vasari's text on the change in Titian's *peinture*, from his early to his latest phase.

> 'We learn from what Vasari has written, to our great profit, about the great Titian, how in the bloom of his youth he used to execute his artworks industriously with incredible neatness; and his works were beyond reproach, indeed they pleased everyone, whether one stood at a distance or close up. But in the end he executed his work very differently, with blotches and rough strokes and of course that looked well if one stood at quite a distance, but it could not be viewed close up.'[337] (fig. 129)

Although Van Mander admitted that Titian's late works looked well, if only at a distance, there was an important reason for sounding a warning against working in the rough manner:

> 'Several masters, wishing to follow this in their work, have made nothing substantial but have rather produced a lot of ugly dross. They thought they could do as well as those who were well practised and have deceived themselves with a mistaken idea, because they thought that his [Titian's] works had been made effortlessly, whereas in fact the utmost competence had been deployed with [great] effort; for one sees that his works have several times been overpainted and covered with [fresh] paint: There is more effort in it than one would think. […] the effort is hidden in it by great artistry.'[338]

It is important for our understanding of Rembrandt's eventual choice for the rough manner to be aware that as early as the time of Vasari and Van Mander, there was no inconsistency or conflict seen between the rough manner and a convincing illusion, as long as the work was painted by a true master and was viewed from a certain distance. This is in fact the clue to the much-quoted story told by Houbraken in relation to his comment that Rembrandt's paintings, especially in his late period, looked as though the paint had been smeared on with a brick-layer's trowel:

> 'Which is why, if people came to his studio, and wanted to look at his work close up, he pulled them back, saying: *the smell of the paint will bother you*'[339] (fig. 130)

337 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 12: '**22** Van *Tizianus* den grooten wy mercken,/Wt *Vasari* schriften ons wel profijtich,/Hoe hy in de bloeme zijns Ieuchts verstercken/Plocht uyt te voeren zijn constighe wercken,/Met ongheloofIijcke netticheyt vlijtich:/De welcke niet te berispen verwijtich/En waren, maer behaeghden wel een yder,/T'zy ofmender verre van stondt oft byder./ **23** maer ten lesten met vlecken en rouw' streken,/Ginck hy zijn wercken al anders beleyden,/Welck natuerlijck wel stondt, als men gheweken/Wat verre daer van was, maer niet bekeken/Van by en wou wesen, …'

338 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 12: '**23** … het welck verscheyden/Meesters willende volghen in't arbeyden,/En hebbender niet van ghemaeckt te deghe,/Dan een deel leelijck goets ghebracht te weghe./**24** Sy meenden den wel gheoeffenden slachten/En hebben miswanich hun self bedroghen,/Om dat sy zijn werck sonder arbeydt dachten/Te wesen ghedaen, daer d'uyterste crachten/Der Consten met moeyt' in waren gheploghen:/Want men siet zijn dinghen overghetoghen/En bedeckt met verwen verscheyden reysen,/Meer moeyt isser in als men soude peysen./**25** … den arbeydt daer onder/Groote Const bedeckt is, …'

339 Houbraken I p. 269: 'Waarom hy de menschen, als zy op zijn schilderkamer kwamen, en zyn werk van digteby wilden bekyken, terug trok, *zeggende: de reuk van de verf zou u verveelen*'.

Fig. 129. Titian, *Boy with dogs*, 1570, 99.5 x 117 cm (detail). Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen

Apart from discussions over the rough and the fine manner of painting, Van Mander expressed his admiration for the way Italian painters other than the Venetians used the brush. His criticism of the way his northern contemporaries (including himself) painted is unsparing.

> 'Not only does our work look dry but when we do our best to paint flesh it still looks like fish or stone.'[340]

So Van Mander exhorts his contemporaries to consider using the brush and paint differently:

> 'Do not then remain tied to your false opinion, like some rigid sect; but change your approach here freely, it is no sin.'[341]

Rembrandt's *peinture* was from the very beginning remarkably varied. He already used a 'rough' way of painting in some of his early works, such as the 'vidimus' with *David before Saul* in Basle (fig. 131). But that was a rapid oil-sketch. If our interpretation of the three same-sized works on gilded copper from around 1630 is correct, Rembrandt did in fact consider the 'rough' manner in which the *Laughing soldier* in the Mauritshuis is painted to be a distinct style.[342] (fig. 132)

From *c.* 1650 the breadth of differentiated, free brushwork in Rembrandt's paintings becomes dominant. One could say, albeit with reservations to be discussed later, that Rembrandt opted from this point on for the 'rough manner', although applied with greater differentiation than by the aged Titian. Here Van Mander's account (quoted above) of Titian's transition from the 'fine' to the 'rough' manner becomes highly relevant. Of course, the topic is also dealt with in Van Hoogstraten's book, where he explains Titian's change from the 'fine' to the 'rough' manner as follows:

> 'The early pieces by *Titian* are painted in a manner with the colours smoothly merging into one another, which nevertheless was done with a full brush, but in his last [phase], when the sharpness of his eyesight was failing, he left the broad brushstrokes unworked, which, seen from a distance further than arm's length, have all the more powerful effect.'[343]

340 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 12: '**35** … Niet alleen siet ons dinghen uyt den drooghen,/maer als w'ons best vleesch te schilderen meenen,'/Soo isset al visch, oft beelden van steenen.'

341 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 12: '**37** … En blijft dan niet, als moetwillighe Secte,/ Aen u valsch' opiny te vast ghebonden,/maer overspeelt hier vry, ten zijn geen zonden.'

342 *Corpus*, Vol. IV, Chapter III, pp. 166-171.

343 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 233/234: 'De vroege dingen van Titiaen zijn zeer in een vloejende geschildert, 't welk nochtans met een vol pinseel gedaen is, maer in zijne laetste, toen hem de scherpheit van't gezicht faelde heeft hy de vlakke plaetstreeken onverwerkt gelaten, welke uit de hand staende, ook dies te grooter kracht hebben.'

Fig. 130. Rembrandt, *Family portrait, c.* 1665, canvas 126 x 167 cm (detail).
Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum (Br. 417)

Fig. 131. Rembrandt, *David with the head of Goliath before Saul*, 1627, panel 27.2 x 39.6 cm (detail). Basle, Kunstmuseum (I A 9)

Fig. 132. Rembrandt, *Laughing soldier, c.* 1630, copper 15.3 x 12.2 cm (detail). The Hague, Mauritshuis (I B 6)

Later on, Van Hoogstraten returns again to this problem that Titian was alleged to have had with his eyesight:

> 'I have also seen in others that, when their eyesight became dimmed with the onset of old age, they began to handle the brush with greater daring.'[344]

Was one of those 'others' perhaps Rembrandt? Could this be a sufficient explanation for his adoption of the 'rough' manner? It seems very unlikely. Rembrandt's late, locally broader manner of handling the brush begins to manifest itself after about 1650 – but in the following years he produced many etchings, in 1659 even a large, exceptionally detailed one (p. 254 fig. 271). In the year of his death ten years later, he was beginning a series of prints with Christ's Passion. That is, although the project never materialized, he was getting the etching plates ready in that year. In his last self-portraits, too, produced in the same year, the subtlety in the detailed work is considered to be just as exceptional as in much earlier work (fig. 133). In connection with the discussion about the 'fine' and the 'rough' manner, it is worth repeating a piece of advice given by Van Hoogstraten, advice known from Antiquity:

> 'One should also adapt his brushwork [*handeling*] according to the place where the work has to stand: for you will assuredly regret it if, in painting a piece that has to hang high up, and has to be seen from a distance, you have wasted much time on small things. Don't hesitate then to take brushes that fill a hand, and let every stroke [of the brush] stand on its own, and [let] the colours remain in many places almost unmixed; for the height and the thickness of the air will show many things merged together which should [seen closer] stand out separately.'[345]

Whether Van Hoogstraten ever found himself needing to put this advice into practice is not known, but Rembrandt certainly followed this line in at least one work, the *Claudius Civilis* (fig. 134).

Yet another approach to the question of differences in brushwork was discussed earlier in this chapter (see p. 12), although in that case it was a question of deliberately varied brushwork within the same painting. There it concerned the perceptual psychological notion, which Rembrandt himself developed, of the *'kenlijkheid'* – a rough paint surface – in the foreground of the pictorial space, contrasting with the *'onkenlijkheid'* – the smooth execution – of passages deeper in the pictorial space.[346]

What can also be said is that his *peinture*, from 1650 on, is to a variable extent determined by chance. But this approach to the art of painting has its antecedents in classical antiquity. Every painter in Rembrandt's time must have been familiar with the following anecdote, repeated here in the words of Van Hoogstraten.

> *'Protogenes* and *Neacles* finding themselves at a loss to depict the foam, first of a dog, secondly of a horse, no matter how much labour they put into it, indeed became so impatient with this difficult task that out of despair they hurled their sponges at their work; and although their dirty sponges pro-

344 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 242: 'Ook heb ik in andere gezien, dat zy, als haere oogen eenichzins door den avont des ouderdoms verduistert wierden, met te meerder stoutigheyt het penseel begosten [?] [begonnen] te handelen.'

345 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 235: 'Nu zoo moetmen ook zijn handeling voornamentlijk veranderen na de plaets, daer het werk te staen heeft: want het zal u wel dapper berouwen, wanneerge in 't schilderen van een stuk, dat hoog uit de hand zal hangen, en van verre moet gezien worden, veel tijts met kleinicheden verquist hebt. Neem dan vry borstels, die een hand vullen, en laet yder streek'er een zijn, en de verwen op veel plaetsen byna onvermengt leggen; want de hoogte en de dikheit der lucht zal veel dingen smeltende vertoonen, die by zich zelven steekende zijn.'

346 Van de Wetering 1997/2009, pp. 182-185.

Fig. 133. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait*, 1669, canvas 86 x 70.5 cm (detail).
London, The National Gallery (IV 27)

duced the desired result, and made their animals foam at the mouth in a highly natural manner, what this actually shows is that their judgement was sound enough, but their hand was too slow. Yet, as *Seneca* says, this is unique in the depiction of something natural, that it happens to painters by chance.'[347]

Given the scale on which he allowed chance to play a role in his later work, albeit in a very different way, perhaps Rembrandt thought that in this regard too he had surpassed the painters of Antiquity (see Vol. IV, p. 308).

Van Hoogstraten devotes a great deal of attention to the other aspect raised by Van Mander, the way of working in which the paint relief shows visibly, the way of handling of the brush whereby

> 'one can learn to handle paint boldly… with no inhibitions (see note 334).

He sees this kind of brushwork mainly as the consequence of the increasing speed with which painters worked over the course of the 17th century, indeed had to work, as a consequence of the situation referred to on p. 26 whereby an increasing number of painters was required to supply an explosively growing market. This is the context in which Van Hoogstraten places the frequently cited painters' contest, based on the alleged challenge set by certain art-lovers, who then witnessed the event, as to which of three painters could produce the best painting in a single day. There is little point in going into further detail here on Van Hoogstraten's interminable digression on speed painting, but it is important to point out that already in classical antiquity stories circulated over the extreme speed with which some painters worked. The following passage taken from Van Hoogstraten's book gives a clear idea of his own attitude in this matter.

> 'There is also that danger in too much haste, of falling short in the best parts of art. *Antidotus* painted roughly, but frequently fell short in proportions [*maetschiklijkheyt*]. They are not all *Nicomachuses* who have a skilled hand: nor are those who are very daring with the brush all Tintorettos, the virtue of the work lies in an appealing faithfulness to life, and if one loses one's potency with haste, then one ought to take more time.'[348]

Aside from digressions over the fine and the rough manner and the visible brushwork mentioned above in relation to viewing distance and speed of working, and *'kenlijkheid'*, there is another phenomenon that Van Hoogstraten deals with at length in his discussion of the handling of the

347 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 233: 'Protogenes en Neacles vonden zich verleegen, hoe grooten vlijt zy ook aenwenden, in het schuim, d'eerste van een hond, en de tweede van een paert, uit te beelden, ja geraekten in zoo slechten zaek buiten gedult, bewerpende haer werk, als wanhopende, met de sponsiën; en schoon de besmette sponsiën 't begeerde teweeg brachten, en hun dieren zeer natuerlijk deeden schuimbekken, zoo bleek hier uit, dat hun oordeel fix genoeg, maer hunne handt te traeg was. Doch, gelijk *Seneka* zegt, zoo is dit het eenige, dat den Schilders by geval [toeval] gebeurt is, in het uitbeelden van iet natuerlijx.'

348 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 240: 'Al te grooten haest is ook gevaerlijk, om in de beste deelen der konst te missen. Antidotus schilderde ruw, maer miste dikwils in de maetschiklijkheyt. Ten zijn niet al Nikomachen, die een vaerdige handt hebben: noch *Tyntoretten*, die stout in 't penseel zijn, De deugt van 't werk bestaet in bevallijke natuerlijkheyt, en als men die met haest onmachtich is, zoo behoortmen'er tijdt toe te nemen.'

Fig. 134. Rembrandt, *Claudius Civilis, c.* 1661, canvas 309 x 196 cm (detail).
Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (Br. 482)

brush. This is the more general looseness in the brushwork that is self-evident to every artist of any stature.

This phenomenon is described by Samuel van Hoogstraten as first of all a natural consequence of the fact that in the work of experienced painters an obvious spontaneity is evident in the execution, based on the skill the painter has acquired. In his discussion of the difference between an original work and a copy Van Hoogstraten writes:

> 'There is always an attractive vitality in the original […] that is missing in the copy: for however well it is copied, something nevertheless shows here and there which does not come from the life but is rather evidence of a painful labour [of copying]!'[349]

For

> 'A good artist, according to Seneca, handles his tools dexterously, or with singular ease'[350]

One then finds in the continuation of this discussion a saying that was probably often repeated in 17th-century workshops:

> 'Laboriously done, tiresome to look at, as the saying goes'[351]

Van Hoogstraten's subsequent attempt to clarify this point, apparently recalling his former master's teaching, is somewhat convoluted:

> 'So it is now necessary that one should get used to a way of doing [i.e. painting] such that it is able to obey readily what the mind dictates: thus the most praiseworthy of all is this: that one should become accustomed to a brisk brushstoke, which indicates distinctively those passages that differ in some way from other passages [in the painting], giving them their proper character, and where acceptable a playful liveliness without ever applying and merging the brushstrokes (too) smoothly; for this dispels the merit [of this brushwork], and yields nothing more than a dreamy stiffness at the expense of an honest distinction between [shades of] colour.[352]

This statement comes close to an ever recurring quality of Rembrandt's brushwork, whether in his early or his late work: it explains why there is a graphic element in almost all Rembrandt's paintings.

But with regard to the question of how Rembrandt thought about the use of the brush, not only in his earlier

349 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 197: 'Daer is altijts een bevallike lusticheit in d'origineelen,[…], die in de kopyen ontbreekt: want hoe wel datze zijn nagevolgd, zoo wijzenze nochtans hier en daer iets uit, dat niet uit de natuer, maer uit een pijnlijken arbeyt schijnt voort te komen.'

350 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 236: 'Een goed konstenaer, zegt *Seneka*, handelt zijn gereetschap behendich, of met een zonderling gemak.'

351 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 237: 'Moeilijk gedaen, moeilijk om te zien, zegtmen.'

352 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 233: 'Zoo is 't nu van nooden, dat men zich een wijze van doen gewenne, die 't verstand vaerdich kan gehoorzamen: dies is allermeest te prijzen, datmen zich tot een wakkere pinseelstreek gewoon maeke, die de plaetsen, die van andere iets verschillen, dapperlijk aenwijze, gevende de teykening zijn behoorlijke toedrukkingen, en de koloreeringen, daer 't lijden kan, een speelende zwaddering: zonder ooit tot lekken of verdrijven te komen; want dit verdrijft de deugt, en geeft niets anders, als een droomige stijvicheit, tot verlies van d'oprechte breekinge der verwen.'

Fig. 135. Rembrandt, *The raising of Lazarus, c.* 1630/31, panel 96.2 x 81.5 cm (detail). Los Angeles, County Museum of Art (I A 30)

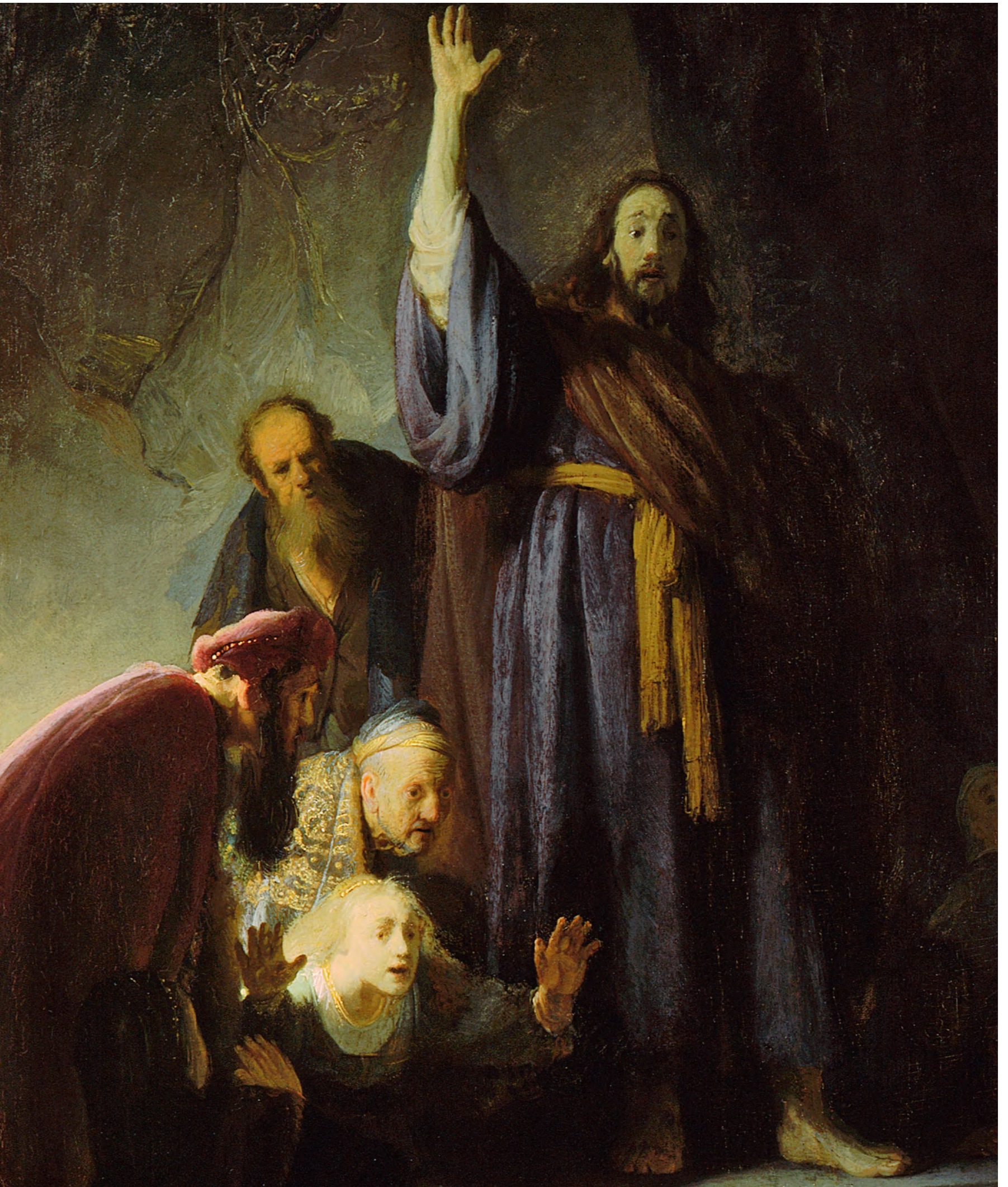


Fig. 136. Rembrandt, *Jacob blessing the children of Joseph*, 1656, canvas 175 x 210.5 cm (detail). Kassel, Staatliche Museen (Br. 525)

work but also during the late period, a much more important aspect of his way of working is his study of the surface textures of different materials. As early as 1626 he began to vary the thickness or consistency of the paint, applying it with a varied brushwork according to the character and surface texture of the material rendered (p. 153 fig. 16).

In the fifth chapter of the first Book of his *Academy*, which is devoted to drawing, Van Hoogstraten gives high priority to the principle of varying the pictorial means according to the different material to be depicted. He writes:

> […] 'one must sometimes change the *handeling* [the way one uses the drawing implement] according to the nature of the things'[353],

after which he develops this idea further in the last of three didactic poems on drawing:

> 'The third lesson is, to give everything
> its own [characteristic surface] quality in the *handeling*,
> After its character in life: acquiring no other manner [of drawing]
> Than that which extends to giving everything its natural quality.'

He adds (in prose) that:

> 'this way of observing [things] will develop with constant practice.'[354]

(This is, of course, self-evident: drawing glass demands another way of handling the chalk or pen than drawing a woolly sheep.)

But when, later in his book, Van Hoogstraten comes to deal with the suggestion of differences in the textures of different materials in oil paints, we touch on one of the keys to Rembrandt's ideas on the handling of the brush. Van Hoogstraten's advice there is virtually the same as in his chapter on drawing – almost a repetition, in fact, of the verse just quoted, on the rendering of the surface textures of different materials (see note 353):

> 'Do not bother much with learning a [particular] *handeling* or manner of painting, but do [take the trouble] to become ever more firm in your observation, and to distinguish the [different] parts of the art [nature], and to imitate them carefully.'[355]

The still-life or history painter had to render the different visual characteristics of things. However, it was perfectly possible, and moreover normal practice, to give the things to be painted their correct shape and colour, a suitable regime of light and shadow and, above all, the correct highlights and other reflections in such a way that, with some painters, the paint surface was completely smooth, so smooth that

> 'even those from the art world were deceived as a result, and could not believe that it was painted, which they could confirm by touching it […].'[356]

Van Hoogstraten was in fact proud of the fact that he too could do so.

> 'We [Van Hoogstraten himself] have also acquitted ourself [in *trompe l'oeil* paintings] to the best of our ability both in the most easterly [Austria] and westerly [England] realms of Europe.'[357]

This passage is adduced here to underline the difference of this latter 'smooth' painting from the approach adopted by Rembrandt, as early as 1626, to make a differentiated paint consistency and brushwork play an important role in his rendering of the countless different surface textures in the visible world, and which Van Hoogstraten *also* recommended. The following remark on this type of differentiated brushwork is almost a literal quote from Van Mander's *Grondt*:

> 'For a different kind of looseness of brushwork is needed for fluffy hair, trembling foliage, or suchlike.'[358] (see also the section *Landscape*, pp. 81-88)

This observation turns out to precede a passage in which the dependence of the differentiation of the brushwork on the surface structure of the material that is to be rendered, is addressed once again:

> 'and yet again, a different kind of brushwork in a beautiful nude, or polished marble. But you will in all things succeed if your hand is ordinarily obedient to your eye and your judgement.'[359]

The insistence on the hand's subservience to the eye returns several times in that chapter, each time formulated

353 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 30: 'Want men moet zijn handeling nae den aert der dingen somtijts veranderen.'

354 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 30:
'De derde Les is, nae den aert van't leven,
Een yder ding zijn eygenschap te geven,
In't handelen: men wen zich geen manier,
Als die [degene die] zich strekt tot aller dingen zwier.
'Maer deze opmerkinge zal door gestadige oeffeninge rijp worden.'

355 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 234/235: 'Bekreun u weynich met een handeling of manier van schilderen te leeren, maer wel, om gestadich in de opmerking vaster te worden, en de deelen der konst wel te onderscheyden, en met wakkerheyt nae te volgen. Zoo zal de hand en't penseel het oog onderdanich worden, om manierlijk de verscheydenheyt der dingen, elk nae zijn aert, op't zwierichst uit te beelden.'

356 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 308: '… dat zelfs die van de konst daer door bedrogen wierden, en niet konden gelooven, dat het geschildert was, voor dat zy daer van door 't aentasten verzekert waren.'

357 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 308: 'Wy hebben zelfs in dergelijk bedroch, zoo in 't oost als westerlijkste rijk van Europa, ons na vermogen gequeeten.'

358 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 235: 'Wanr[t] daer behoort een andere lossicheit van handeling tot het luchtige hair, het lillende loof, of iets dergelijx:

359 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 235: 'en wederom, een anderen aert van 't pinseel te roeren in 't schoone naekt, en het blinkenkde marber. Maer gy zult in alles wel te recht raeken, als uwe hand maer gewoon is aen het oog en het oordeel te gehoorzamen.'

differently. Following his admonition not to get hung up with any particular *handeling* or manner of painting, Van Hoogstraten writes:

> 'Thus, in order to depict most freely and gracefully the diversity of things in a mannerly fashion, each according to its own nature, the hand and the brush must be subservient to the eye',[360]

emphasizing again in a marginal note:

> 'Practise no *handeling* for its own sake but only naturalness'.[361]

How large or small the scale of movement of the brush as it obeys the observing eye was apparently a minor matter. What is important is that a different principle from that of the 'fine versus the rough manner' is raised here. Moreover, it is emphasized that this it is not a question of a particular '*handeling* or manner of painting' in the sense of a style or individual 'handwriting', the central issue is rather that of the subordination of the means to the end of creating in paint a convincing illusion of reality. This explains why a late Rembrandt differs so essentially from, shall we say, a late Fragonard whose late, broad manner of painting is indeed just that, a manner. What makes Rembrandt's paintings so exceptional in this respect is that they have no 'manner'. The early as well as the late Rembrandt must have dinned into his pupils, one of whom was of course Van Hoogstraten, the wisdom quoted above. If one compares Rembrandt's works with those of countless other painters, one is struck by that differentiation in the *peinture* whether 'fine' or 'rough' so gratifying to the beholder. That differentiation seems to have had its roots primarily in the way that Rembrandt, from early on, met the challenge of rendering the surface qualities of all things to be painted with a wide variation in his brushwork. This differentiation never degenerated into a pedantic application of various 'prescriptions' because

> 'the most praiseworthy of all is this: that one should become accustomed to a brisk brushwork, which indicates distinctively those passages that differ in some way from other passages [in the painting], giving them their proper character and where appropriate a playful liveliness.'[362] (figs. 135 and 136)

360. S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 234-235: 'Zoo zal de hand en 't penseel het oog onderdanich worden, om manierlijk de verscheydenheyt der dingen, elk nae zijn aert, op 't zwierichst uit te beelden.'
361 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 234 in the margin: 'Geen eygen handeling te betrachten, maer alleen de natuerlijkheyt.'
362 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 233: […] 'dies is allermeest te prijzen, datmen zich tot een wakkere pinseelstreek gewoon maeke, die de plaetsen, die van andere iets verschillen, dapperlijk aenwijze, gevende de teykening zijn behoorlijke toedrukkingen, en de koloreeringen, daer 't lijden kan, een speelende zwaddering:…'

Fig. 137. Rembrandt, *Christ presented to the people ('Ecce homo')*, 1655, etching 38.3 x 45.5 cm (detail) (B. 76^{VIII})

Space

This section, on the suggestion of space, ought really to have been placed at the head of the series of those basic aspects of the art of painting dealt with so far. Yet despite its importance, Van Mander, whose sequence of treatment of the *gronden* we have followed, allocated no chapter to this aspect. He must have considered the topic so self-evident that it hardly required a separate chapter of its own. The reproduction of *Pictura* on the title page of Philips Angels *Lof der schilder-konst* [In praise of the art of painting] is a striking illustration of the significance of pictorial space: the painting held by this personification of the art of painting, a perspective representation of a long vaulted corridor with a view outside to a building in the distance, effectively creates a deep rectangular hole in the bottom half of *Pictura*.

The art of painting as taught by Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten was by definition based on the principle that the creation of the illusion of space on a panel or canvas was a painter's most obvious goal. As will become apparent, other *gronden* – especially light and colour – play a role in the suggestion of space, which is perhaps another reason why Van Mander did not devote a separate chapter to it.

The simplest means of generating the impression of spatial depth is to place partially overlapping forms one behind the other in the pictorial space and to diminish the scale of these forms or figures the further back they are from the foreground (see p. 16 figs. 16-17). The most accurate method of creating an illusion of continuity in the pictorial space was, of course, geometric (linear) perspective – one of the great discoveries of humanity. By the beginning of the seventeenth century geometric perspective had become common property and publications on the subject were readily available (see note 367). For whatever reason, Van Mander perhaps saw no need to devote a separate section to linear perspective, although he alludes briefly to its principles when he asserts that

> 'Although it is not architecture, for which strict rules are necessary, even so you must be able to set your viewpoint or vanishing point on the horizon [of a landscape] (see p. 85).'[363]

In that context there was no need to go into the matter further. Van Mander paid far more attention to the phenomenon of atmospheric perspective.

> 'Look at the way the landscape in the distance tends to look like the sky, [it] becomes hazy and almost totally merges into the sky; standing mountains appear like clouds that move about' as a consequence of 'the blue body of the air'.[364]

363 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 8: '**9** …, Al ist geen metselrie, die nauwe Wetten/Behoeft, soo moet ghy doch weten te setten/Op den Orisont recht u oogh' oft steke,…'.

364 K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 8: '**8** Siet al t'verre Landtschap ghedaente voeren/Der Locht, en schier al in de Locht verflouwen,/Staende Berghen schijnen wolcken die roeren,…/**10** …blaeu-lijvich Lochts verdicken,…'.

Fig. 138. K. van Mander. *The continence of Scipio*, 1600, copper 44 x 79 cm (detail). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 139. Samuel van Hoogstraten, *A peepshow with views of the interior of a Dutch house* (detail), *c.* 1650s London, The National Gallery
Fig. 140. Rembrandt. *Christ in the storm on the Lake of Galilee*, 1633, canvas 160 x 128 cm. Whereabouts unknown. Stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (II A 68)

That was what Van Hoogstraten, and presumably Rembrandt before him, referred to as the *'thickness of the air'*.[365]

Van Hoogstraten goes much more deeply into the possibilities of creating an illusion of space, claiming that *'advancing, receding and foreshortening'* are the *'most wonderful part of the art of painting.'*[366] As the creator of the '*Peepshow with views of the interior of a Dutch house'* in the London National Gallery (fig. 139), he experimented extensively with *'deurzigtkunde'*, or the art of perspective. Van Hoogstraten considered this art exceptionally important and paints an evidently autobiographical picture of the artist who, with *'…compass and ruler at hand'* has spent *'several winter months'* making ingenious perspectival constructions. But Van Hoogstraten ends his brief three-page review of the use and beauty of perspective with these words:

> 'Now it suited me well to deal here with the basic principles of the art of perspective, but others have gone into it so thoroughly and minutely that it seems to me better that I should neither add nor subtract anything further here. And it will be sufficient in this, my 'academy' [inleyding], that I first place several books in your hands: read then, if you so desire, either Albert Durer, Hans de Vries, Maroldis, Guido Baldi, or the new discovery [*vond*] of Des Argues.'[367]

This is followed by the concluding sentence: *'And perhaps, if time and desire so permit, we will show you a much shorter way, by means of a short-cut.'*[368]

Just as with the proportions of the human figure, most painters had no need of more than a few practical hints on perspective (see also p. 38).

Van Hoogstraten's qualification of the spatial suggestion, quoted above, as *this most wonderful part of the art of painting'* (see note 366) did not in the first place relate to perspective but to all the other, and in some respect subtler means that had been developed in order to realize a spatial illusion. It is significant in this connection that, apart from a period around 1650, Rembrandt used linear perspective only minimally (see pp. 230/231 and p. 246 fig. 245). He did, however, make use of these alternative refinements, perhaps more than any other painter. Some of his contemporaries must have been aware that Rembrandt was something of a pioneer in this area. This was quite possibly also the case with the method known as *'houding'*,[369] viz. the creation of the illusion of spatial relation and separation between the elements of a painting through the well-judged use, above all, of colour, but also of light and shade: what makes figures seem to advance or recede in the pictorial space such that, as Goeree described it, '… *that one can explore, with the eye of course, the intervening space of the place, or the distance that is open and empty between each of the figures as they approach or recede from each other, as though one could walk among them and find one's own place:…*'[370]. When Sandrart discusses this method *'which the Dutch refer to as Houding'*, besides Pieter van Laer he specifically mentions *'the very diligent, and on this point, extremely brilliant Rembrandt, who* [when dealing with houding] *has practically worked miracles*' (see p. 311 note 6).

The phenomenon of the *'thickness of the air'* – i.e. atmospheric perspective – had long been known: that the substance of the intervening air altered the visual appearance of reality seen at a distance was also known by Van Mander (see above and fig. 138). But the way in which Rembrandt employed atmospheric perspective over a much

365 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 264: 'de dikte der lucht'

366 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 306: 'Van voorkoming, wechwijking, en verkorting.' '…allerheerlijkste deel der Schilderkunst,…'.

367 Albrecht Dürer, *Unterwysung der Messung*, Nürnberg 1525; J. Vredeman de Vries, *Perspectiva, id est celeberrima ars*, The Hague 1604, Leiden 1605; S. Marilois, *Ars perspectiva quae continet Theoriam Practicam eiusdem*, The Hague 1614; S. Marilois, *Opera mathematica Ofte wis-konstige Wercken: handelend van de geometrie/ perspective/ architecture*, Amsterdam 1640; Guido Baldi, *Perspectivae Libri VI*, Pisa 1600; Girard Des Argues, *Exemple de l'une des manières universelles du G.G.D.L. touchant la pratique de la perspective*, 1636.

368 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 276: '…Passer en den Maetstok etlijke wintersche maenden ter hand.' […]'Nu paste 't my wel de gronden der Deurzigtkunde hier te verhandelen, maer andere hebben daer zoo breet en omstandig in geweyt, dat het my verveelt, hier ter plaetze daer iets af, of toe te doen. En 't zal in deeze myne inleyding genoeg zijn, dat ik u voor eerst een deel boeken in de hand geef: lees dan, dien 't u lust, of Albert Durer, Hans [Vredeman] de Vries, Maroldis, Guido Baldi, of den nieuwen vond van Des Argues.' en hij vervolgt dan met de afsluitende zin 'En mooglijk, zoo't my de tijdt en de lust toelaet, zoo zullen wy u door een toepad noch een veel korter weg aenwijzen.'

369 Paul Taylor, 'The concept of *Houding* in Dutch Art Theory', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* IV (1992), pp. 210-232.

370 Willem Goeree, *Inleyding tot d'Algemeene Teykenkonst*, Middelburg 1670 (first edition 1668), pp. 128-9: '… datmen de tussen-ruimte van de plaats, of distantie die tussen yder lichaam open en ledig is, van zig wijkende, of na zig toekomende natuurlijk met het oog, als of het met de voeten toegankelijk ware, kan naspeuren, en op zijn plaats geplant vinden:…'

smaller distance than Van Mander or the Caravaggists had done testifies to his innovative achievements in this area too.[371]

The same is true of what Van Hoogstraten calls *'kenlijk'* and *'onkenlijk'*, the exploitation of varying degrees of roughness or smoothness of the paint depending on the depth of the relevant parts within the pictorial space (see fig. 141; discussed extensively on p. 12). Van Hoogstraten deals in considerable detail with these methods, that are so important in Rembrandt's approach to the painter's illusionistic art. Nor does he omit to report other approaches widely used at the time that were also employed by Rembrandt. Some of these methods he lumps together under the heading of *'beleid'* ['policy']: for instance, he remarks that *'the Italians think to move back their background work by mezzotints and half-colours* [a form of atmospheric perspective reduced to a formulaic device].

> Some like to make their work appear forceful with dark or black backgrounds, and attribute to this the power of their stabbing lights [by which he must certainly have had Rembrandt in mind]. Others attribute this virtue [of a forceful appearance] to bright colours, and want the grey and muddy [colours] necessarily to recede [into the background].'[372]

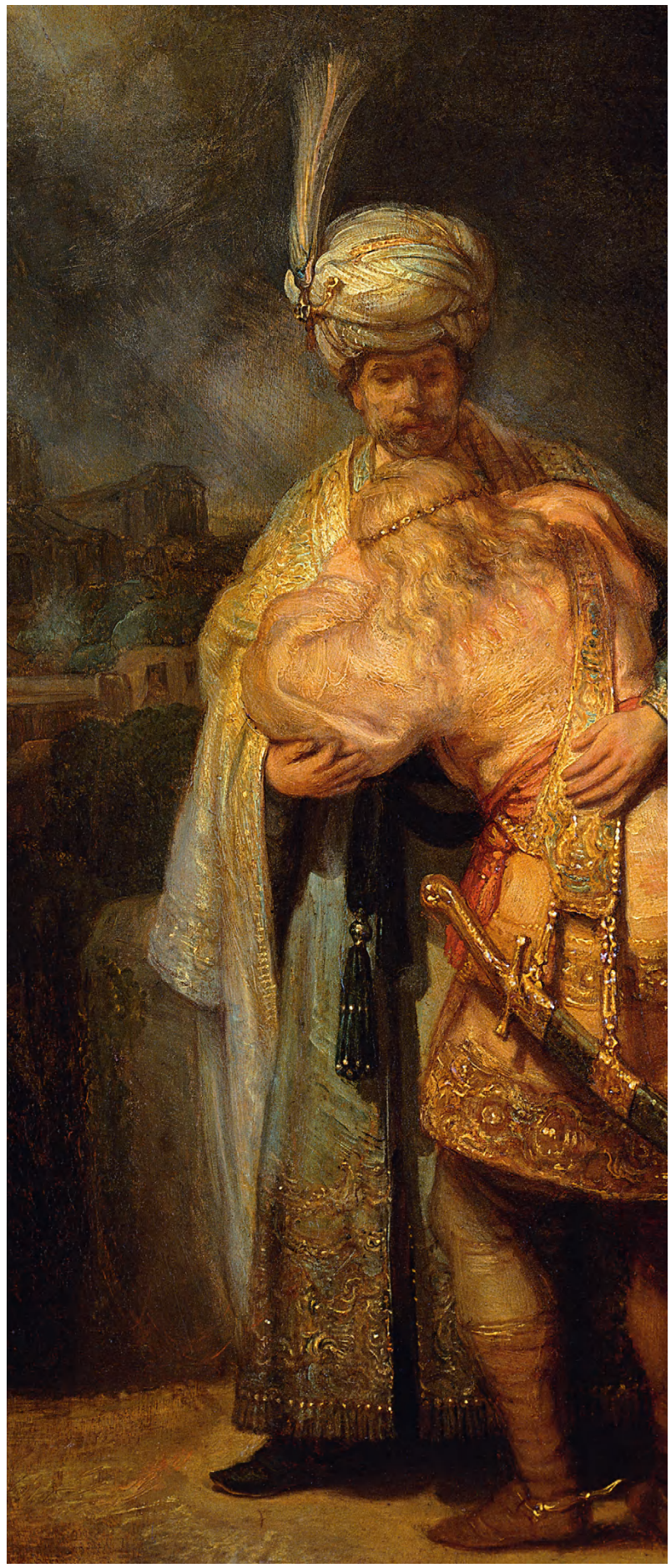
Van Hoogstraten also writes

> 'That many have considered that one can best make this happen with strong shadows is evident from [the fact that] they have often resorted in their work to dark and strongly shadowed images in the foremost corner of their pieces, allowing a light to be seen in the middle ground.'[373] (see pp. 150/151 and 158/159)

This considerable repertoire provided the painter with a range of different ways of suggesting space without always having to resort to the inclusion of colonnades or tiled floors in his images.

When one considers Rembrandt's oeuvre from this alternative standpoint, it strikes one just how much he must have been preoccupied by the problem of the spatial illusion, and the search for a range of finely graduated alternative methods of creating it. Van Hoogstraten's thorough and detailed survey of these methods may well reflect this.

Fig. 141. Rembrandt. *David and Jonathan*, 1642, panel 73 x 61 cm (detail). St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (III C 84)



371 See in fig. 4 the gradual darkening of the white collars and change in contrast of lit and shaded flesh tones in the faces. Compare on p. 63, fig. 69 the differences between the light- and shade contrasts of the two yellow figures.

372 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 306: 'd' Italiaenen meenen haer achterste werk door mezetinten of halfkleuren te rug te schuiven. Zommige willen met donkere en zwarte gronden haer werk met gewelt doen voorkomen, en schrijven haere steekende lichten dat vermogen toe. Deze geeven die deugt [van het met geweld voorkomen] aen de schoone verwen [kleuren], en willen dat de graeuwe en vuile nootzakelijk wechwijken.'

373 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 307: 'Dat veele geacht hebben datmen met sterke schaduwen best kan doen voorkomen, blijkt daer uit, datze veeltijts in haere werken zeer bruine en sterk beschaduwde beelden in de voorste hoeken van hare stukken hebben te pas gebrocht, laetende in de middelruimte een licht inzien.'

Towards a reconstruction of Rembrandt's art theory: Conclusion

The single purpose of the foregoing sections was an attempt to dissect Rembrandt's specific ideas on painting from his pupil's book of instruction on the art of painting. The next question is: did the results of these efforts add up to what one could call Rembrandt's theory of art?

We may assume that the concept of art theory did not exist in Rembrandt's time. What we today call art theory is a way of thinking about and teaching the art of painting that is based ultimately on the treatise *De pictura* completed in 1434 by Leon Battista Alberti, the Italian humanist *homo universalis* who lived from 1404 to 1472. The influence – both direct and indirect – of this treatise, which appeared in print shortly after Alberti's death, was enormous; and one of the main reasons for this influence can be found in its premise: *'Arts are learned first by the study of method, then mastered by practice'*. Barasch summarizes Alberti's contribution as follows: *'What was new in Alberti's rational approach was that he intended the theory of art to be some kind of logical system and that this approach was employed in the imitation of nature.'*[374]

The first Book of Alberti's treatise is devoted to geometrical perspective, the mathematically backed way of suggesting space which at the time was a brand new science. Alberti, however, states very clearly from the outset: *'But in everything we shall say I earnestly wish it to be borne in mind that I speak in these matters not as a mathematician but as a painter.'* (Book I, 1)

It was assumed in the foregoing that Rembrandt, in his quest for new solutions in many areas of the art of painting oriented himself upon what Van Mander called the *'Grondt'*, that systematically ordered system of the basis aspects of the art of painting. Known in the 17th century as the '*gronden*' or *'fundamenten'*. The fact that we could apparently discern in Van Hoogstraten's *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst* traces of Rembrandt's quest in all these areas would seem to support that surmise. From this, one may perhaps infer that Rembrandt, in the wake of Alberti's widely disseminated rational approach to the art of painting must have given considerable thought to the various means *'employed in the imitation of nature'*. He must have experimented with these means in an innovative manner – specifically in his Leiden period – and have applied and, indeed, further developed the results of this experimentation throughout his whole working life. Moreover, he must have taught what he had discovered to numerous pupils, including Samuel van Hoogstraten. One can therefore safely say that Rembrandt had a theory of art, even though it was constantly evolving.

Some contemporaries were, however, remarkably outspoken in their opinion that Rembrandt seemed to them a wild spirit without any theory. We can first listen to two eye-witnesses, thanks to the fact that both of them wrote an ambitious book about the art of painting in which Rembrandt was discussed analytically. These were Gerard de Lairesse (1640 - 1711) and Joachim Sandrart – later *von* Sandrart (1606 - 1688). Both were brilliant painters and thought deeply about the art of painting. Both expressed themselves with great clarity and both had in some way known Rembrandt.

Fig. 142. Rembrandt, *Portrait of Gerard de Lairesse*, 1665, canvas 112 x 87 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Coll. Robert Lehman (Br. 321)

The most pregnant remark about Rembrandt's position in the 17th-century art world is to be found in de Lairesse's large treatise on the art of painting, *Het Groot Schilderboek*, published in 1707. As a young man De Lairesse had met Rembrandt. When 25 years old, he had even had his portrait painted by the master who was at the time nearly 60 years old (fig. 142). Lairesse confessed:

> 'I do not deny that I once had a special preference for his [Rembrandt's] style. But as soon as I began to understand the infallible rules of art, I had to acknowledge this aberration and reject his style as something resting on nothing but disordered flights of fancy which, without examples, have no solid foundation to support them.'[375]

374 Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art from Plato to Winckelmann*, New York 1985, p. 122.

375 G. de Lairesse, *Het Groot Schilderboek*, 1707, I, p. 325: '(…) hoewel ik niet wil ontkennen, dat ik voor dezen een byzondere neiginge tot zyne manier gehad heb: maar ik had zo haast niet begonnen te bezeffen de onfeilbaare regelen dezer Konst, of ik vond my genoodzaakt myne dwaalinge te herroepen, en de zyne te verwerpen; als zynde niet anders gegrondvest dan op losse and spookachtige inbeeldingen, welke zonder voorbeelden weezende, geen wisse gronden hadden, daar zy op steunden.'

What were those infallible rules, and to what examples was Rembrandt supposed to remain faithful? In his much more detailed remarks on Rembrandt, which appeared in 1675 in his *'Teutsche Academie der Edelen Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste',* Joachim von Sandrart provides the insight we need in order to understand De Lairesse's comment. In this text, a number of these infallible 'rules' are summarized, and at the same time contrasted with what Sandrart saw as the core of Rembrandt's personal art theory. Sandrart writes:

> 'So he [Rembrandt] maintained the practise that he had adopted and was not afraid to turn his back on all our rules of art, such as the rules of anatomy and human proportion, against perspective and the use of classical images, against Raphael's art of drawing and a sound artistic training, nor to oppose the academies that are so essential to our profession and to contradict them by asserting that one should solely bind oneself to nature and follow no other rules.'[376]

This critique should not be dismissed – as has often been the tendency – as the usual kind of reaction whereby a subsequent generation judges the 'fashion' of the previous (i.e. Rembrandt's) generation according to its own very different standards. The latter point of view was first argued by Seymour Slive in his book *Rembrandt and his critics* (1953), in which he introduced the term, the 'classicistic critique' of Rembrandt. According to Slive, all those who, following Rembrandt's death, expressed critical opinions of his art were seriously biased by having joined the classicist camp.

Arnold Houbraken, who was well informed by former pupils of Rembrandt, was no doubt paraphrasing Sandrart and De Lairesse when he wrote in his 1718 biography of Rembrandt that:

> 'Rembrandt did not want to tie himself to any rules, even less to follow the illustrious examples of those who have created immortal fame for themselves by electing for beauty, but satisfied himself by following 'the life'[nature], as it appeared to him, without making any selection with respect to it.'[377]

This whole point of view hinges on this 'selection', i.e. the selection of beauty and perfection out of the chaos of visible reality. Time and again, with each wave of Classicism that has risen throughout the history of art, that is what has been at issue – not only in the period after Rembrandt's death but also during his lifetime, for example in Haarlem with painters like Caesar van Everdingen (*c.* 1616 - 1678).

Jan Emmens, in his study, *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst* [Rembrandt and the rules of Art] (1964), developed further the notion of a 'classicistic critique' of Rembrandt. Emmens, however, gave it a slightly different twist by asserting that: 'the criticism levelled against Rembrandt by writers of the 1670s makes it clear that he [Rembrandt] was still the towering figure of an older, and now old-fashioned generation of Dutch painters. That is why the blows of the classicistic attack, which could just as well have been delivered to any other painter of his generation, all fell on his head.'[378]

But Emmens' idea that the blows of the classicistic attack only *'fell on his head'* because he was the most famous of them all may go too far. After all, Rembrandt's attitude as a painter must have attracted notoriety. And furthermore, as discussed in the section on colour above (see pp. 103-112), Rembrandt must have knowingly accepted the risk that his strong ideas on the art of painting would make him an outsider in his own lifetime, despite his fame and the fact that almost nobody doubted his remarkable gifts as a painter.

When Houbraken approvingly quoted another younger contemporary of Rembrandt, Andries Pels (1631-1681) – who had characterized Rembrandt as an 'heretic' – he must have had that outsider status specifically in mind:

> 'What a loss for Art, that so stout a hand made no better use of its innate gift! Who would have surpassed him in painting? But, agh, the greater the spirit, the wilder he becomes, the less will he bind himself to any ground or system of rules. But seeks to know everything from within himself.[379]

It has to be said that the sharp division of the period of the classicistic critique after 1670 – Emmens speaks in this context even of the 'pre-classicist period' as opposed to the classicist era – creates an exaggerated picture of the situation. As already mentioned, Classicist tendencies also existed before 1670.[380] The problem with Slive's and Emmens's account is that it places Rembrandt in a void as far as any structured way of thinking about art is concerned – in Emmens words the 'Tuscan-Roman Negative'.[381] But what is needed is a 'positive' understanding of Rembrandt's way of thinking, an understanding of how and why his ideas deviated so radically from the norms of classicism.

376 'Demnach bliebe er beständig bey seinem angenommenen Brauch und scheuete sich nicht wider unsere Kunstreglen, als die Anatomia und Maas der menschlichen Gliedmaßen, wider die Perspectiva und den Nutzen der antichen Statuen, wider Raphaels Zeichenkunst und vernünftige Ausbildungen auch wider die unserer Profession höchstnöthigen Academien zu streiten und denenselben zu widersprechen, vorgebend, daß man sich einig und allein an die Natur und keine andere Regeln binden solle (…).' Sandrart 1675 (ed. Peltzer 1925), p. 202.

377 A. Houbraken, *De Groote Schouburgh*, 1718/21 I, p. 267: 'Rembrant wilde zig aan geen regelen van anderen binden, en nog min de doorluchtigste voorbeelden volgen van die[genen], welke met het schoone te verkiezen zig zelven eenen eeuwigen roem gemaakt hebben; maar vernoegde zig [er toe beperkte] met het leven te volgen, zoo als het hem voorkwam, zonder eenige keur daar ontrent te maken.'

378 J.A. Emmens, *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst*, (1967) edition used: Amsterdam 1979, p. 274.

379 A. Houbraken, op. cit.[377], p. 268: 'Wat was 't een schade voor de Konst, dat zig zoo braaf/Een hand, niet beter van haare ingestorte gaaf /Bedient heeft! Wie had hem voorby gestreeft in 't schilderen?/Maar ag! hoe grooter geest, hoe meer hy zal verwildren,/Zoo hy zig aan geen grond, en snoer van regels bind./ Maar alles uit zig zelf te weten onderwind!'

380 See also Exhib. cat. *Hollands Classicisme in de zeventiende-eeuwse schilderkunst*, Rotterdam 2000, esp. A. Blankert, 'Classicisme in de Hollandse historieschilderkunst', pp. 12-33.

381 Emmens, op.cit.[378], p. 49 and 260.

When one looks more closely, the outlines emerge of two clearly defined ideas that do in fact provide a well-thought out basis for the so-called *'wildness'* attributed to Rembrandt's attitude as an artist from which it can be concluded that he certainly was not 'wild' but clearly determined in the route he had chosen.

The first of these ideas has already been discussed at the beginning of this chapter: *'that one tries to discover everything through his own labour'*. It is a principle stated by Van Hoogstraten as his own, but it certainly applies to Rembrandt's attitude as an artist, manifest throughout his entire life and we may therefore assume that this statement identifies what Rembrandt's considered the most desirable attitude for the artist.

> 'That [after the young painter has finished his training] he should not only contemplate the dead body of art, that is merely to follow the fashion and do as others do but that he should throw himself into the spirit of art: that is to investigate nature in all its properties'…'He [the aspiring painter should be] envious that someone else knows something that he does not, he [should be] ashamed to learn from anyone else anything that would decisively influence him, and tries to discover everything through his own labours.' (see p. 9)

The second idea underlying the accusation that Rembrandt had stepped beyond the norms of artistic propriety was to surpass the art of the classics, an ambition which must in fact have been basic to Rembrandt's attitude as an artist from a very early stage. This was by no means a rejection of the art of the classics; on the contrary, the classics are always present. But the idea that the art of classical antiquity was the source of fixed standards, and could not be surpassed but only imitated, had become a contentious issue, not only for Rembrandt, as we shall see below. Before proceeding to discuss this it is necessary to consider briefly what place the knowledge of classical antiquity must have had in his thinking.

The intellectual world of Rembrandt was just as thoroughly permeated by ideas, values, stories and images from the classical tradition as that of the later classicists with their critique of Rembrandt. In fact, classical antiquity with its meaning-freighted narratives, its symbols and values was just as vital for Rembrandt and his contemporaries as were the Bible and the related religious values. And in the arts – although by no means only in the arts, because the same was true in the realm of medicine, for instance – the authoritative model of classical antiquity was a given. In this context, when considering the young Rembrandt's intellectual horizons one has only to read the innumerable references to classical authors and painters from antiquity in the writings of Karel van Mander. The mere fact that Rembrandt attended a school called the 'Latin School' tells us something, for in such schools attention was paid not only to biblical studies but equally to Greek and Roman history, mythology, and rhetoric.[383] Rembrandt therefore was confronted at an early age with this aspect of the culture of his time.

Moreover, from 1628 and perhaps even before that, he was in contact with intellectuals in Leiden and such figures as Constantijn Huygens – '*homo universalis*' of his day – in The Hague. It is evident from several contemporary texts devoted to the young painter, that Rembrandt must at that stage have already encountered some of these men while still serving his term of apprenticeship with Jacob van Swanenburgh. And these intellectuals were all well informed in the art of painting and its history.[382] While we know in general of this circle of art lovers that they followed Rembrandt's development as a painter with interest and admiration, we know more specifically the opinion of one of them, Constantijn Huygens, because he wrote about the young Rembrandt not long after they had made each other's acquaintance. One of Huygens' comments, his remark concerning Rembrandt's predilection for the small-scale figures in his early history pieces, has already been discussed at the beginning of this chapter (see p. 3).

Huygens visited Rembrandt in his Leiden studio in the years between 1628 and 1631. The sophisticated gentleman and the young painter would undoubtedly have talked mainly about art during these visits, as expected of an art-lover and an artist. But which of the two would have spoken with more authority? Huygens was the older of the two by ten years. He was exceptionally well informed on matters concerning the art of painting and had clear ideas on the subject.

Two of Huygens' ideas that relate to the norms of classicism are particularly important for the argument that follows below. The first concerns the question of the ancients, widely thought to be normative for all time, and his conviction that they could be surpassed. The second idea relates to Rembrandt's radical naturalism: the question being whether the painter was only concerned with the ideals of beauty and the beautiful or whether everything else could also be worth painting.

Huygens must have had serious doubts – at least in that phase of his life – about whether classical art had to be such a rigid norm for all subsequent artists. In his autobiographical account of his youth – the same manuscript in which he discussed Rembrandt and his Leiden colleague Lievens in such detail – he wrote a section discussing classical versus modern literature in which he quotes approvingly a British nobleman who, in conversation, had expressed the view that texts from classical antiquity were over-rated. According to Huygens, his interlocutor had claimed

> 'that we were pathetically learned admirers of rubble and ruins and allowed ourselves to be led by a regard based more on the names and venerability of the past than its actual content.'[383]

382 See E.v.d. Wetering, 'Rembrandt's beginnings – an essay', in: Exhib.cat. *The mystery of the young Rembrandt*, 2001/02, pp. 22-57, esp. 27-32.

383 *Constantijn Huijgens – Mijn jeugd*, translated from the Latin by C.L. Heesakkers, Amsterdam 1987, p. 39.

This was a view that vexed Huygens considerably, not least where painting was concerned. That is evident in a passage, among others, taken from his observations on art in the Netherlands where, after noting that there were such excellent draughtsmen in the Netherlands, he writes:

> 'In this art, our Netherlanders at the present time have reached a level that no-one has ever previously achieved, not even the ancients.'[384]

Later on in this text, in the context of his appraisal of the young Rembrandt, he goes more deeply into this question of the relation of the art of their time to the art of antiquity. Huygens concludes his praise of Rembrandt's *Judas* (see fig. 6) with the expression of his confident belief that the ancients could indeed be surpassed – and would in fact be surpassed by Rembrandt. These words should certainly not be taken as loose rhetoric, all the more since in retrospect we can see how prophetic they would turn out to be. After his words of admiration for Rembrandt's *Judas Repentant* he continues:

> 'I [would] put this beside all the beauty that the ages have brought forth. And I want to hold this up to those simpletons who claim (and I have rebuked them on this point before) that nothing is being created any longer, or expressed in words, that the ancients have not already created or expressed. I maintain that no Protogenes, Apelles or Parrhasius has ever produced, nor ever could produce even if they were able to return to this world, what has been achieved by a young man, a Dutchman, a beardless miller, in a single human figure [the figure of Judas] and depicted in the totality [of the painting as a whole]. I stand amazed even as I say this. Bravo Rembrandt! To have brought Troy – yes, all of Asia – to Italy [Huygens refers here to Aeneas, the main figure of Virgel's *Aeneid*, who brought a number of survivors from the sack of Troy to Italy where he laid the foundations for the new empire of Rome] is a lesser feat than to capture for Holland the highest title of honour from all of Greece and Italy – and this by a Dutchman who has scarcely ventured beyond the walls of his native city.'[385]

This view of the state of the art of painting at the time of Rembrandt and Huygens' meetings is hugely important for our understanding of Rembrandt as an artist; for Huygens is suggesting that the possibilities for the artists of his time to surpass their great predecessors seemed unlimited, and that the young Rembrandt appeared already capable of doing so.

The conviction that the ancients could be surpassed must have given painters in Rembrandt's time an enormous sense of pride, but it would also have been registered as a challenge, certainly for Rembrandt, who must have known how highly Constantijn Huygens and others regarded him. The way to an art that would surpass all previous art now lay open to him; the constricting authority of classical antiquity could be shaken off. This also implied, of course, that the authority of the great Italian artists of the High Renaissance need no longer be accepted as self-evident. True, Huygens regretted that Rembrandt and Lievens had declined to make the trip to Italy – considered obligatory for young artists at the time – but his concern must have been not so much that they should be duly awed by the work of the ancients and the great Italians, but rather that they should see these works for themselves *in situ*; for even the great Italians, Raphael, Michelangelo and others who worked in the classical tradition, could be surpassed.

The quarrel between the ancients and the moderns: Imitation or progress

Like Vasari and Van Mander in their chronologically ordered biographical accounts of Italian and Dutch artists, Rembrandt must also have thought in terms of *progress* when he entertained ambitions to surpass his great predecessors. Only by the end of the 17th-century did it become clear that art cannot progress in the same sense as science and technology. That was one of the surprising outcomes of the debates still raging during those years around the question of whether or not the authority of the ancients was infallible, a struggle that was also carried on at the time in such institutional arenas as the *Académie des sciences* in France and the *Royal Society* in England. These debates were usually referred to as the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* [the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns].

Referring here to this quarrel is not a merely pointless digression over events that transpired long after Rembrandt's death. It made one thing clear that is of major significance in the present context, but which people did not realize in Rembrandt's time, viz. that between different styles there could be no question of progress in art. There is always, of course, the kind of individual progress made by an artist during his development in any particular style, but where the styles of different periods are at issue, when seen in retrospect they are all in principle equivalent.

It was Charles Perrault who in 1693, in his renowned *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes*, drew the distinction between, on the one hand, the three visual arts together with poetry, rhetoric and music, and on the other hand the sciences: the former were activities in which it was an error to think in terms of progress. But in Rembrandt's day this distinction had not yet been recognized. One can well imagine therefore that, whether it was Constantijn Huygens who sowed the idea or whether he merely gave further impetus to ambitions already entertained by the artist, Rembrandt was not only convinced he could surpass the ancients and their followers, but that in doing so he could achieve progress in the art of painting.

But an artist who no longer could, or no longer wished to rely on the great examples of the past, and who was thus free to paint as he wished, was faced with an enormous challenge. The nature of that challenge meant that the path that lay before him could scarcely be a straight

384 Huygens/Heesakkers, op. cit.[383], p. 72.

385 Huygens/Heesakkers, op. cit.[383], p. 86.

one, for he first had to develop the means with which to surpass the great artists of the past. It was this uncertainty which defined Rembrandt's situation in the Leiden period. What was it that proved crucial for the path that he eventually did take?

The picturesque and the ugly

There is a specific aspect that is inseparable from the resolve to follow 'nature': that of ugliness in all of its forms; ghastliness, deformity, decay, poverty, old age. The artist is constantly faced with the choice between idealizing reality (as the classicists did) or of also showing ugliness in all its variegation. Rembrandt's entire oeuvre is emphatic witness to his insistence that this side of reality should also be shown. The word used for this in the 17th-century, as Boudewijn Bakker demonstrated, was '*schilderachtig*' - picturesque, in the sense of 'worth being painted'.[386] In its modern usage, the word's meaning has shrunk somewhat to connote a kind of 'beauty' or charm in the real world that is not beautiful in the classical sense. One refers to wrinkled old men, a misshapen tree-trunk, the clutter of a workshop or a small fishing harbour as 'picturesque'; but in Rembrandt's eyes some fairly gruesome sights must also have been 'picturesque' in the sense of worth being painted.

In this context, it is revealing to refer to yet another passage from Huygens' youthful memoirs. This one concerns an anecdote from classical antiquity that Huygens evidently enjoyed working into his reflections on Rubens and which would undoubtedly have come up in his conversations with Rembrandt. Huygens relates this anecdote in connection with a painting by Rubens that was then in the possession of the Amsterdam art-lover Nicolaas Sohier:

> '(…) in which the severed head of Medusa was painted with snakes writhing out of her hair. The face of this extraordinarily beautiful woman still retained its grace, but at the same time it excited horror because of the so recent invasion of death and the wreath of hideous snakes.'

Huygens goes on to speak of the

> 'life-likeness and the beauty with which this terrible subject is portrayed',

and further on, he writes:

> 'While I am praising something that I would prefer to see hanging in a friend's house rather than my own, there comes to mind the splendid answer of a Teutonic envoy in Rome. Whilst regarding a valuable painting shown in the Forum Romanum, a depiction of an aged shepherd with his staff, he was asked if he had any idea of its value. With the forthrightness characteristic of his race he replied that in reality he wouldn't even have the man for nothing.'

Huygens continues:

> 'I have nothing to say to critics who judge the beauty of anything from the degree of horror it excites.'

And then Huygens spells out his personal opinion as follows:

> 'Beautiful subjects can still impress with a less elegant presentation, but presentation can never make what is ugly into something graceful.'[387]

'Elegant' and 'graceful' are the key words; and here Huygens and Rembrandt – when one looks at his oeuvre – were evidently in total disagreement. And yet, curiously, Huygens' way of dealing with this dilemma does throw into relief the principles by which Rembrandt must have been guided in his quest – that according to Joachim von Sandrart, quoting Rembrandt: *'one should solely bind oneself to nature and follow no other rules.'*

'naetuereelste beweechgelickheijt'

This is the moment to look more closely at the more significant of Rembrandt's rare statements on art. Because texts concerning art written by Rembrandt are so extremely rare, there is a tendency, from our perspective, to consider his few surviving words on the subject of art as flukes. In one of these texts from his hand, however, there appears a passage that brings us to the heart of what most concerned him during the first two decades of his activities. It is a passage from one of the seven letters – business letters, in fact – that Rembrandt wrote to Constantijn Huygens between 1636 and 1639, some ten years after the latter had visited the young painter in his Leiden studio. These letters relate to the commission from the Stadholder's court, through Huygens as intermediary, for a painted series of scenes showing Christ's youth and Passion (see p. 185). Because the project had fallen behind schedule, in 1639 Rembrandt wrote:

> 'My Lord,
>
> Through the great desire and inclination that I have devoted to the execution of the two pieces that His Highness [the Stadholder, Prince Frederik Hendrik] commissioned from me, namely the one in which Christ's dead body is laid in the grave and the other in which, to the terror of the watchmen, Christ rises from the dead, with attentive diligence these same two pieces have now been completed, so that I am now able to deliver these to please His Highness, for in these two I have tried to achieve the greatest and most natural effect of movement ['*die meeste, ende die naetuereelste beweechgelickheijt*'], which is also the main reason it has been so long in the making.'[388]

386 B. Bakker, 'Schilderachtig: discussions of a seventeenth-century term and concept', *Simiolus* 23 (1995), pp. 147-162.

387 Huygens/Heesakkers, op. cit.[383], pp. 80-81. In the margin, Huygens cites Pliny as the source of this anecdote in his *Naturalis Historia* 35, 4.

388 'Mijn heer / Door die grooten lust ende geneegenheijt die ick / gepleecght hebbe int wel wtvoeren van die twe / stuckens die sijn Hoocheijt mijn heeft doen maeken / weesende het een daer dat doode lichaem Chrisstij / in den graeve gelecht wert ende dat ander / daer Chrisstus van den doode opstaet ▸

Fig. 143. Rembrandt, *The Resurrection*, 1639, canvas 91.9 x 67 cm (detail).
Munich, Alte Pinakothek (III A 127)

The precise meaning of Rembrandt's words '*naetuereelste beweechgelickheijt*' has been often disputed: what did he mean exactly by the term '*beweechgelickheijt*' – was it outward 'moving-ness' or was it an inner 'being moved-ness'. The answer to this question has to come from the context: in the relevant letter, Rembrandt is talking mainly about

dat met / grooten verschrickinge des wachters. Dees selvij / twe stuckens sijn door stuijdiose vlijt nu meede / afgedaen soodat ick nu oock geneegen ben om die / selvijge te leeveren om sijn Hoocheijt daer meede / te vermaeken want deesen twe sijnt daer die meeste / ende die naetuereelste beweechgelickheijt in / geopserveert is dat oock de grooste oorsaeck is dat / die selvijge soo lang onder handen sij geweest.' Strauss *Doc.* 1639/2.

the painting in which Christ awakes from the dead, and in his words '*to the terror of the watchmen*'. In the painting, Rembrandt showed the soldiers running away, stumbling and falling over each other in an extreme state of agitation (fig. 143 and also p. 212). Mary Magdalene and '*the other*' Mary, the two women below right in the painting, are also shocked and moved by this miraculous event. The painting is an outburst of almost panic-stricken movement, and of course this movement is accompanied by inner movements, as the facial expressions show: fright, fear, awe and other emotions are gripping soldiers and women alike. This painting (which is, alas, poorly preserved) should evidently be seen as a true demonstration of that '*naetuereelste beweechgelickheijt*' that Rembrandt, according to his letter, had striven to realize.

When one surveys Rembrandt's oeuvre up to the time when he wrote this letter, it is indeed striking how emphatically he reinforced the movements of his figures with appropriate facial expressions and gestures (see pp. 66/67 and 186/89). Rembrandt's *late* works contrast markedly in this regard: the figures are as a rule not represented in movement, or if they are it is in a restrained manner. In his works up to and including the *Nightwatch* the movements of Rembrandt's figures are, however, so emphatically depicted that it seems as though one were looking at stills from a film (see pp. 208-11). The transition from the earlier to the late style has to do with Rembrandt's changed understanding of the way in which the '*naetuereelste beweechgelickheijt*' can be best visualized in a painting. It is this extreme realism in every respect, intended to bring illusionism in art to its summit, which was the core of Rembrandt's art-theory, and for the sake of which the 'infallible rules' of classical art could – indeed had to be – overruled.

Rembrandt's radical naturalism

Obviously, with such a strong emphasis on an un-idealized nature – following nature however it happens to be – would also have been part of Rembrandt's programme. In this context, the question that springs into focus, demanding to be answered, is: what role did Caravaggio (1571 - 1610) play in Rembandt's thinking about art? For Karel van Mander, the first to publish a text on Caravaggio, had written in his *Schilderboeck* (1604) as follows about this influential Italian:

> 'He is in the habit of saying that all things are mere bagatelles, child's work, trifles, no matter who they are painted by, if they are not painted after the life; and that there is nothing that can rival or surpass following nature; and that he therefore never sets down a single line that is not copied and painted directly after the life.'[389]

Later, Houbraken was to point to the similarity in the positions of Caravaggio and Rembrandt where the uncompromising imitation of nature was concerned. After quoting Van Mander on Caravaggio, he adds:

> 'Our great master Rembrandt was also of the same mind; he set himself the basic rule to follow only nature, and for him everything else was suspect.'[390]

Was Rembrandt then nothing but a belated epigone of Caravaggio? Was he merely re-stating the latter's art theory?

On closer consideration, the differences between Rembrandt and Caravaggio are so great that there cannot be any question of a decisive influence from Caravaggio; only in Rembrandt's early years can one point to a connection with Caravaggio via the Utrecht Caravaggists (see p. 148). But Rembrandt took an entirely different route with his dynamic history pieces, initially all small-scale works, and a result, as far as his treatment of space, light and colour are concerned, developed totally different pictorial means from those employed by Caravaggio.[391] He was also – as far as we know – much more explicit than Caravaggio in his rebellion against his normative predecessors.

Quite apart from the question of whether Caravaggio only painted the reality he had before him, in the form of living models, we can be certain that the many hundreds of figures in Rembrandt's drawings, etchings and paintings were for a large part created from his imagination. Rembrandt's insistence that – in Sandrart's words, '*one should solely bind oneself to nature*'[392] were undoubtedly intended to mean that reality should be naturally rendered and not idealized.

'*Binding oneself to nature*' may seem obvious enough – even simple. But as explained in pp. 17-18, that would be a misunderstanding. The history of art from Giotto to Rembrandt was one long struggle to gain an ever better grasp of the infinite multiplicity of the discernible features in the visible world – and further to investigate the possibility of rendering them. That process was by no means complete. As was seen above in the treatment of the *gronden*, once his training was behind him Rembrandt set out to advance this quest. Where obedience to the *'infallible rules'* – by virtue of their infallibility – in principle must lead to a static rigidity defined by classical antiquity (and did so in fact in the various successive periods of classicism) Rembrandt was one of those searching artists whose conception of the artist's vocation by definition resulted in a dynamic process of discovery. For such artists, this was and has always been a constant investigation of the relation between nature (in the sense of the visible world) and the art of painting.

389 K.v.M. *Levens*, 1604, 160/191: 'Dan zijn segghen is/ dat alle dinghen niet dan Bagatelli, kinderwerck/ oft bueselinghen zijn/ t´zy wat/ oft van wien gheschildert/ soo sy niet nae t'leven ghedaen/ en gheschildert en zijn/ en datter niet goet/ oft beter en can wesen/ dan de Natuere te volghen. Alsoo dat hy niet eenen enckelen treck en dest/ oft hy en sittet vlack nae t'leven/ en copieert/ end´en schildert.'

390 'Van deze meening was ook onze groote meester Rembrant, stellende zig ten grondwet, enkele naarvolging van de natuur, en alles wat daar buiten gedaan werd was by hem verdacht.' Houbraken, op. cit.[377], p. 262.

391 See M. van Eikema Hommes and E. van de Wetering, 'Licht en kleur by Caravaggio en Rembrandt, door de ogen van hun tijdgenoten', in: Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt-Caravaggio*, 2006, pp. 164-179.

392 Sandrart 1675/1925, p. 202: 'daß man sich einig und allein an die Natur und keine andre Regeln binden solle.'

Fig. 144. Page of the Dutch (1622) translation of Albrecht Dürer's 'Aestetic Excursus' from the Third (sic) Book on Human Proportions

wtſpreecken? Maer hoe wel ons dat niet blickt/ ſoo iſt nochtans gheloofflick/ dat die even ſchoon zijn/ dat eene het ander in ſeecker deelen volmaecktheydt overtreffe.

Hier wt moet een verſtandighe Meeſter hem wachten/ dat hy niet altijt een geſlacht in ſchilderen navolge/ maer dat hy in veelvoudige ende verſchepdene manieren geoeffent ſy: Waer wt dit volghen ſal/ dat hy menſchen beelden van allerhand conſtitutie wtdrucken can. Als daer zijn der toornigen ende der blyſienden ofte van allerhand andere meer / dewelcke alle in haer aert krap gemaect zijnde/ voor goet gehouden worden. Comt dan ymandt ende begeert een Beelt van een afgonſtich eñ ſtuers-menſch/ofte liever een Amoureuſen ende liefflicken/ wat ſal eenen geoefden lichter zijn/ als wt de voorghe-ſchrevenen leeringen een bequame ende waerachtige maet ſulcken Beelden te vinden? ende die gevondene met een ghelchickte form verlichten? Want aller menſchen natueren konnen alſo wtgebeeldet worden / als welcke ſyn vierich/ lochtich/ aerdiſch/ wanneer des conſts macht dat werck moderiert: Ende die ervarene Meeſter behoeven een loflick werck niet laugh aen te zien/maer dat ſelve treckt terſtont alle verſtandighe tot onghelooflicke liefde van ſich ſelve. Die in deſen dinghen wel gheleert zijn/ dien is openbaer dat ick ſeggh ende dieſelve hebben wetenſchap van den waren gebruyck. Maer wetenſchap omhelſt altijt die waerheyt/ nademael opinien dickwils daer af dwalen. Daerom ſal hem niemant al te ſeer betrouwen / op dat hy in dit werck niet bedroghen worde. Daerom ſal een Student van d'eerſte conſt een ſeer nutlick dinck doen/ ſo hy veeler ghepresobierden Meeſters wercken dickwils aengeſchouwet ende nagevolcht/ende van hare redenen die Meeſters dickmaels diſputierende gehoort ſal hebben. Maer ick wil niet dat jemant-mepne ghelijck oftmen in een loflick werck eenige dwalingen ſoſe zijn/ niet afmercken ſoude/ welcke te bekennen ende verbeteren ſeer goet is.

Laet u niet bereden/ dat ghy u ghemoet tot eene aert van Beelden aenbindet/ welcks ghy onlancks verſtaen dat een Meeſter ghedaen heeft. Maer die natuer lijdet/dat dat beelt ſodanich ſy/ hoe danich het oordeel ende wijſe des gemoets is. Maer ick bevele vele dingen te beſchouwen/ende de beſten daer wt verkieſen / want die valſheyt van opinien ſtaet byrans allen in den wech/ ende wie zoude dorven ſeggen/dat een werck ſo volmaeckt/dat een beters niet ſoude connen gemaect worden/dewijl niemant ſeggen can/hoe wel een ſchoon menſch geſien/dat een ſchooner niet ſoude moghen ghevonden worden. Maer den ſekerſten wech ingaen is het beſte/het ſy wt ander lieden leeringe/ ofte wt ſyn eyghen ſoeckinge op een levendich exempel. Maer die Meeſters achte ick niet voor goet/ welcke vande conſt veel woorden te maecken ghewennet zijn/ maer ſelve geen loflick werck hebben voor te brengen/ hoedanich ick ſommighe gheſien hebbe: So ghy ſult navolgen/ſo zult ghy vallen/welcke de quaetheyt van haer wercken genoech roept/of ick nu ſtilſwyghe/want dit zijn verſchepdene dinghen/ vant werck veel ſpreecken/ende dat niet doen. Nochtans en verbiede ick niet/dat jemant der onervaren onderwijſinghe toelaet/ want het ghelchieden can/dat ooc die Boeren een faut in u werck aenwijſen zullen/ hoe wel ſy niet leeren konnen/op wat wijſe ghy het verbeteren moet.

Op

In the above analyses of the differences between the principles promulgated in Van Mander's *Grondt* and Van Hoogstraten's *Academy of the Art of Painting*, a considerable number of ideas were found which, in their own ways, all had a significant bearing on the quest. Seen from this perspective, there were no rules that Rembrandt could have complied with. On the contrary, he made new discoveries and most emphatically taught these to his pupils. This is why some of these discoveries can be found in Samuel van Hoogstraten's treatise – along with the exhortation to persist in a searching attitude, as Van Hoogstraten recommends to the readers of his book in words (quoted above) which reflect Rembrandt's attitude as an artist (see p. 131).

Rembrandt and Albrecht Dürer

At several points in the foregoing it was implied that Rembrandt did not consciously draw on the humanistic – or if one wishes – Italian theory of art. The confirmation of this supposition is that contemporaries who, with the rise of Classicism, did comply with what De Lairesse called the *'infallible rules of art'* emphatically stated that Rembrandt did *not* obey any rule formulated by others. And yet one cannot say that Rembrandt was not interested in the ideas of his predecessors. On the contrary; in the case of at least one art theoretical text we can be certain that the author must have been important to Rembrandt. Significantly, however, we have to look in a direction significantly different from the Italian peninsula. This book, which Rembrandt had in his possession, was the Dutch translation, (published in 1622), of the *Vier Bücher von Menschlicher Proportion* [Four Books on Human Proportions] by Albrecht Dürer, which was first posthumously published in 1528. The book was listed in Rembrandt's 1656 inventory under the description '*'t proportie boeck van Albert Durer, houtsnee [woodcut]'*.[393] Amy Golahny was surely correct when she concluded in her book *Rembrandt's reading, The Artist's Bookshelf of Ancient Poetry and History* (2003): 'Since the 1656 inventory gives the title in Dutch, it is likely that Rembrandt owned the Dutch edition.'[394] In the present Volume Dürer's book has already been discussed in the section on human proportions (see pp. 38-48), where it was also argued that Rembrandt may have acquired or for the first time consulted this book in 1635, some years after the end of his Leiden period.

The uninitiated user of Dürer's '*proportie boeck*' could easily miss a rather long text at the end of his Book III. This text contains a number of fascinating ideas which could well have inspired – or at least have confirmed – Rembrandt in the direction he had already taken. This text is generally referred to as Dürer's *Aesthetic Excursus*. For a page of this nine-page long text (see fig. 144). The text is in particular aimed at the artist and the trainee painter. The advice contained there deals, however, with far more than merely practical matters. It may be thought that Dürer's *Books on Proportion*, and also the other treatise that he saw into print, his *Unterweisung der Messung*, were meant as preparation for a much greater endeavour, a book with the working title '*Speis der Malerknaben*' (Food for the painter's apprentice).[395] This title already indicates that the intended book would be comparable to Van Mander's *Grondt* and Van Hoogstraten's *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der Schilderkonst*, but far more ambitious.

In the *Aesthetic Excursus* Dürer mainly addressed himself to (in the Dutch translation) '*de Konst-meester'* (the Master in Art). He did so in such a way that many passages seem to hold up a mirror to Rembrandt in which he must have recognized himself. (For a transcription of such a passage see pp. 239 and 257). The *Konst-meester* is described, for example, as an overflowing source of original images that he calls to mind before he begins to put them on panel or paper. Dürer also deals with the fact that exceptional and rare talents appear (among whom Dürer must have counted himself) who were able to create greater art with a rapid sketch or a small graphic work than others in a painting on which they had worked assiduously for an entire year. Panofsky elucidates this passage by contrasting Rembrandt on the one hand with Ferdinand Bol on the other.[396] Dürer's observation must have confirmed Rembrandt in the confidence with which he left his sketchily executed – often uncompleted – works as they were. Dürer also shared Rembrandt's view that nature was the true source of art, a well from which the artist can draw – with constant practice and effort but not without a highly developed insight (what the Dutch translation calls *wetenschap*).

Dürer also found that in the end only the master really understood and was qualified to judge art – a point of view that Rembrandt must have shared with him, judging by his drawing with the *Satire on art criticism* (fig. 145), and one which is repeatedly asserted by in Van Hoogstraten's book.[397] Samuel van Hoogstraten, who must also have known Dürer's text, borrows a long passage from the *Excursus* in his chapter on human proportions, in which Dürer argues that correct judgement – the compass – is to be found in the eye of the artist, developed through practice (see pp. 47-48) – a point of view which must have jibed completely with Rembrandt's ideas.

Dürer's *Excursus* must have been as important for Rembrandt's attitude as an artist as the role that Constantijn Huygens played in the young artist's early years: both men – each in their own way – must have had a significant influence in strengthening Rembrandt's self-confidence. Dürer, a painter-engraver like Rembrandt, could well have confirmed him in his stubborn, self-willed habit that struck so many of his contemporaries.

393 Strauss *Doc*, 1656/12, no. 273.

394 The Dutch translation is only available in its original 1622 edition and in a facsimile edition of that original printed in 1978.

395 Max Steck (Auswahl und Einführung), *Albrecht Dürer, Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe*, Stuttgart 1961, pp. 198-215.

396 Erwin Panofsky, *The life and art of Albrecht Dürer*, (Princeton 1943) see the Princeton Classic Edition, 2005, p. 283.

397 E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's *Satyre of Art criticism* reconsidered', *Shop Talk. Studies in Honor of Seymour Slive*, Cambridge (Ma.) 1995, pp. 264-270.

Fig. 145. Rembrandt, *Satire on art criticism, c.* 1644. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Robert Lehman Coll.

A provisional summary of the core of Rembrandt's art theory.

On the basis of what has been discussed above, together with observation of Rembrandt's works, a first attempt may be essayed at reconstructing Rembrandt's theory of art.

The starting point is that naturalness has to be the overriding aim. From this it follows that the quality of a work of art does not depend on the beauty or ugliness of that which is depicted. From the demand for naturalness it also followed that certain basic aspects of the art of painting have to be submitted to a continuing investigation.

The aspect that was for Rembrandt, from the very beginning, most important to investigate was the naturalness of the *light* and, associated with it, *light reflections* and *shadow effects*. Where *colour* was concerned, although its naturalness was of course a priority, its nature and intensity were subordinated to the demands of a convincing suggestion of light. In addition, colour was made subordinate to the suggestion of space [*houding*]. *Spatial effects* played such a crucial role with Rembrandt that not only the treatment of colour but also the treatment of light and shadow were subservient to it. On the other hand, the suggestion of the 'passage' of light and of light reflections were an important element in the suggestion of space.

The picture space seen through the frame was organized by Rembrandt according to two important factors: the unity [*eenwezigheid*] to which, to a certain extent, all other features were adapted; and the *ordonnance* and specifically in that context the *sprong*, i.e. the differences in high or low placement, or larger or smaller size of the figures and forms assumed in the ordonnance. A constantly recurrent element in Rembrandt's ordonnance is the *doorkijk – or 'see-through'* – to a further plane. Such visual passages are mostly found on the left side of the image, which means that Rembrandt must have assumed, either consciously or unconsciously, that the beholder oriented him- or herself in the image from left to right – or at least that he himself did so.

Still more important in the ordonnance (although here one can better speak of the composition) was the quantitative distribution of light and shadow [*schickschaduw*], which in turn was subservient to the credibility of the rep-

Fig. 146. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait*, 1665-69, canvas 114.3 x 94 cm.
London, Kenwood House, The Iveagh Bequest (IV 26)

resentation of the light. This combination of the conditions of unity and credibility of the represented light so essentially determined the appearance of Rembrandt's paintings, that – beside naturalness – it must have constituted the second core idea of Rembrandt's art theory.

A third central idea is that the art of *history painting* was the most important challenge for a painter. There follows from this (always taking into account the above pictorial criteria) a series of criteria that are important for Rembrandt's ideas about the art of painting. In the first place these concern the *appearance and acting of the protagonists* in the histories. As far as the characterization of the depicted figures is concerned, Rembrandt took the *proportions* of these figures and other external characteristics that fitted the roles played by each of these figures in the narrative scene of the history. The same was true for the degree of *beauty* or *ugliness* of these figures, while with respect to the *affects* and *postures* of the acting figures he considered himself bound by no rule, but dealt with them according to the many various situations in which these figures appeared.

The all-prevailing demand of naturalness also held for the environs in which his figures appeared and the way they were *costumed* and the *accessories*, *landscape* and *animals* with which they were surrounded. Rembrandt approached these elements of the painting in a studious fashion such as would lead, in his eyes, to a plausible and historically responsible situating of the scene represented. Children and animals played a considerable part in this – often, however, with an eye to the *sprong* in the ordonnance.

A fourth pillar on which Rembrandt's art theory rested had to do with his ideas concerning *human perception* and the *handling of paint*, without which, after all, the painting would not exist. These are ideas which not only survive thanks to Van Hoogstraten but can also be observed by analysing in Rembrandt's work. Where perception is concerned, he must have been acutely aware of the role of the beholder ['the beholder's share' in Gombrich's words]. He realized – and acted on the understanding – that the beholder sees more than the painter has actually done with his materials. This principle must have played a major role in determining the sketchy method of *drawing* that he adopted and in the increasing *sketchiness* of his painted works over time. Probably correlated with this, he gave increasing room for *chance* to play a role, presumably on the assumption that this encourages the beholder to see in it a natural, concrete, reality (see also Vol. IV pp. 303-311). It was presumably this insight which played an important part in Rembrandt's shift to his late style. Once aware of the problem created by depicting figures in his images frozen in motion, he seems to have transferred the dynamics of the image from the figures themselves to the rough brushwork which mobilizes the beholders gaze into an active, never ending search for the definitive forms. The aspect of *kenlijkheid*, the visible paint relief as opposed to a smoother execution, which was relegated to the rendering of the back ground, must also have played a role in this. Rembrandt must also have realized that the focusing eye seeks for *cues* when orienting itself in relation to suggestions of space (see *Corpus* Vol. IV, pp. 307-311). This particularly applies to the interpretation of the sharpness or vagueness of specific elements of the image, and the recognition of the *surface textures* and the *actual colour* of things depicted. Ideas about perception also from early on must have played a role in Rembrandt's highly differentiated *brushwork*, ideas that were partly determined by his original experiments with the suggestion of *surface textures* both of forms and materials rendered and with the manipulation of the paint skin that formed during painting.

Rembrandt must have believed in the special election of the true artist and accordingly must have seen his activities not in the first place as the correct execution of a series of skills that would lead to a convincing suggestion of reality. His relation to the *non finito* and his belief (perhaps strengthened by the ideas of Dürer, see pp. 135-137) in the unique force of the creativity of an elect artist lead one to this surmise.

When, two years before his death, Rembrandt communicated with several Italian intermediaries, these wrote to the Genoese patron whom they represented that Rembrandt had said

> 'He wants to have much money, but he adopts the stance of someone who understands the art of painting and therefore maintains his standpoint.'[398]

This self-assurance must have rested on the way in which he had reflected on art over the entire span of his working life and the sovereign and total independence with which – along with his observations of art and reality – he had realized these ideas in his work.

The above impression of the core of Rembrandt's theory of art of course will need further refining and deepening. It is only a sketch. I can only hope that those who need to comment on this sketch or perhaps even to elaborate on it will explore further the sources that Rembrandt must have been familiar with, or those in which contemporaries reacted to his work and person. There is also a need for further investigations of his works from the perspective of Rembrandt's own possible ways of thinking and deciding. This will be attempted in the following survey of Rembrandt's small-scale histories.

398 Lauro Magnani, '1666. Een onbekende opdracht uit Genua voor Rembrandt', *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis*, 2007, pp. 2-17 (with an English summary: '1666. An unknown commission for Rembrandt from Genoa, pp. 13-15).

Chapter II

An illustrated chronological survey of Rembrandt's small-scale 'histories': paintings, etchings and a selection of drawings.

With remarks on art-theoretical aspects, function and questions of authenticity

ERNST VAN DE WETERING

Introduction

This chapter, unusual in some respects, is compiled with several interwoven objectives in view, which should perhaps be briefly summarized at the outset:

In the first place, the chapter is intended to serve as a 'pictorial atlas' of all the painted small-scale history and genre pieces. In this way the paintings dealt with in the catalogue texts V 1-30 are placed in the context of Rembrandt's total 'production' in this area. The image that this would create, however, would be incomplete if all the etchings with 'histories', made in parallel with the paintings, were not also shown and discussed. For the same reason a representative selection of the drawings of the same type is included in this treatment. We worked in roughly the same way in Chapter III of *Corpus* IV, which was devoted to the self-portraits.

The chronological presentation of the paintings and etchings is possible because in most cases they are dated. With the drawings, however, which are normally undated, it is seldom possible to situate them with any precision in the chronology and thereby reveal their role in Rembrandt's development. In the following survey they are mostly placed in clusters according to the period in which they may have been produced. This way of presenting them is intended to clarify the multiple functions served by Rembrandt's drawings.

The chronological treatment of the paintings and etchings is not always consistent. Rembrandt's choices and decisions sometimes seem to follow identifiable lines. In these cases it makes sense to discuss particular groups of works in their coherence – for example the works in which Rembrandt investigates different types of light and, of course, the several *Passion series* on which he worked over a longer time in between other projects. The etchings are also sometimes discussed in more or less coherent groups, though mostly from the same year because Rembrandt's activities in this field often had their own momentum.

The texts that accompany the works shown are generally concise but are not uniformly organized to serve a single function. Each text in itself focuses on different questions and considerations, and can serve very different functions. The table of contents for this chapter on pp. 146 and 147 may help to choose a specific cluster of works and as an indication of the approach taken in discussing them. In the case of the early paintings, Rembrandt's investigations of the basic aspects of the art of painting ('the *gronden*') are uppermost. In these cases it is assumed that the reader is already acquainted with the contents of Chapter I of this Volume or at least of its conclusion (pp. 137-140). The main consideration in the texts devoted to the etchings is their suspected *raison d' être* – against the background of Rembrandt's activities as a painter.

The sometimes casual tone of the texts appended to the images may give the impression that this is a popularizing survey for the lay reader. This impression may even be enhanced by the fact that, in the main, only one or two aspects of the works displayed are discussed. That, however, would be a misunderstanding, although I hope lay readers may also glean knowledge from the questions these texts raise, and from the insights and hypotheses they contain. The texts, however, are written especially for insiders in the hope that this integral approach to a particular category of works – taken across the boundaries of Rembrandt's three media – will give Rembrandt research new impulses.

For the most part, unfortunately, the works confronted assembled in the following 60 sections have had to be reproduced in single column width; otherwise, this survey would simply have taken up too much of the available space in the Volume. Works of horizontal format, however, are frequently reproduced over two columns. Paintings over which our ideas on attribution have changed are mainly reproduced in a larger size. In these cases, supplementary illustrations are sometimes added. Just occasionally, supplementary images are also added in other cases where, for example, it is a question of preliminary studies or of an obvious attempt by Rembrandt to surpass the work of a predecessor. Confronting these images may lead to a better understanding how Rembrandt's pictorial and narrative mind worked. This chapter can therefore also be seen as a biography of the artist thinking in his studio.

Several of the paintings included in the present chapter were disattributed in earlier volumes of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* and have since been re-attributed to Rembrandt; the texts relating to these paintings serve as corrigenda and are therefore somewhat more comprehensive.

Etchings in mirror image

It may strike – and perhaps at first irritate – the reader that almost all the etchings are reproduced in reverse (i.e. mirror image). There is a very good reason for this: it is how Rembrandt conceived them. The prints as we know them mirror the images that Rembrandt worked out on his etching plate. The Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin had already pointed out that reversing the image has an (adverse) effect on two-dimensional works of art.[1] In a publication of 1948 under the title *Die Radierungen Rembrandts. Originale und Drucke* Mercedes Gaffron, an engineer by profession, took this insight further[2] by demonstrating the consequences of this reversal of the image in the case of Rembrandt – not only in the way it influenced the perception of the beholder but also in the way it affected the narrative qualities of these works.

Gaffron arrived at her insights by investigating the disposition of figures and other significant elements of the image in the pictorial space – what was known in the 17th century as the 'ordonnance' (see pp. 53-64). Rembrandt could only have overcome the distortion in the prints of his intended ordonnance by employing some technical aid that would project a mirror-image of his design on to the etching plate itself and then executing that reversed image with the etching needle. But such a mechanization of the

work process would seem to be utterly foreign to Rembrandt's direct and apparently spontaneous way of working. As Erik Hinterding has shown[3], it seems that Rembrandt was never in any way bothered by the mirror reversal of the image. Whether it concerned the silhouetted topography of Amsterdam (B. 210), the wearing of a sword sheath on the left hip contrary to the rules, or the wielding of the sword, or knife, the place of the crucified Good Thief to the left instead of to the right of Christ, the hand with which Christ gave his blessing (figs. 2/4) it seemed to matter little to Rembrandt whereas, at the same time, it appears that in his paintings and drawings he consistently took the correct right/left placing into account. While he naturally knew that his prints emerged from the press as mirror images of the plate image, there is hardly any case – apart from the signatures – of him anticipating this reversal in his work on the plate (figs. 169, 170; see on this problem regarding Rembrandt's self-portraits *Corpus* IV p. 565).

Many of us are so thoroughly familiar with many of Rembrandt's etchings that the idea of reversing them, for whatever reason, is bound to raise objections. After all, Rembrandt and the collectors of his work obviously tolerated these (reversed) images and Rembrandt himself signed his plates in reverse so that his signature would appear on the print in legible form. In the present context, however, these facts are not sufficient reason to reject the idea of reversing the familiar images. In order to demonstrate the advantages of reproducing the image to correspond with the etching plate and to help reconcile the reader to this practice, a detailed analysis of two etchings by Rembrandt is presented below, firstly Gaffron's analysis of the etching with *Christ and the Samaritan woman* and then our analysis of the *Hundred Guilder Print*, with the effects of image reversal pointed out in both cases. (The same arguments will subsequently be adduced throughout this chapter as and when the need occasionally arises – see p. 193 and pp. 244/5). we assume that every reader will have ready access to a book with the 'normal' reproductions of Rembrandt's etchings so that, in the many cases where only the image corresponding to Rembrandt's plate is reproduced, he/she will be able to consult the usual print images.

When it appeared, Gaffron's book was given a hostile reception by several art historians. Because it is now difficult to find, an English translation of one of her texts is given below.

Christ and the Samaritan Woman (1658) (translated from German by Kristin Belkin) (see figs. 1 and 3).

In this very late etching the narrative is incorporated into the landscape in a special way. The well by which Christ speaks to the Samaritan Woman seems to be located on a hillside outside the city: to the left the path leads at first uphill and then, across from it, up an incline loosely planted with trees, above which parts of the city are visible. In the middle ground at the far left we see several of the disciples watching the scene and further in the back a rider and a man on foot.

These are the surroundings in which we observe the meeting of Christ and the Samaritan Woman. She seems to belong completely to this half-urban/half-rural location from which she came up to fetch water. A large jug stands on the ground in the foreground, while on the edge of the well the woman has placed a bucket with which she will scoop up water. Resting her arms on it, she calmly listens to the words of Christ. Her face is in shadow and is turned away from us, as is her body. The expression of her figure in its sculptural heaviness lies entirely in the calm assurance of her pose and the slight tilt of her head as she listens. The focus of her attention, as well as ours, is towards the right where Christ, seated on a ledge behind the low well, turns to the woman, speaking to her intently. We look directly into his brightly lit face with its strangely magnetic eyes below the dark hair. Besides the head, only his upper body and arms are visible; the rest of his body is in shadow or hidden behind the ledge and the well. Thus in contrast to the woman, the entire meaning of his person is concentrated in the spirituality of his face. The composition is constructed in such a way that our view is repeatedly directed to this face as the focal point of the scene.

Fig. 1. Rembrandt, *Christ and the woman of Samaria*, 1658, **plate image** 12.5 x 16 cm (B. 70[III])

In the print, the spatial effect as well as the roles of the characters is totally different. The curvature of the well behind the bushes in the lower left corner is placed in direct opposition to the view into the distance, with the result that the well appears flat. Even if there is some depth above it, the foreground as a whole appears flat. Nothing leads to the figure of Christ or his face at the upper left; instead, two-thirds of the height of the left side is filled with irrelevant objects. The view is directed past the figure of Christ and beyond the well to the Samaritan Woman, whom we now see from the front, occupying the centre of the composition. However, without the descriptive integration of her figure into the atmosphere of the landscape, she appears a little too self-conscious. By looking directly at her fully shadowed face, the lack of any spiritual meaning of her character is even more pronounced. In this position, her figure catches our view spatially, and since her pose and line of vision lead us back to Christ, with regard to content the composition ends here for us. The landscape to the right no longer plays a part, either spatially or with regard to content. Moreover, in its painterly execution and abundance of details, the right half of the composition seems completely different from the large-scale arrangement at the left.

Thus this etching shows (…) the difference in quality and value of the left and right side of a pictorial invention, which rest on the viewer's spatial orientation. Rembrandt instinctively utilizes the observer's viewing habits to such an extent that the narrative embedded in the landscape acquires its particular meaning through them and, at the same time, the composition its pictorial unity.

So far Mercedes Gaffron.

Fig. 2. Rembrandt, *Christ preaching (The hundred-guilder print)*, *c.* 1647, **print** 27.8 x 38.8 cm (B. 74[I])

An example of our own way of analysing the consequences of the left/right reversal is added to demonstrate the technical and iconographic aspects of this phenomenon. Whereas Gaffron began by analysing the plate image and then went on to discuss the effects of the reversal of the composition, in the following analysis this order is reversed.

Fig. 3. **Print** of etching reproduced in fig. 1

The hundred guilder print in mirror-image

The so-called *Hundred guilder print* – so called because 17th-century collectors had paid this exceptional price for this print – is one of the most impressive etchings Rembrandt ever made. However, the meaning of the image is not evident at first glance. A crowd of dozens of people encircles the tall figure of Christ, who stands on an elevation in the rocky ground. As the eye tracks over the print, to the left it falls on a gathering of men who seem to be conversing with each other, while to the right people, some of them lame or sick, stream in through a tall portal. Immediately surrounding Christ are men and women, old and young, kneeling, lying, sitting, gesturing, either sick or sunk in adoration or meditation. A woman approaches Christ with a child on her arm, further to the left we discover a child who, whilst looking round at another young woman with a child on her arm, is running towards Christ. Surprisingly the men talking at the left of the image appear in sketched lines with only here and there an indication of shadow, whereas the scene to the right with the figures streaming in is executed in light and dark and a range of intermediate tones, with the figures placed in the light and space with considerable detail and indication of plasticity.

The setting in which all these figures are placed appears to be a square enclosed by walls and natural rock. Apart from the portal through which the pathetic procession

enters, another half-round opening can just be made out in the darkness of the background.

It has long been known that several scenes from different chapters of the Gospel according to St Matthew have been combined in this work. No further explanation is required here that the print just described (fig. 2) is a reverse image of the plate from which it has been printed, but if one looks carefully at a mirror image of the print (fig. 4) a great deal becomes clear: the sequence of the depicted events is much better read, and the logic of Rembrandt's way of working reveals itself not only after technical analysis but also to one's visual sense. The 'inventory' of figures and events naturally remains the same – except in one respect. Anyone who knows the Biblical episodes depicted here will be aware that Christ in the print is using his right hand to push away the man with the bald head (recognizable as the disciple Peter) with the back of the hand while with the left hand he appears to make a gesture of blessing. In the plate image, Christ raises his right hand in blessing which is felt to be more natural (fig. 4).

The procedural logic in Rembrandt's usual way of working was to elaborate the image on the plate from left to right. In this way, the emerging image was always freely visible as he worked, as he was right-handed. With his working hand resting on the plate and the etching needle held between his fingers, he was able to see what he was doing and could carefully control the hatchings that give plasticity to the figures. It was also important in this context that the figures were lit from the left so that Rembrandt could work out each individual figure from left to right. Nor is it only *within* the image that the light falls from the left; whilst working, Rembrandt must also have sat in such a way that the light fell on his plate predominantly from the left – and on his working hand, for otherwise he would have had to work in the shadow of his own hand.

Not only would Rembrandt have read his image from left to right whilst working; this also applies to the beholder. As visual psychological research shows, the visual brain tends to organize visual images in the same way[4]; the result is that the image is more easily legible from left to right. Similarly, in looking at an illusionistic painting one also experiences more strongly the illusion of the space in which the events take place when the 'mental eye', as it were, is able to organize the image taking its cues from left to right. It also tends to follow the direction of the light. The seeing mind first needs to find its position *vis à vis* the space depicted, after which it explores this space further and, as Gaffron

Fig. 4. **Plate image** of fig. 2

observed, with a tendency to follow a diagonally upward course .

Once it is realized that the image of the print so familiar to us is actually a mirror reversal of the image that Rembrandt had before his eyes (referred here as the 'plate image'), the narrative aspect of the image also becomes clear. In the *Hundred guilder print* Rembrandt has combined several disparate episodes from the Gospel according to St Matthew that he appears to have chosen because they illuminated a particular aspect of Christ's teaching – that of the poor, the sick and the children as God's elect. Rembrandt drew the episodes that have been shown in the same sequence as they are related by Matthew. The etching can therefore be seen as a coherent sermon. The relevant Biblical texts are quoted in full below because we may be certain that Rembrandt would also have read and re-read these same texts in preparation of the etching. Matthew 14: 34-36: '*And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.*' The woman laid before Christ touches the hem of his robe and is thereby cured. The length of the procession is emphasized by Rembrandt having placed Christ to the right of middle in the composition (of the plate image).

The figures to his left represent three other, smaller scenes. Matthew 19: 13-14 *'Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'* The two young women each with a child on her arm and a small boy in front of them are moving toward Christ. Once we are aware of the context, Christ's manual gesture more readily appears to be one of blessing those who are brought before him, while with the other hand he pushes Peter aside.

The following episode relates to the richly dressed young man who can be seen sitting between the two women: Matthew 19: 16-24 *'And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'* It is quite likely that the camel in the doorway has been added to the procession of the poor and the sick in connection with this text.

Of the group of men to the right of this young man, several have their backs turned to Christ. These are the Pharisees, the party of Judaic scholars of the Law, and the Sadducees, an opposing elite school, both of which are encountered throughout the Book of Matthew and in other gospels discussing how to discredit Christ, how they could trap him with trick questions or how they could undermine the trust of his disciples. Similar groups of Pharisees, who stand with their backs turned to Christ, huddled together in close discussion, are often found in Rembrandt's New Testament history pieces. With the reversal of the print, their comments come *after* Christ's pronouncements and not before. The fact that this group of figures, compared with the stream of the sick and the maimed with their escorts, is sketchily executed is a consequence of the circumstance outlined above, that Rembrandt elaborated the etching from left to right. For whatever reason, he must at a certain moment have stopped. The fact that the etching is not signed serves as an argument for our surmise that Rembrandt himself considered the etching unfinished. (For the *non-finito* in Rembrandt, see p. 161 and pp. 238/9)

A confrontation of the two forms of Rembrandt's image, one the mirror-image of the other, inevitably raises the question of which of the two is to be preferred. Undoubtedly, if given the choice, our familiarity with the print and the fact that this is how it has been transmitted will carry significant weight; but what certainly strikes one is that the unfamiliar mirror image of the print, i.e. Rembrandt's image on the plate, is more supplely and more cogently read. The eye quickly becomes familiar with the pictorial space and is then agreeably led from left to right into the gradually richer and more complicated composition.

If one is asked which version leads one to know Rembrandt better as an artist, there is only one possible answer: the image that he himself created on his etching plate. On the other hand which picture of the man Rembrandt he prefers, the supple or the awkward Rembrandt, one may well be inclined to choose the latter. If that is the case, however, we must be aware that we wilfully continue to obscure Rembrandt's artistic ideas and achievements, feeding a misleading conception with that mass of print images, taken from the plates, simply because we are familiar with the reversed prints rather than the spontaneously created plate images.

How and what: form and content

In concluding this introduction, it may be of interest to the reader to know that the work on this survey began with the lay-out of all the images, organized according to their mutual relationships in the context of Rembrandt's developing ideas, and preceding the texts which elucidate this grouping of the works. The texts were thus added subsequently in the space left over. The expansiveness or, conversely, the succinctness of the texts therefore depended on the space available. However, this should not be seen as an explanation for the fact that, apart from the legends, so little attention seems to be given to the iconography of the works reproduced. Such commentary is

occasionally provided, but scarcely in the usual iconographic/iconological manner (pp. 234/5 and 240/1). Admittedly, Rembrandt must have given a great deal of thought to the content – the 'what' – that he was imaging. This was obvious in the above analysis of the *Hundred Guilder Print*. But anyone wishing to understand Rembrandt as a searching, investigative artist – and that is what distinguishes him, probably above any other artist of his time – must first concentrate primarily on the 'how'. That was evident from our inquiry into the basic aspects of the art of painting (the *gronden*) as conceived by 17th-century minds and by Rembrandt himself (see Chapter I).

It is from this perspective especially that the texts in the following survey of Rembrandt's 'histories' (painted, etched or drawn) were written. Naturally, it would have been impossible to attempt a complete or comprehensive treatment of Rembrandt's concentrated exploration of the diverse pictorial and narrative means. My main intention has been to direct the reader's attention to those *'gronden'* that seemed to have been given particular attention at that moment in Rembrandt's quest.

An index of the contents of this survey is provided below. It is hoped that this will enhance the accessibility of this part of the Volume.

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– 246/47	1654	Looming bankruptcy – a change in production?
– 248/49	1654	Hendrickje/Callisto; the history behind the painting
250/51	1655	Book illustration and art. Paintings on commission?
252/53	*c.* 1656/57	Portraying God four times; the problem of 'continuity'. Looking from the inside out
254/55	1659/60	Emulating Annibale Carracci. Rembrandt's last room light painting. The Washington *Circumcision*
256/57	1661-69	Raking light and colour reflection. Rembrandt's last (unetched) Passion Series. A mind full of images

Fig. 5. Rembrandt, *The three singers ('Hearing')*, *c.* 1624, panel 21.6 x 17.8 cm. Private collection (IV *Corrigenda* I B 1)

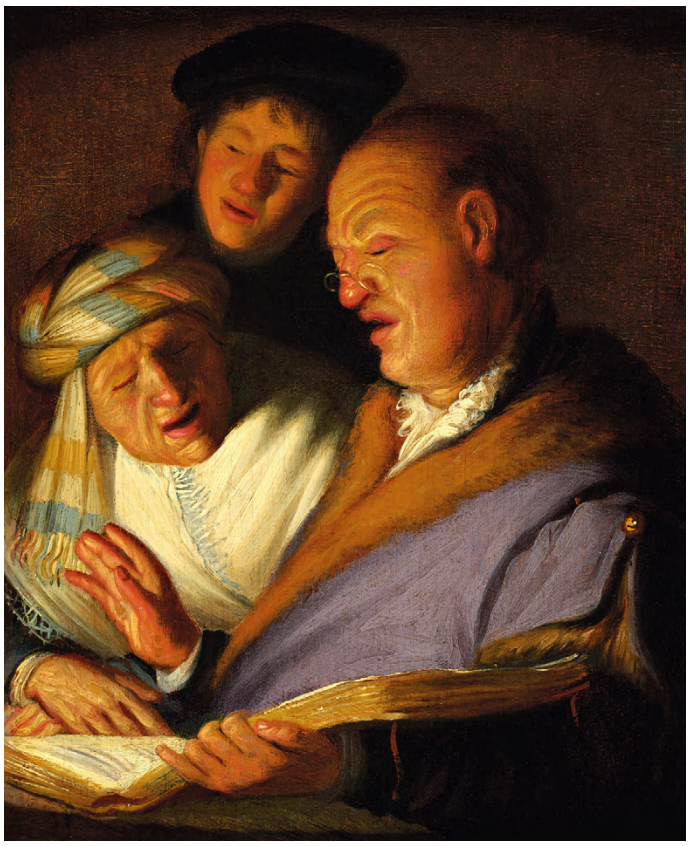


Fig. 6. Rembrandt, *The head operation ('Touch')*, *c.* 1624, panel 21.5 x 17.7 cm. Private collection (IV *Corrigenda* I B 2)
Fig. 7. Rembrandt, *The spectacles seller ('Sight')*, *c.* 1624, panel 21 x 17.8 cm. Private collection (IV *Corrigenda* I B 3)

Rembrandt's earliest known paintings are three small panels from a series of the five *Senses*. At the time he would have been about 18 years old. In his chapter on ordonnance and invention Karel van Mander advises: '… *[one must] always adapt oneself to the dimensions of the space available and avoid making the figures carry the frame, or lie as cramped [by it] as though squeezed in boxes.*' The question is whether Rembrandt was aware of this advice when he painted his *Senses* (figs. 5-7) and soon afterwards the *Christ driving the moneychangers from the temple* (fig. 8). Jan Lievens, Rembrandt's prodigious, youthful associate in Leiden could have influenced this way of framing of his scenes.[5]

The three *Senses* betray an almost child-like awkwardness coupled with a remarkable ambition in their rendering of both human emotions and the effects of light (see pp. 65-80). With regard to the latter, the three-year apprenticeship with Jacob van Swanenburgh may well have been significant. One finds, however, no trace of the teaching of Rembrandt's second teacher, the history painter, Pieter Lastman in the specific and – in the context of Rembrandt's early works – unusual ordonnance and use of colour. It is tempting to speculate that perhaps Rembrandt may have painted these four paintings after his apprenticeship with Jacob van Swanenburgh and *before* he went to Amsterdam to continue his training with Lastman. However, the *Christ driving the moneychangers from the temple* bears the date 1626, by which time Rembrandt's apprenticeship with Lastman was already behind him. And yet the similarly compressed composition and the handling of colour, which is very like Rembrandt's use of colour in the *Senses*, suggest an origin almost at the same time as that of the *Senses*. The date 1626, which is placed with the monogram on the pillar behind the figures, is therefore put in question. The large monogram RH (F?) is formed by upright capitals and together with the date is scratched in the partially dried paint of the pillar and therefore seems to have been added later (in 1626), most likely by Rembrandt himself. Sometimes he added his signature and a date only later, possibly when selling the work. ■

Fig. 8. Rembrandt, *Christ driving the money-changers from the Temple*, *c.* 1624/25, panel 43.1 x 32 cm. Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts (I A 4)

Fig. 9. Rembrandt, *The stoning of St Stephen*, 1625, panel 89.5 x 123.6 cm.
Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts (I A 1)

Between 1625 and 1627, three multi-figured history pieces were painted, most likely on commission – the smallest of these probably functioning as a design to be shown to a commissioning patron (fig. 11). A comparison of the different ways in which the shadowed foreground was conceived in the three works says a great deal about Rembrandt's approach to composition, the suggestion of space and treatment of light – all in relation to the scene depicted.

By the end of the 16th century, dark repoussoirs and shadowed folds in the terrain had been introduced as the means of enhancing the strength of light in the middle- and background of the scene depicted. As Van Mander put it: *'First of all it is good if our foreground is always rich in contrast in order to make the other planes recede.'* (*Grondt* chap.8 v.19) And in the same connection Van Hoogstraten writes that many painters *'frequently in their works have introduced very dark and strongly shadowed figures in their paintings, allowing light to fall in the middle space'* (SvH p. 307). This procedure is employed in the *Stoning of St Stephen* (fig. 9) and in the *David with the head of Goliath* (fig. 11).

It is interesting that in the Leiden *History piece* (fig. 10) the device of tonal contrast in the foreground is only minimally used (locally, immediately to the right of the strongly lit pile of weaponry in the foreground). Although one may confidently state that the shadowed foreground figures in both the *Stoning of St Stephen* and in the *David with the head of Goliath* are without iconographic significance, one suspects, on the contrary, that the weaponry in the enigmatic Leiden *History piece* was significant for the meaning of this scene, which has never been satisfactorily identified. Seen in this way, the horseman to the left in the foreground of *David with the head of Goliath* must have been intended to be of iconographic significance in the scene depicted. In this regard, one can similarly speculate over a comparable difference between the horseman in the left foreground of the *Stoning of St Stephen* and the horseman in the left foreground of the *David with the head of Goliath*. This colourful young man, his gaze directed toward the central scene, could very well have been meant by Rembrandt to be Jonathan, the son of Saul. According to the Book of Samuel 18:1 Jonathan first set eyes on David during this event: *'And it came to pass, when he [David – who brought the head of Goliath to Saul] had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.'* ■

Fig. 10. Rembrandt, *History painting (subject unidentified)*, 1626, panel 90 x 122 cm. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal (I A 6)
Fig. 11. Rembrandt, *David with the head of Goliath before Saul*, 1627, panel 27.2 x 39.6 cm. Basle, Kunstmuseum (I A 9)

Fig. 12. Rembrandt, *Balaam and the ass*, 1626, panel 63.2 x 46.5 cm. Paris, Musée Cognacq-Jay (I A 2)
Fig. 13. P. Lastman, *Balaam and the ass*, 1622, panel 41.3 x 60.3 cm. Jerusalem, The Israel Museum

Fig. 14. Rembrandt, *The baptism of the Eunuch*, 1626, panel 63.5 x 48 cm. Utrecht, Museum Het Catharijneconvent (I A 5)
Fig. 15. P. Lastman, *The baptism of the Eunuch*, 1623, panel 85 x 115 cm. Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle

An 'ordonnance' worthy of renown may indeed have been the greatest challenge for the young Rembrandt. After all, as Van Mander put it, *'the excellence and the power of art are united in the ordonnance – the perfection of its execution, the esprit and the intelligence with which it has been thought out, the careful attention and experience of all aspects of the art of painting'* (see p. 53). It therefore says much for Rembrandt's ambition in this area that shortly after leaving Pieter Lastman he dismantled the ordonnance of two of the latter's paintings and in each case arranged the same scene differently (figs. 12-15). He evidently wanted to show that after his period of training he was trying *'to discover everything through his own labours'* (see p. 9).

In the *Balaam* painting (fig. 12) and later that same year in the *Tobit and Anna* (fig. 17), he pursued his exploration of the rendering of human affects, an investigation he had already begun in 1624/25 (figs. 5-8). In doing so, he seems to have distanced himself from the prescriptive approach to the task recommended by Van Mander (see p. 65). Apparently he was already convinced that the expression of human emotions is much too subtle to be caught by prescription. As later noted by Van Hoogstraten, the painter can better take as his starting point the situation given in the painting and try to feel the state of mind of the protagonists (see p. 68) – for example, Balaam's rage verging on frenzy, or Anna's indignation at being unjustly accused, or Tobit's despairing sor-

Fig. 16. Rembrandt, *Musical company*, 1626, panel 63.4 x 47.6 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (I A 7)

Fig. 17. Rembrandt, *Tobit accusing Anna of stealing the kid*, 1626, panel 40.1 x 29.9 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (I A 3)

row. The fact that Rembandt seems to have wanted to give even Balaam's ass a facial expression underlines his intense interest in the affects – and in animals (see pp. 65-70 and 89-97).

Likewise Rembrandt dismantled and reassembled Lastman's *Baptism of the Eunuch*. Many art historians tend to see this kind of rearrangement of figures in purely compositional terms, taking a triangle or a semi-spiral as a geometrical scheme on which to base their analysis of composition. The 17th-century painters, however, did not think in such terms. They considered, in the words of Van Mander, *'to set to work like the merchant who, with surprising skill, displays his wares on high shelves, or down below'* or chose for figures *'introduced on hills, in trees or on stone steps or holding on to architectural pillars, and also others in front, below on the ground'* (see p. 56). At this time, Rembrandt may have used or even coined the term '*sprong*', as Van Hoogstraten called this type of ordonnance in his *Academy of the Art of Painting* : *'One should give the figures an agreeable 'sprong' such that whether high or low together they create a shape that is attractive to the eye and there appears an interplay between them resulting from their diversity'* (see p. 62).

One of the constant challenges for the painter was to represent convincingly the characteristic quality of the surface textures of an endless multiplicity of the things and materials that surround one – including the persons themselves, their clothes, accessories, tools etc. It is striking that the treatises of Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten scarcely mention this (see pp. 72 and 122). Only exceptionally is a prescription given – for instance, in the case of velvet, where the highest lights should be placed along the contours of the material and its folds (see fig. 61). In general, it would seem that such knowledge was part of what one picked up in the workshop. For the most part, however, the painter had to observe for himself the appearance of material textures and surface structures in reality. According to Van Mander the painter could learn to master this skill by paying constant attention to the principle of learning *'from nature, the painters' mistress'*. This was mainly a matter of getting the right sort of light reflection from shiny objects or a characteristic suggestion of the highest lights on matt surfaces – all according to their characteristic qualities (*'hare eygenschap')* (see p. 122 n. 354). The so-called *Musical Company* (fig. 16) may in the first place be seen as a display piece showing how to distinguish different surface textures by varying the peinture, in which variations in the consistency of the paint also played an important role.

In the *Tobit and Anna* (fig. 17) limited attention is paid to the rendering of various surface textures. In that painting Rembrandt for the first time introduces two light sources, which in itself was no innovation. In his *Basic aspects of the art of painting* (Grondt), Van Mander referred to Raphael's *Liberation of St Peter* in the Stanze as an *'Example of night painted with different lights'* (cap. 7: 37/38). But this is a night scene. The fact that Rembrandt, in his *Tobit and Anna*, introduced two light sources in a daylight scene (the window and a small fire in the right foreground) may be seen as evidence of his investigative and creative drive which from then on would manifest itself in his dealing with different kinds of light and shadow. It is, for instance, only in 1632 that he manages to render the light from a visible window in a more convincing way (see p. 196). ■

Fig. 18. Rembrandt, *The flight into Egypt*, 1627, panel 27.5 x 24.7 cm.
Tours, Musée des Beaux-Arts (I C 5)

Fig. 19. Rembrandt, *The flight into Egypt*, *c.* 1627/1629?, plate image 14.6 x 12.2 cm (B. 54[I])

Fig. 20. Rembrandt, *The rich man from the parable*, 1627, panel 31.7 x 42.5 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie (I A 10)

There can be little doubt that the *Tobit and Anna* (fig. 17) is the last painting Rembrandt completed in 1626. In several respects, the painting points forward to his pictorial explorations in 1627. As already said, there are two light sources in this painting. The fire in the bottom right corner illuminates Tobit's lower leg, the dog at his feet and Anna's skirt with the chatelaine. One sees there what effect artificial light must have according to Rembrandt: the colours in that corner of the painting are broken in favour of the effect of the light (on the breaking the colours, see pp. 106-107).

Another effect of artificial light which must have already engaged him for some time is the phenomenon that the open flame in a dark space reduces the degree of visibility – or perhaps one should say, hampers our observation – of things, something which he had not yet realized at the time of his work on the *Sense of Touch* (fig. 6). This problem continued to intrigue him, as Van Hoogstraten testifies. Rembrandt *'has depicted the strength of candle-light to the best of his abilities in several dark prints* (see figs. 223-225) *but if one covers these small lights, the rest of the work remains dark; just as, when someone shows us something by candle-light, we usually hold our hands in front of the light so that it does not prevent us seeing everything in as much detail and as recognizably as possible.'* (On open fire against darkness, see p. 78.) In his scenes lit by candle or lamp light from 1627, he would therefore cover the light source, either partially or wholly. The *Rich man* (fig. 20) is Rembrandt's masterpiece in this respect. He fully explored the fact that from a single small light source (in Van Mander's words) *'the shadow has to seek its direction everywhere away from that point'* (see p. 71). A probably somewhat earlier effort to explore this phenomenon is the small *Flight into Egypt* discovered in the 19th century (fig 18). In *Corpus* Vol. I, this latter painting was dis-attributed from Rembrandt on the basis of arguments – mainly urged, it must be said with considerable embarrassment, by the present author – which in retrospect are found to be untenable (I C 5). In the catalogue of the 2001 exhibition *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt* the painting was re-attributed to Rembrandt.[6]

More or less simultaneously, Rembrandt was working on an etching with a flight into Egypt, probably his first etching with a 'history' as subject (fig. 19).

In this miscarried etching he had wanted to realize light effects as strong as those achieved in his paintings from the same period, but this time in a scene by daylight – fairly low, direct sunlight, in fact, to judge by the shadows cast by Josephs feet. But whereas dark passages in a painting are executed with few brushstrokes with oil paint, after which attention can be turned to working out the lit passages, in an etching the convincing rendering of dark shadow requires conscientiously worked out patterns of innumerable hatchings. This is the only way of achieving a convincing interplay of light and dark and a resulting credible suggestion of space and plasticity. Rembrandt only summoned the patience for such a way of working several years later (see figs. 54-56).

One can infer from these years of struggle with a new medium that, as an etcher, Rembrandt must have been an autodidact (see for instance also figs. 35, 39, 40). In the etched *Flight into Egypt* (fig. 19) he immediately makes a beginner's mistake: he takes too big a plate. As a result, he gets bogged down in the laborious work of creating the dark zones that he wants by means of hatching. There are only two prints from this etching in existence. On one of them, Rembrandt has taken a pen to tinker with futile plans for improvements. He subsequently cut the plate into smaller, more manageable etching plates (B.54[III] and B.5[I]).

The plate image, reproduced here, is easier to read than the print: the small procession travels in the direction of reading, from left to right. Because the light now falls from the left, the effect of the incoming light behind the low repoussoir is enhanced and the cast shadows are more effective.' ■

Fig. 21. A. Dürer, *St Jerome in his study*, 1514, engraving
Fig. 22. Rembrandt, *The apostle Paul in prison*, 1627, panel 72.8 x 60.2 cm. Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie (I A 11)
Fig. 23. Rembrandt, *Simeon in the Temple*, *c.* 1627, panel 55.4 x 43.7 cm. Hamburg, Kunsthalle (I A 12)
Fig. 24. Rembrandt, *Two old men disputing (Peter and Paul)*, 1628, panel 72.3 x 59.5 cm. Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria (I A 13)

In each of the three surviving *Senses* (figs 5, 6, 7) Rembrandt applied a particular kind of light: daylight in the *Spectacles seller*, open candlelight in the *Operation* and artificial light from beyond the picture frame in the *Singers*. From 1627 he began to investigate further – systematically and apparently – these and other kinds of illumination. Having dealt with the potential of the dark repoussoir as a means of intensifying the strength of daylight in a scene, his attention was drawn to the light of a hidden candle – or of other obscured sources (see figs. 9-11, also 18 and 20).

Also in 1627 he began to concentrate on a similarly major problem: the effects of incident sunlight (figs. 22, 23, 24). Albrecht Dürer had already tackled this problem in the famous engraving with *St Jerome in his study* (fig. 21), a print which Rembrandt must undoubtedly have studied in the course of seeking better solutions to this problem. The effect of direct sunlight entering a room in Dürer's print is shown by the projection of the window's frame and the lead strips of the panes on the side of the window recess. But Dürer goes no further: the details in the room are all equally visible. In Rembrandt's paintings with incident sunlight, the projection of the window is also shown, but the visibility of the details of the depicted space decreases markedly, depending on their place in that space. This phenomenon evidently engaged Rembrandt's mind, for his ideas on the matter led to theorizing which was subsequently set down in an extended argument on so-called *'kamerlicht'* ('room-light') by Samuel van Hoogstraten (pp. 76-77). The degree to which Rembrandt must have given serious thought to the effects of sunlight is evident, not only from figs. 22 and 23, but also from a description of the painting reproduced in fig. 24 passed down by Jacques de Gheyn III (see also p. 163) in whose inventory the figures in the painting were described ('two old men disputing') with the addition '*with sunlight entering*' [*'daer comt een sonnelicht in'*]. Here Rembrandt no longer uses a white background wall as a projection screen for the sunlight, but in a sophisticated manner shows the strength of the sunlight as it illuminates the hindmost figure and a constellation of objects and draperies situated lower in the pictorial space.

Investigation of *Rembrandt Laughing* (figs. 25 and 26), a painting which re-surfaced in 2007, revealed that an entirely different image lay beneath the visible paint surface (fig. 26).[7] Precisely what is happening in the image that was thus made visible has not yet been unravelled. In the foreground can be seen a golden shield with a colourful, fringe-like edge (which one may compare with the shield in the background of the Tokyo painting, fig. 27). Weapons lie on the ground and draperies hanging from an eleva-

Fig. 25. Rembrandt, *Rembrandt laughing*, 1628, copper 22.2 x 17.1 cm. Private collection

Fig. 26. Visual traces of painting under *Rembrandt laughing* (fig. 25) revealed with synchroton-based X-ray fluorescence spectrometry (SR-XRF). The colours are schematically reconstructed (slightly retouched) with oil paint

Fig. 27. Rembrandt (?), *A biblical or historical nocturnal scene*, 1628, copper 22.1 x 17.1 cm. Tokyo, Bridgestone Museum of Art (I C 10)

tion. Elsewhere, vague shadowy figures can be seen, the most clearly distinct being the silhouette, at the right of the scene, of a gesticulating figure with a sash round his waist, seen from the back. Behind this figure light streams into the depicted space from the right, as though produced by an artificial light source placed low down. Evidently it is a nocturnal scene. This underlying scene, still to be clarified, may be considered as yet another small-scale history piece in Rembrandt's oeuvre. Moreover, the scene shows a striking kinship with the much discussed campfire scene in Tokyo. It is conspicuous that both paintings are painted on virtually identically sized, thin copper plates. (The one with the Tokyo painting was clumsily repaired before it was painted on, and is so thin toward the left edge that fragments have since been broken off)[8]. In view of the doubts concerning the authenticity of the Tokyo painting, one can speculate that the newly discovered (underlying) nocturnal scene may perhaps be the prototype and the painting in Tokyo a satellite, possibly – as earlier suggested – by the young Gerard Dou. But – who knows? – perhaps the status of the painting in Tokyo will change as a consequence of further investigation of the newly discovered, underlying history piece. In addition to the candlelight and sunlight paintings discussed above, these two paintings with their artificial light entering low down, are further evidence of the intensity with which Rembrandt and his early pupils must have been preoccupied with various different kinds of lighting (and complementary shading) in the period 1627/28. ■

Fig. 28. Rembrandt, *Interior with figures, playing 'Handjeklap'*, *c.* 1628, panel 21 x 27 cm. Dublin, The National Gallery of Ireland

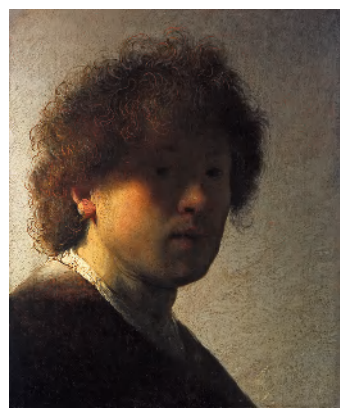
This remarkably small panel (fig. 28), which in 1886 found its way into the National Gallery of Ireland as a work by Willem de Poorter, was for a long time unjustifiably excluded from Rembrandt's oeuvre, even though numerous characteristic features argue for an attribution to him.

The absurd banality of the subject – *handjeklap*: a game that involves the person who is 'it' being whacked on the behind and then guessing who did it – was undoubtedly partly responsible for the hesitation of many to see in it a painting by Rembrandt. However, after such authorities as Benesch and Haverkamp Begemann had earlier argued the case for its attribution, the painting was eventually exhibited in 2001/2 in Kassel and Amsterdam as a work by Rembrandt.

Since then few have questioned this attribution. One argument to the contrary, raised by Roelof van Straten, was that the edges of the shadows cast on the floor are sharper than those in Rembrandt's *Judas repentant*[9] (fig. 30); but this argument loses its force once one becomes aware of the fact that these are different kinds of light. In the present painting the room is evidently illuminated by a candle which (for the beholder) is obscured by a silhouetted figure into the left foreground.[10] In the *Judas*, the daylight streams in to the interior space from the left. It had been known since classical antiquity that shadows cast by

Fig. 29. Hypothetical reconstruction of the first state of fig. 30 on the basis of the X-radiograph
Fig. 30. Rembrandt, *Judas repentant returning the pieces of silver*, 1629, panel 79 x 102.3 cm. Private collection (I A 15)

Fig. 31. Rembrandt, Study in pen and wash, presumably done in preparation for the second state of fig. 30, 11.5 x 14.6 cm. Whereabouts unknown (Ben. 8)
Fig. 32. Rembrandt, *Study in the mirror*, *c.* 1628, panel 22.6 x 18.7 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (I A 14)



candle-light are different from those caused by daylight. Van Hoogstraten refers to Seneca's *Naturales Questiones* when discussing the difference between candle-light and daylight: *'Things illuminated by fire, says Seneca, are different than when they are illuminated by a wider source of light. The sharpness of the shadow is caused by the light of a small flame, because the light of a small flame radiates out as from a point source: it only strikes things that it can reach in a straight line […] whereas daylight is so much larger than the particular parts that it illuminates, shining around, as it were, and by its magnitude surrounding them'* – implying that the shadows cast by daylight have blurred contours (S.v.H. p. 259).

In view of the painting's somewhat schematic lay-out, and because it is not signed, it could be argued this is a study that originated in the context of Rembrandt's intensely questing work on the *Judas repentant*, a work that would give decisive direction to the further course of his career as a painter (see also p. 105). It is likely that the Amsterdam *Study in the mirror* (fig. 32) was also a study made in this connection, perhaps with an eye to the lighting of the figures on the extreme left in the *Judas*. From the X-radiographs of the *Judas* one can make out that ordonnance and treatment of light in that painting were initially very different (fig 29). Rembrandt sometimes made sketches during the execution of a work, in preparation for radical changes in its conception. The drawing reproduced in fig. 31 is an example of this practice. ■

Fig. 33. Rembrandt, *The foot operation*, 1628, panel 31.8 x 24.4 cm.
Switzerland, private collection (I C 11)

Fig. 34. Signature of fig. 33

Tackling the question of whether this *Foot operation* (fig. 33) was or was not painted by Rembrandt is a confusing experience. Seen through the mists of time, the world of two Leiden studios, those of Jan Lievens and Rembrandt, will not disclose how many and which young painters were being trained there whilst simultaneously contributing to the studio production.

To begin with, there were of course the young Rembrandt and his fellow-painter Jan Lievens. How many pupils did each of them have? We don't know. And could it have been that pupils of the one were influenced by the other? Or did Rembrandt and Lievens after all share a workshop and did they have the same pupils together? We don't know. Sometimes a cluster of works once attributed to Rembrandt condense into a mini-oeuvre from what appears to have been the apprentice period of one of the pupils, with characteristics of both Rembrandt and Lievens. This is the case, for example, with the group of works attributed to the painter of the much-admired *Scholar in a lofty room* in the London National Gallery (see p. 262, 3b). In other cases, the attempt to distinguish between hands or to identify further mini-oeuvres rests on a laboriously constructed, but ultimately tautological apparatus, whereby qualitative differences are provisionally raised to the status of criteria of authenticity.

On the few occasions that works from this group of painters bear a Rembrandt monogram, this carries significant weight, especially when it is certain that such a monogram is not a later addition and is of a type that occasionally occurs in that period. And that is the case in the present painting (fig. 34).

This type of monogram is only found with Rembrandt between 1627 and '29 and is moreover so rare that no later imitator could have known it. Surprise has been expressed at the fact that the 'tail' of the *R* is missing; but in fact the start of this tail – which in this period was conspicuously short – is actually visible, just above the horizontal stroke of the *H* where this stroke meets the shaft of the *R*. Part of this short stroke could have been lost.[11]

If we accept that this *Foot operation* is indeed by Rembrandt, it is worth pointing out that he produced another work around the same time with another man, similarly tensed with his back bent and hands clasped to his chest, this time in an (unfinished?) etching of St Jerome intently praying before a skull and Bible (fig. 35). There are differences, however: the two works depict different emotional states, with slight, though significant variation in affect, body posture and hand gestures (see pp. 65-70 and 49-52). Technically this large etching was not a success (see also above p. 155).

Fig. 35. Rembrandt, *St Jerome kneeling*, *c.* 1628, plate image 38.9 x 33.2 cm (B. 106)

The plate of this etching is of a remarkable size, even considerably larger than the one used for the earlier, failed etching with the *Flight into Egypt* (fig. 19). Rembrandt's ambition was not matched by his technical ability, let alone his patience and perseverance. It seems that at a certain point he just gave up. There is an old discussion regarding the *non-finito* in Rembrandt's work which focuses on works like the *Hundred guilder print*, parts of which were also left in a sketched state. The question is: did Rembrandt plan in advance to leave large sections of such important works in their sketched state? Some scholars are convinced that he did, despite the fact that Arnold Houbraken wrote in his well-documented biography of Rembrandt: *'But there is one thing to deplore: that he so soon driven to change or to move to something else, many things that were only half finished, both in his paintings and even more in his etched work, where the finished parts give us an idea of all the splendid [things?] that we could have had from his hand, had he completed each thing in the way he had started it, as can be seen especially in the Hundred Guilder Print and elsewhere'*.[12] To read this with the idea that Houbraken – himself a particularly finicky painter – judged Rembrandt by his own norms does not do justice to the issue at stake. After all, Rembrandt worked on the detailing of many of his prints right to their finish (see figs. 102/3, 275). The *non-finito* of such etchings cannot therefore be seen as a characteristic of Rembrandt's style. It is however conceivable that he broke off the work process in certain cases at the moment that he was satisfied with the result and left the work in a partly sketchy condition. See pp. 236/7 for ideas over the esteem that uncompleted works have enjoyed ever since classical antiquity. ■

Fig. 36. Rembrandt, *The painter in his studio ('Idea')*, *c.* 1628, panel 24.8 x 31.7 cm.
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (I A 18)
Fig. 37. Rembrandt, *An old man asleep by the fire ('sloth')*, 1629, panel 51.9 x 40.8 cm.
Turin, Galleria Sabauda (I A 17)

These three paintings originated at roughly the same time in 1628/29. Two of them are closely related in conception: to the right in the foreground a large dark shape and behind it a lit space in which something transpires. But in content they are markedly different: the one a workshop scene with perhaps the art theoretical message that a painting should be *'first born in the mind through inward imagination before it can be nurtured by the hand and brought to perfection'*[13] and the other a religious scene with the awe-inspiring revelation of Christ to two disciples during the supper at Emmaus. One can only speculate on the question of why these two works were made. Was one (fig. 36) painted for an interested art-lover visiting the studio? Was the other (fig. 38) (which is painted on paper) made as preparation for an etching to be circulated as a religious print? Or was Rembrandt primarily emulating Adam Elsheimer (see V 27 fig. 5)?

Indeed, one can speculate in this way over the *raison d'être* of many of Rembrandt's works. But in the case of these two paintings, one thing is certain: Rembrandt must have given them their form in the context of the artistic quest of discovery that determined all his activities, not only in his Leiden years, since he was not one of those painters who *merely followed the fashion and did as others did'* (see p. 9).

The third painting reproduced on these pages (fig. 37) falls completely outside almost everything that preoccu-

Fig. 38. Rembrandt, *The supper at Emmaus*, 1629, paper stuck on panel 37.4 x 42.3 cm. Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André (I A 16)

pied Rembrandt during this period – no adventurous investigation of light effects, even though the man depicted sits beside a small fire, no interesting compositional solutions; neither colour nor the rendering of material textures play a significant role; no other affect than the face of a dozing man. It appears to be no more than a competently executed but ultimately dull painting. The only 'basic aspect' of the art of painting that plays any role of significance in this painting is that of human body posture: the man slumps in his chair, the snoozing head resting on his left fist, his right hand tucked into the dark cloak.

For the 17th-century viewer this posture must have immediately signalled that the painting depicts sloth (*acedia*), which itself inevitably leads one to speculate on the *'raison d'être'* of the painting. The key to an answer may be found in the painting's connection with Jacques de Gheyn III (1596-1641), who was probably the first and until 1641 sole owner of the painting. The painting was recorded in the inventory of his estate as follows: *'an old man sitting asleep by a fire with his hand in his bosom'*[14]. According to the inventory, the deceased had been in possession of one of the most extraordinary early works by Rembrandt (fig. 24); yet this man snoozing by the fire would seem to be the least interesting among the paintings in his possession.

Jacques de Gheyn III was the son of the engraver of the same name, Jacques de Gheyn II, who was highly esteemed at the Stadholder's court. The young Jacques was also trained as an artist, although only a few works by him are known. That admirer of Rembrandt, Constantijn Huygens, who must have visited Rembrandt in the year during which the paintings discussed here originated (see pp. 131-133), considered Jacques III as the *'voortreffelykste van mijn vrienden'* ('foremost of my friends'). But at the same time, according to the autobiography that he wrote in *c.* 1630, he was very concerned about him: *'If I think back on De Gheyn's promising beginning it incenses me ..... that someone who was so evidently born in the Netherlands to be forever a pearl in the crown of his fatherland can bury his talent in this way and can slumber in barren and ignoble indolence …'* It is not unthinkable that Huygens commissioned Rembrandt to do this painting for Jacques III as a gibe at his indolence, an example of what was known in Rembrandt's time as a *schimpschilderij* – an admonitory painting (see also pp. 532/3). ■

Fig. 39. Rembrandt, *Peter and John at the gate of the Temple*, *c.* 1628, plate image 22.1 x 16.9 cm (B. 95)

Fig. 40. Rembrandt, *The blind Tobit*, *c.* 1628, plate image 7.9 x 6.3 cm (B. 153[I])

In addition to his attempts on small etching plates to portray his own (sometimes grimacing) face before the mirror as well as the many sketches of beggars, the young Rembrandt continued trying to make etchings of more ambitious narrative subjects with more complex light and shadow effects. But in this area his ambition was time and again thwarted by lack of the necessary ability. There now exist scarcely more than a few prints of these etchings – and indeed there may never have been many more (see figs. 19, 35 and 39). It would seem that in these attempts he was always taking on too large a plate. Drawing and hatching with a thin etching needle on a prepared etching plate demands more control and is far more laborious than working directly on paper with the softer chalk that creates broad lines, which the young Rembrandt was mainly using in this period (see fig. 146). Furthermore, using chalk a dark tone can be relatively quickly achieved with broad hatchings. At the same time Rembrandt worked with the draughtsman's pen, the thickness of whose lines can be varied by differences in pressure applied to it. Moreover, washes introducing tones of variable darkness can be added by means of a brush loaded with dilute ink. When working with the etching needle, in comparison, hundreds or sometimes even thousands of lines are needed to achieve roughly the same effect.

As to drawing with the needle, a sequence of scenes with horsemen from *c.* 1628-1632 (figs. 41-44) shows how Rembrandt gradually began to achieve fluency in the use of descriptive contours; but an effective hatching technique – more painterly, as it were – was an entirely different challenge. In 1630 he finally succeeded in creating etched history pieces – albeit only minute ones – in which he managed to suggest space and atmosphere by means of different ways of hatching with the etching needle (see figs. 54-56).

As observed on p. 170, it is amazing to see how the young artist, who by that stage was already a sovereign master in the techniques of drawing and painting, persisted in his struggle to make this third, difficult medium his own. In the course of this survey it will become clear just how important a role the etching would play in his life as an artist; for it was thanks to this technique that he could disseminate his 'inventions' on a much wider scale than was possible by means of paintings. This possibility probably explains why he persisted as he did until he had mastered the etching technique as no other artist. But it cannot have been utilitarian objectives alone that kept him experimenting and practicing. The way he persisted with the renewal of his technical and pictorial possibilities, well after he had completely mastered the etching technique around 1632, testifies to a searching attitude that is evident from his entire painted oeuvre. It is interesting to observe that these four horse-riding scenes, three carry no monogram while the fourth bears a mirror-image inscription (on the print). One cannot but wonder, therefore, whether these works were not simultaneously serving two aims: as further steps in the learning process of an etcher whilst also, as suggested on p. 89, attending to one of the basic aspects of the art of painting, in this case animals ■

Fig. 41. Rembrandt, *The small lion hunt (with one lion)*, *c.* 1629, 15.8 x 11.7 cm (B. 116)
Fig. 42. Rembrandt, *Turbaned soldier on horseback*, *c.* 1632[?], plate image 8.2 x 5.7 cm (1:1) (B. 139)

Fig. 43. Rembrandt, *The small lion hunt (with two lions)*, *c.* 1630, plate image 15.4 x 12.1 cm (B. 115)
Fig. 44. Rembrandt, *A cavalry fight*, *c.* 1632, plate image 10.8 x 8.3 cm (1:1) (B. 117)

Fig. 45. Rembrandt, *Samson betrayed by Delilah*, 1628 (?), panel 61.3 x 50.1 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (I A 24)

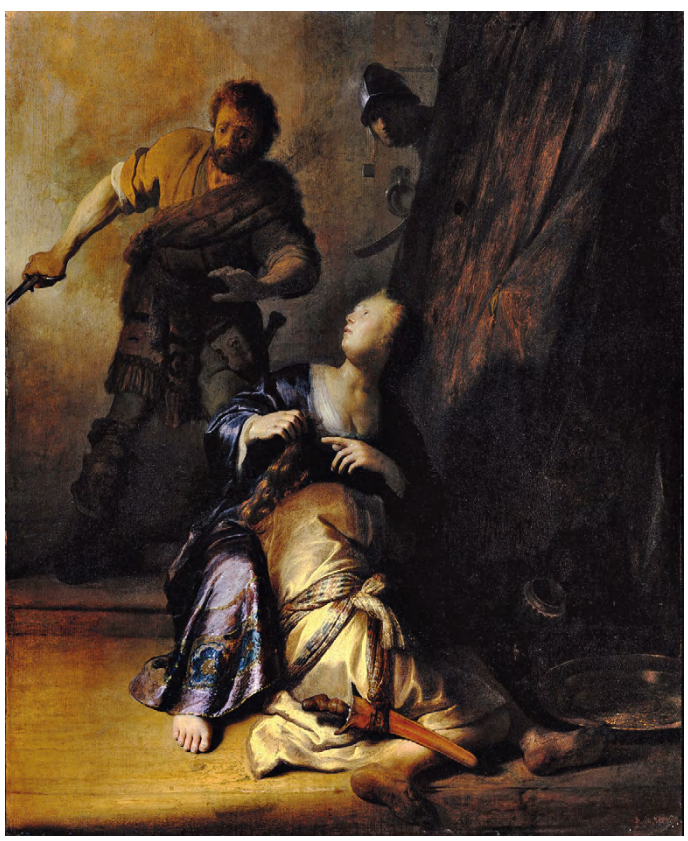


Fig. 46. Rembrandt, *David playing the harp for King Saul*, *c.* 1629, panel 62 x 50 cm. Frankfurt am Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut (I A 25)

In his chapter on Ordonnance and Invention Van Mander makes this remark: *'Thus it is found that our greatest masters also learn to be more sparing and know how to give their Works a beauty and graceful quality with few figures.'* Could Rembrandt have been taking his cue from this remark? – but then taken to its literal extreme of history pieces that contained only a single figure. And did he already identify himself with the greatest masters who demonstrate their mastery in their restraint? The mutual confrontation of these works already shows the inventiveness that Rembrandt was able to draw so as to give each of the figures depicted their own particular role with appropriate and expressive attitudes and gestures.

If one only pays attention to the thirteen hands visible in these five paintings it becomes clear just how much thought Rembrandt must have given to directing each separate 'actor'. As far as the various attitudes and gestures of the hands are concerned, one finds in Van Hoogstraten words that could well have originated in Rembrandt's thinking about how to depict them: *'As far as the hands are concerned, all the deeds or actions are principally worked out by these, indeed the same movements are almost comparable to normal speech. They desire and promise, they demand, they deny, they display joy, sorrow, regret, recognition, fear and horror.'* (see p. 51)

When one studies the figures in these paintings more closely in the context of the depicted scenes, one gets the impression that the list of possible situations with their associated postures, attitudes and gestures is without limit. There is a general tendency for investigators in this area to think in this context in terms of codified hand gestures as for example John Bulwer (1614-1684) would develop linked with particular affects. It is perhaps better, however, to start from an approach such as that adopted by Van Hoogstraten in his chapter on the *Passions and emotions (Hartstochten en Driften des gemoeds)*. He begins with a long list of *'all that can happen to people'* – in which it is clear that this enumeration is no more than a sample of the endless possibilities of situations that can overtake people. His advice to young painters – and as Rembrandt would also have advised – is therefore the pupil should feel himself into each situation he wishes to represent like an actor: *'thus one must wholly reshape himself as an actor'* and depict his protagonists, in an endless range of possibilities, accordingly (see p. 68).

Comparing these five paintings with each other, it strikes one how ingenious Rembrandt was in his search for solutions for an effective dark foreground which he apparently considered an indispensible *repoussoir*. We have already seen in dealing with multi-figured history pieces from the period 1625-27 how diverse his solutions in this area could be (pp. 150/51). The modest, obliquely running dark band in the foreground of the *Samson and Delilah* (fig. 45) is a totally different solution to this problem from the massive *repoussoir* of the table and book on the writing desk of the *St Paul* (fig. 47). In both cases the dark zones serve as a threshold behind which the subtle play of light unfolds to create space. In the *Jeremiah* (fig. 48) the deep, dark red cloth on which the mournful Jeremiah leans fulfils the same function. The prophet's simply modelled blue-grey cloak makes a fascinating connection with the light parts of the background. Rembrandt chose the most revolu-

Fig. 47. Rembrandt, *The apostle Paul at his writing desk*, *c.* 1629/30, panel 47.2 x 38.6 cm. Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum (I A 26) (see also p. 74 fig. 80)

Fig. 48. Rembrandt, *Jeremiah lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem*, 1630, panel 58.3 x 46.6 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (I A 28)
Fig. 49. Rembrandt, *St Peter in prison*, 1631, panel 59.1 x 47.8 cm. Jerusalem, Israel Museum (I A 36)

tionary solution to this *repoussoir* problem for the *Saul and David* (fig. 46), a solution which points the way ahead. In that (badly preserved) painting both protagonists partially occupy the foremost part of the pictorial space, filled with shadow. David's head and body, like Saul's lower leg are, as it were, plunged into an unlit layer such that one could speak of a dark *repoussoir* built into the figures themselves. Rembrandt would often apply this device during the thirties, even in portraits, in order to enhance the intensity of the light on the lit passages.

In all five paintings, the shade and the shadows cast by the figures of course constitute a part of the complex of darkness that amplifies the intensity of the light, in each painting in a different manner. What one sees here is what Van Hoogstraten would later characterize as a procedure: *'to heighten the beauty of the one by obscuring the other'* (see p. 59). One could argue that the Rembrandts in 1627 and '28 were undertaken as investigations of both candle- and sunlight which, after the project of the *Judas repentant* in 1628/29 led to this form of *'ordonnantie'* with *'schikschaduwen'* (shadows serving a compositional function) which were to determine so decisively Rembrandt's career as an artist (see also pp. 59-61). He became, one might say, trapped to this 'schema' in the treatment of light and shadow, imposed upon himself in submission to the intensity and beauty of the lit zones. Because only in this way, he must have thought, could the light acquire the lifelike intensity that he had come to demand. ■

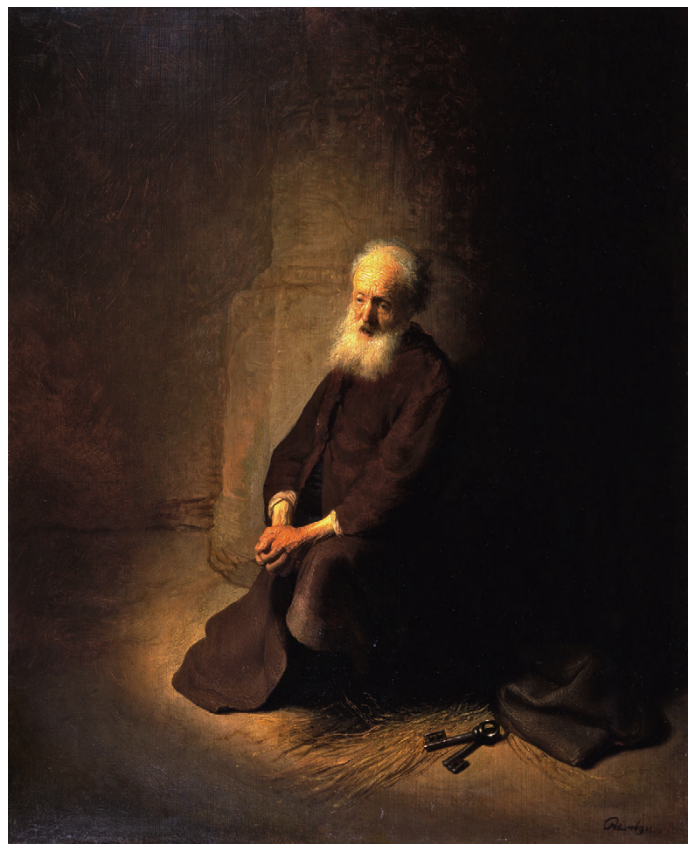
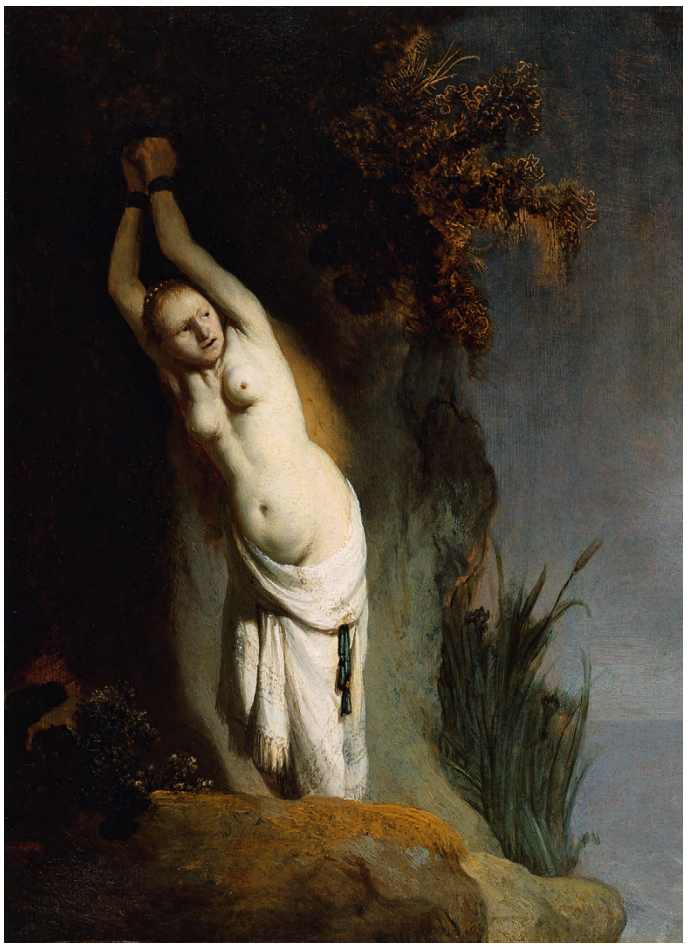


Fig. 50. Rembrandt, *The good Samaritan*, 1630, panel 24.2 x 19.8 cm. London, The Wallace Collection (II C 48)

Fig. 51. Rembrandt, *Andromeda*, 1630/31, panel 34.1 x 24.5 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis (I A 31)



Horst Gerson earlier suggested that the *Good Samaritan* in the Wallace Collection (figs. 50 and 52) might be a copy after a lost original.[15] In *Corpus* II C 48 this suggestion was taken further. The monogram RHL and the date 1630 on the stone in the bottom left corner were at that time still hidden beneath an overpainting and were only discovered in 1976. This overpainting was perhaps commissioned or carried out by one of the painting's earlier owners in the mistaken belief that the inscription was the inventory number of an even earlier owner. It was not unusual to introduce such numbers in paint on the front of paintings. It can scarcely be doubted, however, that we are dealing here with an inscription applied by Rembrandt himself.

That in itself was sufficient reason for the art historian Christopher Brown to reconsider the question of the attribution of this painting. However, this reconsideration was also necessitated because the finding of the inscription meant that the accepted date of the painting, *c.* 1633, needed to be revised. The dating was based on the close link between the painting and an etching by Rembrandt dated 1633 (fig. 102). Apart from the dog added to the scene, this etching corresponds so exactly with the painting that the etching's design must have been transferred from the painting via a tracing technique. The only other possibility is that both the etching and the painting could have been based on a lost prototype, as indeed was assumed by Gerson and the Rembrandt Research Project.

Brown re-attributed the Wallace painting to Rembrandt again, referring to the kinship he perceived with two paintings that originated in 1628/29, the *Handjeklap ('La main chaude')* (fig. 28) and the *Painter in his studio* (fig. 36).[16] Possibly even more convincing is the similarity in their execution between the naked torso of the wounded man and that in *Andromeda* from *c.* 1630 (fig. 51). However, the strongest evidence that the *Good Samaritan* cannot be a copy (and consequently must be the prototype of the etching) comes from a comparison of the painting with the X-radiograph (fig. 53). The difference betrays the painting's exploratory genesis – as one generally sees with Rembrandt's paintings. This is evident, for example, in the zone under the horse's belly where the light distribution must originally have been different. In the X-radiograph, the leg of the helper, who is lifting the wounded man from the horse, is still only roughly reserved. In the painting, a *pentimento* has been executed above the horse's croup and, in addition, the horse's head originally seems to have been turned more toward the beholder.

The question remains as to what could have been the work's *raison d'être*. Was it really intended as the design for a print? That the painting is so definitively signed and dated, as well as the fact that the dates of the painting and the etching are so far apart, suggests that that is unlikely. Moreover, the painting has been executed with close attention to colour. When the RRP suggested that another, almost identical painting must have served as the

Fig. 52. Detail of fig. 50

Fig. 53. X-Ray (detail)

prototype of this painting, it was thought to have been a (lost) grisaille made specifically in preparation for the etching. This idea was based on the assumption that Rembrandt prepared for his more ambitious etchings with grisailles, as in the case of the *Ecce Homo* print (figs. 75 and 76). But this assumption was demolished once Royalton Kisch had demonstrated that the etching after the *Ecce Homo* grisaille was wholly or partly executed by J.G. van Vliet.

If the *raison d'être* of the painting should be sought in Rembrandt's putative exploration of the basic aspects of the art of painting, which of those *'gronden'* might be relevant here? Animals? This is certainly the first horse that Rembrandt painted in close detail (see also pp. 89-91). Or colour (see pp. 103-112)? In particular, the colour of human flesh which, according to a contemporary source, *'in truth is the essence of the whole work'*.[17] Could the challenge of rendering human skin convincingly also be an important *raison d'être* of the (in this respect) strikingly similar *Andromeda?* Or could it also be a concern with landscape (see pp. 81-88)? For all its simplicity, with this painting Rembrandt ventured much further into the field of landscape than ever before.

Or is this painting simply a message about love of one's fellow and how to show this in a visual image convincingly? The answer may well be that all these factors, deliberately chosen for their various reasons, were in play when Rembrandt conceived precisely this painting at this point in the self-chosen path of his development. ■

Fig. 54. Rembrandt, *The presentation in the Temple with the angel*, 1630, plate image, 10.3 x 7.8 cm (B. 51[II])
Fig. 55. Rembrandt, *The Circumcision*, *c.* 1630, plate image 8.8 x 6.4 cm (B. 48)

Fig. 56. Rembrandt, *Christ disputing with the doctors*, 1630, plate image 10.8 x 7.8 cm (B. 66[III])
Fig. 57. Rembrandt, *Simeon's song of praise*, 1631, panel 60.9 x 47.9 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis (I A 34)

In 1630, after three or four years of hard graft, Rembrandt eventually began to succeed as the etcher that he wanted to be – but still only on a very small scale. In these three *c.* 10 cm high etchings with complicated subjects set in the high and deep space of the Temple of Jerusalem Rembrandt achieves his goal of suggesting real light and atmospheric space. The secret of his success here was the patiently executed, lively, dense hatchings in the shadow passages. With patience and unflinching courage the young painter had finally made this recalcitrant technique his own; he had at last produced his first successful histories, albeit as *ars miniatures*.

Of course, this achievement was slight compared with the breath-taking depth and darkness and the strong light effects in the same temple which Rembrandt had realized that same year with light and dark paint in fig. 57. There, however, he had worked on a panel six times higher and with a surface area 60 times greater, and in oil paints which enabled the artist to realize his aims with far less effort than each of these miniature etchings demanded.

These three small etchings must surely have been the beginning of a prematurely aborted series of prints with Christ's youth.

Rembrandt's production of series has so far received very little attention. We know of at least eleven painted or etched series of three or more works, far more than one would expect from an artist with a reputation for being fickle and self-willed. Six of these series concern etchings including the three small etchings reproduced here with scenes from Christ's youth, a series such as Rembrandt again made in 1654. In the latter case, however, he got as far as a series of six (see further on the etched series pp. 246-49. ■

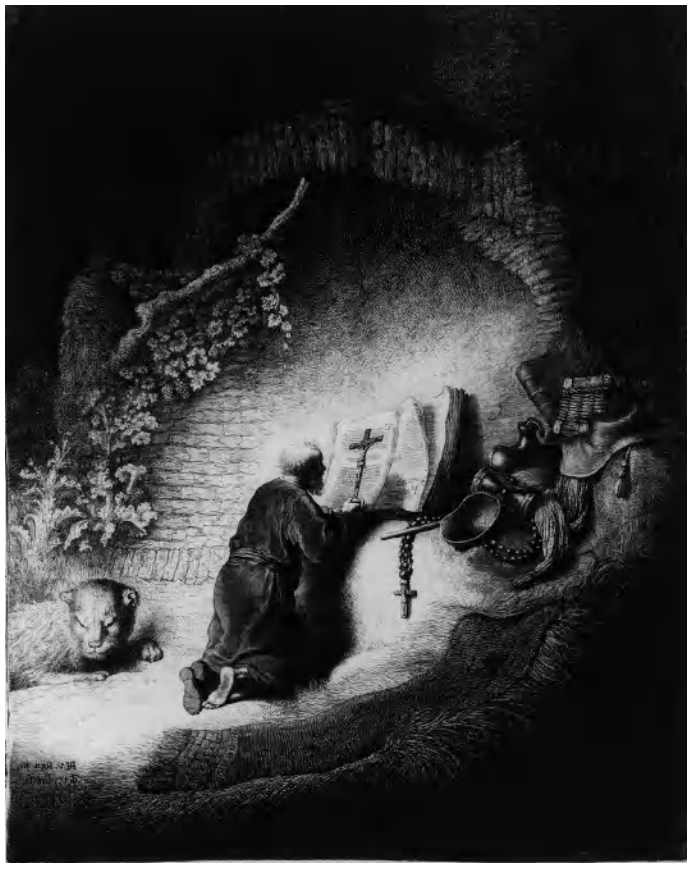
Fig. 58. J.G. van Vliet, *St Jerome kneeling in prayer* (reproduction print after a lost painting by Rembrandt), 1631, plate image 35.4 x 28.4 cm (B. II, 13)

Fig. 59. J.G. van Vliet, *The baptism of the Eunuch* (reproduction print after a lost painting by Rembrandt), 1631, plate image 49 x 39.5 cm (B. II, 12)
Fig. 60. J.G. van Vliet, *Lot and his daughters* (reproduction print after a lost painting by Rembrandt), 1631, plate image *c.* 60 x 48 cm (B. II, 1)

In 1630/31 Rembrandt began a project that is particularly remarkable because it throws light on the self-assuredness of the artist who was then only 24 or 25 years old. He sought the collaboration of the engraver J.G. van Vliet for making prints after four of his Leiden paintings. The idea must have been to launch a major market venture. In 1656 there was still a case with copies of these and seven other prints produced in 1634, the fruits of the collaboration with Van Vliet. Six of these latter prints are of half figures displaying different affects, or in unusual lighting or costume. Given that these six prints were all of the same size, there is speculation that they were intended to constitute a series (possibly of drawing examples?).

Of the first four prints originating about 1631 three were reproductions of history paintings by Rembrandt that have since been lost (figs. 58, 59, 60). These three prints are shown here in mirror image the better to determine the place of the relevant paintings among Rembrandt's history pieces from this period. By far the most ambitious and original of these lost works must have been the *Baptism of the Eunuch*. The words penned by Van Hoogstraten in his *Book on Ordonnance* are highly applicable – one has the feeling that Rembrandt himself could have spoken them: '*… One should make his ordonnance public by publishing prints* [of one's works] *to submit it to the judgement of others and to be able in the future to avoid those failings that are pointed out with reason, whether by friend or foe!…'* (see p. 64).

The praying *St Jerome* (fig. 58) is similar in conception to the figure of Jeremiah in *Jeremiah lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem* (fig. 48), but the painting concerned would appear



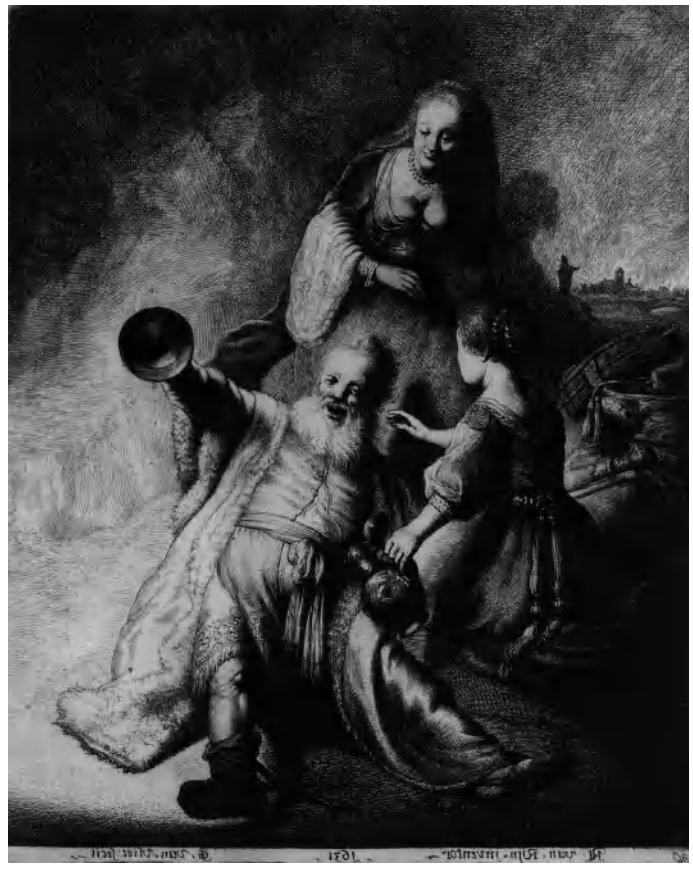


Fig. 61. Rembrandt, *An old woman reading (The prophetess Hanna)*, 1631, panel 59.8 x 47.7 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (I A 37)

Fig. 62. J.G. van Vliet, *An old woman reading* (reproduction print after fig. 61), *c.* 1631, plate image 27.4 x 22.3 cm (B. II, 18)

to have been larger and more ambitious than the *Jeremiah*.

In the case of fig. 58 and fig. 59 it could have been the novel ordonnance that led Rembrandt to publish these inventions but in the case of *Lot and his daughters* (fig. 60), one gets the feeling that there were other reasons for disseminating reproductions – perhaps affects, postures, costumes, rendering of surface structures, or what seems to be more likely for reasons mainly concerning the subject matter.

The fourth of these paintings by Rembrandt after which he had prints made by Van Vliet was the *Prophetess Hannah*. In this case, because that painting has been preserved (fig. 61) we are able to compare prototype with reproduction print (fig. 62). Like the three other history paintings reproduced by Van Vliet in 1631, Rembrandt must have considered this work to be a rather special achievement, for its own reasons. It is the first painting in which the face of the subject, although turned away from the light source, is illuminated by light reflected from the paper such that her facial features are still clearly distinct. When one compares this painting with the print, it is clear that Rembrandt's evident aim of a convincing play of light has not been satisfactorily realized by Van Vliet. To do full justice to the intended effect in the painting the background in the etching would have to be darker.

The fact that in 1656 a case of these prints remained still unsold raises the question of whether Rembrandt had second thoughts about circulating his inventions in the form of reproductions by Van Vliet. Apparently, when it came to the next graphic reproductions after one of his own paintings, the *Raising of Lazarus* of *c.* 1631 (fig. 66) he preferred to make it himself (fig. 67). Only in 1633 was the collaboration between Rembrandt and Van Vliet resumed – but this time Uylenburgh was also involved, as the publisher and possibly also the commissioner (see p. 178).

Apparently the first collaboration between Rembrandt and Van Vliet was prematurely terminated. It is not an unreasonable guess that in 1631 Rembrandt decided himself to execute those inventions that he wished to circulate on a wide scale, first in the form of reproduction prints after his own paintings (figs. 67 and 102), and then as highly detailed prints that he himself conceived and executed (see, for instance, figs. 103, 116 and 147). ■

Fig. 63. Rembrandt, *Minerva in her study*, *c.* 1631, panel 60.5 x 49 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (I A 38)

Fig. 64. Rembrandt, *The abduction of Proserpina*, *c.* 1631 (the sky overpainted by a later hand), panel 84.8 x 79.7 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (I A 39; see also p. 82)

Fig. 65. Engraving by P. Soutman after P.P. Rubens, *The abduction of Proserpina* (detail, see also p. 82)

These two paintings (figs. 63 and 64) were mentioned together in the 1632 inventory of the Stadholder's possessions. They are still together in the same collection, now in the Berlin Gemäldegalerie. It is hard to imagine a greater contrast between two paintings by the same artist done in the same year. The *Minerva* (fig. 63) is a perfunctory portrayal of the Goddess Minerva, neatly painted but certainly not for the purpose of exploring the basic aspects *[gronden]* of the art of painting, with which Rembrandt was still deeply involved at precisely this time – as is evident from the other of the two paintings shown, the *Abduction of Proserpina* (fig. 64).

Just as in 1626 Rembrandt 'answered' works by his teacher Pieter Lastman with paintings of his own (see figs. 12 and 14), so here, in a highly pointed manner, he is engaged in debate with another painter, this time Peter Paul Rubens. The confrontation of the two painter's versions of the same theme demonstrates that Rembrandt – who knew the print after Rubens' version (fig. 65) – was striving for progress in the art of painting through an uncompromising search for an extreme *realism*. The first difference that strikes the eye between Rembrandt's treatment of the *Abduction of Proserpina* and Rubens' version is Proserpina's golden yellow cloak stretched under great tension. This was a stroke of genius on Rembrandt's part, this violent transgression of the convention of a pleasing variation in pleated, falling or streaming drapery, a rule obediently followed by Rubens (see on Rembrandts approach concerning drapery pp. 98-102). What makes Rembrandt's solution so brilliant is that the stretched cloak connects the group containing Pluto and Proserpina to the group of women, including the goddess Diana, who try with all their might to prevent Pluto from taking the struggling Proserpina with him to the underworld. With Rubens, despite the effect of strenuous movement in the scene, the figures are grouped as in a frieze, as separate figures, whereas Rembrandt has joined them at either end of a cloak stretched to its tearing point. Where, in the history of western painting up till then, does one find female figures – including the goddess Diana – so extremely inelegantly dragged along the ground? Where does one find a woman wildly thrashing and scratching as Proserpina does here?

If Rembrandt was driven by ambition – *'to discover everything through his own labours'* (see p. 9) – then it would certainly seem to be evident in this painting. It would seem that Rembrandt engages here with all the *gronden* – basic elements of painting – with a new eye. The vehement attitudes and affects of the protagonists, the unusually

Fig. 66. Rembrandt, *The raising of Lazarus*, *c.* 1631/32, panel 96.2 x 81.5 cm. Los Angeles, County Museum of Art (I A 30; see also p. 120)

Fig. 67. Rembrandt, *The raising of Lazarus*, *c.* 1632, plate image 36.6 x 25.8 cm (B. 73^{III})

dynamic ordonnance, developed in the pictorial space in an original fashion, the landscape foreground executed in a brilliant and original manner, the swiftness of the horses racing toward the underworld, the prominant – almost dominant – role given to the unconventionally stretched drapery, the specific colour harmony of green, yellow white and flesh tone in the lit zone and the intensity of the light in relation to the shadows in the image as a whole: it is all highly original! This painting must once have been one of the most splendid treasures to come from Rembrandt's artistic imagination, but today its original appearance is much distorted – strongly darkened in the extensive passages of shadow, cropped at the top. Moreover, the decision to expose an old (bright blue) overpainting of the sky was highly unfortunate. Here it has been digitally 'restored'.

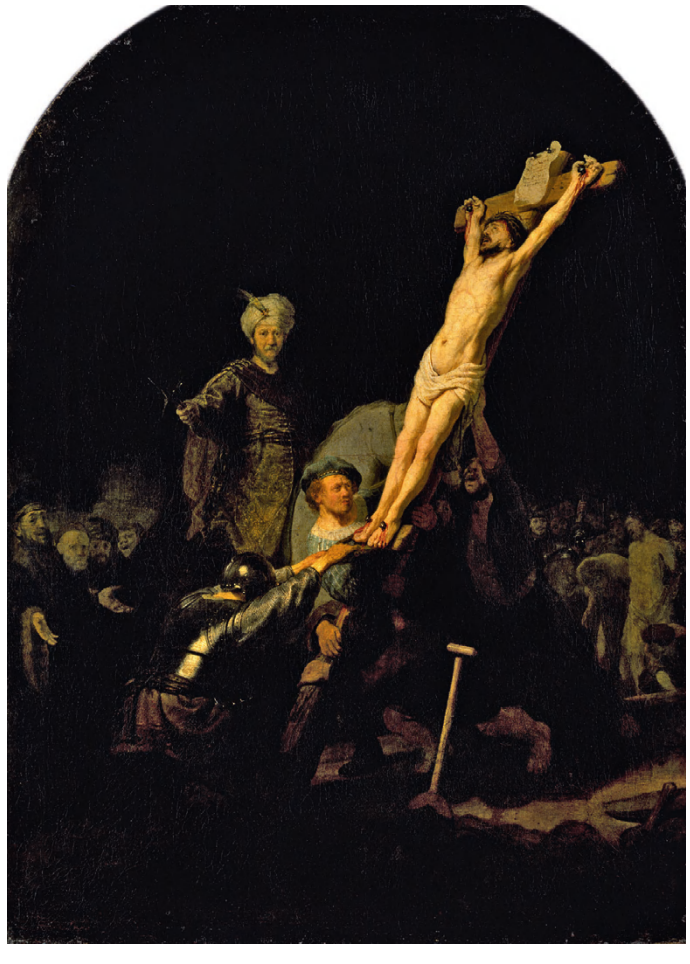
The panels of fig. 64 and fig. 66 probably come from the same thick oak tree. They have been sawn from this trunk such that the soft heart of the trunk runs through the middle of the panel in both paintings. Not only do they show a serious (though restored) more or less vertical split in the middle, they have both been sawn off at the top. The X-radiograph of the *Raising of Lazarus* (see I A 30) testifies to an unusually eventful genesis, during which large parts of an earlier image – probably a wholly different depiction of the same scene with a radically different ordonnance – were scraped away. Josua Bruyn, who (in *Corpus* I pp. 307-08) was responsible for this reading of the painting's material history, summarized his conclusions as follows: 'The course of this painting's production seems to have been complicated by radical alterations, and one must therefore assume a longish process, probably stretching over the years 1630/31.[The present author prefers a dating of that process from 1631- '32.] Of the, roughly, three stages that can be distinguished by means of the X-ray photographs the second must have had a composition which in its left-hand half bore a striking likeness to that of the etching shown in fig. 67. Presumably this etching was started when the painting was in this second stage. […] The unusual appearance of the etching [with its black frame] could be explained if one looks on it as a graphic reproduction of the painting. The hypothesis that the painting in its second stage would have matched the etching in the right-hand half as well and perhaps even in an arched top section removed by Rembrandt cannot be checked against the X-ray photograph, since this is difficult to interpret in the right-hand half due partly to paint having been scraped away. It does allow one to conclude that the figures of Christ and Lazarus were given their present positions only in the third and final stage; as a result of this character of the composition of the painting changed radically vis-à-vis that of the etching as shown in fig. 67 despite a number of motifs still shared by the two pictures.' ■

1631-35/(46). Rembrandt's first two Passion Series (pp. 176-185)

1631-33. Emulating Rubens. A failed reproduction print

Fig. 68. Engraving by P. Pontius after Rubens, *Christ on the Cross*, 1631
Fig. 69. Rembrandt, *Christ on the Cross*, 1631, canvas on panel 99.9 x 72.6 cm. Le Mas d' Agenais, Parish church (I A 35)

Fig. 70. Rembrandt, *The Raising of the Cross*, 1633, canvas 95.7 x 72.2 cm. München, Alte Pinakothek (II A 69)



With his departure from Leiden and arrival in Amsterdam to join Hendrick Uylenburgh's workshop, a wholly new life opened up for Rembrandt in several respects. The most important change was that, from that moment, he found himself nearly fully occupied as a portrait painter. It would seem that the years when he could choose freely what he did were behind him. He had explored most of the basic aspects of the art of history painting *'through his own labours'* and had matured to the point of becoming a recognized master. Now when he painted history pieces it would not in the first place be for the purpose of exploring his possibilities in this field but to put into practice the skills and insights he had already acquired.

Two *Passion series*

Several art historians have pointed out that Rembrandt's *Christ on the Cross* dated 1631 (fig. 69) could have been the germ of the project known as the *Passion series for Frederik Hendrik*. However, this particular painting probably did not arise from a commission. It is argued in *Corpus* I A 35 that it more probably originated in connection with a painting contest between Rembrandt and Jan Lievens in which both young painters took as their starting point a painting by Rubens, known from a print from 1631 (fig. 68).

That Rembrandt's *Christ on the Cross* has the same format as the works which are now counted as belonging to the *Passion* series for Frederik Hendrik (see for the whole series p. 185) and the fact that it is similarly half-round above, makes it highly likely that it was this painting which led to the commission to paint the series. As is well known, Frederik Hendrik's secretary Constantijn Huygens played an intermediary role here. But whether the *Christ on the Cross*

Fig. 71. Engraving by L. Vorsterman after Rubens, *The Descent from the Cross*, 1620

Fig. 72. J.G. van Vliet and Rembrandt, *The Descent from the Cross*, 1633, print 51.8 x 40.2 cm (B. 81 I). Miscarried due to fault in etching process

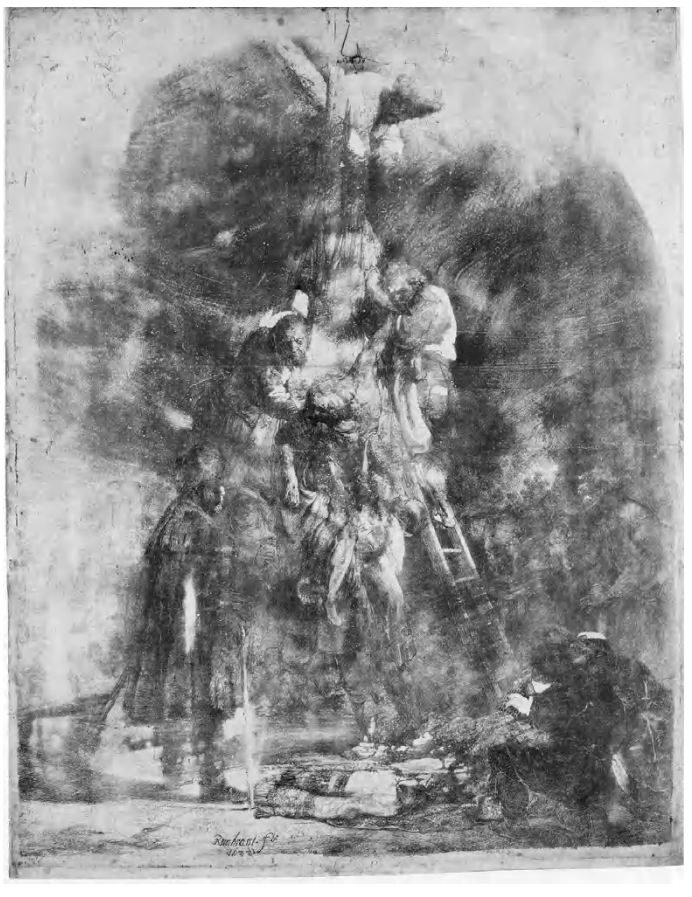


Fig. 73. Rembrandt, *The Descent from the Cross*, 1632/33, panel 89.6 x 65 cm. Munich, Alte Pinakothek (II A 65)

ever actually belonged to this series – and if not why not – remains an unanswered question.

The creation of the *Passion* series for Frederik Hendrik subsequently dragged on for certainly fifteen years, no doubt much longer than was originally estimated (see p. 185). However, that project soon branched off into another, exceptionally ambitious, not to say megalomanic project for a series of monumental prints. Only two of these were actually executed (figs. 74 and 76), while we know of certainly four, possibly even six, grisailles made in preparation for prints which, although planned, were never executed (see p. 184).

This derivative project may have arisen out of a particular incident. In the *Descent from the Cross* for Frederik Hendrik (fig. 73), just as in the *Christ on the Cross*, Rembrandt was emulating Rubens. Rembrandt took as his reference point Vorsterman's print after Rubens' *Descent from the Cross* in the Antwerp cathedral (fig. 71). Rubens' heroic pathos was fundamentally transformed by Rembrandt into a powerful realism that evokes in the viewer a deep sense of involvement in Christ's suffering. Early in 1633 a print after the painting was made by J.G. van Vliet. Some details may have been executed or corrected by Rembrandt himself. The same was found to be the case with the *Ecce Homo* (fig. 76). The discovery that a professional printmaker was involved in bringing one of Rembrandt's grisailles into print had a major impact in several respects. Firstly, it proved that, in this case at least, Rembrandt had not made grisailles in preparation for etchings that he himself was supposed to execute, thus undermining the more general conviction that he made grisailles for his own etchings. More importantly in the present context, it suggested that ▸

Fig. 74. J.G. van Vliet and Rembrandt, *The Descent from the Cross*, 1633, print 53 x 41 cm (B. 81 (2)^{II})

Fig. 75. Rembrandt, *Ecce Homo*, 1634, paper on canvas 54.5 x 44.5 cm. London, The National Gallery (II A 89)
Fig. 76. Rembrandt, *Ecce Homo*, 1636, print 54.9 x 44.7 cm (B. 77^{IV})

the other grisailles of this period were not intended to be works in their own right (see p. 184).

It seems that during the process of etching the plate with the copy after the *Descent from the Cross* the acid bite was a disaster (fig. 72) and so, in the same year, Van Vliet (and Rembrandt) returned to the intended reproduction print a second time, working on a new plate which turned out very well (fig. 74).

Whereas Rembrandt had applied his signature to the first, miscarried plate with only his name, he now added to his signature the words *cum pryvlo* (*pryvilegio)*, clear evidence of Rembrandt's ambition with this powerful 'invention'. In the third state of the print, which probably appeared in the same year, the following text was engraved after Rembrandt's *cum pryvlo: 'Amstelodami Hendrickus Ulenburgensis Excudebat'* (Hendrick Uylenburgh from Amsterdam is the publisher [of this print]). It would therefore seem that Rembrandt and Uylenburgh together had great plans for this print or that it was the launch of a major project for more prints whose copyright had to be safeguarded. It is significant in this context that the miscarried print, like the painting of the *Descent from the Cross* after which it was copied, was half-round above (see fig. 72), whereas the newly made print was rectangular. This is important because in 1634 Rembrandt made a grisaille – the *Ecce Homo* (fig. 75) – with the same format as the second, rectangular print after the *Descent from the Cross* (fig. 74).

Since the two prints discussed here (figs. 74 and 76) are very large, their thematic relationship eventually raised the suspicion that they were intended as pendants or possibly as the beginning of a series. This suspicion was strengthened by the fact, mentioned above, that in the same period two almost equally large grisailles were painted (figs. 77 and 78).

The idea that these grisailles were indeed part of a separate, large-scale *Passion series* project in the making, a project that had branched off from the *Passion series for Frederik*

Fig. 77. Rembrandt, *Joseph telling his dreams*, *c.* 1634, paper stuck on card, 55.8 x 39.7 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (II A 66)
Fig. 78. Rembrandt, *John the Baptist preaching*, 1634/35, canvas 62.7 x 81.1 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (III A 106), original size

Fig. 79. Rembrandt, *John the Baptist preaching*, 1634/35, canvas 62.7 x 81.1 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (III A 106), enlarged by Rembrandt himself around 1640.

Hendrik, seemed increasingly obvious. But there was one problem that stood in the way: among these grisailles there was one scene from the Old Testament. And because of this, the grisailles referred to were for long considered (also by the Rembrandt Research Project during the work on the second Volume of *A Corpus*) as separate paintings in their own right, albeit of the existing grisaille type of painting. Only during the work on Volume III did it dawn on us that there must be some connection between these works (see *Corpus* III pp. 79-80). The fact that they were both executed on paper or loose scraps of canvas added to the growing insight that they were not paintings in their own right. The fact that both the *Ecce Homo* print and the print after the *Descent from the Cross* were generally attributed to Rembrandt had also helped to obscure the nature of this connection. Only when Royalton Kisch clearly demonstrated that these two etchings were largely executed by Van Vliet did it become clear that they were not entirely independent works, but were essentially part of a *Passion series* of prints, to be executed by a professional printmaker on the basis of designs by Rembrandt.

The case became all the stronger when it was realized that the scene with *Joseph telling his dreams* (fig. 77) could be incorporated in this context: although it comes from the Old Testament, this scene is entirely compatible with a *Passion series*. Albrecht Dürer's small *Passion series*, after all, begins with two scenes from the Old Testament, the *Fall of Man*, and the *Expulsion from Paradise*, the very cause of Christ's redemption of mankind from original sin through his death and resurrection. The story of Joseph's brother was considered one of the most striking prefigurations of Christ, his passion and resurrection. In this story the prominence in the foreground of the *Ecce Homo* grisaille/print of the members of the Sanhedrin, the priests who try to force Pilate to condemn Christ to death (figs. 75 and 76), may be read in the light of this prefiguration. They could be seen as analogous to Joseph's brothers who sought to have him killed.

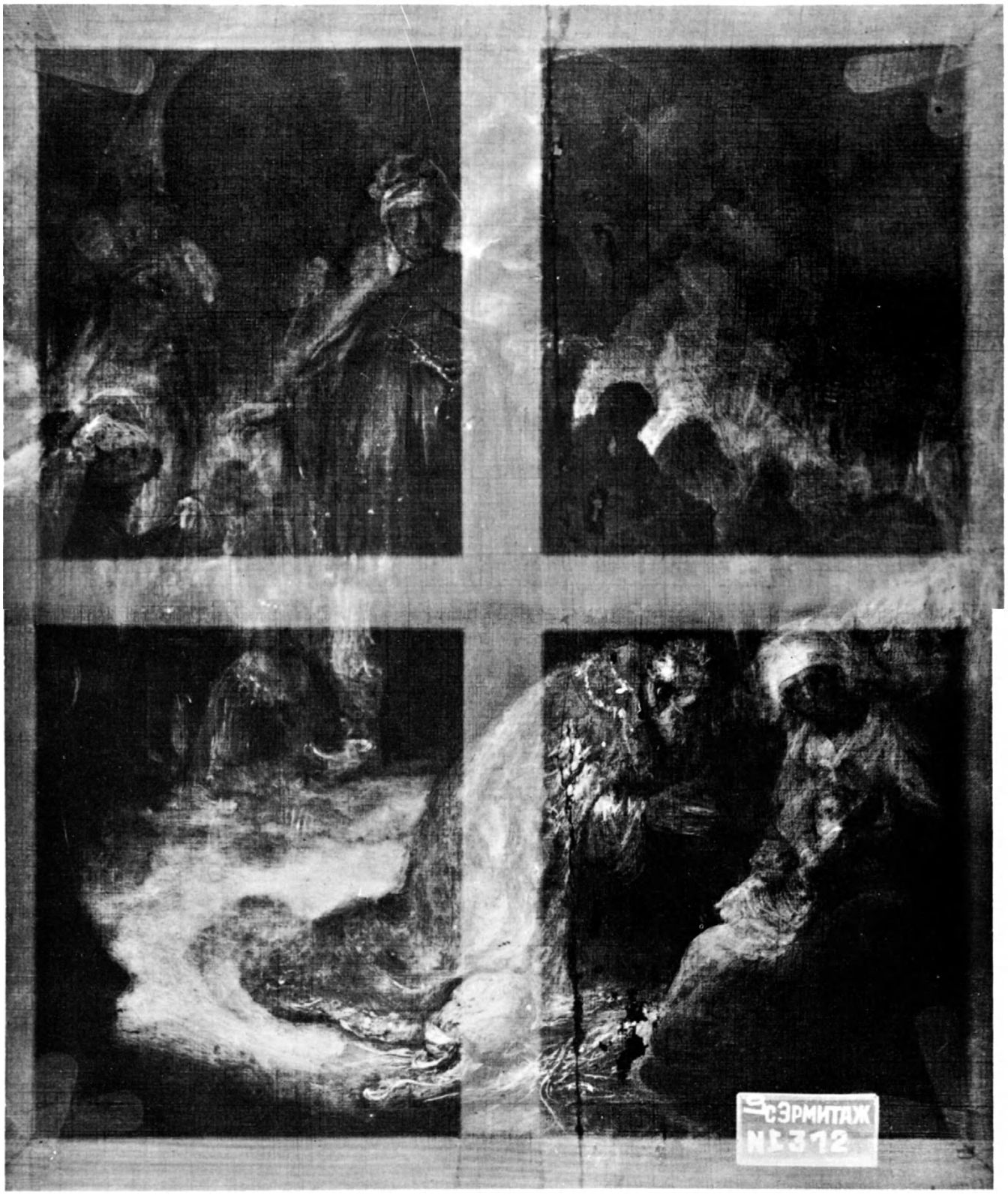
The story of Joseph was of special significance to the Mennonite Brotherhood to which Hendrick Uylenburgh belonged, because the brethren identified strongly with the band of Christ's disciples. The Mennonite connection is thus not only of significance in understanding the important place in the series of the *John the Baptist preaching* (fig. 78), for Mennonites held a radical belief in adult baptism, it also explains the fact that all the disciples are depicted in the *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane* – a scene almost never encountered in the iconographic tradition of the Gethsemane episode of the Passion. This work (fig. 82) is executed in chalk and ink wash but should also be considered as a grisaille for a planned etching in this series. ▸

Fig. 80. Rembrandt, *The Adoration of the Magi*, 1633/35, paper on canvas
44.8 x 39.1 cm. St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (II C 46)

The grisaille on paper with the *Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 80), which was only in 1969 recognized as a possible Rembrandt, should also be seen in the context of preparations for the planned series. Previously, the Rembrandt Research Project had not accepted this grisaille as an autograph work by Rembrandt (see *Corpus* II C 46). When Volume II was published, the possibility of a close connection between the various grisailles from the 1630's had not yet been realized. The genesis of this painting is typical of Rembrandt's way of working. Passages that were originally lighter were toned down, such as parts of the foreground terrain, and in the background behind a few silhouetted figures in the middle ground. Probably with the same end in view, i.e. to reduce the number of lit passages for the sake of a more concentrated lighting, a darkly clad page was added behind the kneeling Magus (compare figs. 80 and 81).

The different phases of this genesis, evidence of a creative process suggestive of Rembrandt, were already known to the original Rembrandt Research Project team. Today these observations regarding the work's genesis weigh heavily in

Fig. 81. X-Ray



favour of an attribution of the grisaille to Rembrandt, but at the time of work on Volume II the locally unsatisfactory execution was thought to weigh more heavily against. If we are to gain further insight into the painting's execution and pictorial qualities the distorting layer of varnish will first have to be removed.

As already suggested, the drawing with *Christ and his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane* (fig. 82) also seems to have been made in preparation for the series tentatively reconstructed here. The unusually large scale and the remarkably refined distinctions of tonal relations within the work, rather unusual for a drawing by Rembrandt, have always puzzled specialists in the field of Rembrandt's drawings. But if one assumes that this refinement is also part of the preparation for a print to be executed by a specialized printmaker, it becomes all the more obvious that this work too should be placed in the context of the *Passion series* discussed here.

As already indicated above, the image of Christ sur- ▸

Fig. 82. Rembrandt, *Christ with his disciples*, 1634, pen and brown ink with brown and other washes and red and black chalk, 35.7 x 48.8 cm. Haarlem, Teylers Museum (Ben. 89)

Fig. 83. Rembrandt, *The incredulity of Thomas*, 1634, panel 53 x 50 cm. Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts (II A 90)

rounded by all his disciples (apart from Judas) in the Garden of Gethsemane is extremely rare. The moment represented here is when, on arrival in the Garden, Christ says (Luke 22:40-41): *'Pray that ye enter not into temptation'* and then withdraws with three of the disciples to pray alone. The theme of human weakness is illustrated in this Gethsemane drawing/grisaille too; one of the disciples has already fallen asleep. The disciple seen from the back in the left foreground, is seen to be yawning as he looks round, shielding his gaping mouth to prevent Christ seeing it.

The drawing is signed by Rembrandt and dated 1634. In the same year Rembrandt painted the *Incredulity of Thomas* (fig. 83). In that painting too all eleven disciples (as well as Mary and Mary Magdalene) are shown. Jesus says *'be not faithless but believing'*. Feelings of guilt associated with the danger of a lack of faith played an important role in the Mennonite community. The episode of the doubting Thomas exemplified this danger: even Jesus' disciples could lack belief in Christ's resurrection after his sacrifice for mankind. It is therefore telling in this same context that the first known owner and possibly purchaser of Rembrandt's *Incredulity of Thomas* was the Mennonite merchant Ameldonck Leeuw. One is tempted to suggest that this painting

Fig. 84. Rembrandt, *Christ in the storm on the Lake of Galilee*, 1633, canvas 160 x 128 cm. Whereabouts unknown (II A 68). Stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (see also p. 127)

might also have had to do with the development of the series of prints under discussion here. The *Christ in the storm*, a rarely depicted subject, could possibly also have originated in the same context (fig. 84).

Two considerably smaller grisailles from the same period, the *Lamentation* (fig. 85) and the *Entombment* (fig. 87), which is in places extremely sketchily executed, might also be related to the hypothetical *Passion series* discussed above. The fact that they are grisailles, together with the fact that they seem to have originated in the same period as the other grisailles argues in favour of this suggestion, and moreover the *Lamentation* in its first form, cropped by Rembrandt himself, was on paper. We don't know how large that paper was originally, and thus how large was the original conception of that work. Rembrandt apparently had major difficulties with the completion of this work (for a full discussion, see *Corpus* III A 105). Simultaneously he worked on two, smaller, designs, a drawing as well as this grisaille, apparently trying to condense the complex narrative context of this scene into a single, unified composition which would contain references to past and future – the purpose presumably being to create a design for an etching, either for the large format print series discussed here or for some other purpose. However, given the fact that these designs were of the same size, one can exclude the idea that in this form both were related to the large format *Passion series*; but having cropped the grisaille, Rembrandt could have continued working on it with another series in mind. The two designs are of the same size as two of his most ambitious etchings from that period: the *Good Samaritan* from 1633 and the *Angel appearing to the shepherds* from 1634 (for a further discussion of this connection see p. 193) ■

Fig. 85. Rembrandt, *The Lamentation*, 1634/35, paper on canvas, subsequently on panel 31.9 x 26.7 cm. London, The National Gallery (III A 107) (Later additions omitted from this reproduction) (see also p. 317)
Fig. 86. Rembrandt, *The Lamentation*, *c.* 1637-38, pen and brush, chalk and oil on paper, 21.6 x 25.4 cm. London, The British Museum (Ben. 154)
Fig. 87. Rembrandt, *The Entombment*, *c.* 1635, panel 32.1 x 40.3 cm. Glasgow, Hunterian Art Gallery (III A 105)

1. (see fig. 77)

2. (see fig. 80)

3. (see fig. 78)

4. (see fig. 82)

5. (see fig. 75)

6. (see fig. 74)

7. (hypothetical) (see fig. 85)

8. (hypothetical) (see fig. 87)

Reconstruction of an unfinished Passion series in prints.
The images 1 – 8 are iconographically arranged.

no.	*technique*	*remarks*
1	oil paint on paper	Close setting of female figure to the left and partial inscription on the right indicate cropping on those sides.
2	oil paint on paper	A copy in Gøteborg (Br. 541) shows indications that the painting has been cropped to a greater or lesser extent on all four sides.
3	oil paint on loose sheet of canvas	In the process of enlarging this grisaille narrow strips were cut from all four sides.
4	various drawing materials on paper	The cropping of the feet of the disciple lying in foreground and traces of cropping on the right (as a result of which one of the disciples was probably cut off) indicate that this drawn grisaille was cropped along the bottom and right side.
5	oil paint on prepared paper	Grisaille in original condition; tracing marks; same size as the print made after it.
6	etching	After one of the paintings for the Passion Series for Frederik Hendrik (fig. 73).
7	oil on paper stuck to canvas	The grisaille was begun on paper, possibly of the same size as figs. 1-6, then reduced and fixed on a piece of canvas such that the narrative content could be expanded. Around 1645 it was enlarged by a pupil. Enlargements not shown here (see p. 316).
8	panel	Panel has its original size, being of the same width as 1-6; As this is a night scene in a tomb the upper part of the design may have needed no further detailing.

1. (hypothetical) (see fig. 69)

2. (see fig. 73)

3. (see fig. 70)

4. (see fig. 127)

5. (see fig. 151)

6. (see fig. 152)

7. (see fig. 190)

8. (copy after lost original) (see fig. 192)

The Passion series for Frederik Hendrik.
The images 1-8 are arranged in the chronological order of their production

no.	*date*	*support*	*remarks*
1	1631	canvas stuck on panel	This work could have led to the order to paint a Passion Series for Frederik Hendrik, although this painting itself need not necessarily have been part of the series.
2	1632/33	Spanish cedar	
3	1633	canvas	
4	1636	canvas	
5	1635/1639	canvas	
6	1635/1639	canvas	
7	1646	canvas	
8	1646	—	Copy after lost original

1633-35. Rembrandt's early Amsterdam drawings with 'histories'.

Fig. 88. Rembrandt, *The Lamentation*, *c.* 1635, pen and brown ink, 17.3 x 15.5 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 100r)

Fig. 89. Rembrandt, *Jacob mourning at the sight of Joseph's bloody coat*, *c.* 1634, pen and brush and brown ink, 17.4 x 15.5 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 95)

Drawing has a special place among the different media that an artist working on a flat surface can make use of; in fact, drawing can be compared with thinking aloud. In jotting down a first idea for a scene, the drawing hand is, as it were, a direct extension of the artist's imagination. The hand's movements are almost unconsciously directed in evoking such an image (see figs. 88 and 96). Such movements directly linked to the imaginative idea determine the character of many of Rembrandt's drawings. As a result, his drawings have a quality we usually refer to as 'spontaneous'. It is an aspect of Rembrandt's drawings that has certainly contributed to his fame – but not only because of that spontaneity. The drawings reproduced in figs. 88 and 96 are certainly no masterpieces; they are hastily drawn registrations of Rembrandt's first thoughts. In a rather more developed drawing like that in fig. 95 one finds a combination of this same scarcely controlled haste with, in places, a much greater degree of control of the moving hand. But there too one can speak of a spontaneity. This combination of two degrees of spontaneity is evident, for example, in fig. 89 where Rembrandt tries to render the affect of despair in the face of the distraught Jacob, heartbroken at the sight of the bloodied coat of his son Joseph, whom he imagines to be dead. In this face too the traces of the pen are executed with spontaneity, and not in the least laboriously. In these lines it appears to be the imagination – in this instance inspired by empathy for the suffering Jacob – that guides the moving hand. It is not only the way Rembrandt has rendered the contracted eyebrows and the open hanging mouth, groaning in grief, and the hands and legs clamped together in a gesture of despair. In looking at this image the beholder also physically feels the weight with which Jacob's recoiling trunk is thrown against the back of the chair.

It is clear that the skill with which this image was created is not to be obtained solely by diligent practice. It is a mixture of highly developed skill, a powerful visual imagination and a remarkable capacity for empathy with the figure or figures that Rembrandt portrays. This combination of talents, capacities and humanity seems to be the key to the exceptional manner in which Rembrandt's drawings so move the beholder as well as arousing his or her admiration

Although many of Rembrandt's drawings have been preserved, there were many more that have not. This does not mean that all those drawings that were not preserved on paper have been lost, though certainly more than a few have. Because of the special role of drawing in the artist's work, each of Rembrandt's works – be it an etching, painting or a more elaborated drawing – has, in its first lay-out, passed through the stage of a 'thinking aloud' drawing. Not for nothing did Karel van Mander call drawing the '*wet nurse of all arts*' and the *'father of the art of painting'*. Clearly, not all of Rembrandt's works that began as a drawing were done on paper. For instance, Rembrandt's etchings could well be considered as drawings, drawings that were so executed and then processed in the acid bath that they could be multiplied on the printing press. Considered as the products of draughtsmanship, the prints of Rembrandt's etchings mostly show a more controlled hand and are much more detailed than his drawings on paper. Other drawings, however, must have played a role in the creation of these refined works (apart, that is, from such drawings as figs. 148, 199, 201). In a few cases it can be demonstrated that Rembrandt's etching ground – the acid-proof layer covering the plate – was white.[18] In these white grounds Rembrandt usually scratched the lines to be etched by the acid in the copper plate. If the suspicion voiced in pp. 192 and 219 is correct, viz. that most of Rembrandt's etchings were produced during *'the long winter evenings'*, it would have been

Fig. 90. Rembrandt, *Studies for St John the Baptist preaching* (see fig. 78), *c.* 1634, pen and brown ink, 16.7 x 19.5 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 141)

Fig. 91. Rembrandt, *Sheet of Studies*, *c.* 1633, metalpoint on prepared vellum (fragment of a lost 'tafelet'), 13 x 8 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Ben. 341)

a logical choice for Rembrandt as a rule to use a white rather than the usual dark etching ground, and it would be natural for him first to sketch his intended image on it, possibly with charcoal, although those sketches would be irreparably lost. The hypothetic existence of such preparatory sketches on the etching ground would explain the high degree of control that is characteristic of the etched 'sketch' lines that can be seen on many of the etchings which Rembrandt left half-completed (see figs. 203, 226, 241). These lines may have been introduced in such a controlled manner because Rembrandt was guided by the preliminary sketches – now all lost forever – on his presumed white etching ground.

Other drawings have been lost because they were done on an erasable drawing tablet, or *tafelet*, with the lines of an erasable metal stylus. Only a few such tablets or fragments of these have survived (fig. 91). In Rembrandt's time these tablets (usually made from recycled, prepared parchment) were bound in the form of sketchbooks, most of which have been partly or wholly lost through wear and tear. They were used by tradesman, poets, mariners etc, and also by painters for making notes or jotting down ideas that could be worked up later.

Many of Rembrandt's other drawings still exist, but are hidden under his paintings. Rembrandt's brush drawings on panel or canvas were, we know, often broader and rougher than his drawings on paper. In the case of unfinished paintings the sketch lines are sometimes partly visible (see fig. 134). In other cases they can be rendered visible by radiation investigations (see p. 633 fig. 14).

Taking this broad view, the continuing discussion over how many drawings can be attributed to Rembrandt becomes largely futile. Rembrandt must have made thousands of drawings in the course of his 'thinking aloud' in all possible ways and for many different purposes. In some of his drawings after nature, in his landscapes for example, or in his drawings with domestic scenes, one finds an almost calligraphic mastery which leads one to suspect that these did not originate from direct observation but were rather created on the basis of rough sketches after nature, either on his *tafelet* or, for example, using black chalk on paper.

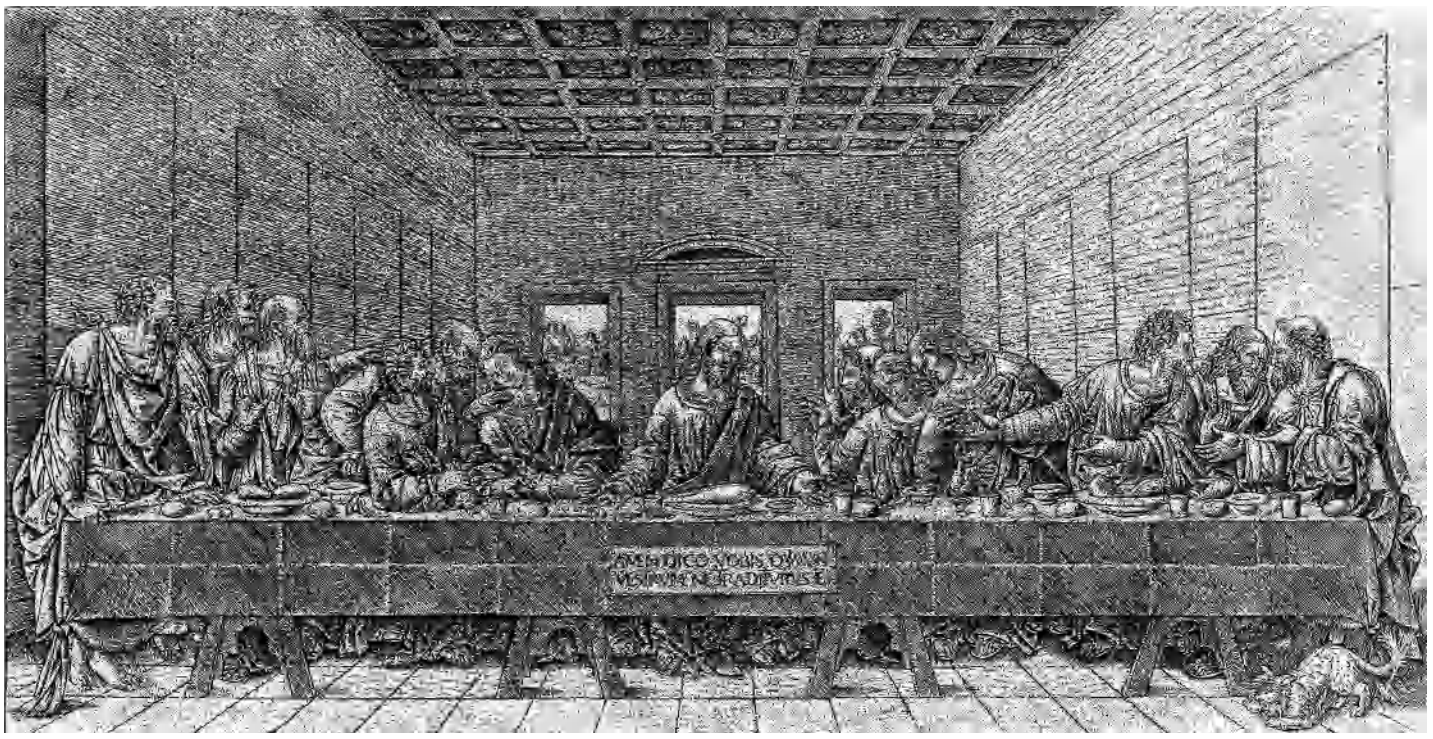
We can infer from the 1656 inventory of Rembrandt's possessions that he was well aware of the special significance of sketches such as those shown on these four pages. One finds in the inventory entries such as *'Een boek vol schetsen, van Rembrant'* ['A book full of sketches, by Rembrandt']; *'Een anticq boeck in swart leer gebonden met de beste schetsen van Rembrant'* ['An old book in black leather with the best sketches by Rembrandt'*]; 'Schetsen van Rembrant met de pen geteeckent'* ['Sketches by Rembrandt drawn with the pen']. Rembrandt's sketches were sometimes included in '*Eenige packetten met schetsen soo van Rembrandt als anders'* ['Some bundles of sketches by Rembrandt and others']. Among these unspecified works on paper would have been found the many sketches with histories which, apparently, were not systematically preserved by subject (as were those in which he kept his figure, landscape or animal drawings, or his drawings of '*naked men and women*' or *'antique statues'*, organized according to type for possible eventual use either by himself or his pupils).

Rembrandt seems to have preserved his sketches with histories equally carefully, even when they probably had no further functional purpose. This habit can perhaps be traced to an idea that, as far as is known, Albrecht Dürer was the first to articulate. Dürer did so in a book that Rembrandt must have read (for more on this see especially pp. 39 and 135), where Dürer writes : *'one man may sketch something with his pen on half a sheet of paper in one day, …, and it turns out to be better*

Fig. 92. Anonymous Italian, after Leonardo da Vinci, *The Last Supper*, mid 16th century, engraving

Fig. 93. Rembrandt, Sketch after fig. 92, *c.* 1635, red chalk 12.4 x 21 cm. London, British Museum (Ben. 444)

Fig. 94. Rembrandt, Sketch after fig. 92, *The Last Supper*, 1635, pen and brush in brown ink, 12.8 x 35.5 cm. Berlin Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 445)



and more artistic than another's large work at which its author labours with the utmost diligence for a whole year.' It is evident from a passage in Arnold Houbraken's biography of Rembrandt that Rembrandt's contemporaries – and certainly the art-lovers of the following generation – greatly admired Rembrandt's sketches with histories. Houbraken, after expressing his admiration for a number of Rembrandt's painted small-scale history pieces, continues as follows: '*It pleases us [….] to say something about his life-like and inimitable etching, which alone would have sufficed to maintain his fame. Of the literally hundreds known to the lovers of art in print, and similarly no smaller number of sketches done with pen on paper, in which the emotions related to all kinds of incidents are so artfully and clearly shown in their essential characteristics that one is amazed. Anger, hate, sorrow, joy and so forth, are all so naturally depicted that one can read from the lines of the pen what each of them wants to say.'* It is interesting that Houbraken pays extra attention here to one drawing in particular: '*Among many that stand out from the multitude is the portrayal of Christ's Last Supper which I have seen with the art loving Van der Schelling, at present in the possession of heer Will. Six,*

Fig. 95. Rembrandt, *Christ carrying the Cross*, *c.* 1635, pen and brown ink, wash, 14.4 x 26 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 97)

Fig. 96. Rembrandt. *The rape of Ganymede* (sketch related to fig. 119), pen and wash drawing, 18.5 x 16.1 cm. Dresden, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 92)

mentioned earlier, and which is estimated at more than twenty ducats, even though it is merely a sketch done with pen on paper. From which one can only conclude that he had made such a powerful observation of the various passions and emotions, that he could impress a fixed image in his mind.'[19] No doubt the drawing that Houbraken specifically mentions here is the one reproduced in fig. 94. It is one of the few sketches that Rembrandt signed and dated, apparently in connection with its sale to an art-lover. As in his other sketches with histories, we can see Rembrandt 'thinking aloud' here over Leonardo's *Last Supper*, which Rembrandt knew from a reproduction print that he must have possessed (fig. 92).

Undoubtedly, the drawing of histories must have had a special status for Rembrandt because there, more than in any other kinds of drawings (the drawings of figures, animals, landscapes etc.), he could give full reign to invention, as Karel van Mander had put it in his *'Grondt'* (see p. 53). *'For painters, this* ordening *is also essential, because this is where the excellence and the strength of art come together, also perfection and spirit, as well as the thoroughness of the thought, attention and wide experience. This is why there are so few so supremely competent in invention [that we] hear them praised as exceeding others in fame.'*

Moreover, histories posed the challenge to depict the affects and postures of the protagonists – and the intensity of their interactions. Rembrandt's ability to achieve this in an unrivalled manner will be repeatedly demonstrated and discussed throughout this survey. ■

Fig. 97. Rembrandt, *The Descent from the Cross*, 1634, canvas 159.3 x 116.4 cm.
St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (II C 49)

The entry in *Corpus* II dealing with the *Descent from the Cross* in the Hermitage, signed and dated 1634 (fig. 97), can be seen as a demonstration of the consequences that may result when priority is accorded to connoisseurship based exclusively on stylistic considerations in the assessment of a painting. The summary of the relevant text (*Corpus* II C 49, p. 630) reads: 'Although based, in respect of various motifs, on Rembrandt's *Descent from the Cross* of 1632/33 (fig. 73), this painting must because of its style be looked on as by a different hand. It appears to have been produced in Rembrandt's studio, presumably in the early 1640's, although the exceptional type of canvas used recurs in a work of 1634 and would therefore suggest an earlier date. The lack of homogeneity in the execution tempts one to think of participation by more than one hand but an attribution to a single pupil (who remains to be identified) is more likely.'

With slight exaggeration, one might say that Rembrandt is here being told by the Rembrandt Research Project how he could *not* paint in 1634, while a (still) unidentified pupil in *c.* 1640 *could*. And this is asserted against several compelling, objective arguments that make an attribution of the painting to Rembrandt virtually incontestable.

It is true that, in many respects, the painting is strikingly different from a *Descent from the Cross* that Rembrandt painted in 1632/33 – i.e. not more than a year or two earlier – in the context of a prestigious commission from the Stadholder of the Seven Provinces of the Netherlands for a *Passion series* (see fig. 73 and p. 185). The difference between the two paintings is so great that it is indeed difficult to imagine that they were the product of the same artistic mind or hand. But we have already seen this with Rembrandt, for example in the comparison on p. 7 between the Leiden *History piece* and the *Judas repentant*, painted only two or three years apart. The difference between the two paintings of the *Descent from the Cross* might well have been pointed out in the discussion of those paintings in Volume II as the fruit of a questing mind. But at that time, in the 1980's, the thinking about style and the evolution of style was still dominated by the idea of a correspondence between a painter's unique character and his equally unique style (in Max Friedlander's words, "the unchangeable core of the man and his style"). That idea, however, proved to be very much a product of its time and, as in the case of Rembrandt, led to a number of unwarranted disattributions. Indeed, progress in our understanding of such stylistic differences was only made after a re-evaluation of the criteria then employed, by investigating 17th-century ideas about art (as demonstrated in Chapter I), and when the more concrete and objective evidence was given its due weight in the assessment of each case. In the present case, such evidence was already known and mentioned in the relevant entry, i.e.

– that we have here a large painting with Rembrandtesque characteristics;

– the canvas on which it is painted, with a very high degree of probability, comes from the same bolt of linen as a painting that also bears the date 1634, the *Flora* (II A 93), which coincidentally also hangs in St Petersburg;

– the X-radiographs of the *Descent from the Cross* show that the genesis of this painting was just as eventful as with many paintings that are unhesitatingly attributed to Rembrandt. Moreover, the traces of this lively genesis, in some cases revealing radical pentimenti, correlate with those aspects of the art of painting that especially engaged Rembrandt's mind: ordonnance and the treatment of light (see pp. 53-64 and 71-80). Both in the arranging of the figures and in the extent and the detail of the relations between light and shadow, as well as in the eventual definition of the forms, the painter has confidently intervened with a bold hand and altered his work in a way that is typical of Rembrandt. (Having said that, it should perhaps be added that we know virtually nothing in this regard, for example, of the early Govaert Flinck? The Govaert Flinck Research Project should begin at once.[20]

– that there are several pieces of evidence constituting a very strong argument that the painting must have remained in Rembrandt's house for a long time, probably from the time of its creation until 1656. To begin with, Heinrich Jansen, a pupil of Rembrandt who was in his workshop between 1645 and 1648, must have copied the painting and taken the copy back with him to his home town of Flensburg. In 1650 this evidently free copy – or a free copy, signed by Jansen, after his own original copy – hung as an epitaph in St Mary's Church in Sønderborg. Secondly, there is the fact that a free variant with life-size figures was painted in the 1650's in Rembrandt's late style, apparently by a pupil. As Wheelock has demonstrated, this variant which is now in Washington was originally of larger format (II C 49, Copy 2; see p. 265, no. 20a, b).

– The fact that these two copies /variants were undoubtedly made after the St Petersburg *Descent from the Cross* is already in itself a strong argument in favour of attributing that painting to Rembrandt, for such satellites were as a rule produced after prototypes by the master (see pp. 259-310). When *'Een afdoeningh van 't kruijs, groot van Rembrant, met een schone goude lijst'* ['A descent from the cross, large by Rembrandt, with a beautiful gold frame'] is listed in the inventory of Rembrandt's possessions, drawn up in 1656, this can hardly be other than the painting after which Heinrich Jansen and the anonymous author of the painting mentioned above made their copies or variants.

– There are strong indications that the art dealer Johannes de Renialme bought several works by Rembrandt at the 1656 sale. In the inventory of De Renialme's estate after his own death in 1657 there is an entry for a *'Descent from the Cross by Rembrandt'* which is so highly valued (400 guilders) that one may infer that at that time there was no doubt that the painting was an autograph Rembrandt.

These several arguments converge overwhelmingly in favour of a re-attribution of the Hermitage *Descent from the Cross* to Rembrandt. When the painter's hand and the relation between paint and illusion in this painting are compared with the same characteristics in two equally ambitious paintings on canvas in the Hermitage, the already mentioned *Flora* and the *Abraham's sacrifice*, from 1634 and '35 respectively, over whose authenticity there is no question, any doubt over the attribution of the St Petersburg *Descent from the Cross* to Rembrandt disappears.

The difference between this painting and the *Descent from the Cross* that Rembrandt painted for the Stadholder Frederik Hendrik can perhaps best be described by quoting a poem about the work discussed here from the time when it was in the possession of Valerius Röver – *There we see your [Rembrandt's] Mount Calvary so wonderfully depicted/ The sorrowing mother swoons, and each plays his role in the tragedy.*[21] The ambition behind this painting is evidently so different from that behind the *Descent from the Cross* in the *Passion series* that a disattribution of the St Petersburg painting on the basis of essential differences from the other one would indicate a misunderstanding of the nature of Rembrandt's ambition to rediscover the art of painting *'through his own labours'* (see p. 9). ■

Fig. 98. Rembrandt, *The rat catcher*, 1632, plate image 14 x 12.5 cm (B. 121[III])
Fig. 99. Rembrandt, *The Holy Family*, *c.* 1632, plate image 9.6 x 7,2 cm (1:1) (B. 62)

Fig. 100. Rembrandt, *Joseph's coat brought to Jacob*, *c.* 1633, plate image 10.7 x 8 cm (1:1) (B. 38[I])
Fig. 101. Rembrandt, *St Jerome praying*, 1632, plate image 10.9 x 8.1 cm (1:1) (B. 101[I])

It will be argued in more detail on p. 219 that in Rembrandt's time the artist's evening hours (as well as his pupils') were probably often devoted to drawing. But surveying Rembrandt's production in the early 1630's, one can only conclude that once he came to Amsterdam to work with Hendrick Uylenburgh he must have devoted much of his evening time to etching as well. During the day he would undoubtedly have been almost fully occupied with the stream of painted portraits that came out of the workshop of Uylenburgh and Rembrandt during that time.

Fig. 102. Rembrandt, *The good Samaritan*, 1633, plate image 25.8 x 21.8 cm (B. 90[I])

Fig. 103. Rembrandt, *The angel appearing to the shepherds*, 1634, plate image 26.2 x 21.8 cm (B. 44[III])

The large reproduction print Rembrandt made after his (subsequently radically altered) painting, the *Raising of Lazarus* (fig. 67 or figs. 102 and 103), could have been produced by daylight, but in the evenings the artificial light of a candle or lamp would have been sufficient to draw in the white etching ground on a small plate (see for Rembrandt's etching ground p. 186). By locally exposing the copper of the plate with the etching needle, an image was created comparable to a red chalk drawing.

It is rather surprising that Rembrandt himself should have produced a reproduction print after one of his paintings, since in 1631 he had got J.G. van Vliet to produce prints after four of his history pieces. Why did he now make such a print himself? As mentioned earlier on p. 178, Uylenburgh was involved as the publisher of the reproduction print that Van Vliet made after Rembrandt's *Descent from the Cross* from Frederik Hendrik's *Passion series* (fig. 74). It is not unlikely that Uylenburgh would also have had a say in the choice of Van Vliet as the engraver for the (aborted) *Passion series* of prints described on pp. 176-184. One cannot but wonder why that project was never brought to completion. It was suggested on p. 173 that Rembrandt may not have been satisfied with Van Vliet's work. That would hardly be surprising, since compared, for example, with the prints that were produced in Antwerp after paintings by Rubens, the prints by Van Vliet were crude and unattractive. Van Vliet was certainly not a highly gifted artist; when one surveys his own prints and those after Rembrandt's or Lievens' paintings, it is evident that he was simply not capable of adequately translating Rembrandt's paintings and grisailles in lines and hatchings.

Rembrandt's print with the *Raising of Lazarus*, executed by his own hand, was perhaps an answer to this problem (fig. 67). However, that was a very large, time-consuming print. The next reproduction print that Rembrandt produced after one of his own works was considerably smaller: the *Good Samaritan* from 1633 (fig. 102; see also p. 168), in which Rembrandt allowed himself freedoms (especially by adding the defecating dog in the foreground) which he may well have thought enhanced the ordonnance (see p. 96), the spatial effect and possibly also the narrative or metaphorical import of the image (compare figs. 50 and 102).

For an understanding of Rembrandt's possible plans to produce prints himself, it may be significant that he thereupon made a similarly sized, even more ambitious print, the *Angel appearing to the shepherds* (fig. 103) and that at the same time he may be assumed to have been wrestling with a design for a similarly large etching that was never executed, the *Lamentation beneath the Cross* (p. 183 figs. 85 and 86). One may speculate over the possibility that, as an alternative to Van Vliet's print production after Rembrandt's designs, Rembrandt himself may have worked on a series of highly elaborate prints for which he not only created the design but which he also executed himself (figs. 85/86, 102 and 103). He may have considered that to be the optimal way of *'making his ordonnance public'* (see p. 64) whereas the small, roughly executed etchings (figs. 98-101) were produced for a different market sector. ■

1632/34. Landscapes with mythological histories including animals. A compositional formula with water and land

Fig. 104. Rembrandt, *The rape of Europe*, 1632, panel 62.2 x 77 cm.
Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum (II A 47)

From 1631-'32, two parallel lines in Rembrandt's activities in the area of small-scale histories have now been dealt with in succession: the work on the two *Passion series* (see pp. 176-85) and his activities as an etcher of biblical scenes between 1632 and '34 (see p. 192/93). All this took place despite the tremendous demands of the portrait studio.

One can distinguish another separate line that developed out of Rembrandt's work on the *Abduction of Proserpina* from 1631 (fig. 64 and p. 82). In 1632 and 1634 he painted comparable themes, the *Rape of Europe* (fig. 104) and *Diana bathing with the stories of Acteon and Callisto* (fig. 105). What connects these three paintings is not just that they depict mythological scenes; there is also the fact that all three are played out in highly detailed landscapes that strongly determine the image as a whole.

In the Leiden years, landscape had played hardly any role in either the paintings or the etchings and drawings. The *Good Samaritan* from 1630 (fig. 50) shows a first serious attempt to paint a landscape with foliage in the foreground. In the brilliantly painted pasture in the foreground of the *Abduction of Proserpina*, Rembrandt explores the possibility of depicting flowers and foliage. In figs. 104 and 105, dense, leafy woodland and, in the left foreground, water both play an important role. It is striking that Rembrandt also chose this division between land and water for his allegory for the book *Der Zeevaert Lof* (Praise of seafaring) (fig. 106).

In all the works just cited, animals play a prominent role. It seems that in these works, which originated between 1632 and '34, Rembrandt was still keen to '*discover everything through his own labours*'. Here he seems to focus on two *gronden* in particular – landscape and animals – just as he does in the 1634 *Angel appearing to the shepherds*, which is exceptionally elaborate in these respects (fig. 103; see the relevant sections pp. 81-88 and 89-97). As demonstrated on pp. 144/45 and 244/45, where the mirror-reversal of the plate image by the printing process was discussed, here too it is found that the mental eye of the beholder (and the artist himself) first explores the left part of the composition, subsequently proceeding toward the right and diagonally upwards. ■

Fig. 105. Rembrandt, *Diana bathing with her nymphs with the stories of Actaeon and Callisto*, 1634, canvas 73.5 x 93.5 cm. Anholt, Museum Wasserburg (II A 92)
Fig. 106. Rembrandt, *The ship of fortune*, 1633, plate image 11.3 x 16.6 cm (B. 111[II])

Fig. 107. Copy of a lost original by Rembrandt, *A Christian scholar in a vaulted room*, 1631, panel 60.8 x 47.3 cm. Stockholm, National Museum (I C 17)

Fig. 108. Rembrandt?, *An old man in an interior with winding staircase*, *c.* 1632, panel 28.2 x 34.4 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (II C 51)
Fig. 109. Infra-red photograph of fig. 108

Categorizing works according to the particular emphasis on specific *gronden* as proposed here is certainly not far-fetched: as discussed in Chapter I, Rembrandt must have been fully aware of this categorization of the different aspects of the art of painting.

This would seem to be confirmed, for example, by a confrontation of the two paintings shown on this page. Whenever the question of a painting's *raison d'être* arises, there is a reflex tendency to prioritise its iconographic meaning, but in the case of these paintings this approach yields very little of interest. It is therefore reasonable to assume that, unlike the works for the *Passion series*, they were *not* in the first place made because of their subject matter. The subjects that Rembrandt chose for his paintings in these first ten year of his career were often no more than the pretext for getting to grips with a pictorial challenge or to solve a pictorial problem, in this case Rembrandt's exploration of *'Kamerlicht'* ['Roomlight'] (see p. 76 fig. 82). In a sense one might say that we are dealing here with 'art for art's sake'; as expressed by Van Hoogstraten: *'… I dare to assert that an honest practitioner of the Art of Painting, who practices it solely for itself and for its virtuous nature, would truly be unjustly scorned.'*[22]

Rembrandt's explorations of effects of light falling in an enclosed space have already been discussed on pp. 73-80 with reference to Van Hoogstraten's discourse on the so-called *'Kamerlicht'*, or 'room light' (pp. 76-78).

In his early paintings with indoor scenes he did not show the window through which light entered. There is one exception to this rule, *Tobit and Anna* from 1626 (fig. 17). But in that painting it is immediately clear that he

Fig. 110. Rembrandt, *A young woman (Esther?) at her toilet*, 1633, canvas 110.5 x 94.3 cm. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada (II A 64)

Fig. 111. Rembrandt, *Daniel and Cyrus before the idol Bel*, 1633, panel 23.4 x 30.1 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum (II A 67)

was hardly aware of the problems which this created for the representation of light in the interior room. In the *Judas repentant* (fig. 30) he painted these effects most convincingly, but there he wisely avoided showing the opening through which the light enters from outside. He must have consciously faced this problem in a painting that is now only known from a reproduction print and from a work that is considered to be a copy, dated 1631, after a lost prototype (fig. 107).

The next attempt at painting an interior room with a visible window is shown in fig. 108. Although this small painting is signed and dated 1632, in *Corpus* II it was not accepted as an autograph work (*Corpus* II C 51). The paint layers are covered with an extremely thick, yellowed layer of varnish, as a result of which it is very difficult to get any clear insight into its pictorial characteristics. However, a highly detailed infrared photograph does give sufficient insight into its technique, execution and quality to raise afresh the possibility of its authenticity (fig. 109). Yet another cogent argument in favour of the attribution to Rembrandt is provided by the way in which the problem of the 'roomlight' has been explored in this early painting. In the earlier attempt, i.e. the prototype of fig. 107, apart from the figure at the table the incoming light straightforwardly illuminates those elements that define the interior space, the walls and the floor. But in fig. 108 an extremely complex form, a spiral staircase, is also placed in the 'roomlight'. Moreover, a second light source is introduced to the right, a fire which illuminates a woman attending it. This is all freely executed with great authority and an amazing insight into the complex behaviour of light in an interior space. It is no wonder that Rembrandt produced several works (including the etched portrait of Jan Six (see p. 80 fig. 87) displaying these effects – effects which art-lovers were evidently able to appreciate (see also Van Mander on Pieter Aertsen's interiors p. 72). One finds occasional paintings of rooms with a visible window throughout Rembrandt's own oeuvre and in workshop paintings (figs. 194 and 273). They must have been admired for the power of the illusion of daylight that Rembrandt achieved – but at what cost. It was Vermeer who found ways to avoid the gloominess of such daylit interiors, the price paid by Rembrandt to achieve this illusion of 'roomlight'.

As to the figure depicted in fig. 110, art historians have never been able to agree: is it Esther or Judith or possibly even Bathsheba? We simply do not have an iconographic key that will fit. Or is the *raison d'être* of this painting to be sought elsewhere: the depiction of a woman in a complex historical costume, carefully thought out in its facture? That, after all, was Rembrandt's answer to Van Mander's approach of drapery, with primacy given to the fall of the material, as an aesthetic aim in itself (pp. 98-102).

And is the small painting in fig. 111 perhaps no more than a painted scene in a convincing historical set design? The relatively obscure episode could be recited so that the beholder might the more admire its depiction. It could then also be told how, in this story (Daniel 14:1-21), Daniel unmasked the priests of Bel, just as Christ, according to the Gospels, unmasked the Scribes and Pharisees. ■

Fig. 112a+b. Rembrandt, *Joseph and Potiphar's wife*, 1634, **plate image** (**a**), **print** (**b**) 9 x 11.5 cm (B. 39[I])

It is perhaps worthwhile at repeated intervals to demonstrate how much the reversal of the previously familiar prints of Rembrandt's etchings may deepen our insight into Rembrandt's pictorial and narrative thinking (see also pp. 142-145 and 244/245). Joseph was sold into slavery and taken away in a caravan on its way to Egypt. Genesis 39:1-15: *… Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him… And it came to pass that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused. … And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.'*

If one follows one's natural impulse to read this image from left to right, as Rembrandt drew it on his plate (fig. 112a), not only is the dynamic of Joseph's flight more powerful than in the familiar print (fig. 112b), the darkness of the bed in which the semi-naked woman turns herself toward Joseph takes on a much stronger erotic charge. As an exceptional case, Rembrandt here has the light enter from the right, as a result of which the force with which Joseph tries to wrest himself from the woman's grasp and his gestures of repulsion are all the more effective.

Fig. 113. Rembrandt, *Christ and the woman of Samaria among ruins*, 1634, plate image 12.3 x 10.6 cm (B. 71[I])

Rembrandt borrowed the figure of Christ in fig. 116 from a print of the same subject by Albrecht Dürer almost exactly. Why he did so is a question that would undoubtedly have excited lively discussion among 17th-century painters, for there could have been very different reasons for such an appropriation. Van Mander adopted a rather neutral position in 1604 when speaking of *'rapen'* (gleaning) from the work of others. His remark that *'well cooked gleanings make a good soup'* (*Grondt*, Cap.1: 46) implies that, if well integrated, elements drawn from the works of others (can) certainly contribute to a good painting (or etching in this case). Philips Angel (1641) and Samuel van Hoogstraten (1678) paid close attention to this issue, developing very different arguments for or against such borrowings. Van Hoogstraten felt he could justify such a quotation as Rembrandt's from Dürer's print by, for instance, pointing out '*that the works of our predecessors are just as free for us [to use] as are the books of the ancients to the scholars '* (S.v.H. p. 193). Angel proposed the argument *'that one is free to borrow from anything else in order to bring its imperfection to a higher state of perfection'*. This could perhaps have been Rembrandt's aim here, for the way in which he transformed Dürers print (from the latter's *Small Passion*) is astonishing. Another consideration that may have played a part is that borrowing for this reason, according to Angel, also served *'as homage to the master from whom [it] has been borrowed'* (Angel p. 36). ■

Fig. 114. A. Dürer, *Christ driving the merchants from the Temple* from *The small Passion*, 1511, woodcut 12.5 x 9.7 cm
Fig. 115. Rembrandt, *Christ at Emmaus*, 1634, plate image 10.2 x 7.3 cm (B. 88)
Fig. 116. Rembrandt, *Christ driving the merchants from the Temple*, 1634, plate image 13.6 x 16.9 cm (B. 69[I])
Fig. 117. Rembrandt, *The stoning of St Stephen*, 1635, plate image 9.5 x 8.5 cm (B. 97[I])

Fig. 118. Rembrandt, *The Holy Family*, *c.* 1634, canvas 195 x 132 cm.
Munich, Alte Pinakothek (II A 88)
Fig . 119. Rembrandt, *The rape of Ganymede*, 1635, canvas 177 x 130 cm.
Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (III A 113)

Fig. 120. Rembrandt, *Belshazzar's feast*, *c.* 1635, canvas 167.6 x 209.2 cm.
London, The National Gallery (III A 110)

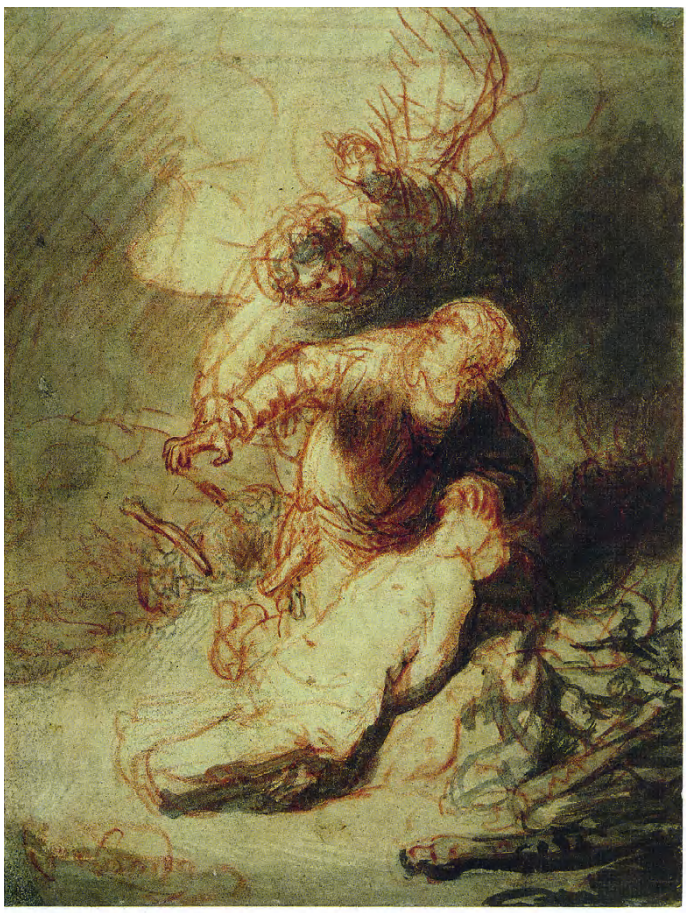
Probably beginning even before he left Uylenburgh, and certainly in the period after his departure, over a period of two years Rembrandt made a number of large, highly ambitious history pieces with mostly full length, life-size figures (figs. 118-122, 124).[23]

We have no idea why he took such a step toward a Rubensian scale during this period; nor do we know why he so quickly abandoned his attempts in this field. After leaving Uylenburgh, the question of which choices he had to make for the sake of his future career would surely have played some role here. We can exclude the possibility that these were all commissions; quite possibly none of them were. Surveying the series of these large works in chronological order, it is clear that Rembrandt gave these figures increasingly more freedom of movement within the pictorial space. In this, he was following his natural inclination, as is evident in the drawn revision of the ordonnance of the *Abraham's sacrifice* (fig. 121). As explained on p. 6, his efforts to give his figures sufficient room for movement is one of the likeliest reasons for Rembrandt to opt so emphatically for the small scale in order to pursue his investigations of the *gronden* of the art of painting. So why did Rembrandt nevertheless make these life-size, full length history pieces? Was it to rival Rubens? Or because he thought (probably wrongly) that there was a market for them? And why did he so soon abandon this endeavour?

Perhaps there is a wholly different solution to this puzzle, a solution that at the same time may lead to insight into a phenomenon that has hitherto never been explained. This concerns the remarkable reduction of Rembrandt's oeuvre when it comes to this type of painting. Surveying the history of the cataloguing of Rembrandt's oeuvre, one is struck by the fact that a remarkably large number of life-size history pieces with two or more figures that were once attributed to Rembrandt have since been disattributed – twelve or even more.[24] From the period after 1642, apart from the many life-size, single figure three-quarter pieces, one can point to only some five that have not thus been disattributed (see fig. 233, p. 121 fig. 136, p. 319 fig. 12). We may be quite sure that all these disattributed large-scale history pieces originated in Rembrandt's

Fig, 121. Rembrandt, *Abraham's sacrifice*, 1635, canvas 193.5 x 132.8 cm. St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (III A 108)
Fig. 122. Rembrandt, *The blinding of Samson*, 1636, canvas 205 x 272 cm. Frankfurt am Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut (III A 116)

Fig. 123. Rembrandt?, *Abraham's sacrifice*, *c.* 1635, red and black chalk, wash, heightened with white, 19.4 x 14.6 cm. London, The British Museum (Ben. 90)
Fig. 124. Rembrandt, *Danae*, *c.* 1636 - 1643, canvas 185 x 203 cm. St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (III A 119). Reconstruction of the original appearance.



workshop. They must have been made by pupils.[25]

Taking into account also a number of life-size, more or less free workshop copies after Rembrandt's life-size history pieces (p. 265, nos. 21b, 22b), one can assume that a considerable number of Rembrandt's pupils as a rule may have painted one large painting with life-size figures. With some of these works, one is led to suspect that two young painters probably worked on them together.

Producing a painting of such a format is in every respect a project of an entirely different order from producing an easel painting. One can speculate that during the final stages of an apprenticeship, perhaps as a 'graduation piece', one such large painting was seen as proof of mastery of the art – or in any case as a demonstration piece to show that the young painter was now capable of producing a large painting. As far as we know, the St Lucas guilds in the Netherlands no longer demanded the obligatory production of proof of mastery, although this was still often the case in the surrounding countries.

Perhaps we have to see Rembrandt's brief period as a painter of life-size history pieces as a necessary phase in which he was able to demonstrate to potential patrons that he was also capable of producing large-scale paintings. Perhaps the commission for the *Nightwatch* would not have been extended to Rembrandt if he had not, for example, painted the *Blinding of Samson* (fig. 122). ■

Fig. 125. Rembrandt, *Susanna at the bath [and the Elders]*, 1636, panel 47.2 x 38.6 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis (III A 117)
Fig. 126. P. Lastman, *Susanna at the bath*, 1614, panel 42 x 58 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

Fig. 127. Rembrandt, *The Ascension*, 1636, canvas 93 x 68.7 cm. Munich, Alte Pinakothek (III A 118)
Fig. 128. Rembrandt, *Susanna and the Elders*, *c.* 1636 (comment on fig. 126), red chalk, pencil in grey, 23.5 x 36.4 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 448)

Just as Rembrandt had measured himself against Albrecht Dürer in 1634 and against Leonardo da Vinci in 1635 (figs. 116 and 94), in 1636/37 he turned his attention again to Pieter Lastman, ten years after he had analyzed and emulated several of the latter's works in 1626 (see figs. 12 and 14).

But this time it was not in the first place in order to radically revise Lastman's ordonnances; in amply sized drawings Rembrandt introduces refined changes in Lastman's stage direction. In fig. 133 Rembrandt has Joseph, who had become viceroy of Egypt, stand out above all the other figures around him and amplifies the suggestion of space between the foreground and the middle- and background. In his variant on Lastman's *Susanna and the Elders* (fig. 128) he subtly manipulates the position of the two elders with regard to each other and to Susanna. Using minimal means, he also creates here a stronger feeling of space.

In the same period he worked on his own scene with

Fig. 129. M. van Heemskerck, *The angel leaving Tobit's house*, woodcut 23.8 x 18.8 cm (detail)
Fig. 130. Rembrandt, *Manoah's offering*, *c.* 1635-38, pen and brown ink 17.4 x 19 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 180[r])
Fig. 131. P. Lastman, *Joseph distributing corn in Egypt*, 1612, panel 57.6 x 88.2 cm. Dublin, The National Gallery of Ireland

Susanna where he chose a moment in this narrative episode that occurs a few seconds before the situation unfolding in Lastman's painting. Rembrandt has hidden both the elders in the shrubbery behind Susanna such that they are also almost invisible to the viewer. In her chaste innocence, no doubt also adding to her seductive charm for the hidden old lechers, she is on the point of entering the water. Not long after this, undoubtedly still challenged by Lastman's painting (fig. 126), Rembrandt would begin to

Fig. 132. Rembrandt, *The angel Raphael leaving Tobit and his family*, 1637, panel 66 x 52 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (III A 121)
Fig. 133. Rembrandt, *Joseph distributing corn in Egypt*, *c.* 1637 (comment on fig. 131), black chalk 31.3 x 46.2 cm. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung (Ben. 446)

wrestle with problems of stage-direction that arise from the drama of this scene of Susanna and the approaching old men (see figs. 178 and 198), problems that would engage him – with intermissions – for the next nine years.

When one surveys these two pages, one is forced to think of a young, maturing artist who is still just as keenly and unremittingly engaged with pictorial and narrative questions as in the time following his apprenticeship when he *'tries to discover everything through his own labours'* (see p. 9) at the same time challenging and paying homage to his great predecessors. ■

1637. The *Concord of the State*: a new interpretation. An oilsketch for an unknown – or never painted – history painting. Historical 'couture'

Fig. 134. Rembrandt, *The Concord of the State*, *c.* 1637, panel 74.6 x 101 cm.
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (III A 135)

In 1637 Rembrandt moved into a new studio. Now that he was independent of Uylenburgh, he painted only one or two portraits. The phase of the work on large-scale history pieces was behind him (pp. 200/201) and he now had only a few pupils, among them Ferdinand Bol.

His production that year was extremely varied. Each of these works demonstrates a sovereign mastery. It is as though the exploration of the *Gronden* had reached its end. In a sketch like the *Young woman before a mirror* (fig. 136) the gesture and affect of the woman are almost playfully realized, yet at the same time with great concentration and an extraordinary control of form, light and reflected lights. This is one of those oil studies that Rembrandt made for some of his history pieces.[26] It appears that he made these studies particularly when the lighting of one of the figures was too complex to realize directly in the intended painting. It is important to comment on this painting here because it has for a long time been misdated (to 1657) by twenty years and neglected in the Rembrandt literature.

The ordonnance and execution of another work that would on the face of it seem to be a most uninspiring commission similarly betray Rembrandt's sovereignty. This is the design for a political print, which represents, in Rembrandt's own words, *'De eendragt van 't lant'* [the 'Concord of the State']. This large oil-sketch, detailed in some parts, remarkably cursorily executed in others, has been the topic of much debate as to its function and its exact meaning. In a recent article, Bram Kempers amassed evidence to demonstrate that the many symbols and personifications employed in it show a strong affinity with those of the political prints and pamphlets that had appeared during the Dutch-Spanish war.[27] Kempers convincingly showed that it must have been a member of the Orangist party, possibly Maurits Huygens, (Constantijn's younger brother) who provided the iconographic programme. The message of this never-to-be realized print was a warning to the Dutch to unite at that stage of the war (which had begun in 1568 and would end in 1648). The warning was especially aimed at the Amsterdam regents who, for reasons of commerce, wanted to settle the conflict prematurely.

Precisely because we know that this work was commissioned and because we know that dozens of obligatory symbols and personifications had to be worked into the image in an intelligible way, the compositional unity and brio with which Rembrandt has unified so many elements in his invention are all the more impressive. The different planes, from foreground to background, are skilfully placed in the pictorial space; light and shadow are similar-

Fig. 135. Rembrandt, *Abraham caressing Isaac*, *c.* 1637, plate image 11.6 x 8.9 cm (B. 33[I])

Fig. 136. Rembrandt, *Young woman in front of a mirror*, *c.* 1638, panel 39.6 x 32.9 cm. St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (Br. 387)

Fig. 137. Rembrandt, *Abraham casting out Hagar and Ishmael*, 1637, plate image 12.5 x 9.5 cm (B. 30)

ly used for compositional purposes – in particular, the device of the horseman with his servant in the shadowed foreground unifying the composition. All is so placed in space that the painting could tolerate any enlargement or diminution without losing anything of the mixture of monumentality and vitality, unity and complexity. It says much that Rembrandt hung this unused sketch in his own salon [*sael*]. The intended print was probably never executed because the Amsterdammers eventually agreed to fall in with the strategy of the seven provinces under the leadership of Frederik Hendrik. Surveying Rembrandt's entire oeuvre, it is evident that this is one of his absolute masterpieces, a work in which he demonstrated a complete control over all the means that he deploys.

Two etchings with episodes from the story of Abraham were made in the same year as the *Concord of the State*. One of these shows a frequently depicted scene, Hagar being sent away with her (and Abraham's eldest) son Ishmael (fig. 137). The other has a rarely shown subject: Abraham playing with his son Isaac (fig. 135). Only when one fully understands what it took to make these two etchings does one realize that by far the most time and attention were invested in the costumes of these figures. In the section devoted to *Drapery* in Chapter I in this Volume (pp. 98-102), the great difference has already been pointed out between Rembrandt's attitude to costume and that of his predecessors, for whom the beauty of the drape of the materials was of primary importance. In these two etchings, what one might call historical 'couture' of the highest order is depicted. Rembrandt has designed here extremely complex, layered costumes with rich materials and a great variation in the details and decorative elements. Just as important, however, was the way in which the protagonists express their feelings. The facial expressions, body language and gestures are eloquent of Rembrandt's alertness of imagination in his realization of the scenes he represents. ■

Fig. 138. Rembrandt, *Parable of the labourers in the vineyard*, 1637, panel 31 x 42 cm.
St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (III C 88)

In 1969, i.e. shortly after the beginning of the RRP, the paintings attributed to Rembrandt in the Hermitage were studied by two members of the team (see also figs. 80, 97, 175). Among these paintings was the *Parable of the labourers in the vineyard*, dated 1637 (fig. 138). On the basis of a lack of quality, combined with the existence of various other old versions, the painting was judged to be a copy of a lost Rembrandt original. The summarized opinion in *Corpus* III C 88 is here quoted in part:

'While the approach to the subject and the lively way the story is portrayed undeniably carry the stamp of Rembrandt, a certain unevenness in execution prompts doubt about the painting being autograph. An overemphatic definition of form in the foreground areas is difficult to reconcile with a rather uncertain and poorly articulated rendering of the mid-ground figures. The organization of space is not really effectively supported by the chiaroscuro. A larger copy of mediocre quality [in an English private collection], like the present work bearing the date 1637, confirms that there must have been a lost original in which Rembrandt's intentions as to form, chiaroscuro and spatial effect were more clearly realised. The Leningrad painting was most probably done in Rembrandt's studio in 1637, the same year as the presumed original from which it was copied must have been produced. One cannot say for sure which pupil did this, but it could well have been Ferdinand Bol, who must at all events have been familiar with the work.'

The painting's condition probably influenced this opinion more than was then realized: the paint surface is disfigured by serious deterioration in crucial parts, such as the group of figures to the right of the scene around the table. This condition, as well as disturbing overpaintings that were not recognized as such at the time, certainly played a role in the disattribution of the painting by the RRP.

Since then the original views of the RRP team and the *a priori* arguments supporting such views have been critically examined. In September 2006 part of the St Petersburg collection was accordingly re-investigated by the present author. The recently produced infrared photographs of the painting under discussion turned out to be of great

Fig. 139. X-Ray of fig. 138 (detail)

Fig. 140. Infra-red reflectograph of fig. 138 (detail)

benefit in that it allowed one to read the panel's genesis and condition.

I too had originally been convinced that the St Petersburg picture could not be by Rembrandt. Shortly before my first study of the painting in 1983 I had been working closely on *The Concord of the State* – also from 1637 – in connection with the latter's restoration (fig. 134). I did not find in the St Petersburg *Parable of the labourers in the vineyard* the same assured, yet free and confident control of the paint as it flowed from the brush in the more linear details that I had come to know and appreciate in *The Concord*. Nevertheless, this later examination of the painting forced me to conclude that the earlier opinion of the RRP should be revoked. The arguments in favour of this change of opinion are as follows:

My revocation of our disattribution is based above all on the renewed analysis of the X-radiograph and the new infrared photographs (figs. 139 and 140). Even at the earlier examination, a comparison of the picture with the X-radiograph, disrupted as it was by the cradling (it has become more readable with the help of digitalization), revealed that there were pentimenti in the St Petersburg version, i.e. changes introduced during the working process. 1. A rectangular radio-absorbent shape at the left of the present two windows may indicate that a different window was originally intended in the small wall at the left of the room. 2. Above the table between the master of the vineyard and his scribe is a light, round shape which can also be seen in the paint relief. 3. The suggestion of light in the master's lap and a triangular reserved space in this area point to a significant change in this passage; and 4. the master's right lower arm held across his chest was originally entirely visible. From this it is clear that the surface of the table was later painted over this lower arm.

During my examination of the painting in 2006 it transpired that pentimenti 3 and 4 are part of a complex of interventions connected with changes in the perspectival construction of that part of the image. Apparently the painter intended to raise the horizon, i.e. the visual focus of the beholder, as can be most easily determined from the orientation of the leaded strips of the two windows, which converge in a vanishing point on the master's chest. A change on the window bench visible at the window on the right (compare the picture with the X-ray image) suggests that Rembrandt may have intended to raise the visual focus of the beholder in order to allow a view of the surface of the table. In doing this, however, he needed to partly cover the master's lower arm. Evidence that the scene was originally intended to be seen from a lower viewpoint is provided by the group of four labourers in discussion: the heads of the two men behind are placed lower than those of the two in front.

Taken together, the changes in the conception of the composition described above are incompatible with this being a copy, and therefore the painting under discussion should be considered the prototype of the other versions.

There are other additional arguments for re-attributing the work to Rembrandt. Certain details are much more clearly seen in the infrared reflectographs than in the painting in its present condition, in particular the details that are drawn with the brush in a dark colour (fig. 140). These details lie on the paint surface of the picture and thus should not be regarded as possible underdrawings. The way these details are drawn, especially in the group of the four labourers in discussion, suggests Rembrandt's hand. It demonstrates his deep understanding of details, as for example in the bag of the worker seen from the back, the shoes and other details indicated in drawing. Rembrandt's etchings from the same period show a comparable style of draughtsmanship.[28] ■

1638/39. Paintings and etchings as 'film stills'. The beginning of an artistic crisis? (pp. 208-213)

1638. The perfect small-scale history painting – emulating Leonardo. Histories in landscape settings

Fig. 141. Rembrandt, *Samson's wedding*, 1638, canvas 125.6 x 174.7 cm.
Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (III A 123)

One of the most interesting and most ambitious history pieces painted by Rembrandt is the *Samson's wedding* (fig. 141). The figures in this 175 cm wide painting are on a markedly larger scale than the figures in the other small-scale history pieces that Rembrandt had painted since 1624, but they are by no means life-size. This unusual scale, neither one thing nor the other, may explain why this work hardly features in the present-day canon of the most loved Rembrandt paintings. One tends to forget its existence. Although it hung for a long time behind the Iron Curtain, that is hardly the reason for its lack of recognition since the same fate had no appreciable influence on the aura or the fame of other paintings. It should be said, however, that the painting has figured prominently in the Rembrandt literature: it was highly praised in Philips Angel's *Praise of the art of painting* (*Lof der schilderkonst*) from 1642. Angel praised it for a specific quality: the presumed historical accuracy with which Rembrandt has represented this scene (see p. 99 for a translation of this passage). The demand for such accuracy implicitly played a prominent role among the 'basic aspects of the art of painting' [*gronden*], as is clear from Samuel van Hoogstraten's *Academy of the Art of Painting*.

There are also other *gronden* whose practise is carried to the highest level in this painting. The degree of variety of affects is astonishing (see p. 67 fig. 73), while the matching diversity in human postures is equally impressive. Moreover, Rembrandt gives his figures – especially Samson, of course – appropriate proportions. One could argue that each of the protagonists is rendered as a unique individual, and furthermore dressed by Rembrandt in a great variety of costumes with different materials and fashions; the ordonnance is spatially convincing and highly varied; the execution controlled and deft; the role of light shrewdly thought out and subtly effected.

In short, from the perspective of the application of the *gronden*, this painting can be seen as the perfect Rembrandt. In his book *Rembrandt & the Italian Renaissance*, Kenneth Clark suggested that it was Rembrandt's answer to Leonardo's *Last Supper*. If that is so – and there is much to support the idea (see figs. 92 - 94) – then the confrontation of Rembrandt's painting with the print after Leonardo's

Fig. 142. Rembrandt, *The risen Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene*, 1638, panel 61 x 49.5 cm. London, The Royal Collection (III A 124)

Fig. 143. Rembrandt, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1638/47 (in its finished state of 1647, see also fig. 178), panel 76.6 x 92.8 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (V 1)

Fig. 144. Rembrandt, *Landscape with the Good Samaritan*, 1638, panel 46.5 x 66 cm. Cracow, Muzeum Narodowe (III A 125)

mural, which Rembrandt possessed (fig. 92), affords an excellent opportunity to grasp more clearly Rembrandt's pictorial and narrative ideas.

A remarkable difference is that Leonardo's work is devoted to one of the most crucial moments in the New Testament narrative whereas Rembrandt's painting deals with one of the more insignificant episodes from the entire Bible. This is the feast of Samson's marriage to his Philistine wife, when Samson set the guests a rather trifling riddle, the answer to which was subsequently betrayed to the guests by his wife (with dire repercussions for her).

The sole reason for Rembrandt choosing precisely this theme was, in all probability, that it dealt with a scene in which, just as in the *Last Supper*, a substantial number of people sit at table in the company of two main personages – in Leonardo's painting these two being Christ and Judas, in Rembrandt's, a rather foolish Samson and his wholly insignificant bride.

Comparing the two works (figs. 92 and 141), one could argue that Rembrandt's solution – judging by the qualities mentioned above – is in all respects the more interesting one, and that he has in a quite remarkable way engaged with what Samuel van Hoogstraten referred to as the 'second and third observation', i.e. the faithful representation of the historical setting and customs, costumes and accessories (see p. 50). Compared with Leonardo's symmetrically grouped clusters, Rembrandt's painting has remarkably more life, even though Leonardo's lively depiction of each of these four groups of three figures was considered revolutionary in its time.

But is Rembrandt's work better? One can only think that he himself must have thought so. But if Rembrandt's painting of *Samson's wedding* is compared with the attempt to emulate Leonardo in the drawing from 1635 (fig. 94), one conspicuous difference stands out. In the drawing Rembrandt has the groups of disciples in tsunami-like waves surging to left and right of the still figure of Christ at the centre in a manner which betrays a total grasp of the whole. In the Dresden painting, Rembrandt seems to lose that grasp, however closely related it is to the drawing in some respects and despite the ordering role given to the light. In the painting, the illustrative liveliness so clearly gains the upper hand in the painting that the coherence (which Rembrandt of course intended) collapses into a hotchpotch of separate mini-engagements, each in itself brilliantly executed.

In relation to his pictorial aims, we know that during this period Rembrandt was preoccupied with the idea of, in his own words, *'de meeste en natureelste beweeghelijckheit'* (i.e. the most life-like sense of natural movement). This characterization is indeed applicable to this painting – but it is also applicable to a modern film-still and to historically well-founded 'machines' such as were fabricated for the Paris Salon.

When one looks back at the fourteen years since Rembrandt painted the *Senses* (figs. 5-7) his progress in all areas is ▸

Fig. 145. Rembrandt, *Joseph telling his dreams*, *c.* 1634, paper stuck on card, 55.8 x 39.7 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (II A 66)
Fig. 146. Rembrandt, *An old man seated*, 1631, red chalk 25 x 17 cm. Private collection (Ben. 20)

Fig. 147. Rembrandt, *Joseph telling his dreams*, 1638, plate image 11 x 8.3 cm (B. 37[II])
Fig. 148. Rembrandt, *Studies* for fig. 147, 1638?, pen and brown ink, wash, 13.9 x 12.5 cm. Private collection (Ben. 168)

Fig. 149. Rembrandt, *Adam and Eve*, 1638, plate image 16.2 x 11.6 cm (B. 28^{II})

Fig. 150. Rembrandt, *Death appearing to a wedded couple*, 1639, plate image 10.9 x 7.9 cm (B. 109)

spectacular, yet something in the period under scrutiny here goes wrong – perhaps precisely because Rembrandt had achieved such all-round mastery. For example, he could now convincingly place a history piece in a landscape (figs. 142-144). But because he made each of his figures a unique, autonomously acting individual, he tended to lose the overall grasp that he had developed in 1628/29 during his work on the *Judas* (fig. 30).

The disintegration of the compositional coherence that now occurred – and here the appropriate term is 'composition' rather than 'ordonnance' – is most revealingly seen when the oil sketch with *Joseph telling his dreams* from *c.* 1634 (fig. 145) is compared with the etching with the same subject (fig. 147) that he made four years later, in the same year that he painted *Samson's wedding*. It is true that he used a number of elements in this etching that he had used in the grisaille, but the main lines in the organization of the image are sacrificed to the detailed description of each figure and its costuming. The differences between the drawn studies (figs. 146 and 148) illustrate the radical change in Rembrandt's approach. It would seem that the steady growth of his power of imagination, together with his total control over the means with which he realized his images, had led into a trap of over-confidence. His rapidly growing fame perhaps also contributed to this over-confidence. The Leiden burgomaster Jan Orlers wrote of Rembrandt around this time that he was *'so talented that he has since become one of the most esteemed painters of this century'* and Rembrandt would probably have rated himself in the same way.

This 'film still' character is highly pronounced in two other prints that Rembrandt made in 1638/39 (figs. 149 and 150). With extreme care, his Adam and Eva are reconstructed in all their ugliness and primitive humanity as they wonder what to do with the apple, urged on by an all too realistic dragon. *Death appearing to a wedded couple from an open grave* reminds one of a page from a fashion magazine.

Anne Hollander, a film theoretician, writes in her book *Moving pictures* (1991): 'Even if the moving camera sits on a motionless subject, the film is still moving and we are waiting, expectant and responding, our eyes and spirits are in motion.' This may partly be explained by the psychological state of anticipation shared by humans with other higher animals, in which the neurotransmitter dopamine plays a crucial role. A painting also stimulates the natural tendency to be constantly anticipating. It depends on the painting how long we are kept suspended in the state of anticipation, but one thing is certain: the more lively the suggested movement in a still image, the sooner our attention flags and turns to boredom. It is argued elsewhere that, from this phase of his work in which he explicitly strived for the *'meeste en de natureelste beweeghelijkheyt'*, Rembrandt began to find himself caught in an artistic crisis that would frustrate his activities as a painter for virtually ▸

Fig. 151. Rembrandt, *The Entombment*, 1635/39, canvas 92.6 x 68.9 cm. Munich, Alte Pinakothek (III A 126)

Fig. 152. Rembrandt, *The Resurrection*, 1639, canvas 92.9 x 67 cm. Munich, Alte Pinakothek (III A 127)

the entire decade of the 1640's. Only in *c.* 1651, at the beginning of his so-called 'late phase' did his brushwork begin to take over the dynamic role in his paintings which serves to arouse our anticipation. As a result, the figure is then increasingly brought to life – thanks to what Ernst Gombrich called 'the beholder's share'. By then, however, the figures in Rembrandt's history pieces were no longer engaged in frenetic activity but were virtually at rest, yet vibrant nonetheless.

Surveying the production of 1638/39, it would seem that this film still effect – so conspicuous, for example, in the *Joseph telling his dreams* – seems also to be correlated with the fact that in these works Rembrandt hardly assigns any role at all to the background in the composition of the image as a whole. This strikes one when one compares the works discussed here (and also, for instance, the etching with the *Death of the Virgin Mary*, fig. 153) with the two *Passion pieces* produced for Frederik Hendrik in 1639 (figs. 151 and 152). In the latter, the similarly extremely moving scenes are embedded in a very spacious, more or less neutral dark setting that absorbs, as it were, all the hustle and bustle of the *'meeste en de natureelste beweeghelijkheyt'*. Rembrandt was working with dark backgrounds in the interplay between partially lit main subjects and large shadows in the middle- and foreground that dissolve into the dark background. He had developed this pictorial means – of figures emerging out of a partial obscurity in those large shadow passages – during his struggle with *Judas repentant* as a way of letting the viewer experience latent movement. That, at least, is one of the conclusions that could be drawn from an analytical comparison of the *Judas* with the Leiden *History piece* which originated two or three year previously (compare p. 7 figs. 5 and 6).

It is striking that in the following years Rembrandt again set his painted and etched history pieces against a more spacious background, partly determining the composition. In the *Pygmalion* – if the etching (fig. 156) had been completed – this would have been the dark background in which the forms placed in it are almost dissolved. That this was indeed the intention is evident from the drawing (fig. 154), which in the context of this argument is very telling, confirming the impression that Rembrandt attached the utmost significance to his grasp of the whole by means of his use of shadows (i.e. cast shadows) and the extremely important compositional role of the shadowed areas of his images. The incredibly attentive way in which he introduces subtle modulations within the etched version of the *Pygmalion* allows us in the first place to glimpse the really phenomenal etching technique that Rembrandt had by this time acquired, but also the extremely intelligent manner in which he strove for a unity, so important compositionally, in such a dark passage. ■

Fig. 153. Rembrandt, *The death of the Virgin*, 1639, plate image 40.9 x 31.5 cm (B. 99[II])
Fig. 154. Rembrandt, *The artist drawing from a model 'Pygmalion'*, *c.* 1639, pen and brown ink 18.5 x 16 cm. London, British Museum (Ben. 423[r])

Fig. 155. Detail of fig. 153
Fig. 156. Rembrandt, *The artist drawing from a model 'Pygmalion'*, *c.* 1639, plate image 23.2 x 18.4 cm (B. 192[II])

Fig. 157. Rembrandt, *The Visitation*, 1640, panel 56.6 x 47.8 cm (detail).
Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Art (III A 138)

What was described on p. 209 as an exceptional episode – the sacrifice of the overall compositional grasp for an extreme attention to detail – seems to have been a passing phase in Rembrandt's quest for further pictorial means. Surveying the works that originated in 1640, it would seem that the balance between figures and background has been restored.

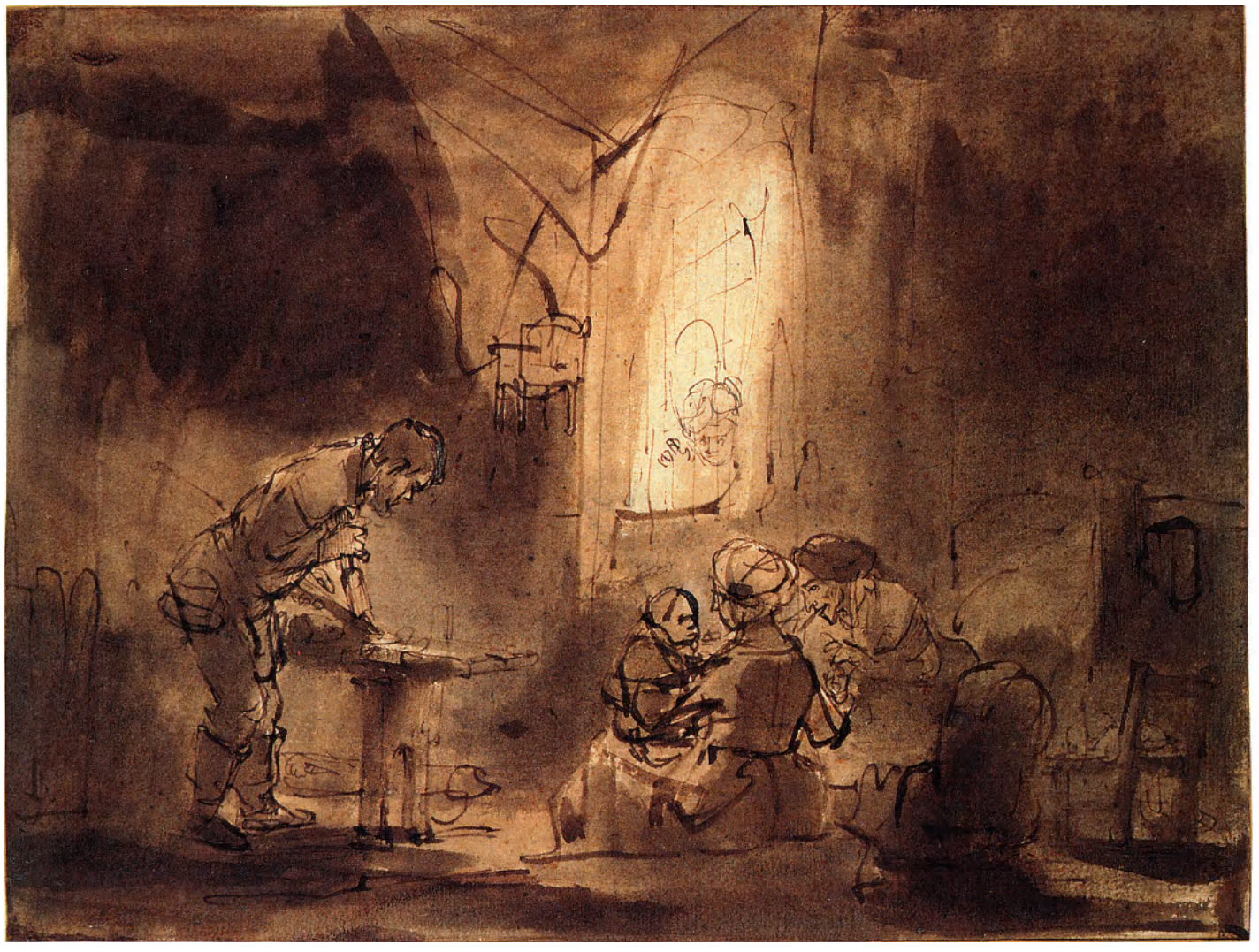
What strikes one in these three works (figs. 157, 158, 159), and what appears to become increasingly more important in Rembrandt's way of ordering his images, are the different levels of the stage on which his scenes are enacted. This feature was without doubt deliberately introduced with an eye to the ordonnance. We have to bear in mind that in the course of this year, 1640, Rembrandt had

Fig. 158. Rembrandt, *The Presentation in the Temple*, *c.* 1639, plate image 21.3 x 29 cm (B. 49[II])

begun his work on the *Nightwatch*. The reader will perhaps recall that Samuel van Hoogstraten, in his analysis of the ordonnance of the *Nightwatch*, used the term *'sprong'* [literally: leap] – a concept whose full meaning is now difficult to grasp. According to Van Hoogstraten, *sprong* is the quality in a narrative painting deriving from variety in the placing of the figures: the figures depicted in a scene should be *'grouped in a manner attractive to the eye'* and one should *'give the figures a ´sprong´ that is pleasing [to the eye], such that, whether high or low, together they create a 'shape' that is attractive to the eye, and there appears an interplay between them resulting from their diversity* (see pp. 62-63, 96). In the phrase *'whether high or low'* this definition touches on what it is that makes the *'sprong'* in the *Nightwatch* so successful: that is, just as in the scenes shown on these pages, the play with different levels of the 'stage' on which a scene is enacted. Perhaps the word *'sprong'* is derived from *'verspringen' [changing level]* which is precisely what happens in the three 'stages' used in these works (and in the *Nightwatch*). But then it must be added that Rembrandt also used another kind of *verspringen* in order to give the grouping of his figures a diversity. That is the almost constantly recurring introduction of children, animals, and kneeling or bowed figures, whenever the scene concerned gave occasion. ■

Fig. 159. Rembrandt, *The beheading of John the Baptist*, 1640, plate image 12.9 x 10.3 cm (B. 92[I])

Fig. 160. Rembrandt, *The Holy Family in the carpenter's workshop*, *c.* 1645, pen and brown ink and washes, 18.4 x 24.6 cm. London, The British Museum (Ben. 516)



In the introductory text over Rembrandt as a drawer of histories (see pp. 186-189) the emphasis was placed on the way his draughtsmanship constituted a form of 'thinking aloud'. In that text, the very different ways in which Rembrandt was active as a draughtsman were discussed: not only in his drawings on paper but also during particular stages of the work on his paintings and etchings. This makes it clear that the surviving group of drawings on paper gives only an incomplete picture of Rembrandt's activities as a draughtsman.

However, the variety of forms and functions within this surviving corpus of drawings on paper is still considerable. They are certainly not all to be seen as the results of exploratory 'thinking aloud'. Sometimes it is a matter of projects realized with remarkable care, such as the drawing with the Holy Family in Joseph's workshop, done with pen and diluted ink (fig. 160). One may wonder whether Rembrandt made a work like this as a demonstration of his ideas on *'kamerlicht'* (see p. 76) and the role of shadows in the ordonnance - the '*schikschaduwen*' (see p. 60). He may well have used this drawing to explain such ideas to his pupils, as Schatborn has suggested.

The process of making such a work on paper is very close to that of producing a painting. The two media overlap each other here such that one once again becomes aware of the absurdity of the rigid separation within the community of Rembrandt scholars of the specialisms defined by his three media.

Other drawings – although very differently executed – have been created with an equal concentration on the desired end result.

Tobit, who on the evidence of his calm facial expression must have willingly submitted to this operation, nevertheless holds fast to the arms of his chair with both hands, each with a different grip. The thickness of the repeatedly drawn lines in these two details seems to betray how much Rembrandt must have put himself into these two gripping hands. He seems to have felt just as strongly the concentration with which Tobias carries out the operation: the tensed muscles of the neck stand out clearly. Tobit's wife Anna, the bowl of the curative medicine in her hand, watches over Tobias' shoulder attentively. The angel closely follows the operation with intense curiosity. Sarah, the wife of Tobias recently introduced into the family, stands to one side with hands folded, watching what is going on.

In describing this work, one feels an almost irresistible desire or inclination to name the particular feelings of the different figures.

According to Samuel van Hoogstraten the invention of such ordonnances was usually practised in the evenings.

Fig. 161. Rembrandt, *Tobias healing his father's blindness, c.* 1642-4, pen and brown ink, touched with white gouache, 21.1 x 17.7 cm (1:1). Cleveland, Ohio, The Cleveland Museum of Art. Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 1969.69 (Ben. 547)

But he strongly advises that what the draughtsman *has designed in the evening he should revise and improve the next morning'* (see p. 58). If this was also Rembrandt's custom it would be interesting to try to distinguish in this kind of drawing the work of the evening from the morning stage. For instance, could Tobit's hands and the head, neck and left hand of Tobias have been improved in the morning after the evening before? ■

Fig. 162. Rembrandt, *The triumph of Mordecai*, *c.* 1641, plate image 17.4 x 21.5 cm (B. 40)
Fig. 163. Rembrandt, *The angel departing from the family of Tobias*, 1641, plate image 10.3 x 15.4 cm (B. 43^{II})
Fig. 164. Rembrandt, *The Spanish gypsy 'Preciosa'*, *c.* 1642, plate image 13.3 x 11.3 cm (B. 120)
Fig. 165. Rembrandt, *The baptism of the Eunuch*, 1641, plate image 17.8 x 21.3 cm (B. 98^{II})
Fig. 166. Rembrandt, *The large lion hunt*, 1641, plate image 22.4 x 30 cm (B. 114^{II})
Fig. 167. Rembrandt, *The raising of Lazarus*, 1642, plate image 15 x 11.4 cm (B. 72^{I})
Fig. 168. Rembrandt, *The Descent from the Cross*, 1642, plate image 14.9 x 11.6 cm (B. 82)

Fig. 169. Rembrandt, *The flute player*, 1642, plate image 11.6 x 14.3 cm (B. 188[IV])
Fig. 170. Rembrandt, *Man drawing from a cast, c.* 1641, plate image 9.4 x 6.4 cm (B. 130[I])
Fig. 171. Rembrandt, *The card player,* 1641, plate image 8.8 x 8.2 cm (B. 136[I])
Figs. 172, 173. Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate..Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum
Fig. 174. B. Fabritius (?), *Three young men drawing by candle-light*, 1650-55, pen in brown and brown and grey washes and white, 13.9 x 17.9 cm. Munich, Graphische Sammlung

In his research on the identity of the civic guardsmen in Rembrandt's *Nightwatch*, dated 1642, Dudok van Heel discovered that one of them had actually died in 1640, leading to the inference that Rembrandt had already worked on the *Nightwatch* as early as 1640. Rembrandt must have had access to a very spacious room somewhere else in the city to be able to work on that painting, which was much too large for his own studio on the Jodenbreestraat.

During these years of 1640-42, Rembrandt produced some 30 etchings. It would seem that Rembrandt must have worked on these etchings in the evenings – an idea already suggested on p. 192. That drawing activities were assigned to the evening was a natural consequence of the fact that painting was only possible by daylight. The artificial light available in a 17th-century studio – candlelight – would have changed the colours. It is therefore unsurprising that Van Hoogstraten several times refers to *'the winter evenings'* when describing drawing after models (figs. 170 and 174), or that he advises the pupil to draw his weekly ordonnance in the evenings (see p. 58). A *'thick wax candle'*, according to Van Hoogstraten, gave enough light to work by. One sees young draughtsmen at work in candle-light in drawings by Baccio Bandinelli; while of all the innumerable workshops illustrated in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* there is only one which shows industry conducted by candle-light: the Drawing School.

Rembrandt must also have used the long winter evenings for drawing – not only drawing on paper, but probably also on the etching plate, certainly when drawing on the smaller etching plates. This idea would seem to be corroborated by the fact that in 1641 Rembrandt made two etchings on small etching plates with figures in candlelight (figs. 170 and 171). It is perhaps worthwhile to pursue this idea further to see how the family (and servants and pupils) must have spent their evenings gathered at the one or two locations within the house where warmth and light could be shared by everyone, each with his or her own occupation, including – as we learn from Van Hoogstraten – drawing. It would have been perfectly possible to draw on a relatively small etching plate, given the white ground that Rembrandt seems to have used (see p. 186).

If this was the customary routine in Rembrandt's house, one should consider the possibility of dividing his etchings into those, on the one hand, created under the conditions of a 'home industry', and on the other hand the larger, more elaborate etchings which could only be drawn in the studio. The demands on the resources of his studio that these more ambitious projects would have imposed may explain why, during the period when Rembrandt made extremely elaborate etchings like the *Hundred guilder print* (figs. 202-204), he hardly painted at all. That was also the period during which Rembrandt drew his elaborate self-portrait whilst working at a window (B. 22; see p. 469). Perhaps it is because of this etching that the idea has never arisen before: that Rembrandt may have drawn the majority of his etchings by candle light. ■

Fig. 169

Fig. 170

Fig. 171

Fig. 172

Fig. 173

Fig. 174

Fig. 175. Rembrandt, *David and Jonathan*, 1642, panel 73 x 61 cm.
St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (III C 84)

Fig. 176. Rembrandt, *The return of the prodigal son*, *c.* 1642, pen and wash in brown ink, 19 x 22.7 cm. Haarlem, Teylers Museum (Ben. 519)

In the course of discussing the *Concord of the State* (p. 204), it was remarked that Rembrandt had brought together in that design for a political print a great many political symbols and personifications in a well organized ordonnance. In many another political print all these disparate elements could easily have resulted in a chaotic design, a riot of emblems and allusions; but Rembrandt had managed brilliantly to forge them into a single unity, in distinct planes that succeed one another in the depth of the pictorial space through the use of light and shadow. Would this have been Rembrandt's ideal of a composition: *'Eenwezigheid'* [unity] with a refined '*sprong'* and with a masterly *'schikking'* [compositional disposition] of light and shadow, whereby the different planes are interlinked in a convincing manner?

If this kind of ordonnance represented his ideal solution, the composition of the painting to be discusssed here with *David's parting from Jonathan* seems almost primitive. As the beholder's eye seeks a path from the accurately detailed background to the foreground, it traverses an unusually vacant space between the city and the foreground. Then the foreground is taken up by the single, large lit form of two embracing figures.

The fact that Rembrandt opted for this unusual solution can be explained by the nature of the episode depicted. Anyone reading the relevant Biblical text (1 Samuel 20: 35 – 43) will realize that Rembrandt has here prioritized content over form in an extraordinary way. He has done so in order that the chosen form – the placing of the figures, the singular organization of the pictorial space – serves the narrative essence of the story.

King Saul, the father of Jonathan (the man with the turban), filled with jealousy because of David's popularity with the people, wanted to have him killed. Jonathan, who had conceived a love for David (see p. 150), had already warned the latter to hide himself. The next morning Jonathan leaves the palace and accompanied by a lad journeys through the open landscape toward David's hiding place, where he first shoots an arrow as a signal that it was indeed not safe for David to return. There follows a moving scene in which Jonathan and David embrace each other tearfully, because they must take leave of each other.

Fig. 177. Rembrandt, *Esau selling his birthright to Jacob*, usually dated *c.* 1642, pen and brown ink, wash, 20 x 17.3 cm. London, The British Museum (Ben. 606)

The weeping David has the weapons that Jonathan had earlier given him, some of which are seen lying on the ground.

The empty space between the men embracing each other in the foreground and the city, deep in the background, is curious in a pictorial sense but in a dramatic sense it is extremely effective. The merging of the two men reduces the composition to its simplest: a large, strongly lit form placed before an empty space with, in the background, the city with Saul's palace. The way in which the light blends the two figures into a single form is highly effective. In the case of such a constellation of light colours, Rembrandt must have spoken of *'bevriende kleuren'*, or related colours (see p. 79). It will become evident (on the basis of the few texts we have from Rembrandt that relate to his work) that he must in the first place have taken the subject matter – the content – as the basis for his thinking about a painting rather than the form (see also pp. 240/41). Once we know this, it becomes all the more obvious how intricately for Rembrandt form and content were unified. But this means that the art historian involved in questions of attribution must look into matters of content as much as form. Otherwise he may well be led, albeit unconsciously, to disattribute a work such as this because of its unusual composition, even though other arguments are deployed for the disattribution. This probably happened when the members of the Rembrandt Research Project disattributed this painting from Rembrandt, a painting which in every other respect, apart from its ordonnance is highly Rembrandteque.

Referring to the nature of the scene depicted, it should be pointed out that it was precisely in this period that Rembrandt made drawings (figs. 176 and 177) showing an emotionally charged interaction between other pairs of men in a manner that is comparable to the scene in this painting. ■

Fig. 178. Pupil of Rembrandt, copy after Rembrandt's *Susanna and the Elders* before its final state (see fig. 198), *c.* 1643, pen and brown ink, brown and grey washes, red chalk, 17.8 x 23.8 cm. Budapest, Szépmüvészeti Múzeum (V 1 fig. 3)

Fig. 179. Rembrandt, *The toilet of Bathsheba*, 1643, canvas 142 x 142 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (V 2)

It seems that the *Susanna and the Elders* (figs. 178 and 198) stood in Rembrandt's studio for some years after 1638. It remained there until 1647 and it certainly did not face the wall throughout that whole period. Fig. 178 shows the well-known drawn copy which reproduces the painting as it must have looked around 1643. The fact that this drawing was made leads one to infer, with a reasonable degree of confidence, that Rembrandt considered the painting in that state to be a finished work. Perhaps no prospective purchaser had so far shown any interest in it.

As explicated in cat. nos. V 1 and V 2, we are convinced that the *Bathsheba* in New York, dated 1643 (fig. 179), was a 'satellite' of Rembrandt's painting *Susanna and the Elders*. The complex relation between these two paintings has been brought to attention in Chapter IV, pp. 294-301. For other reasons, aspects of that relationship need to be discussed here too. This is necessary because it would seem that, specifically during the forties, the interrelation between Rembrandt's own production and that of his pupils in the context of the training/production programme was more complicated than either before or subsequently. We are fairly certain that in the *cleyne schilderkamer* in the attic of Rembrandt's house on the Jodenbreestraat (or in an annex in another building) a number of pupils worked in separate cubicles. One has to imagine that they were mainly busy with copying and making variants on works by the master. Rembrandt's drawings, paintings and etchings used for the purpose were apparently (temporarily) kept in the cubicles for that purpose. One of the pupils around 1643 made the drawing after the *Susanna and the Elders* (fig. 178), while also other pupils had the painting for a longer time in their cubicles to produce partial copies from it (see p. 266 nos. 27b and c). Most of the other small-scale history pieces from the forties would also have been kept for longer periods in pupils' cubicles. Rembrandt's training practice flourished during these years, with pupils such as Carel Fabritius, Samuel van Hoogstraten, Abraham Furnerius, Lambert Doomer and Heinrich Jansen. These pupils not only witnessed but also, in a sense, contributed to a change in the nature of the production of Rembrandt's workshop. In this context, it may be wondered why it was specifically in these years that Rembrandt led his pupils on outdoor excursions to draw landscapes. It was also in the same period that he seems to have worked on a model book that he evidently planned.[29] One should bear in mind the significance of the fact that Samuel van Hoogstraten was apprenticed to Rembrandt during this period, for this was when the basis was laid for his *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst* (Academy of the Art of Painting).

During this period, especially during the forties, Rembrandt's own production of paintings declined conspicuously. He painted no more portraits for a whole decade. It has been suggested on page 211 that this remarkable decade was a time during which Rembrandt fundamentally reassessed his ideas about painting, which would explain why it was that in this period, just as in his Leiden years, he painted almost exclusively small-scale history pieces. At the same time there originated a number of extraordinarily ambitious etchings with 'histories', such as the *Hundred guilder print* (see p. 229).

It is worth noting that one of Rembrandt's small-scale history pieces, the *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* dated 1644 (fig. 180), was apparently never used as a prototype for satellites. From the complete pedigree of this painting one concludes that, apart from the *Nightwatch*, it was probably the most expensive painting Rembrandt ever made. As well as the large number of figures depicted, the extremely delicate execution must also have contributed to this unusually high evaluation. Perhaps this was also the reason that pupils may not have been allowed to use it in their cubicles.

It is conspicuous that at the same time as his work on the *Woman taken in adultery* Rembrandt was also working on several drawings with comparable ordonnances, i.e. with large groups of figures arranged in a frieze-like formation (figs. 181-183). Two of these drawings depict the same scene: Jacob deliberating with his sons over the approaching journey to Egypt in connection with the famine. In the art historical situating of such related pairs there has been in the past an understandable tendency to consider one of the two works as a first attempt and the other as a second,

Fig. 180. Rembrandt, *Christ and the woman taken in adultery*, 1644, panel 83.8 x 65.4 cm. London, The National Gallery (V 3)
Fig. 181. Rembrandt, *The brethren of Joseph requesting Benjamin from their father, c.* 1643, pen and brush in brown ink, 20 x 27.7 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, L. Bonnat bequest (Ben. 542)

Fig. 182. Rembrandt, *The star of the kings*, *c.* 1641/2, pen and brown ink, wash, 20.4 x 32.3 cm. London, The British Museum (Ben. 736)
Fig. 183. Rembrandt, *The brethren of Joseph requesting Benjamin from their father*, *c.* 1643, pen and brown ink 17.6 x 23.1 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (Ben. 541)

definitive version. In his survey of Rembrandt's painted oeuvre, Bredius, for instance, always reproduced such pairs next to each other. Once we began to understand the phenomenon of the 'satellites' produced in Rembrandt's workshop, we were able to identify such pairs as a prototype by the master and a free variant painted by a pupil, which, given the sheer, quantity of such cases, gave us a better insight into Rembrandt's regime of training and production (see Chapter III, Appendix 1).

In the case of these two drawings, however, it does seem that their relation is of the type that was earlier attributed to all such pairs of works. The Paris drawing (fig. 181) was apparently Rembrandt's first attempt, the Amsterdam version the second, more successful version (fig. 183). This time, a confrontation of the two drawings yields insight into Rembrandt's searching mind. He decided to change the ordonnance to a semi-circular arrangement – as he had originally designed for the *Woman taken in adultery*, in which, as shown by the X-radiograph of that painting, he subsequently removed the (lower placed) figures in the left foreground (see V 3 fig. 2). ■

Fig. 184. Rembrandt, *The Holy Family asleep, with angels*, *c.* 1645, pen and brown ink, 17.5 x 21.3 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum (Ben. 569)

Fig. 185. Rembrandt, *The Holy Family with angels*, 1645, canvas 117 x 91 cm. St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (V 4)

As mentioned earlier (p. 58), we know – thanks to Van Hoogstraten – that it was recommended that one should continue to practise the composition of ordonnances, advice which was not only considered valid for pupils but also for a master. The ability to invent had to be maintained, as it were, on a high level of alert.

Van Hoogstraten's own pupil Arnold Houbraken describes in his book on Dutch painters how Van Hoogstraten recommended his pupils to imagine particular situations when composing such ordonnances. He also describes how Van Hoogstraten gave his pupils demonstrations of how they themselves should act out or get their fellow-trainees to enact these situations, so that they could identify with a given situation so as to be able to represent it as credibly as possible (see p. 70). It is quite likely that this was also the way things were done in Rembrandt's workshop.

The aspiring or experienced artist could in this way depict particular situations in their own spontaneous fashion. Apparantly such small theatrical pieces were not played out according to the existing pictorial or iconographic tradition. That is what we often see with Rembrandt's drawn ordonnances. In the domestic scene of Mary by the open hearth (fig. 184) he shows Joseph stretched out on the ground, apparently resting from his work as a carpenter. On the left can be seen thinly drawn indications of angels hovering above the child, intently watching him.

When Rembrandt depicts the Holy Family in similar circumstances in his painting in the Hermitage, the painting is more 'formal', more carefully considered in the iconographic sense and, as it were, more programmatic than the drawing. Joseph is not lying there, but is shown as a carpenter working at his bench, busy fashioning a yoke – the symbol of Christ's crucifixion (fig. 185).

In his etchings too, Rembrandt sometimes seems to have been more 'informal' than in the paintings, although it should always be borne in mind that as a history painter Rembrandt was far less bound by decorum than his contemporaries. When comparing his creations in the different media in this respect, one finds a gradual scale of difference. Examples of iconographically informal – indeed highly inventive – etchings from the same period are reproduced in figs. 186 and 188: Abraham, approaching the sacrificial altar with Isaac, is shown speaking to his son; or the unusual scene of the small procession with the body of Christ approaching the grave belonging to Joseph of Arimethea.

When confronted with this aspect of Rembrandt's studio practice it is as well to realize that, as with the paintings and drawings, the pupils could have been urged by Rembrandt to find an original solution for themselves. With etchings like figs. 187 and 189 one cannot but wonder whether they were indeed produced by Rembrandt himself, however unusual or informal the scenes they depict and however original – exceptional even – the technique: for example, the Joseph who seems to be peeling an apple whilst regarding the infant Jesus, or the repentant Peter, who holds a key in each hand rather than both keys in one hand (as is common in the iconographic tradition), etched on plates that have been unusually lightly exposed to acid.

The problem of the authenticity of certain etchings will return in Chapter III, Appendix 1. ■

Fig. 186. Rembrandt, *Abraham and Isaac*, 1645, plate image 15.7 x 13 cm (B. 34)
Fig. 187. Rembrandt, *Rest on the Flight*, 1645, plate image 13 x 11.5 cm (B. 58)

Fig. 188. Rembrandt, *Christ carried to the tomb*, *c.* 1645, plate image 13.1 x 10.8 cm (B. 84)
Fig. 189. Rembrandt, *St Peter in penitence*, 1645, plate image 13.1 x 11.6 cm (B. 96)

Fig. 190. Rembrandt, *The Nativity*, 1646, canvas 97 x 71 cm. Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek (V 11)
Fig. 191. Rembrandt, *The Circumcision*, 1646, pen and brush in brown ink, wash, 23.3 x 20.3 cm. Munich, Graphische Sammlung (Ben. 581) (V 10 fig. 6)

Fig. 192. Rembrandt workshop, *Copy after the lost Circumcision by Rembrandt* (see p. 185, 8), *c.* 1646, canvas 97.8 x 72 cm. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum (V 10)

In 1646 Rembrandt finally produced the last two Passion paintings for Frederik Hendrik. These were two scenes from Christ's childhood, the *Nativity* (fig. 190) and the *Circumcision*. We don't know whether this saw the completion of the commission as originally agreed, but in 1647 Frederik Hendrik died and the situation regarding the commission therefore changed.

As is known, the original *Circumcision* has been lost. However, it was demonstrated in cat. V 10 that it is a valid assumption that the surviving copy, now in Braunschweig, faithfully reproduces Rembrandt's painting (fig. 192).

This copy was not the only by-product of Rembrandt's work on this painting. Two partial copies have survived as well as a large, drawn copy (see V 10). Whether the drawing shown in fig. 191 is also a copy by a pupil or a drawn design or interim drawing by Rembrandt himself is not clear: among connoisseurs of Rembrandt's drawings there is no unanimity on this point.

The *Nativity* (fig. 190) also gave rise to lively activity among a number of pupils. One of them made a free variant after it (see V 12 and Chapter IV). Other pupils adopted the extreme impasto in the faces of the shepherds in their own work (see V 5 and V 16).

As was explained on p. 222, there must have been such a vibrantly active interrelation between the work of the master and that of his pupils that it is difficult to isolate Rembrandt's own work within the profusion of different types of product in this workshop. Whether the Kassel *Holy family with the curtain* (fig. 193) is entirely by Rembrandt

Fig. 193. Rembrandt or pupil, *The Holy Family with painted frame and curtain*, 1646, panel 46.8 x 68.5 cm. Kassel, Staatliche Museen, Gemälegalerie (V 6)
Fig. 194. Rembrandt and pupil, *Tobit and Anna with the kid*, 1645/6, panel 20.2 x 28 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (V 7)
Fig. 195. Rembrandt and pupil, *Joseph's dream in the stable at Bethlehem*, 1645, panel 20.7 x 27.8 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (V 8)

Fig. 196. Rembrandt or pupil, *The Prophetess Anna in the temple*, *c.* 1650 or '46, panel 43 x 34.8 cm. Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland (V 17)
Fig. 197. Rembrandt, *Abraham serving the three angels*, 1646, panel 16 x 21 cm. Private collection (V 9)

himself or – as we suspect – by the painter who painted the *Prophetess Anna* (fig. 196), or whether both – or neither – of the two paintings are by Rembrandt, we are confronted by an enigma.

A puzzle of another kind is presented by figs. 194 and 195: here we suspect that scenes were partially prepared by Rembrandt in which pupils then created particular lighting situations by way of exercises (see entries V 7 and V 8).

If *Joseph's Dream* (fig. 195) is an exercise in the rendering of heavenly light, one may wonder whether Rembrandt's exquisite, even smaller *Abraham and the angels* (fig. 197) could have been painted by way of a demonstration to show how it could be done better; the *Joseph's Dream* is dated 1645, *Abraham and the angels* 1646 (see in this connection also p. 240). ■

Fig. 198. Rembrandt, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1638/47, panel 76.6 x 92.8 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (V 1)
Fig. 199. Rembrandt, *Study* for fig. 203, *c.* 1639 (*c.* 1647), pen and brown ink, wash, 10 x 12.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (Ben. 183)

Fig. 200. Rembrandt, *Nocturnal landscape with the Holy Family*, 1647, panel 33.8 x 47.8 cm. Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland (V 13)
Fig. 201. Rembrandt, *Study* for fig. 203, *c.* 1647, pen and brown ink, wash, 14.4 x 18.5 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 188)

In 1647 Rembrandt finally completed the *Susanna and the Elders* begun in 1638. In one respect in particular he had changed the painting quite radically compared to its earlier state (see fig. 178): the hectic flight of the fowl, the oil container knocked over and spilling its contents, the foremost elder's hand groping after Susanna's breast, these were all painted out. It would seem that the moment depicted now lasts rather longer than before – as strange as that may seem. But the changes had at least mitigated the abruptness, which soon becomes tiresome, of the earlier representation (in this connection see p. 211). This is, as the analysis of its genesis reveals, an exceptional document of Rembrandt's indefatigably probing mind exploring the artistic and narrative possibilities of the art of painting (see V 1, *2. Comments*).

In the same year Rembrandt finished another masterpiece the *Holy family and the shepherds by night*, one of the other paintings where we can see Rembrandt thinks about the art of painting. This time it is possible to know almost exactly what the thoughts were thanks to the fact that this painting is obviously an effort to find better solutions to the difficult problems that Adam Elsheimer had set himself in his version of the same subject, a nocturnal scene with the Holy Family and shepherds by a camp fire near a pond. An analysis of the many differences, great and small, between Rembrandt's solutions in his representation of the scene and those of Elsheimer gives us an opportunity to refine our understanding of Rembrandt's ideas about the art of painting in many respects (compare cat. V 13 figs. 1 and 5).

The years 1647 to '49 were mainly devoted to a sequence of extremely ambitious etchings: the *Portrait of Jan Six* (see p. 80), the frontispiece for the tragedy *Medea* by Jan Six (fig. 204), the *Hundred guilder print* (fig. 203) and for example the extremely detailed *Beggars at the door of a house* (fig. 206).

If one places the unusually compressed composition with the *Pharisees in the temple* (fig. 202) between these works, one cannot but suspect that this is a fragment of a (much) larger image. It has already been pointed out on p. 6 in this Volume that Rembrandt preferred to have his figures acting in an amply spacious setting; but here the figures on the left, below and to the right are so closely framed that their forms are in places transected by the edges of the etching plate.

Fig. 202. Rembrandt, *Pharisees in the Temple*, 1648, plate image 7.1 x 12.9 cm (B. 126[II])
Fig. 203. Rembrandt, *The hundred guilder print*, *c.* 1647, plate image 27.8 x 38.8 cm (B. 74[I])

In all probability this must have been an exceptional print – perhaps one as ambitious as the *Hundred guilder print* – that Rembrandt must have eventually considered to be a failure but from which he could salvage this fragment.

One can only speculate on the question of what the original image looked like. Perhaps this fragment constituted part of a New Testament temple scene, which Rembrandt must have eventually considered to be a failure. The fact that the signature stands on an already hatched part of the architecture would seem to corroborate this hypothesis. ■

Fig. 204. Rembrandt, *Medea: or the marriage of Jason and Creusa*, 1648, plate image 24 x 17.6 cm (B. 112[III])

Fig. 205. Rembrandt, *The supper at Emmaus*, 1648, panel 68 x 65 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (V 14)
Fig. 206. Rembrandt, *Beggars receiving alms at the door*, 1648, plate image 16.5 x 12.8 cm (B. 176[I])

Fig. 207. Pupil of Rembrandt, *The supper at Emmaus*, 1648, canvas 87.5 x 111 cm. Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst (V 15)
Fig. 208. Rembrandt, *St Jerome beside a pollard willow*, 1648, plate image 18 x 13.3 cm (B. 103[II]).

Beginning with the new realism of Giotto, following the earlier tradition of the *maniera greca*, human figures were often placed in or in front of an illusionistically rendered architectonic setting (see p. 16 fig. 16). On p. 211 attention was given briefly to the fact that the act of looking involves anticipation: involuntarily one is always prepared for the figures in a painting, drawing or etching to start moving.

When architecture is included in an image, of course, the beholder does not anticipate that this will start moving. As a result, the beholder senses, whether consciously or not, that the figures in such a setting are freed from the architecture by their latent capacity for movement.

We have seen how, from the late 30's onwards, Rembrandt seemed to wrestle with the 'film still problem' (see p. 211), after which he was ever less inclined to represent his

Fig. 209. Rembrandt, *The good Samaritan*, *c.* 1648-49, pen and brown ink, 19.7 x 20.5 cm. Weimar, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (Ben. 615)

Fig. 210. Rembrandt, *Boaz pouring six measures of barley*, *c.* 1649-50, pen and brown ink, 12.6 x 14.3 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (Ben. 643)

figures in movement while at the same time he continued nonetheless to seek an illusion of reality in his history pieces. Perhaps this explains why towards the end of the 40's architecture came to play an increasingly important role in his works. Of course, architecture also sometimes appears in his earlier works. When an etching with figures before a house from 1632 (fig. 98) is confronted with a comparable etching from 1648 (fig. 206) – it is striking that the architectonic setting in 1632 appears to be more organic than the more 'crystalline' architecture in 1648. In fig. 98 the tectonic essence of the architecture itself is somewhat obscured by the vegetation and the separate curved elements. In addition, the foot of the wall is hidden by restless, dynamic forms. In fig. 206 sharply defined, angular forms are introduced in the same place. At the same time, emphatic use is made of the rules of linear perspective. The same difference can also be seen in a comparison of figs. 102 and 245.

In his later works Rembrandt seems not only to obey the rules of perspective to define precisely the spatial character of the setting, but perhaps also to stress the 'vitality' of his (latently moving) figures without having to show them in vigorous action. This new approach – the placing of figures in a strictly perspectival setting – is also to be seen in the Paris *Supper at Emmaus* (fig. 205), in fig. 209 and in figs. 213 and 215.

This is not of course to say that Rembrandt was solely dependent on static architecture to give his figures a stronger presence in the evoked image. In Chapter I it was pointed out (on p. 87) that in Van Hoogstraten's 'remake' of Karel van Mander's chapter on landscape the idea of a *'vlakte'* (flat ground) as the basis of a landscape had taken on a strong emphasis. Rather than explaining that difference as merely reflective of the fact that the landscape of Holland simply is flat, I have suggested that Rembrandt seems to have emphatically directed the attention of his pupils to the significance of horizontality (and its correlative verticality). When one considers the figs. 205, 206 and 209 from that viewpoint, one is struck by the stability of these compositions, a stability that sensitizes the beholder to the smallest deviations from the imaginary vertical axis. As a consequence of what one might call a 'beneficent horizontality' – an important factor in his compositions – Rembrandt's figures acquire, as it were, a typical specific gravity. Could this perhaps explain why Rembrandt has the foreground in his *Jerome beside a pollard willow* occupied by the reflecting surface of a pond? Elsewhere in this book it is argued that such a pond is part of Rembrandt's standard inventory of a wilderness (p. 528). This also recurs in the *Callisto in the wilderness* (V 19). But both in fig. 208 and in the *Callisto* (fig. 257), the reflective surface of the pond contrasts with the suggested disorder that characterizes a wilderness, as well as constituting the horizontal basis upon which the composition rests and the figures come to life.

In fig. 210, Rembrandt takes this one step further. The scene is enacted on a threshing floor which is not actually shown. Boaz, the owner of the cornfields, wants to pay the Moabite Ruth for her work during the harvest and says to her [Ruth 3:15]: *'Bring the veil that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city.'* In the light of the above, one can appreciate the way that the bottom contour of the veil and the course of the hem of Ruth's dress touching the floor betray Rembrandt's use of the flatness of the (unseen) ground as a *virtual* basis for his statuesque, yet at the same time latently moving figures – without the least need of any architectonic or other reference to fall back on. ■

Fig. 211. Rembrandt, *Cain slaying Abel*, *c.* 1650, pen and brown ink, 16.9 x 24.7 cm. Copenhagen, Kobberstiksamling (Ben. 860)
Fig. 212. Detail of fig. 211

Fig. 213. Rembrandt, *Jael and Sisera*, *c.* 1659-60, pen and brown ink, 10 x 17.2 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (Ben. 1042)

That the work of a 17th-century artist depicted reality seemed self-evident. But it was equally self-evident that, in 'inventing' a history, the artist did not as a rule have that reality concretely before him; the image had to be evoked with the help of the imagination. This is also true for the scenes on these two pages, even if Rembrandt perhaps may have got pupils to act out some of these situations (see p. 70). His imagination must also have been given full reign, for example, when he envisaged the situation in the field with the two sacrificial altars, when Abel's sacrifice was accepted by the Lord and that of Cain was not Genesis 4:8: '*and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him*'.

It was also Rembrandt's own visual imagination which dictated that the violence of the jealous Cain and Abel's desperate resistance to this wholly unexpected murderous onslaught (fig. 211) had to be entirely differently depicted than, for instance, the killing of Sisera by Jael (fig. 213). In the latter case, silence surrounds the sleeping Sisera, for *'Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.'* (Judges 4: 21).

How that process of imagining with the mind's eye occurred engaged the attention of both Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten (resorting to the model of classical rhetoric) and would surely have been considered by Rembrandt too. Fig. 36 reproduces a painting which, in all probability, shows how a painting is, to quote Karel van Mander, '*first borne in the mind through inward imagination before it can be nurtured by the hand and brought to perfection*' (see note 13). It is interesting then to read further how Samuel van Hoogstraten describes the birth of an image *'through inward imagination'*. Having first ascertained that *'All that art displays, painting by painting, is an imitation of natural things, but the arranging and ordering comes from the mind [or spirit] of the artist'*, there follows a description of that process: *'the mind of the artist … first grasps the elements given in advance confusedly in his imagination, before he forms them into a whole, arranging them such that together they constitute what seems to be a single image'* (see p. 60).

Sometimes Rembrandt seems to represent episodes drawn from one and the same narrative and therefore mutually related in different media (see also pp. 242-243). One such example is the story of the blindness of Tobit, from which two incidents are depicted in the drawing in fig. 215 and the etching in fig. 217. The devout, aged Tobit had buried a Jewish friend against an Assyrian decree, and because of this act he was considered unclean and slept outdoors

Fig. 214. Rembrandt, *The parable of the talents*, *c.* 1650-55, reed pen and brown ink, 17.3 x 21.1 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (Ben. 910)
Fig. 215. Rembrandt, *Tobit sleeping under the bird's nest*, *c.* 1651, reed pen and brown ink, 16.9 x 19 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Ben. 872)

beneath his courtyard wall. Whilst asleep he was blinded by the droppings of sparrows falling in his eyes. In a much later episode of the story, he is seen stumbling blindly as he goes to meet his son Tobias and the angel Raphael, now returned from a long journey. As scripture has it: '*Tobit also went forth toward the door, and stumbled.* ' (Tobit 11:10). The little dog, which according to the Biblical story had accompanied Tobias and Raphael on their journey, and in Rembrandt's imagination has evidently run on ahead toward the house, tries to prevent the blind Tobit walking into the door. This touching detail of the dog assuming the (self-appointed) role of guide-dog to the blind man surely belongs to *'one of the elements'* that Rembrandt had *'grasped in his imagination …arranging them such that they [the elements] constitute what seems to be a single image'*. ■

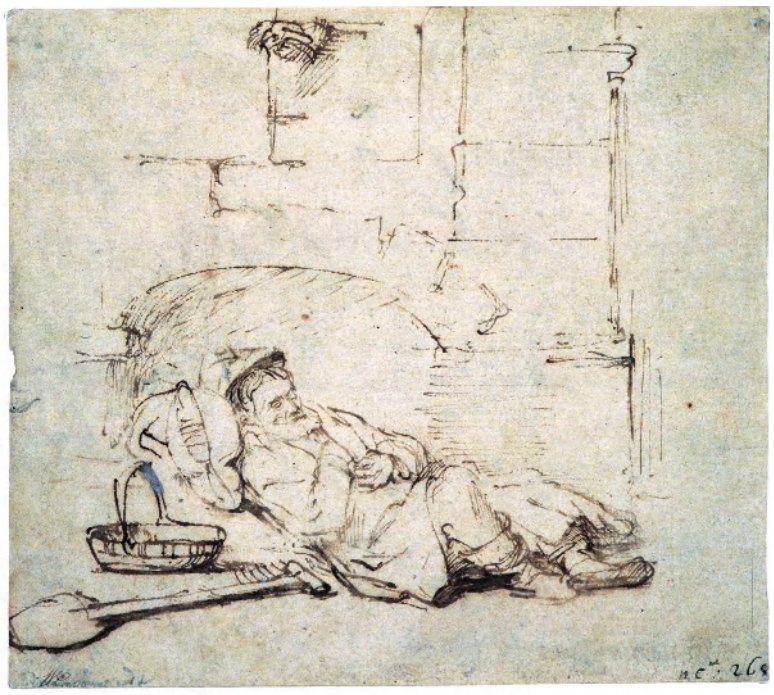


Fig. 216. Rembrandt, *Christ among the doctors*, *c.* 1652, reed pen and brown ink, 18.9 x 25.9 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, L. Bonnat Bequest (Ben. 885)
Fig. 217. Rembrandt, *The blindness of Tobit*, 1651, plate image 16.1 x 12.9 cm (B. 42[I])

1651/52. Two of Rembrandt's friends (pp. 234-237)

1651. A friend witnesses Rembrandt at work. Pentimento and theology

Fig. 218. Rembrandt, *Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene, 'Noli me tangere', c.* 1651, canvas 65 x 79 cm. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum (V 18)

There is a remarkable document relating to the painting reproduced here (fig. 218), a poem by one of Rembrandt's friends, Jeremias de Decker (1609-1666), in which the poet relates that he was present at the painting's origin. At the end of the poem De Decker wrote: '*your masterful strokes, friend Rembrandt, I first saw move on this painting*'. (See Catalogue V 18 for a detailed discussion of this text.) De Decker's description of the scene painted by Rembrandt reads as follows: *'It seems that Christ is saying: Mary, tremble not/It is I, Death has no part of your Lord/She, believing this, but not being wholly convinced/ Appears to vacillate 'twixt joy and grief, and between fear and hope./The grave-rock rising high in the air, as art requires/And richly shadowed, dominates the painting and gives majesty to the whole work.'*

Again and again Rembrandt depicted episodes from the New Testament in drawings, etchings and paintings, mainly scenes from Christ's Passion. Years before he painted the *Noli me tangere* he had already painted the episode with Christ and Mary Magdalene meeting in the early morning after Christ's Resurrection (fig. 142), as well as various Golgotha scenes (pp. 176-183; fig. 97). And later he would again depict Christ's despair in the Garden of Gethsemane (fig. 269), as in the drawing reproduced here (fig. 220). It would seem that each time he portrayed these situations he did so by reliving them with the same devotional intensity.

One may, of course, judge that Rembrandt was merely illustrating his scenes much as a stage director would direct his actors – the figures enacting these scenes – to the best of his ability. But there is much which suggests that Rembrandt was more deeply involved in these episodes crucial to the Christian faith. The practice of intense meditation on the biblical narratives to the point of identifying with them had a long tradition. Above all, such deep, inward contemplation of Christ's sufferings and resurrection was a way of bringing to full consciousness the paramount significance of His sacrifice for mankind, to redeem the sinner and to free him from Original Sin.

Rembrandt's evidently close friendship with Jeremias de Decker certainly fits in with the idea that the involvement in Christ's passion and resurrection could have had a more personal significance for him. Just as De Decker was

Fig. 219. Rembrandt, *The Calvary*, *c.* 1653, pen and brown ink, 24.7 x 21.1 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (Ben. 924)
Fig. 220 Rembrandt, *Christ consoled by the angel*, *c.* 1652, pen and brown ink, 18.4 x 30.1 cm. Hamburg, Kunsthalle (Ben. 899)

incidentally involved in this painting's origin, we can be equally certain that Rembrandt had read De Decker's long poem *Goede Vrijdag of te het Lijden onses Heeren Jesu Christi* [Good Friday or the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ] published in 1651, the same year in which Rembrandt created the painting. The two men seem to have been close kindred spirits. Indeed, De Decker's poems may perhaps be taken as counterparts to Rembrandt's way of thinking and feeling about Christ's life, passion and sacrifice as he represented them in his own, highly personal way, time and again emphasizing that Christ sacrificed himself for Man's redemption.

The transformation described in entry V 18, which, as the X-radiograph shows, was made during work on the painting, is extremely interesting in this context. Rembrandt changed the originally intended scene with Christ as an incognito gardener (compare fig. 142) to the immediately following episode in which Christ reveals his divine nature to Mary Magdalene. It is worth speculating whether this radical change in the painting's subject, with its shift in theological import, was not only effected under De Decker's eyes but perhaps also under his influence. This would mean that the narrative character of the scene Rembrandt first brought to his canvas, with Christ as the gardener and Mary Magdalene, made way for a scene conveying a much stronger invitation to religious meditation. Seen from such a viewpoint, De Decker's description of the painting is much more than a neutral ekphrasis. ▸

Fig. 221. Rembrandt, *Homer reciting verses*, 1652, reed pen and brown ink, 25.5 x 18 cm. Amsterdam, Six Collection (Ben. 913)

One could imagine in a similar way Rembrandt's relationship with the cultivated and erudite Jan Six. A contemporary characterized him as an *'excellent lover of all virtues, arts and sciences'*. There must have been a bond of genuine respect between the two men. But during Rembrandt's meetings with Jan Six quite different matters

Fig. 222. Rembrandt, *Minerva in her study*, 1652, reed pen and brown ink and wash, 19 x 14 cm. Amsterdam, Six Collection (Ben. 914)

must have been discussed than with Jeremias de Decker. This is perhaps evident from the 1647 etched portrait, in which Rembrandt goes to extreme lengths to render credibly the light reflected in Six's face from the open page of his book (see p. 80 fig. 87). At the same time, in this etching Rembrandt realizes an exceptional example of *kamerlicht* (see pp. 76-78). That Six must have been a thoroughly informed art lover is later confirmed by the way he lets Rembrandt paint his famous portrait with an extraordinarily daring handling of the brush (see pp. 113-123).

The fact that Rembrandt contributed two splendid drawings to the *Album Amicorum* of Jan Six in 1652 is further evidence of the strength of their relationship. In one of the drawings, poetry is personified by Homer reciting his verse to a rapt audience (fig. 221). This drawing surely refers to Jan Six's ambitions as a poet, which he had shown in 1648 in his tragedy *Medea*, published with a frontispiece from the hand of Rembrandt (fig. 204). The group round Homer must have reminded the initiated art lover of Raphael's *Parnassus*. The second drawing with elaborate washes showing Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, arts and knowledge, in her study (fig. 222) may have been made as a demonstration of Rembrandt's compositional experiments with light and shade (see pp. 60/61). ■

Fig. 223. Rembrandt, *The star of the kings: a night piece*, *c.* 1651, plate image 9.4 x 14.3 cm (B. 113)
Fig. 224. Rembrandt, *The flight into Egypt: a night piece*, 1651, plate image 12.7 x 11 cm (B. 53III)

Fig. 225. Rembrandt, *The adoration of the shepherds: a night piece*, *c.* 1652, plate image 14.8 x 19.8 cm (B. 46II)

In his Leiden years, when the young Rembrandt's ambitions were still focused on his further development as a painter, he had intensively explored the nature and effects of different kinds of lighting. In the following years, at intervals, he repeatedly returned to this study of the effects of light. Around 1652 he concentrated yet again on the effects of artificial light in the dark. Samuel van Hoogstraten writes that: *'Rembrant has depicted the strength of candlelight to the best of his abilities in several dark prints, but if one covers up these small lights, the rest of the work remains dark: as we are used, if someone shows us something by candlelight, to hold our hand in front of the light so that it does not prevent our eyes from making everything out as detailed and recognizable as possible'* (see p. 78).

In the etching with the *Flight into Egypt* (fig. 224), Rembrandt shows what Van Mander had described as follows: *'… taking the light source as the mid- or starting point, the shadow has to seek its direction everywhere away from that point'*. The light streaming out between the bars of the lantern directly illuminates the small group patchily; while the light falling on the ground is reflected back on to the travellers, so that those parts of the ass and its precious cargo that are not directly illuminated can also be made out. This scattering and reflection of light from the single source of the lamp prevents the eye being virtually blinded – as in the situations depicted in figs. 223 and 225 – to everything apart from the dazzling light source itself.

Art-lovers must have been highly intrigued by the depiction of such light effects which is probably why Rembrandt disseminated these through the medium of prints, multiple copies of modest size which could be widely disseminated. The execution of such images in larger prints meant undertaking extremely time-consuming projects, such as the etched portrait of Jan Six from 1647 (p. 80 fig. 87), in common with other major etching projects from this period (see also pp. 228/29). No wonder then that the *Hundred guilder print* was not completely elaborated. The fact that, in this print, the right part of Rembrandt's plate was left uncompleted is a clear indication that Rembrandt worked out such detailed prints from left to right (see fig. 4).

This can also be seen in the plate image of the *Christ disputing with the doctors* (fig. 226) how Rembrandt began to work out his sketched image from the left side. However, in this case he soon gave up. Given the large size of this plate and the extreme complexity of the image, completing it – by arranging the ordonnance in detail and executing the lights and shadows – would have been a particularly time-consuming project. This was probably why he stopped and signed the plate. Even the first sketch was in places not yet finished, as the two sitting figures to the left and right of the foreground show. The question therefore arises of how Rembrandt could have decided to seal the 'completion' of a print such as this – or, for another example, the *St Jerome reading in an Italian landscape* from (fig. 241) – with his signature.

Taking into consideration both this phenomenon, which occurs not infrequently, and the degree of sketchiness observed in many of Rembrandt's etchings, it is

Fig. 226. Rembrandt, *Christ disputing with the doctors*, 1652, plate image 12.6 x 21.4 cm (1:1) (B. 65[I])

worth raising here again, like was earlier done on p. 161, the question of the *non-finito* in Rembrandt's work – all the more so in the light of a text that has not hitherto been invoked in research on Rembrandt.

In the first place, there was a well known classical source which endorsed a positive attitude to the unfinished work. Pliny observed that for various reasons the unfinished works of famous Greek painters, found in their studios after their death, were more admired than their finished ones. According to Pliny: *'It is also a very unusual and memorable fact that the last works of artists and their unfinished pictures such as the Iris of Aristides, the Tyndarus' Children of Nicomachus, the Medea of Timomachus and the Aphrodite of Apelles which we have mentioned, are more admired than those which they finished, because in them are seen the preliminary drawings left visible and the artists' actual thoughts, and in the midst of approval's beguilement we feel regret that the artist's hand while engaged in the work was removed by death'* (Nat. Hist. XXX, XL).

There was also a story that undoubtedly circulated in 17h-century Dutch workshops and which Boschini had allegedly heard from one of Titian's last pupils, Jacopo Palma il Giovane (1544-1628), of how *the most discerning connoisseurs* bought Titian's unfinished pictures which he had left stacked, face to the wall, with the intention of continuing to work on them later.

According to Houbraken, Rembrandt was deliberately non-committal about whether a painting was finished or not, and would allow no one else to decide it. Houbraken relates that he had seen paintings by Rembrandt *'in which some parts were worked up in great detail, while the remainder was smeared as if by a coarse tarbush, without consideration to the drawing'*. Moreover, Houbraken continues, apparently quoting his informants, *'He was not to be dissuaded from this practice, saying in justification that a work is finished when the master has achieved his intention in it'*.

A text by Albrecht Dürer that has not previously been cited in this connection throws important light on the matter and is well worth quoting. It is to be found at the end of the third of Albrecht Dürer's *Four Books on Human Proportions*. Rembrandt owned this work in a Dutch translation and, as explained on pp. 39 and 137, he must certainly have read it and used it. The text reads: *'Only the powerful artists will be able to understand this strange speech, that I speak the truth: one man may sketch something with his pen on half a sheet of paper in one day, or may cut it into a tiny piece of wood with his little iron, and it turns out to be better and more artistic than another´s big work at which its author labours with the utmost diligence for a whole year. And this gift is miraculous. For, God often gives the ability to learn and the insight to make something good to one man the like of whom nobody is found in his own days, and nobody has lived before him for a long time, and nobody comes after him very soon'*. (Translation Erwin Panofsky) Rembrandt's familiarity with this text could be crucial for our understanding of the self-confidence with which he insisted that the above *Christ disputing with the doctors* and similarly barely worked out prints were ready for sale to interested parties. ■

Fig. 227. Constantijn Daniel van Renesse, *The return from Egypt, c.* 1652, black chalk, pen and brown and grey ink, brush and grey wash, 19.5 x 22.3 cm. Dresden, Kupferstichkabinett
Fig. 228. Constantijn Daniel van Renesse, *Daniel in the lion's den,* 1649-52, black chalk, pen and brown wash, heightened with white, 20.6 x 32 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen

Fig. 229. Rembrandt, *The return from Egypt, c.* 1652, reed pen and brown ink, 19.3 x 24.1 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 902)
Fig. 230. Rembrandt, *Daniel in the lion's den, c.* 1650, reed pen and brown ink, wash, 22.2 x 18.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (Ben. 887)

In Chapter I the various different *'gronden'* were investigated with specific regard to the way they were transformed under the influence of Rembrandt's new approach to the art of painting. The first impression is that, in all cases, what was primarily at stake was 'form' in the widest sense, especially where it concerned the proportions of the human figure, composition, light, drapery, the spatial quality of landscape, and colour. But one certainly could not say that this entailed an abstraction of the painterly means, such as occurred with the kind of stylistic analysis which came to predominate in the 20th century. In Rembrandt's time, content was never out of sight, certainly not with the *'gronden'* that relate to the postures and movements, or the ordonnance, affects and costuming of the protagonists in a history piece.

Judging the way in which form and content were interwoven was left to the painter and viewer of the individual works. It is highly exceptional to get any direct insight into Rembrandt's way of thinking in this area, but just occasionally we get a glimpse of this when inscriptions were added to drawings. It is not always clear what exactly the function of these inscriptions was. They probably served some purpose in connection with Rembrandt's teaching.

A striking example of this is an inscription – although not actually written by Rembrandt himself – on the back of a drawing that is attributed to Constantijn Daniel van Renesse (fig. 227). It is possible that this drawing by Renesse is a free variant of a drawing by Rembrandt with the same subject (fig. 229); but it is much more probable, as has already been cautiously suggested by Holm Bevers, that it

Fig. 231. Rembrandt or pupil, *The departure of Rebecca from her partents' home, c.* 1637, pen and brown ink with washes, 18.5 x 30.6 cm. Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie, Graphische Sammlung (Ben. 147)

Fig. 232. Rembrandt, *Christ and the woman taken in adultery, c.* 1659-60, pen and different shades of brown ink (colours added by later hand), 17 x 20.2 cm. Munich, Graphische Sammlung (Ben. 1047)

first originated as a study assignment, and that Rembrandt then proposed a better solution.[30] Bevers suggested that Rembrandt not only criticized the drawing verbally, but also demonstrated his ideas in a drawing of his own. If this is the case, the inscription would reflect Rembrandt's spoken criticism of Renesse's drawing and his suggestions for changes, while Rembrandt's drawing would be the demonstration of this advice. The correlation between the content of the inscription and Rembrandt's drawing is so striking that it can be seen as confirming Bevers' suggestion. It reads as follows: *'As for changes, it would be better if the ass were seen from behind rather than having all three heads facing out of the picture. Also more foliage should be depicted around the tree. 1. Joseph is lifting too forcibly and rudely. 2. Mary has to hold the child with greater care, for a tender child does not like being held so tightly. Joseph is too short and thick, his head grows out of his [trunk], and both of their heads are too big'.*

To understand this particular case fully it is important to know that the young Renesse was not a regular apprentice but rather an external pupil who seems to have taken occasional lessons from Rembrandt. Apparently he was given an assignment each time which was subsequently discussed by Rembrandt, who, perhaps in Renesse's presence, then sketched an alternative solution. This may also have been the case with Rembrandt's *Daniel in the lions' den* (figs. 228, 230). Seen in this light, these drawings (figs. 229 and 230) and Rembrandt's comments inscribed on the verso of fig. 227 are invaluable documents of Rembrandt's pictorial and narrative thinking.

Other examples of autograph inscriptions are to be found on two of Rembrandt's own (?) drawings, on which Christian Tümpel has commented lucidly.[31] Beneath the drawing with *The Departure of Rebecca from her parent's home*, (fig. 231) dated around 1637, Rembrandt wrote: *'dit behoorde vervoucht te weesen met veel gebueren die deese hoge bruijt sien vertrekken'* [this should be composed with many neighbours to see this high-born bride's departure]. Tümpel considered the word *'vervoucht'* to be a term that connoted both the composition – i.e. the formal organization of the image – and its iconographic aspects. With regard to the latter, this would primarily be a question of the etiquette that ought to be followed whenever an important person, in this case a high-born bride was on the point of taking her leave. Decorum would demand that many should be present to see her off, hence the inscription.

Under the *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* (fig. 232) Rembrandt noted: *'zoo jachtig om Christus in zijn antwoord te verschalken, konden [zij 't] schrifterlick antw[oord] niet afwachten'* ['So eager to ensnare Christ in his own reply. they could not wait for his written answer']. To understand the meaning of this inscription it is first necessary to quote the relevant Biblical text [John ch.8: 3-8] *'And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.'*

As Tümpel remarked – the inscription beneath the drawing emphasizes the haste with which the Scribes and Pharisees tried to trap Christ into an answer that would conflict with the Mosaic law. The fact that the woman, led by a rope, is shown kneeling suggested to Tümpel that Christ has already given his answer.

Whether the inscription here perhaps also relates to an intended change in this invention is no clearer than with the Rebecca drawing. In both cases, however, we catch a glimpse of Rembrandt's thinking about his histories. ■

Fig. 233. Rembrandt, *Bathsheba with King David's letter*, 1654, canvas 142 x 142 cm. Paris, Louvre
Fig. 234. Rembrandt, *David receiving the news of Uriah's death*, *c.* 1652, pen and brown ink, 19.5 x 29 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (Ben. 890)

Fig. 235. Rembrandt, *Nathan admonishing David*, *c.* 1652, pen and brown ink 12.3 x 14.8 cm. Private collection (Ben. 918)
Fig. 236. Rembrandt, *David in prayer*, 1652, plate image 14.3 x 9.3 cm (B. 41[I])

In 2 Samuel 11:1 to 12:16 the story is related of how, from the roof of his palace, King David saw the beautiful Bathsheba, wife of Uria the Hittite, while she was bathing. He had a message brought to her, requesting her to come to him (fig. 233), which she did. And David *'lay with her'*, as a result of which Bathsheba became pregnant. David thereupon organized that Uria should fight in the front line of his army, hoping that he would be killed. When a messenger duly reported Uria's death to King David (fig. 234), the way appeared to be clear for him to take Bathsheba as his wife. But during a subsequent conversation, the prophet Nathan (shown by Rembrandt already behind the messenger in fig. 234) passed severe judgement on David's behaviour (fig. 235). David was deeply oppressed by his guilt when the child that Bathsheba bore him became seriously ill. He prayed day and night for the child's recovery (fig. 236), but the child died. (Their next child was Solomon. Thus, according to the Bible, David and Bathsheba began the line from which Christ would be born.)

This story is related here with reference to four of Rembrandt's works because this group of works, which originated between 1652 and '54 and were executed in Rem-

Fig. 237. Rembrandt, *A scholar in his study*, *c.* 1652, plate image 21 x 16 cm (B. 270[I])

Fig. 238. Rembrandt, *The phoenix or the statue overthrown*, 1658, plate image 17.9 x 18.3 cm (B. 110)

brandt's three different media, demonstrates Rembrandt's intense involvement with the story. We witnessed a similar involvement earlier, in that case with the story of Tobit and Tobias (p. 233).

Where one is inclined to assume that the scenes from the story of David, Bathsheba and Nathan were created on Rembrandt's own initiative (and in the case of the two drawings and the etching this is hardly open to dispute) it would seem at first sight that this is certainly not the case with figs. 237 and 238. Could Rembrandt have made such complex, coded scenes on his own initiative and if so what would have been his aim in wanting to multiply them? In the case of one of the earlier allegories, we know for certain that Rembrandt made it (fig. 106) on commission and for a specific context. Similarly, it can scarcely be doubted that this also applies to the *The Concord of the State* (fig. 134). In the illustrations to Menasse Ben Israel's book *Piedra Gloriosa*, which are only intelligible by reference to the text, this was obviously the case (fig. 260). The rule would seem to be that if a print (or painting or drawing) is obviously a kind of rebus, one can safely assume that Rembrandt was executing the idea of someone else.

If there is one etching in particular over which there has been wild speculation, it is surely the print popularly known as the 'Faust' (fig. 237). In the context of this chapter there is little point in repeating the historiography of the interpretations bestowed on this image. The most recent is perhaps the most convincing. According to this latest interpretation, the mysterious figure staring at the supernatural apparition is neither Faust nor Socius nor any of the other earlier suggested candidates. According to art historian Lyckle de Vries, this is an illustration of a passage from one of the Epistles of St Paul: *'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.'* (I Corinthians 13:12). In the print we see a learned scholar, surrounded by his attributes, who sees the world as in a dark mirror. While one hand holds the mirror, another hand points into it. Of the unintelligibly jumbled letters of the text that floats next to the mirror, the only letters that are coherent display the symbol of Christ, 'INRI'.[32]

There have been numerous attempts to fathom the meaning of the so-called Phoenix print (fig. 238). Quoting Hinterding on the different efforts to break the code: 'Schmidt-Degener's more personal interpretation elicited the most response. He suggested that with this image (dated two years after Rembrandt's bankruptcy) the artist was making a stand against the malice and ill-will that he had endured after his bankruptcy, and testifying to his confidence in the resurrection of his art'. In general, one is nowadays much less inclined than Schmidt-Degener and his contemporaries were to see Rembrandt's works as personal statements. In this context, however, it is interesting that around 1644 Rembrandt drew a satirical allegory of art criticism, which perhaps one can consider a personal statement (see p. 138 fig. 145). Moreover, in 1654 he painted what is possibly a coded statement that refers to Hendrickje's exclusion from the Reformed Communion (cat. V 19).

The fact that Van Hoogstraten, in his book, indicated to young painters the possibility, under certain circumstances, of producing a '*schimpschilderij*' [a satirical painting] (see p. 163 and fig. 37) or a *'wrake des Penseels'* [revenge of the brush] (see V 19, p. 532) means that it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that a painter should take his personal revenge with a print like the Phoenix print. ■

Fig. 239. H. Seeghers, *Tobias and the angel*, plate image 20.7 x 28 cm.
Fig. 240. Rembrandt, *The flight into Egypt*, *c.* 1653, plate image 21.2 x 28.4 cm (B. 56[IV])

Fig. 241. Rembrandt, *St Jerome reading in an Italian landscape*, *c.* 1653, print 25.9 x 21 cm (B. 104[I])

In justifying the decision to limit the scope of this volume to the small-scale history pieces (with full-length figures), an important reason given was that the figures in such history pieces appear freely in a spacious setting. Where this setting is a landscape, the rather artificially drawn line between pure landscape and the pure history piece can become blurred. This occurs with the *Landscape with the Good Samaritan* in Cracow (fig. 144). In this context it is perhaps worth seeing how Rembrandt transforms the scene of *Tobias with the angel and the fish* by Hercules Seeghers. He must have come into possession of Seeghers' plate (fig. 239) and decided to work on it (fig. 240). Seeghers' figures were removed from the plate and replaced by the Holy Family on the flight to Egypt. The radical change in scale undergone by the figures would seem to give a telling insight into Rembrandt's thinking on the preferable scale for the figures with respect to the landscape in which they are placed. His deliberate choice of this solution above that of Hercules Seeghers is again evident when, in the same year, Rembrandt chose a landscape setting for his scene of the *St Jerome with his lion*. When one analyses this etching, the problem of the reversal of the image in the print compared with the plate-image is raised in a most striking manner. Anyone looking at this image in its print form (fig. 241) will see the landscape as a rather arbitrary background, before which the scene with St Jerome with his lion stands out. If one then looks at the same image as Rembrandt created it on the plate, it is at once apparent that the scene is integrated into the landscape (fig. 243). This is so because one is invited to read the whole depth of the landscape, from the bubbling brook below in the foreground to the background. In the print (fig. 241), the waterfall on the extreme right is relatively inconspicuous, whereas in the plate-image, together with the hill that rises up with its buildings, it dominates the image to a significant degree. The beholder gets a much stronger impression that St Jerome is not sitting in front of the landscape, but rather with his back turned to the landscape, so that his hermitic existence as one who has separated himself from the world is much more palpable, while the integration of foreground and background is such that they together constitute a space in which the rocks with St Jerome and the lion are merely a separate corner, a hermitage. In this case, there is strong confirmation that the scene was actually intended to be seen in this way. A drawing that Rembrandt made in preparation for the etching makes it clear that the original intention was to absorb St Jerome into the shaded foreground of this glorious landscape, in almost invisible isolation (fig. 242). The drawing also confirms that Rembrandt left the etching 'unfinished' (see on this issue pp. 161 and 238/39).

The significance that Rembrandt attached, either consciously or unconsciously, to the fact that the eye first explores the space in which the depicted scene is situated, is evident when one lets the plate-image of the so-called *'Petite Tombe'* sink in. The mental eye first orients itself toward the architecture and the view through to an interior courtyard before it focuses on Christ and the crowd of his listeners. ■

Fig. 242. Rembrandt, *St Jerome reading*, *c.* 1652, reed pen and wash, 25 x 20.7 cm. Hamburg, Kunsthalle (Ben. 886)

Fig. 243. Plate image of fig. 241

Fig. 244. Rembrandt, *Christ preaching ('La petite tombe')*, *c.* 1652, plate image 15.5 x 20.7 cm (B. 67)

1653/55. A diptych and two print series. Art and biography (pp. 246-249)

1654. Looming bankruptcy – a change in production?

Fig. 245. Rembrandt, *Christ presented to the people ('Ecce homo')*, 1655, plate image 38.3 x 45.5 cm (B. 76^{III})

Fig. 246. Rembrandt, *The three crosses*, 1653, plate image 38.5 x 45 cm (B. 78^{IV})

In this account of Rembrandt's work, hardly any biographical data have so far been adduced as factors of any significance for Rembrandt'as work. Where in the past emphasis was on trying to weave together an account of Rembrandt's life and work – the one proposed as an explanation of the other and vice versa – few current Rembrandt researchers are inclined to view his work or its dynamic development in this way. In this, as also in the first chapter, Rembrandt's teachers and the significance of the proximity of Jan Lievens have been briefly discussed, as well as the often underestimated role of art lovers; his move to Amsterdam and the working relationships with Van Vliet and Uylenburgh, which are not altogether clear; his departure from Uylenburgh's workshop; the friendships with Jan Six and Jeremias de Decker. The years between the creation of the *Nightwatch* and the onset of the fifties were also discussed, a period in which Rembrandt's changed activities as painter were seen as years of artistic reorientation and a more intensive involvement with pupils. It is possible that the upheavals of the Geertje Dirks affair could explain why Rembrandt became so active with landscape drawing outdoors.

In the following phase of his life, however, there loomed a new and probably even more radically disturbing threat, that of Rembrandt's growing financial difficulties, leading to his eventual bankruptcy as a combined result of personal mismanagement and external factors which had their origin in the First Anglo-Dutch War. As a consequence of all this he had to give up his large house on the Jodenbreestraat. Is there any pattern to be discerned in his artistic production in the period leading up to this disaster? Between 1652 and '56 Rembrandt painted a number of self-portraits, which could have been produced for foreign admirers in much the same way that the *Aristotle* was bought by a wealthy Italian art lover. Rembrandt produced four elaborately etched portraits for Amsterdammers of his own circle of acquaintances. One of the most striking features of Rembrandt's activities as an etcher is that he projected two series with scenes from the Life and Passion of Christ (figs. 247-256 and 258) and an impressive diptych of two large etchings (figs. 245 and 246) . Was this all an attempt to tap new sources of income? We know from a very late document, a notarial act from 1670 that in 1669, the year of his death, Rembrandt was busy with a Passion series of prints that he been commissioned to make for the collector and gentleman dealer Dirck van Cattenburgh. A print series evidently earned money and was apparently also an object of desire to collectors and art dealers.

Could this perhaps explain why in 1654 Rembrandt created these two series, one with six scenes from Christ's childhood (figs. 247-252), another with four scenes from Christ's Life and Passion (figs. 253-256)? In 1656, there is reason to suspect, he added a fifth print to this latter series (fig. 258).

It could also be that the *Ecce Homo* (fig. 245) from 1655 was made as a pendant to the *Christ on the Cross*, dated 1653 (fig. 246), possibly conceived earlier as a self-standing work. Further investigation of the market for print series could perhaps help answer the question of why Rembrandt during this time made such clusters of serial works.

If we simply regard the group of etchings on pp. 247/248 in the context of Rembrandt's increasing financial worries they can easily be seen as hastily concocted products for immediate sale, but this is to do them a grave injustice. We can also view them very differently. On pp. 234/235 the friendship between Rembrandt and Jeremias de Decker was discussed, in the course of which it was suggested that both men were kindred spirits in the way they both passionately re-lived Christ's Life and Passion. Should this series perhaps be seen as Rembrandt's counterpart of De Decker's long devotional poem *'Good Friday or the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ'*? The *Descent from the Cross by torchlight* (fig. 254) is a moving example of Rem-

Fig. 247. Rembrandt, *The Adoration of the shepherds: with the lamp*, *c.* 1654, plate image 10.5 x 12.9 cm (B. 45[I])
Fig. 248. Rembrandt, *The Circumcision in the stable*, 1654, plate image 9.4 x 14.4 cm (B. 47[I])
Fig. 249. Rembrandt, *The flight into Egypt*, 1654, plate image 9.3 x 14.4 cm (B. 55)

Fig. 250. Rembrandt, *The Virgin and Child with the cat and snake*, 1654, plate image 9.5 x 14.5 cm (B. 63[I])
Fig. 251. Rembrandt, *Christ seated disputing with the doctors*, 1654, plate image 9.5 x 14.4 cm (B. 64)
Fig. 252. Rembrandt, *Christ returning from the Temple with his parents*, 1654, plate image 9.5 x 14.4 cm (B. 60)

Fig. 253. Rembrandt, *The Presentation in the Temple in the dark manner*, *c*. 1654, plate image 21 x 16.2 cm (B. 50)
Fig. 254 Rembrandt, *The Descent from the Cross by torchlight*, 1654, plate image 21 x 16.1 cm (B. 83)

Fig. 255. Rembrandt, *The Entombment*, *c*. 1654, plate image 21.1 x 16.1 cm (B. 86^{IV})
Fig. 256. Rembrandt, *Christ at Emmaus*, 1654, plate image 21.1 x 16 cm (B. 87^{II})

Fig. 257. Rembrandt, *A woman wading in a pool (Callisto in the wilderness)*, 1654, panel 61.8 x 47 cm. London, The National Gallery (V 19)

Fig. 258. Rembrandt, *Christ appearing to the apostles*, 1656, plate image 16.2 x 21 cm (B. 89)

Fig. 259. Rembrandt, *Abraham's sacrifice*, 1655, plate image 15.6 x 13.1 cm (B. 35)

brandt's involvement in Christ's Passion and a wholly original image. The manner in which this group of labouring men gently take the dead weight of Christ's body as he is lowered from the Cross in a winding sheet, the combination of religious pathos and closely imagined realism are unprecedented in the history of art. One of the men holds up the torch to illuminate their work, another hastens with tools in hand to free Christ's left foot where it is still nailed to the Cross, while below another figure reaches up anxiously, one hand catching the torch-light, to support the slack torso and lolling head of the dead Christ. All the etchings from these series are characterized by this kind of originality, which appears to come from a deep involvement and an imagination operating, time and again, at the height of its capacity.

Another episode in Rembrandts life which resulted in a specific work concerns not only events in his own life but more especially that of his common-law wife Hendrickje Stoffels. In entry V 19 in this book, it is argued that this painting, earlier seen as a genre piece in which, it was thought, Hendrickje Stoffels could be recognized as the model, could well have been painted as a response to the refusal of the sacrament to Hendrickje by the church council of the Reformed congregation, of which Hendrickje was a member. This argument is developed from the idea suggested by the American art historian Jan Leja, that the woman in the painting, seen holding up her shift as she bathes in a pool, could be Callisto. Banished from Diana's retinue of nymphs because she was discovered to be pregnant (by Zeus) (see fig. 105) Callisto withdrew to the wilderness. She was later given a special place in the firmament as the star constellation *Great Bear.* ■

Fig. 260. Rembrandt, *Four illustrations designed for Samuel Menasse Ben Israel, Piedra gloriosa de la estatua de Nebuchadnesar*, Amsterdam 1655, plate image 28 x 16 cm (B. 36^{III})
The image seen by Nebuchadnezzar
Jacob's ladder
Daniel's vision of the four beasts
David and Goliath

In virtually the same period in which Rembrandt etched the series reproduced on pp. 246-249, he created another etched series, but this time produced for the purpose of illustrating a book titled *Piedra Gloriosa* (The glorious stone), written by the Amsterdam Rabbi Menasse Ben Israel (fig. 260). This book was an apocalyptic treatise based on Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2). The treatise linked together four biblical stories, in three of which a stone – according to Menasse Ben Israel the same stone, the Piedra Gloriosa – played a role. There was the stone that 'smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay' in Daniel 2:34 ; the stone used by Jacob as a pillow in Genesis 28:11,12; and the stone with which David smote Goliath (1 Samuel 17:49). The fourth etching shows Daniel's vision of the four beasts (Dan. 7:3,17).

The existence of this series of book illustrations in the same period during which there originated etched series with episodes from the life of Christ suggests a problem that seems not to have been raised in the Rembrandt literature. It concerns the terms 'illustration' and 'illustrative'. The term 'illustrative' acquired a rather negative connotation in 20th-century conceptions of art. The illustration – as the visual image of a scene described in a text – is usually seen as serving the text rather than as an autonomous work of art showing a specific episode from a story. But strictly speaking, and apart from the possible anachronisms that can creep into relatively insignificant arguments, this would mean that the illustrations for the book by Menasse Ben Israel are of a different order from, for example, the six scenes from the life of Christ on p. 247.

The often unconscious idea that every separate work of an artist is an autonomous work led early on to these etchings from Rembrandt's series of Christ's childhood being taken out of their context, a situation which was perpetuated by Bartsch's method of ordering the etchings according to iconographic criteria. It is implicit in this approach that these works are not classed as illustrations, and are therefore of a different order from the prints for the book by Menasse Ben Israel, which have always been catalogued and discussed together and in the context of the book concerned. But the six scenes showing episodes from Christ's childhood are of course also illustrations connected with a book, in this case the Bible.

Although it would seem clear that the small-scale history pieces painted in the Leiden period served as a kind of 'laboratory' for the exploration of the *gronden* of the art of painting, the *raison d' être* of small-scale history pieces in the fifties and early sixties is mostly obscure. In certain respects, it is true, Rembrandt remained an exploratory artist. For instance, the way in which he continued to investigate the surface structure of the paint for further possibilities of the convincing rendering of the texture of materials, spatial effects, and as a playground for chance – this could all be called experimental, seen in connection with the '*grond*' concerning the handling of the brush (see pp. 113-123).

The fact that these small-scale history- and genre paintings occur so sporadically in Rembrandt's later period perhaps makes it more likely that these were made for commissioning patrons for who the content of the painting was more important than the form. It is certainly possible that the story of Potiphar's wife constituted a warning in the 17th century for well-bred young daughters not to get involved with male domestics (see cat. V 22, p. 575); or that a horseman in Polish costume mounted on a tawny Cossack steed could have referred primarily to the popular Polish military which had so bravely defended the frontiers of the Christian

Fig. 261. Rembrandt, *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife*, 1655, canvas 110 x 87 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (V 22)
Fig. 262. Rembrandt with later additions, *The Polish Rider, c.* 1655, canvas 116.8 x 134.9 cm. New York, The Frick Collection (V 20)

Fig. 263. Pupil of Rembrandt, *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife*, 1655, canvas 110 x 87 cm. Washington, The National Gallery of Art (V 23)
Fig. 264. Rembrandt, *A slaughtered ox*, 1655, panel 95.5 x 68.8 cm. Paris, Museé du Louvre (V 21)

world against the advancing Muslims (see cat. V 20, p. 545); and that a slaughtered ox was painted for an oxen grazier (see cat. V 21, p. 558).

It is the isolated character of this type of painting within Rembrandt's late oeuvre that created the grounds for questions of attribution that have sometimes dogged their existence like in the case of the *Polish Rider* (fig. 262) and the Rotterdam *Tobit and Anna* (V 28 and fig. 273). ■

Fig. 265. Rembrandt, *God announcing his covenant to Abraham*, *c.* 1656, pen and brown ink, 19.7 x 26.6 cm. Dresden, Kupferstichkabinett (Ben. 1003)

Fig. 266. Rembrandt, *Abraham entertaining the angels*, 1656, plate image 15.9 x 13.1 cm (B. 29)

This survey is so organized as to allow certain patterns to be recognized in Rembrandt's activities within specific short periods. The constellation of works shown on these two pages suggests once again the idea of Rembrandt as an artist who sometimes gave free rein to his imagination as we saw, for instance, with the clusters of etchings on pp. 192 and 218/219. Thus Rembrandt produces on the etching plate St Francis worshipping before a life-size Christ on the Cross (fig. 267), while in another etching Christ in his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane is supported by an angel (fig. 269). Then he makes a drawing in which the beholder sees the two Marys and Johanna (Luke 24: 1 – 12, esp. 1) approaching Christ's tomb (fig. 268).

In the drawing in fig. 265 we see God as an extraordinarily beautiful (wingless) angel, supported by two small angels, as He appears to Abraham who, overwhelmed by reverence and prostrate with is face to the ground, hears God's promises. In fig. 266 Rembrandt shows God with the same Abraham, this time visiting him incognito as a friendly old man with a big beard.

What is remarkable here is that in Rembrandt's portrayals of God there seems to be a total lack of what is referred to in narrative film or television as 'continuity', i.e. attention to the consistency of characterization of the protagonists in a sequence of narrative scenes. Now God appears like this, now like that. In the two works shown here the difference is explicable. But in the series of illustrations for Menasse Ben Israel God sits enthroned in

Fig. 267. Rembrandt, *St Francis beneath a tree praying*, 1657, plate image 18 x 24.4 cm (B. 107^{II})
Fig. 268. Rembrandt, *Two Maries and Johanna at the sepulchre*, *c.* 1656, pen and brown ink, 15.9 x 23.1 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Ben. 1009)

heaven (fig. 260), where he is certainly not incognito, with just such a beard as in fig. 266, while in 1646 in the scene in which Abraham hospitably entertains visitors whom he does not recognize, Rembrandt portrays the incognito God, in the same scene as in fig. 197 as an angel, this time with wings. Has Rembrandt merely drawn from various different iconographic traditions without regard for 'continuity', or do these works reflect a theological issue concerning the various forms in which God has appeared to Man? But then the problem of continuity also arises in Rembrandt's depictions of Abraham or for instance David. ■

Fig. 269. Rembrandt, *The agony in the garden*, *c.* 1657, plate image 11.1 x 8.4 cm (B. 75)

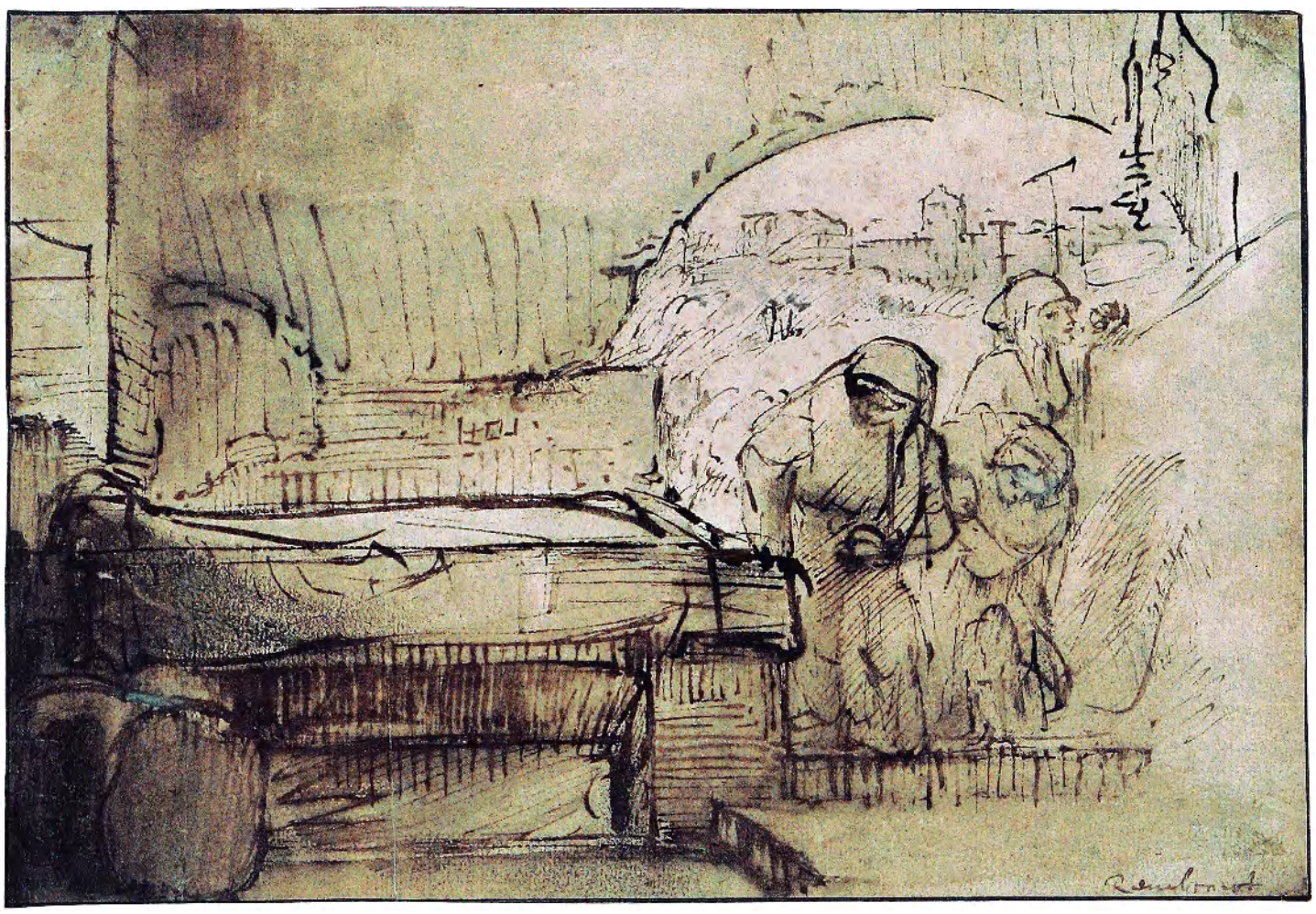


Fig. 270. Annibale Carracci, *Jupiter and Antiope*, 1592, print 15.1 x 22.4 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet
Fig. 271. Rembrandt, *Peter and John healing the cripple at the gate of the Temple*, 1659, plate image 18 x 21.5 cm (B. 94[II])

Fig. 272. Rembrandt, *Jupiter and Antiope*, 1659, plate image 13.8 x 20.5 cm (B. 203[I])
Fig. 273. Rembrandt, *Tobit and Anna*, 1659, panel 41.6 x 54.4 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (V 28)

Almost from the moment that Rembrandt established himself as an independent painter in 1625, he commented on the work of other painters: first of all (and also later) Lastman (figs. 12, 14, 128, 133), then Rubens (figs. 64, 69, 73), Leonardo (figs. 93, 94, 141), Dürer (figs. 116, 149), Elsheimer (cat. V 13), Raphael (fig. 221), Lucas van Leyden (fig. 245), and in 1659 Annibale Carracci (fig. 272). He did so by creating his own improved versions of works by these predecessors. Rembrandt must have had a strong interest in the history of the art of painting. At the same time, he apparently wanted to measure himself against the heroes of that history. Apart from these drawn, etched or painted commentaries, all that we know for certain about Rembrandt's art historical outlook derives from our knowledge of his extensive collection of prints by – and after – famous masters, including Annibale Carracci, listed in the inventory of 1656.

A succinct sample of art historical writing taken from the beginning of Book 7 of Van Hoogstraten's *Academy of Painting* gives an idea of what Rembrandt's art historical outlook could have been. It was not just a summary of the *'lives of the renowned and illustrious painters from Ancient and Modern times'* in Karel van Mander's *Schilderboeck'*. In the history that painters themselves carried in their heads there must also have been the residues of information handed down by the oral workshop tradition. One should reflect on the fact that both of Rembrandt's masters spent a considerable time living and working in Italy.

In Rembrandt's remake of Annibale Carracci's *Jupiter and Antiope* we see how a different distribution of light and shadow on the two bodies and the space between them contributes to the illusion of movement as Jupiter leans forward. The white emptiness behind the metamorphosed supreme god further enhances this illusion. The alertness of the lecherous god contrasts much more convincingly with the sleeping Antiope. Whereas Carracci's scene is coagulated by excessive detail, Rembrandt manages here to suggest a dynamic reality.

Rembrandt not only pursued this critical analysis of his most famous predecessors right up to this year of 1659; in

Fig. 274. Rembrandt, *The Circumcision in the stable*, 1661, canvas 56.5 x 75 cm.
Washington, The National Gallery of Art (V 30)

the same year he also resumes (in figs. 1 and 271) the work of drawing, in a highly detailed manner, on the etching plate. Between 1647 and 1650 this time-consuming technique had kept him almost entirely away from the painting easel (pp. 228/229). In the immediately following period he executed his histories, particularly the three series and the large diptych (figs. 245-258) in a much more cursory, loosely sketched and hatched manner. (Rembrandt's etched portraits and small nocturnal scenes are not considered here.) The drape of the clothing of figures in the series mentioned was mainly indicated by linear means and generally shadowed with often parallel hatching. In the etching with *Peter and Paul healing the cripple at the Temple gate* (fig. 271) the fall of the heavy material in which Peter and John are clothed is again as carefully modelled as in the *Hunderd guilder print* (fig. 203). The painterly equivalent of this approach can be seen in the *Tobit and Anna* from the same year (fig. 273; cat. V 28).

That painting has been dropped from the Rembrandt canon for several decades because it did not seem to fit the widely accepted image of the late Rembrandt. Moreover, one would hardly expect yet another painting with 'roomlight' as late as 1659. Surely that problem had been more or less solved in 1632 (see fig. 108) and that solution unproblematically employed by Rembrandt over subsequent decades (fig. 138 and p. 80). Admittedly, his pupils still wrestled with it (fig. 194) and in the case of one of his pupils, Samuel van Hoogstraten, that struggle eventually issued in the sophisticated, calibrated elucidation of the problem in his *Academy* (pp. 76-78). But why should Rembrandt still make paintings in which 'roomlight' is once again a central feature? One possible answer is that art lovers – or collectors – could have been greatly interested in this type of painting. In the case of the *Circumcision in the stable* (fig. 274), thanks to a document, we know that there was a particular demand from that specific public for the small, small-scale history paintings that are so typical of Rembrandt (see cat. V 30). ■

Fig. 275. Rembrandt, *Woman with the arrow* (Cleopatra), 1661, plate image 20.5 x 12.3 cm (B. 202[I])

It is remarkable that in the very earliest works considered in this survey and in the last two small-scale history pieces, one etched, one painted, the light plays a special role. The etching (fig. 275) is a highly attentive rendering of the complex anatomy of a woman's back in raking light. Another example of such a *tour de force* with this type of lighting – and from the same period – is to be found in the left hand of the *Staalmeester* [Syndic] placed furthest to the right (Br. 415). It is as though, after all the years during which he had engaged with the representation of light and shadow, beginning with the *Senses* from *c.* 1624 (p. 148), Rembrandt was still challenged by such problems.

In the same year he investigated another effect of light which, it would seem, he had not previously attempted on this scale, the colour (other than whitish) of reflected light. Only sporadically and on a small scale, as for example in the *Jewish Bride* (Br. 416), did he ever define the colour of the reflected light. As discussed on p. 76, Samuel van

Fig. 276. Rembrandt, *Esther and Ahasuerus*, 1660, canvas 71.5 x 93 cm.
Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts (V 29)

Hoogstraten referred explicitly to Rembrandt's special attention to the reflection of light. But despite his thorough treatment of this phenomenon, the *colour* of the reflected light is not dealt with in his treatise. This could well betray Rembrandt's lack of interest in this phenomenon up to the period of Van Hoogstraten's training, but it is all the more remarkable because van Mander, in his own treatment of light in the *'Grondt'*, does specifically deal with this aspect of reflected light where he discusses how the green light reflected from a meadow influences the colour of a person's face (K.v.M. *Grondt*, Cap. 7: 50).

In the *Esther and Ahasuerus* (fig. 276), Rembrandt bestows particular attention on the colour of the reflected light and in a remarkable manner. The light falling from the left illuminates Esther's red dress, whose reflection in turn reddens the tablecloth where she is sitting. The hanging fold on the front of the table cloth is also tinted by this reflected red light; it even radiates out into the room and affects the colour of the large jug standing in front of the table, further away from Esther.

These are Rembrandt's last known small-scale history pieces. However, this should not be taken to mean that Rembrandt had decided to put a definitive end to his activity in this field. In 1667 he painted two, subsequently lost oil sketches as *modelli* for the opinion of a commissioning patron from Genoa who wished to order two large paintings from Rembrandt, an *Ascension of the Virgin Mary* and another painting for the same church (see p. 140). Nor had Rembrandt definitively given up altogether the idea of creating etched histories. In 1669, the year of his death, he was found by a visitor busy with a number of etching plates that he was preparing for a Passion series. No trace of this series has survived.

Albrecht Dürer once wrote – and Rembrandt, who knew these words, must have recognized himself in them:

> ***'The mind of artists is full of images which they might be able to produce; therefore, if a man properly using this art and naturally so disposed, were allowed to live many hundred years he would be capable – thanks to the power given to man by God – of pouring forth and producing every day new shapes of men and other creatures the like of which was never seen before nor thought of by any other man.'***

On 4 October 1669 Rembrandt died taking this potential wealth of images with him to the grave. ■

NOTES

1 H. Wölfflin, *Gedanken zur Kunstgeschichte,* Basel 1941.
2 M. Gaffron, *Die Radierungen Rembrandts. Originale und Drucke, Studien über Inhalt und Komposition,* Mainz 1948.
3 E. Hinterding, Lecture about plate image and print with Rembrandt, on 29 January 2010 at the occasion of the exhibition *Rembrandt gespiegeld* (Rembrandt in mirror image) in Museum the Rembrandt House, Amsterdam.
4 For a general survey of this topic, see Charles G. Gross and Marc H. Bornstein, 'Left and right in science and art', *Leonardo*, Vol. II, pp. 29-38, Pergamon Press 1978; Frans van der Helm, 'Links/rechts', *NRC Handelsblad* 20 juli 2010, p. 16.
5 Exhib. cat. *The mystery of the Young Rembrandt*, Kassel/Amsterdam 2001/02, compare cat. 8 and 9.
6 Ernst van de Wetering, 'Delimiting Rembrandt's Autograph Oeuvre – an Insoluble Problem?', in: Exhib. cat. *The mystery of the young Rembrandt,* 2001/02, pp 58-81, esp. 76/77. I now find the earlier disattribution hard to understand. In hindsight, it seems to me that the small scale of the painting and the poor condition of Mary's face must have played a role. I had not seen the actual painting itself and, because I thought that it was larger, the execution of certain details seemed to deviate too markedly from the manner of painting that was considered at the time to be characteristic for the young Rembrandt. The treatment of form, drapery, light, colour and the substance of the paint in this painting, *mutatis mutandis*, has in the meantime become so familiar from Rembrandt's early oeuvre that I can no longer imagine my doubt of the authenticity of that painting. Moreover, the fact that this small painting was painted on a previously used support also lends weight to the (re-) attribution to Rembrandt. We now know of 15 superimposed paintings (and two doubly used etching plates) from Rembrandt's hand from his early Leiden period.
7 E. van de Wetering, '*Rembrandt laughing,* c. 1628 – a painting resurfaces', *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis,* 2007, pp. 18-41.
8 The Bridgestone Painting Research Group, *In darkness and light. A Rembrandt in Tokyo reconsidered*, Tokyo 1989.
9 R. van Straten, 'Rembrandt re-attributions: Between fact and wishful thinking', *Rembrandt 2006* (Essays) M. Roscam Abbing (ed.), Foleor Publishers, 2006, pp. 103-111, esp. 103-107.
10 As for the silhouette of the figure in the left foreground, which at first sight seems so strange, in 1628/29, the period in which the painting originated, it was fashionable for men to wear enormous hats – like that worn by the central figure in the painting – turned up at the front, and with its exaggeratedly wide brim resting behind on the wearer's back (verbal communication Marieke de Winkel).
11 E. van de Wetering, op. cit.[7], p. 24, fig. 7.
12 Houbraken I, p. 258/259: 'Maar een ding is te beklagen dat hy zoo schigtig tot veranderingen, of tot wat anders gedreven, vele dingen maar ten halven op gemaakt heeft, zoo in zyne schilderyen als nog meer in zyn geëtste printkonst, daar het opgemaakte ons een denkbeeld geeft van al 't fraais dat wy van zyne hand gehad zouden hebben, ingevallen ny yder ding naar mate van het beginsel voltooit hadde, als inzonderheid aan de zoo genaamde honderd guldens print en andere te zien is,…'.
13 E. van de Wetering, 'The creation of a pictorial idea', in: *Rembrandt, The painter at work*, Amsterdam/ Los Angeles, 1997/2009, pp. 75-89.
14 A. Bredius, *Künstler-Inventare* I, The Hague 1915, p. 236 no. 301.
15 Br.-Gerson 545.
16 Chr. Brown, 'Rembrandt's reassessed', *Apollo,* December 2006, pp. 54-61, esp. 56-58.
17 The De Mayerne Manuscript (ed. Berger), p. 289.
18 Chr. White, *Rembrandt as an etcher. A study of the artist at work*, (first ed. 1969), used edition 1999, p. 7.
19 Houbraken I, p. 270: ''T lust ons (schoon zyn levensrol zig al vry wyd en breed heeft uitgestrekt) nog van zyn natuurlyke en onnavolgelyke etskonst wat te zeggen, 't geen alleen genoeg zoude geweest hebben om zyn roem op te houden. Van deze zyner ettelyke honderden onder de printkonstlievenden bekend, gelyk ook geen minder getal van schersen met de pen op papier, waar in de driften van 't gemoed ontrent allerhande voorvallen zoo konstig en duidelyk zig in de wezenstrekken vertoonen dat het te verwonderen is. Toren, haat, droefheid, blydschap, en zoo voort, alles staat zoo natuurlyk afgebeeld dat men uit de pentrekken lezen kan wat elk zeggen wil. Onder vele die onder die menigte uitsteken is de verbeeldinge van Christus laatste Avondmaal 't geen ik by den konstminnenden vander Schelling heb gezien, thans in handen van meergemelden Heere Will. Six, het geen meer als twintig Ducatons waard geschat word, schoon het maar een enkele schets met de pen op papier is. Waar uit men besluiten moet: dat hy magtig is geweest op de beschouwinge der menigerhande gemoetsdriften, zig een vast denkbeeld in te drukken.'
20 The Amsterdam Rijksmuseum has embarked on such a project.
21 'Daar wij uw Kruisberg zien zo wonderbaar verbeeld/ De droeve Moeder zwijmt, en elk zijn treurrol speelt': fragment of a poem on the collection of Valerius Röver (d. 1693) by J B Wellekens (1658-1726).
22 S.v.H. *Hooge schoole*, p. 348: 'Waer op ik dan derf vaststellen, dat een oprecht oeffenaer der Schilderkonst, die haer alleen om haer zelfs wil, en om haren deugtsaemen aert navolgt, waerlijk t'onrecht zoude versmaet worden.'
23 Among this group of large-scale history paintings of the period 1634-36 also the seriously cropped *Prodigal son in the tavern* (Dresden) and the (originally probably larger) *Samson threatening his father in law* (Berlin) – see Chapter III Appendix 1 – should be counted.
24 Bredius 509, 522, 526, 531, 584, 595, *The Lamentation* (Sarasota), *The Centurion* (London, Wallace Collection), *The beheading of John the Baptist* (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum), *Christ blessing the children* (London, National Gallery), *Abraham and the Angels* (St Petersburg, Hermitage), *Abrahams Sacrifice* (Munich, Alte Pinakothek).
25 M. Franken, 'Learning by imitation: copying paintings in Rembrandt's workshop', in: *Rembrandt. Quest of a Genius*, ed. B. van den Boogert, Amsterdam/Zwolle 2006, pp. 153-178 esp. 155.
26 E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's oil studies: new light on an old problem', in: Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Quest of a Genius,* ed. B. van den Boogert, Amsterdam/Zwolle 2006, pp. 179-207.
27 B. Kempers 'Allegory and symbolism in Rembrandt's *De eendracht van het land. Images of concord and discord in prints, medals and paintings'*, Paix de Westphalle, L'art entre la guerre et la paix, Musée du Louvre 1998, Paris 2000, pp. 71-113.
28 This text is part of a postscriptum to an article by Arnulf von Ulmann, 'Rembrandt gepaust. Das Gleichnis der Arbeiter im Weinberg. In der St. Petersburger Ermitage und eine weitere neu entdeckte Version. Mit einer Nachschrift von Ernst van de Wetering, *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseum*, Nürnberg 2007, pp. 85-102 (Translation Kristin Belkin).
29 See J. Emmens, *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst*, (diss. 1967) edition used Amsterdam 1979, pp. 215-218.
30 H. Bevers et al. *Drawings by Rembrandt and his pupils. Telling the difference,* Exhib. cat. The Getty Museum, 2010, cat. nos. 31.1 and 31.2.
31 Chr. Tümpel, 'Jesus und die Ehebrecherin und Rembrandts Notizen auf Zeichnungen mit Historien', *Rembrandt-Zeichnungen in München*, Münich 2003.
32 Lyckle de Vries, 'Rembrandt's ets B. 270: Faust of Paulus', *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis*, 98 1/2, pp. 32-36.

Chapter III

Rembrandt's prototypes and pupils' production of variants

ERNST VAN DE WETERING

Over the course of the Rembrandt Research Project, the project's investigators were increasingly confronted with problems and questions related to the training of pupils in Rembrandt's workshop, and with the workshop production that may have been associated with it.
This aspect had played no major part in the original plans for the project since the only –or at least most important – question on the agenda had then been: which works of a Rembrandtesque appearance could be considered as autograph Rembrandts?

Besides a large number of paintings that we accepted as being autograph works by Rembrandt, what remained after the first sifting between 1968 and *c.* 1984 was an indeterminate mass of paintings of diverse nature. As became gradually apparent, there were virtually no later forgeries found among them. What were found were paintings which, seen in retrospect, could after all be considered as works by Rembrandt himself[1] and works which, on further consideration, were judged to have probably been produced by Rembrandt in collaboration with a workshop associate, either a pupil and/or assistant.[2] It also gradually became clear that many of the paintings that had been disattributed were works which had been produced in the context of the training of Rembrandt's pupils and the workshop production that was possibly connected with it.

We might have suspected this latter in advance, of course; Joachim von Sandrart had written in his biographical text, concerning Rembrandt, that

> '… Rembrandt's house in Amsterdam was full of almost innumerable children for instruction and learning, each of whom paid an annual fee of one hundred guilders' and that 'he earned considerable sums of money, some 2000 or 2500 guilders a year, from their paintings and etchings.'[3]

The connection between this eye-witness account and the works disattributed by the Rembrandt Research Project was not immediately seen because at the time when the Project began the image of works by Rembrandt's pupils had been set by the earliest signed and dated works by pupils as far as these could be identified. And such works were usually found to differ in style more or less markedly from Rembrandt's autograph works. Apart from that, a 20th-century preconception about education was projected on to the 17th century, which further contributed to the assumption that the work of pupils would be easily distinguishable from that of the master, even while they were still working in Rembrandt's workshop. That anachronistic preconception has been stated explicitily by Sumowski: '… Freedom to choose what could serve as an example apparently was granted by Rembrandt from the outset … in accordance with Rembrandt's ideal of the individual freedom to choose. The Rembrandt–imitator did not work according to his sense.'[4]

The truth, however, gradually emerged that the paintings that were closely related to Rembrandt's works and yet unacceptable as autograph for reasons of particular nuances of style and quality, were not later imitations or falsifications as had initially been thought. They were works which had originated in an educational context in which the accurate imitation of the master was considered to be the most important means of learning the skills of the trade.[5] This explained why copies of works by Rembrandt were to be found among the disattributed paintings that had demonstrably originated in Rembrandt's workshop; and tronies in his style and technique. Furthermore, the existence of free variants after Rembrandt's works could be similarly explained. These are paintings that are evidently related to prototypes by Rembrandt (*'principaelen'* in 17th-century Dutch terminology) yet which cannot be considered copies, even though they often include parts that are copied after Rembrandt's 'prototype'. We refer to such works simply as 'satellites' because there are several types of works derived from Rembrandt's own works. If we were to distinguish between these types by categories with descriptive titles we would lose sight of what they have in common – their dependence on works by the master.

In retrospect it is remarkable that the attention given to the nature of this type of painting only developed during the later stages of the project's existence. Such pairs of *'principael'* and satellite were actually already visible in the Rembrandt literature, specifically in the survey by Abraham Bredius, where what we now see as prototype and satellite were often reproduced on opposing pages. But Bredius, and many others with him, thought that both paintings were by Rembrandt and that their kinship could be explained by assuming that they represented steps in Rembrandt's creative search for the best solution. For a long time too, uncertainty reigned within the Rembrandt Research Project over the question of whether both works in such pairs could not have been painted by Rembrandt himself. Two particular cases in point were the Munich version of *Abraham's sacrifice* (Appendix 1, 21) and the Copenhagen version of the Paris *Supper at Emmaus* (App. 1, 38). The true nature of this practice in Rembrandt's

1 See for instance the reattributed paintings in Chapter II of this Volume and a number of self-portraits reattributed in the *Addenda and Corrigenda* of Vol. IV.

2 See in this Volume cat. V 7, 8, 24.

3 J. von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie der Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste*, Nuremburg 1675 (ed. A.R. Peltzer, Munich 1925), p. 203: '…seine Behausung in Amsterdam mit fast unzahlbaren fürnehmen Kindern zur Instruction und Lehre erfüllet, deren jeder ihme jährlich in 100 Gulden bezahlt, ohne den Nutzen, welchen er aus dieser seiner Lehrlinge Mahlwerken und Kupferstucken erhalten, der sich auch in die 2 bis 2500 Gulden baares Gelds belauffen, samt dem, was er durch seine eigne Handarbeit erworben.'

4 Sumowski *Gemälde* I, p. 14 '…Freiheit in der Wahl des Vorbildlichen wurde den Schülern offenbar von vornherein zugebilligt … Das …entsprach Rembrandts Ideal des Individuellen. Der Rembrandt-Imitator arbeitete nicht in seinem Sinn.'; Zie ook Haak Introductie collectie Cevat.

5 J. Bruyn, 'Studio practice and studio production', *Corpus* II, pp. 12-50; J. Bruyn, 'Rembrandt's workshop; function and production', in: Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, pp. 68-89; M. Franken, '"Aen stoelen en bancken leren gaen". Leerzame vormen van navolging in Rembrandts werkplaats', *Album Discipulorum J.R.J. van Asperen de Boer*, Zwolle 1997, pp. 66-73; M. Franken, 'Learning by imitation: copying paintings in Rembrandt's workshop', in: Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, 2006, pp. 153-178; E. van de Wetering, 'Principaelen' and satellites: pupils' production in Rembrandt's workshop', in: Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt? The master and his workshop*, 2006, pp. 106-122.

workshop was eventually revealed to us, but from an unexpected direction.

That insight took shape when, in two cases, private collectors confronted us with variants previously unknown to us. The owners hoped that their paintings might be works by Rembrandt himself. The first case was the *Isaac and Esau* (App. 1, 25b), which has often been discussed and reproduced since. Isaac lies in, and Esau kneels next to a huge bed that determines the paintings entire composition and bears a strong resemblance to the bed of the *Danae* in the Hermitage (App. 1, 25a). It was clear at first sight that we were looking at a painting executed in Rembrandt's technique and thus must have originated in Rembrandt's workshop; but it was evidently not an autograph work by Rembrandt himself. The same applied to the case of a version of the Louvre painting with *The angel leaving Tobit and his family* (26a). In this newly discovered studio work the angel flies up in the direction of the beholder (App. 1, 26b).

Our confrontation with these two paintings was the first step leading gradually to our becoming convinced that we were dealing with a phenomenon that could be significant in the demarcation and ordering of Rembrandt's autograph oeuvre. The two paintings led us to the idea that we were dealing with an aspect of Rembrandt's normal workshop practice where training and production were aligned with each other. Our hypothesis was that Rembrandt's pupils produced works in which, on the one hand, they based themselves on the master's work, but at the same time could allow their own 'invention' to take its own way towards independent artistic mastery. It was therefore an obvious suspicion that these pupils, in a subsequent stage of their apprenticeship, would develop inventions of their own for paintings in Rembrandt's style. Michiel Franken discovered a contemporary formulation that was relevant for an understanding of this phenomenon in a text by Vondel: that the pupil, like a child '*had to learn to walk while holding to chairs and benches*' [*'aen stoelen en bancken [moest] leren gaen'*]. In the case of the trainee painter, the master's works would be considered the 'chairs and benches'.[6] Another relevant passage is found in Willem Goeree's *'Inleiding tot de praktijk der algemene schilderkunst'*. It reads as follows: *'That, – with an eye to one's education – one practises the virtues of the work of a famous master in a new invention.'*[7]

It may be assumed that such exercises were an integral part of the production of etchings and paintings that Rembrandt sold for his own benefit, just as Sandrart described (see note 3). So far, no texts have been found that give any precise account of this method of teaching/production. In the inventories that have occasionally been found of the parents of Rembrandt's pupils, works have been listed as being *'after Rembrandt'*. These may have been copies, but could also have been free variants of the type described here.[8] The surmise that this was a normal teaching method, whereby commercial commodities were at the same time produced, is supported by the fact that we have encountered the same phenomenon with other 17th-century painters – as shown at the end of the Appendix 1.

As already said, free variants can be 'hidden' in the documents behind the designation 'after Rembrandt'. But the possibility cannot be excluded that they have also occasionally entered the market as works by Rembrandt himself. Indeed, in some cases we have indications that this actually happened. In these cases, however, we have the impression that Rembrandt got his pupils to produce such altered versions in order to improve one of his own already executed inventions. The best known example of this is the *Abraham's sacrifice* in Munich, where it can be taken as established that Rembrandt got a pupil to paint the prototype afresh (*'overgeschildert'*), but this time in an altered form *('verandert'*). This pupil – often taken to be Govaert Flinck – made use of a drawing with Rembrandt's new, improved 'invention' (see p. 201 fig. 123) in which, compared with the St Petersburg prototype, both the ordonnance and iconography were partially revised.

The reason why the art historical discussions round this case went on for so long has mainly to do with degree of freedom with which the passages common to both paintings have been executed in the Munich version. They seem to be more spontaneously painted than the corresponding passages in the St Petersburg version. As a result, it was difficult to accept that they could have been copied by another hand. Not only in the case of Rembrandt but also, for instance, in that of Frans Hals and his workshop, caution must be exercised in this matter. In the 17th century, and certainly in the case of these two workshops, it was not usual when copying to strive for an exact repetition of the prototype. Copies (whether partial or complete) in these workshops could be freer in their execution because although the copyist had the prototype before him it was apparently not demanded that he should copy as exactly as was common in the 19th and 20th centuries. For this reason, discussions over the phenomenon of free variants after Rembrandt's *principaelen* are often protracted and laborious.

In the arguments invoked in such cases, radiographic investigation play an important role in providing evidence of the genesis of the works concerned (see for instance cat. V 12-15, 21-22 and Appendix 2 to this Chapter). Equally important is the analysis of style and quality, and the way the various pictorial means have been employed, as demonstrated in Chapter IV in this Volume.

The range and nature of the differences between *'principael'* and free variant could be greater than, say, in the case of *The angel leaving Tobit and his family* (App. 1, 26b). The composition of the prototype could, for example, be mirror-imaged by a pupil, and then freely varied, as we are convinced is the case with the London *Nativity* (App. 1, 37b). Alternatively, the young painter could use the mas-

6 M. Franken, op.cit.[5], 1997.

7 Willem Goeree, *'Inleiding tot de praktijk der algemene schilderkunst'*, Middelburg 1697, p. 85: 'Datmen de deugt van een beroemd meesters werk omtrent en in een nieuwe inventie geleerdelijk oefent.'

8 *Corpus* II, pp. 48-49.

ter's prototype as a basis for developing 'a new invention' as proposed by Goeree. This happened in the case of the *Danaë/Isaac and Esau* transformation (App. 1, 25b) and with Rembrandt's Berlin *Susanna,* which was transformed by a pupil into a *Bathsheba* (27d). Whatever the case, the general hypothesis presented here does offer the possibility of introducing some structural order into the production of Rembrandt and his workshop. Certainly one would like to test this hypothesis directly against contemporary sources that are more explicit about this training/production system than the texts quoted above (Sandrart, Vondel, Goeree). Taken together, however, the latter constitute impressive corroborative evidence.

But the sheer mass of such suspected *'principael'*/satellite pairs as collated in Appendix 1 (pp. 262-269) alone argues for this hypothesis, even though in many cases further investigation is needed above that which has already been published (also in *Corpus* Vols IV and V) (App. 1 nos. 17-28, 30, 31, 35-39, 42, 45, 47, 49, 50, 51). We also believe we have been able to identify similar *'principael'*/satellite pairs in the case of both Gerard Terborch and Jan Steen (54-56), which have been subjected to similar analysis as that demonstrated in Chapter IV.[9] In both cases we can infer that here too we are dealing with *'principael'*/satellite pairs. We are thus not dealing with a training/production system that was unique to Rembrandt. It may be anticipated that we are looking at a general workshop practice with far-reaching consequences for problems of attribution in Dutch 17th-century painting.

In the case of Rembrandt's small-scale history pieces, insight into another type of free variant proves to be equally important for the ordering of Rembrandt's oeuvre. These are the free *partial* copies: mainly heads or half-figures, a few times whole figures that were isolated from Rembrandt's prototypes and copied and modified to serve as independent 'tronies'. In several cases (27b, 35b), it could be shown that these were indeed works produced in Rembrandt's workshop and derived from prototypes by Rembrandt. Such paintings, which in the past had been regarded as autograph oil-studies made in preparation for Rembrandt's history pieces, in most cases came to be considered as free partial copies. The great problem in the discussion over this type of painting is that the majority of these have long been in private ownership and some of them are untraceable. We can only hope that they still exist and will be made available for investigation in the future. The category of free variants after Rembrandt self-portraits (App. 1 32, 42b, 47b, 49b, 51b) is extensively discussed in *Corpus* IV.

In Appendici 1-3 and Chapter IV the phenomenon raised here is considered further. In Appendix I this is done through the frequency with which it seems to occur. Undoubtedly, it would have occurred more often with the etchings and drawings from Rembrandt's workshop than is suggested here. It is, however, for specialists in these areas to explore further the occurrence of this phenomenon when they see occasion to do so. The same applies equally, of course, to the oeuvres of other artists. In that case we still have only suspicions based on the analysis of style and quality (see App. 1 54-56). We are very well aware that such an approach to oeuvres that have been accepted to date, not only in the case of Rembrandt but also of other artists, could cause considerable disquiet among the owners of the paintings concerned. The satellites shown in Appendix 1 are presented here on the basis of tentative opinions that, in certain cases, require further testing.

Our main concern is to bring the phenomenon to attention because we believe that it could be of significance for the future of art historical research on a broad front.

9 E. van de Wetering, 'Gerard ter Borch en zijn atelier', *Kunstschrift* 2005, no. 3, pp. 16-27. In the case of 56 a/b this happened during a number of lectures.

Appendix 1

An illustrated survey of presumed pairs of Rembrandt's prototypes and pupils' free variants

1a B 352

1b B 353

1c Br 64

Br	=	Bredius
B	=	Bartsch
Ben	=	Benesch
priv. coll.	=	private collection
p	=	page in present volume
App	=	Appendix to present chapter

2a Br 539

2b Br 556

The first free variants on Rembrandt's works appear as early as 1628, when he had his first pupils. Several of these variants seem to be from the same hand (see 1c, 2b, 3b), an artist who would appear to have been influenced by both Rembrandt and Jan Lievens. The name van Dirck Lievens has been suggested by Martin Bijl, although this possibility remains unverifiable. This younger brother of Jan Lievens was a contemporary of Gerard Dou, usually considered to have been Rembrandt's first pupil. Dirck Lievens was also a painter but there are no works that can be attributed to him with any certainty. The young painter, whoever he was, was clearly determined and ready to follow Rembrandt in his explorations of the effects of artificial light with large, dark repoussoirs and sunlight, going for highly daring effects.

3a Br 535

3b Br 427

4a – d: In fig. 4b, the challenge that led to the painting of this free variant was surely to render the affect of laughter. Beneath 4a, technical methods of investigation revealed a campfire scene with armed figures (fig. 4c) see also Ch. II p. 157.
4d could well be a free variant of the painting now covered by 4a. If it is a free variant after a prototype by Rembrandt it could possibly be painted by Gerard Dou.

5: The relation between 5b and 5a is unmistakable: their ordonnance is remarkably similar. But whereas in 5a the entering sunlight plays a main role, other motives must have influenced the decision of the author of 5b to paint his variant in this way.

4a p 157

4b Br 15

4c p 157

4d Br 533

5a Br 423

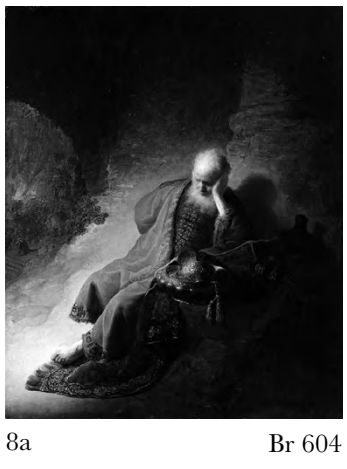
5b Br 424

6a Br 602

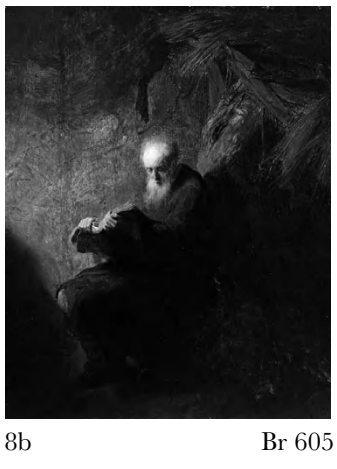
6b Br 425

7a Br 69

7b Br 465



8a Br 604



8b Br 605

9-14: Rembrandt's early pupils seem to have imitated the young Rembrandt experimenting with the etching technique by making free variants after his small etchings.

9a B 354

9b B 355

10a B 163

10b B 166

11a B 141

11b B 142

12a B 151

12b B 150

13a B 138

13b B 140

14a B 165

14b B 144

The etchings 16b, 23b, 24b show Rembrandtesque motifs. But in their representation of the human figure they evince a language of forms and a handling of contours, space and light that is so foreign to Rembrandt that it is difficult to believe that they were executed by him. Perhaps the relation proposed here between prototype and satellite could provide an explanation for the occurrence of such etchings.

15a B 174

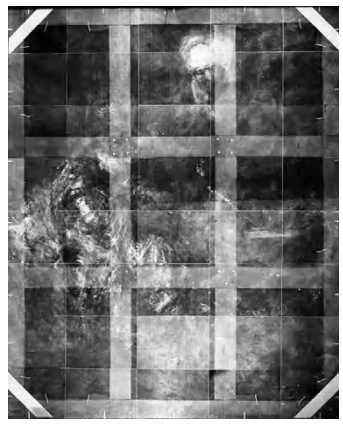
15b B 175

16a B 54

16b B 52

17a Br 494

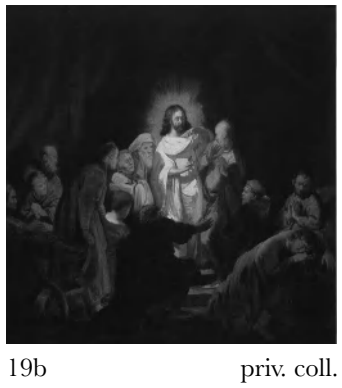
17b App 2, Br 495



18a X-ray of 18b

18b Br 522

19a Br 552



19b priv. coll.

20a Br 551

20b Br 584

19a/b: Some copies are not only free in their execution but also differ strikingly from Rembrandt's entire way of painting. This is the case with 19b. And yet the dendrochronological evidence shows that it almost certainly originated in Rembrandt's workshop. Given that Rembrandt's pupils had, as a rule, spent an earlier apprenticeship with another master, the difference in style between 19b and 19a could perhaps point toward the young painter's previous master.

18a/b and 20a/b: several times one finds that a free variant is based on a much earlier prototype. In the case of 18a/b this variant is based on a large unfinished painting, partly visible in the X-radiograph, that Rembrandt must have kept from 1633/34 until the 1650's. Similarly, 20b was painted in the 1650's after a painting made in 1634 (p. 190 fig. 97) that Rembrandt had hanging in his house up to 1656 (see p. 191).

21a Br 498

21b Alte Pinakothek München

22a Br 499

22b priv. coll.

21a/b: In this case it is virtually certain that the variant was executed on the basis of a design, drawn by Rembrandt, in which he had changed the composition of 21a (see p. 201 fig. 123).

23/24: When one asks which etchings by his pupils were sold by Rembrandt to his own advantage (see p. 259) one can well imagine prints like 23b and 24b.

22b, initially a copy of 22a, was originally of the same width and was extended on the left within Rembrandt's studio, entailing a change in the invention. It is not impossible that after that Rembrandt's prototype (22a) was enlarged accordingly and that the added piece has since been lost as a result of water damage (*Corpus* III A 109).

23a B 121

23b B 119

24a B 69

24b B 68

25a Br 474

25b App 3, p 282

26a Br 503

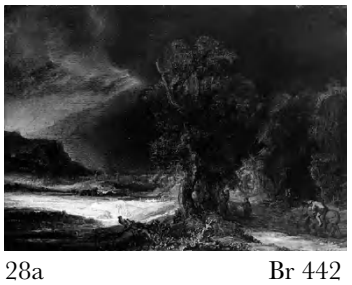
26b App 3, p 279

27a Br 516

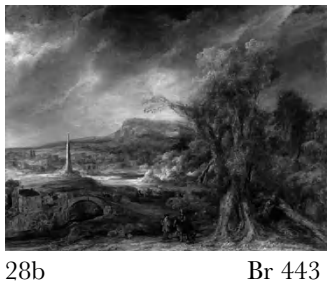
27b Br 518

27c Br 248

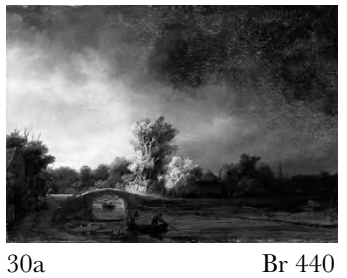
27d Br 513



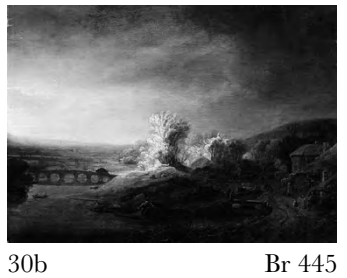
28a Br 442



28b Br 443



30a Br 440



30b Br 445

29a Br 456

29b Br 455

31a Ben 538

31b Ben 537

Hypothetical Prototype

32a

32b Br 35

32c Br 40

33a Br 359

33b Br 367

34a Ben 547

34b Ben 646

35a Br 570

35b Br 375

36a p 428

36b Br 376

36c p 430

37a Br 574

37b Br 575

38a Br 578

38b Br 621

38c p 477

38d Br 579

38e Br 597

40a Br 583

40b p 518

41a Br 377

41b Br 378

42a Br 43

42b Br 44

42c Br 45

44a Br 385

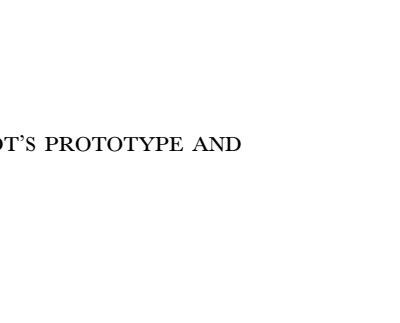
44b Br 384

45a Br 524

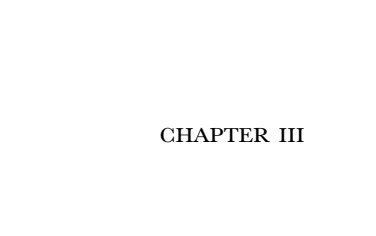
45b Br 523

43a Ben 947

43b Ben 948



46a Ben 1047



46b Ben 1046

47a Br 50

47b p 603

48a Br 306

48b Br 307

49a Br 54

49b Br 57

50a B 70

50b p 608

51a Br 53

51b Br 56

51c Vol. IV p 538

53a Br 485

53b Br 484

54a Mauritshuis

54b Boijmans

56a Getty Museum

56b priv. coll.

52a

52b Br 304

52c Br 302

52a/b/c: There is a group of four small, sketchily executed heads that are related to that of 52a (see also 52b and c). Establishing the possible relations of these paintings with 52a would require investigating all five paintings. Is one of them an autograph sketch for 52a? Are all sketches after the same posing model? Or is 52c a satellite of 52b or vice versa?

55a Getty Museum

55b Getty Museum

53a, b: The possibility that 53b could perhaps have been painted by Rembrandt's pupil Aert de Gelder basing himself on 53a would require an in-depth study of de Gelder's oeuvre.

54/56: Both the 32 painted principals shown above as well as the 36 putative free variants that may have been based on them almost all have a Br(edius) number. That is, Bredius in 1935 accepted all these paintings as autograph works by Rembrandt. If the free variants are in fact works by pupils, this would mean that Rembrand's oeuvre could be only about half as large as assumed by Bredius. The same could be the case with the oeuvres accepted as autograph of, for example, Gerard Terborch (54 and 55), Jan Steen (56) and other 17th-century painters where, as with Rembrandt, one can distinguish comparable putative 'principal/ satellite' pairs.

Fig. 1. Rembrandt, *A Young woman at her toilet* (Esther), 1633, canvas 110.5 x 94.3 cm. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada (II A 64)

Appendix 2

A satellite investigated

The painting reproduced in fig. 2, measuring 54.3 x 47.3 cm, was discovered in 1904 in the attic rooms of the Friesland estate, 'Dekema State'. It is neither signed nor dated, but displays so many Rembrandtesque characteristics that following its discovery the pre-eminent Rembrandt expert of that time, Abraham Bredius, was invited to give his opinion of the painting. He thought he recognized in it a work by Rembrandt and published it as such in his 1935 survey of Rembrandt's painted oeuvre.[1] Bode also considered the painting to be an autograph work by Rembrandt; and on the basis of his judgement it was acquired in 1926 by the Berlin collector Dr Walter Heiligendorff as a work by Rembrandt.[2] It has remained in this collection to the present day. However, the painting was not accepted as an autograph work by Bauch, Gerson and Tümpel.

In 2008 the painting was shown to the Rembrandt Research Project for their assessment. In its technical execution and its application of pictorial means it demonstrated a clear affinity with Rembrandt's work from the early 1630's. Dendrochronological research provided strong backing for this judgement. The youngest annual ring of the oak panel is from 1608, the earliest possible date of painting 1617[3]. In its overall quality, however, the painting differs so markedly from Rembrandt's works from the early Amsterdam period that it cannot be considered a work from his own hand. Yet the subject and the composition are so clearly related to Rembrandt's *Young woman (Esther? Judith?) at her toilet* of 1633 in Ottawa (fig. 1) that, in the light of our understanding of this aspect of Rembrandt's teaching practice and workshop production, it can be considered a free variant of the Ottawa painting. This was the reason it was decided to investigate the work in more detail.

In the putative prototype in Ottawa, the identity of the sumptuously dressed young woman, groomed by an older woman, cannot be ascertained with any certainty. (Is it Esther or Judith – or perhaps even Bathsheba?) But in the present painting the fact that the similarly richly clad young woman seems to be holding a folded document (fig. 4) suggests that we are looking here at Esther (see the Old Testament Apocryphal Book of Esther: VIII: 8-10).

X-radiographic investigation shows that the painting underwent a complex genesis (fig. 3).

- Beneath the now visible wooden dais there was an obliquely running dark repoussoir with undulating contours, perhaps some form of drapery. In addition the treatment of light in that zone of the painting seems to have been different.
- The woman seems to have been originally turned slightly more three-quarters to the right. This is suggested by the position of two earlier hands, roughly indicated in lead white-containing paint (to the right of her now visible right hand and on the right next to her left hand). The course of the contour of the woman's left arm and shoulder also contribute to this surmise.
- The radio-absorbency of the cloak leads one to suspect that this was not originally intended to be brown but a lighter colour. In its original form the left contour of the cloak ran a different course.
- A strip running obliquely down to the left from the waist can be followed through the present right hand.
- The boundary between the left upper edge of the cloak and her 'blouse' ran less obliquely.
- The contours running away from both shoulders followed a different course.
- The light patch beside the woman's left hand may be considered to be an indication of an earlier left hand. This means that the hand with the document was moved during the course of the work. However, a clearly reserved shadow of the document on an earlier stage of the skirt, in a zone showing up light, indicates that at that early stage the document was intended to be placed there. The way that part of the skirt was initially painted is closely similar to the way the cloak hanging over the back of the chair was painted in its first underpainted stage.
- According to the X-ray image, in the place where a green shawl now lies on a flat golden dish, a different object was painted which, despite its clearly defined form, cannot be identified. One cannot exclude the possibility that this form is connected with an earlier version of the shawl.
- In the more or less radio-absorbent background round the upper half of the figure there is a larger reserve for the woman's hair. This substantial reserve takes up considerably more space than Esther's hair now visible in the paint surface. The reserve by her left shoulder and upper arm similarly betrays a more capacious original intention.

To begin with, one has to conclude from the differences between the X-ray image and the finally executed work that the present background was introduced over a background painted earlier, preparatory to working anew on the figure. It could be that the original background round the upper half of the figure was lighter than it is now. According to the infra-red photograph, however, the paint in this zone contains charcoal as well as lead white (fig. 5). It must therefore have been grey. But more importantly, the reserve betrays an originally different conception of the painting – albeit probably retaining the same subject. This idea is corroborated by 'disturbance' in the X-ray image of the head and around it: the face was probably originally placed slightly more to the right and, more especially, higher. The latter surmise is suggested by the light zone obliquely above and to the right of the present forehead. The way this zone has been painted shows marked similarity with the light – showing earlier stage of the

1. Bredius 495.
2. Formerly Hamburg, coll. C.A. Mandl; sale Amsterdam 13 July 1926, no. 655.
3. Dendrochronological report by Dr. P. Klein, Hamburg.

Fig. 2. Free variant after fig. 1, *Esther,* panel 54.3 x 47.3 cm.
Private collection (Br. 495)

Fig. 3. X-Ray

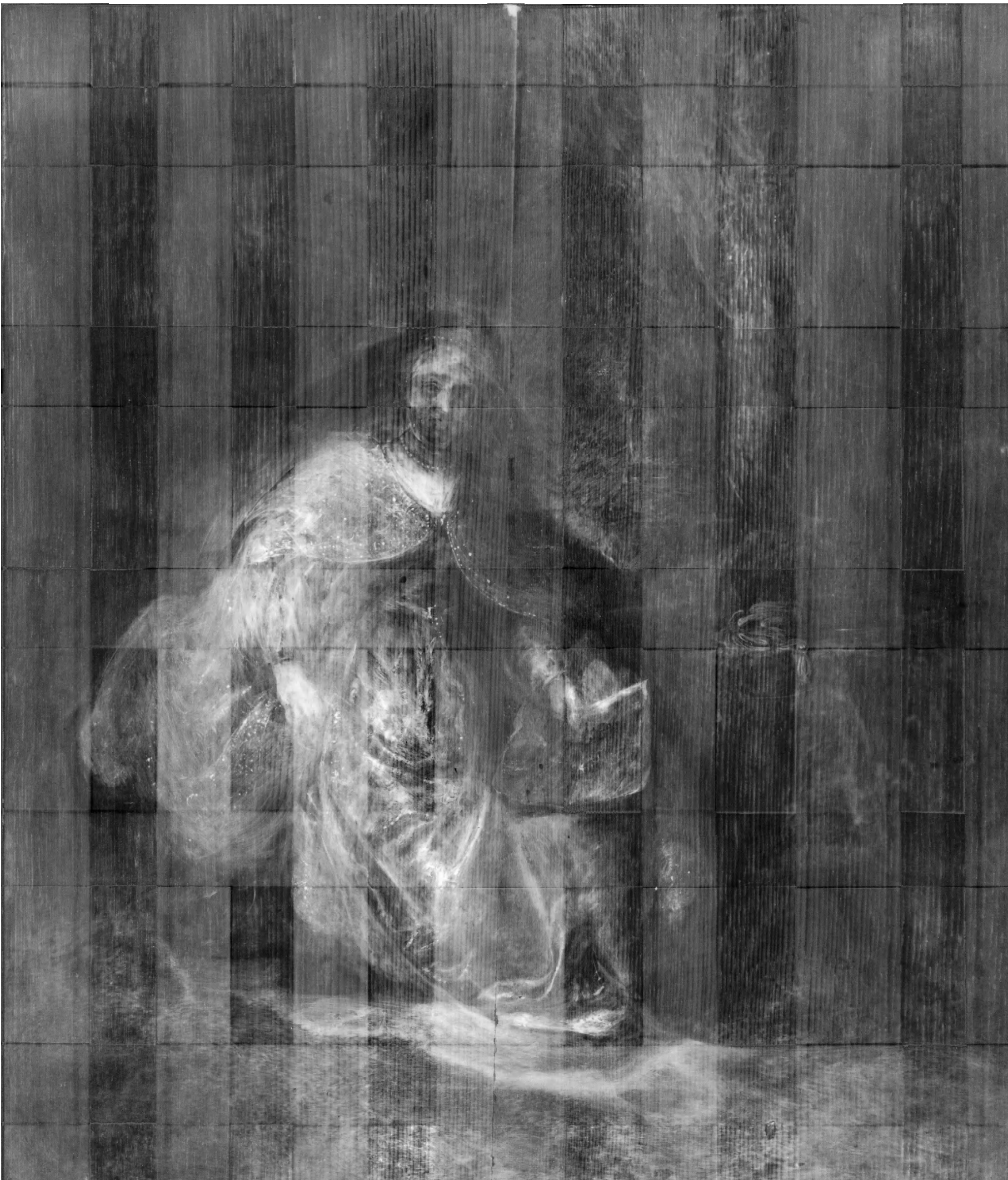


Fig. 4. Detail of fig. 2 (turned 90°)

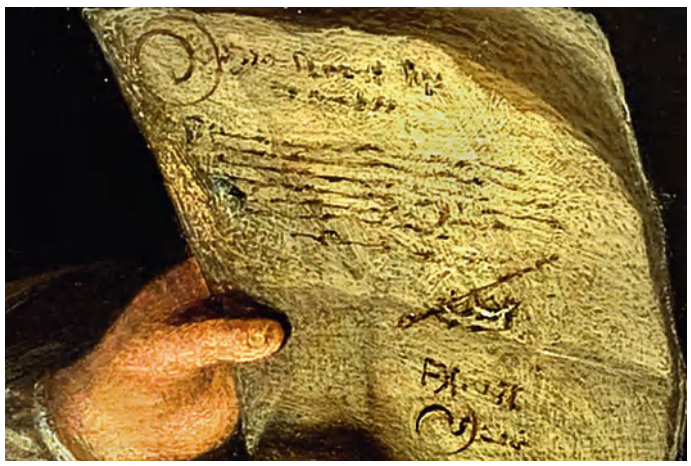


Fig. 5. Infrared photograph

cloak and the zone of the skirt in which the shadow of the document is reserved.

When all these deviant elements are compared with what one sees in the surface image, one is led to suspect that two hands may have worked on this painting. The robustness, for example, with which the reserve of the shoulders, hairdo and head was introduced, the emphatic way form was given to the cloak thrown over the back of the chair, the way in which the foreground was originally conceived, this all betrays a very different artistic temperament, not only as far as the execution is concerned, but also with regard to the conception as a whole. What stands out conspicuously with the foreground is that no account has been taken there of the wooden dais that was apparently later introduced on top of grey tiles.

In this painting, therefore, much more has happened than that a pupil straightforwardly produced a free variant, basing himself on a work by the master. One artist began the work and a second artist finished it, in the process taking a whole series of liberties. We are familiar with this phenomenon from several other works that were earlier attributed to Rembrandt or to one of the painters from his school (cat. V 7, 8, 24). Another striking example is the portrait of Prince Rupert of the Rhine in the Getty Museum (see p. 5). It is our view that in all these cases the first lay-in is to be attributed to Rembrandt, and that painters in his immediate circle, almost certainly his pupils, completed the final versions, often taking marked liberties. One could go so far as to say that these are satellites painted on top of more or less completed originals by Rembrandt himself. An example that would seem to be relevant to the present case is the *Esther and Ahasuerus* in Bucharest (III B 9), whose first, unfinished version must have originated in the same period as the Ottawa prototype (see also Chapter V p. 319) and the satellite dealt with here. In that case, however, the superimposed painting was by a pupil executed in the 50's more than 20 years after Rembrandt had stopped his work on the underlying work.[4]

To come back to the present painting: there are several points of correspondence between the vaguely outlined, roughly laid-in first version visible in the X-radiograph of the present painting, and paintings which we consider to be authentic Rembrandts. There is a striking similarity between the reserve of head, shoulders and hairdo with the X-ray images of the Ottawa prototype (*Corpus* II A 64 fig. 2) and *'Sophonisba'* in Madrid (*Corpus* II A 94 and Addendum in *Corpus* III p. 775). In all three paintings these amply contoured reserves seem to have been wiped from the lead white-containing background with the same flair.

The way in which the brush has been handled in the roughly in-laid underlying version of the painting is strongly reminiscent of what can be made out in the lead white-containing underpainted areas in the 1633 *Christ in the Storm*, II A 68 (for instance, to the left of the ship's bow); in the 1632/33 *Raising of the Cross*, II A 69 (left of the soldier in the foreground); the New York *Woman with a fan* also painted in 1633, II A 79 (near the original left-side contour of the chair).

Taking all in all, it is likely that someone in Rembrandt's immediate proximity introduced the variant over a first design executed by Rembrandt himself.

This account is of course of a more or less hypothetical nature. But there is a point in publishing such tentative reconstructions of what took place in Rembrandt's workshop: the more such case histories are reconstructed, however tentatively, the clearer our view of the regime of training and production in his workshop – and possibly also in those of other artists – will gradually become.

4. Another possible example of this is the Braunschweig *Scholar* (*Corpus* I C 15), the light-showing parts of whose first design – in as far as they are visible in the X-radiograph – are very similar in their execution to the painting discussed here (figs. 2 and 3).

The question naturally springs to mind as to who the relevant pupil in this case might have been. Painters such as Jouderville (1612/13 – 1645/48), Govaert Flinck (1615 – 1660), Willem de Poorter (1608 – after 1648), Dirck Santvoort (1610/11 – 1680) are all possible candidates. But whether one wishes to make connections, on the basis of style and painting, technique between the earliest signed works by these artists and the work in question here depends on the tenacity – not to say compulsiveness – with which one is driven to attach the name of a painter to every painting. One has to remember that, in general, we only know by chance the names of Rembrandt's pupils (see *Corpus* II pp. 45-47). Consequently it is impossible to know how many young men populated the workshop of Rembrandt and Uylenburgh and who they were. Some of them – who may have died at an early age – will remain anonymous, simply because their names have never been recorded in connection with Rembrandt.

It may be relevant to this question of who the author of the (visible part) of the present painting could have been, that there exists a copy after the painting (fig. 6) which, given the dendrochronological dating of the panel (youngest growth ring dating from 1625), could have originated in the first half of the 17th century (see note 3). In that regard, the present case is comparable to that which is discussed in the following Appendix.

Fig. 6. Copy after School of Rembrandt, *Esther*, panel 67.1 x 51.5 cm. Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal, on loan from the library of the University Leiden (inv. S 177)

Fig. 1. Rembrandt, *The angel Raphael leaving Tobit and his family*, 1637, panel 66 x 52 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (III A 121) [Version A]

Appendix 3

Two nearly identical variations on Rembrandt's 1637 *The angel Raphael leaving Tobit and his family* in the Louvre*

Three similar paintings, the versions A, B and C
(figs. 1-3)

According to its signature painted in 1637, the Louvre version of this composition (version A) belongs to Rembrandt's most important small-scale history paintings from the 1630s.[1] In view of its genesis, the technique and manner of painting, and of its superbly Rembrandtesque quality, there can be no doubt that it is a work by the master himself (fig. 1).

The subject is taken from the (apocryphal) Book of Tobit 12:21-22. Having guided young Tobias on his journey to Rages in Media, and having instructed him how to cure his father's blindness upon their return to Nineveh, the angel Raphael reveals his identity and then disappears. He is seen flying upwards in the midst of swirling clouds.

In 1983 we were confronted with another version (version B) of the same scene which basically differed from the Paris version only in the position and gesturing of the flying angel. Given the technique and execution of version B and the type of oak panel on which it was painted we did not have the slightest doubt that the painting was produced in the 17th century and, in all probability, in Rembrandt's workshop. The general quality of the execution of the painting was less outstanding than in the Paris painting (version A), from which we concluded that version A was the prototype of version B.

Satellites

We were intrigued by version B because, precisely during this period, we had begun to be aware of a phenomenon which had significant consequences for our understanding of the way Rembrandt's studio functioned both as a training and production workshop: the phenomenon of the 'satellites', free workshop variants based on 'principalen' (prototypes) by Rembrandt (see pp. 259-275). Version B of the Paris *Tobit,* the painting that had surfaced in 1983, was in our view just such a 'satellite'.

It seemed natural that such free variants, like version B, would vary from one pupil to another and in that sense would be unique efforts by the individual pupils. Given that assumption, we were then rather astonished to discover that a duplicate of version B appeared to exist. The German owners approached us in 2005 by sending a photograph of this 'Doppelgänger' (fig. 3).

Our first reaction was to assume that this painting (referred to as version C in the following) would be a later copy after version B. From the photograph, we at first thought it to be a much later – possibly even 19th-century – copy after version B, made at a time when that version may have been considered to be an original by Rembrandt. Our response was largely dictated by what would later turn out to be the extremely bad condition of the paint, and the many restorations which appeared to have affected the stylistic properties of the work. We advised the owners to have the oak panel investigated by Prof. Dr. Peter Klein, Hamburg. To our surprise the dating of the annual rings of the wooden panel, comprising three boards, made it likely that version C was painted in or after 1639, although an earlier dating, from *c.* 1634 onwards, could not be excluded. We should remember that Rembrandt's prototype in Paris is dated 1637.

This dating of version C immediately raised the possibility that both paintings could have originated in Rembrandt's workshop. But even if this were the case, there was no way around the assumption that one of these two satellites of version A should be a copy of the other – version C after B, or B after C.

The ideal way to sort out this problem would be to study both paintings (B and C) simultaneously under the best possible conditions – an unlikely situation, but nonetheless one which happened to present itself. At about the same time that Prof. Klein had investigated version C, version B resurfaced after we had virtually lost track of the painting between 1983 and 2006. Thanks to the kindness of the owners of the two paintings, we now had the chance to study both paintings simultaneously.

The angels

What first drew our attention in this comparison of the two paintings were the similarities as well as the difference between the similar flying angels in versions B and C. In these two paintings, the approaching angel is depicted from a different angle compared to the angel in the prototype of this composition (version A). It is therefore most probably an invention on the part of one of the painters of the versions B or C. The choice of precisely this variation on a prototype by Rembrandt draws attention to a coincidentally similar case – Rembrandt's autograph *Abraham's sacrifice* from 1635 in St Petersburg and its 'satellite' from 1636 in Munich (p. 265, 21a and b).

In that case too an angel approaching from a different angle in the satellite was the most significant element conceived by the pupil himself, even though we know that this pupil must have based this variation on a rough sketch by Rembrandt in the British Museum (p. 201 fig. 123). Also in the *Abraham* case, one observes a clear difference of style and quality between the angel and the (much greater) part of the painting where the pupil was on solid ground in working after Rembrandt's painted prototype. If we wanted to gain further insight into the painterly qualities of the painter of the original satellite (B or C) of Rembrandts *Tobit* painting, we had to concentrate especially on the angel.

In a comparison of the two angels in versions B and C, a specific detail of the angel in version B is conspicuously weaker than the same detail in version C. In version B the

* Report written by E. van de Wetering on the basis of investigations together with Karin Groen, Peter Klein, Martin Bijl, René Gerritsen and Leonore van Slooten.

1 *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, Vol. III (1989), A 121.

angel's right arm seems to have the wrist growing from the shoulder, whereas this arm in version C is so constructed that although largely covered by the sleeve it is anatomically, and in its relation to the body, much more plausibly rendered. On the basis of this difference, it seemed at first that version C must have served as the model for version B. Further, the painter of version C, according to the X-radiographs, seemed to have explored more possibilities in the painting of this arm and the hand, which also contributes to the impression that version C was the original satellite and version B, particularly in the arm under discussion, a rather clumsy copy.[2]

In July 2006, in the course of an exhaustive discussion over the two paintings (versions B and C) and a 1:1 photograph of version A, all three works were thoroughly studied together with their associated infrared photographs and X-radiographs.[3] A comparison of tracings of the group of figures from the three paintings on transparent foil clearly indicated that mechanical copying techniques had been used in the production of versions B and C – presumably also through the use of tracings. According to 17th-century sources, when making tracings, one technique was to use paper soaked in oil to make it transparent.[4] During our investigation of the tracings, we found that the usual practice was apparently not to execute a single tracing of the entire composition (probably for reasons of paper format) but rather of parts – mostly consisting of one or more figures together – to be covered separately. As a result, in the transfer of the tracing, parts of the image could find themselves slightly shifted in relation to each other on the panel.

In this discussion around the question of whether version B or C was the actual satellite and the other work (C or B) a copy of it, we came to a stalemate. The problem at that point seemed insoluble. This confusion was only deepened by the fact that at some unknown time, version C had been deeply damaged in its material structure by the injudicious use of a (probably) very alkaline cleaning agent. As a result, for instance, paint samples taken from the two paintings B and C were incommensurable, and samples from version C could give no further indication of the painting's possible date of origin.

A breakthrough came in a subsequent session on the two paintings in the summer of 2007, when thanks to Leonore van Sloten, a staff member of the Amsterdam Rembrandt House Museum, we became aware of the striking kinship between two of the figures present in all three versions (viz. the kneeling Tobit and the young woman with clasped hands) and two figures in Ferdinand Bols' painting *The women at the tomb of Christ* in Copenhagen (fig. 5). This is an exceptionally ambitious work (280 x 385 cm) from 1644 which must have originated some years after Ferdinand Bol had become established as an independent artist (after Bol's arrival in Rembrandt's workshop as a pupil in *c.* 1637, he probably left the workshop around 1641).

The kinship between version A (Rembrandt's Paris prototype) and the above-mentioned painting by Bol had previously been discussed in the literature, for instance by Albert Blankert in his monograph on Bol.[5] In the subsequent course of our investigation of versions B and C, significant new points of view now presented themselves. First of all, our investigation of the relation between Bol's *The women at the tomb of Christ* and the three versions of the Tobit composition sharpened our eyes for many relevant differences between versions A, B and C and between these paintings and the Bol painting.

In this comparison, the position of the entwined hands of the kneeling Tobit in version A and the hands of the kneeling Mary at Christ's tomb in the Copenhagen painting were found to be most closely related to the hands of Tobit in version B. The hands in version C were placed slightly closer toward the knees. In addition, the head of the old woman (Anna) in version C deviated both in construction and proportions from the same head in versions A and B. These and similar observations meant changing our ideas about the mutual relations between the three versions of the Tobias composition. It now seemed more likely that version B was directly dependent on version A, which would mean that version C had been copied after version B. On the other hand, as well as the right arm of the angel there were other passages in version C that were better than the comparable passages in version B: for example, the proportions of the dog which were less monkey-like in version C than in version B. We know from various sources that 17th-century copyists attempted to improve on the prototype.[6] After comparison of many details of the three versions A, B and C we were convinced that version C, without direct knowledge of version A, was copied with a certain freedom after version B (see note 2 for a commentary on the right arm of the angel). Our provisional conclusion is now that version B was a free variant – a satellite – of the Paris prototype by Rembrandt and that version C was a rather free copy after version B.

2 After detailed comparison of versions A, B and C, it remained a possibility that the strange deformation of the right arm may have arisen through the introduction of the dark triangular patch to the left of the wrist and lower arm during a restoration. It is this patch which contributes most to the impression of anatomical deformity in this arm. There is no comparable dark patch in version C; instead, at the equivalent place, one sees the continuous left contour of a daringly but convincingly foreshortened lower arm. Perhaps this contour in version B was covered by the triangular dark patch which functions as the dark interior shadow of the sleeve. There appear to have been further interventions with dark paint in version B, possibly to cover abraded areas in shadowed passages. In this way, it is quite likely that the hinge above the head of the aged Anna has disappeared beneath black paint: this hinge is visible in both versions A and C. The black headscarf of Anna, the old woman in the group of figures, is probably totally overpainted with black paint.

3 The participants in this discussion were the scientist Karin (C.M.) Groen, the restorer/researcher Martin Bijl, the research photographer René Gerritsen and the writer of this report.

4 Arnulf von Ulmann, 'Rembrandt gepaust. "Das Gleichnis der Arbeiter im Weinberg" in der St. Petersburger Ermitage und eine weitere neu entdeckte Version mit einer Nachschrift von Ernst van de Wetering', in: *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums 2007*.

5 A. Blankert, *Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680): Rembrandt's pupil*, Doornspijk 1982, cat. no. 17 (p. 97) and earlier by Roger Fry in: *Burl. Mag.* 44 (1924), pp. 189-192.

6 John Michael Montias, *Artists and Artisans in Delft*, …, Princeton 1982, p. 234.

Fig. 2. Version B, variant of version A, panel 65.5 x 50 cm. USA, Coll. N. Saban

Fig. 3. Version C, variant of version A or copy after version B?, panel 62 x 51 cm. Germany, private collection

Version B by Ferdinand Bol

What makes version B so interesting is that this pupilary work probably played an important role in the origin of Bol's *The women at the tomb*, the painting in Copenhagen. The hypothesis that will be argued below is that version B was painted by Ferdinand Bol during his apprenticeship with Rembrandt.

What triggered this hypothesis was a remark by Albert Blankert concerning a preparatory drawing for the Copenhagen painting, a drawing that is safely attributed to Bol (fig. 4), and its bearing on the above-mentioned relation between two figures in that painting (the kneeling Tobit and the standing veiled woman) and the corresponding two figures in Rembrandt's *Tobit* in the Louvre (our version A).[7] In the preparatory drawing, these two figures differ considerably from the corresponding figures in the Copenhagen painting: specifically, the position of the kneeling figure is different. This kneeling figure is represented obliquely from behind in the drawing, whereas in the painting it is shown obliquely from in front, similar to the placing of the old Tobit in Rembrandt's *Tobit* painting. The similarities in the details of the arms and hands in these two paintings and the rendering of the body are also striking. Blankert's remark refers to these same similarities when he closes his catalogue text relating to the Copenhagen painting as follows: "The kneeling woman leaning forward and the standing woman on the right are almost directly derived – only the arms of the standing figure were changed – from Rembrandt's *The angel Raphael leaving Tobit and his family* (Paris, Louvre, III A 121), dated 1637. It is curious that the derivation in the final painting is more literal – hence more blatant – than in the preliminary drawing in Munich".[8]

It is indeed surprising that, with regard to the position of the kneeling figure, the Copenhagen painting is less like the preparatory drawing in Munich (fig. 4) than the Paris painting (our version A). Does this mean that when he came to paint the kneeling figure in *The women at the tomb* he then based himself on Rembrandt's painting? That would imply that seven years after the origin of Rembrandt's painting, Bol had the kind of access to this painting that allowed him to base two figures in his work almost literally on it. We know that this happened in the case of Bol's monumental (404 x 282.5 cm) version of *Abraham and the angels* from 1663,[9] in which the attitude of the Abra-

7 Blankert, op.cit.[5], Plate 201 (A).
8 Blankert, op.cit.[5], p. 97, cat.no. 17.
9 Blankert, op.cit.[5], cat. no. 2, p. 90.

Fig. 4. Ferdinand Bol, *The three Mary's at the Sepulchre*, study for fig. 8, 23.3 x 31.7 cm. Munich, Printroom, inv. no. 1842

ham figure is inconceivable without Rembrandt's prototype of 1646 with this scene (compare figs. 6 and 7). However, it is almost certain that Bol was then in possession of Rembrandt's small painting; after all, an *Abraham and the angels* by Rembrandt is listed in the inventory drawn up on the occasion of Bol's marriage in 1669 (see also cat. V 9).[10] One cannot entirely exclude the possibility that Bol could have had Rembrandt's *Tobit* painting from 1637 (our version A) in front of him when he painted *The women at the tomb* in 1644, seven years after Rembrandt painted the work and several years after finishing his apprenticeship with Rembrandt. But there is the alternative possibility that Bol made use of version B while he was working on his *The women at the tomb*. This is the hypothesis that will be argued below.

The *c.* 20-year-old Ferdinand Bol – already trained as a painter – was a pupil of Rembrandt during roughly the same period in which the latter was working on his Tobit scene (around 1637). We have indications, meanwhile,

Fig. 5. Ferdinand Bol, *The women at the tomb of Christ*, 1644, canvas 280 x 358 cm. Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst

10 Blankert, op.cit.[5], p. 77, no. 42: 'Abraham en de Engelen van Rembrant' (Abraham and the angels by Rembrant').

Fig. 6. Rembrandt, *Abraham serving the angels*, 1646, panel 16.1 x 21.1 cm. USA, private collection (V 9)

Fig. 7. Ferdinand Bol, *Abraham and the angels*, canvas 404 x 282 cm (detail). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (on loan in Het Noordbrabants Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch)

that 'satellites' often originated in Rembrandt's workshop at roughly the same time that Rembrandt was producing his prototype, and that Rembrandt apparently suggested or urged his pupils to depart from his prototype in on one or more respects. In this way they could develop their ability to find their own 'inventions'. It is thus possible that Bol could have painted version B, even if – in this stage of the present argument – this must remain no more than a conjecture. Because Bol's own style – like that of all Rembrandt pupils – only developed after he left Rembrandt, no putative pupilary work can be attributed to him or to any other pupil on stylistic grounds. It is rather a constellation of external evidence, discussed below, and the comparison of various details in version B with the same details in *The women at the tomb*, that draw one to the almost inevitable conclusion that Bol must have been the author of version B, which will turn out to have served as a model during his work on *The women at the tomb*.

As mentioned on p. 259, works produced in Rembrandt's workshop were sold for Rembrandt's own profit.[11] On the other hand, we know from archival records that the parents of his pupils sometimes possessed works 'after Rembrandt' that had apparently been painted by their sons during their apprenticeship period.[12] We also know that Rembrandt was acquainted with the father of Ferdinand Bol; he had painted his portrait.[13] Bol's father died in 1641. If he had purchased work by his son from Rembrandt, this could well have come into the possession of the young Ferdinand after his father's death. In the inventory of 1669 mentioned above, *'a Tobias'* is listed among the paintings in Bol's possession. This indication is not sufficiently specific, but in view of the modest status of the painting (a pupilary work), it could perhaps refer to version B. This kind of hypothetical argumentation is not necessary, however; at most it can only serve to show the plausibility of the thesis that Bol made use of version B and not Rembrandt's prototype (version A) when he was working on his *The women at the tomb* in 1644; and that it is therefore extremely probable that version B is a pupilary work by the young Ferdinand Bol.

From a comparison of the Copenhagen painting with version A and version B, it is unmistakably clear that in working on his *The women at the tomb* Bol made use of version B and not Rembrandt's prototype (version A). One sees this when one for instance compares the fingers of Tobit, the beads in the hair of the standing woman, or the way the woman's veil in version A functions like the eaves of a roof, as it were, to cast a shadow, a detail which has been worked out much more vaguely, even though in a comparable manner, in version B and in the Copenhagen painting.

'Rapen' (gleaning)

It is important to be clear about the main point here. The real thrust of the argument is not concerned with Ferdinand Bol's copying his own pupilary work when he worked on his *The women at the tomb*, but rather with the use (in the relevant figures) of a literal copy after Rembrandt's prototype. Blankert called the way in which Bol had made use of Rembrandt 'blatant', meaning that almost literally quoting was shameless. But he wrote that at a time when the idea of 'gleaning' (in Dutch 'rapen') and the workshop practice referred to by that term had not been raised in the art historical literature. 'Gleaning' refers to the way parts of other painters' works were used, sometimes copied out of sheer laziness. In other cases, however, such 'visual quotations' were considered perfectly respectable. In connection with gleaning, Philips Angel thus says 'it […] serves as a form of homage to the Master from whom it is taken'.[14] As Miedema observes, the term 'gleaning' can be used as a crude form of 'imitatio' but also as 'aemulatio', where the one who uses the visual quotation does so in a new context and in doing so introduces greater or

11 J. von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie der Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste*, Nuremburg 1675 (ed. A.R. Peltzer, Munich 1925), p. 203; Strauss *Doc.*, pp. 594/5.

12 *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, Vol. II (1986), p. 49.

13 Blankert, op.cit.[5], p. 77, no. 54: 'Een conterfeijtsel van mijn vader door Rembrant' ('a portrait of my father by Rembrant').

14 Philips Angels, *Lof der Schilder-konst*, Leyden 1642, pp. 36/37.

Fig. 8. Rembrandt, *Danaë*, 1636-1643, canvas 185 x 203 cm. St Petersburg, The Hermitage Museum (III A 119) (digitally reconstructed with the help of fig. 10.)

Fig. 9. Ferdinand Bol, *David's dying charge to Solomon*, 1643, canvas 171 x 230 cm. Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland (probably cropped on all – except right – sides)

Fig. 10. Attr. to Ferdinand Bol, *Isaac and Esau*, *c.* 1636, panel 57.3 x 69.9 cm. Private collection

smaller changes.[15] This latter remark applies to Bol in his *The women at the tomb* (see also pp. 198/99).

In the same way, Bol also quotes Rembrandt's *Danae* (fig. 8) in his *David's dying charge to Solomon* in Dublin (fig. 9). There too Bol probably made use of a free variant painted by himself, the *Isaac and Esau* usually attributed to Bol, which is based on Rembrandt's *Danae* in its first form (fig. 10). Rembrandt completed his *Danae* in 1636 but this work certainly remained in his workshop during the early 40's before Rembrandt radically altered it.

Bol's quotation from Rembrandt's *Abraham and the angels,* mentioned above, can also 'be considered a respectable form of 'gleaning' (compare figs. 6 and 7).

The *raison d'être* of version C?

Dendrochronological investigation establishes that the origin of version C can certainly be placed from 1639 onward. One cannot exclude the possibility that it was produced in Rembrandt's workshop, but it is more likely that one of Bol's pupils copied it as an integral part of his training. In this way this pupil could have been initiated both in Rembrandt's manner of inventing and in the way that Ferdinand Bol varied it. We know the names of three of Bol's pupils. One of them was Frans van Ommeren who is only mentioned in a document.[16] We know two other pupils of Bol from Arnold Houbraken's *De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen*: Cornelis Bisschop (1634-1674) and the young German Godfried Kneller (1646-1723) who later became an important portrait painter in England.[17] But there were undoubtedly more young painters in Bol's studio who could have painted version C after Bol's variant of Rembrandt's *The angel Raphael leaving Tobit and his family* (version A).

The relevance – if not importance – of this case is that this is the first case in which a satellite painting from Rembrandt's workshop can be attributed to one of his pupils with a probability which verges on certainty and that we can follow the fate of that satellite to an important extent in the first decade of its existence.

15 Karel van Mander, *Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const*, ed. Hessel Miedema, Haarlem 1604/Utrecht 1973, Vol. II, p. 389.

16 See Blankert, op. cit.[5], pp. 22, 74-75.

17 A. Houbraken, *De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen*, 3 vols, Amsterdam 1718-1721: II, p. 220 and III, p. 233.

Chapter IV

On quality: Comparative remarks on the functioning of Rembrandt's pictorial mind

ERNST VAN DE WETERING

Several small-scale history paintings from the period under discussion in this book can be attributed to Rembrandt with certainty on the basis of evidence other than style. In some cases, investigation of the support, the reconstruction of a painting's genesis, analysis of the relations with other works or with documents concerning its provenance, and other relevant data all add up to a conclusive attribution. Although none of this evidence by itself is decisive, when taken together it provides sufficient grounds to allow us to speak of a 'documented' work. Accordingly, our view of a document is not confined solely to written or printed sources: the painting itself as an object may also be understood as an – often remarkably rich – document. With the help of such varied evidence, a group of autograph works can be assembled, which then may provide stylistic criteria for the demarcation of Rembrandt's autograph oeuvre from the works by others in his workshop.

We are also fortunate to have cases of workshop variants painted by pupils in Rembrandt's workshop, paired with their authentic prototypes. Among the small-scale history paintings after 1638 there are three such pairs (see figs. 1 and 2, 17 and 18, 29 and 30). The three workshop variants concerned were for a long time considered to be autograph works by Rembrandt – and are still so considered by some. Whilst the relationships between these three prototypes and their 'satellites' are explored in detail in the relevant catalogue entries (V 11 and V 12, V 1 and V 2, V 22 and V 23), in the context of this chapter, the three workshop variants will be confronted with their prototypes, with the aim of extrapolating specific criteria of the style and quality of Rembrandt's autograph works.

In the following analyses, it cannot be stressed too highly that the illusion evoked in a painting is the result of a multiple series of interrelated decisions and actions. Successful executive control of this process demands a pictorial intelligence, whose influence becomes less visible the more successfully the illusion is evoked. And yet despite the seductive power of a successful illusion, once one is alert to the fact that it is the artefact of an intelligent process, analysis of the painting can open one's eyes to the pictorial intelligence and sensitivity of its author. One even dares to hope that such comparative analyses might give us access to the workings of Rembrandt's pictorial mind.

Two Nativities

The first of these detailed comparisons deals with two paintings of Christ's nativity (figs. 1 and 2). The Munich *Nativity* (fig. 1) belongs to a series of seven works illustrating episodes from the life of Christ (see p. 185). Six works of this series are preserved in the Munich Alte Pinakothek and their provenance can be traced back to 1719. There is a lacuna between this early 18th-century citation and the 17th-century references to a series of paintings by Rembrandt of the life of Christ in the possession of the House of Orange. However, in view of the genesis of the Munich paintings and given their influence on Rembrandt's workshop production, one may exclude the possibility that the Munich series could, for instance, be a series of copies after the series ordered by Stadholder Frederik Hendrik, or an altogether different series produced by another painter. Moreover, the commission by the Stadholder is documented in letters by Rembrandt himself and by documents from the Prince's administration in such a way that the Munich series cannot but be identified with the Passion series ordered by the Prince. Finally, assuming that Rembrandt executed such an important commission himself, the authenticity of the Munich *Nativity* cannot be doubted.

As was demonstrated in V 12, the genesis of a painting in London depicting the same subject (fig. 2) is so closely interwoven with that of the Munich *Nativity* that it must be considered to have originated in Rembrandt's workshop almost simultaneously with its prototype. We therefore take the London work to be a typical example of a 'satellite' based on Rembrandt's 'principael' [autograph prototype] in Munich (see for 'Principaelen' and 'Satellites' pp. 259-269).

The constituent elements in these two versions of the *Nativity* are arranged in a similar fashion, although the one composition is the reverse of the other. However, comparing them, one sees in the Munich painting that the relation of details to the whole, and to each other, follows a different principle from that underlying the London version: the Munich painting exhibits a subtle subordination of detail to the image as a whole, whereas in the London variant, the various elements of the scene coexist in a relation of equality. This difference between the paintings reflects a fundamental difference in the two painters' grasp of the challenge involved in creating such a composition. When comparing the two paintings in more detail, one should take into consideration that they differ in size (Munich 97 x 71 cm, London 65.5 x 55 cm). Hence the figures do differ somewhat in scale. Also the fact that the London painting is in good condition and cleaned whereas the Munich painting, like the Munich series as a whole, is in less good condition: its appearance is impaired by discoloured varnish and, as usual, the darker areas have lost some of their detail due to darkening of the paint. As to the difference in scale, it should be noted that Rembrandt's use of his pictorial means usually was not affected by differences in scale.

The anecdotal character of the London work, which is primarily due to the parity between the figures and the small scenes into which they are organized, adds to the painting's appeal and in the past has positively influenced – and still does influence – art historians in their attribution of the work to Rembrandt.[1] In the Munich painting, on the contrary, all of the figures participate in a single 'act' whereby a natural hierarchy arises among the main and subsidiary figures (figs. 1-4).

1 This is evident, for instance, in the following comparison of the two paintings by Gerson, p. 92: 'The painting in Munich is marked by greater unity of line, composition, and lighting, but the London canvas is livelier in conception,...'

Fig. 1. Rembrandt, *The Nativity*, 1646, canvas 97 x 71 cm.
Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek (V 11)

Fig. 2. Pupil of Rembrandt, *The Nativity*, 1646, canvas 65.5 x 55 cm.
London, The National Gallery (V 12)

Fig. 3. Detail of fig. 1

Fig. 4. Detail of fig. 2

Fig. 5. Detail of fig. 1

Fig. 6. Detail of fig. 2

Fig. 7. Detail of fig. 1

Fig. 8. Detail of fig. 2

Fig. 9. Detail of fig. 1

Fig. 10. Detail of fig. 2

The painter of the London work defined many of his forms by introducing linear elements, primarily consisting of lit edges that strengthen the contours, and opted for a sketchy rendering of costumes and faces; while in the Munich painting linear elements are incorporated and dissolve, as it were, into the plasticity of the objects (compare figs. 3 and 4). To see how structure, detail and spatial placing in the Munich painting were achieved with a minimum of means, one need only compare the man holding the cloth to his mouth with the woman with the white wimple in the London painting (compare figs. 5 and 6); or the heads of Joseph (compare figs. 7 and 8), or the tilted head of the illuminated bearded shepherd in the Munich painting with the head of Mary in the London painting (compare figs. 9 and 10). Moreover, bearing in mind that the scale of the figures in the Munich painting is larger than that in the London painting, one is struck by the incomparably more sophisticated understanding of the structure of things and the subtlety in the choice of tonal values in the Munich painting compared with the London painting.

There is another fundamental difference in the use of paint. In the London painting, light-catching passages are executed with moderately pastose paint in a fairly uniform way throughout the painting, whereas the painter of the Munich work has attempted a far greater degree of differentiation in this respect – depending on the strength of the illumination and the placing of forms in the space (compare figs. 7-10).

Thus, scrutinizing the two works in their entirety (compare figs. 1 and 2), the difference is clear. Whereas in the Munich painting the organization of the light and tonal values contributes greatly to a continuity in the spatial advance or recession of the different elements, in the London painting, despite the fact that other means – overlapping etc. – play a role in the suggestion of space, these are effectively negated by a total absence of that specific interrelation of tonal values and lighting which is so characteristic of the Munich work.

Fig. 11. Detail of fig. 1

There is yet another reason why the spatial illusion in the Munich painting is of a different order from that in the London painting. This has mainly to do with the structural components of the stall looming out of the dark, in which the event takes place. The ladder, several rafters and the partitions all form part of this structure, which not only provides sufficient perspectival cues but also combines with refined tonal differences to create a convincing spatial illusion (compare figs. 11 and 12). To this end, cast shadows are sometimes used to clarify the construction of the space. For example, one is struck by the way the ladder resting against the hayloft casts its shadow on the wall, not

Fig. 12. Detail of fig. 2

only defining the ladder's position, but also corroborating the continuity of the effect of light that emanates from the central group.

Certainly, the same ingredients are found in the London painting, yet there they make no logical contribution to the illusion of space. On the contrary, where the eye seeks possible orthogonals that might help clarify the construction of the space, it encounters confusing cues. The diagonal lines, for instance above the group at the right, create a spatially incoherent image and confuse the viewer vis-à-vis his relationship to that space.

Fig. 13. Detail of fig. 1

The extent to which the author of the Munich painting – Rembrandt, that is – paid attention to the suggestion of space and the attendant function of light and shadow is evident from a comparison of the cows in the two stables (compare figs. 15 and 16). In the Munich painting, the most clearly represented cow is a participant observer, seen three-quarters from the front with its turned head partially obscured by shadows; whereas in the London painting the foremost cow serves as a mere coulisse with no other spatial function.

Despite the seeming liveliness of the assembled figures in the London painting, closer scrutiny of the construction and attitudes of the figures in the Munich painting, and the way in which their clothing is depicted shows the latter to be far more effective and convincing (compare figs. 13 and 14). The painter of the London work seldom succeeded in clearly defining the folds of the clothing or establishing a logical relationship with either the shape of the body or its movement. Where he has attempted this, such as in the clothing of Mary, his weakness is immedi-

Fig. 14. Detail of fig. 2

ately apparent. In this respect, the depiction of Mary's hand and arm is revealing. The light-catching folds that run along the contour of the cloak contribute to the curious flatness of this entire passage. The behaviour of the draped folds of fabric in Mary's lap has no natural logic. For the rest, the painter has avoided such problems as far as possible. This criticism also applies to the way the painter has rendered gestures and attitudes – summarily, and rarely effectively.

In the Munich painting, on the other hand, the poses of the figures and the response of the clothing are always controlled and convincing, no matter how succinctly rendered. The standing, sitting and kneeling positions of the figures lend a remarkable stability and cohesion to the group as a whole. The positions of the heads with respect to the bodies and the relation of the heads to each other play an important role in this stability. The groups of figures are characterized by their variety as well as by their cohesion such that, compared with the London painting, the unity and expressivity of the scene is remarkably strong.

Fig. 15. Detail of fig. 1

Fig. 17. Rembrandt, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1638/47, panel 76.6 x 92.8 cm.
Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (V 1)

Fig. 16. Detail of fig. 2

A Susanna and a Bathsheba

Susanna and the Elders in Berlin (fig. 17) bears the date 1647. The purchase in Amsterdam of a work of this subject painted by Rembrandt is mentioned in a document of 1647, in which Adriaen Banck is identified as the buyer.[2] There are several interlocking lines of evidence which indicate that the painting under discussion must be the one referred to in this document: there is the fact that the purchased painting was a work that must have been already completed in a different form in 1642;[3] the protracted, complex genesis of the Berlin painting so clearly

2 Strauss *Doc.*, 1647

3 Strauss *Doc.*, 1642

Fig. 18. Pupil (with an intervention by Rembrandt), *The toilet of Bathsheba*, 1643, panel 55.4 x 75.5 cm. New York, N.Y., The Metropolitan Museum of Art (V 2)

Fig. 19. Detail of fig. 17

Fig. 20. Detail of fig. 18

Fig. 21. Detail of fig. 17

Fig. 22. Detail of fig. 18

evident from the X-radiograph; the existence of a preparatory drawing that can be dated 1638, and the existence of a drawing in which the painting is copied in a finished state and which closely correlates with many features seen in the X-radiograph (V 1 figs. 1-3). The nature of the painting's genesis, taken with its complexity, raises the level of plausibility of the suggestion that the Berlin *Susanna* is an autograph work to a certainty. Furthermore, as with the Munich *Nativity*, we think that we can point to a 'satellite painting' that originated four years before completion of the *Susanna*, namely the *Bathsheba* in New York (fig. 18). Both paintings are extensively dealt with in the catalogue part of this book (V 1 and V 2).

When the *Susanna* is compared and contrasted with the New York *Bathsheba*, the constituent elements of these two history paintings (each with three figures) seem to correspond, even though they are differently arranged and the figures differently posed. The stone terrace with the curved steps and the background in both of these paintings are very similar. To the extent that the over-cleaned view of the background in the *Bathsheba* is legible, it also displays many similarities with that in the *Susanna*. It may be assumed that a procedure was followed in the *Bathsheba* very like that advised by Willem Goeree:

> 'that one studiously practices the virtue of a famous master's work in a new invention'.[4]

A comparison of the two works allows several of the stylistic and qualitative characteristics of the *Susanna* (and therefore of Rembrandt's autograph artistry) to be identified. It is notable, for example, that Rembrandt was far more economical with brushstrokes visible as such; accordingly, he introduced far fewer individual details, such as small leaves or highlights or sheen. Where he has included such details, they evince a mutual hierarchy and are never repetitive, as is so often the case in the *Bathsheba*. Compare, for instance, the vegetation on the rock face in both paintings (figs. 21 and 22). In the *Susanna*, the brush-

Fig. 23. Detail of fig. 17

4 'dat men de Deugd van een beroemd Meesters Werk, omtrent en in een Nieuwe Inventie geleerdelijk oeffend'. W. Goeree, *Inleyding tot de praktyk der algemeene schilderkonst*, Amsterdam 1697[2] (1670), p. 85.

strokes dissolve in their function, as it were, yet without ever losing the character of brushstrokes (compare figs. 19 and 20). A corollary to this is that strokes used linearly cannot be recognised as such, which they can in the case of the *Bathsheba*; see, for instance, the cuff and the folds, or her chemise to the right of her hip near the highlights on the top step of the terrace. Pastose passages in the *Susanna* are functional and serve to render both texture and the lighting. They give the impression of having arisen casually, while in the *Bathsheba* they are 'pasted on', as it were – for example, the highlights on the metal utensils (compare figs. 23 and 24) or in the zone of light around the peacocks, for which, incidentally, the painter relied on the incomparably more intelligently painted Detroit *Visitation* by Rembrandt (see V 2 figs. 10 and 11). There is a certain uniformity in the execution of the *Bathsheba*, such as in the terrace, whereas this is not the case in the *Susanna*. In the latter painting, execution and tonality are varied in response to the lighting and the situating of the relevant passage in the pictorial space.

Another feature that characterizes the *Bathsheba* is the fact that each part of the painting – for instance the individual items of the clothing of the seated old woman – is an independent unity. In the *Susanna*, each part is situated in space and in relation to other parts such that despite the complexity of the image there is a natural and fully convincing continuity in the illusion thus evoked (compare figs. 17/18 and 19/20).

A number of essential differences may be noted in other features that are of essentially comparable subject matter. For example, the fabrics in the *Susanna* appear to have greater weight. They 'fall' rather than 'float', as seems to be more often the case in the *Bathsheba*. The fall of the drapery in the *Susanna* is both simpler because fewer folds are depicted, and yet more complex because of the far greater variation in the folding produced by the fall (compare figs. 27 and 28). In the *Bathsheba*, the contours of different pieces of drapery run parallel to the left of Bathsheba's supporting hand and to the left of her bent knee: no such features are found in the *Susanna*. Related to the way in which the drapery floats in the *Bathsheba*, the figures in that painting have a lower 'specific gravity' than in the *Susanna*. The resting, seated figure of Bathsheba is even less balanced than that of the shocked Susanna descending into the water (compare figs. 17/18 and 19/20).

It is not merely the nature of the action in the *Susanna* that determines the interaction of the figures in their placing, their attitudes and movement. Coherence is primarily determined by compositional and 'rhythmical' factors. There is no such mutual coherence of the figures in the *Bathsheba*; their placing with respect to one another in the pictorial space seems arbitrary, and this applies particularly to Bathsheba despite the fact that she occupies an almost exactly central place in the composition. (In the *Susanna* and in many of Rembrandt's autograph works, on the other hand, one finds a typical, conscious exploration of the possibilities of a compositionally powerful asymmetry.) In the *Bathsheba*, the arbitrariness mentioned above also applies to the positions of the arms and legs. Further, the rendering of the plasticity of faces and hands in the two paintings is of a different order. Compared with the *Susanna*, the construction and anatomy of the figures in

Fig. 24. Detail of fig. 18

Fig. 25. Detail of fig. 17

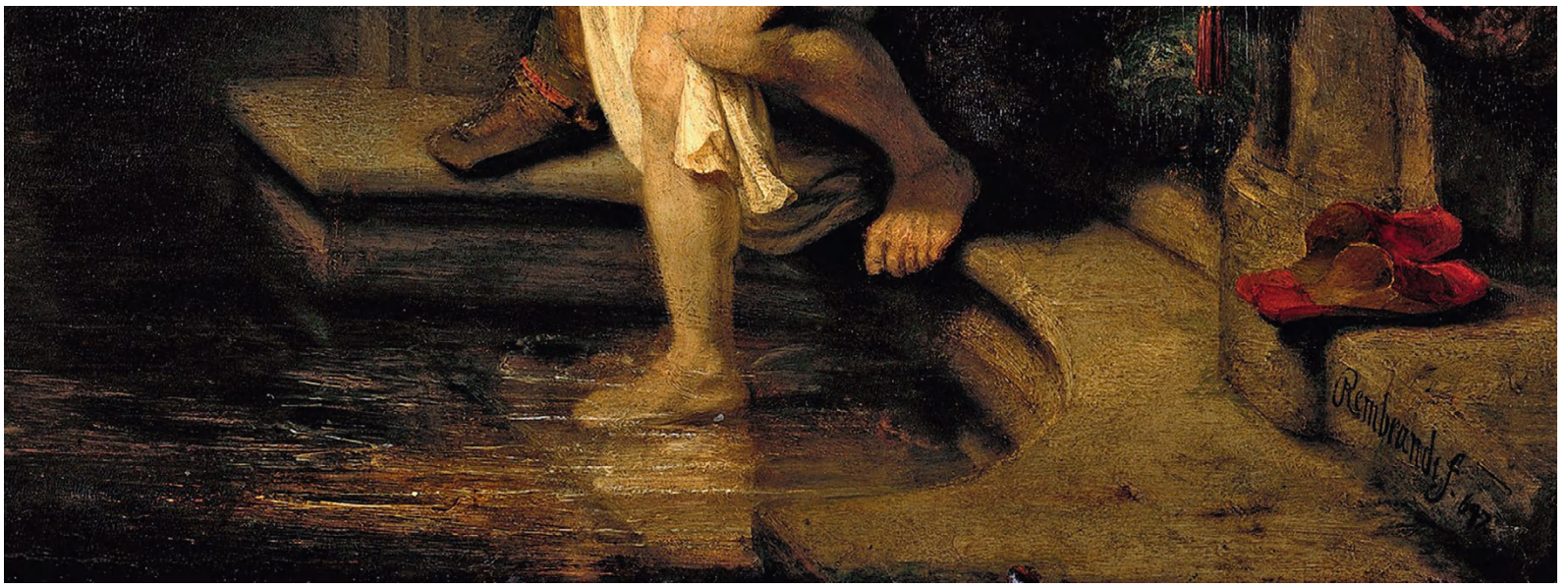


Fig. 26. Detail of fig. 18

the New York painting evince a curious awkwardness.

In a manner analogous to that observed in the confrontation of the two *Nativities* (see figs. 1 and 2 in this chapter), the viewer experiences a far stronger spatial illusion in the case of the *Susanna* than with the *Bathsheba*. This is due to the richer and more intelligent use of the possibilities of perspective in the *Susanna* than in the *Bathsheba*: one need only compare the two terraces (compare figs. 25 and 26).

Two times Joseph and Potiphar's wife

No 17th-century written documents relating to the *Joseph and Potiphar's wife* from 1655 in Berlin (V 22) have come down to us. Yet the genesis of this work is so typical of Rembrandt that it may be used as a conclusive argument for the painting's authenticity. Moreover, at some point in its execution, when the painting was evidently considered to be finished, a Rembrandt signature and date were painted over. These can now be seen only with the aid of infrared reflectography and autoradiographic techniques, and thus must have been applied by the author of the painting (see V 22 fig. 7). Furthermore, at a certain stage during its genesis the painting appears to have served as the point of departure for a free workshop copy, the painting of the same subject in Washington (V 23) – a type of 'satellite painting' that may be described as a copy, although with elements invented by the painter who executed it (compare figs. 29 and 30).

The specific qualities of the Berlin *Potiphar* can be singled out by comparing parts that were literally or approximately copied in the Washington painting. In doing so, the relatively poor condition of the Berlin work must be taken into account as well as the possibility we have suggested in the catalogue text that certain passages in this painting, such as the left part of the bedding and

Fig. 27. Detail of fig. 17

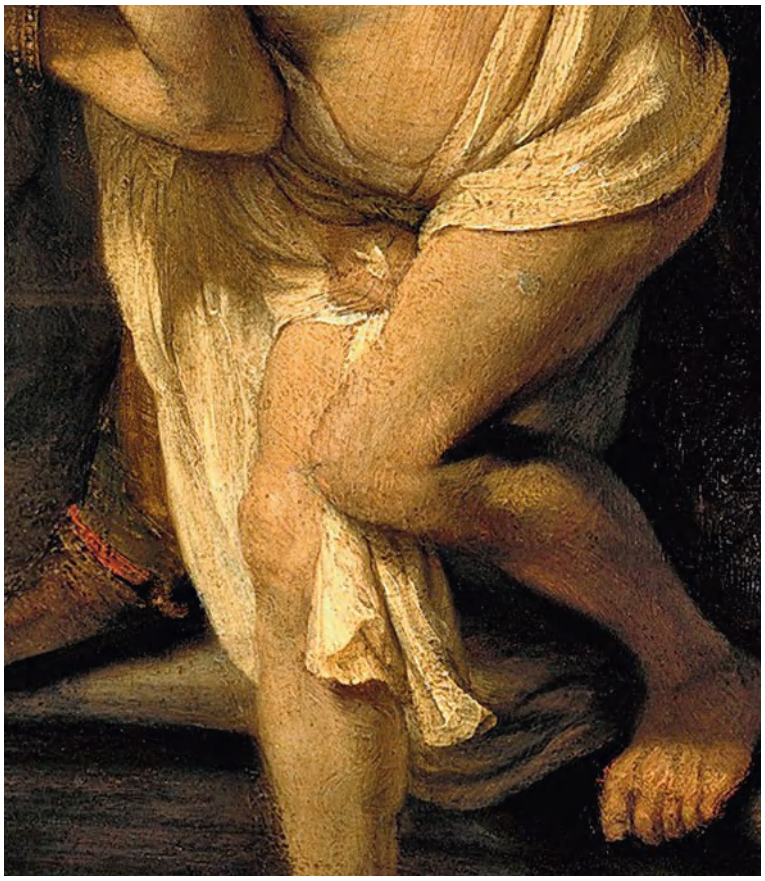


Fig. 28. Detail of fig. 18 with an intervention in Bathsheba's left leg by Rembrandt (see p. 349)

the figure of Joseph, could have been completed by another hand (see V 23 pp. 589/591).

In the Berlin painting, the depiction of the woman's body, even those parts concealed by clothing such as the legs, shoulders and elbows, testifies to great clarity and consistency of the mental image of its painter – Rembrandt. In the Washington painting, on the other hand, we see what happens when a painter assembles various parts into what looks like a body without mastering the anatomical structure of the body depicted (compare figs. 31 and 32). The woman's right arm is as absurdly short as her left arm is exaggeratedly long. Her right knee assumes an impossible position in relation to her hips, which are fixed in space by the chair, and her billowing skirt. The two slippers cannot be seen to relate in any logical fashion to the legs one assumes are under the skirt. One can also compare passages such as the wrist of the hand on the chest in the two paintings, the tilt of the head in relation to the neck, and the neck in relation to the shoulders. Although the woman's head in the Washington painting must have been closely copied, one immediately notes the copyist's inability to reproduce or equal the woman's specific expression (figs. 33 and 34).

Comparison of the two women's clothing clearly shows that both in the differentiation and the logic of the folds of fabric, and in the depiction of texture, the rendering of the woman's gown in the Berlin painting is incomparably richer and more intelligent. In its fall and in the concentration of folds, the fabric follows the underlying forms and accentuates the woman's pose (figs. 31/32). In contrast, the fabric of the woman's gown in the Washington painting merely falls in long folds with no suggestion of the underlying forms. Moreover, if one compares the way in which in both paintings the weight of the upper body of the woman leans against the armrest of her chair, the pose of the Washington woman is much less convincing than that of the woman in the Berlin picture (figs. 31 and 32).

One could single out many other weaknesses in the Washington painting's female figure that betray the limitations of the copyist.

Comparing the left hands, wrists and forearms, one notices marked differences in understanding of the anatomical and plastic structure of these elements (compare figs. 35 and 36). In Rembrandt's painting, the modelling of the back of the hand subtly follows the knuckle joints, and the cylindrical forms of the fingers are clearly defined. In the Washington painting, in contrast, the back of the hand and the fingers are painted as a single flesh-coloured shape in which the separate fingers appear as though cut by scissors and are almost randomly connected with the hand.

One finds similar weakness in the wrist. Rembrandt suggests the complexity of that joint by marked modelling, whereas the painter of the Washington version prefers to hide the complex anatomical articulation behind a bracelet. Precisely in that part which this bracelet does not cover, the rendering of the wrist is conspicuously weak compared with that of Rembrandt. Where the hand bends at the wrist from the forearm is clearly indicated in Rembrandt's prototype by the introduction of tonal dif-

Fig. 29. Rembrandt (with additions by another hand), *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife*, 1655, canvas 113.5 x 90 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (V 22)

Fig. 30. Pupil of Rembrandt, *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife*, 1655, canvas 105.2 x 97.9 cm. Washington D.C., The National Gallery of Art, Andrew W. Mellon Collection (V 23)

Fig. 31. Detail of fig. 29

Fig. 32. Detail of fig. 30

ferences that are as subtle as they are strong. The logic of the foreshortening of the forearm is consequently highly natural in his painting, whereas in the Washington painting, although the form of the forearm is carefully suggested by subtle lighting and light reflections, this is at the cost of the effect of foreshortening; and as a result that arm appears to be too long.

Similar weaknesses are also evident in this painting in the figure of Potiphar: comparison here clearly shows that the author of the Washington painting has not come to grips with the challenges posed by this figure in the Berlin prototype (compare figs. 37 and 38). Potiphar's feet are positioned too far above one another to be consistent with the relatively low horizon suggested by the bed, while the treatment of light seems to betray a complete absence of any guiding thought. In the Berlin painting, the woman and the bed are lit by a source that also illuminates the folds of Potiphar's skirt, while the figure of Potiphar remains in shadow. Only the glinting jewellery and some reflections in the face and cloak allow the shaded parts of the figure to be seen. In the Washington painting, on the contrary, Potiphar's forearm resting on the chair back (and touching the shoulder of the woman) is directly lit, while the rest of the costume is suggested by means of unorganised highlights that suggest random reflections. At the same time, the lower half of the face seems to receive light while the top half of the face is shown irrationally shaded by the overhanging turban.

The confrontation of the two paintings makes it clear how, in this instance too, Rembrandt's prototype is the product of a far greater understanding of the nature, the

Fig. 33. Detail of fig. 29

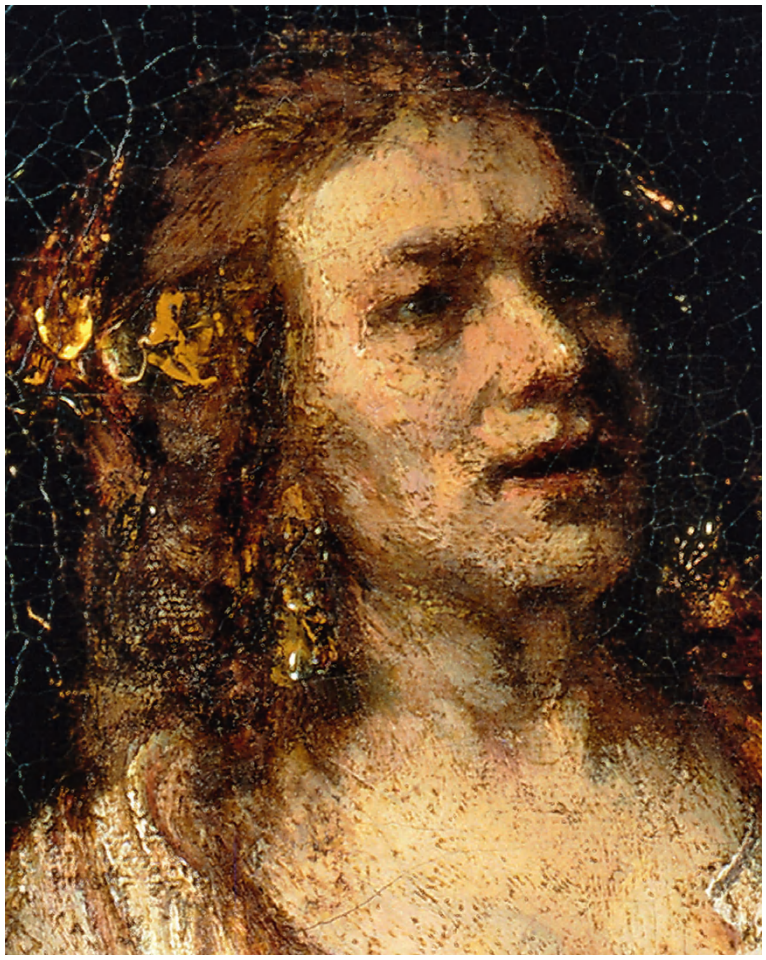
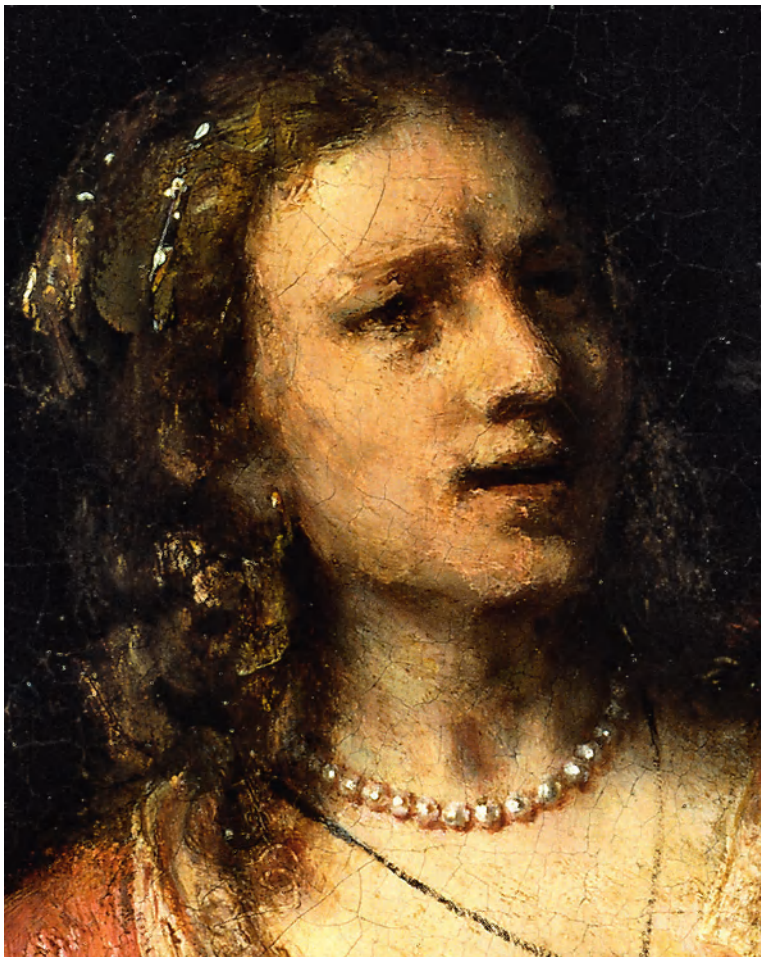


Fig. 35. Detail of fig. 29

Fig. 34. Detail of fig. 30



structure and the logic of the elements depicted and the space and light in which they are situated. The intensity of the light and the cues generating the illusion of space in the Berlin painting – in so far as these qualities can still be discerned, given the poor state of its preservation – are consistent with the principles inferred from the two original works previously analysed.

Reviewing the above comparisons of these three pairs of paintings, the stylistic and 'illusionistic' features of the autograph works also appear as qualitative distinctions. In many features, the differences between prototype and derivative are due to the pupil's inability to understand Rembrandt's command of the many pictorial and narrative intricacies involved and hence to match the general quality of the master's work. This also applies to other 'satellite paintings', such as the altered copy of for instance the *Sacrifice of Abraham* in St Petersburg (III A 108, copy 2; see p. 265, 21b) or the copy after the *Angel leaving the house of Tobit* (III A 121, copy 2) and Chapter III, (Appendix 3, fig. 2).

The fact that Rembrandt seems hardly to have intervened as a teacher in such instances seems equally surprising, but an explanation for this may be distilled from the statements concerning Rembrandt's pedagogy that were recorded by Samuel van Hoogstraten (see Chapter I, pp. 13-14).

Fig. 36. Detail of fig. 30

Fig. 37. Detail of fig. 29

Fig. 38. Detail of fig. 30

Conclusion

In these confrontations of three prototypes with their satellites, one can identify the specific characteristics (with respect to purely pictorial aspects) of Rembrandt's autograph works at different levels. An important characteristic that shows up clearly is related to the nature of spatial illusion. The above analyses demonstrate just how much attention Rembrandt paid to the provision of visual information, in the form of perspective cues, that contributes to our experience of the space within the painting, yet without following an academic perspectival construction. The same applies to the carefully thought out relation between tonal gradations and their contribution to the suggestion of space; and to the connecting, space-creating role given to the lighting. Shadows play an essential role in making the beam of light visible, while simultaneously helping to structure the space in the image. In the 17th century these pictorial characteristics were connoted by the term *'houding'* – the creation of the illusion by colour and tone (besides of course overlapping and the diminishing of scale in space), but without linear perspective.[5] (See also pp. 125-128 and pp. 232/233)

Another qualitative characteristic of Rembrandt's work is his sure grasp of the anatomy of his figures, even when they are concealed by clothing. One rarely finds him making errors in complex poses or rendering limbs too long or short, or not connecting parts of the body –errors all to be found in the derivatives painted by his pupils. In this respect, as in the treatment of space, he must have possessed an unusual ability to visualize with the mind's eye. This also applies to the manner in which Rembrandt's figures sit, stand, walk or otherwise act. Rembrandt uses the position of the head relative to the body to subtle effect, with the entire range of possible tilts and turns. The relation of the drapery to the body it covers, the singularities of the various fabrics, their fall, folds and sheen are depicted in a remarkably differentiated fashion and with great economy. The way Rembrandt deals with costumes manifests a keen interest in the structure and make of the items of clothing he depicts (see also Chapter I, pp. 98-102). The posture, anatomy and clothing of the individual figures, together with their positioning with respect to each other and the 'stage' on which they act, lends them a specific gravity and physicality, a typical spatial and plastic presence. The placing of the figures with respect to each other, the direction of their gazes, their attitudes and the poses of the heads all contribute strongly to a unity in the treatment of the scene as a whole.

The third type of pictorial quality relevant to this discussion concerns Rembrandt's way with detail and his 'hand'. In the above analysis of the three pairs of paintings, we noted Rembrandt's economical use of his means, whose hierarchically calibrated application resulted in a totally convincing suggestion of the materials and surfaces depicted. Moreover, the means 'dissolve' in the evoked illusions, while – and in a certain sense this is the miracle of Rembrandt's art – the paint substance and the strokes nevertheless retain their autonomy. Quite apart from the question of whether it is a finely or coarsely executed painting, this engenders an apparently specific relation between the autonomous stroke of paint and the illusion thus achieved, a relation that might be called the 'paint/illusion quotient'. In this connection, it may be asked whether Rembrandt regarded the 'handwriting' of his works as a pictorial goal in itself. It is certainly not inconceivable that the 'handwriting', or distinctive touch, could have been considered an important goal in Rembrandt's time: there is Houbraken's passage on Frans Hals where he recounts that this artist was in the habit of first laying in his portraits *'vet en zachtsmeltende'* ('thick and creamy smooth'), and then applying the brushstrokes later: *'nu moet er het kennelijke van den meester noch in'* ('now the master's distinctive touch still has to be introduced'). However, we have the impression that such a *deliberate* aim of giving qualitative distinction to the brushstroke does not seem to have been part of Rembrandt's views on painting, or if so to only a limited extent. Even if the visible traces of his hand do play a major role in his pictorial productions, he would seem to have given higher priority to other goals (see also pp. 113-123).

5 P. Taylor, 'The Concept of *Houding* in Dutch Art Theory', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 55 (1992), pp. 210-232.

Chapter V

More than one hand in paintings by Rembrandt

ERNST VAN DE WETERING

In a 1969 article on Rembrandt as a teacher, Haverkamp-Begemann wrote that: 'In spite of their ability to emulate Rembrandt's style, they (Rembrandt's pupils) apparently did not assist him to any substantial degree in his drawings, etchings and paintings. Not one painting is known of which the visual surface shows evidence of having been executed by Rembrandt with the assistance of another artist. In this respect Rembrandt differed greatly from Rubens who used the talents available to assist him in his work. Rembrandt preferred to complete his paintings, his drawings and his etchings himself.'[1]

This vision of Rembrandt's working method was long taken for granted. Early sources undoubtedly contributed to the general acceptance of the idea of Rembrandt as a solo worker. Houbraken, with reference to Rembrandt's etching technique, recorded that the master did not allow his pupils to witness his etching procedure,[2] while Baldinucci related a comment by Rembrandt's pupil Bernhard Keil that the master would not have allowed even a king in his studio while he was still at work.[3] In the 19th century, moreover, Rembrandt became seen as the very model of the wayward, subjective genius working beyond the norms and the common comprehension of his time. This *topos* of the isolated creative genius, essentially an idea rooted in the Romantic period, no longer commands the assent needed to sustain the image presented by Haverkamp-Begemann, but there are other more substantial factors that do corroborate this view, factors that are inherent to Rembrandt's style and the nature of his production. To begin with, given the kinds of images painted by Rembrandt, it is difficult to imagine a division of labour akin to that in Rubens' studio, where (animal, still life, landscape) specialists each contributed their share to the production process. Moreover, a procedure in which pupils or assistants enlarged and elaborated designs, as was the case in Rubens' studio, is not at all obvious in the case of Rembrandt. The scale of his production, with large history pieces and allegories forming the exception, afforded little reason to adopt this method.

Moreover, using 17th- and early 18th-century written sources Taylor demonstrated that in 17th-century views on painting, the much-discussed concept of 'houding', or ordering, became increasingly important during Rembrandt's lifetime. Taylor defined the concept of 'houding' in his fundamental article on the subject as: 'Light, shadow and colour ... artfully selected and composed if the illusion of three dimensions is to be produced on a two-dimensional surface', and provided a series of extensive quotes from 17th- and early 18th-century Dutch sources which describe in detail those factors deemed important for the achievement of a successful 'houding' (see p. 126).[4] As Dorien Tamis has suggested, this growing recognition of the importance of 'houding' for the composition as a whole over the course of the 17th century could have been an important reason for the intensifying criticism of the earlier, widespread practice of two or more hands working on a single painting.[5] And, as it emerges from texts devoted to Rembrandt, contemporaries noted that he excelled in the area of 'houding'.[6]

Everything thus contradicts the idea of collaboration being part and parcel of Rembrandt's *normal* studio practice. But at the same time, our growing perception of the traces of the work of other hands in several of his paintings raises the question of assistance in Rembrandt's work as a distinct problem. The evidence of these hands lies in the conspicuous fluctuations in style and quality in certain paintings. Where passages that are difficult to accept as autograph in fact turn out to be the work of others, it becomes increasingly clear that they were not all, as was long thought, executed by unidentified hands after Rembrandt's death. In the case of several paintings discussed below, scientific investigation has yielded strong evidence that such interventions could have taken place during Rembrandt's life, and in his studio.

Once convinced of the invalidity of the *a priori* assumption of Rembrandt as a soloist, one is has to acknowledge that each painting should be investigated with a view to determining the presence or absence of assistance, regardless of when this could have taken place. Such an investigation, however, assumes that Rembrandt's hand can be recognised and that a different one can be detected and precisely located. Given 17th-century training and studio practice this will not always be possible. However, in a substantial number of instances, passages in a single painting manifest such significant differences in style and quality that one can legitimately speak of another hand.

In the context of the problem of authenticity, the researchers involved with the Rembrandt Research Project were not the only ones to become aware of the possible presence of more than one hand in paintings by Rembrandt. Partly in response to the publications of the RRP (for example, in the case of the disputed Beresteyn portraits) others have also noted that this explanation for the observed stylistic and qualitative anomalies should not be overlooked.[7] The question is: what kind of collaboration could theoretically have existed in Rembrandt's studio and how could this be demonstrated? After all, there are no written sources on this.

1 E. Haverkamp-Begemann, *Rembrandt after three hundred years: An exhibition of Rembrandt and his followers*, Chicago/Minneapolis/Detroit 1969-70, pp. 21-30, esp. 25.

2 A. Houbraken, *De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlandtsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen*, Amsterdam 1718, I, p. 27.

3 F. Baldinucci, *Cominciamento, e progresso dell'arte dell' intagliare in rame, colle vite di molti de'più eccelenti Maestri della stessa Proffesione*, Florence 1686, paragraph 9: 'Quando operava non avrebbe data udienza al primo Monarca del mondo, a cui sarebbe bisognato il tornare, e ritornare finchè l'avesse trovato fuori di quella faccenda.'

4 P. Taylor, 'The Concept of *Houding* in Dutch Art Theory', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992), p. 220.

5 D. Tamis, forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation.

6 J. von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie der Edlen Bau-, Bild-, und Mahlerey-Künste*, Nuremberg 1675, i, 3, p. 85.

7 W. Liedtke, 'Reconstructing Rembrandt', *Apollo* 129 (May 1989), pp. 323-331; pp. 371-372. A.K. Wheelock Jr., *Dutch Painting of the Seventeenth Century*, The Collection of the National Gallery of Art, Systematic Catalogue, Washington 1995, pp. 205-210, esp. 207-210. H. von Sonnenburg, in: Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt not Rembrandt*, 1995/96, cat. nos. 3 and 4, pp. 18-19 and 82-87.

Fig. 1. Gerard Dou and Govaert Flinck, *Rest on the flight into Egypt*, 1637, panel 77.6 x 64 cm. Private collection (I C 6; Vol. II *Corrigendum*, pp. 848-854)

The conspicuous stylistic differences in paintings such as the so-called *Treasure digger* in Budapest,[8] and in the *Rest on the Flight* in a private collection, with contributions by Dou and Flinck (fig. 1) strongly suggest that others must have collaborated in the production of paintings in Rembrandt's immediate vicinity. In the case of the latter painting, the unmistakable participation of more than one artist would seem to be confirmed by an old source: it may be assumed to be identical with a work already attributed to these two artists in a 17th-century inventory: 'Een Josep en Maria van Gerrit Douw en Flinck' (A Joseph and Mary by Gerrit Douw and Flinck).[9] Evidently such paintings combined the talent of two specialised artists, as was quite common in Southern Netherlandish art, but certainly not uncommon in Northern Netherlandish art. There are indications that such joint efforts were particularly prized by collectors and art lovers. Such collaboration seems to have occurred only sporadically in Rembrandt's circle and no instance of the master's direct involvement in such an undertaking has come to light.

Nevertheless, there are other reasons for assuming that Rembrandt's was not the only hand in some of the paintings attributed to him. This chapter will briefly examine these instances. But first some remarks on Rembrandt's practice of retouching works by others are in order.

It would be hard to believe that Rembrandt did not occasionally or even regularly retouch paintings by assistants and pupils, and introduce changes in paintings and other works originating outside of his studio. That at least is the impression one gets from the frequent mentions of retouched paintings in Rembrandt's inventory.[10] The curious series of etched tronies after prototypes by Jan Lievens that were 'geretucceerd' by Rembrandt,[11] together with the introduction of a flight into Egypt in the place of the burnished out Tobias and the Angel in the etching by Hercules Seeghers (see p. 244, figs. 239, 240), are signs that Rembrandt found it normal to retouch or even modify another's work.[12] However, it is striking that with the exception of the above, no other instances of such intervention by the master have been recognised with any certainty. In addition to the handful of student drawings where this is evident,[13] the Rembrandt literature considers only a few cases where Rembrandt may have retouched a painting by a pupil. One such possible example is the copy in Dresden of the *Entombment* from the Passion series, which Bauch, following Valentiner, saw as a workshop copy with some intervention by Rembrandt (in the figures of Christ and Mary, for instance).[14] It is highly unlikely, however, that Rembrandt's hand could be recognised from a few amending brushstrokes, as Von Sonnenburg suggested in his comments on the Munich *Sacrifice of Abraham* (III A 108, *Copies*, 2). [15]

But there is a greater chance of recognizing Rembrandt's interventions when entire passages are involved in which forms are also defined by the brush, such as in the above-mentioned *Entombment* in Dresden and in the foot repainted by Rembrandt in V 24 fig. 8.

In the case of portrait production, the division of labour in Rembrandt's workshop has gradually been revealed in various ways; but no evidence has been found of a systematic division of labour in Rembrandt's early – let alone his late – portrait production. Other participants seem sometimes to have been involved, but only incidentally, for instance in the painting of lace collars and cuffs in the portraits from the early 1630s.[16]

There are also portraits by Rembrandt in which sections other than collars appear to have been done by pupils or assistants. For instance, in Vol. II of *A Corpus* we considered the possibility that the hands in the *Wtenbogaert* portrait (II A 80) could have been delegated to an assistant. The *Portrait of Anna Wymer* in the Six collection (III C

8 Agnes Czobor, *Rembrandt und sein Kreis*, Budapest 1969, no. 9.

9 In the inventory of Laurens Mauritsz Douci in Amsterdam, 18 January 1669. Br. *Künstler-Inv.*, II, p. 423.

10 For example: 'Een still leggent leven van Rembrant geretukeert; Een schilderije van een Samaritaen door Rembrandt geretuckeert' in: Strauss *Doc.*, 1956/12, nos. 351, 352.

11 B.P.J. Broos, 'Rembrandt verandert. En overgeschildert', *De Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 26 (1972), pp. 137-52. Rembrandt, B. 286, B. 287 and B. 288.

12 Rembrandt, B. 56.

13 For example, see Renesse in: Sumowski *Drawings*, IX, nos. 2199xx, 2191xx, 2159x, 2166x.

14 Bauch 1966, A 11. See also: W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt. Des Meisters Gemälde*, Stuttgart and Berlin 1908, p. 516.

15 Lecture written by H. von Sonnenburg for the Rembrandt Symposium held in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, 1992 (read by E. Haverkamp Begemann).

16 Vol. II, pp. 64-76.

Fig. 2. Rembrandt, *Portrait of a married couple*, 1633, canvas 131.5 x 109 cm (detail). Whereabouts unknown (II C 67)

Fig. 3. Rembrandt and workshop, *Portrait of a woman*, 1633, panel 90 x 68 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (II C 80)

113) turned out to be a co-production of Rembrandt and a workshop hand. This, however, does not mean that there was a consistent system for dividing labour in Rembrandt's workshop.

Nonetheless, in the early Amsterdam period, Rembrandt or Hendrick Uylenburgh, for whom Rembrandt worked under an arrangement that is still poorly understood,[17] attempted to rationalize the apparently thriving portrait studio in Uylenburgh's enterprise. This can be deduced from three cases in which a specific compositional formula was repeated by various hands. The first is the wife in a double portrait (II C 67, which we now accept as largely by Rembrandt), whose pose of the upper body, tilt of the head and position of the arms, etc. so literally correspond with those of the woman in the early pendant portraits in Vienna, that either the one was based on the other, or both shared a common design (figs. 2, 3).

The second example has to do with three paintings: the man from the Beresteyn pendants in New York (fig. 4), the portrait of a man in Vermont (fig. 6), and the man in a pair of companion pieces in Munich (fig. 7). Here, too, the bearing of the figures, the position of the hands and so forth are so obviously similar that the three (or more) painters must have made use of the same composition. The third example is the pendant of the aforementioned Munich portrait of a man (fig. 8) which follows the compositional scheme of the woman of the Beresteyn pendants (fig. 5). As with the prints executed by Van Vliet, in these instances too the execution is uncoupled from the work's conception. The Beresteyn woman gives the impression of being largely the work of someone other than Rembrandt, with a change in the position of her left hand being the master's only contribution.

The significance of the examples mentioned so far is too limited to afford insight into the question of assistance with regard to Rembrandt as a 'whole'. One cannot simply assume that such a putative rationalization of the production of portraits and ambitious prints in the early Amsterdam years was subsequently continued in Rembrandt's studio after he left Uylenburgh in 1636.

At the beginning of the Rembrandt Research Project in 1968, the accepted idea of Rembrandt as a soloist with a studio was still too strong to admit the question of possible assistance in particular cases. Conspicuous discrepancies in style, quality and handling of paint were generally assumed to be the result of later overpainting. Still, it appears that other, clearly less competent hands did contribute to works by Rembrandt under the master's very eyes.

The most obvious instances of this are those few paintings we know of where someone else has introduced later additions to the original picture surface. The best example is the *Lamentation* in London (fig. 9), which must have been enlarged in Rembrandt's workshop. In this grisaille, which

17 Vol. II, pp. 56-60.

Fig. 4. Rembrandt, *Portrait of a man from the Beresteijn family*, 1632, canvas 112 x 89 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (II C 68)

Fig. 5. Rembrandt and workshop, *Portrait of a woman from the Beresteijn family* (companion-piece to fig. 5), canvas 112.5 x 88.8 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (II C 69)

Fig. 6. Rembrandt workshop?, *Portrait of a man with gloves*, canvas 112 x 91 cm. Vermont, Shelburne Museum (Br. 168)

Fig. 7. Circle of Rembrandt, *Portrait of a man*, canvas 112 x 100 cm. Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Staatsgalerie Schleissheim

Fig. 8. Circle of Rembrandt, *Portrait of a woman*, canvas 112 x 100 cm. Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Staatsgalerie Schleissheim

was surely made in the context of the etching project with J.G. van Vliet mentioned earlier, the additions at the top and bottom were undoubtedly executed by another, far weaker hand, possibly the one also responsible for two figures added at the left edge. The method used to enlarge this image corresponds closely with that found in another grisaille, the *John the Baptist preaching* in Berlin (see p. 179, fig. 78). Since we know that the Berlin grisaille was enlarged in Rembrandt's studio, it is a reasonable inference that the additions to the London *Lamentation* were also probably made under Rembrandt's eyes. This assumption is supported by the fact that the composition of the ground on the additions is identical to that found on many of the canvases used during the first 20 years of Rembrandt's activity.[18] Moreover, the hand of the individual responsible for the additions to the *Lamentation* can actually be recognised in a painting from Rembrandt's workshop, namely the *Joseph's dream* in Berlin (V 8, see also below). If the date of 1645 on that painting is correct, we have an indication as to when the *Lamentation* was enlarged.

The early so-called *Self-portrait* in the Uffizi (III B 11) was also enlarged, presumably by another hand. This was done on the support itself. For reasons that remain unclear, a strip of this panel approximately 15 cm wide was left unpainted.

Works considered unfinished must have abounded in Rembrandt's studio and remained there for longer or shorter periods of time. Some were never finished, while in other instances years passed before a work was completed.

Rembrandt's approach to the matter of completion is demonstrably unusual, as is particularly clear in his etchings. Examples include the *Pygmalion* of *c.* 1639 (B. 192) (see p. 213, fig. 156), the *Hundred guilder print*, *c.* 1648 (see p. 229, fig. 203) and *St Jerome in an Italian landscape* of 1652 (see p. 244, fig. 241). In the case of the *Pygmalion*, Emmens attempted to place its 'unfinished' state in an art-theoretical context, namely as a 'develatio' – a disclosure – of Rembrandt's enigmatic etching technique.[19]

Several paintings clearly show that they were later completed or reworked by Rembrandt himself to suit new ideas. For example, this applies to the *Saskia* in Kassel (II A 85), begun around 1632/33 and completed only at the beginning of the 1640s. The initial phase of the *Danae* in St Petersburg (III A 119) must have been executed in 1636, after which the painting was radically altered in the 1640s. Rembrandt also worked on and off over a period of nine years, between *c.* 1638 and 1647, on the *Susanna and the Elders* in Berlin (V I).

There are also paintings that were evidently never finished. That, at least, is a conclusion one might draw from the fact that the condition of parts of these works may have been considered unpresentable. In the light of the above quote from Houbraken, this is of course a matter that cannot be decided. To this day, the hand of *A woman wading in a pond* in London is considered by some as unpresentable, and for this reason it was long overpainted with a 'presentable' one (see V 19 figs. 23, 24).[20] Nevertheless, the painting bears an authentic signature and date which can be taken as a sign that Rembrandt considered it a work *'daarin de meester zijn voornemen ... bereikt* [had]' (in which the master [had] achieved his intended objective see p. 239). In contrast, the *Landscape with a castle* in Paris (fig. 10), presumably painted in the 1640s, lacks his signature. In this landscape the break between foreground and background and the lack of finish in the trees at the right is such that one can well imagine that Rembrandt had not yet achieved his objective. The unsigned *Portrait of a boy* in Passadena (Br. 119) of the 1650s was also never finished and is still mostly an initial lay-in. The fact that the *Self-portrait* in Kenwood (IV 26) lacks a signature suggests that Rembrandt may have considered this painting (certainly the lower half) unfinished. If significance is to be attached to this criterion, the lack of a signature on the *Portrait of Jan Six* could mean that Rembrandt deemed even this work unfinished. See on the topic of the non-finito in the case of Rembrandt pp. 161 and 238/239.

There is a good chance that unfinished works were completed by others at some point in time. Moreover, it appears from discussions of other painters in 17th-century sources that this was a fairly common practice. As described in greater detail, the *Polish rider* may well be such a related case (see V 20).

Two monumental works from Rembrandt's late period also show evidence of the participation of other hands, namely the *Portrait of Frederick Rihel on horseback* in London (fig. 11) and *The return of the Prodigal Son* in St Petersburg (fig. 12). In view of the lack of anatomical accuracy, the treatment of light and the *peinture*, the horse in the Rihel portrait deviates so fundamentally from the rest of the painting that an attribution to Rembrandt of this part of the painting can, in our opinion, be ruled out. Bruyn suggested the involvement of a pupil or assistant in the production of this painting.[21] In the St Petersburg *Return of the Prodigal Son*, the execution of the two secondary figures in the background, and the elevation on which the Prodigal son kneels, differ from the rest of the painting in handling and conception of form to such an extent that here, too, its present appearance could well be the work of another artist. Similar, more or less radical interventions by hands other than Rembrandt's are found in the *Juno* in the Hammer Collection (Br.-Gerson 639), where the right hand with the stick and the area surrounding it have been worked up. Something comparable must have happened to a woman's portrait from the first half of the 1630s which was transformed by someone else into a sibylline figure (III C 115). With regard to the latter painting, it is

18 Exhib. cat. *Art in the making*, 1988/89, pp. 66-73; see also Karin Groen, 'Grounds in Rembrandt's workshop and in paintings by his contemporaries' and Karin Groen, 'Tables of grounds in Rembrandt's workshop and in paintings by his contemporaries', in: *Corpus* Vol. IV, pp. 318-334 resp. pp. 660-677.

19 J.A. Emmens, *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst*, Utrecht 1968, pp. 159-163.

20 Bode-HdG 353. H. Ruhemann, *The Cleaning of Paintings. Problems and potentiallities*, London 1969, figs. 12 and 13.

21 J. Bruyn, in: Exhib. cat. *'Een gloeiend palet …'*, Rotterdam 1988, pp. 78-88.

Fig. 9. Rembrandt, *Lamentation*, 1634/35, paper on canvas, subsequently on panel 31,9 x 26,7 cm with an added strip along the top painted around 1645. London, The National Gallery (III A 107)

Fig. 10. Rembrandt, *Landscape with a castle*, *c.* 1645, panel 44.5 x 70 cm.
Paris, Musée du Louvre (Br. 450)

highly probable that this intervention – given its execution and paint texture – took place in Rembrandt's workshop. The same is true of the *Selfportrait with shaded eyes* of 1634 (figs. 13; IV *Addendum* 2),[22] and the 1637 *Self-portrait* in Paris (III B 10), in which both the background and parts of the costume are not by Rembrandt.

As argued in the discussion on the enlargement of the London *Lamentation* (III A 107), one has to imagine that some of these interventions were carried out under Rembrandt's eyes, or even at his express request. This also applies to the virtually complete reworking of an imposing early work, the Bucharest *Condemnation of Haman* of *c.* 1633 (figs. 15 and 16; III B 9), which must have remained in its unfinished stated in his workshop for decades. The initial composition was not just locally re-worked, but almost, though not entirely, covered with a painting of the same scene. Could Rembrandt's rejected original have become a pupil's exercise object: to produce a variation on the work of the master, a related 'satellite' superimposed on its prototype? (see also p. 264)[23] A similar case is presented by the *Minerva* in the Gulbenkian Collection in Lisbon (Br. 479). Almost entirely concealed by the paint layer that we now see, which seems to have been applied by a painter from Rembrandt's workshop, there is a painting of the same scene whose facture – according to the X-radiograph – is closer to Rembrandt's. Another related case is the *Prodigal Son in the tavern* in Dresden (III A 111), where those sections of the female figure considered least likely to be by Rembrandt are, in fact, applied over paint layers that betray a Rembrandtesque quality in the X-radiograph (figs. 17 and 18).

In view of the style and paint texture, in this painting too the altered and overpainted passages must have been done by a rather mediocre painter in Rembrandt's studio.[24]

The paintings just discussed signal an unusual phenomenon, one that could be further clarified by being subjected to other forms of scientific investigation. The relatively modest scope of the phenomenon and its seemingly random occurrence make it impossible to speak of more than

22 *Corpus* IV pp. 615-626; see also E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's verborgen zelfportretten/Rembrandt's hidden self-portraits', in: *De Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis*, 2002/1-2, pp. 2-15.

23 A. van Grevenstein, K. Groen, E. van de Wetering, 'Esther voor Haman, toegeschreven aan Rembrandt', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 39 (1991), pp. 56-83.

24 *Corpus* IV, pp. 217-229.

Fig. 11. Rembrandt and workshop, *Equestrian portrait, possibly of Frederick Rihel*, *c.* 1663 (the horse is painted by a different hand), canvas 294.5 x 241 cm. London, The National Gallery (Br. 255)

Fig. 12. Rembrandt and workshop, *The return of the prodigal son*, *c.* 1665, canvas 262 x 206 cm. St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (Br. 598)

a series of comparable incidents rather than a standard feature of Rembrandt's workshop practice; at least that is the impression given by the examples cited above. Furthermore, in most instances there is no certainty about the time when the intervention was executed by a second hand, whether before or after Rembrandt's death. Nor is there any certainty about where it took place, in Rembrandt's workshop or elsewhere. The character of the paint consistency, though, seems to betray an origin of these interventions in Rembrandt's workshop.

In the case of three paintings, the discrepancy between conception and execution is so striking that one could imagine a pupil executing (parts of) the painting following a lay-in by Rembrandt which was partly covered in the process.

The genesis of these paintings (see cat. V 7, V 8, V 23) combined with the style and quality displayed by the paint surface, are certainly compatible with this conclusion. We derive our confidence in recognising a hand other than Rembrandt's in parts of both paintings from insights gleaned from our analysis of the characteristics of documented history paintings from the 1640s, discussed in Chapter IV. The suspicion that the lay-in of these paintings was by Rembrandt is based on the same analysis, but also on the observation that the painter of the visible surface either did not execute, or greatly simplified more complex parts of the initial lay in.

One hopes it is clear to the reader that the hypotheses presented in this chapter were not borne out of a mere desire to speculate. They represent an attempt to create order in some of those phenomena that contribute to the confusions which bedevils the demarcation of Rembrandt's autograph oeuvre.

Postscriptum

Anna Tummers' doctoral thesis, *The fingerprint of an old master. On connoisseurship of seventeenth-Century Dutch and Flemish Paintings: Recent debates and seventeenth-Century insights*. (University of Amsterdam 2009), appeared after this chapter had been written. In her dissertation, Tummers argues that it was normal in 17th-century practice for master painters to sign works that they had not necessarily executed by themselves. In the light of the attribution discussions that were already occurring in the 17th century, Tummers calls this phenomenon 'the paradox of seventeenth-century connoisseurship'. She considers her approach to be applicable to Rembrandt's workshop practice and bases her theory on two passages from Samuel van Hoogstraten's *'Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst'*:

> 'Certainly it is not amusing to hear, when sometimes ignorant but arrogant art lovers, wanting to point out the best feature in any painting, pick on something so common, that has been done by a Master as though in his sleep, or at least while taking a rest from his main work. These things were considered by the ancients as extras to the principle work, and were called Parerga; and in the case of great Masters they were

Fig. 13. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait with shaded eyes*, 1634, panel 70.8 x 55.2 cm. New York, private collection (IV *Addendum*, 2)

Fig. 14. Fig. 13, photograph taken *c.* 1935

Fig. 15. Rembrandt and workshop, *The condemnation of Haman*, *c.* 1633, canvas 236 x 86 cm. Bucharest, Muzeul National de Arta (III B 9)

Fig. 16. X-radiograph of fig. 15

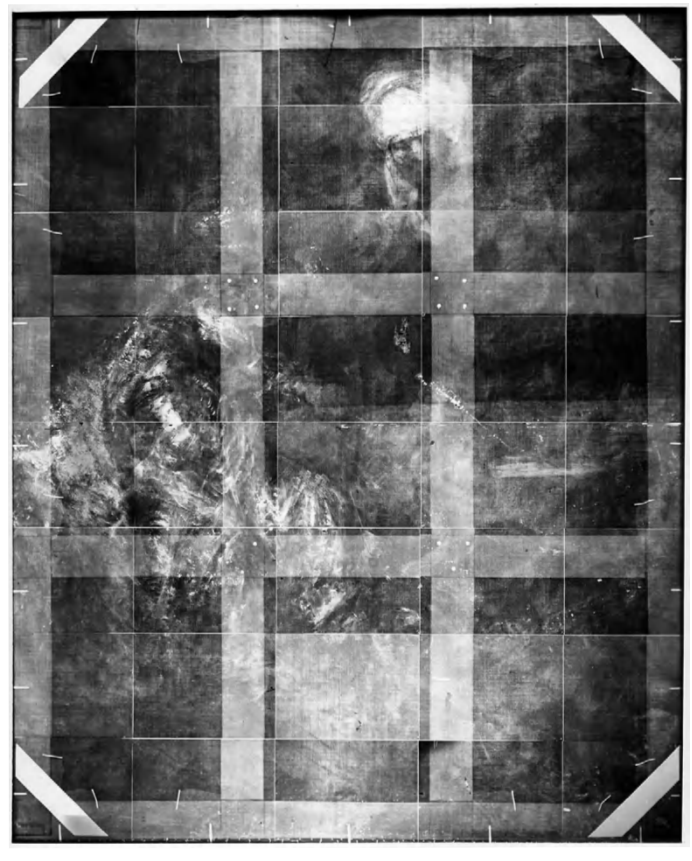


Fig. 17. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait as the prodigal son in the tavern*, *c.* 1635, canvas 161 x 131 cm (detail). Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (III A 111)

Fig. 18. X-ray of fig. 18

> usually executed by boys and young trainees, or by those who made a speciality of them.'[25]

The other passage reads:

> 'I will gladly admit that a master in great works takes on the help of others, who are practiced in *bywerk* [the parts of secondary importance]: but whosoever wishes to bear the title of Master in Histories must also be ready to undertake the *bywerk* [himself] when necessary,'[26]

It is risky to isolate these quotations without further regard to context – as Tummers does – and use them as evidence of the way Rembrandt's workshop functioned. The first quotation derives from a section devoted to the foolishness of art lovers in general and bears no explicit relation to the contemporary workshop practice. The second quotation that Tummers adduces for her case comes from an argument on *'Universality in Art'* – the desirability that a real Master should be proficient in every aspect of the art of painting, in which the main reference is to Italian artists such as Raphael, Pordenone, Rosso, Pierino del Vaga etc. After all, this quotation ends with the recommendation that *'whosoever wishes to bear the title of Master in Histories'* must also be prepared to paint the incidental *bywerk*. The use of quotations out of context in this way to support an argument that Rembrandt as a rule entrusted the painting of the *bywerk* to his pupils or others is unjustified. It can only be defended if the relevant texts can be shown to correlate with observable features in works by Rembrandt and where those texts can be tested, if possible against other relevant texts by Van Hoogstraten or other contemporary sources. Tummers has failed to do that, and consequently there is the risk that the texts she adduces as evidence are misleading.

There are in fact several texts, including a passage by Van Hoogstraten which argue against Tummer's suggestion that Rembrandt as a rule involved his pupils in the execution of his history pieces and related works. One of these texts concerns Rembrandt's mastery in what was called 'houding'. On this point, Sandrart was full of praise for Rembrandt. This is demonstrated by a passage in which he deals with the necessity of 'breaking the colours' in such a way that all the components of the picture are

25 S.v.H. Hooge Schoole, p. 76: 'Zeker 't is onvermakelijk te hooren, als somtijds onweetende, doch verwaende liefhebbers, het beste deel in eenich stuk willende aenwijzen, iets zoo gemeens uitpikken, dat by den Meester schier als slapende, of ten minsten van zijn voornaemen arbeyt rustende, gemaekt is. Deeze dingen zijn by de ouden als overmaet of toegift tot het voornaemste werk geacht geweest, en wierden van hen Parerga genoemt; en zijn by groote Meesters gemeenlijk door de hand van jongens en aenkomelingen, of van de geene, die daer een handwerk van konden, gemaekt.'

26 S.v.H. Hooge Schoole, p. 72: 'Ik zal gaerne toestaen, dat een meester in groote werken hulp van anderen nemen, die in bywerk geoeffent zijn: maer die met recht den naem van Meester in Historyen draegen wil, moet ook raet weten, als 't nood doet, tot bywerk.'

given their correct place in the pictorial space. According to Sandrart, the result of this method is what 'we call Hauding [sic] in Dutch'. Sandrart continues:

> 'This is something the painter must be very clearly conscious of, yet few recognize it. And here we can learn from our marvellous Bamboccio as well as from others, especially from the very diligent and, on this point, extremely brilliant Rembrandt: he has practically worked miracles [in houding].' (see note 6)

The fact that Rembrandt is specifically referred to in this text as outstanding in the area of 'houding' implies that he, more than others, paid great attention to accurately attuning tones and colours to achieve the desired effects of depth in the painting as a whole. A glance at his works confirms this.

This priviliged use of 'houding' as a means of achieving the suggestion of space implies that it would have been problematic, if not impossible, for Rembrandt to collaborate with pupils/assistants – all the more so because, as a rule, Rembrandt worked from back to front and *bywerk*, by its nature, is often required in the background.

There is an important passage in Van Hoogstraten's book which virtually excludes the suggestion that Rembrandt regularly had his pupils work on his paintings. This passage has already been discussed in Chapter I in the section on *Ordonnance*, in which Van Hoogstraten distinguishes three different types of painters where history painting and comparable image-making is concerned (see pp. 60-61). It is useful to consider the whole passage again here.

The first type of painter is characterized by Van Hoogstraten as follows:

> 'whatever subject he is dealing with, he enjoys making this appear marvellously attractive as though he found more pleasure in displaying an assortment of things together than [concentrating on] the [narrative and compositional] whole; [this type of artist exhausts himself] whether in lively movements, tronies, decor or ornament.'

This type of painter is naturally the first one thinks of for allowing part of the considerable *bywerk* in his paintings to be executed by others.

With the second type of artist and his approach to the problem of ordonnance, Van Hoogstraten surely has in mind an artist like Rembrandt – if not Rembrandt himself:

> 'Another [type of artist] will [give] magnificence to the same elements through a more strictly organized order by means of 'schikschaduwe' and 'beeldsprong' [shadow effects applied for compositional reasons and variety in the placing of the figures and other elements of the image].'

That he must have had Rembrandt in mind here, or at least painters who worked in his style determined by a strong chiaroscuro, is confirmed by the way Van Hoogstraten deals with the third type of artist which he goes on to characterize as follows:

> 'But the third type [of painter] esteems only a straightforward representation, without forced ordonnation, and pretends to boast of true splendour, following the Roman gracefulness of Raphael and Michelangelo, and maintaining that the dignity [of the painting] is disrupted by the depiction of minor emotions: they consider that the highest form of painting deals only with heroic virtues; and that the deliberate manipulation of light and shadow [such as the second type does] is a feeble device, improperly [used] to heighten the beauty of the one by obscuring the other.'

By this third category of painters, Van Hoogstraten is undoubtedly referring to a trend that had already begun to dominate the Dutch art scene even while Van Hoogstraten was apprenticed to Rembrandt. One thinks of the painters who were selected to participate in the Oranjezaal project (p. 110 fig. 124 and p. 61 fig. 66). There can scarcely be any doubt that in identifying this second type of painter, i.e. those who '*…heighten the beauty of the one by obscuring the other parts of a painting*'. Van Hoogstraten was referring to painters like Rembrandt who painted history pieces in such a way that it demanded a single pictorial mind and imagination to demonstrate the relation between the tones. In Rembrandt's case this meant keeping light and shadow – which in practice was often equivalent to the principle and the secondary work – in balance. If Rembrandt did indeed require *bywerk*, this would mostly have been in large shadow passages where pupils would have had little to contribute – and if details were necessary there, these would have been too difficult for pupils because the most important compositional task lay in introducing them in the right relation to the light passages – and therein precisely lay the principle work.

One may therefore assume that when Van Hoogstraten refers (in the remarks quoted by Tummers) to painters who got assistants of various kinds – 'boys', apprentices, specialists in particular painted elements, as in the case of Rubens – to execute their *bywerk*, he certainly did not have Rembrandt in mind. [Apart, that is, from his qualification that the true 'Meester der Historyen' – which would have included Rembrandt of course – did not feel above carrying out the bijwerk himself where necessary.]

Catalogue

V 1 Rembrandt – Susanna and the Elders 1638/1647

BERLIN, STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN, GEMÄLDEGALERIE, CAT. NO. 828 E

HDG 55; BR. 516; BAUCH 28; GERSON 221; TÜMPEL 22

1. Introduction and description

In some cases the history of the production of a painting by Rembrandt can be followed so closely that his artistic deliberations can be seen as it were. This is all the more the case in the Berlin *Susanna and the Elders*, since there are strong indications that Rembrandt worked on this painting on and off for nearly a decade. While this had already been suspected for a long time, the research conducted on this painting and described here adds to our knowledge and understanding of its genesis. With a reinterpretation of old information and the availability of new data, it is also possible to follow Rembrandt's artistic development between 1638 and 1647 as it manifested itself while he was working on this painting. The greater part of this entry, therefore, is devoted to the interpretation of the 'archaeological' data of which this painting is the 'site', and of the drawings and other works that play a role in the reconstruction of the evolution of this significant work.

In chronologically ordered surveys of Rembrandt's oeuvre, this painting is usually placed in 1647, the date inscribed on the painting. In this volume, however, we have opted to deal with it as the first catalogue text. The reason for this is that the painting was certainly already present in Rembrandt's workshop from as early as *c.* 1638, after which, and with intervals, Rembrandt worked on it up to 1647. In the case of other paintings that Rembrandt worked on with long interrupting intervals, we have placed them too according to the presumed first version of the image. This applies, for example, to the *Half length figure of Saskia van Uylenburgh* (II A 85), which developed in the years between *c.* 1633/34 and *c.* 1642. Another example is the *Danaë* (III A 119), which must have been completed in its first form in 1636, but which Rembrandt radically altered around 1643. We adopt this policy because a painting with a prolonged genesis can have influenced the production of pupils throughout the period of its presence in the workshop. Thus the *Danaë* in its first form was decisive for the *Isaac and Esau*, attributed to Ferdinand Bol (see III A 119 copy 1) which originated around 1640. In our view, the Berlin *Susanna* in an earlier stage served as the prototype for the *Bathsheba* in New York, dated to 1643 (V 2).

The subject of the painting is taken from the apocryphal story of Susanna in the Book of Daniel, which tells how Susanna, the wife of Joakim, having sent her two maidservants to fetch some ointment and soap, is surprised while bathing in her garden by two Elders who had been spying on her for several days, and who threaten to accuse her of adultery should she refuse their advances (Daniel 13:15-21).

A pool of water occupies the area before an overgrown wall visible in the dusk, beyond which a large complex of buildings rises at the left. Susanna steps from a curved stone landing into the water. Bent forward and gazing out at the viewer, she has her right foot on a step in the water. She shields her breasts with her bent left arm and extends her left hand away from her torso in a gesture of either alarm or defence. The drape, which only partially covers her naked body, is grasped by one of the Elders who has approached from behind, his right foot placed far to the fore. With his right hand raised in a possibly obscene gesture – fist balled and thumb raised – he bends his head towards her. He wears a soft tall cap, a richly decorated gown and a square-necked jerkin over a white shirt. Behind him at the right, the second, bearded Elder descends from an arched opening in a rock wall. He leans on a stone bannister with his right hand, and on a stick with his left. He wears a turban and a wide cloak fastened at his right shoulder over a dark costume. An open gate and a flowering bush indicate that the bathing scene is set in an enclosed garden. Susanna's red cloak is draped over a stone balustrade in the right foreground, at the base of which are her two red slippers.

On the other side of the water at the far left a peacock-like bird can be discerned on the wall which forms the division between the pool in the foreground, and a garden with trees extending beyond it near the buildings. The complex consists of a portal crowned by a balustrade with two shield-bearers, above which is a partially illuminated elevation with corner pilasters and a cornice, placed at a right angle to the picture plane. Rising behind this is an imposing, irregularly rounded structure from which extends a long, partially visible wing.

Working conditions

Examined in November 1968 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.), in December 1988 (E.v.d.W.) and in June 1990 (M.F., V.M., E.v.d.W.): out of the frame and in good daylight and artificial light, with the aid of nine X-ray films, together covering the whole surface of the painting and with a stereomicroscope and infrared reflectography. Infrared photographs were received later. The painting is covered by a thick layer of yellowed varnish which impedes observation.

Support

Mahogany panel, grain horizontal, 76.6 x 92.8 cm. Thickness varies from 1.4 to 2.1 cm. Single plank. The surface of the back is very uneven, with clearly visible traces of transverse planing; the fairly regular bevelling on all four sides varies in width from 4.5 to 6.5 cm. Five holes are found along both the top and bottom edges – at the top spaced from 17 to 19 cm apart, and at the bottom from 16 to 18 cm. They begin on the back of the panel and extend into it without, however, continuing all the way through to the front. These holes show up in the X-radiograph as dark spots. A few horizontal cracks run from the left and right edges to a maximum length of 13 cm. The panel warps inwards near the cracks.

The type of wood was identified as *Swietenia mahagoni Jacq.*[1] In the mid-17th century, various types of South American wood were commonly used to make packing cases for sugar cones. The panel here was most probably originally part of such a crate.[2] This would identify the holes along the top and bottom edges of the panel as peg holes, necessary for the crate's construction.

Fig. 1. Panel 76.6 x 92.8 cm

Ground

The ground has hardly anywhere been left exposed, although it may shine through as a light tone in the areas to which a very thin, transparent brown glaze seems to have been applied, such as at the right near the head and in the costume of the Elder furthest back, and directly to the left of Susanna's head; at the left of the rock wall; and at the lower left in the water; in the trees in the garden; and in the shaded part of the buildings.

Paint layer

Condition: Good, with the exception of a few fissures caused by the cracks in the panel. The image appears to have been somewhat strengthened in places: in the water at the lower left along a crack, and in the dark areas of the architecture and the garden, where the paint layer is probably slightly abraded. That the painting has suffered some abrasion in areas is clear from a very accurate 18th-century reproductive print by R. Earlom (fig. 16; see *4. Graphic reproductions*, 1). It shows two women in the dark garden – undoubtedly the two servant women dismissed by Susanna – who, due to the painting's present condition are now discernible only as faint apparitions. In addition, if we are to believe this 18th-century print, the hand with which Susanna presses the wrap into her lap was originally provided with a detailed indication of the fingers, now just barely visible.

Craquelure: The paint surface displays surprisingly little craquelure. Only locally, in the flesh tints of Susanna, and in a few other places, such as in the sky, a fine craquelure pattern can be detected.

The countless traces of the changes this painting underwent are manifested in a variety of ways: as differences in relief, in worn places, as uncovered remains of paint near new contours, and as impasto showing through transparent zones of the new forms. In *2. Comments* these traces will be described and interpreted with the aid of X-radiographs, infrared photographs and related drawings. Here, a brief characterisation of the execution as it appears on the surface will suffice.

The execution of the Berlin *Susanna* is distinguished by an extraordinary – though never finicky – attention to detail, while simultaneously manifesting a remarkable grasp of the relationship of tone, colour and light in the composition as a whole. The brushstrokes are freely placed yet very clearly differentiated, both in the movement of the brush and in the way in which the paint itself is varied. Locally, such as in the body of Susanna, hardly any brushwork can be seen.

Fig. 2. X-Ray

Fig. 3. Copy 1. A pupil of Rembrandt, before 1647 (possibly around 1643). Pen and brown ink, brown and grey washes, red chalk, 17.8 x 23.8 cm. Budapest, Szépmüvészeti Múzeum

Rembrandt f. 16

Fig. 6. Infrared photograph, detail (1 : 1)

A strong light falls on Susanna and the Elder nearest her. The gradation of the intensity of the light within their figures is carefully modulated. In the nude Susanna, this results in an astonishing range of flesh tints, and in thoughtfully differentiated contours – from sharp outlines in the arm to more blurred ones in the legs – and a great richness in the treatment of the paint in which the texture of underlying differently shaped passages plays a role. Despite their loose execution, the faces have distinct individual expressions and that of Susanna (like her body) shows subtle reflected lights.

The impression the painting makes is largely determined by the deliberation with which the architectonic setting of the scene has been thought through. Faintly lit, the architectural elements are varied in tone and melt into the deep shadows permeating the entire pictorial space. However, the clarity of form and the detail of the visible built structures are not affected – from the landing from which Susanna steps into the water, to the impressive edifices in the background. The way in which the building in the background, done in opaque greys, forms a tonal and coloristic unity with the lead-grey sky is striking. The treatment of Susanna's red cloak with a limited range of shades of vivid red is undoubtedly determined by the fact that an earlier version of this cloak had to be covered, whereby the great attention to the folds and reflections of light is noticeable. Transparent sections through which the ground is visible, as noted in *Ground*, occur only in a few areas, such as in the trees in the garden and the rock wall before which the scene is enacted and in and around the Elder to the right, areas from the first stage of the painting that were left untouched.

Fig. 7. Infrared photograph, detail (1 : 2)

Radiography

The X-radiograph shows a number of phenomena associated with the support (see *Support*). In addition to the dark shadows of the row of five peg holes along the top and bottom edges of the image, the cracks and a wax seal at the far left, the X-radiograph also reveals a number of bright light spots at the upper left and right sides and at the lower left, which can be interpreted as lacunae in the wood filled with priming. These fillings do not seem to be

Fig. 8. Detail with signature (1 : 1)

restored damages of a later date, but were probably done before Rembrandt began to paint.

The most important elements of the painted image are clearly recognizable in the X-radiograph. Many deviations of the forms also show up. These deviations can be partially observed in the actual paint surface; in the X-radiograph they manifest themselves as either reserves or as elements showing up light.

Susanna's hair appears as a dark reserve in the somewhat radioabsorbent background. It should be noted that this reserve is far larger to the left of the head than the hair in the final version. The shape of this reserve suggests that Susanna was initially depicted with her hair hanging down. Also, differences in the light forms of the radiographic image of Susanna relative to the final result can be noted in the higher placement of her left shoulder, changes in the position of her left hand and a different shape for the white drape, which originally had tighter contours and entirely covered the buttocks, flowing approximately to the place where now the ankle meets the surface of the water.

A reserve for the left hand of the forward Elder is discernible in the white drape. Formerly, however, this was conceived differently: another arm is visible in the X-radiograph above the present position of the left arm, rendered with a few vigorous brushstrokes, extending across the Elder's chest and continuing across Susanna's back. In this stage, the upper body of this Elder must have been placed more in profile than it is now. A strip running parallel to the present left shoulder and upper arm is somewhat darker than the background in the X-radiograph, which seems to indicate that this figure previously had another contour. Moreover, a slightly darker reserve for his right hand shows that it was initially placed somewhat higher and in front of the nose. The shape of this reserve is also visible in the paint surface. The reserve for the headdress shows it to have been completely different: it was much taller, while the lower part had a more turban-like form. Executed in radioabsorbent paint, the headdress probably corresponds with the largely painted-over area of yellowish paint still evident in the paint surface.

A number of deviations in the right foreground are visible in the radiographic image. For example, the reserve for the landing is situated further to the left. Showing up in the area of the red cloak and in a zone above it are robust brushstrokes in radioabsorbent paint, in which a reserve has been left for the collar. In the radiographic image, the hanging sashes occupy more space. A reserve for the sashes, which is more to the right and extends further up, as well as one for one of the little ties hanging from the collar, were left in the drape, which is done in highly radioabsorbent paint and probably extended down to the water basin. A jet of liquid shows up somewhat to the left of Susanna, and in the pool, a swan taking flight. To the right above the head of the second Elder are a number of light brushstrokes, which may indicate vegetation. Above this Elder's head and to the left can be detected the arched form of the passage. A shape can be distinguished on the little wall at the left consisting of a few light strokes, probably a bird. With respect to the group of buildings, a reserve was left in the fairly pronounced sky only for the low structures at the left. A dark reserve, reminiscent of the crown of a tall tree, was left in the area in the painting under the imposing, wide tower-like structure.

A few areas in the X-radiograph are more difficult to identify. Among them is a light stroke of paint to the right of the open gate, and an area behind the elbow of the left Elder and above the collar and a portion of Susanna's cloak. Here too the paint surface shows an uninterpretable shape covered by dark paint.

The infrared photographs confirm in part the observations of the painted surface made with the naked eye and of the X-radiographs. Visible at the left between Susanna's head and hand is a lighter spot in the place where the X-radiograph shows a dark area of a reserve for hanging hair (figs. 5 and 6). It is also clear how the arch in front of which the rightmost Elder stands has been altered. The infrared photograph reveals dark lines, which indicate the architectural forms of a passage and which are far less clear in the paint surface (fig. 7).

Signature

At the lower right on the vertical edge of the receding step on which rest the slippers, in black <*Rembrandt.f.[1]647.*> (fig. 8). The inscription shows the letters and the numbers in perspective. Some of the letters appear to have *pentimenti* in an ochrish yellow colour. Above the numbers is a black line, also in perspective; the three legible figures seem to have been slightly strengthened. The unusual degree of care with which the signature has been executed could signify the importance that this painting may have had for its maker.

2. Comments

Although the question of attribution is not one of the problems associated with the Berlin *Susanna and the Elders* – no doubts have ever been expressed and rightly so – its exact place within Rembrandt's authentic oeuvre is not

Fig. 9. Pupil of Rembrandt or belonging to the Munich and Dresden group of Rembrandt imitations, pen and bistre, 19.7 x 17 cm (Ben. 536). Dresden, Kupferstichkabinett

altogether clear. This is owed to the fact that the painting's genesis complicates its stylistic interpretation. The curved arrangement of the figures, for example, is a solution more characteristic of Rembrandt in the 1620s and 30s than in the 1640s. The archway through which the second Elder emerges, just behind him to the left, once contributed greatly to this effect. From the X-radiographs and infrared photographs, and primarily from a drawn copy of an earlier stage of the composition, which will be dicussed below (see fig. 3), it appears that Rembrandt during his work radically toned down the prominence of this archway as a compositional element and thereby entirely changed the structure of the composition.

In addition to the change just mentioned, there are other significant alterations in the painting, several of which have been addressed by previous authors. Kauffmann was the first to note in 1924 that certain overpainted elements showed up in the paint surface.[3] Subsequently, Burroughs in 1931, indicated the traces of another lay-out which he, however, incorrectly considered as part of the underpainting.[4] He relied on a (partial) X-radiograph of the painting.

Kauffmann connected his observations concerning the changes in the painting with several drawings. He proposed a reconstruction of the genesis of the painting, in which the present visible version was preceded by only one earlier. As he convincingly demonstrated, that earlier stage was faithfully copied in a drawing now in Budapest (fig. 3).[5] This drawing has been attributed to Barend Fabritius and dated *c.* 1646 by Wegner.[6] The stage in the development of the painting documented by this drawing, however, was placed much earlier by Kauffmann, namely before the *Susanna at the bath* in The Hague (see fig. 13; III A 117), which he considered to have been painted in 1637. He arrived at a hypothetical dating of *c.* 1635 for the earlier stage of the Berlin *Susanna* as recorded in the Budapest drawing, henceforth called the 'Budapest stage'. While many followed Kauffmann in this view, not everyone agreed with him. For example, Benesch[7] and Sumowski believed that the Budapest stage was reached shortly before the completion of the painting in 1647.

In themselves, radical changes do not necessarily indicate a long working process. However, there is an archival document that Hofstede de Groot had already connected to the Berlin *Susanna*,[8] which implies that the painting was considered to be completed in or before 1642. In this document of 1659, a certain Adriaen Banck states that in 1647 he bought from Rembrandt 'een stuck schilderije van Susanna' (a painting of Susanna) (see *3. Documents and sources*, 1). This statement was made at the request of Titus' guardian, Louys Crayers, in connection with determining Titus' share of his mother's inheritance. While the document of 1659 bears on the sale of a painting in 1647, it can be concluded from the reason for making the statement that the painting already existed at the time of Saskia's death in 1642. Otherwise, it would not have been included as property in determining the extent of her inheritance. The other statements of 1659 in this inheritance matter (including one dealing with the *Night watch*, III A 146) all appear to concern works already completed by 1642, that is, the year of Saskia's death.[9] From 1642 and earlier years, however, no painting with Susanna other than the Hague *Susanna at the bath* dated by us to 1636 is known (III A 117), for which, given its small size, a price of 500 guilders is not likely. The mention in the document may thus concern the Berlin *Susanna* which, after all, is provided with the date 1647 – the year in which Banck bought his 'stuck schilderije van Susanna' (a painting of Susanna). In short, the document provides a strong argument in favour of Kauffmann's hypothesis that the Berlin *Susanna* must have been completed in one form or another long before 1647; at the latest in 1642. That the painting had reached the stage in which it was copied in the Budapest drawing well before 1647 – possibly around 1643 –, is also evident from, the influence it exercised in this form on a painting from Rembrandt's workshop, the 1643 *Bathsheba* (V 2) in New York, a connection which will be discussed in more detail below.

A drawing in Dresden (fig. 9; Ben. 536) played a role in relation to Kauffmann's dating of 1635 for the earlier stage of the painting. According to Kauffmann, this drawing (which, incidentally, he had rejected in an earlier article,[10] but which upon reconsideration he nonetheless included in Rembrandt's oeuvre) could on stylistic grounds only be dated to the mid-1630s. This dating of the drawing, which Kauffmann considered as a preparatory study for the first version of the painting, thus provided him with an indication for the point in time when Rembrandt would have begun the painting. Benesch (see note 7) on the other hand, dated the drawing to the mid-1640s. Partly based on this dating, he believed that the earlier stage of the painting must have been done shortly

before the final version. Apart from the problems of dating and attribution associated with this drawing, already advanced in the first publication on it by Burchard,[11] in our view the drawing does not appear useful in analysing the transformations of the Berlin painting. It corresponds only in a general sense with the painting: neither the composition as a whole, nor specific details closely coincide with any stage in the painting's genesis. Christian Dittrich, in the 2004 catalogue of the Rembrandt drawings in Dresden, even rejected the drawing altogether, suggesting that it belonged to the Munich and Dresden group of Rembrandt imitations.[12]

The genesis of the painting was more complex than supposed by either Kauffmann, Burroughs, or the other authors who had to rely on the evidence they could collect with the means at their disposal. The earlier appearance of the composition will be discussed later in this argument. First, the changes after the Budapest stage will be analysed, as they most clearly demonstrate that through this intervention the painting not only experienced fundamental changes in form and composition, but also in colour – an aspect that until now has been neglected in the literature on this painting.

To gain an idea of the earlier appearance of the painting in terms of colour, it is necessary to seek traces of underlying paint in worn areas and along the final contours. Thus, it is highly likely that the colour of the clothing of the leftmost Elder in the previous stage deviated from what is now seen. Red paint shows through the smoothly applied black paint in the dark jerkin and in the shaded side of his left sleeve. In addition to red, the earlier stage also contained blue and yellow elements. This is indicated by a yellowish spot with some blue and a smudge of red in the background just to the right of the head of the Elder, in the area of the originally higher shoulder (see also *Radiography*). Evidently these traces are the remains of an earlier stage. Furthermore, some blue vaguely shines through on the chest, possibly corresponding to the transparent blue extant in the right sleeve, and to traces of blue that are partially covered by blackish paint at the left near Susanna's red cloak. Where now the garments of the Elder nearest Susanna are dominated by colours of black and brown, previously a combination of blue and red must have played a role in the clothing of this figure. It is also possible to get an impression of the earlier colour scheme of the headdress of this Elder, which (according to the drawing in Budapest) was lower. So, while the cap now is of a black fabric with a red shimmer, partly painted-out ochre strokes with a blue accent indicate that the cap matched the earlier version of the Elder's clothing, and was thus more colourful than it is now.

The most significant change, however, was in the colour scheme of Susanna's cloak and slippers. These are now painted in a strong red. In the X-ray image both the folds in the cloak, applied with bold strokes of radioabsorbent paint, as well as the hanging sash deviate from what can be discerned in the paint surface. Moreover, the earlier shape of the cloak as such was different. The folds visible in the X-radiograph clearly correspond with the folds and the sash in the Budapest drawing. On the basis of the pale grey-yellow locally shining through the paint surface of the red garment, the brownish tints below the dark hanging part, and the fine points of yellow and white impastoed paint piercing through the red paint layer, it can be assumed that the garment in this earlier stage was intended to be a yellowish, probably gold brocade-like fabric. The earlier version of the cloak appears to have been left uncovered above the collar, where yellow-white strokes of paint can be detected, and in the brownish area below the collar. Also Susanna's slippers were executed in yellow and brownish tints. The only reddish accent in this part of the earlier phase of the painting was provided by the sash, which was done in an opaque pink red, and was somewhat wider, as evidenced by the traces of wearing to the right of the present sash.

Before discussing the consequences of these drastic changes in the colour scheme, it is necessary to point out changes in the colour and the *peinture* in the skin of Susanna; traces of an underlying, somewhat more yellow flesh-coloured paint layer in the hollow of the knee, in the breast, and in the shoulder at the right near the contour probably belong to the same earlier stage in the evolution of the painting as do the other changes in the colour scheme described above. In contrast to the smoothly applied flesh colour in the final version of Susanna, the brushstrokes of the more yellow flesh tints exhibit plainly visible relief.

Envisaging the painting in its earlier appearance, it is striking that the light yellowish tonality of Susanna's skin and the cloak behind her constitute a compositional cluster of brightness. Similar solutions are found in a number of Rembrandt's works from the second half of the 1630s and early 1640s, for instance in the *Night watch* (III A 146). The impression of the colour being outshone by the light must originally have been strengthened by the rugged, light scattering paint surface. In similar earlier conceptions, red functions primarily as a repoussoir, generally glowing along the rims of dark figures and forms (cf. the man holding a partizan in the *Blinding of Samson* in Frankfurt, III A 116, or the musketeer loading his musket at the left in the *Night watch*). Broadly stated, it can be postulated that Rembrandt subordinated colour to light and three-dimensionality until the early 1640s. This changed in the 1640s; while the handling of light remains equally convincing, local colour – particularly the red – was allowed a greater role. The 1645 *Holy Family* in St Petersburg (V 4) is an early and telling example of this new tendency, for instance with the very powerful and practically uniform red of the blanket in the cradle. Thus, the covering of the yellowish cloak and the yellow-brown slippers with intense, even reds in the *Susanna* can be considered as an almost programmatic act in Rembrandt's development as a colourist.

The remains of colour below the present dark tones of the garment of the foremost Elder suggest that initially this figure was the only colourful element in the painting, with the exception of the sash trailing from Susanna's cloak. The rose colour of the sash, however, appears to indicate that this colourful element also had a part in the

Fig. 10. Rembrandt, *Study of one of the Elders, c.* 1638, pen and gall-nut ink on light yellow prepared paper, 17.3 x 13.5 cm (Ben. 157). Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria

effect of being outshone by strong light. The reduction of the colourfulness of the Elder nearest Susanna in turn lends an ivory quality to the skin of her upper body (now smoothly executed), which appears to be entirely modelled by the light. The usual juxtaposition in the Berlin museum of Rembrandt's *Susanna* with the one by his teacher Lastman (see fig. 14), makes it abundantly clear that Rembrandt was intent on giving an entirely convincing luminosity to the light playing upon a given element in the painting, reinforced by the inclusion of deep shadows and even by setting the scene in the dark, an aspect that, as will appear, runs counter to the biblical story.

Like the changes in the colour, the changes in the figures and the elimination of elements suggesting forceful movement can be seen as typical of Rembrandt's evolution in the 1630s and 40s. The latter was an aspect that had prompted Kauffmann to argue in favour of a date of 1635 for the inception of the painting. To start with, in the drawing in Budapest, the approaching Elder reaches around Susanna and grasps at her breast with his left hand; in the drawing (fig. 3), his arm was placed somewhat higher than in the painting now. Not only do streaks of paint which show up in the X-radiograph agree with this placement of the arm: which show the contour of this Elder's back and shoulder is higher and runs further to the right, both in the X-radiograph and the Budapest drawing, indicating that in this earlier stage his upper body was turned more in profile. In addition, the correspondence between the drawing and a few strokes showing up faintly in the X-radiograph in the area of the left leg of the Elder nearest Susanna, indicates that the now invisible leg was, in fact, visible in the early stage even if its original position is not entirely clear.

One can argue whether by literally curtailing the Elder's assaultive movement of the arm and allowing his left leg to merge into the shadow behind Susanna, a few elements of action, if not unrest, were consciously eliminated. This is certainly the case in several other areas in the painting. For instance, in the Budapest stage the foremost Elder overturns a jar with his extended front leg, spilling its contents. This small stream of some liquid is visible in the X-radiograph and it also shows through the paint surface locally. One other 'agitated' element that is eliminated is a large swan to the left of Susanna, which is apparently startled by the events taking place on the bank. This bird is visible in both the X-ray image and in the paint relief. Stereomicroscopic investigation shows the swan to have been done in greyish browns. A number of smaller birds taking flight to the left of the swan can be seen only in the drawing.

Susanna herself may also have made a more agitated impression in the earlier stage. Studying the drawing in Budapest, it appears that her upper body probably had a somewhat different position: the shoulder and the upper arm were slightly higher and more to the left, with the arm less pressed into her torso than now. It is difficult to discern this earlier position of the shoulder and the upper arm in the X-radiograph because it interferes with the final, as well as a still earlier version of this area, which was executed in a fairly strong radioabsorbent paint. That the left arm was moved more to the front can be inferred from the X-radiographs, in which two different versions of Susanna's hand show up to the left of the hand now visible. The hair hanging free at the left of the head, as well as the somewhat altered position of the head and slightly different expression, both visible primarily in the Budapest drawing, contribute to the impression that Susanna's alarmed torsion was suggested more strongly in this earlier stage.

Furthermore, the drape enveloping Susanna's body was more agitated. In this stage, more of the white drape was visible. From the X-ray image, from covered traces in the paint surface, and from the drawing in Budapest it can be concluded that the folds in the drape at the left under Susanna's arm were originally more active. The only suggestion of this earlier movement in the figure of Susanna now present is her earring dangling at an angle, Rembrandt's way of suggesting the sudden movement of a head. The fact that this detail is not seen in the Budapest drawing would seem to indicate that it was added in the final stage.[13]

Another question is whether the place occupied by the curved stone steps in the Budapest drawing is the same relative to the figure of Susanna as in the earlier version of the painting. A reserve, visible as a dark form in the X-ray film, indicates that the landing extended a bit higher and more to the left in the earlier version. In the drawing, this part of the landing functions more as a repoussoir than is now the case. A repoussoir as a rule heightens the dynamic quality of a composition; elimination of the corner

of the landing should, therefore, be counted among the measures taken by Rembrandt to eliminate the agitation in this painting. This change could also be related to the fact that below Susanna's right foot is flesh-coloured paint, which can be interpreted not only as a reflection of the leg, but, given the form, could also indicate an earlier, lower position of the foot. This lower position in the earlier stage of the painting is also evident in the drawing in Budapest, where it seems as if the foot in the water is actually on the landing. One other change in the landing should be mentioned. In the Budapest drawing, the step on which the slippers rest is missing. From this could be concluded that this step was inserted, along with the signature, only in the final version – even though this change cannot be directly inferred from the X-radiograph. Finally, where in the present painting a dark shadow is found in the tall tower-like building, in the Budapest drawing a tall tree fills the area. This tree corresponds with a dark form, to be read as a reserve in the X-radiograph, so that it would seem obvious to assume that a tree indeed originally occupied this place in the painting.[14]

As mentioned above, certain peculiarities can be detected in the paint surface and especially in the X-radiograph (namely in the Elder nearest Susanna, in her figure and in the left background) that do not coincide with the changes between the stage documented in the Budapest drawing and the image now visible. In short, there must have been yet another stage, one that, as will appear, precedes the one discussed above.

The X-ray film reveals that a reserve was left for the gesticulating right hand of the Elder nearest Susanna, indicating that the hand was placed somewhat higher, before the nose rather than before the mouth. This higher position of the hand is also visible in the paint surface of the background. With a microscope flesh colour can be discerned in this area showing through the grey of the paint surface of the background. This means that at one time not only was a reserve for the hand left in the background, but that this hand was actually executed. The shape of the Elder's headdress was also different in this stage. In the X-ray film, a dark form indicates a reserve for a tall headdress. In the paint surface, a few light strokes of paint of this headdress are visible along the upper contour of this reserve.

Moreover, Susanna's pose in this stage was different from her final appearance and from the one documented in the drawing in Budapest. The X-radiograph shows that her left shoulder, painted in fairly strong radioabsorbent paint, was closer to her chin, as is also the case in the *Susanna at the bath* in The Hague (see fig. 13; III A 117) of 1636. And judging from the presence of light radioabsorbent strokes, her white drape hung down to the water surface. The areas showing up in the X-ray film, furthermore, give reason to surmise that changes were made in the head of Susanna, even though there are too few clear indications to allow a reconstruction of the head's earlier bearing.

Finally, the radically altered area in the left background must be discussed. An even, radioabsorbent sky shows up

Fig. 11. Rembrandt, *Adam and Eve*, 1638, etching (plate image) (B. 28 II)

in this region in the X-radiograph, in which the low buildings at the left, the tall tree and an erratic contour of the wall at the right can be seen as dark reserves. From this can be assumed that the tall, grey tower-like structure was not envisioned in the first stage of the composition. In addition, on the basis of the presence of blue paint in the region of the tower and the grey sky, visible under a stereomicroscope, the sky in this stage appears to have been a bright blue, which has iconographic consequences.

We have no document comparable to the drawing in Budapest that would give us a coherent view of these features in the stage of the painting just mentioned. Yet, based on the nature of these features, it can be established that they precede the Budapest stage and thus constitute a first stage. This is indicated by the fact that the deviating parts of the composition – the tree, the buildings, the rock wall, the raised right hand and tall headdress of the Elder nearest Susanna – appear mostly as reserves in the sky or other areas executed in radioabsorbent paint.

Kauffmann's arguments for dating the Budapest stage (our second) around 1635 are not convincing. However, there are compelling reasons for dating the stage preceding the Budapest one to 1638. This can be inferred from a drawing of the grasping Elder by Rembrandt in Melbourne (fig. 10; Ben. 157), whose authenticity has never been doubted. The pose of this figure, with the hand before the nose and a high headdress, is identical with the earliest version we found of the Elder in the

Fig. 12. Rembrandt, *Seated female nude*, study of Susanna, *c.* 1647, black chalk heightened with white, 20.4 x 16.4 cm (Ben. 590). Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett

Fig. 13. Rembrandt, *Susanna at the bath*, 1636. The Hague, Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Mauritshuis (III A 117)

painting. The drawing can be dated to *c.* 1638 not only on the basis of style, but especially through the use of iron-gall ink and light yellow prepared paper, which Rembrandt also used in a few other drawings from the same time.[15] It seems to have been intended as a sketch for the complicated pose of the Elder at the left. The bold slanting line cutting through the wrist of his left hand and representing the outline of Susanna's back, and the diagonal stroke at the lower right near his left leg at the height of her cloak, indicate that the drawing was made when the composition of the painting had been more or less determined. Thus, what we are dealing with here is not a preparatory study but, as was more often the case with Rembrandt, a sketch meant to help him change or refine some aspect of the composition. The probability of *c.* 1638 as the date when Rembrandt began to work on this painting is strengthened by the fact that the placement of Susanna's legs, the right one almost stretched out, the left one bent, agrees with the pose of Adam in the etching *Adam and Eve*, dated 1638 (fig. 11; B. 28).

The sketchy treatment of the rightmost Elder, one of the few remaining elements of the first stage, displays some affinity with the figures of this period, and specifically with the figure of Tobit in *The angel Raphael leaving Tobit* of 1637 in Paris (III A 121), which is also on panel.

As alluded to above, the *Bathsheba* in New York (V 2) provides an important clue for determining when the Berlin painting was altered from the first to the second, i.e. the Budapest stage. In the New York painting dated 1643, which in composition and colour scheme recalls the first stage of the *Susanna*, an important change is found in the background identical to the one made in the Berlin *Susanna*. Initially both paintings had substantially more sky at the left, which was subsequently partly covered over by buildings in a second stage. Moreover, in both pictures the sky was originally bright blue. Assuming that the change in the New York painting was inspired by a parallel one in the Berlin *Susanna*, then the date of 1643 inscribed on the finished version of the New York *Bathsheba* provides a plausible date for the alterations from the first to the second stage of the Berlin painting. The yellowish cloak in the *Bathsheba* then also affords an idea of the role Susanna's cloak must have played at the outset in the Berlin painting.

In connection with the last change – the one that resulted in the present appearance of the Berlin *Susanna* – we have an important document, again in the form of a drawing, this time a black chalk study of a *Seated female nude* in Berlin (fig. 12; Ben. 590). There is a striking similarity between the definitive pose of Susanna in the Berlin painting and the woman in the Berlin drawing with respect to the pose and the placement of the shadows in the upper arm. Given the alteration the painting underwent in the last stage, one can assume that this study of a seated female nude, dated around 1647 on stylistic grounds[16], was done with the final pose of Susanna in mind. Thus, it seems that work on the painting ceased for some time between 1643 and 1647 and that subsequently, after a substantial pause, it was thoroughly reworked. [One is reminded here of the genesis of the *Danae* in St Petersburg (III A 119)]. It can be concluded that large parts of the *Susanna* as they now appear are datable to 1647 – the year in which the painting was actually sold.

Fig. 14. P. Lastman, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1614, panel 42 x 58 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie

Fig. 15. Rembrandt, *Susanna and the Elders*, *c.* 1635, red chalk, pencil in grey, 23.5 x 36.4 cm (Ben. 448). Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett

There are further questions that need to be raised, one of them being the relationship of the Berlin painting to the Hague *Susanna at the bath* (fig. 13; III A 117). Accepting a date of 1638 for the commencement of work on the Berlin painting, then the first stage of that painting does not precede – as Kauffmann and many authors following him supposed – but rather follows the Hague *Susanna*. This dating, however, does not necessarily imply that the far smaller Hague painting of 1636,[17] should be considered a preparatory study for the Berlin painting, as Gerson suggested,[18] even though the similarities in the pose of Susanna are irrefutable. A series of correspondences between the two paintings can certainly be indicated. For example, the colour scheme of Susanna's clothing in the first version of the Berlin painting, with a modest accent of opaque rose-red in the dangling sashes near the cloak painted predominantly in white, grey and yellow tints, is similar to that in the Hague *Susanna*, where the burgundy robe plays a subsidiary role in relation to the white shirt. Also, in both paintings Susanna looks straight out at the viewer – a feature possibly derived from a 1620 print of Susanna by Lucas Vorsterman after Rubens.[19] Moreover, the pose of the Berlin *Susanna* in the first stage of the painting, with her shoulders tucked into her chin, is identical to that in the Hague *Susanna*. Rembrandt appears to have derived Susanna's pose, covering her pudenda with one hand and extending the other from her body as she raises her arm to cover her breast, from Lastman's *Susanna and the Elders* of 1614 in Berlin (fig. 14), in which Susanna makes the same gesture, though in reverse, as both of Rembrandt's Susannas. In this connection, it can be noted that in the drawing in which he copied and paraphrased Lastman's composition (fig. 15; Ben. 448), Rembrandt was clearly seeking alternative positions for Susanna's arms.[20]

Despite these similarities, there are significant differences between Rembrandt's two Susanna paintings with regard to the episode depicted, and especially with regard to the approach to the subject. In terms of iconography alone there is an essential difference. The painting in The Hague depicts a relatively rarely illustrated scene of the Elders spying on Susanna (compare, among other examples, Rubens' *Susanna* in Munich[21]), while the Berlin painting shows the far more frequently illustrated later episode, in which the Elders reveal themselves and threaten her. In the Hague painting, by manipulating the lighting and limiting detail, Rembrandt focused all attention on the nude Susanna, whereby even the spying Elders, who are essential to identifying the exact subject, can only be discerned in the bushes with difficulty.[22] This reductive treatment differs greatly from the first version of the Berlin painting, in which all sorts of details serve not only to emphasise the dramatic character of the scene, but also to indicate the time of day when the episode depicted transpires. The women visible only faintly (probably a result of abrasion) in the garden at the left, can be viewed as an indication of when the scene takes place. According to the story, the two Elders made their appearance only after Susanna had sent away her two maid servants. And the blue sky in the first phase of the painting – quite exceptional for Rembrandt – can also be explained as an indication of the time of day when the narrative occurs, namely mid-day. The drama of the rude intrusion – as described above, underscored by the Elder grabbing for Susanna's breast in these first versions – is even further reinforced by the birds taking flight and the liquid spilling from the overturned jar. These two iconographic details, eliminated from the final version, must have had a bearing on the subject of the scene. Traditionally, the swan was a symbol of beauty and purity.[23] The swan taking flight may refer to the imminent threat to Susanna's virtue. The same is true for the overturned jar spilling its contents.[24]

With this emphasis on the assault, an explanation of the grasping Elder's gesture – right hand balled into a fist with raised thumb held in front of the nose or the mouth – as *manu fico* seems more likely than the suggestion that it was intended as an incitement to silence.[25] Also arguing against the latter explanation is the fact that the hand is held slightly away from the face.

A similar approach to the depiction of a narrative subject as in the early stage of the *Susanna* can be found in another picture of the late 1630s, the London *Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene* signed and dated 1638 (III A 124). In this picture the time of Christ's first appearance to Mary Magdalene as given in the Bible is indicated by a

yellow, early morning light coming just above the horizon. In the pose of one of the protagonists, Mary Magdalene, this painting reveals a comparable emphasis on the suddenness of the event taking place. That Rembrandt abandoned this approach to narrative representations during the 1640s appears not only from the definitive version of the *Susanna*, in which the blue sky and dramatic accents have been eliminated, but also from the *Noli me tangere* in Braunschweig of 1651 (V 18). In comparison to the London painting, here too Rembrandt opted for less dramatic poses of the figures and a darker sky.

For a long time, the many changes in pictorial and narrative style that have been analyzed in this entry were explained exclusively in terms of Rembrandt's highly personal evolution. This explanation, however, may be inadequate. Developments such as the rise of Classicism may also have affected these changes. Until now, the cliché of Rembrandt as anti-classicist has hindered research on this possible influence, one which might explain much of what emerges in his works of the 1640s.[26] It has been argued elsewhere that the changes in the present painting could be related to Rembrandt's changing ideas on the representation of moving figures in the scenes he depicted (see note 13). (For further discussion see Chapter IV, pp. 294-300)

Additional remarks

After completion of the above text in 1998 the Berlin *Susanna* was exhaustively analysed in 2006 by Eric Jan Sluijter in his particularly rich book, *Rembrandt and the female nude*.[27] In several respects, and particularly on the genesis of this painting, he expresses views that differ from our own. We shall therefore turn to consider briefly his ideas.

Sluijter proposes that the history of the origin of this painting begins considerably earlier than we assume. Where we consider it extremely probable that Rembrandt began to work on this painting in *c.* 1638 (see our arguments for this view in *Comments*), Sluijter argues that its first version could possibly have already been painted on the Berlin panel in 1635. In this connection he speaks of an 'exercise (by a pupil) to elaborate upon Lastman's composition [with the same subject] with the help of Rembrandt's drawing [*c.* 1635] after his master's painting'[28] (see figs. 14 and 15). Sluijter suspects that the Berlin *Susanna* initially belonged to the type of pupils' work that we refer to as 'satellites', in this case a 'free variant' on a given prototype (see Chapter III). One consequence of this line of thinking is that Rembrandt's *Susanna* in the Mauritshuis would then have been begun after an unknown pupil of Rembrandt had realised the Berlin *Susanna* in its first form. Sluijter has radical ideas about the original conception of the painting that he links to this hypothesis; he suggests that the pupil concerned may have followed Lastman's conception so closely that he depicted Susanna in the sitting position. Sluijter believes he can support this hypothesis by demonstrating the – in his view – incorrect anatomy of the Susanna in its original form. These defects would have been the consequence of persisting with parts of Susanna in the woman's original sitting position that Sluijter presumes. Having pointed out that the position of Susanna's legs is remarkably similar to that of Adam in Rembrandt's etching *Adam and Eve*, dated 1638 (see fig. 11), he writes of 'the awkward proportions of Susanna: her legs are curiously short (most notably her thighs, especially the thigh of her right leg), possibly as a consequence of leaving certain parts unchanged while altering others. The construction of the anatomy as a whole has become peculiar too. How the right leg could ever join with the torso is totally unclear, while the left leg is strangely twisted, the thigh is parallel to the picture plane while the lower leg is turned inward (and her foot outward) in an impossible stance'.[29]

Apart from his remarks about the anatomy of Susanna, which will be dealt with below, Sluijter's hypothesis that a pupil could have begun the work would seem to be difficult to maintain for several reasons. Firstly, it should be pointed out that the painting has a remarkably hefty format for a small-scale history piece with only three figures. Then there is the choice of support, a strikingly large plank of mahogany, in one piece, which indicates that the Berlin *Susanna* must be seen as a highly ambitious project. According to our analysis of prototypes and their free variants executed by pupils, these variants are relatively modest in format, whereas the Berlin *Susanna*, compared with Rembrandt's small-scale history pieces, is a relatively monumental work.

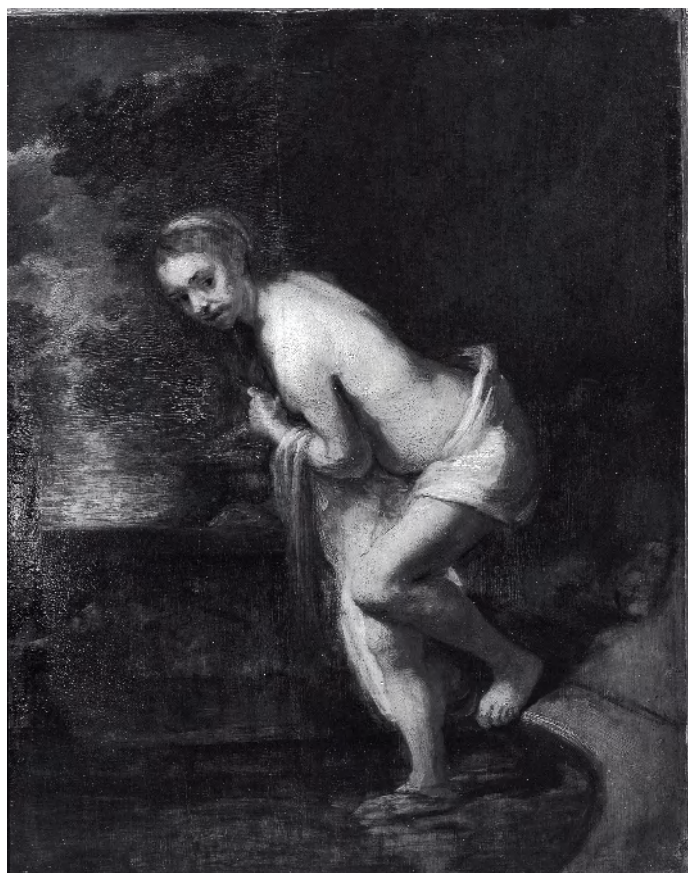
Where Sluijter proposes that Rembrandt entirely overpainted the first version – putatively by a pupil – in two stages, we are of the opinion that a large proportion of the earliest version has been preserved in its first form, viz. the Elder with the turban painted directly on to the yellow ground, such that this ground shows through in thin transparent passages in the clothing and to the right of this figure in the background.

Turning to the suggestion that Susanna was initially sitting, it should be pointed out that there is nothing to be seen in either the X-radiograph or in the infrared image that might indicate this. The passage between Susanna's thigh and the garment laid over the architecture shows no radio-absorbency, indicating that the original situation here has very probably remained unchanged. If Sluijter's suspicions are correct, by comparison with the sitting position of the Susanna in the Mauritshuis, one would expect traces of the object on which Susanna had been sitting, as also in Lastman's *Susanna* (see figs. 13 and 14).

With regard to Sluijter's remarks on the anatomy of Susanna: from the line of her backbone one can infer that Rembrandt wanted to depict Susanna such that her upper body was turned to the right relative to the lower body, which is slightly turned toward the viewer. When this observation is taken into account, the relation between her right thigh and the invisible right hip will be seen to be not so impossible as Sluijter suggests. Moreover, in the posture which we suggest here, if one compares the length of the right leg with the length of the upper body and head, the midpoint of Rembrandt's figure of Susanna lies in the pelvic region, in accord for instance with the description of 'een matigh Wijf' (an average woman) in: *Beschrijvinghe van Albrecht Durer. Van de Menschelijcke Proportion*, 1527 published in Dutch in 1622 (p. 76) of which Rembrandt owned and demonstrably consulted a copy (see Chapter I, pp. 38-48).

Fig. 16. Mezzotint by R. Earlom, 1769

Fig. 17. Copy 4. Rembrandt workshop, panel 62.9 x 47.6 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (Br. 518)



This is not to say, however, that the anatomy of Susanna is entirely satisfactory. It seems as though the distance between her waist and the contour of her buttock visible beneath the drapery is too long. It would have been more logical to place her left thigh in a slightly more vertical position. But one finds the same anomaly in the Adam in the print mentioned above (see fig. 11), which originated during the same period in which we situate the beginning of the work on the present painting. In addition, the execution of the Elder descending on the right, which in our

Fig. 18a. Copy 5. Rembrandt workshop, panel 22.2 x 18.4 cm. Bayonne, Musée Bonnat (Br. 372)

Fig. 18b. Rotating fig. 18a such that the grain of the panel is running in vertical direction

view belongs to the first stage, is technically and stylistically similar to passages in paintings on panel from the second half of the 1630s, such as the Paris *Angel leaving Tobit and his family* (III A 121). This suggests that this part of the painting, representing the first stage, was done around 1638 rather than 1635. The superior execution of the descending Elder does not tally with an attribution of this stage to a pupil as Sluijter suggests.

Comparison of the X-radiograph with the final painting leads to the inference that the massive building in the background was most probability not originally planned. The reserve in the (originally blue) sky is limited to the architectural element across which falls a sharp shadow at the extreme left, and the crown of a tree. This tree is somewhat similar to the tree which now partially obscures the massive building, a later addition.

Such colossal buildings – with a usually polygonal, blunt tower-like structure – only appear in Rembrandt's paintings of the period around 1640 and subsequently (e.g. in the *Visitation* from 1640 in Detroit, III A 138/Br. 562; the *David and Jonathan* from 1642 in St Petersburg, Br. 511; the Louvre *Landscape* around 1645, Br. 450; the *Nocturnal landscape with the Holy Family* of 1647 in Dublin, V 13/Br. 576; and *The Polish Rider*, *c.* 1655 in New York, V 20/Br. 279).

Peter Schatborn has suggested the possibility that the appearance of such buildings in Rembrandt's paintings may be correlated with three detailed drawings of English monumental buildings: St. Albans Cathedral (Ben. 785); Windsor Castle (Ben. 786), and St. Paul's Cathedral in London (Ben. 787). Two of these (Ben. 786 and 787) are signed 'Rembrandt' and dated 1640. The question of the authenticity of these drawings has long been a matter of debate, but Schatborn is strongly inclined to attribute them to Rembrandt. He also points out the possibility that the addition of the large, polygonal structural element and the correlated buildings in the Berlin *Susanna and the Elders* was inspired by Rembrandt's work on these drawings. That could be taken as an indication that this and other changes in the present painting were introduced in or after 1640.

Fig. 19. Copy 2. Rembrandt workshop, 27 x 21 cm. Formerly Paris, coll. Bisschoffsheim (Br. 248)

3. Documents and sources

1. Among the total of 11 depositions made in 1659 at the request of the guardian of Rembrandt's son Titus van Rijn to determine the size of the latter's inheritance from his mother Saskia van Uylenburch who died in 1642, there is one by Adriaen Banck in which he stated 'dat hij attestant int jaer 1647 van Rembrant van Rhijn, vader van deselve Titus gekocht heeft een stuck schilderije van Susanna, daervoor hij attestant alsdoen aen hem heeft betaelt gehadt de somme van vijffhondert guldens in gelde …' (that in the year 1647 he, the deponent, had purchased from Rembrandt van Rhijn, the father of Titus, a painting of Susanna for which he paid the sum of 500 guilders in cash…) (Strauss *Doc.*, 1659/17).
2. The painting is mentioned again on 31 August 1660, together with a portrait of Adriaen Banck and a sketch, both of which are also stated to be by Rembrandt, in the transfer document of moveable property of Adriaen Banck to Adriaen Maen, who happened to be his brother-in-law: 'In de Zijdel Caamer: Een stuck van Rembrandt de Historij van Susanna *f* 560:-:-' (In the Antechamber: A painting by Rembrandt the History of Susanna 560 guilders) (Strauss *Doc.*, 1660/13).

4. Graphic reproductions

1. Mezzotint by R. Earlom (London 1742/43-1822), inscribed: *Rembrandt pinxit – John Boydell excudit, 1769 – R. Earlom fecit / Susanna and the Elders. / From the Original Picture Painted by Rembrandt in the Collection of Sr. Josa. Reynolds. / … of the Picture … by 3… in Length – publish'd June 12. 1769 by J. Boydell, Engraver in Cheapside London* (fig. 16).

5. Copies

1. Drawing, pen and brown ink, brown and grey washes, red chalk, 17.8 x 23.8 cm; Budapest, Szépmüvészeti Múzeum (fig. 3; see note 5). Accurately depicts an earlier stage of the painting (see *2. Comments*).
2. Oak panel, grain vertical, 27 x 21 cm (measured in the frame); formerly coll. Bisschoffsheim, Paris; Coll. Madame Perrone (de Noailles), Hôtel de Pompadour, Fontainebleau; Examined 22-4-1971 (J.B., S.H.L.). Painted partial copy of the head of the Elder at the left (fig. 19; Br. 248).
3. Panel 18.7 x 23.3 cm; formerly coll. M. von Nemes, Budapest, 1913; Caretto Gallerie, Turin, 1991. Another partial copy of the same detail as copy 2.
4. Oak panel, grain vertical, 62.9 x 47.6 cm, two planks; Paris, Musée du Louvre. Examined in September 1968 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.). Painted partial copy of Susanna (fig. 17; Br. 518). As is usual for partial copies, there are deviations in details from the Berlin *Susanna*. Some of these deviations, however, correspond with an earlier stage of the prototype, such as her hair hanging down and the wrap entirely covering Susanna's buttocks. The

upper part of this wrap corresponds with the final version, in which the Elder lifts it up but does not reach for her breast. These are indications of an origin in Rembrandt's studio during the working process on the prototype between the Budapest stage and the final result. This dating is also entirely in keeping with the results of the dendrochronological analysis: the earliest possible felling date is 1642.

5. Oak panel, diagonal grain, oval 22.2 x 18.4 cm, thickness *c.* 1 cm; Bayonne, Musée Bonnat. Examined 10-3-1972 (B.H., P.v.Th.). Painted partial copy of Susanna (figs. 18a+b; Br. 372). The position of Susanna's head and shoulders is tilted in relation to the prototype. The wood grain in the oval panel runs diagonally. Turning the panel so that the wood grain is vertical, Susanna's position corresponds with that of the Berlin *Susanna*. From this and from the absence of bevelling in the relatively thick panel can be concluded that the painting was later cut down to its oval format such that the figure of Susanna was turned in relation to the original.

6. Provenance

– Probably bought from Rembrandt by Adriaen Banck in 1647 (see *3. Documents and sources*, 1).
– Probably included in the inventory of goods transferred to Adriaen Maen bij Adriaen Banck to settle a debt in 1660 (see *3. Documents and sources*, 2).
– Coll. Baron Schonborn, sale Amsterdam 16 April 1738 (Lugt 482), no. 67: 'Susanna met de Boeven, door Rembrand van Rhyn, uytmuntent konstig. hoog 2v. 8d. breet 3v. 2d. [= 77.18 x 90.07 cm]' (Hoet I, p. 511, no. 66: 700 guilders).
– Coll. J.A.J. Aved, sale Paris 24ff November 1766 (Lugt 1563), no. 31: 'Rembrandt Van Ryn. Susanne au bain; cette vertueuse femme est inclinée & debout, un pied dans l'eau & l'autre sur une marche de pierre; elle semble faire un effort pour échapper des mains d'un vieillard qui la retient par sa chemise, dont elle s'est en partie couverte. Le second vieillard est sur un plan un peu plus élevé, la main droite appuyée sur une rampe d'escalier; une belle robe d'écarlate avec agrément d'or, est posée sur un pied d'estal, au bas duquel sont des pantoufles de même couleur; des édifices & de l'architecture sont en plus grande partie le fond de ce Tableau, qui est peint sur bois; il porte 28 pouces de haut, sur 34 de large [= 75.6 x 91.8 cm]. Une intelligence parfaite, une touche ferme & le bel effet du clair obscur distinguent infiniment ce morceau, & le mettent au rang des plus importants de ce Maître: on lui reproche néanmoins que la figure de Susanne n'est pas d'un beau choix; mais qui ne sait pas que Rembrandt n'a jamais brillé dans la partie du dessein, lorsque les sujets l'ont obligé de représenter des femmes nues?' (2360 francs).
– Probably coll. Edmund Burke. On 1 May 1769, John Boydell announced the forthcoming publication of Earlom's mezzotint after the painting of *Susanna and the Elders* in the collection of 'Birk, Esq.',[30] identified as Edmund Burke in Hofstede de Groot (see note 8).
– Coll. Sir Joshua Reynolds. According to the second state of Earlom's mezzotint, published on 12 June 1769, the picture was in the possession of Sir Joshua Reynolds; in 1792 by inheritance Lady Inchiquin, a niece of the painter;[31] sale London (Christie's) 11-14 March 1795, remise 13-17, 4th day (Lugt 5284), no. 82: 'Ditto [Rembrandt] – Susanna and the Elders. One of his elaborate and finished pictures, producing a surprising effect, in point of colouring a valuable study of art.' Bought back by her heirs via Wilson for 156 guineas; sold to Charles Offley, London 22 March 1795 (for 120 guineas).
– In 1796 coll. Joseph Berwick, whose daughter Mary was married to Anthony Lechmere. By inheritance coll. Sir E.A.H. Lechmere in The Rhydd (until 1883).
– Dealer Ch. Sedelmeyer, Paris 1883 (*Catalogue of 300 paintings*, 1898, no. 135).
– Acquired for the Königliche Gemäldegalerie, Berlin 1883.

NOTES

1. J. Bauch and D. Eckstein, 'Woodbiological investigations on panels of Rembrandt paintings', *Wood Science and Technology* 15 (1981), pp. 251-263, esp. 255. See also *Corpus* IV, p. 657.
2. P. Klein, 'Hat Rembrandt auf Zuckerkistenholz gemalt?', *Zuckerhistorische Beiträge aus der Alten und Neuen Welt,* Schriften aus dem Zucker-Museum, Heft 25, Berlin 1988, pp. 37-43, esp. 40-41.
3. H. Kauffmann, 'Rembrandts Berliner Susanna', *Jb. d. Pr. Kunsts.* 45 (1924), pp. 72-80.
4. A. Burroughs, 'New illustrations of Rembrand's style', *Burl. Mag.* 59 (1931), pp. 3-10, esp. 9 and Plate I C.
5. Sumowski *Drawings* IV, no. 823[x].
6. W. Wegner, 'Bemerkungen zu Zeichnungen der Rembrandtschule im Museum der bildenden Künste in Budapest und zum Problem der Rembrandtwerkstatt', *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts* 34-35 (1970), pp. 103-110, esp. 106-108, fig. 75.
7. O. Benesch, *Rembrandt. Werk und Forschung*, Vienna 1935, pp. 38-39, esp. 38.
8. HdG 55.
9. Strauss *Doc.*, 1659/16, 1659/18, 1659/19, 1659/21.
10. H. Kauffmann, 'Eine Vorzeichnung Rembrandts zur Dresdener Saskia von 1641', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 41 (1919), pp. 34-56, esp. 45, note 26a.
11. L. Burchard, 'Eine neue Rembrandtzeichnung', *Jb. d. Pr. Kunsts.* 33 (1912), pp. 173-175.
12. C. Dittrich, Th. Ketelsen, *Rembrandt. Die Dresdener Zeichnungen*, Cologne 2004, cat. no. 87.
13. Rembrandt's changing conception of movement in painting over the course of the 1640's and subsequent years are elaborated in more detail in: E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt as a searching artist', in: *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 108-115.
14. Curiously, this motif of a tall tree before a tower is also found in a painting of *Bathsheba*, present whereabouts Utrecht, Rijksmuseum Het Catharijneconvent (Sumowski *Gemälde* VI, no. 2503). See also V 2 fig. 16.
15. P. Schatborn in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Drawings and Etchings*, 1991/92, cat. no. 24.
16. See note 15; H. Bevers, *Rembrandt. Die Zeichnungen im Berliner Kupferstichkabinett*, Berlin 2006, cat. no. 27.
17. P. Noble, A. van Loon, 'New insights into Rembrandt's Susanna', in: *Art Matters Netherlands Technical Studies in Art*, 2 (2005), pp. 76-97, esp. 78.
18. Gerson 221.
19. Hollst. XLIII, no. 4; see P. van Thiel in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, cat. no. 25.
20. B. Broos in: exhib. cat. *De Rembrandt à Vermeer. Les peintres hollandais au Mauritshuis de La Haye*, Paris (Grand Palais) 1986, cat. no. 41; Bevers, op.cit.[16], cat. no. 18.
21. Panel 77 x 110 cm; Munich, Alte Pinakothek, inv. no. 317.
22. For an interesting study of the Hague *Susanna* and the representation of the female nude, see: E.J. Sluijter, 'Rembrand's early paintings of the female nude: *Andromeda* and *Susanna*', in: G. Cavalli-Björkman (ed.), *Rembrandt and his pupils; papers given at a Symposium in Nationalmuseum Stockholm, 2-3 October 1992*, Stockholm 1993, pp. 31-54.
23. A. Henkel and A. Schöne (eds.), *Emblemata-Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 1967, cols. 814-818.
24. The overturned jar near a pair of slippers is also found in a print of a comparable subject by Hendrik Goltzius from *c.* 1578 of *The rape of Lucretia* (B. 106).
25. Tümpel 1986, p. 250.
26. A. Blankert, 'Classicism in Dutch history painting', in: exhib. cat. *Dutch Classicism in seventeenth-century painting*, Rotterdam/Frankfurt 1999-2000, pp. 12-33.
27. E.J. Sluijter, *Rembrandt and the female nude*, Amsterdam 2006.
28. Sluijter, op.cit.[27], p. 132.
29. Sluijter, op.cit.[27], p. 135.
30. Chr. White in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt in 18th Century England*, [New Haven] Yale Center for British Art 1983, cat. no. 5.
31. F. Broun, 'Rembrandts in the collection of Sir Joshua Reynolds', unpublished typescript 1984, no. 2; J. Kelch in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, no. 37.

V 2 **Pupil of Rembrandt with intervention by Rembrandt – The toilet of Bathsheba** (free variant after V 1) 1643

NEW YORK, N.Y., THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, ACC. NO. 14.40.651
BEQUEST OF BENJAMIN ALTMAN, 1913

HDG 40; BR. 513; BAUCH 25; GERSON 213; TÜMPEL A1

1. Introduction and description

Gerson first raised questions over the authenticity of this painting in 1968,[1] since when various opinions have been voiced in the Rembrandt literature as to whether, and if so, to what extent, Rembrandt was involved in the production of the New York *Toilet of Bathsheba*.[2]

During the course of our own investigation of this painting, we found that the attribution problems associated with it touched on several issues that have already been raised in the introductory chapters of this book:

- the ways in which we believe Rembrandt's pupils contributed to the workshop's output by producing copies and variants of Rembrandt's prototypes (see Chapter III, pp. 259-269);
- the possibilities for distinguishing the hand of Rembrandt from the hands of his pupils (see Chapter IV) provided by analysis of style and quality;
- our suspicion that works by Rembrandt's pupils may in some cases (for example, see cat. V 5) also have served as prototypes for copies and variants, just as prototypes by Rembrandt himself;
- our growing insight into various forms of collaboration in Rembrandt's workshop, sometimes (as with this painting) in the form of local interventions by Rembrandt in the work of a pupil;
- in particular the consequences of this insight for our further understanding of the way that 17th-century painters – and perhaps Rembrandt himself – may have *thought* about this (see also V 15).

The scene is based on 2 Samuel 11:2-3, which recounts how one day, from the roof of his palace, King David observed Bathsheba, a woman of exceptional beauty, at her bath.

The nude Bathsheba is seated on a stone bench, on which are placed a blue cushion and an Oriental carpet. She is fully lit, her right hand resting on the sole garment covering her modesty, the white chemise draped over her thigh with one sleeve hanging down between her legs. Her other hand is pressed lightly against her right breast. Her left foot leans on the carpet, which is draped over a flight of stone steps leading to a basin. She rests her right foot in the lap of an old woman attending to her feet. The old woman is dressed in a dark purple gown with wide sleeves and a broad fur collar over which a head scarf falls onto her shoulder. She wears a black head covering over the head scarf. Near her is a metal bowl with a sponge.

Bathsheba's fur-lined, gold brocade cloak falls behind her in heavy folds; beside her is a silver bowl with a jug and a chain set partially on the blue green carpet that is largely concealed under the chemise. Behind Bathsheba, a black maidservant combs her mistress's long blond hair. Situated in shadow among large leaves in the far right foreground are a pair of peacocks, partly silhouetted against the illuminated rock wall and ground.

Behind Bathsheba and the black maidservant are trees and cliffs enveloped in shadow. To the left is a view with a palace in the distance; King David can be discerned standing behind a balustrade on the highest terrace. Vaguely outlined against the sky is the profile of a city.

Working conditions

Examined on 15 April 1969 (J.B., B.H.), in February 1988 (E.v.d.W.) and after restoration in November 1995 (P.B., M.F., E.v.d.W.): out of the frame with the aid of six X-ray films, together covering the whole picture.

Varnish: A severely cracked varnish that had impeded observation during the earlier investigations was removed in 1995.[3]

Support

Panel, oak, grain horizontal, 55.4 x 74.5 cm (without added slats). Single piece. The panel was planed down to a thickness of 0,4 cm, and affixed to another panel that has been cradled. Narrow wooden slats have been applied all around, thereby preventing dendrochronological investigation. To the left near the middle run two horizontal cracks; the upper one to the jug, and the lower one to above the head of the old woman. There is another small horizontal crack above left.

Ground

A yellow brown ground shows through in the transparent parts of the foliage and in parts of the rocky plateau near the basin.

Paint layer

Condition: The entire background, the black maidservant's head and the upper parts of her garments have suffered extensively. The other figures and the lit foreground are in fairly good condition. The shaded parts of the gold brocade cloak appear to be locally damaged. Dark shapes shine through in the sky which may be connected with the pentimento described below (see *Radiography*).

Craquelure: A fine pattern of cracks can be discerned in the paint layer to the left and right of the hanging part of Bathsheba's cloak, and also in the shadow of the carpet on the stone bench. Similar cracks occur in the background to the left of the old woman. Irregular cracks are found in the paint layer at the right in and near the cloak. These cracks are related to a pentimento and show up dark in the X-ray image.

This painting, executed mainly in muted colours, displays a striking concentration of light on the main figure. Its lit parts are carefully modelled with relatively thin paint in virtually even flesh tones over a somewhat more pastose paint – possibly of the underpainting – in which brushstrokes are clearly visible. Reflections of light in the shadows indicated in sometimes relatively long strokes reinforce the suggestion of plasticity, and blurred contours lend the nude figure an atmospheric quality. A surprising element is the minutely painted, strongly contrasting eyes with their large pupils in deep black. There is no reason to suppose that this black was added by a later hand. Details of the fabrics and metal objects to either side of Bathsheba are strongly emphasised. For instance, bold whitish and yellowish, thickly applied light accents enhance the knobbed decorations of the metal vessels painted in greys and ochre yellow. Almost the entire surface of the Orien-

Fig. 1. Panel 55.4 x 74.5 cm

tal carpet and Bathsheba's gold brocade cloak are painted with small dots and dabs of paint in various colours and provided with yellow white highlights to indicate the fall of the folds. The face of the old woman turning away from the light and flatly painted in a brownish flesh colour is enlivened by a highlight on her spectacles indicated with a thin yellow line. Her light-catching head scarf is painstakingly modelled, as is the dark violet garment with carefully applied light purple and grey highlights. Light accents consisting of little streaks and lines are also found on the edges of the stone steps. The mass of rocks to the right is fairly thinly painted with the exception of a lit part against which the peacocks, predominantly rendered in browns, stand out darkly.

Given the condition of the painting described above, it is difficult to evaluate the execution of the background. The dark part of the sky was painted in a second stage, as blue shines through locally in the craquelure (see also *Radiography* and *Comments*).

Radiography

In the X-radiograph Bathsheba's body shows up light. The face shows up in its present position, but traces of an earlier, probably more frontal version can be detected. The sleeve of the white chemise lying over Bathsheba's thigh shows up extremely light, as do the folds around the supporting hand. Evidently, the light paint was applied there particularly thickly. The highest lights of the cloak also show up light. In the area of the corner of the stone bench can be seen a light vertical strip, which may be the hanging sleeve of a garment in an earlier stage. To the right of this, precisely at the present right boundary of the cloak, there shows a vertical stroke of paint whose significance is not clear; in the course of execution, it was cov-

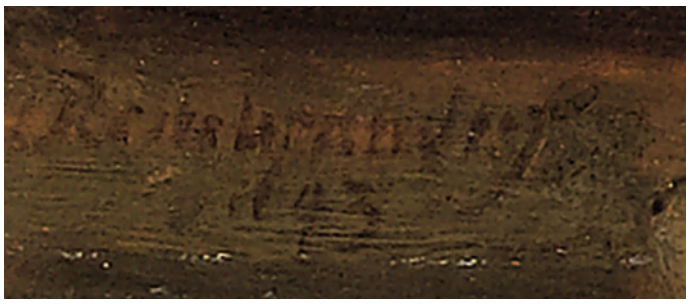
Fig. 2. X-Ray

ered with paint in such a fashion that shrinkage cracks have occurred. The X-radiograph displays an almost vertical row of small spots showing up light to the left of Bathsheba, just above the jug. These are related to a depression on the back of the panel which has been levelled with radio-absorbent filling material.

It seems as if the sky initially occupied a larger share of the landscape in the background and that the reserve for the building at the left was significantly smaller than in the final execution. The radioabsorbency of the sky is patchy and does not display the progression from light to dark found in the paint surface, indicating that the dark part of the sky must have been painted during a second stage. The contour of the reserve for the area behind Bathsheba, now formed by a virtually vertical, somewhat overgrown cliff face, was, according to the X-radiograph, originally more agitated, as if more vegetation had been planned there. The domed tower in the background does not show up as darkly as one would expect and was probably not reserved in this form in the sky. In any case, the radio-absorbent paint of the sky to the left of the tower extends to the relatively vague reserve of the palace on top of which King David stands. While the shape of a small figure on upper terrace of the palace is clearly visible, it is not congruent with the present one: the figure in the X-radiograph is set lower and is smaller in scale. Diagonally to the right and below is the reserve of the palace, which displays two more or less clearly bordering bulges which may also be considered as reserves for figures, possibly other versions of David. The numbers 297 show up in the upper left corner, an inventory number painted on the paint layer.

Infrared reflectography revealed underdrawing in brush near the edge of the cliff face.[4]

Fig. 3. Detail with signature (enlarged)



Signature

On the vertical surface of the stone steps on which the old woman sits, in brown paint: <*Rembrandt. ft/1643*> (fig. 3).

2. Comments

In our assessment of the New York *Toilet of Bathsheba*, the unsatisfactory condition of the paint has to be taken into account, primarily in the background and parts of the black maidservant. The consequences of the painting's condition for its appearance become clear when we compare the painting in its present state with the two oldest, 18th-century reproductive prints: an etching by Moreau of 1763, which largely agrees with a print by Le Grand from 1770-80, when the painting was in the Poullain collection (figs. 4, 5; see *4. Graphic reproductions*, 1 and 2). If we take these two reproductive prints at face value, there is far more clarity in the spatial construction and much greater detail, both in the trunks and foliage behind Bathsheba and in the background view, than is now evident in the painting. The loss of detail is such that a flat shape above the old woman's head, which in the reproductive prints appears to be a bare cliff face rising out of trees, has been interpreted by one modern author as a part of Bathsheba's bench 'in the shape of a long-necked animal, perhaps a sphinx or camel,'[5] and by another as a 'naturalistic camel'. [6]

In fact, we are dealing here with one of the comparatively rare instances where reproductive prints give us a fairly accurate idea of a painting's material history. An 1815 dated etching by Burnet gives the background quite another appearance, one which corresponds with the present state (fig. 6; see *4. Graphic reproductions*, 3) One has to assume that the painting was drastically restored with substantial overcleaning sometime between 1770/80 and 1815 – either in Paris when Lebrun owned the painting (see also I A 12, p. 156), or in London.

When judging the painting with a view to its attribution, the better preserved sections must be taken as the point of departure. These include the majority of the foreground along with the figures of Bathsheba and her old servant. As discussed in Chapter IV, comparison of this section with the reliable core of Rembrandt's paintings in the 1640s reveals fundamental differences. It is at once evident why several authors have contested this painting's position in Rembrandt's oeuvre. Gerson, observing that 'the style of the painting is not consistent' believed that 'Rembrandt rework[ed] an earlier painting by one of his pupils.'[7] While Tümpel considered the work in its entirety to be the work of a pupil,[8] other scholars,

Fig. 4. Etching by J.M. Moreau the Younger, 1763 (reproduced in reverse)

Fig. 5. Etching by A.C.S. Le Grand (reproduced in reverse)

Fig. 6. Etching by J. Burnet, 1815

Fig. 7. Rembrandt, *The Visitation*, 1640. Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Arts (III A 138)

Fig. 8. Detail of III A 138

Fig. 9. Detail of V 2

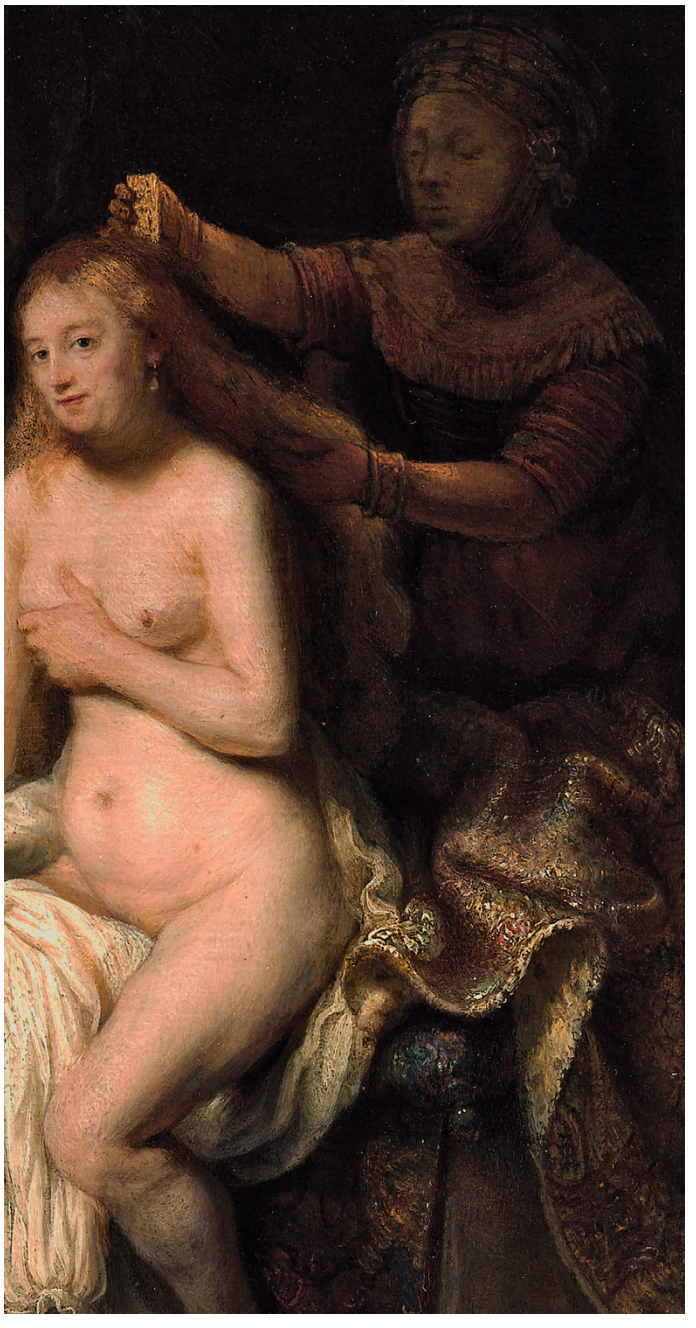


Fig. 10. Detail of III A 138

Fig. 11. Detail of V 2

including Eisler[9], Von Sonnenburg[10] and Sluijter,[10] continued to consider Rembrandt as its sole author. We are inclined to agree basically with Tümpel but, like Gerson, we also believe that Rembrandt's hand can be recognized in places.

In 2006 and 2007 there appeared two texts exhaustively devoted to the present painting: by Eric Jan Sluijter in his *Rembrandt and the female nude* (see note 10) and Walter Liedtke's entry in his *Dutch paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (see note 2). These two texts offer views, which only exceptionally accord with our own. Both authors consider the painting to be an autograph work by Rembrandt. According to Sluijter, it could have originated in two stages, a suggestion which partially coincides with Gerson's view except that Sluijter is inclined to accept that both stages were executed by Rembrandt. Sluijter: 'I am (…) inclined to accept this painting as wholly by Rembrandt's own hand. The difference in the rather free execution of the body [of Bathsheba] and the detailed technique of the surrounding area might point to the fact that Rembrandt repainted the body in 1643, and the rest of the painting dates from the mid-thirties.'[11] Liedtke had already spoken out in favour of the painting's authenticity. In his entry from 2007, reacting to our own conviction (which is defended below) that the New York *Bathsheba* is a free variant on *Susanna and the Elders* in Berlin in an early stage of that work's genesis, he encapsulates his view of the painting as follows: ' … what the comparison between the New York and Berlin paintings actually demonstrates is that they are by the same artist [Rembrandt], one whose fascination with female beauty, male desire, and the endless possibilities of artistic creation did not diminish in midcareer.'[12]

Notwithstanding its unmistakable Rembrandtesque character, in our view the painting manifests a singular want of pictorial cohesion in the better preserved parts and many weaknesses in the depiction of individual forms. The picture's weaknesses become apparent when it is compared with a work such as the *Visitation* in Detroit, dated 1640 (fig. 7; III A 138). This painting affords several correspondences in terms of motifs, summarized by Liedtke in a passage devoted to the relationship between the two paintings: 'Not only the peacocks and aspects of the setting in the *Visitation* but also two of the women in that painting anticipate motifs in the Bathsheba, in a manner suggesting rich imagination rather than repetition or borrowing.' We, however, understand the relationship between the two paintings very differently. If one compares the passages referred to by Liedtke, one cannot but note a dramatic and intrinsic difference in quality (figs. 8 and 9; figs. 10 and 11). In those parts of the painting – and indeed in all other parts of the painting – the *Visitation* witnesses to an exceptional skilfulness in the characterization of forms and in having achieved an evocation of space and a suggested plasticity with a sovereign control and with anatomical accuracy. Also, when one takes into consideration the condition of the head of the black servant in the *Bathsheba*, there is an inadequate and anxious stiffness which, in our opinion, precludes the possibility that the two paintings could have been produced by the same hand. This can also be said if the pairs of peacocks in the two paintings are compared: a sublime characterization of the pair of peacocks and their chicks in the *Visitation* – an example of Rembrandt at his best as a drawer and painter of birds and beasts. This may be compared with the unsatisfactory modeling of the two peacocks in the present painting. One could object that in this case the two birds are silhouetted against a light background. That is, however, also the case with the male peacock in the *Visitation*; but how much more sensitive and anatomically attentive are the contours of the head, neck and back of the bird in that painting.

Seen by itself, the handling of the nude figure of Bathsheba is characterized by a certain subtlety. But when one compares this Bathsheba with Rembrandt's handling of the nude figures in the two paintings of *Susanna* (III A 117 and V 1), the posture and the proportions of this nude figure are as a whole weak (see also Chapter IV figs. 19 and 20). The strongly contrasting eyes constitute an intriguing element in the careful modelling and sfumato-like treatment of the figure of Bathsheba. For a detailed analyses of the differences between the two paintings, which in our view are fundamental, see Chapter IV, pp. 294-301.

Gerson's suggestion, that the present painting represents a pupil's work retouched by Rembrandt, would seem only to apply to the left leg of Bathsheba. The most important reason for thinking that Rembrandt intervened in the execution of this leg is the marked difference in the rendering of the skin here compared with other parts of Bathsheba's naked body. In the latter, the author of the painting has applied a relatively simple modelé, with mainly warm, yellowish brown shadows on a predominantly pinkish, scarcely differentiated flesh tone, whereas the complex modelé of the left leg has been achieved with a wealth of subtle nuances of warm and cool tones suggested with brushstrokes in a manner that is, as far as they are visible, characteristic of Rembrandt. A comparison of the figure of Bathseba in the present painting with the Susanna in the Berlin *Susanna and the Elders* (V 1) emphasises overall (apart from Bathsheba's left leg) the relative lack of the subtle interplay between warm and cool tones that is so characteristic of Rembrandt's rendering of human flesh (compare also Chapter IV figs. 27 and 28).

The attention to detail in the metal vessels and fabrics on either side of the figure of Bathsheba makes a disproportionate impression due to excessive use of pronounced highlights and light accents. The old woman at Bathsheba's feet is characterised by a somewhat unimaginative detailing that affords neither an arresting suggestion of the construction of light and dark, nor of light reflections such as Rembrandt would certainly have used in this situation. Finally, comparing the manner in which highlights are applied to the steps, or how draperies and peacock feathers are depicted, one realises how much richer the rendering of such motifs is in the Detroit *Visitation* and *mutatis mutandis* in the Berlin *Susanna*. The *Bathsheba* appears to have been conceived as an assemblage of somewhat formulaic shapes which lacks pictorial unity. For a further comparative study of the style and quality of this painting (see Chapter IV, pp. 294-301).

Fig. 12. P. Lastman, *Bathsheba*, 1619, panel 41.5 x 61.5 cm. St Petersburg, The Hermitage Museum

Fig. 13. Caraglio after Raphael, *Roxana and Alexander, c.* 1535, engraving 22.3 x 30.8 cm

It is unlikely that the painting is a literal workshop copy of a lost prototype by Rembrandt; the fairly substantial changes in the figure of Bathsheba and elsewhere can, in a certain sense, be taken as signs of original invention. But that is not to say that prototypes by Rembrandt and other artists may not have been followed. In addition to the motifs in Rembrandt's above-mentioned *Visitation* in Detroit, the painter of the New York *Bathsheba* also relied – in fact, relied more heavily – on the *Susanna and the Elders* in Berlin. That painting is indeed dated to 1647, but as explained in V 1 it must have been present in Rembrandt's workshop in various stages of completion from *c.* 1638 onward (and therefore in 1643, the date inscribed on the *Bathsheba* painting discussed in this entry). In one of its earlier stages, quite possibly a stage which Rembrandt considered to be finished, the Susanna painting was copied by a pupil in a tonal drawing using chalk and ink wash (see V 1 fig. 3). The reliability of that copy is corroborated by the fact that the differences between the drawing in question and the finished *Susanna* can be traced in the X-radiograph of that painting in its finished state (see V 1 *Radiography* and *Comments*). The correspondences between the New York *Bathsheba* and the *Susanna* in its earlier state (as recorded in the drawn copy) are so striking that one has to assume that the painter of the *Bathsheba* must have based himself on that version of the *Susanna*. Thus there are remarkable correspondences in the foreground of the scene being enacted: the stones leading to a pool, a block-shaped elevation constituting part of the garden architecture, with Bathsheba's clothes laid on it (and on which she is seated in the New York painting). In the genesis of the *Susanna*, it seems that this setting was planned from the outset.

A direct comparison of the New York *Bathsheba* and the Berlin *Susanna* also draws attention to several features which decisively corroborate the proposition that the painter of the *Bathsheba* based himself on the *Susanna*. Perhaps this is most clearly seen in the draperies. The light yellow highlights that enliven the brownish draperies to the right of the main figure in the *Bathsheba* were also present in the *Susanna* at an earlier stage. As seen in the Budapest drawing (see V 1, fig. 3), Susanna's cloak originally had a different form and was concomitantly draped differently. Thanks to microscopic investigation of the paint in the relevant part of the painting, we know the colour of that earlier appearance. Originally, Susanna's cloak was yellow-brown with light yellow highlights, just as in the *Bathsheba*. Only at a later stage did Rembrandt give this cloak its present deep red colour. Surprisingly, the changes introduced in the background of the New York painting reflect specific modifications introduced by Rembrandt in the background of the Berlin *Susanna*. This observation raises the suspicion that the pupil who painted the *Bathsheba* observed and partially followed the master's interventions in the *Susanna* whilst simultaneously working on his own painting. In the *Susanna* as well as in the *Bathsheba*, the sky initially occupied a significantly larger surface area with less space reserved for the buildings. Moreover, the sky in both paintings was first blue; in the *Susanna*, this was replaced by a grey sky; a change that was also introduced in the upper section of the sky in the *Bathsheba*. Should the *Bathsheba* indeed date from 1643, as is indicated by the inscription on the painting, it would represent an important additional document for the reconstruction of the genesis of the *Susanna*.

The close relationship between the genesis of the *Bathsheba* painting under discussion here and that of the Berlin *Susanna* provides further arguments against an attribution of the *Bathsheba* to Rembrandt. These arguments are strengthened by the fact that this relation between the two paintings fits a phenomenon frequently observed in Rembrandt's workshop whereby many of Rembrandt's works have one or more 'satellites', i.e. works produced by pupils that are based on Rembrandt's prototypes. This may involve copies of an entire composition by Rembrandt or merely parts of it, but also free variants on Rembrandt's works. Chapter III looks at this phenomenon in depth.[13] Free variants on a work, however, need not necessarily be representations of the identical subject. In 1678 Samuel van Hoogstraten advised prospective artists to depict a subject different than the model when following 'eens anders goede ordening' (a good composition by another [artist]). As an example, Van Hoogstraten mentioned Virgil, who based his *Aeneid* on Homer's *Odyssey*.[14] We know that the young Rembrandt himself had used compositions by other painters, for example by his teacher

Fig. 14. Formerly ascribed to Rembrandt, I. Jouderville?, *Bathsheba at her toilet,* etching 12.4 x 9.4 cm (B. 127[II])

Fig. 15. Rembrandt School, *Bust of a woman*, 1643, panel 74 x 50 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (Br. 109)

Lastman,[15] in this fashion (see I A 9). As appears from the relationship between the *Bathsheba* and the *Susanna* outlined above, there is every indication that he also encouraged his pupils to paraphrase his own work in a similar way (see Chapter II).

In looking for other possible sources that the painter of the New York *Bathsheba* could have used, Sluijter and others have suggested two paintings by Lastman, the Petersburg Hermitage *Bathsheba* from 1619 (fig. 12) and the Berlin *Susanna* of 1614 (V 1 fig. 14). However, the relationship between these two works and the New York *Bathsheba* are hardly relevant to the question of possible prototypes on which the painter of the present work could have based himself. A more obvious suggestion – also entertained by Sluijter as a possibility – is that he may have referred back to an engraving by Jacopo Caraglio after Raphael's *Roxana and Alexander* for the position of Bathsheba, as Golahny suggested in 1984 (fig. 13). On the other hand, the type and the attitude of the old woman would seem to derive from this figure in Rembrandt's lost *Bathsheba* from *c.* 1632 (see II C 45) as reproduced in an etching previously attributed to Rembrandt, now tentatively attributed to Jouderville, one of several reproductions of this painting (fig. 14).

The identity of the painter of the work under discussion cannot as yet be determined with any certainty. We can, however, point to a few striking correspondences in the handling of paint, texture and treatment of the bare skin with another presumed shopwork, also dated 1643, the *Bust of a woman* in Berlin (fig. 15; Br. 109) The kinship between the two paintings is considerably reinforced – perhaps even too suggestively – by the fact that both figures almost appear to be derived from the same model.

One remarkable aspect of Rembrandt's teaching and workshop practice that has gradually revealed itself more clearly is that paintings which we consider to be works produced by pupils – 'satellites' of Rembrandt's prototypes (*principaelen*) – could in turn have been used by other pupils as points of departure for their own copies or variants (see for instance V 5). In our view, this is also the case with the *Bathsheba*, now in the Utrecht Museum Catharijneconvent (fig. 16) which, as first noted by Golahny, is based on the New York painting.[16] Golahny considered the Utrecht painting to be a work by the Weesp painter Gijsbert Sibilla. Sumowski, who initially also attributed the Utrecht *Bathsheba* to Sibilla,[17] subsequently catalogued it as 'Rembrandt school'. Sumowski rightly noted that the Utrecht *Bathsheba* also betrays knowledge of Rembrandt's *Susanna* of 1638-47 (V 1). He observed distinct similarities in the background and in the hanging cloak.[18] In addition to those noted by Sumowski, there are further similarities one might also mention. For instance, there is the bag of the maidservant behind Bathsheba in the Utrecht painting, which resembles the bag of the left Elder in the Berlin *Susanna*. Secondly, the woman at Bathsheba's feet in the Utrecht painting appears to be directly borrowed from a print, previously attributed to Rembrandt, after a lost painting by Rembrandt (fig. 14). Thirdly, the large tree and the way it is placed before the tower are obviously derived from the comparable passage in the second stage of the genesis of the *Susanna*, which Rembrandt changed

Fig. 16. Rembrandt School, *Bathsheba*, panel 54 x 71 cm. Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent, on loan from the Instituut Collectie Nederland

in the final stage of the Berlin picture. Thus the Utrecht painting, like the New York one, contains elements of Rembrandt's *Susanna and the Elders* in its second stage, and therefore it is not at all unlikely that the Utrecht painting originated from Rembrandt's workshop, even though the execution and the rather clumsy proportions of the figures might not, at first sight, lead one to think so.

Another Rembrandtesque painting now in Glasgow, *The painter and his model* (fig. 17; Br. 436), which was earlier considered as a work by Rembrandt and even as a preliminary study for the New York *Bathsheba*,[19] must also have relied on the present painting.

Situating the New York *Bathsheba* in Rembrandt's workshop production is more complicated than in the case of those other paintings allegedly by Rembrandt that have been disattributed by us. First of all, there is the suspicion that with the execution of the left leg Rembrandt has introduced a major correction in the work of a pupil. Then there are the signature and date, which give no immediate reason for doubting that the inscriptions were added by Rembrandt. Finally, there is the fact that the painting seems to have served as a prototype for other paintings that apparently originated in Rembrandt's workshop. In the light of all this, the question of what *is* a Rembrandt, or more precisely, what Rembrandt himself considered as a 'Rembrandt', only becomes more complicated. That, however, does not relieve us from the task we set ourselves of trying to unravel the problem of a possible division of hands in Rembrandt's workshop.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

1. Etching by Jean Michel Moreau the Younger (Paris 1741 - 1814) with the inscription: *Rembrandt Pinxit. – J.M. Moreau Sculp. / David & Bethzabée / d'après le Tableau Original de Rembrandt, qui est dans la Galerie de S.E.Mgr.le Comte de Bruhl, / Premier Ministre de S.M. le Roi de Pologne, Electr. de Saxe: Haut de 1.Pied 9.Pouces, sur 2. Pieds 3.Pouces de large* [= 53.8 x 65.1 cm!] (fig. 4).
Probably there is a state dated 1763, as is given by A. von Wurzbach.[20] Reproduces the painting in reverse, with the exception of the signature which is in the same direction as in the original. The background in the etching is far more richly

Fig. 17. Rembrandt School, *The painter and his model*, panel 51 x 61 cm.
Glasgow, Art Gallery and Museums (Br. 436)

detailed and therefore more spatially distinct than in the painting in its present state. Even assuming that the printmaker lent a graphic clarity to certain parts that was not present to the same extent in the painting, it is obvious that the trees and the view in the distance have since lost much detail. There is one piquant deviation from the painting. While in the painting Bathsheba's pubic area is covered by the shirt lying over her right thigh, in the print it is left uncovered. This is not the case in the prints mentioned below, which raises the suspicion that the painting might have been 'purified' after 1763. However, neither the paint surface, nor the X-radiography support this supposition. The craquelure pattern in the relevant passage is so homogenous that there is no question of an adjustment having been made by a later hand. Moreover, there is no trace of the decorated trim indicating the edge of the fabric near the groin in the print by Moreau.

2. Etching by Auguste Claude Simon Le Grand (Paris 1765 - after 1815) with the inscription: *Rembrandt Pinx. – Le Grand Sc. / Du Cabinet de Mr.Poullain* (fig. 5). Reproduces the painting in reverse. While it is generally somewhat less richly detailed than the much larger etching by Moreau discussed above, this one also displays an undeniably far more extensively detailed background than the painting in its present state. There is every reason to suppose that this print was made independently of no. 1. Not only is it also in reverse, but many details differ in shape.

3. Etching by John Burnet F.R.S. (Musselburgh near Edinburgh 1784 – Stoke Newington near London 1868) with the inscription: *Balneum Bathshebae / Rembrandt pinxit 1643 / Burnet fecit 1815 – Alexandro Oswald Armigero Bonarum Artium admiratori egregio, hanc Tabulam in Testimonium Amicitiae D.D.Q. / Andreas Geddes / Joannes Burnet et Boydell Sociique excudebant Londini – Ad Picturam celeberrimam antea / Thesauro Comitis de Bruhl asservatam / nunc autem penes Andream Geddes* (fig. 6). Reproduces the painting in the direction of the original. The print is quite evidently not after one of the above-mentioned prints given that it clearly reproduces the painting in approximately its present state: the entire background has a far flatter appearance and in the sky are differences in tonality that correspond with tonal gradations in the painting, which are connected with pentimenti (see *Radiography*) that previously were not visible.

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance

– Possibly coll. Willem Six (1662-1733), sale Amsterdam 12 May 1734 (Lugt 441), no. 56: 'De Historie van Badseba, door Rembrand van Ryn' (265 guilders to Hoogenberg) (Hoet I, p. 413).
– Coll. Van Zwieten, sale The Hague 12 ff April 1741 (Lugt 537), no. 136: 'Batseba wiens haar gekampt en wiens voeten gewassen werden, door twee Vrouws personen seer ongemeen door den selve [Rembrand van Ryn]. Hoog 1 v. 9 d., breed 2 v. 5 d. [= 54.8 x 75.8 cm; using the Rhineland measure of 12 inches to the foot]' (Bathsheba, her hair combed and her feet washed by two female persons, highly unusual by the same.) (350 guilders to De Hond) (Hoet II, p. 21, no. 130).
– Coll. Comte de Brühl, Dresden (1763).
– Coll. Poullain, sale Paris 15-21 March 1780 (Lugt 3106), no. 37: 'Rembrandt Van-Rhyn. David regardant de la terrasse de son palais Bethsabé qui sort du bain. Elle est assise sur un siége couvert d'un riche tapis & placé sur les degrés qui descendent au bain. Une vieille femme est à ses pieds, & lui coupe les ongles: derrière elle un Esclave Maure peigne ses cheveux: à ses côtés sont un pot, une jatte & un collier: plus loin on voit un paon. Dans le fond du tableau, s'offre le palais du Roi & un paysage. Un coup de Soleil éclaire la scène. Si la correction du dessin & un choix noble de figures n'ont pas été le partage de Rembrandt, il nous en dédommage par un effet & une harmonie qui distinguent ses ouvrages de ceux des autres Peintres. Hauteur 20 pouc. 6 lign. Largeur 28 pouc. [= 55,4 x 75,6 cm]. Ce morceau vient du Cabinet du Comte de Brulh, Ministre du Roi de Pologne.' (2400 francs to Le Brun).
– Coll. Le Brun, sale Paris 11-23 April 1791 (Lugt 4705), no. 53: 'Rembrandt van Ryn. David regardant Bethsabée qui sort du bain;…. Hauteur, 20 pouces 6 lignes; largeur, 28 pouces. Il vient de la vente de M. Poullain, où il fut vendu 2400 liv. no. 37 de notre catalogue. Il est gravé en grand par M. Moreau, et en petit dans le recueil Poullain. B.' (bought in for 1000 francs).
– Coll. Alexis Delahante, sale London 2-3 June 1814 (Lugt 8530), 1st day no. 25 (£ 105 to Geddes).
– Coll. Andrew Geddes, 1815 (see *4. Graphic Reproductions*, 3).
– Coll. Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), sale London (Christie's) 15 May 1830 (Lugt 12373), no. 120 (£ 157.10. to Smith).
– [Coll. G.J. Vernon], sale London (Christie's) 15-16 April 1831 (Lugt –), 2nd day, no. 48 (£ 160.13 to Emmerson).
– Coll. Thomas Emmerson, sale London 15-16 June 1832 (Lugt 13018), 2nd day no. 135 (£ 252 to Phillips).
– Coll. Colonel de Biré, Brussels (sale under the name of Héris), sale Paris 25-26 March 1841 (Lugt 16137), no. 6 (7880 francs).
– Coll. Baron Steengracht van Oosterland, The Hague (1859-before 1883).
– Coll. Baron H.A. Steengracht van Duivenvoorde, The Hague (1883-1913); sale Paris 9 June 1913, no. 61 (1.000.000 francs to Duveen).
– Coll. Benjamin Altman, New York in 1913 who gave it in the same year to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

NOTES

1. Gerson 213; Br.-Gerson 513.
2. For a survey of the various references to the painting, including opinions expressed as to its (partial) attribution to Rembrandt, see W. Liedtke, *Dutch paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York 2007, cat. 149, esp. pp. 613 and 622/23.
3. Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt/not Rembrandt* I 1995/96, p. 61.
4. Op. cit.[3], cat. no. 10, esp. figs. 126, 127.
5. A. Golahny, 'Rembrandt's early Bathsheba: the Raphael connection', *Art Bull.* 65 (1983), pp. 671-675, esp. 673.
6. C. Eisler, 'Rembrandt and Bathsheba', *Essays in Northern European Art presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on his sixtieth birthday*, Doornspijk 1983, pp. 84-88, esp. 86.
7. Op. cit.[1]
8. Tümpel 1986, cat. no. A1.
9. Eisler, op. cit.[6], p. 86.
10. Op. cit.[3], cat. no. 10; see also E.J. Sluijter, *Rembrandt and the female nude*, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 345-348; Liedtke, op. cit.[2].
11. Sluijter, op. cit.[10], p. 345.
12. Liedtke, op. cit.[2], pp. 617-618.
13. See also E. van de Wetering, '"Principaelen" and satellites' in *Rembrandt? The master and his workshop*, exhib.cat. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen 2006, pp. 106-122; M. Franken, 'Learning by imitation: copying paintings in Rembrandt's workshop', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, Amsterdam/Berlin 2006, pp. 153-177.
14. S. van Hoogstraeten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*, Rotterdam 1678, pp. 192-193.
15. B.P.J. Broos, 'Rembrandt and Lastman's Coriolanus: the history piece in 17th-century theory and practice', *Simiolus* 8 (1976), pp. 199-228.
16. Golahny, op. cit.[5], esp. p. 674.
17. Sumowski *Gemälde* I, p. 87 note 58.
18. Sumowski *Gemälde* VI, no. 2503 as Rembrandt school.
19. G. Knuttel, 'On the Bathseba of Rembrandt in the Metropolitan Museum, New York', *Actes du XVIIme Congrès International d'Histoire de l'Art. Amsterdam 23-31 juillet 1952*, The Hague 1955, pp. 421-424.
20. A. von Wurzbach, *Niederländisches Künstler-Lexikon* II, Vienna/Leipzig 1910, p. 446.

V 3 Rembrandt – Christ and the woman taken in adultery 1644

LONDON, THE NATIONAL GALLERY, INV. NO. NG 45

HDG 104; BR. 566; BAUCH 72; GERSON 208; TÜMPEL 63

1. Introduction and description

When Rembrandt's *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* appeared on the art market in England in 1807, a discussion concerning its quality (recorded in the diary of J. Farington) ensued among connoisseurs. From Farington's notes it appears that some of his contemporaries even doubted the picture's authenticity.[1] Just as the painting then evidently did not conform with everybody's idea of Rembrandt's style, today too it remains somewhat isolated in the generally accepted image of Rembrandt's art. While its meticulous execution is closest to the work of the early Rembrandt, the conception of form and space and the relatively static composition are far removed from it.

Fortunately, however, external evidence supporting the painting's authenticity is so strong that all doubt can be excluded. Such instances, certainly in Rembrandt's production of the 1640s, are extremely welcome because they make it possible to delineate the artistic range of his autograph oeuvre with greater accuracy.

The subject of the painting is derived from John 8:2-8. In the morning, when Christ was instructing the people in the temple, the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to him who had been caught committing adultery. They asked him whether the woman should be stoned to death as dictated by the laws of Moses. Christ answered this trick question as follows: 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.'

The main group situated on the various levels of a stairway in the foreground of a vast, tall and mostly tenebrous space is picked out by a brilliant shaft of light streaming in from the upper left. Christ stands just left of centre while to his left is a bearded man with a cane wearing simple clothing and barefoot like Christ, who may be identified as the apostle Peter. Facing them and kneeling on the step is a weeping woman, richly garbed, whose veil is raised by a scribe with a long beard and wrapped in a dark cloak standing next to Christ. Turning to Christ, he presents the woman with his right hand. Behind Christ and St Peter can be seen a number of figures, presumably apostles. Standing behind the kneeling woman to the right are scribes and Pharisees, mostly dressed in luxurious and exotic clothing, and a soldier with a helmet, cuirass and a staff holding a lappet of the woman's cloak. Visible directly to his right is the head of a bearded man with a tall black headdress raising his index finger to his lips. This group is closed off at the right by an old man with a white beard and a red beret, and a man in a red cloak, a feathered turban and a sword. Most of the figures look at Christ as if in anticipation of his answer.

To the right of the main group, before the wall of a tall dais with blind niches and pilasters, three figures – an old man leaning on a crutch, an old woman behind him at the left, and a seated woman who appears to be weeping – are set in half shadow somewhat apart from the main group. To the left of and equally far away from the main group is another group, of which the figures closest to the front and seen from the back – the woman with a child in her arms – are still just in the light; a bit further back a woman pulls a child by the arm. They belong to the crowd climbing up the stairs at the left that lead to the monumental dais. A number of them have already reached it and many kneel with their hands clasped. A ceremony is taking place on the dais. On a red carpeted elevation the high priest sits on a fancifully shaped gold throne with an exceptionally tall decorated back, his cloak spreading out far behind him. Before the elevation are two gleaming golden columns framing an altar before which kneel a man and a woman dressed in red. Between the columns and on the other side of the altar can be seen a figure dressed in bright clothing who appears to be holding a dish in one hand – presumably a priest making an offering. Between this figure and the high priest stands a man with a book before him in which he seems to be writing. Facing him, before the elevation and seen from the back, is a temple servant with a long staff and a censer. Finally, at the right sits an old man with a black cap.

Above the dais is an immense baldachin from which hang dark red curtains to either side of the throne. Looming behind in the semi-darkness is a cluster of columns. The right one turns into an arch, while from the left one runs a wall, along the base of which are two objects resembling sarcophagi.

Working conditions

Examined in May 1968 (B.H., E.v.d.W.) and October 1988 (E.v.d.W.): out of the frame and in good daylight, with the aid of an infrared photograph and an X-ray mosaic, both covering the entire surface of the painting.

Support

Oak panel, grain vertical, 83.8 x 65.4 cm. Thickness *c.* 1.6 cm. Single plank. The panel is bevelled on the back on all four sides. Both top corners are rounded; as MacLaren already concluded, this was done later. This can be inferred from the fact that the paint has crumbled at the edge and brushstrokes are abruptly broken off here. Moreover, neither the bevelling nor a more or less continuous black border painted round the image follow the rounded corners. The panel may have originally been rectangular, even though a drawing formerly attributed to Rembrandt (see fig. 9) and probably done in his workshop, shows a depressed rounded top.[2] Two parallel cracks can be detected beginning at the middle of the upper edge of the panel, the longer righthand one extending down to the left of the capital of the taller pillar in the background. Two dovetail joints have been applied on the back of the panel to secure this crack.

Dendrochronological investigation yielded the following results. Radial board. To the right of the core of the trunk, 235 annual rings of heartwood were measured, to the left of the core of the trunk, 220 annual rings of heartwood were measured. The wood is from the same tree as four panels with paintings by Rembrandt: the panel to which is affixed the enlarged canvas of the Berlin *John the Baptist preaching* of *c.* 1634/35 (III A 106), and those of the Rotterdam *Portrait of Aletta Adriaensdr.* of 1639 (III A 132), the New York *Portrait of Herman Doomer* of 1640 (III A 140) and the *Self-portrait* of *c.* 1640 in the

Fig. 1. Panel 83.8 x 65.4 cm

Fig. 2. X-Ray

Fig. 3. Infrared photograph

Thyssen-Bornemisza collection (IV 2). Thanks to supplementary investigation by Dr P. Klein, the felling date of this tree can now be determined fairly precisely. The panel of the *Portrait of Aletta Adriaensdr.* contains 7 sapwood rings; the youngest heartwood ring was formed in 1614. Regarding the sapwood statistic of Eastern Europe, an earliest felling date can be derived for the year 1623, however a felling date between 1627…1629…1633 is more probable. With a minimum of a 2 years storage time an earliest creation of the painting is possible from 1625 upwards. Under the assumption of a median of 15 sapwood rings and a minimum of a 2 years storage time a creation is plausible from 1631 upwards.[3]

Ground

A light tint shows through in the transparent parts and forms the base tint of the gilded throne.

The ground consists of a layer of chalk, probably with glue as a binding medium, over which is a *primuersel* (a primary coat) of lead white with yellowish-brown earth pigment with linseed oil as a binding medium; the lead white has lumped into nodules. The ground layers are extremely thin, as appears from the X-radiograph and a cross-section, in a part of the background in the area of the pillar in the middle of the composition. The authors of *Art in the making* suggested as an explanation for this that the painter clearly needed the smoothest possible surface for such a highly finished painting.[4]

Paint layer

Condition: Generally good despite some wearing in the thin areas of the paint layer. Worn spots, for example in the figure seated to the right of the throne, have been retouched. Paint losses in the area of the two figures in the right foreground, according to the X-radiograph, have also been retouched.

Craquelure: A fine varnish craquelure pattern visible over virtually the entire surface of the painting hampers observation of the paint craquelure. Infrared photographs indicate fine cracks that have developed locally in the thinly painted areas, mainly in the dark paint. They are clearly related to the grain of the panel. No craquelure can be observed in the areas painted with lead white. A number of horizontal cracks in the ground and in the paint have arisen in the area of the knot in the panel, which also show up clearly in the X-radiograph. Vertical cracks in the paint can be discerned in the area of a figure covered by the light steps (see *Radiography*).

The execution of the painting is characterised by a differentiation between the lit foreground with the main subject, and the middle ground painted in predominantly warm brown, yellow and red tints. The group of Christ and the figures near him is rather thickly painted in generally indistinguishable brushstrokes. The most compact paint layer is found in the figure of the woman, in strongly illuminated heads and in details, such as the hands of the scribe showing the woman to Christ, the sleeves of the soldier (where the glimmers of light have been applied as elongated highlights) and the turban of the man in the right foreground. The execution of these figures is minutely detailed. This is coupled with a stunning variety of colour: warm purple brown in Christ's robe, yellows in the figure directly behind the woman, light sea-green in the sleeves of the soldier, strong light blue-green in the lit slipper of the woman and blue in her belt, and a bright burgundy in the two standing men in the right foreground. Corresponding colours are dispersed over the group situated further back at the left, including an opaque blueish green placed alongside muted red and red brown.

Detail decreases and the paint is more thinly applied in the figures as they recede. The little figures near the altar are sketched over the ground which shines through; areas filled in with dark paint here provide a differentiation in tonal values. A few of the elements to the front of the dais, such as the woman kneeling before the altar and the side of the elevation where the high priest is seated, are picked out in red. The figures of the high priest, the standing temple servant and the seated man at the far right are reserved in the area of the throne, painted more thickly and actively in ochre and white. However, they were given final form somewhat later as the paint of the figures locally overlaps that of the throne.

The baldachin with the curtains falling to either side of the throne is more summarily indicated partly with transparent reddish paint. A similar loose, almost nonchalant treatment characterises the architectural elements at the left. In the tallest pillar of the cluster of columns, red brown is thinly brushed, while dark greys distinguish the other pillars. Like the crowd of figures below, the image is built up primarily by reserving semi-transparent areas in more opaque darker ones. Accordingly, the dark space within the arch to the right of the cluster of columns is filled with a final layer of deep black, while the area to the left is a bit less dark and the paint slightly more transparent.

In general, the contours of the figures slightly overlap the parts further back. The reverse is encountered to the left of the figure in red wearing a turban in the foreground in connection with a pentimento. A discussion of the pentimenti also partially visible in the paint surface is found in *Radiography*. Red shimmering through the paint of the step below the adulterous woman is also related to these pentimenti.

As mentioned above in *Support*, the painted surface is edged by a more or less continuous black painted border, which may or may not be original. Interesting in this respect is that two other paintings from the 1640s also have similar black borders that at first sight do not appear to be authentic. It is possible that they were originally there, but as a consequence of being right on the edge were severely damaged and retouched or overpainted (see the New York *Toilet of Bathsheba* of 1643, V 2, and the St Petersburg *Holy Family* of 1645, V 4).

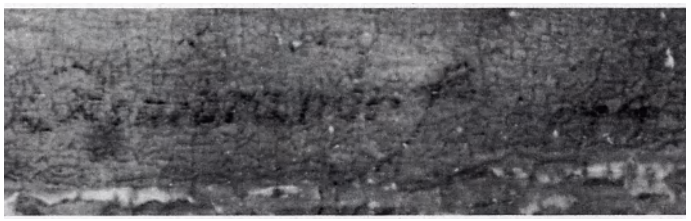
Radiography

The alterations in the conception of the painting are rather radical. The most interesting are interruptions in the stairs below the central group at the far left and in the middle. These interruptions must be read as reserves.

Fig. 4. Detail

Fig. 5. Detail

Fig. 6. Detail with signature (2 : 1)



These reserves, one of which is diagonally under the figure of Christ, and three others further to the left, can be interpreted as being for figures meant to be placed in the foreground. While the authors of *Art in the making* presume that these figures 'were never developed' (see note 4), the fact that in these places red shines through suggests that they were, indeed, further elaborated. Rembrandt used red for repoussoirs on a number of occasions (see for example *The stoning of St Stephen* of 1625 in Lyons, I A 1, or *The blinding of Samson* of 1636 in Frankfurt, III A 116). The radioabsorbency of the paint in the steps does not entirely coincide with the distribution of light in the present composition. For instance, neither Christ's feet nor the shadowed area to the left are reserved in this light zone. St Peter's feet and the woman holding the child by its hand at the far left in the middle ground penetrate the reserves visible in the X-radiographs. Perceptible in the infrared photograph at the far left are light lines and forms that do not correspond with the present surface and which are most likely related to the rejected repoussoir figures.

Various other pentimenti can be discerned in the X-radiographs and in the infrared photograph (figs. 2 and 3), as well as in the painted surface, a few of which were already noted by MacLaren (see note 2). The contour of Christ's head was originally somewhat higher and the fingers of the hand Christ holds up to his chest were most likely extended. The contour of the headdress of the man in yellow right behind the adulterous woman runs considerably higher (the X-radiograph here shows a light spot). The *profil perdu* of the man in the turban appears to have been shifted to the right in a later stage. Clearly visible in the X-radiograph are the forms of an old man who made way for the man in shadow a bit further back holding his index finger up to his lips.

Showing up in the X-radiograph at the far right in the area of the illuminated floor is the reserve for a now absent figure that is clearly discernible in the infrared photograph and vaguely visible in the paint surface (see note 4). The initial lay-out for the sitting woman in the group of three figures in the right middle ground can be seen in its entirety in the infrared photograph. The figure in profile which now partially conceals her was probably not yet in its present place in an earlier stage.

The knot in the panel just left of centre partly filled with a quantity of radioabsorbent material (and thus showing up clearly) was already mentioned above. To the right of the knot is an indistinct white area caused by the priming and interrupted by a dark spot, the borders of which create the impression that here the ground layers were scraped off. A similar, though smaller area is also visible to the left of the knot (see *Ground* and note 4).

Fig. 7. Salomon Koninck, *Christ among the doctors*, panel 84.5 x 71.5 cm. Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek

Signature

At the lower right, very small in dark paint: <*Rembrandt f 1644*> (fig.6).

2. Comments

This signed painting dated 1644 enjoyed a great reputation almost from its very inception. Admiration for a painting of Christ and the woman taken in adultery by Rembrandt is evident from the extremely high prices set on a work with this subject in the 17th and the early 18th century. Because of its virtually unbroken provenance, the London picture can be identified with this prized work with a degree of probability bordering on certainty (see *6. Provenance*). The supposition that the painting originated in Rembrandt's workshop gains strength from the fact that the panel is from the same tree as four others by Rembrandt from the period 1635-1642 (see *Support*). The substantial number of drawn and painted variants based on the London painting is indicative of its great impact both in Rembrandt's studio and in his circle. Before discussing this further, however, the genesis of the painting will be described. This testifies a mental and artistic process which, when compared to the genesis of other authentic paintings, proves characteristic for Rembrandt.

As appeared from the discussion of the X-radiograph and infrared material, radical changes were introduced in the course of work on the painting which document the artist's quest for a final solution for the grouping of his figures and how he modulated the organisation of space and light. It is primarily from the X-radiographs that conclusions can be drawn regarding the various stages of the

Fig. 8. Rembrandt, *Simeon in the Temple*, 1631. The Hague, Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Mauritshuis (I A 34)

composition. The most extensive change was the elimination of four figures in the bottom zone, now occupied by dark, only partially visible, very wide steps roughly parallel to the picture plane. From the reserves visible in the X-radiographs, three were near the lower left corner – the rightmost one overlapping the area where St Peter's feet now are – and the fourth under the Pharisee presenting the adulterous woman to Christ. Accompanying this change was a revision of the illumination of the stairs, which under the figure of Christ were originally lit over a substantial width. To gain an idea of the initial conception of the composition, we can look at Salomon Koninck's *Christ among the doctors* in Munich (fig. 7) which may have been inspired by the first stage of the painting under discussion. This work is dated to the mid-1640s and may have been begun before the London painting was altered.[5] In it two repoussoir figures are contrasted against the illuminated centre of the temple interior. By painting over the repoussoir figures in this work, emphasis is shifted to the open space in which a carefully staged shaft of light falls on the main actors and creates a contrast with the tenebrous middle ground. This also made room for the woman holding the child by the arm, presumably not initially planned there. In other places as well a differentiation between the lit foreground and the dusky middle ground seems to have occasioned changes. This is most clear in the man with the finger raised to his lips now in shadow to the right of the soldier, whose face according to the X-radiographs was originally fully illuminated. A change which seems to have taken place at the right can be considered as a reinforcement of the spatial differentiation. A standing figure at the far right vanished and the old man with a red cap was added behind the man with a turban (possibly as a replacement for the vanished figure) thereby allowing an unobstructed view of the wall of the dais.

The final result of these changes is a painting in which a novel treatment of light is used to accentuate the main group and, primarily with the help of the diagonal shaft of light, to link the standing Christ and the kneeling woman. The scene on the dais depicted on a far smaller scale (and thus at a considerable distance) in turn contributes greatly to the suggestion of the vastness of the dark temple interior and, as will be demonstrated below, constitutes an important formal and iconographic element. Numerous correspondences exist with earlier versions of the temple interior by Rembrandt. In some of these, motifs (such as the high position of the altar on the dais) are not from the Bible, but are probably based on Flavius Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* and *War of the Jews*.[6] In others, motifs such as the curtain (2 Chronicles 3:14), and the two pillars, called Jachin and Boaz, near the entrance (2 Chronicles 3:15-17) are biblical in origin. Related works include the Hague *Simeon in the Temple* of 1631 (fig. 8) and the preceding etching of the same subject of 1630 (B. 51), and primarily the 1635 etching of *Christ driving the moneychangers from the Temple* (B. 69, cf. I A 15 fig. 11) and the lost *Circumcision* that was delivered to Frederik Hendrik in 1646 (V 10) with cherubim all around 'the walls of the house' (as mentioned in 1 Kings 6:29 and Ezekiel 41:18) and where the main scene is very similar to that taking place on the dais in the London painting.

The deliberation involved in the illumination, which so effectively emphasises the main motif, and in the sophistication of the semi-shade and darkness used to suggest the remarkably imposing cavernous temple space in the *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* is reminiscent of the 13-year earlier Hague *Simeon in the Temple* in which, according to the X-ray images, the distribution of light and shade was fundamentally altered. A relationship with this painting has already been noted with regard to the detailed depiction of small-scale figures set in an immense space. Assuming that the signature and the 1644 date of the London painting disappeared when it was cleaned during the Second World War, the suggestion was even made that it dated from the early 1630s, like the Hague painting.[7] The date, however, is present and accounted for and, moreover, the style of the London painting differs from that of its Hague counterpart on a number of points. In fact, when the two are compared, stylistic properties of the London painting characteristic of Rembrandt's work in the 1640s surface all the more clearly. Broadly speaking, the contrast could be defined as that between a dynamic composition (the *Simeon in the Temple*) and a static one (the *Christ and the woman taken in adultery*). In the Hague painting, the pronounced linear perspective with its vanishing point to the left just beyond the picture plane helps create a well-organised spatial structure in which, however, the othogonal lines give rise to powerful diagonal tendencies. The spatial dynamics are further enhanced by the relatively large repoussoir-figures in the right foreground. The live-

Fig. 9. Rembrandt (?), *Christ and the woman taken in adultery*, black chalk, 12.2 x 9.1 cm (Ben. A 42). Munich, Graphische Sammlung

Fig. 10. Attr. to Rembrandt. *Young woman weeping*, *c.* 1644, black chalk, 15 x 13 cm (Ben. 535). Whereabouts unknown

liness of the main group of the *Simeon in the Temple* is created not only by means of the dramatic poses, gestures and turns of the figures, but also the restlessness of the drapery, and the subordination of local colour to the overall light effect, which is thus reinforced.

In the London painting, on the other hand, the role of linear perspective in the suggestion of space is negligible. No matter how clearly the figures and the architectural elements seem to be situated in the pictorial space, the spatial structure is subject to a horizontal thrust, enhanced by the frieze-like formation of the main group. Partly as a consequence of the predominantly static drapery folds, and naturally through the virtual absence of gestures and torsion of the relatively elongated bodies, the main group in the *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* is anything but dynamic. With their individual, carefully considered costumes with contrasting, sometimes powerful local colours, each of the figures appears to be described in a documentary fashion, as it were. Notwithstanding this, the painting is neither garish nor does it give a waxwork-like impression, because the organisation of light and shade and the predominantly brown-grey tonality of the whole again structure the image and lend it tranquillity.

The descriptive approach of a group of figures arranged as a frieze was a formula Rembrandt frequently employed in the 1640s. The '*Hundred Guilder Print*' of 1647/48 (B. 74) is one of the best examples of this tendency. On a smaller scale, this quiet formality is also found, for example, in the 1645 etching of *Abraham and Isaac* (B. 34). However, Rembrandt appears to have deliberately rejected the traditional repoussoir effect in the foreground when painting out the four repoussoir figures (documented in the X-radiograph; see also Chapter II, p. 223). It therefore seems that precisely in this painting he was investigating the possibility of moving further away from a compositional scheme already recommended by Karel van Mander.[8] Considered in this light, the London painting can be seen as a daring compositional venture. It is tempting, indeed, to view it as the artist's attempt to explore the potential of the new classicizing trend at the same time distancing himself from the dynamic stage direction of the former period.

Other works, both drawings and paintings, however, reflect the impact of this painting in Rembrandt's studio and circle. The only drawing in the group that depicts the entire painted composition is a small black chalk sketch in Munich (fig. 9; Ben. A 42), which Benesch considered an authentic drawing by Rembrandt. Wegner doubted the drawing's autograph status[9] and this view appears to be supported by a few sketches after other paintings by Rembrandt, two after the *Nativity* in Munich (V 11 figs. 8 and 9; Ben. 578 and 579), and two after the lost *Circumcision* (V 10 figs. 7 and 8; Ben. A 43 and A 43a), both of which were delivered to Stadholder Frederik Hendrik in 1646. The fairly uncontrolled, chaotic draughtsmanship in these sketches argues against an attribution to Rembrandt. These sketches, now in various collections, were made after completed paintings by Rembrandt and in the same period as the lat-

Fig. 11. Detail of fig. 1 (1:1)

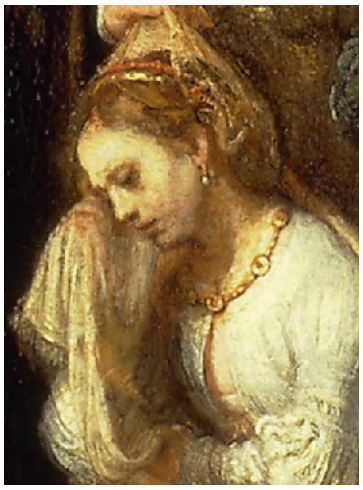
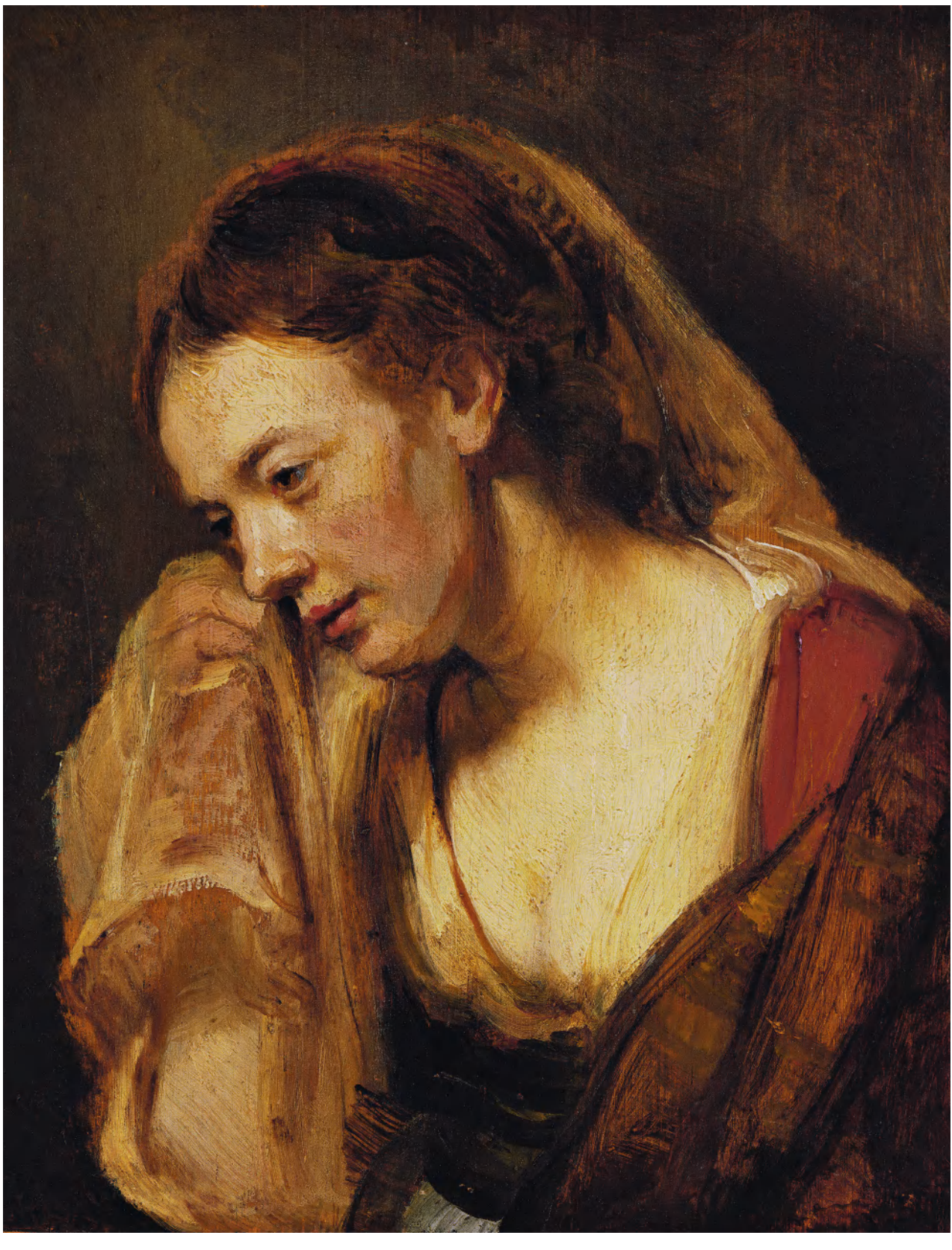


Fig. 12. Rembrandt, *Weeping woman*, *c.* 1644, panel 21.5 x 17 cm. Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Arts (Br. 366) (1:1)



ter, which suggests that they originated in Rembrandt's studio. Possibly they served to preserve the memory of the master's composition.

A drawing of the scene on the dais by a pupil now in Stockholm[10] broadly follows its model with only a few alterations. For example, the kneeling bearded man between the two pillars in the painting appears before the left pillar in the drawing so that the profile of his head is powerfully silhouetted against the light column. The various drawings of Christ and the woman taken in adultery deviate even more from this scene in the painting. While two of the drawings (Ben. 533 and Ben. 1047) do include

Fig. 13. Rembrandt workshop, *Young woman with a red necklace*, *c.* 1645, panel 21 x 17.5 cm. New York, N.Y., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Rita Markus (Br. 373)

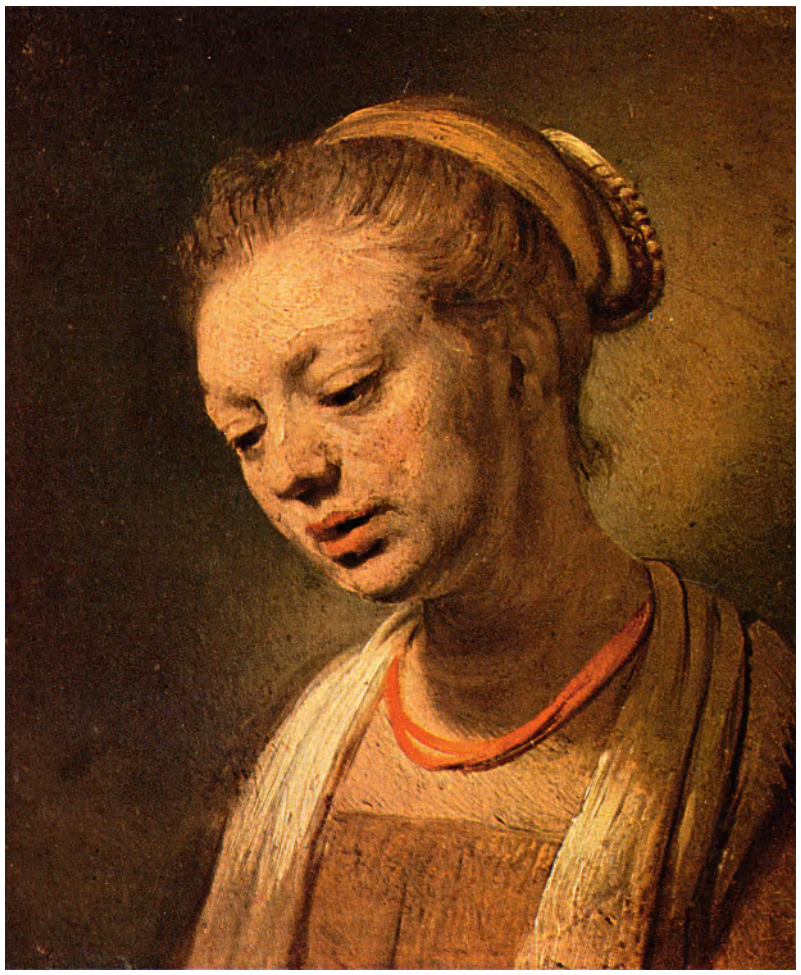


Fig. 14. S. van Hoogstraten, *Self-portrait*, 1644, panel 63 x 48 cm. The Hague, Museum Bredius

a dark group of figures in the foreground – like that found in an earlier stage of the painting – the depiction of the space and the placement of the figures differ so much from Rembrandt's painting that they cannot be considered either as copies of this earlier stage, or as preparatory drawings by Rembrandt himself as Benesch proposed for one of them (Ben. 533). While the possibility that such variants originated in Rembrandt's circle cannot be excluded, nor can it be assumed. In this connection it should be mentioned that one of these drawings (Ben. 1047) was done on the back of a funeral announcement of 1659, and thus could only have been made at least 15 years after completion of the painting.

The only drawing that can be related to the genesis of the painting is a red chalk *Study of a seated weeping woman* attributed to Rembrandt (present whereabouts unknown; fig. 10, Ben. 535), even though the resemblance is limited to the pose of the head and the arms. Like the chalk *Study of Susanna* (Ben. 590; V 1 fig. 12), it could have served as a figure study for the pose of the figure in the painting.

The connection between the painting dealt with here and a small panel with a weeping woman in Detroit (Br. 366, fig. 12; examined 18 September 1972 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.), again November 2005; for *Table of dendrochronological data* see *Corpus* IV, p. 657) was first discussed by MacLaren as recently as 1960.[11] Bredius, in his survey of Rembrandt's oeuvre, thought the painting was 'probably a preparatory study for a Lamentation'. But while Bredius took it to be an autograph work by Rembrandt, MacLaren saw 'what seems more probably a later derivation from it by another hand'. Gerson, who appears never to have seen the painting, judged that 'it seems to be a rather poor painting in the style of Gerbrand van den Eeckhout'.[12]

Bruyn included the Detroit painting in the category of small *tronies* that had long been considered preparatory studies from Rembrandt's hand.[13] All these works, Bruyn believed, could be dis-attributed from Rembrandt – if only because they all appeared to be by different hands.[14] The implicit claim carried by this assertion is that Rembrandt did not make preliminary studies, executed in oils, for figures in history pieces or other paintings. Such a conclusion would be somewhat rash, since among Rembrandt's works are paintings that have in the meantime been accepted as autograph works and that can be reliably and directly linked with his history pieces.[15] However, it is still recommended that the paintings disattributed as a group by Bruyn should be investigated, one by one, for the possibility that they might not after all have served as preliminary studies. This recommendation certainly applies to the *Weeping woman* in Detroit.

When Bruyn in 1991 disattributed this painting together

with the whole group of small, sketchy *tronies* he was repeating his earlier surmise, published in 1988, that Samuel van Hoogstraten could have been its author[16] Bruyn's argument for this attribution was based on the following reasoning. Firstly, he believed he could see that the Detroit painting was by the same hand as the *Young woman with a red necklace* in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (fig. 13).[17] He then claimed to see a relationship between the latter painting and the so-called *Self-portrait* by Samuel van Hoogstraten from 1644, a young man's head monogrammed *S.v.H.* and dated *16[4]4*, in The Hague, Museum Bredius (fig. 14).[18] In view of the monogram, it is highly probable that this latter painting is indeed a work by the 17-year-old Samuel van Hoogstraten and possibly a self-portrait. Taking these claims as his premises, by a two-step deductive inference Bruyn thought he could attribute the Detroit painting to Samuel van Hoogstraten, an attribution that has since been generally accepted. Bruyn's basic premises of his argument, however, are far from convincing.

To begin with, the differences in execution and quality between the Detroit sketch and the *Young woman with a red necklace* are so significant that one can exclude the possibility that these works were by the same hand (compare figs. 12 and 13). As Bruyn himself observed, the painting in the Metropolitan Museum is characterized by a treacly handling of paint. While he implies that this differs only in degree from the much subtler handling of pastose highlights in the Detroit woman, the difference is in fact fundamental. The way the paint is applied in the painting in the Metropolitan Museum can be characterized as rough and insensitive, and does not even approach, let alone match, the subtleties of the modelé in the Detroit painting. The same is true of the overall differences in the character of forms and the colour scheme. Compared with the Detroit painting, the forms in the painting in the Metropolitan Museum are obviously clumsier and more schematic. The differences are even more striking when one considers the colour scheme: the shadows in the neck and face in the New York painting are a dingy brown and roughly executed, whereas the luminous shadows in the face of the Detroit sketch are subtly differentiated in colour. The refined play between warm and cool tones in the latter painting is virtually absent from the *Young woman with a red necklace*.

These fundamental differences in execution render Bruyn's first premise – the proposed linkage between the sketch in Detroit to the *Young woman with a red necklace* – indefensible. His second proposal, the linking of the *Young woman with a red necklace* to Van Hoogstraten's *Self-portrait* in Museum Bredius (fig. 14), is therefore more or less irrelevant, but in any case it is highly dubious. There is absolutely no question of any stylistic or technical link between the *Weeping woman* in Detroit and Van Hoogstraten's early self-portrait in Museum Bredius. Compared with the Detroit sketch, the work of the young Van Hoogstraten is crude in both form and execution and primitive in its handling of light.

It will be clear from the above that we do not find an attribution of the Detroit painting to Van Hoogstraten a possible option. Moreover, it is scarcely imaginable that a pupil could have based himself on the woman in *The woman taken in adultery* for this painting (compare figs. 12 and 11 both reproduced on a 1:1 scale). One would then have to accept that this putative pupil had drastically enlarged (by a factor of four) the miniscule figure of the adulterous woman, and in doing so had substituted the relatively few details of the London woman, whose summarily executed costume is closed to the necklace, with partially exposed breasts and shoulders, executed in a manner that betrays a sovereign handling of the paint (fig. 12) The refinement in the modelé and in its rendering of the skin far surpass the presumed prototype in the London *Woman in adultery.* The implications of this can best be seen when the details concerned in the London painting and the Detroit sketch are reproduced next to each other, on the same scale, life-sized (see figs. 11 and 12). In our view, the far more likely option is to consider the Detroit painting as a preliminary study, painted from the life, for the woman in the London painting. It may, however, be assumed that the painting was sold under Rembrandt's own name: as early as 1661 it was described in the estate of Willem van Campen (a cousin once removed from the painter and architect Jacob van Campen) in Amsterdam as 'een crijtend vroutgen van Rembrandt' (a weeping woman by Rembrandt).[19]

Fig. 15. *Christ and the woman taken in adultery*, present whereabouts unknown

The composition of the London *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* clearly influenced the work of artists outside Rembrandt's workshop, including two paintings by Gerbrand van den Eeckhout,[20] and particularly one by Cornelis Bisschop of the 1650s.[21] Finally, an earlier much-discussed painting must be mentioned. This is a related composition with half-length figures, formerly in Minneapolis,[22] which may or may not be a later pastiche (fig. 15).

The appreciation of the London *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* can be gauged from its high valuation and the prices it fetched at auction (see *6. Provenance*). In 1657 in the estate of the dealer and collector Johannes de Renialme 'a painting of a woman taken in adultery by

Rembrant van Rhijn' was valued at 1500 guilders and was, thus, by far the most expensive work in the entire collection. 'The woman taken in adultery by Rembrand' in the estate of the collector Jacob Jacobsz. Hinloopen was valued at 2000 guilders by the leading art dealer Jan Pietersz. Zomer in 1705, and fetched 2510 guilders at the Willem Six sale in 1734. There is insufficient reason to doubt the continuity of this provenance or that the painting described is not, in fact, the work now in London. One cannot escape the conclusion that the painting has always been exceptionally well favoured. This was also true in 1807, when the dealer Lafontaine offered it for sale in London for £ 5000. However, a few comments at the time, reported by Joseph Farington, were, indeed, distinctly negative. Northcote lamented that 'there was … so much misery in the picture, the figures were so petite & mean, that He would not give twopence for it'; Cosway and others 'had pretended to doubt *its originality*'; and Fuseli, not realising that Rembrandt had depicted Christ listening and not speaking 'said… that the Background is the finest part of it; and the whole very fine; but the figure of our Saviour is difficient in Expression, the Arm ought to be extended to accompany the words "Let Him that is witht. sin throw the first stone" Rembrandt has in general in this picture, unlike Himself, failed in Expression.' On the whole, the 'acknowledged excellence of the picture' had dawned on people and Benjamin West 'expressed Himself in the strongest manner of the merit of the picture & declared it to be in its way the finest piece of Art in the world.' At a dinner party given by Sir George Beaumont, Beaumont 'expressed the warmest admiration of *the Rembrant* "The Woman taken in Adultery", as being the finest of all Rembrant's productions. Cosway's objection to it as not being by Rembrant was derided & His ridiculous assertions & fancies laughed at' (see note 1).

Examining the visual tradition of the subject, one is struck by the fact that the London painting deviates from the usual depiction of the subject in one crucial respect. Alongside the more prevalent type of Christ teaching with the adulterous woman almost always shown standing (in accordance with the story as told in John 8:3), in the Middle Ages another visual type emerged of Christ pointing to or writing on the ground with his finger. This remained the most common type from the 16th to the 18th century. In addition, representations of the adulterous woman kneeling before Christ were introduced in the 15th century, one of the earliest examples of which is the engraving by Veit Stoss.[23] The scene by Rembrandt and his followers coincides with this type. It is entirely possible that the penitent Mary Magdalen type was used for the kneeling woman, depicted as a penitent sinner. However, the suggestion that the Magdalen figure was taken from a *Crucifixion* by Tintoretto in Munich, or the print after it by Johannes Jenet,[24] is not particularly convincing, if only because the figure assumes an entirely different pose.

The figure of Christ listening in Rembrandt's painting, as Held concluded, does not agree with the traditional representation where he is shown speaking while the woman is being presented and accused.[25] In the London painting, Rembrandt chose to depict only the charge against the adulterous woman being made by the spokesman of the scribes. Rembrandt did not emphasise Christ's answer, but rather the compassion evident in his eyes as he looks down at the weeping woman surrounded by her accusers and awaiting condemnation.

Podro has attempted, unconvincingly, to link Rembrandt's painting with the dispute in Holland between Arminians and Gomarists. Specifically, the question of whether an ecclesiastical court beyond the jurisdiction of the state should be established to deal with cases of morality. The Arminians, that is the Remonstrants from whose circle Rembrandt received some commissions, opposed such an ecclesiastical court and believed that the church should not be permitted to do anything more than encourage the sinner to repent. According to Podro, the story of Christ and the woman taken in adultery could have lent biblical support to such a view.[26] The question, however, is whether with this painting Rembrandt actually wanted to contribute to the theological discussion between orthodox and liberal followers of the Protestant church: we do not know the identity of Rembrandt's patron in this instance, or even if it was commissioned. It should be remembered that the painting was first mentioned in 1657 in the possession of De Renialme, a Catholic art dealer. Moreover, the discord which arose after the death of Maurits in 1625 and in the beginning of the stadholdership of Frederik Hendrik had abated, and was far less topical at the time that Rembrandt created his painting than in the first three decades of the 17th century. Also, Podro's conception that Rembrandt's interpretation of the theme, namely the contrast between the scene in the foreground and the smaller-scale one of the ceremony being enacted before the high priest enthroned on the dais, pertained to the contrast between Christ, who refrains from making a judgement and the priest sitting in court, must be seen in perspective. That such a specific explanation is less likely can be deduced from the fact that Rembrandt often situated the motif of an enthroned priest with his entourage on a dais in the middle ground of a composition, for instance in the Hague *Simeon in the Temple* of 1631 (I A 34) and in the etching *Christ driving the moneychangers from the Temple* of 1635 (B. 69).

Naturally, the story of the woman taken in adultery (which is not part of the original repertoire of Christ's acts of salvation) is related to the promise of the forgiveness of sin, as embodied in the person of a woman who, according to Mosaic Law, had to be stoned to death for her misconduct. This is clear from Christ's final words here: 'Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more' (John 8:11). The notion of the forgiveness of a repentant sinner is set forth by Calvin in his exegesis on John 8, in which he underscores that in his desire to convert lost sheep, Christ therefore, hardly surprisingly refrained from judgement.[27] Also, in the annotations to John 8:11 in the Dutch Authorised version of 1637 it was not condemnation, so much as Christ's forgiveness of the sins of the adulterous woman that was stressed: 'Christ doth not condemn her, neither doth he acquit her, seeing as it was not his office to pronounce civil sentence upon an evil doer, but as a teacher to bring sinners to repentance….'

As Tümpel suggested, the central idea here is far more likely to be the general contrast between 'the love of God […] who exonerates and forgives, and the religion of the commandments, which seeks fulfilment in absolute obedience and takes its form from the splendour of the cult itself.'[28]

3. Documents and sources

See under *6. Provenance.*

4. Graphic reproductions

An 1823 dated etching by John Burnet (Musselburgh near Edinburgh 1784 - Stoke Newington, near London 1868), an engraving by William Thomas Fry (1789-1843) and a mezzotint by George Henry Phillips (active in London *c.* 1815 - 1830) all dating from after the acquisition of the painting by Angerstein and its entry into the National Gallery add nothing to our knowledge of its material history.

5. Copies

1. MacLaren (see note 2) mentions information imparted to him by Gerson concerning a partial copy of the central part in the museum in Sibiu, Romania.
2. What was perhaps a copy (on a larger scale), but considered by Vosmaer and Hofstede de Groot[29] to be the original, is described in the sale of the T. Hellinx collection, Leiden 6 April 1778 (Lugt 2826), no. 2: 'Rembrand van Rhyn. Hoog 49. en breed 37. duym [= 127.9 x 96.6 cm (Rhineland foot of 12 inches per foot)]. Rond in de hoogten. Dk. De Vrouw van Overspel beschuldigt, heerlyk van ordonnantie en kragtig Coloriet, men ziet een bedaarde ernstheid in het wezen van den Zaligmaker, welke indringt, door de Oogen, tot in het Hart van deze Vrouwe, daar men een groote schaamte in ontdekt. Waarlyk een verheeven denkbeelt van zoo een groot Meester' (Rembrand van Rhijn. Rounded at the top. Canvas. The woman accused of adultery, wonderful composition and robust colour scheme, one notes a quiet earnestness in the face of the Redeemer, emanating from the eyes and piercing the heart of this woman, as one discovers there a deep shame. A truly lofty conception by such a great master) (196 guilders to Wubbels). While unusual, larger-scale copies do occur (see for example III A 126, copy 2).
3. A drawn copy of the entire composition was in Bremen, together with a drawn altered copy in reverse.[30]

6. Provenance

– Probably identical with: 'Een schilderij van vroutje in overspel door Rembrant van Rhijn - *f* 1500:-:-' (A painting of a woman taken in adultery by Rembrant van Rhijn - 1500 guilders), described in the inventory of the estate of the art dealer Johannes de Renialme (*c.* 1593-1657) drawn up by the painter Adam Camerarius and the collector Marten Kretzer in Amsterdam on 27 June 1657. The collection consisted of some 400 paintings (of which the *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* received the highest valuation) and was sold at auction on 4 September 1657.[31]
– Probably identical with 'Het vrouwtje in overspel bevonden van Rembrand - *f* 2000:-:-' (The woman taken in adultery by Rembrandt - 2000 guilders), described in the inventory of the estate of Jacob Jacobsz. Hinloopen (1644-1705) drawn up by the broker and art dealer Jan Pietersz. Zomer in Amsterdam on 24 November 1705. It has been suggested that the painting must have come from the father of this collector also called Jacob Jacobsz. (1621-1679) or from his uncle Jan Jacobsz. Hinloopen (1626-1666),[32] however proof of this is lacking.
– Coll. Willem Six (1662-1733), Amsterdam. There seen and described by A. Houbraken: 'Dus is ook het stukje 't Vroutje in overspel bevonden, genaamt, by den Heere en Meester Willem Six oud Scheepen der Stadt Amsterdam' (Thus also the piece of the woman taken in adultery is mentioned [in the collection of] Sir and Master Willem Six, former alderman of the City of Amsterdam).[33] Sale Amsterdam 12 May 1734 (Lugt 441), no. 5: 'Het Vrouwtje in Overspel zig voor Christus vertoonende, van Rembrant van Ryn, zynde het beste dat ooit van hem gezien is' (The woman taken in adultery presenting herself to Christ, by Rembrant van Ryn, being the best by him ever seen); written in the copy of the sales catalogue in the Six Foundation: *f* 2510:-:- to 'de WelEd.Grootagtbare Heer Burgemeester Six' (the most honourable lord mayor Six), namely Jan (II) Six (1668-1750), cousin of Willem Six. (See also Hoet I, p. 411)
– Coll. Six family, Amsterdam; said to have been sold with a few other paintings to the art dealer Louis Bernard Coclers in 1803.[34]
– Dealer Pierre Joseph Lafontaine, Paris, who bought it from Coclers in 1803 and took it to London in 1807.[35] Sale [Lafontaine] London (Christie's) 13 June 1807, no. 44 (bought in). Sold privately to John Julius Angerstein on the following day (see note 2).
– Purchased with the Angerstein collection for the proposed National Gallery in 1824.

NOTES

1. J. Farington, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, 16 vols., New Haven/London 1978-1984, Vol. 8, 1982 (ed. by K. Cave), pp. 3057, 3064-3069, 3076, 3081, 3084-3085, 3091, 3156.
2. N. MacLaren, *The Dutch School* (National Gallery catalogues), London 1960, pp. 308-311; revised and enlarged by Christopher Brown, London 1991, pp. 328-330.
3. See *Corpus* IV, p. 657.
4. Exhib. cat. *Art in the making*, 1988/89, cat.no. 9; 2006, cat.no. 10 and pp. 224-226.
5. Sumowski *Gemälde* III, no. 1094.
6. F. Landsberger, 'Rembrandt and Josephus', *Art Bull.* 36 (1954), pp. 62-63, esp. 62.
7. C. Zilva, 'Signatures and dates on Rembrandt's paintings', *Apollo* 42 (1945), p. 191.
8. K. van Mander, *Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const*, Haarlem 1604, Chapter V fol. 16r, 11 and fol. 18r, 34; see also B.P.J. Broos, 'Rembrandt and Lastman's Coriolanus: the history piece in 17th-century theory and practice', *Simiolus* 8 (1975/76), pp. 199-228, esp. 202.
9. W. Wegner, *Die niederländischen Handzeichnungen des 15.-18. Jahrhunderts*, (Kataloge der Staatlichen Graphischen Sammlung München I), Berlin 1973, cat.no. 1145.
10. Sumowski *Drawings* VI, no. 1541[x] as by Salomon Koninck.
11. MacLaren op. cit.[2], p. 309: 'A small half-length study in oils of a weeping woman, closely connected with the figure in the picture but on a larger scale, is in the Detroit Institute of Arts; it has been considered a study for the painting but seems more probably a later derivation from it (or from a lost sketch) by another hand.'
12. Br.-Gerson 366.
13. The whereabouts of most of these paintings are unknown. This includes such paintings as Br. 241, 244, 248, 376.
14. J. Bruyn, 'Rembrandt's workshop: function & production', in Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, p. 79.
15. *Corpus* IV *Corrigendum* I C 22. E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's oil studies: new light on an old problem', in: Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, Amsterdam/Berlin 2006, pp. 179-207.
16. Sumowski *Gemälde* II, nos. 847 and 849 [under Samuel van Hoogstraeten];

see also J. Bruyn [review of] Sumowski *Gemälde* II, *O.H.* 102 (1988), pp. 322-333, esp. 329-330.

17. Formerly collection Sydney van den Bergh, Wassenaar (no. 1383); since 2005 in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the 2007 catalogue of the Dutch paintings in that museum (no. 170, pp. 749-753), following Bruyn's construction, which is not accepted here, attributed to Samuel van Hoogstraeten. Bredius 373 - From the collection of Rita and Frits Markus, Bequest of Rita Markus, 2005 (2005.331.7).
18. A. Blankert, *Museum Bredius. Catalogus van de schilderijen en tekeningen*, Den Haag 1978; Blankert revised edition Zwolle 1991. Sumowski *Gemälde* II no. 847 [under Samuel van Hoogstraeten] and Bruyn op. cit. [16].
19. Br. *Künstler-Inv.* IV, p. 119; Strauss *Doc.*, 1661/11.
20. One dated 1653 in the Gemäldegalerie, Kassel, inv. no. GK 1064 (Sumowski *Gemälde* II, no. 441 and V, p. 3062 no. 3 and p. 3065), and one in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. A 106 (Sumowski *Gemälde* II, no. 442).
21. Present whereabouts unknown; Sumowski *Gemälde* III, pp. 1961, 1965 note 66, 1982.
22. Sumowski *Gemälde* I, pp. 85, 88 note 80, fig. p. 129; see also Catherine Scallen, *Rembrandt, reputation and the practice of connoisseurship,* Amsterdam 2004, pp. 140 and 272 and fig. 29.
23. M. Lehrs, *Geschichte und kritischer Katalog des deutschen, niederländischen und französischen Kupferstichs im XV. Jahrhundert*, Vol. VIII, Vienna 1932, cat.no. 2.
24. Jacopo Tintoretto, canvas 153.5 x 247 cm, München, Alte Pinakothek, inv. no. 4590; A. Golahny, 'The *Adulteress* by Rembrandt and by Van den Eeckhout: variations on an Italian "Magdalene"', in: W. H. Fletcher (ed.), *Papers from the second interdisciplinary conference on Netherlandic studies held at Georgetown University 7-9 June 1984*, Lanham/New York/London n.d., pp. 115-123.
25. J.S. Held, 'Das gesprochene Wort bei Rembrandt', in: O. v. Simson and J. Kelch (eds.), *Neue Beiträge zur Rembrandt-Forschung*, Berlin 1973, pp. 111-125, esp. 119.
26. M. Podro, 'Rembrandt's *Woman taken in adultery*', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1978), pp. 245-252.
27. J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to St John* I, transl. W. Pringle, Edinburgh 1847, p. 319.
28. Tümpel 1986, p. 237: 'de liefde van God (….), die kwijtscheldt en vergeeft, en de religie van de geboden, die in de absolute gehoorzaamheid haar vervulling zoekt en haar vorm krijgt in de pracht van de cultus zelf'; see also U. Keller, 'Knechtschaft und Freiheit. Ein neutestamentliches Thema bei Rembrandt', *Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen* 24 (1979), pp. 77-112, esp. 79-83.
29. C. Vosmaer, *Rembrandt*, The Hague 1877, p. 536; HdG 104.
30. W. Sumowski, 'Kritische Bemerkungen zur neuesten Gemäldekritik', in: O. v. Simson and J. Kelch (eds.), *Neue Beiträge zur Rembrandt-Forschung*, Berlin 1973, pp. 91-110, esp. 93 and Plate 14, fig. 50.
31. Strauss *Doc.*, 1657/2 no. 291.
32. S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, 'De Rembrandts in de verzamelingen "Hinloopen"', *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 56 (1969), pp. 233-237.
33. A. Houbraken, *Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen* I, Amsterdam 1718, p. 261.
34. J. Six, 'Iets over Rembrandt', *O.H.* 11 (1893), pp. 154-161, esp. 155 note 1.
35. C.H. Balkema, *Biographie des peintres flamands et hollandais*, Ghent 1844, p. 101.

V 4 Rembrandt – The Holy Family

1645

ST PETERSBURG, THE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, CAT. NO. 741

HDG 94; BR. 570; BAUCH 73; GERSON 211; TÜMPEL 65

1. Introduction and description

The St Petersburg *Holy Family* was painted in a transitional phase of the master's career leading up to what is usually referred to as Rembrandt's late style. Since this is one of those paintings whose authenticity is not in question, the present text will deal primarily with stylistic and pictorial developments. In this context, this amazingly rich, although not very well preserved painting is a key document.

Seated on a low chair, Mary holds a heavy book open on her knees, while turning to lift a cloth draped over the hood of a reed cradle. She bends toward the Christ Child asleep under a red, fur-lined blanket in the cradle. Near Mary a small wood fire burns on the tile floor of a fireplace only part of whose hood is visible. She has rolled up her apron or outer skirt the better to feel the warmth of the fire. Her left foot rests on a foot-warmer with a coal pan. On the tile floor to the right of the foot-warmer, illuminated by the flames, are a brazier with a pan, and a bowl of porridge with a spoon in it.

Joseph stands just behind Mary, bending over his workbench which rests on sawhorses. Over a white shirt and a black doublet, one sleeve of which is visible, he wears a short-sleeved, brown coat with an apron over it. Lit from the right by daylight he is working the bottom end of a piece of wood, probably a yoke, with a short axe. Other pieces of wood rest against the workbench. On the wall above the workbench hang a brace and bit and to the right a ring on a cord, part of a still unidentified object. Above Joseph is a structure that might belong to the roofing, and to the left, behind the cradle, is a table or a workbench with a few additional tools, perhaps planes. The level of the wooden floor changes behind the cradle.

The darkness of the back part of the interior is dispelled by a host of angels enveloped by clouds and illuminated by heavenly light. With wings and arms spread out, the foremost angel gazes down at the Child in the cradle. Three of the other five angels – the middle one pointing with the index finger and holding a wreath of flowers in the other hand – also gaze upon the scene below which seems to be lit by the same heavenly radiance.

Working conditions

Examined in August 1969 (J.B., S.H.L.), in 1985 (E.v.d.W.) during an exhibition in Museum Boijmans-Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, on 14 March 1997 (P.B., M.F.) in relatively good light with the painting out of the frame during an exhibition in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam and in 2006 (E.v.d.W.) under excellent light at the exhibition *Rembrandt. Quest of a Genius* in Amsterdam, Rembrandthuis.

Support

Canvas, relined, 116.4 x 90.4 cm (measured along the stretcher). At the top of the original canvas, cut from a previous stretcher, has been added a 2.7 (± 0.2) cm wide strip and at the bottom a 1.2 (± 0.1) cm wide strip; the present height of the original canvas is therefore app. 112.5 cm. Whether the present width is original is doubtful. Given the awkward cutting off of the fireplace by the right edge of the painting (more of this fireplace is visible in a drawing in Bayonne (Ben. 567, discussed below in *2. Comments*, see also fig. 5), it seems likely that a section is missing at the right. The absence of a counterpart in the upper left corner to a painted arch in the upper right corner, added by a later hand, suggests that a strip of the support was also cut off along the left edge at a later date. This suspicion is reinforced by the peculiar truncation of the finely detailed angel, whose head is seen from the back. This angel was meant to function as a repoussoir, but in the painting's present state is hardly effective. The dimensions of the painting given in the 1740 inventory of the collection of Pierre Crozat were 127.1 x 89.3 cm, which may mean that the painting was also app. 11 cm higher than it is now. As its height is 6 pouces (= 16.2 cm) less in the 1755 catalogue of the collection of Louis Antoine Crozat, the painting may have been cut down at the top sometime between 1740 and 1755 (see *6. Provenance*).

The painting was relined with a lead white adhesive. Consequently, no measurements regarding the original fabric were possible on the Hermitage X-radiograph of the painting.

Ground

A yellow brown shines through locally in thinly painted parts of the background.

Paint layer

Condition: In addition to the alterations of the painting's format mentioned in *Support*, the work has suffered in other respects as well. The more thickly painted passages have been flattened, undoubtedly as a result of pressure applied during lining. While these areas are otherwise well preserved, the thinly painted areas must have been seriously worn or abraded as they display extensive retouchings. Thus countless blotchy and darkened retouchings are visible in the dark parts in the top half of the interior, in the shaded area just under the hood of the cradle, and in the cradle's shadow on the floor. The paint layer to the left of the fireplace hood has suffered to such an extent that the representation is no longer legible; both to the left and right of this damaged area the roof construction and the hood have been heavily overpainted. The paint of Joseph's head has been overcleaned, and his hair, eye, and doublet are largely overpainted. Local retouchings are evident in Mary's hair, and overpaintings in brown are found on her left sleeve, jacket, and in the shadow cast by the arm on the body. Wearing of the paint layer is evident both in the shaded area of the hand with which Mary holds the book and the shaded side of the book above the hand. The sawhorse, workbench, and the pieces of wood resting on it to the right of Mary and the book have been retouched, as are the rims of light and the light accents on the foot-warmer, the pan and the brazier, and the little bowl at the lower right. Some brown overpainting can be detected in the host of angels.

The original paint along the edges of the original canvas is almost entirely overpainted. Priming on the strip

Fig. 1. Canvas 116.4 x 90.4 cm

Fig. 2. Detail

added to the bottom overlaps the original edge at the left. This addition is covered with brown paint to just below the signature. Toward the right, the brown paint progressively becomes a very deep red to the point where a black overpainted band begins, gradually broadening to the right until it extends onto the original canvas. A narrow band of black paint over a red coloured filler extends up along the right side of the painting. From app. 12.5 cm from the top edge this overpaint widens into an arch that rounds off the top corner of the picture. Connecting up with the black edge is a band overpainted in thin brown. The left side has been similarly treated, except for the light area above where a corresponding arch is missing. Although we cannot determine from this whether the canvas was cut along the left edge at a later stage, this does seem plausible (see *Support*). The colour of the paint on the strip added to the top of the painting matches that of the original paint layer.

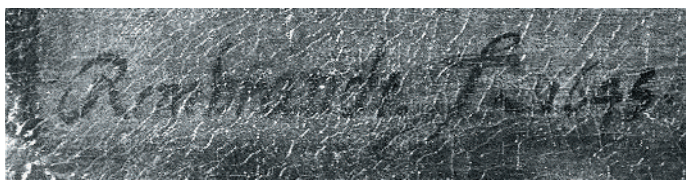
Craquelure: The entire surface of the painting is covered by distinct craquelure with a relatively large pattern, the largest of which is found in the figure of Mary.

As will be clear from the above, the execution of the thinly painted areas of the picture can no longer be fully assessed as a result of the countless retouchings and overpaintings. The colour scheme of the better preserved areas plays an important role in the organisation of the light and in the spatial effect. The colour scheme in the foreground is dominated by the bright, relatively flatly applied brick red of the blanket. Contrast is provided by the mixed green in the cloth over the hood of the cradle, the dark burgundy of Mary's jacket, and the blueish black colour of her skirt. However, the blond tones of the lit parts of the angels, the cradle and the wooden floor along with the muted range of browns and greys in the rest of the picture determine the tonal organisation of the image as a whole.

As is often the case with Rembrandt, the *peinture* can only be evaluated if its twofold function is taken into account, namely to render texture and to suggest light and space. Efforts to achieve convincing texture are certainly not visible in all areas. For instance, forms in the background are self-evident and their materiality has not been further elaborated. In contrast, the little cradle is remarkably convincingly rendered. The wickerwork is brilliantly formulated by means of small strokes of dark brown, brown yellow and ochre yellow, worked up with yellow white highlights. The execution of this passage also contributes to the spatial illusion and the intensity of the effect of light as the paint surface is coarse and worked with thickly painted highlights.

The depiction of the folds plays an important role in the characterisation of the different fabrics. The cloth wound around Mary's head is deftly and firmly brushed in white, some grey and some ochre brown. The texture of the pillow in the cradle is convincingly portrayed with a great deal of white, light greys and thin browns in the shadows. The fur lining of the blanket is painted in short, variously placed strokes of thick ochre yellow, brown, white yellow, some red and grey. No traces of brushwork can be discerned in the lit areas of the bright brick red of the blanket; some brushstrokes are found in the shadows of the folds painted in carmine. The rendering of the various textures and fabrics is further differentiated: Mary's jacket is painted in dark burgundy, with browns in the shadows and bright red for its sheen, creating the impression of red velvet. This impression also arises from the fact that the highlights in the sleeve of her outstretched arm generally follow the contours – a 17th-century procedure for suggesting velvet.[1] In turn, the sheen of the olive green cloth on the hood of the cradle suggests a rather different fabric. The folds of this cloth have glimmers of light consisting of strokes of ochre yellow and light green; the shadows are marked with brown. The ornamental border of the cloth hanging down at the left contains dark green, yellow ochre, some pink red, some white and carmine to indicate the decoration and the fringe. Characteristically, in areas where Rembrandt took great pains in the rendering of texture, he also used freely placed strokes for other ends unrelated to the suggestion of materiality, for example to indicate the flow of the folds. This is evident in the folds that run from the cloth on the hood of the cradle to Mary's fingers. The presence of a reddish tint in these folds of the predominantly green cloth is related to the colour reflex of the red blanket. In the book, a free, almost draughtsman-like handling of the brush provides a concise rendering of texture. Alternation of cool and warm intermediary tints creates the illusion of light and shade. The lines of text are done in brown. Free yellow white strokes varying in width indicate the lit sections of the pages. Grey is used for the cast shadow of Mary's head on the book. An undulating streak of ochre yellow at the lower left stands for that part of the binding that catches the light.

Fig. 3. Detail with signature (reduced)



A similar use of a single colourful 'cue' for the nature of the depicted material is also evident in the wings of the angels. The wings are painted in gradations of grey, tonal values that vary depending on their placement in relation to the light. However, occasional rims of light create the impression of heavenly radiance.

For an analysis of the exceptional role played by the reflected light in the painting under discussion, see *2. Comments*.

It seems that Mary initially wore a gown with a lower neckline, as is also seen in the partial copy discussed below (see figs. 6-8). In the red of Mary's straight-edged bodice the relief of underlying strokes of light paint is visible. These extend into the flesh colour of the chest and the white kerchief to the left of the face.

Radiography

The existing X-radiographs provide no legible image because of the use of radioabsorbent adhesive for the relining.

Fig. 4. Rembrandt, *The Holy Family*, 163[.]. Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek (II A 88)

Fig. 5. Rembrandt, *The Holy Family in the carpenter's workshop*, *c.* 1645, pen and bistre 16.1 x 15.8 cm (Ben. 567). Bayonne, Musée, coll. L. Bonnat

Signature

Lower left, in dark brown: <*Rembrandt.f.1645.*> (fig. 3).

2. Comments

The St Petersburg painting contains features which are characteristic of stylistic developments arising in the mid-1640s. The impact of these developments becomes clear when the St Petersburg *Holy Family* of 1645 is compared with the Munich painting of the same subject done eleven years earlier (fig. 4). It is obvious that the motifs and compositional elements are closely similar but the two works differ substantially in the conception of form, light and colour. In the earlier painting, forms are characterised by the contrast between the bold shadows and the light areas – generally executed in broken tints – which appear to loom up from the dark. Sharp light, grazing lights, and cast shadows are crucial to this method of creating light and plasticity. They isolate parts of the figures such that the viewer is challenged to discover a coherence, which evokes an illusion of almost tangible plasticity. Something of this conception can still be found in the St Petersburg painting, primarily in the celestial host in the upper left corner where, for example, a rim of shadow along the back of the head of one of the angels induces a similar contrast. However, in the painting's central group, which receives the highest light, the extent to which the bright red determines the general colour scheme, and the avoidance of contrasts of light and dark in defining form and spatial arrangement is striking. For example, as far as form is concerned, the head of Mary is comparable with that of Mary in the Munich painting; but the plasticity and foreshortening are so discretely indicated, by means of subtle variations in colour and the way the paint has been applied, that the emphasis falls more on the spatial effect and the interplay of light and colour rather than on plasticity of form. In short, there is a marked shift from strong modelling in the Munich painting to a more painterly representation of the illuminated forms in the St Petersburg painting; from the subordination of colour (generally by using broken tints) in the Munich painting to brighter and more autonomous colour keyed to the light in the St Petersburg picture. Symptoms of this shift in the years before 1645 can be discerned, for example in some areas of the *Night watch* (III A 146), and perhaps most distinctly in the London *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* of 1644 (V 3). However, the degree to which the spatial homogeneity of the painting under discussion is determined by muted contrasts of light and dark, and by the search for subtle relations in accordance with the bright red and white colour scheme of the central group, represents a another step in Rembrandt's search for new solutions. Moreover, the brushwork, chiefly in the thick areas, is dominated by a broad, relatively flat handling which suggests forms by their surface areas rather than by analysing their detail. In this respect, there is a clear similarity with the *Girl leaning on a window-sill* in Dulwich (Br. 368; see IV 7 fig. 6), also from 1645.

Numerous instances of reflected light are found in areas depicting illuminated skin, including the heads and

Fig. 6. Copy 1. Rembrandt workshop, *Head of a young woman*, panel 20.5 x 17 cm. Private collection (Br. 375)

Fig. 7. X-Ray of fig. 6

hands of Mary and the Child and the faces and nude bodies of the angels. This use of light cast into shadows by a neighbouring object is crucial to the effect of light and space in this painting and determines the mood of the scene. Thus, the light that falls on the book is reflected up into the shadows of the neck and cheek of Mary. Light reflexes help define details in the face of the Child. Reflected light also plays a leading role in the angelic host. The foremost angel is primarily lit by the powerful heavenly light streaming in from the upper left. In turn, the illuminated areas of this angel bounce the light up, as it were, onto the face of the angel at the left, engulfed in shadow, so that it glows softly. The full-length angel further left shares the light cast up by the foremost angel. Such effects are described by Samuel van Hoogstraten in his definition of reflected light: 'Reflection is actually a rebounding of the light from all lit things, but in art we speak only of reflection, the secondary illumination, which falls in the shadow.'[2] In a rationalisation of the characteristics of reflected light, Van Hoogstraten arrives at the 'calculation' that the power of reflected light should be half of that of the actual light.[3] That Rembrandt was already noted in his time for his skill in the application of reflections is clear from Van Hoogstraten's words: 'Our Rembrandt has acquitted himself wondrously in reflections, yes it would appear that the election to cast back some of the light was his true element …'. (see also Chapter I pp. 73-76)[4] This 'election' is more manifest in this painting than in almost any of his other works. With his singling out of Rembrandt's use of reflections Van Hoogstraten, who trained with Rembrandt between *c.* 1642 and *c.* 1648, may well have been directly inspired by the St Petersburg *Holy Family*. Following on from this quoted passage, however, Hoogstraten criticizes his master by remarking that Rembrandt did not keep the 'rules of art'. He counted him among those who 'rely solely on their eye and their own experience'. It seems that Van Hoogstraten is here judging his former master in retrospect according to a numerical system for 'calculating' different light intensties, that he developed after his apprenticeship with Rembrandt and eventually published in his treatise on the art of painting in 1678 (see also Chapter I, p. 76).[5]

While the motif of the angels in the heavenly host is unique in Rembrandt's paintings of the Holy Family, it is reminiscent of that in works with other subjects of the 1630s, particularly in his etching of the *Angels appearing to the shepherds* (B. 44) of 1634 and the Munich *Ascension* (III A 118) completed in 1636. The motif surfaces in a closely related manner in several drawings by Rembrandt or his circle, for instance in the *Holy Family sleeping* in Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum (Ben. 569), in which other motives are shared with the St Petersburg picture as well (see p. 224). Though shown from a slightly different angle, an angel in a drawing of *Jacob's dream* presently attributed to Bol in the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris is almost identical to the foremost angel in Rembrandt's painting.[6] This reinforces Bruyn's impression that statuettes of putti were used as models in Rembrandt's studio.[7]

A drawing in Bayonne (fig. 5; Ben. 567) is generally considered a compositional sketch for the painting. That is certainly plausible. The placing of the figures and other elements of the composition differs so essentially in the drawing from that in the painting that it is inconceivable

Fig. 8. Infrared reflectogram (detail of fig. 6)

that we could be dealing here with a (freely executed) copy of the painting. One need only compare, for example, the positions of the angel, Mary and Joseph in relation to each other. Moreover, the drawing betrays an exploratory approach – for example, in the case of the abbreviated but extremely effective indication of the beam of light and the placing of the angel within it. There is a conspicuous difference between the attention given to the yolk and the adze that Joseph is working with, and the cradle with the child, which is indicated by little more than a shapeless doodle. The drawing is, *mutatis mutandis*, in many ways comparable with the drawing connected with the *Ganymede* (Ben. 92; III A 113, fig. 5), with which it shares the common feature that Rembrandt's 'calligraphy', such as one encounters in more thoroughly worked out drawings, is entirely lacking. In all regards, the drawing in Bayonne appears to be a working drawing in which a complex idea is fixed in its first form and has been partially worked out further.

A painted paraphrase of the head of Mary (see *5. Copies*, 1; figs. 6, 7) – comparable to other similar 'tronies' isolated from Rembrandt compositions (see Vol. I, pp. 44-45) – was recognised as such by Bauch.[8] This partial copy seems to have been made in Rembrandt's studio, as the clothing presents an earlier stage of the St Petersburg painting (fig. 8). The author of this work may be the same pupil who painted Br. 373 (see V 3 fig. 13).

Numerous authors, including Kuznetsov,[9] have noted the naturalistic domesticity of the scene on the one hand and the supernatural host of angels on the other. The celestial host emphasises the divine nature of Christ. This motif was far more common in scenes of the Annunciation than in those of the Holy Family. On the other hand, Joseph's humble status as carpenter was repeatedly emphasised in the work of Rembrandt and his pupils. Joseph, fashioning a yoke, could be a reference to a passage from the Gospels, for instance Matthew 11:29-30, where Christ compares discipleship to an 'easy' yoke.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

5. Copies

1. Panel 20.6 x 17.3 cm; private collection (fig. 6; Br. 375). Bauch, rightly, rejected the idea of this being a study by Rembrandt for Mary's head in St Petersburg *Holy Family*, and considered it a pupil's copy (see note 7). This small painting must have originated in Rembrandt's workshop (see *2. Comments*). It shows the original V-shaped neck which, in the work in the Hermitage, was changed to a straight edge – an alteration that one may assume was made by Rembrandt himself. One can also see on the X-radiograph (fig. 7) that the young woman originally wore a white bonnet. It is characteristic of this type of partial copy – usually derived from Rembrandt's small-scale history pieces – that their authors allowed themselfes – or were required by their master – to take liberties with regard to costuming. (Local) infrared reflectographic investigation (fig. 8) reveals preliminary underdrawing with black chalk or charcoal in preparation of the complex tilting of the head.
2. A copy of the entire composition and 4 replicas of the group of the Virgin and the Child in the cradle by Jean-Honoré Fragonard (Grasse 1732-Paris 1806), the latter bearing titles such as 'La bonne Mère', 'Le Berceau':[10]
   - Canvas 91 x 75 cm; private collection. This copy reproduces the entire composition. Formerly owned by François Boucher, sale Paris 18 February-9 March 1771 (Lugt 1895), no. 111.
   - Canvas 42 x 54 cm; San Francisco (Cal.), M. H. de Young Memorial Art Museum.
   - Canvas 49 x 59 cm; coll. H. R. Stirlin Oboussier, Saint-Prex, Switzerland.
   - Canvas 49 x 59 cm; private collection, England.
   - Canvas 50 x 60 cm; private collection.

6. Provenance

*– In the inventory of Roger de Piles drawn up on 15 April 1709 by Valet, 'notaire au Chatelet': 'Dans le cabinet a coté de la chambre: 1 tableau de toile représentant une "Nativité" de Rembrant, avec bordure de bois doré … 50 l.'[11] Roscam Abbing has suggested that this is a reference to the painting in St Petersburg.[12]
– Hofstede de Groot[13] assumed, that the painting was in the collection of Adriaen Bout, sale The Hague 11 August 1733 (Lugt 427), no. 81: 'Joseph, Maria en 't Kindje, kragtig en uytvoerig geschildert, hoog 40 en een half, breet 51 duym [= 106 x 133.4 cm]' (Joseph, Mary and the Child, powerfully and elaborately painted, high 40 and a half, wide 51 duym [= 106 x 133.4 cm]) (150 guilders to Hausbergen) (Hoet I, p. 390). This information could apply only to the painting in St Petersburg if one assumes that the height and width were confused and that the painting was measured in the frame.
– Coll. Pierre Crozat (1665-1740), Paris. Described in the inventory of his estate drawn up on 30 May 1740 as no. 20: 'Un tableau peint sur toille de trois pieds onze pouces de haut sur deux pieds neuf pouces de large [= 127.1 x 89.3 cm], représentant une Vierge avec son enfant dans un berceau et une Gloire d'anges, dans sa bordure de bois sculpté doré, peint par Rainbrand, prisé 800 l.'[14]
– Coll. Louis-François Crozat, marquis du Châtel (1691-1750), Pierre Crozat's eldest nephew, who inherited his paintings.

– Coll. Louis-Antoine Crozat, baron de Thiers (1699-1770), who was to inherit Pierre Crozat's paintings in case his eldest brother, Louis François, would die without male heirs.[15] Described in: *Catalogue des Tableaux du Cabinet Crozat, Baron de Thiers*, Paris 1755, p. 15: '…une Vierge tenant un Livre d'une main, & découvrant de l'autre l'Enfant Jesus dormant dans un berceau; par Rembrandt: sur toile, de 3 pieds 5 pouces de haut, sur 2 pieds 8 pouces de large [= 110.9 x 86.6 cm].'
– With the entire Crozat de Thiers collection bought for Catherine II, Empress of Russia, at the instigation of Diderot and after negations conducted by François Tronchin, in 1772. *Catalogue raisonné des Tableaux qui se trouvent dans les Galleries, Sallons et Cabinets du Palais Impérial de S. Petersbourg, commencé en 1773 et continué jusqu'en 1783* (manuscript) no. 923: 'Paul Rembrant. La Vierge et l'Enfant Jesus. La Vierge tient un Livre d'une main et découvre de L'autre l'Enfant Jesus qui dort dans un Berceau d'Osier. Tableau supérieurement beau dans toutes ses parties et très terminé: L'Enfant, le Berceau, la Mere, un vol d'Anges, tout est admirable et piquant. Il est très précis et des plus précieux: on y trouve la signature et la datte de 1645. Sur toile. Haut 1 ar.[chine] 9½.V.[erchokk] Large 1 Ar.4 V.[= 113.3 x 88.9 cm].'

NOTES

1. K. van Mander, *Het schilder-boeck*, Haarlem 1604, fol. 44r: 'In plaets dat ghy u Laken met gheheelen Hoogsels de ployen pleeght te doen verheffen / Daer gaet het gants anders met de fluweelen / Want ghy maket al bruyn / en gaet slechts deelen / De canten weerschijnich u hoogsels effen'. (In contrast to other kinds of fabric, in which you tend to give relief to the folds with full highlights, the treatment of velvet differs entirely, because you make it totally dark and apply uniform highlights only to the reflecting sides.)
2. S. van Hoogstraeten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*, Rotterdam 1678, p. 262: 'Weerglans is wel eygentlijk een wederomkaetsing van het licht van alle verlichte dingen, maer in de konst noemen wy maer alleen reflectie of weerglans, de tweede verlichting, die in de schaduwe valt.'
3. Van Hoogstraeten, op. cit.[2], p. 267; see also Chapter I, p. 77.
4. Van Hoogstraeten, op. cit.[2], p. 273: 'Wonderlijk heeft zich onzen Rembrant in reflexeeringen gequeeten, jae het scheen of deze verkiezing van 't wederom kaetsen van eenich licht zijn rechte element was…'
5. Van Hoogstraeten, op.cit.[2], pp. 262-63, 267-73; p. 273: '… had hy hem maer wat beter op de grondregels deezer konst verstaen: want die alleenlijk op zijn oog en gewaende ondervindinge steunt, begaet dikmaels feylen, die den spot van leerjongers, ik zwijge van meesters, verdienen: ….'
6. Sumowski *Drawings* I, no. 248.
7. Compare J. Bruyn, 'On Rembrandt's use of studio-props and model drawings during the 1630s', *Essays in Northern European art presented to E. Haverkamp Begemann on his sixtieth birthday*, Doornspijk 1983, pp. 52-60.
8. Bauch 1966, p. 48.
9. Y. Kuznetsov in: *Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn. Paintings from Soviet Museums*, Leningrad [*c.* 1971], no. 16.
10. G. Wildenstein, *The paintings of Fragonard*, [London] 1960, cat. nos. 7-11.
11. L. Mirot, *Roger de Piles, peintre, amateur, critique, membre de l'Académie de Peinture (1635-1709)*, Paris 1924, p. 67.
12. M. Roscam Abbing, 'Rembrandts "De Heilige Familie" van Roger de Piles (1635-1709)', *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 93/2, pp. 9-14.
13. HdG 94.
14. M. Stuffmann, 'Les tableaux de la collection de Pierre Crozat', *G.d.B.-A.* 6th series 72 (1968), pp. 11-144, esp. 100, no. 366.
15. Stuffmann, op. cit.[14], pp. 32-33.

V 5 Pupil of Rembrandt – The Holy Family at night 1645/46

AMSTERDAM, RIJKSMUSEUM, INV. NO. A 4119

HDG 91; BR. 568; BAUCH –; GERSON –; TÜMPEL –

1. Introduction and description

Opinion over the authorship of this painting was long divided after Hamann rejected the attribution to Rembrandt in 1948 and suggested Nicolaes Maes as its possible maker.[1] Since Bauch[2] and Gerson[3] in 1966 and 1968, respectively, followed Hamann and omitted the *Holy Family at night* from their catalogues of Rembrandt's oeuvre, it has received scant attention in the art-historical literature: the painting is not included in more recent monographs on Rembrandt by Schwartz and Tümpel, and in his *Gemälde der Rembrandtschüler* Sumowski catalogued it as an anonymous work from the school of Rembrandt.[4] In 2006 Taco Dibbits gave a detailed account of the vicissitudes endured by this painting and the history of its reception.[5] Although we in no way doubt the painting's disattribution, it displays so many Rembrandtesque features that the question of its relationship with autograph work by Rembrandt justifies a separate entry.

Two women, Mary and Anne, are seated in the middle of a large room near a cradle in which the Christ Child sleeps. With some difficulty, Joseph can be discerned crouched under the stairs at the left of the scene. Mary, seen somewhat from the back, reads a book that catches the light from the only source of illumination in the painting. As she is seated in front of this light, she shows up dark against the lit back wall. On her head she wears a little coif, and over the dark clothing on the shoulders a loose dressing gown. At her feet is the cradle with the Child, behind which sits the sleeping Anne, who holds a cord with which to rock the cradle. Anne wears a full skirt, and over a white shirt a brick-red bodice with a white loose dressing gown, and a half-length fur-trimmed shoulder cloak. Covering her head is a coif over an undercap that ties under her chin. She casts a large shadow, which partly overlaps a map hanging on the wall. The wheel near her, probably a hand spinning wheel, also casts a large shadow on the stairs leading to a door in the left side wall. At the far left is a chimney breast on which hangs a gleaming brass sconce. Before the mantelpiece on the floor, which is slightly lower than in the rest of the space, is a chair seen from behind. On the other side of the room is a ball-legged table, covered with a tablecloth, on which are a pair of shoes, a bottle, a shallow bowl with a spoon and an upright basket. This basket probably leans either against the side wall or a cupboard visible behind the basket. The open door of the cupboard affords a view of various household objects, including a pewter pitcher. The back wall is articulated by three wallposts. In the right part of the back wall is a window consisting of two section with leaded-glass panes; the window appears to be closed off by shutters on the outside. A broken window pane is plugged with a wad of some material. Above the window is a closed semi-circular shutter fastened to the wall by two large hinges. Tied to a large metal ring on the shutter is a cord extending to the ground via a pulley hanging from the ceiling and vanishing from sight behind the open door of the cupboard. However, it is difficult to imagine how this shutter opens, given that the hinges are set at an angle to one another. Nails have been driven into two of the posts: the one above Mary casts a shadow on the beam; and a bag hangs from the other.

Working conditions

Examined 5 August 1969 (J.B., B.H., S.H.L., P.v.Th., E.v.d.W.), 19 September 1988 (E.v.d.W.) and on 5 July 1996 (M.F.): out of the frame, in good light and with a stereo-microscope, infrared reflectography and six X-ray films covering the entire surface.

Varnish: A pronounced craquelure in the varnish somewhat hampered observation. However, in 1996 surface grine was removed and a new layer of varnish applied.

Support

Panel, Spanish cedar (*cedrela odorata*), grain horizontal, app. 60.5 x 77.5 cm. Thickness 1.3 cm. Single plank. Bevelled at the back on all four sides. On the back are the remains of a wax seal, and an inscription in black ink at the upper left that can be read as 'Margrita Six'.

The use of a support made of cigar box wood from Middle and South America, Spanish cedar, is also encountered in a few paintings by Rembrandt and his circle: the Munich *Descent from the Cross* of 1632/33 (II A 65), *The Visitation* of 1640 in Detroit (III A 138) and the *Portrait of a man holding a glove* in New York, with the date of 16[4]8 (Br. 221) (See *Corpus* IV, p. 657, cq. pp. 650, 651, 656).

Ground

A yellowish ground shows through a reddish brown transparent layer to the right of Anne's lit lap. This may be a white ground with a yellowish *primuersel* customary for a painting on panel. This ground also shows through in various other places, including the figure of Joseph, the doorpost, to the right in the cradle, in the stairs and under Anne's chin, and in the figure of Mary, particularly in her shoulder. In these areas can be seen a pattern of parallel horizontal lines which are probably due to the wood grain. A similar pattern is also visible in thinly painted areas, such as the left vertical post and the dark shaded area to its left and in the left part of the window.

Paint layer

The condition of the paint layer is good with the exception of a few minor retouchings in the stairs, in the dark sections near the stairs, and along the edges of the image.

Craquelure: No craquelure can be observed except in the very pastosely painted white of the book and of Anne's head cloth.

As mentioned in *Ground*, the ground shows through in many thinly painted areas. In these areas the painted dead colour stage of the composition can be seen locally. Mary's shoulder displays several thinly painted brownish lines that may belong to this stage, over which the loose dressing gown is further elaborated with opaque grey, a yellowish streak and several fairly robust blackish lines. The contour of the bannister rail is indicated with a dark stroke, which may belong to the dead-colour stage. Over this, the lit top of the bannister rail directly behind the

Fig. 1. Panel 60.5 x 77.5 cm

wheel is painted with opaque yellow-ochre. The greyish side of the bannister is also done over this dark underpainting. Infrared reflectography confirms that the composition is brushed in in dark lines (see *Radiography*). A few lines serving to articulate the back wall and visible only in relief in the paint surface show up dark with infrared reflectography. These include a horizontal line in the vertical beam above Mary – a continuation of the top part of the two horizontal beams to either side of the vertical posts. The X-radiographs reveal that light paint may also have been used in the dead colour stage (see *Radiography*).

The composition was then worked up from the back to the front over the dead colour lay-in following a common 17th-century practice, one also used by Rembrandt.[6] This sequence can be deduced from the manner in which the objects in the foreground were reserved in the paint used for sections further back. This is evident in Mary's dark silhouette, which shows up as a dark shape in the X-radiograph. In the paint surface can be seen how the pastose paint of the back wall, the window, and the open book slightly extend under Mary's contours, which are in thin, primarily brown tones. Moreover, the pastose paint of the map and the back wall extends slightly under the contours of Anne's large shadow on the back wall, which shows up dark in the X-radiograph.

The application of paint varies from very thin to very thick. By far the thickest impasto occurs in those parts of the composition that are well lit, namely the lit pages of the book painted in white, clearly visible brushstrokes, the plastered back wall indicated with rugged touches, the girder rendered with vertical strokes directly above and behind Mary, and the map partly done with viscous paint. The lit parts of the figures of Anne and of the Child in the cradle are painted in quite thick impasto, with great attention being given to details, such as the cord held by Anne indicated with a row of light dots. Objects further from the source of light, including those on the table at the right and in the cupboard, also testify to a great con-

Fig. 2. X-Ray

cern for detail. For instance, the lit rims of the upright basket and on the shoes on the table meticulously painted in browns, and the countless catchlights on glass, metal and wood objects also evince this concern for detail. These catchlights have been applied with thick daubs and streaks to gleaming objects in the cupboard and on the table, to the lead strips and hinges of the windows, and to the brass sconce on the mantelpiece on the other side of the room. A few pastose streaks, visible above the sconce suggest yellow highlights, possibly as a result of wearing of the peaks of the impasto. These streaks define a gleaming object, probably an earlier version of the sconce, which was painted over with brown and replaced with the one now visible set slightly lower. Another pentimento shows up clearly in the paint relief, namely in the vertical post above Mary. The vertical strokes defining this post are interrupted in the area around the nail and conceal a basket, which in the final composition was shifted to the left post and set more in shadow. In the region of the bottom of the overpainted basket, a horizontal yellow brushstroke shows through. This may have belonged to the strongest lit part of the basket, done in more pastose paint, which has become visible as a result of wear.

Radiography

The X-radiograph largely corresponds with what one would expect from the paint surface. Chiefly the light, pastose areas in the lit sections of the scene show up light. Also clearly visible are the two objects that were painted over mentioned in *Paint layer*, i.e., the basket on the middle post and the sconce on the mantelpiece. Moreover, small differences between the X-ray image and the paint surface can be observed which, however, must not be considered as pentimenti but rather as minor corrections by the painter in finishing the painting. For instance, Anne's head covering was initially slightly higher, as was the fur trim of her shoulder cloak at the right.

Infrared reflectography reveals the dead colour stage of

Fig. 3. Detail

Fig. 4. Detail

the composition, namely the architectural elements (see *Paint layer*). Another chairleg visible in the reflectographic image, near the front leg of the little chair to the left, is probably part of the lay-in. The X-ray film shows that the pillow in the cradle is only roughly indicated with a few coarse strokes of radioabsorbent paint. From this it may be concluded that the underpainting was executed in dark as well as light paint.

Signature

The licks of dark paint on the wooden floor under the cradle were thought to be the remains of a signature.[7] However, given the place where they were applied, they would seem to indicate the joint between two planks.

2. Comments

The *Holy Family at night* long enjoyed great fame as a painting by Rembrandt. In the 18th century, when the painting was in Paris in the Duc d'Orléans's renown collection, it was highly praised on several occasions and reproduced in print. At the time, it was not recognised as the Holy Family, but interpreted as a genre scene of a family in an interior at night. In 1722, Richardson compared the painting with Correggio's *La Notte*, not because of the image's iconography, but because of its chiaroscuro (see *6. Provenance*).[8] Later in the 18th and early 19th century, the domestic atmosphere of the family scene was emphasised, and expressed in titles and descriptions such as 'la Veillée Hollandoise' and 'The Cradle'.[9] Only in the course of the 19th century was the subject of the painting identified as the Holy Family. Curiously, Hamann still believed it to be a genre scene in 1948.[10]

At the time, Hamann not only disregarded the accepted interpretation of the painting as the Holy Family, he also rejected the traditional attribution to Rembrandt. Until then, no one had given serious thought to the painting's place in Rembrandt's oeuvre: it had been accepted unquestioningly as a work by Rembrandt, and its date of origin generally given as *c.* 1645.[11] Only after Hamann's publication did opinions about the painting begin to differ. Not only was the matter of its attribution now a subject of discussion, but also its date. For instance, following Rosenberg,[12] in 1965 Van Thiel[13] believed that the painting as a Rembrandt should be situated in the late 1630s, while De Vries[14] and Van Gelder[15] maintained the long-standing dating of *c.* 1645. Hamann and others who rejected the Rembrandt attribution also brought up the problem of dating, but then as an argument bolstering their standpoint. Hamann believed that the painting was only partly related to Rembrandt's work of the 1640s, and that it displayed features common to the master's early work. He maintained that the combination of characteristic features from different periods was typical for a painting by a pupil. Since Gerson also omitted the *Holy Family at night* in his 1968 *Rembrandt Paintings* (see note 3), it has been excluded from Rembrandt's oeuvre with no alternative attribution, although Hamann's suggestion of Nicolaes Maes as its possible author is mentioned. As a result, the painting has landed in the diffuse group of anonymous works generally called 'Rembrandt school' whose relationship to Rembrandt's autograph oeuvre remains unclear.

We too do not accept the work as a painting by Rembrandt. However, there are various grounds for situating the painting in Rembrandt's workshop around 1645/46. We believe it to be an independent workshop product by a pupil or an assistant, who took Rembrandt's work as a point of departure regarding the treatment of paint and style, as well as for various motifs. That the picture cannot be considered to be a copy after a lost original seems clear from the pentimenti discussed in *Paint layer*. Moreover, the nature of the reserves indicates that the maker of the Amsterdam painting was not working from a direct model (see I A 14). In the following discussion, arguments are forwarded for situating the *Holy Family at night* in Rembrandt's immediate circle and even in his workshop.

First, looking at the *Holy Family at night*, it is striking how many Rembrandtesque depictions of this subject originated around 1645. One immediately thinks of Rembrandt's own painted *Holy Family* in St Petersburg (V 4) of 1645. Among the Rembrandtesque drawings generally dated to around 1645 are several scenes of the Holy Family, including Rembrandt's *Holy Family in the carpenter's workshop*, whereabouts unknown (fig. 5; Ben. 516).[16] In addition can be mentioned the *Holy Family with painted frame and curtain* in Kassel dated 1646 (V 6), as well as Ferdinand Bol's signed and 1648 dated etching of the *Holy Family*.[17] While these works differ in technique and execution as well as in composition, they do include various motifs used in a closely related manner, such as Joseph as a carpenter shown in profile. It would appear that members of Rembrandt's workshop or pupils who had just left, such as Bol, drew from a common reservoir of motifs and applied them in more or less the same way. Although the motif of Joseph as a carpenter is absent in the Amsterdam *Holy Family at night*, a few other motifs found in the images of the Holy Family mentioned above do occur. For instance, the cradle with the sleeping Child, his head resting on a pillow, is very close to that in a drawing by Rembrandt in Cambridge (Ben. 569). It is also similar to the cradle in Rembrandt's painting of 1645 in St Petersburg with respect to position and type, even though in the latter painting it is provided with a cap, as is the case in the picture in Paris and in a somewhat later drawing attributed to Rembrandt in Berlin (Ben. 873). The porridge bowl with the spoon on the table in the Amsterdam painting is found near the fire in the St Petersburg painting, and prominently situated in the foreground in the Kassel *Holy Family*. The basket (which was moved) hanging from the nail on the left girder in the *Holy Family* in Amsterdam recurs in the painting in Paris, in the etching by Bol mentioned above, and the related working drawing in the British Museum. This basket may have been 'taken' from Elsheimer's *Philemon and Baucis* of *c.* 1608 in Dresden, or from Goudt's print after this painting (see V 27 fig. 5). The figure of Mary with a book recurs in the St Petersburg painting, although in an entirely different pose. Qua pose, the Amsterdam Mary seems to rely on the woman reading in Rembrandt's 1638 etching of *Joseph telling his dreams* (B. 37; see Chapter II fig. 147).

Fig. 5. Rembrandt, *The Holy Family in the carpenter's workshop*, *c.* 1645, pen and brown ink with brown wash, touched with white, 18.4 x 24.6 cm (Ben. 516). Whereabouts unknown

These motifs link the painting to a group of works by Rembrandt and his circle from around 1645. However, locating the origins of the painting in Rembrandt's workshop cannot be based solely on this fact, for Rembrandt's pupils used such motifs once they had moved on. Another argument, however, can be advanced to support the painting's origins in Rembrandt's workshop in the form of a wash drawing, whose whereabouts are unknown, that has received little attention in the Rembrandt literature (*5. Copies*, 1; fig. 6). The sheet was mentioned in the collection of Jonathan Richardson Sr (1665-1745) in 1722 as by Rembrandt, an attribution which has long been repudiated. Despite a few differences, the composition of this highly detailed drawing in pen and wash largely agrees with that of the painting. Details in the painting, for instance the subdivision of the panes of glass with strips of lead, are not found in the drawing, and minor deviations are evident in the illumination in both works. The most significant difference is the drawing's rather more elongated composition. This is not just due to the fact that the drawing includes more of the scene at the left and right, but also reflects a disparity in the proportions of the individual elements. For instance, this becomes clear when comparing the figure of Anne in the painting and in the drawing; the figures and other parts as too are somewhat wider than in the painting, which lends weight to the idea of the drawing having been made after the painting rather than as a preparatory study. The tendency to enlarge figures somewhat while copying has been noted in other instances (see I A 14, I A 40 and V 23). Finally, the drawing relies on the finished painting, and not on an earlier phase in its genesis in which the basket and the sconce occupied a different place in the interior.

The existence of a painting and a fairly precise drawing after it strongly supports a date and place of origin for both of around 1646 in Rembrandt's workshop. At that time, as in the period around 1635, a group of drawn copies of the same type as the one after the present painting were made after Rembrandt's own work. In the use of washes and contour lines the drawing after the *Holy Family at night* is so similar to one of these, namely the one after the *Nativity* in Munich (V 11 fig. 6), that they make the impression of being by the same hand. Such elaborate drawn copies probably served a function in drawing instruction in Rembrandt's workshop. The emphasis on the rendering of shadows with washes accords with one of the steps in the learning process as described by Goeree, namely the copying of paintings. According to Goeree, in this way not only did prospective painters learn 'to reduce the proportions of a large [image]',[18] but also practised 'conveying in their drawing the *houdinge*, the fitting advancements and recessions in the picture space that are in the painting.'[19] That the present painting was chosen for this purpose may well indicate that it was considered a work of definite quality by the members of Rembrandt's workshop and presumably by Rembrandt himself. The painting discussed here could perhaps be a case where a pupil's work may have served as a model for another pupil (see also V 2).

Along with the choice of subject matter, the use of motifs described above, and the existence of a drawing after the painting by a pupil of Rembrandt, the treatment of light and the manner of painting also connected this painting to works by Rembrandt and his workshop from the mid-1640s. Various paintings from this period bear witness to Rembrandt's intense preoccupation with staging the lighting. The *Holy Family* of 1645 in St Petersburg (V 4), the *Nativity* of 1646 in Munich (V 11), and the *Nocturnal landscape with the Holy Family* in Dublin of 1647 (V 13) afford a sampler of Rembrandt's solutions for the treatment of light in nocturnal scenes with various sources of light. The influence of Rembrandt's interest in light effects on his pupils and assistants can be seen in paintings such as the *Dream of Joseph* in Berlin (V 8) and the *Nativity* in London (V 12).

Compared with the works with nocturnal scenes referred to above, the light effects in the Amsterdam painting are extreme. This is very clear in the case of the cast shadows – both the enormous shadow cast by Anna over the map on the wall, and the complex play of light and shadow on the stairs due to the presence of the large hand spinning wheel. Like the ladder, the spoked wheel appears to have been an object that played a role in Rembrandt's workshop not so much because of its iconographical significance, but as a challenge in rendering light convincingly (see also V 8). That Rembrandt's pupils relied on his work directly when seeking such solutions can be seen in the motif of the nail with a cast shadow in the post above Mary. This motif already occurs on the back wall in Rembrandt's *Holy Family* of 1645 in St Petersburg. In the *Nativity* from 1646 in Munich (V 11), the foreground figure of a shepherd functions as a dark repoussoir obscuring the light source, just as the figure of Mary does in the Amsterdam painting. This element was also adopted by the painter of the workshop variant after the Munich painting that is now in London (V 12). The Munich and Amsterdam paintings also share a similar, extremely pastose application of paint in the most brightly lit sections, although it must be said that these passages differ significantly in quality.

Along with these similarities with autograph works by Rembrandt, clear differences can be noted as well. For

Fig. 6. Copy 1. Rembrandt workshop, pen and ink, 29.4 x 46 cm.
Whereabouts unknown

instance, the Amsterdam painting displays no hierarchy in the organisation of light and shadow, nor in the degree of detail in relation to the depicted space: a hierarchy typical of autograph works by Rembrandt (see Chapter IV). The emphatic use of pastosely applied light reflections, also in objects far removed from the source of light, is particularly characteristic of the anecdotal approach of the painting's maker, who lavishes equal attention on all of the objects in the scene. This attention to detail, however, goes hand in hand with a weak sense of construction. This was noted in the *Introduction* in connection with the large hinges of the closed semi-circular wooden shutter above the windows, which are angled such that the shutter could not be opened despite the cord and the pulley. Also the construction of the stairs with its odd curves, and the treads differing in shape and size, are not convincingly rendered. This anecdotal sense of detail combined with a flawed understanding of construction would appear to add to the justification of the now generally accepted rejection of the painting from Rembrandt's oeuvre.

As is almost always the case, attempts to establish a firm connection between a work that originated in Rembrandt's workshop and the early signed works from the oeuvres of pupils fail here too. This is hardly surprising: after all, as is clear from Houbraken's biographies of Rembrandt's pupils, those pupils came to Rembrandt in order to make his style their own. As a result, both stylistically and technically, their works tend to hide themselves, as it were, within Rembrandt's oeuvre. In the case of the painting under discussion here, it would seem that it had already been absorbed into Rembrandt's oeuvre during his own lifetime. The fact that it was copied in a drawing by another pupil (by way of exercise, it would appear) can be taken as an indication that in Rembrandt's workshop (with the approval of the master?) it was regarded as an exemplary work. Our suggestion under *6. Provenance*, that the painting was acquired by Jan Six, would also corroborate the idea that it must have been considered a work of special quality. An art-lover like Jan Six would perhaps have seen it as a representative work in Rembrandt's style – as if by Rembrandt himself. Once again, we are faced with the problem that was raised in the discussion of the *Bathsheba* in New York (see V 2).

The grounds for an attribution to another painter, such as Nicolaes Maes, as suggested by Hamann, Bauch and Gerson, are not yet solid enough. While the motif of the cradle with the Christ Child is, indeed, found in a few of Maes' early genre paintings from the 1650s,[20] the illumination and the manner of painting in these works are too far removed to support an attribution of the *Holy Family at night* to this painter.

In attempting to identify the maker of the Amsterdam painting, a certain affinity can be noted with Salomon Koninck's signed and dated 1646 *Scholar in a study* with

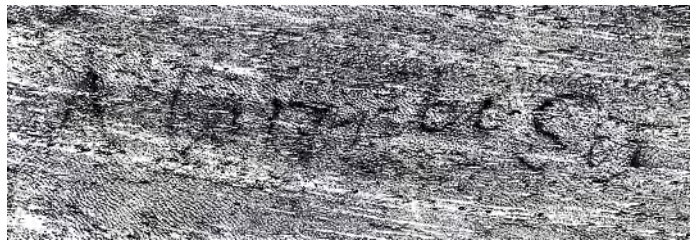
Fig. 7. H. van den Burch, *Christ conversing with Nicodemus*, panel 58.1 x 75.5 cm. Coll. Morsink

respect to the light effects, the cast shadows, and countless catchlights.[21] Other paintings of the 1640s betray Salomon Koninck's familiarity with Rembrandt's work, even though he was not active in the master's workshop.[22] However, arguing against an attribution to Salomon Koninck is the different handling of the paint. In the treatment of paint and light, the work in Amsterdam is closest to Rembrandt's workshop production of the mid-1640s. This also holds true for the working manner, whereby the image was first underpainted with dark and light paint, and subsequently worked up from back to front.

Hofstede de Groot mentioned various old copies of the Amsterdam *Holy Family at night*.[23] It is assumed that one of these, now in Glasgow, was executed in the 18th century at the earliest.[24] It has never been noted that the *Holy Family at night* was imitated in the 17th century, albeit not in Rembrandt's circle, in a painting with an entirely different subject. The Delft painter Hendrick van den Burch based himself on this work for his signed, undated *Christ conversing with Nicodemus* in a private collection (fig. 7). The composition and details in both works are so close that Van den Burch must have seen the *Holy Family*, probably during his stay in Amsterdam in 1659-1660.[25] Particularly striking is how Van den Burch transformed the large wheel in the Amsterdam painting into the back of a chair, which casts a shadow in a similar fashion on the stairs. Van den Burch's painting displays no trace of the unusual use of very pastose paint found in the lit sections of the *Holy Family*.

Upon completion, the *Holy Family at night* remained in Amsterdam for quite some time before entering the collection of the Duc d'Orléans in Paris. At least, this is what we deduce from the inscription 'Margrita Six' on the back of the panel (fig. 8). As Van Thiel already noted, two women bearing this name and living in Amsterdam can theoretically be connected with this inscription: Margaretha Six (1653-1704), daughter of Pieter Six and Johanna Six; and Margaretha Six (1666-1718), daughter of Jan Six and Margaretha Tulp. We believe that the latter Margaretha Six was the most likely owner of the painting, which she appears to have inherited from her parents. This would mean that Jan Six was one of, if not

Fig. 8. Inscription on the back of the panel, infrared photograph



the earliest owner of the painting in question (on this, see *6. Provenance*). The painting most probably landed in Paris shortly after Margaretha Six's death in 1718, where it was seen by Richardson around 1720 on his way to Italy.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

1. Engraving by K.G. Guttenberg (Wöhrd near Nuremberg 1743 - Paris 1790); reproduces the Amsterdam painting in reverse. Inscribed: *Peint par Rembrant Van Ryn. – Dessiné par Martini. – Gravé par Carl Guttenberg* / (on either side of the Orléans arms) *La veillée – hollandoise* / *De la Galerie de S.A.S. – Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans* / *A.P.D.R.*. Published in: *La Galerie du Palais Royal, gravée d'après les tableaux des différentes écoles qui la composent, … sous la direction de J. Couché*, Paris 1808 (see *6. Provenance*).

2. Etching by Dominique Vivant Denon (Givry 1747 - Paris 1825). Reproduces the painting in reverse.

5. Copies

1. Pen drawing with wash 29.4 x 46 cm, present whereabouts unknown (fig. 6). In the Richardson collection in 1722 (see also *2. Comments*). Reproduces the painting fairly accurately, except for minor deviations such as the exclusion of the lead strips in the windows. The drawing gives more of the scene at the left and right. It was reproduced as a mezzotint by James McArdell around 1755, when it was in the Hudson collection (Charrington 105[III]).

According to Hofstede de Groot, there are various painted copies, one of which on canvas is in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum (op. cit. note 24).

6. Provenance

– Probably owned by Jan Six and Margaretha Tulp, and subsequently inherited by their daughter Margaretha Six. An old inscription in ink on the back of the panel reads 'Margrita Six', possibly to indicate that the painting was intended for her.

When he published the inscription, Van Thiel thought that it most likely referred to Margaretha Six (1653-1704), daughter of Pieter Six and Johanna Six.[26] She died childless in 1704, and left all that she had acquired during her second marriage to Joan de Vries, or had inherited from her mother, to her brother Willem Six (1662-1733). That the painting was not included in the sale of his collection after his death in 1733 must, according to Van Thiel, be explained by the fact that it was already in Paris. Van Thiel excluded the possibility that the inscription could have been referring to Margaretha Six (1666-1718), daughter of Jan Six and Margaretha Tulp, on the ground that the painting was not in the catalogue of Jan Six's paintings auctioned on 6 April 1702. Moreover, as Six's daughter Margaretha made no pur-

chases at this sale, Van Thiel assumed that she was not interested in paintings. However, there is a document that escaped Van Thiel's attention which makes it likely that this Margaretha Six did, in fact, own the *Holy Family at night*. In the inventory of the goods of Jan Six's widow Margaretha Tulp drawn up on 9 October 1709 after the latter's death, several paintings are listed without any further specification of their subject or maker that were intended for Margaretha Six.[27] A very plausible explanation for the inscription 'Margrita Six' on the back of the panel is that it was made to indicate that the *Holy Family at night* was one of the paintings designated for her, and which, therefore, were only mentioned *pro memorie* in the inventory of 1709. It is highly probable that the painting was sold and went to France after the death of Margaretha Six in 1718.

– Coll. Philippe Duc d'Orléans (1674-1723). Mentioned as in the 'Cabinet du lit jaune' of the Palais Royal by Jonathan Richardson in his *Account*: 'A Woman reading to her Mother, while the Old Woman nods in, rocking the Cradle where her Grandchild sleeps: The same Size as the finish'd Drawing my father has, and exactly the same, as far a Drawing and Picture can be. All the good properties of a Picture (of this subject) are here in a very high Degree, and some as high as one can conceive 't is possible to raise them. They are plain People, and in a Cottage; and Nature and Humour must be instead of Grace, and Greatness; the Expression is exquisite; the Colouring warm, and transparent; a vast number of Parts put together with utmost Harmony; and for the Clair-Obscure it may stand in Competition with the Notte of Correggio, or any other picture.'[28] Because Richardson, according to the introduction of his *Account*, visited France in 1720 on his way to Italy, the painting must have been in the collection of the Duc d'Orléans in that year. According to Stryenski, the painting was not in the 1724 inventory drawn up after the death of Philippe d'Orléans.[29] The painting is mentioned in the 1727 *Catalogue des Tableaux Flamands du Cabinet de Feu S.A.R. Mons. Duc' d'Orléans*, Paris (chez d'Houry), 9 June 1727 [not in Lugt], p. 11: 'Rambrant – Un Vieillard, une femme et un Enfant au berceau, sujet de nuit. Toille (sic) Hauteur 1 pied 10 pouces Largeur 2 pieds 4 pouces [= 59.48 x 75.76 cm].' Subsequently, the painting is described by Du Bois de Saint Gelais in his *Description des Tableaux du Palais Royal … dediée a Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans*, Paris 1727, p. 363 (2nd ed. 1737, p. 364): 'Paul Rembran. Une Nuit. Peint sur toile (sic), haut d'un pied dix pouces, large de deux pieds quatre pouces [= 59.48 x 75.76 cm]. Un jeune homme vû par le dos, lit à côté d'une vieille femme; & sur le devant on voit un enfant dans un berceau. La lumière d'une chandelle qui ne paroît pas, éclaire ce Tableau.' *Galerie du Palais Royal…*, Paris 1786-1808, III: 'La Veillée hollandoise, dessiné par Martini, Gravé par Carl Guttenberg. De la Galerie de S.A.S. Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans IIII^{e} Tableau de Rembrant van Ryn. Peint sur Bois, ayant de hauteur 1 Pied 10 Pouces, sur 2 Pieds 4 Pouces de large. Ils étoient autrefois au Palais Royal; mais on les voit aujourd'hui au Rincy où Feu Mgr. le Duc d'Orléans, les fu transporter.'

– Sold from the collection of Philippe Egalité with the other Dutch and Flemish paintings to Thomas Moore Slade who acted on behalf of Lord Kinniard, Mr Morland and Mr Hammersley and brought to England in 1792. Exhibited at 125 Pall Mall, London, April 1793; catalogue *The Orleans Gallery now exhibiting at the Great Room late the Royal Academy, No. 125 Pall Mall*, as no. 34: 'Cradle by Rembrandt'.

– Bought by Richard Payne Knight M.P. (1750-1824) (1000 guineas.[30]

– By descent to Boughton-Knight, Downton Castle, and Peareth Kincaid Lennox, Ludlow.

– In 1965 purchased by the Rijksmuseum.

NOTES

1. R. Hamann, *Rembrandt*, Potsdam 1948, p. 288; supported by Sumowski 1957/58, p. 225.
2. Bauch 1966, p. 49.
3. In Gerson 1968, the *Holy Family at night* is not included in the catalogue; in Br.-Gerson, p. 608, Gerson's opinion that the painting is from Rembrandt's workshop is further explained.
4. Sumowski *Gemälde* IV, no. 1902.
5. T. Dibbits, 'Ooit Rembrandts "vermaarde schilderij": de receptiegeschiedenis van *Heilige Familie bij avond*', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 54 (2006), no. 2, pp. 100-121.
6. On the working sequence, see Vol. I, Chapter II, pp. 11-33, esp. 25-31.
7. P.J.J. van Thiel, 'Rembrandts Heilige Familie bij avond', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 13 (1965), pp. 145-161, esp. 159 note 16.
8. J. Richardson Jr., *An account of some of the statues, bas-reliefs, drawings and paintings in Italy, etc. with remarks*, London 1722, p. 21.
9. Just like *The Holy Family with St Anne* in Paris (III C 87), known from the 18th century as 'Le Ménage du Menuisier'; and the *Holy Family* in Kassel (V 6).
10. Hamann, op. cit.[1], p. 288.
11. Only Bauch suggested a somewhat later dating of around 1650, see K. Bauch, 'Ausstellung holländischer Kunst von 1450-1900 in London', *Zeitschr.f.b.K.* 63 (1929/30), pp. 9-23, esp. 18.
12. J. Rosenberg, 'Die Rembrandt-Ausstellung in Holland', *Kunstchronik* 9 (1956), pp. 345-354, esp. 347.
13. Van Thiel, op. cit.[7], p. 150.
14. A.B. de Vries, *Rembrandt*, Baarn 1956, p. 49.
15. J.G. van Gelder, 'De Heilige Familie bij avond', *Openbaar Kunstbezit* 10 (1966), no. 36.
16. M. Royalton Kisch, *Drawings by Rembrandt and his circle in the British Museum*, London 1992, cat. no. 43.
17. Hollst. III, p. 18 no. 4; the date in the print is difficult to decipher. Bartsch (II no. 4) read it as 1648; Hind (*Catalogue of drawings by Dutch and Flemish artists… in the British Museum* I, London 1915, p. 61 no. 1) as 1643; and Münz (II, pl. 23b) as 1645.
18. W. Goeree, *Inleydinge tot de algemeene teykenkonst*, Amsterdam 1697^{3} (1668), p. 33: 'van een groote, in een kleine proportie brengen'.
19. Goeree, op. cit.[18], p. 34: 'de houdinge, en de betamelijke voor en agteruytwijkingen, die inde Schilderye is, ook in sijn Teikening overbrengen.' See for *houdinge*, P. Taylor, 'The concept of "Houding" in Dutch art theory', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992), pp. 210-232.
20. For example, see Sumowski *Gemälde* III, no. 1331 and 1336.
21. Sumowski *Gemälde* III, no. 1134.
22. Sumowski *Gemälde* III, esp. p. 1628.
23. HdG 91.
24. Cat. *Dutch and Flemish, Netherlandish and German paintings in the Glasgow Art Gallery*, Glasgow 1961, no. 98.
25. See on this: P. Sutton, 'Hendrick van den Burch', *Burl. Mag.* 122 (1980), pp. 315-326.
26. Van Thiel, op. cit.[7], pp. 150-151.
27. GAA, not. S. Wijmer, NA 4845, act 78, pp. 717-783 and 784-796, d.d. 9 October 1709, esp. pp. 729 and 733.
28. Richardson, op. cit.[8], p. 21.
29. C. Stryienski, *La galerie du Régent Philippe, duc d'Orléans*, Paris 1913, p. 182, no. 398.
30. W. Buchanan, *Memoirs of painting, with a chronological history of the importation of pictures by the great masters into England since the French Revolution*, London 1824, vol. I, p. 196.

V 6 Rembrandt or pupil – The Holy Family with painted frame and curtain 1646

KASSEL, STAATLICHE MUSEEN KASSEL, GEMÄLDEGALERIE ALTE MEISTER, CAT. NO. GK 240

HDG 90; BR. 572; BAUCH 77; GERSON 212; TÜMPEL 66

1. Introduction and description

The Kassel *Holy Family* with its painted frame and *trompe-l'oeil* curtain is one of Rembrandt's most popular paintings. However, closer examination of the work raises the question of whether it really was executed by Rembrandt. Weighing the arguments for and against the authenticity of the painting is particularly complicated in this case, largely because considerable areas of the painting are almost inaccessible due to a thick, murkily discoloured layer of varnish. In its well preserved parts, the painting shows a remarkable kinship with a painting whose attribution to Rembrandt is widely doubted, *The Prophetess Anna in the Temple* in Edinburgh (V 17).

In the lit foreground of a dusky room Mary sits on a low chair with a red back and holds the child. She wears a white headdress, the material gathered into pleats and held in place behind by a red and blue band. An embroidered white scarf is draped around her shoulders. Her brown dress has a hint of green. A large, light grey-blue cloth or cloak lies over the back of the chair and over Mary's right knee. She has wrapped a corner of what appears to be the same cloth around the child. The infant Jesus is dressed in a brick-red outfit from which emerge the white collar and the yellow sleeve of different undergarments. The child rests one foot on Maria's lap and clasps her neck with both hands. Jesus has slightly opened his mouth and appears to be frowning, perhaps crying. The postures and gestures of Mary and child, together with the disordered bedclothes of the cradle, give the impression that Mary has just lifted the child out of the cradle to comfort him.

On the left behind Mary there is a four-poster bed with the curtains open. The near curtain is draped over the head of the bed, from which protrude a few straws. In the foreground on the far left there is a wicker cradle with sheets and a blanket decorated with light blue and yellowish stripes. Between the bed and the cradle stands a wooden board. A wood fire burns at Mary's bare feet. Huddled next to the fire is a cat with its eyes fixed on a reddish brown, earthenware porridge bowl with a spoon. Behind and to the right of Mary there is an object that appears to be a low chair with crossed legs; grey, oblique strokes may be read as indicating the back, while two horizontal shapes could be seen as the armrests.

The space in which Mary and the child are located is difficult to define. It appears to be completely open on the right, with access to the outdoors. More to the left in a rear wall there is a high, arched window recess which is closed off at the back by what appears to be an iron grill. In front of this stands a main upright post which supports a cross beam and diagonal braces which in turn support the beams of a wooden ceiling. This ceiling, however, covers only part of the space, thus creating the impression that Mary is sitting under a wooden lean-to. In the catalogue of the Kassel collection, published in 1888, Eisenmann described this structure as a hut built into the ruins of a building with pointed arches.[1]

The structural post just described, on which hangs a large flat hat, stands centrally, and behind it, set obliquely, or perhaps built around it, is a bench. Beneath the broad plank of the bench top a second plank protrudes at its right end. On its front there are long planks, those at the top ending in a curved line and those below in a shallow S-shape. The bottom of the bench's right vertical end piece seems to be shaped as a volute. The spatial placement of this object and its scale are, however, unclear; the orthogonal line of its top does not match the perspective construction of the two steps to its right. These steps lead down and, so it would seem, outside.

There we see Joseph in the dusk before trees that stand out against a greyish blue sky. Joseph raises an axe with both hands; his left leg rests on a length of wood which is placed obliquely over, or against one of the steps, or is perhaps positioned behind it. Here again the representation of the space is unclear. In front of the two steps there is a wooden balustrade-like panel with blind niches.

Painted around the scene described is a wooden frame that appears to be made of shiny wood. The bottom edge of the frame is decorated with scroll-like ornaments which gleam with such striking yellow highlights that they appear to be gilded. The basket arch crowning the frame, which also has some scrollwork decoration, rests on fluted pilasters, the one on the right being largely concealed by a red curtain hanging on shiny yellow rings from a rod, apparently made of metal. The rod casts its shadow on the painted frame, both at the right and left.

Working conditions

Examined in October 1968 (J.B., B.H.), in 1973 (J.B., E.v.d.W.), on 30 January 1989 (E.v.d.W., M.d.W.) and on 25-28 January 1994 (M.F., E.v.d.W.): the painting out of the frame in good light, with the aid of a stereomicroscope, infrared reflectography, an ultraviolet lamp and a complete set of X-radiographs.

Observation is hindered by the yellowed and fairly opaque layer of varnish and the very pronounced varnish craquelure. This problem was temporarily alleviated by the conservator of the Gemäldegalerie during the last of the examinations by locally wetting the surface with an appropriate substance.

Support

Oak, grain horizontal, top sawn in the shape of a flattened trapezium, 46.8 x 68.4 cm. Thickness 0.8 to 1.4 cm. One piece. Broad bevelling is found at the left, slightly less at the bottom, and very little on the right. The almost complete absence of bevelling on the three sides of the top is an indication that the panel was cut down there by a later hand. Only along the right oblique side is there extremely narrow, local bevelling, evidently so that after being cut down the sawn panel could still be seated in the rebate of a frame on that side as well. In a drawn copy in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (see *5. Copies*, 1; fig. 3) the depicted frame is larger, with a complete basket arch. Given the great fidelity of this copy, it may be considered a reliable document regarding the original form of the painted frame. On the basis of this drawing it is fair to assume that strips of this trompe l'oeil frame were also

Fig. 1. Panel 46.8 x 68.4 cm

Fig. 3. Copy 1. Rembrandt workshop, *The Holy Family*, black and red chalk with brown wash on vellum, 22.4 x 28 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum

Fig. 2. X-Ray

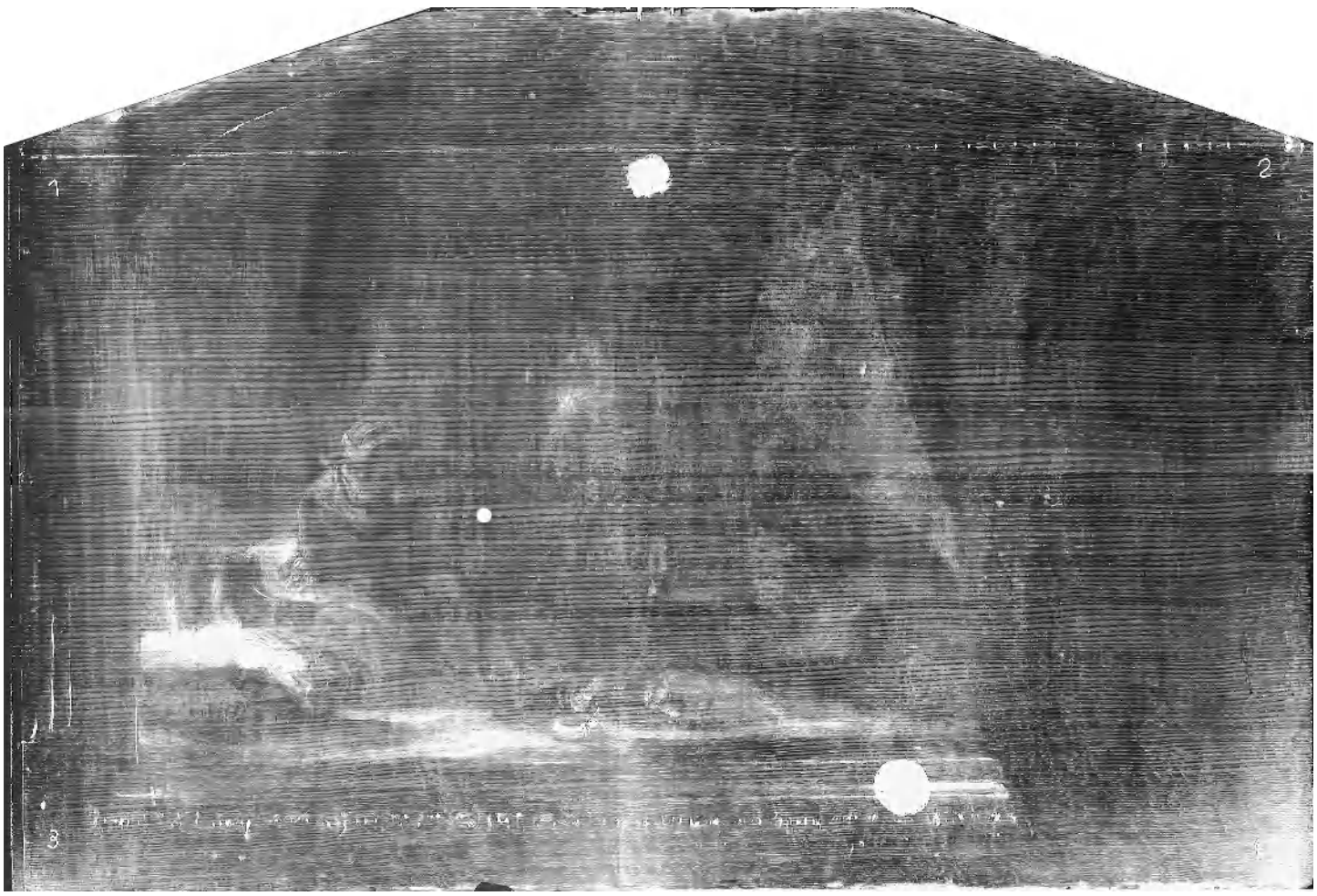


Fig. 4. Infrared reflectography

Fig. 5. Detail with signature (enlarged)

sawn off along the sides and the bottom. Accordingly, the dimensions of the panel might originally have been about 58 x 72 cm, in keeping with a standard format widely used in the 17th century which measured app. 73 x 50 to 60 cm.[2]

The suspicion that the panel has been reduced cannot be confirmed by examination of the edges of the paint surface, since they have been filled and retouched all around. This in itself, however, is a strong indication that the ground and paint layers along the edges had been damaged, which supports the theory of strips of the panel being removed. The probability that the painting was cut down at the top is reinforced by the fact that there are remnants of auricular ornaments, such as are seen in the Oxford drawing. A print by Oortman published in 1809 shows the painting in its present format, from which it can be concluded that it was reduced before that date (see *4. Graphic reproductions*, 1, fig. 18). The dimensions of the work as given in the *Haupt-Catalogus* (begun in 1749) of the Kassel collection correspond so closely to the present ones that we can safely assume that it was cut down before its acquisition for this collection in 1752 (see *6. Provenance*). The curious remark in this catalogue that the painting is octagonal at the top, rather than having a basket arch, as in the drawing in Oxford, also points in this direction. It must be assumed that the term 'octagonal' refers to the form that would result if the panel were similarly shaped at top and bottom.

On the reverse there are two wax seals, one with the words 'Musée Napoleon' and one with a family coat-of-arms showing a chevron with three trees and a helmet. These are probably the arms of the first known 18th-century owner of the painting, Willem Lormier.[3]

Dendrochronological investigation by Prof. Dr. J. Bauch, Hamburg, showed that the youngest heartwood ring dates from 1616. Referring to the sapwood statistics of Eastern Europe, an earliest felling date of 1625 may be inferred, although a more probable felling date lies between 1629..1631…1635 + x (see also *Corpus* IV, p. 658). Assuming a minimum storage time of two years, the very earliest year the painting could have been done is 1627 on. If one assumes a median of 15 sapwood rings and a minimum seasoning time of two years, a more plausible date of creation is from 1633 on. If the panel was indeed originally larger, the last growth ring of the original panel must actually have been later too.

Ground

A yellowish ground layer is visible at many points, including the corner of the bed at the upper left and in the wooden panel with the signature on the right. The ground showing through dominates the colour scheme in such passages as Mary's hair and sleeve (where the ground is exposed by fine scratchmarks), the window and the landscape behind Joseph. The ground is also partially exposed in the lower half of the curtain.

Kühn published an analysis of the ground, describing its colour as whitish grey.[4] Given that the exposed ground is yellowish everywhere, it might be thought that Kühn disregarded the yellowish *primuersel* that is normally found in panels by Rembrandt and his workshop and was applied over the chalk priming (see Vol. I, pp. 18-19). However, the results of his analysis can also be interpreted in a different way. The samples Kühn examined to determine the nature of the ground were usually taken, for understandable reasons, along the edges. Since it is not easy to assess the condition of the edges of a panel that has been cut down on all sides (see *Support*), the possibility that these samples came from later fillings along the edges cannot be discounted. This suspicion is strengthened by the fact that, in addition to chalk and size, the samples contained lead white with an unusual composition.[5] On the other hand, there are signs in the X-ray image which suggest that the ground does, in fact, contain more lead white than usual (see *Radiography*).

Paint layer

Condition: Apart from along the edges, there are no significant paint losses through flaking. However there are places with wearing. Ultraviolet light discloses minor retouches at many points, including at the bottom edge of the frame, in the red curtain, in the cradle, in the cloth draped over the chair and in the child's lip. A larger retouching is seen only at the top right in the painted frame. For a discussion of the possible effects of a varnish regeneration and subsequent copaiba treatment(s), see Craquelure.

Craquelure: A very heavy varnish craquelure makes it virtually impossible to assess the craquelure in the paint by surface inspection. On the basis in part of the X-ray image, however, it seems that the paint layer shows barely any craquelure apart from local fissuring in the dark passages. The latter is particularly evident in the landscape behind Joseph and in the window. Locally, microscopic examination reveals small cloudy pigment traces that have been dislodged from the paint layer and become fixed in the varnish. This indicates that the varnish of the painting has been regenerated with alcohol vapours, as has happened with some of the other Rembrandts in the Kassel collection, and has undergone one or more treatments with paint-weakening copaiba balsam. Such treatment can affect the paint layer, for example the softening of the craquelure edges caused by age and the development of shrinkage cracks.[6] For further assessment of the painting's condition, in particular the extent of local darkening, see *2. Comments* below.

As mentioned under *Ground*, the ground layer is exposed in many places. In these areas a brown to reddish brown underpainting, very deftly done, is visible at numerous points. It can be seen in Joseph's shirt, in the trees above

him, in the roof structure, in the window, in the wooden panel on the right, between the curtains of the four-poster bed and in Mary's neck and hairline. Traces of underpainting are evident in another way too: infrared reflectography reveals freely executed brush lines in the figures. In Joseph's breeches and legs these lines diverge from the forms now visible (figs. 8 and 9). Similarly, among the visible lines adding detail to Mary and the child, infrared reflectography reveals other lines locally which follow a different course and evidently belong to the initial design. In the paint surface, a light underpainting is locally visible in the decorated lower edge of the frame. Thus, between the first and second decorative elements from the right there is an oval, somewhat impastoed form that shows through as reddish. Elsewhere in the frame there are also traces of similar, very deftly painted reddish strokes.

Apart from the strong colour of the curtain, the painting is executed primarily in warm and cool browns and greys, though there are local colour accents enlivening the palette, such as the bright red one-piece suit worn by Jesus, the fire and the brick-red earthenware bowl, the blue and red band on Mary's headdress and the light blue hues in the cloth draped over her chair. There are also places in the views of the landscape where the sky is blue, even if subdued, and the trees green.

The way in which the paint is applied ranges from very thin to extremely thick. In the scene itself, the impasto of the porridge bowl practically models the form. By far the heaviest impasto is found in the painted frame and the curtain rod and rings. The rod, which is indicated in black and grey, has been given a long, white highlight with a series of narrow touches and uncertain strokes. In the curtain rings and the decorative lower edge of the frame, bright, lumpily applied yellow highlights play a prominent role. Otherwise the frame is done in various ochreous shades. The highlights on the horizontal edges at the bottom of the frame become thicker and lighter towards the curtain. In contrast, the intensity of the highlight on the rod decreases towards the right. The repeated scrollwork motifs at the bottom of the frame are executed with remarkable nonchalance in that their width is irregular: the lower arcs of the scrollwork become larger towards the right.

Large parts of the curtain (in which, as described under *Ground*, the yellow ground is exposed or shows through in several passages) have been laid in with rapidly applied, broad strokes of transparent red and blackish and brownish paint. Highlights and shadows have been painted over this adding detail to the folds of the fabric. The highlights are predominantly done in opaque, sometimes slightly coarsely applied licks of a vermilion-like red. The shadows in the curtain's folds are painted with loosely applied, long strokes of black. Here and there the colour of the red curtain has been reinforced with dark red glazes. The loops on which the curtain hangs have been given the same treatment.

The most light falls on the bedding in the cradle; the sheet is painted in impastoed white. In both the paint surface and the X-radiograph can be seen that this light paint initially gave only a very broad indication of the pillow and sheet. At a later stage, the contours of the pillow, the strap and the metal ring to which it is attached were painted over it. The cradle owes its effectiveness not only to the lighting, which is heightened by the impasto in the white, but above all to the bold foreshortening. The structure of the cradle is meticulously rendered. Nails, indicated by dark spots, are visible along the bottom edge at the front. The wicker consists of yellow-brown touches over a darker brown, with a little reddish brown and a local red glaze on the long side, and a russet brown underpainting showing through at the head end.

The chair on which Mary sits is largely in browns and done with a little red glaze and yellow ochre with very thin, whitish highlights. The blanket or cloak hanging over the chair back shows light blue highlights and turns to reddish brown over Mary's thigh in the shadow. The undulating contour of a fold hanging down has been emphasized with a rather tentative yellowish brown line. Otherwise the folds are done with thick black lines. Mary's sleeve is in dark brown applied over the clearly visible yellowish ground, after which numerous very fine, hatching scratches were made in the still wet paint. In the scarf an off-white hue has been painted over a darker colour. The decoration is indicated by a series of black crosses. In both the scarf and the headdress the painted folds appear to be painted effectively but show uncertainty in their execution. This is evident not only in an agitated and almost messy *peinture*, but also in a degree of muddiness in the various gradations of both light and shadow. Mary's dress painted in browns shows narrow green rims of light along the contour of her back and at her hip. As a result, the fabric of the dress seems to have a hint of green, apparently intended to suggest velvet.[7]

Contours and folds in the child's outfit are indicated with deft, linear brush strokes. On the forearm, beige strokes have been applied over the red paint as if to indicate the sleeve of another garment worn under the outfit, and at the neck the thin white line of a collar is visible. The heads of Mary and the child are vaguely modelled. Light and shadow are shown by thin strokes; the eyes and mouths are suggested only cursorily by a few darker streaks, with some red used for both mouths.

In the half dark behind Mary the structure of the four-poster bed and the folds of the curtains are economically indicated in a considered manner using linear brushstrokes that are dark or light according to the illumination. In the lit areas the floor is painted with a light yellowish brown, with general indications in darker brown of the cast shadows of the cradle and Mary. It is not clear whether the dark yellow-brown strip at the front on the right is a step or a floorboard of a darker shade. The shadow of the bowl contains reddish brown. It may be that the reflection of the red terracotta is suggested in this way. The cast shadow behind the cat, on the other hand, is very summarily indicated with a few strokes of dark brown. The cat is rendered with a great many muddy greys, browns and touches of red, together suggesting its fur.

At first sight the wooden roof structure appears to be executed with some thoroughness. In fact this is only true of the front section, where the cracks between the planks

Fig. 6. Detail (1:1)

and the nails holding them in place are indicated by strokes and dots. The beams in the background, and the window with its leading or bars, on the other hand, are done rather coarsely and uncertainly. The same awkwardness is evident in the way in which the oval medallion is incorporated into the window. The depiction of the hat on the upright post is also wanting and the same can be said of the landscape and the figure of Joseph.

In the landscape, the relation between the foliage and the blue sky behind it is completely unclear. Opaque dots and dabs of green or blue directly beside the opening in the pavilion seem to have been applied regardless of the form of the tree. The blue of the sky is indicated by occasional, far from convincing, strokes. The strange spotty effect in the trees does not appear to be due to the condition of the paint surface, although this cannot be entirely ruled out.

Traces of two pentimenti can be seen on the surface. The front bedpost originally continued down to the cradle. The wooden board between bed and cradle was

Fig. 7. Detail of V 17 (1:1)

painted over it later. The second pentimento that is visible in the paint surface is in Mary's headdress, which was initially larger at the back (for other pentimenti see *Radiography*).

Kühn took and examined some paint samples.[8] The kind of pigments he found confirm the obvious 17th-century origin of the painting.

Radiography

The X-radiographs are difficult to read, possibly because the ground contains more (radio-absorbent) lead white than usual. For this reason, and because the paint is thinly applied in most places, the X-ray image shows little contrast. Only the thickly painted elements containing lead white and lead tin yellow, such as the porridge bowl, the floor, the sheet in the cradle, the highlights of the curtain rod and rings and the gleams of light on the frame

GOED BEWERKT NEDERLOF

Fig. 8. Detail

Fig. 9. Detail IRR

can be clearly discerned. The hints of green in Mary's dress and the brushstrokes of the same colour at the top of her skirt show up light, no doubt because the rather thickly applied green paint must contain copper. The windows and the shadowy background to the left of the curtain, in which the figure of Joseph is reserved, also show up somewhat light in the X-ray image.

Several forms in the radiographs do not correlate with what is seen on the paint surface. The pentimenti that are also vaguely discernible to the naked eye – the alteration of the headdress at the back of Mary's head and the bedpost showing through the wooden board behind the cradle – were mentioned above under *Paint layer*. The second of these pentimenti reflects a relatively significant intervention in the composition and light organisation of the painting. During this same intervention the bulk of the white sheet, which originally bulged over the cradle, was reduced. The strap of the cradle was evidently painted over the sheet, since the X-radiograph shows no reserve left for it in the radio absorbent paint of the sheet. Changes have also been made to the distribution of light on the floor. The lit area on both sides of the cast shadow of the cradle originally extended further to the left.

As discussed under *Paint layer*, in the figures infrared reflectography reveals brushstrokes that run differently than those in the final image, for example in the position of Joseph's legs (see fig. 9).

Signature

On the wooden panel on the right: <*Rembrandt.ft./1646*> (fig. 5). The inscription is written in small letters and digits. The letters *t* and *ft* are in a lighter shade of brown than the rest of the signature and difficult to decipher. The last digit of the year is also difficult to make out with the naked eye. With the aid of the microscope the date can be read as *[164]6*.

2. Comments

From the very beginning of the Rembrandt Research Project, the authorship of the Kassel *Holy Family* has been disputed between the team members. Despite external evidence which seems to point to its authenticity, there remained room for doubt as to whether it really is an autograph Rembrandt.[9] The arguments pro and contra will first be summarized before discussing some of these arguments in more detail in the course of these comments.

One argument in favour of its authenticity is the fact that the painting can be considered to be the prototype for a type of painting with a *trompe l'oeil* frame and curtain which appears regularly in the decades that immediately follow the year of origin of this painting (see below). Other evidence for the authenticity of the Kassel painting comes from two highly detailed drawn copies that were almost certainly produced in Rembrandt's workshop after the Kassel painting itself (and not after some possible, lost prototype) (see figs. 3 and 16). Assuming that it was in the first instance the works by the master that were copied in this fashion, the existence of these drawings alone would at first sight support an attribution of the Kassel painting to Rembrandt (see also the discussion below).

On the other hand, doubt over the attribution to Rembrandt is raised by the overall unstable quality of the painting. This was already hinted at in the description above and will be further specified below. The execution is highly variable and seems qualitatively to be below the standard we expect from Rembrandt (see Chapter IV, esp. p. 310). Especially in the middle ground those perspectival cues characteristic for Rembrandt are lacking that would bring clarity to the spatial conception. Despite the daring perspective of the cradle, certain other foreshortened details that are important for the illusion of space appear to have been neglected or confused. This is true, as far as

Fig. 10. V 9 (before restoration)

Fig. 11. V 9 (after restoration)

perspective is concerned, for example, of the unfortunate way in which the orthogonal of the end of the confusing bench in front of the background window stands in relation to the direction taken by the orthogonals of the steps that lead below. The oval of the small bowl, executed in super-pastose paint, does not accord with other perspectival cues (fig. 12). All in all, the spatial conception seems to be atypical for Rembrandt.

However, it can be argued that several factors from the painting's material history have had a detrimental effect on its appearance in this and other respects. To begin with, for much the greater part of the painting the exact condition of the paint layer is very difficult to establish because, as described above, it is covered by an extremely thick, turbid and strongly yellowed layer of varnish (compare figs. 10 and 11). In addition, it seems that the paint layer, especially in the thinner passages in the background, has been over-cleaned, though to what extent is unclear. The thick varnish layer also makes it difficult to establish whether, and if so, to what extent these passages have been touched up by later hands. Certainly, those parts of the image in the gloom have darkened so much and have so merged optically that the suggestion of space more in general is seriously disturbed. This is evident from the fact that the darker passages in the Oxford drawing (fig. 3) are still legible and in their tonal values and their spatial function are effectively differentiated. Whilst it is true that the tonal values in the drawing (which, after all, were done with ink wash on white-ish vellum) may be assumed to be – and to have always been – lighter overall than in the original painting, nevertheless the draughtsman of the Oxford drawing has so carefully differentiated the tonal values that one may cautiously infer that, in the Kassel painting too, the tonal values of shadows of the frame and curtain were relatively heavier than those in the interior where the scene unfolds. Accordingly, the view through the window to the landscape must have been significantly lighter in the painting.

For a better understanding of the changes in the tonal values of the background it should be pointed out that the landscape background, with its present agitated play of transparencies and optically merging, darkened passages with foliage, emphatically recalls the background of the Berlin *Susanna*, which is apparently similarly darkened. This comparison in fact argues for rather than against the attribution of the Kassel painting to Rembrandt (compare the Berlin painting in its present condition with the Budapest drawn copy of the painting in an earlier state (V 1 figs. 1 and 3).

Another factor that may have affected the paint layer unfavourably, albeit to an unknown extent, is that the painting has in the past been subjected to the Pettenkofer regeneration treatment. Microscopic investigation has shown that dissolved paint has been locally assimilated in small 'clouds' into the varnish layer subjected to this treatment, and for the same reason the brushstrokes have been distorted or obscured to a degree that is difficult to ascertain. The question remains as to whether insight into these distortions can contribute to a 'safer' assessment of the painting's pictorial features and qualities. However that may be, there are still arguments relating to quality that raise doubts over the painting's authenticity.

The painting shows many conspicuous weaknesses: to begin with, despite the high degree of detail, some uncertainty is evident in the structure and in the execution of these details. The depiction of the draped fabric and the related effects of light and shadow fails to convince and the same is true of the cradle's ring and strap.

The cat is messy in both design and execution. A great many muddy greys, browns and red touches are used to suggest its fur. The cat's pose and structure (the position of the legs in relation to the body, and of the tail in relation to the hind legs, the proportions of the eyes, nose and split upper lip, the high placing of the ears) betray a markedly clumsy handling. The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the fire done in strokes of thick paint (see fig. 12).

The weak passages cited above betray both a lack of real understanding of the structure of things and poor control of the balance of light and shadow, as well as an unsure hand. This also strikes one, for example, in the figure of Joseph.

The poor execution of this figure of Joseph is evidenced in the thin and sketchy application of the browns over the locally visible ground. The anatomy and the

Fig. 12. Detail (1:1)

Fig. 13. Detail (1:1

depiction of his clothing (the way the head is set on the body, the arm on the shoulder, the knee and calf on the leg, the rendering of the hands, the way the collar runs up to the neck, the contour of the face) are especially flawed and uncertainly handled, with here again thin, messy lines and muddy colours. However, if one compares the execution of Joseph with the sketch of this figure revealed by IR reflectography, one is struck by the conspicuous difference. Whereas the sketched figure is more clearly constructed, the end result is messy (compare figs. 8 and 9).

It became evident earlier, in the case of several paintings formerly attributed to Rembrandt, that there is such a discrepancy between conception and execution in places that it is surely worth considering whether in the present case too, for whatever reason, Rembrandt might have handed over the execution of this painting, if only in part, to another less capable hand (see also Chapter V, pp. 318-319 and V 7, 8, 22).

In some parts, however, the present work is particularly strong, not only in conception but also in the execution. This is true of the figure of Mary and of the child and greater parts of the cradle where one can observe the unusually rich differentiation in the degree of detailing and a surprising variation in the drape of the materials rendered. The most important quality of this part of the painting is its daring placing in relation to a horizon which, in view of the perspectival treatment of the cradle, is relatively low. As a result of this, and of the wide fall of her garment, convincing in relation to the body and its posture, and also as a result of the fabric hanging over the back of the seat, the figure of Mary acquires a 'weight' which is specific to Rembrandt and which verges on the monumental. The deftly executed curtain on the frame also speaks in favour of the attribution to Rembrandt. One can only hope that removal of the varnish will improve the legibility of this painting, which would allow for better analysis of both the effects of its condition and the extent of a possible collaboration between two hands.

An additional complication in the problem of the present painting's attribution stems from the striking stylistic and technical similarities between the Kassel *Holy Family* and the work to be discussed in V 17, the *Prophetess Anna in the Temple* in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh painting is usually dated to 1650 on the basis of the inscription, whose last two ciphers, however, are unreliable. It may have been

Fig. 14. Detail of V 17 (1:1)

painted earlier, possibly even at the same time as the present painting.

In the foreground scene of V 17 (see V 17 fig. 4) the painting betrays the same hand as the foreground scene in the Kassel *Holy Family with painted frame and curtain* (see fig. 6). The similarities between the present painting and the *Prophetess Anna in the Temple* are so compelling that we have to consider whether the two paintings should be attributed to one and the same painter from Rembrandt's immediate circle. Alternatively, one could defend the argument that the two works together represent a stage in Rembrandt's development in the second half of the 1640s.

These similarities are of various kinds. The treatments of the flesh tones in the heads of Mary and the child, on

Fig. 15. Copy 3. Attr. to Philips Koninck, *Virgin and Child next to a cradle*, pen and brown ink, 10.4 x 8.7 cm. Frankfurt, private collection (1:1)

the one hand, and the boy kneeling by Anna on the other, are very similar in the fluent manner in which the transitions of the light zones to the surrounding shadows are handled (figs. 6 and 7). In addition, the hands of Mary and those of the young boy in the Edinburgh painting are remarkably alike: the way the fingers are treated, in the one case intertwined and in the other with the two hands held together, and the way these seemingly flattened fingers are articulated with the general form of the hand. Similarly, the white-ish draperies in the cradle, on the one hand, and Anna's shawl, on the other, are treated in a closely related manner – apparently with an eye to the charging of the light intensity through the application of impasto (figs. 6 and 7) – and compared with the other draperies in either painting they both exhibit a very free approach to their patterns of folding. The affinity is also striking in the details of the glossy furniture and in the feeling for form revealed in such details. Finally, the correspondences in technique and temperament should be pointed out in the execution of the scroll-work in the gilded under edge of the frame in the Kassel painting and the golden cherubim above Anna's head (figs. 13 and 14). Both paintings seem to show a break in the continuity between foreground and background, which at first sight appears awkward. However, we have learnt from the recent restoration history of *Abraham serving the angels* (V 9) dated 1646 how crucial the removal of old thick and tinted varnish layers can be in cases where fore- and background seem to be disconnected (figs. 10 and 11). This lesson should teach us to be very cautious with the paintings we are comparing here when it comes to the question of whether they are autograph works by Rembrandt himself.

As was briefly pointed out at the beginning of these *Comments*, the fact that the present painting is a *trompe l'oeil* of a specific type as well as the existence of a number of 17th-century drawn copies after the work, is highly significant for an attribution of the painting to Rembrandt. Both these points will be developed in the following.

Landgrave Wilhelm VIII of Hesse-Kassel made the following observation in 1752, the year in which he acquired the painting: 'der Rembrandt, wo der Vorhang auf ist, verdient besonders seine stelle bey denen andern zu bekommen, die Vorstellung ist so, als wann das Stück mit dem Pudre gemalt wäre' ['the Rembrandt with the curtain deserves a special place among the other paintings. The image is as though the painting had been done with a powder puff.'].[10] It is noticeable that Wilhelm was concerned above all with how the work was painted and specifically, by referring to the curtain, the fact that is a *trompe l'oeil*. The document makes no mention of the fact that it portrays the Holy Family. The depiction of the family in an everyday manner meant that in the 19th century, too, there was some difficulty in determining the subject. In the 1888 catalogue it was listed as 'Die heilige Familie, bekannt unter den Namen die Holzhackerfamilie'.[11] Yet there can be no doubt that the artist intended to portray the Holy Family. Elements such as the porridge bowl, Joseph chopping wood and the cat belong to the iconographic tradition and are also seen in other paintings of this subject by Rembrandt and his workshop, such as the work of 1645 in St Petersburg (V 4).

The Kassel *Holy Family with painted frame* could be regarded as a painting of a painting. The effect of a *trompe l'oeil* curtain partly covering a painting makes the painting as a two-dimensional object seem part of the *trompe l'oeil* as well. Yet the fact that the curtain rod casts a shadow only on the painted frame, and not on the depiction of the Holy Family, suggests that in the Kassel painting the *trompe l'oeil* element is limited to the frame and the rod attached to its top on which the partly opened curtain hangs.

Wolfgang Kemp pointed out that in Rembrandt's time the practice of hanging a real curtain before a painting was relatively common.[12] The earliest dated example from the period of the Dutch Republic is a regents' portrait of 1644 by Adam Camerarius whose original frame still has hooks and an eye for a, now missing, curtain rod.[13] The custom of putting curtains on paintings probably originated in the Southern Netherlands. In Antwerp paintings of art collections, the works depicted are occasionally equipped with a curtain, as can be seen for example in *The cabinet of Cornelis van der Geest* by Willem van Haecht in 1628.[14] We know from several frames and from paintings and prints of interiors, such as Rembrandt's own etched *Portrait of Jan Six* of 1647 (B. 285) (see p. 80, fig. 87), that in the Dutch Republic curtains were hung in front of paintings from the 1640s onward. The existence of the practice is also attested by several references in documents from the second half of the 17th century. An inventory of 1655, for example, lists 'three silk sea-green curtains to be hung in front of paintings'.[15]

The purpose of this custom is not entirely clear. Oil paintings as a rule withstand the effects of light well.

Fig. 16. Copy 2. Rembrandt workshop, *The Holy Family*, black and red chalk, pen and black ink with brown and grey washes, 19.2 x 28.7 cm. London, The British Museum

Nonetheless, in his 17th-century guide for art lovers, Giulio Mancini (1558-1630) referred to the practice as a means of protecting pictures.[16] But in the 17th century, curtains were also used to 'unveil' a painting only when it was to be viewed. There is a revealing passage in Constantijn Huygens' autobiography in which he says that Rubens' painting *The head of Medusa* was normally covered.[17] In a letter of 1648 Nicolas Poussin applauded the practice of covering paintings with curtains because it enabled the beholder to look at them one by one without overburdening the senses.[18]

According to Tümpel[19] and Kemp,[20] in the case of the Kassel *Holy Family* the painted curtain can also be seen as belonging to a tradition of religious works, including such celebrated paintings as Hugo van der Goes' *The Adoration of the Shepherds* and Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*.[21] From the 11th century, in works in which the emphasis was on Mary as mother, the curtain was used to underscore the 'revelation' of the newborn Christ Child as a sign of the moment when the New Covenant was sealed.[22] The curtain drawn aside could then be the equivalent of the cloth covering the Christ Child which is lifted by Mary, as seen in Rembrandt's *Holy Family* of 1645 in St Petersburg (V 4).[23]

On seeing a curtain painted as a *trompe l'oeil* before a painting, a 17th-century viewer would unquestionably have been reminded of the familiar anecdote about the rivalry between the ancient Greek artists Zeuxis and Parrhasius.[24] The latter depicted a curtain in front of his painting that was so realistic that Zeuxis tried to pull it aside. A reference to this story in a painting could allude to the power of the art of painting to deceive the human eye.

The formula of a painting with a *trompe l'oeil* curtain caught on between the 1640s and 1660s, for example, with the Leiden School (see the *Self-portrait* by Gerrit Dou in Amsterdam).[25] The elaboration of the idea in Leiden is best seen today in the work of Adriaen van Gaesbeeck, whose *Rest on the flight into Egypt* of 1647 in the Lakenhal in Leiden is so closely related in style and subject to the Kassel painting that a direct connection between the two works may be suspected (fig. 17).[26] It is entirely plausible that Van Gaesbeeck had contact with Rembrandt's workshop because he was in Amsterdam, probably from 1 July 1645 and certainly until the end of 1646.[27] This convention was also used, however, by other painters, such as Gerard Houckgeest, Emanuel de Witte and Johannes Vermeer, who worked in other towns in the second half of the 17th century and who seem to have had no direct contact with Rembrandt.

Although elements such as a painted frame or curtain were used as *trompe l'oeil* motifs before the 17th century in the Low Countries and elsewhere,[28] we certainly should not rule out the possibility that the interest in *trompe l'oeil* effects shown by Dutch painters of the second half of the 17th century was given a new impetus by activities in Rembrandt's workshop, where, from about 1639, there was a brief period of interest in the device of *trompe l'oeil*.

Fig. 17. A. van Gaesbeeck, *Rest on the flight into Egypt*, 1647, panel 40 x 48.5 cm.
Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal

The most obvious examples are the pendant portraits of *Nicolaes van Bambeeck* in Brussels and *Agatha Bas* in London of 1641 (III A 144 and III A 145; see also Vol. IV, Chapter III, p. 245) and the *Girl in a picture frame* in Warsaw (Br. 359; see p. 266, 33a), in which the sitters lean on or over a painted frame, or hold on to it.

As far as we know, Rembrandt first used a curtain as a *trompe l'oeil* element in the *Young woman in bed* in Edinburgh (Br. 110), which was probably painted in the first half of the 1640s. We believe that this painting functioned as a *trompe l'oeil* hatch or door, a kind of *trompe l'oeil* that would not have been unusual in the Netherlands. But after that work, the present painting was the first in which a frame with a curtain was introduced as *trompe l'oeil* elements and, it would seem, not only the first from Rembrandt's workshop but in Holland altogether. It was a novelty in Dutch painting, which makes it difficult to believe that the invention should be ascribed to a pupil of Rembrandt, all the more so when we note that this formula was repeated in a pupil's work from 1648, the Copenhagen *Christ at Emmaus* (V 15) of 1648, which we consider to be a pupil's free variant after Rembrandt's *Christ at Emmaus* of 1648 in Paris (V 14).

One could speculate as to whether there may have been a prototype, now lost, on which the Kassel painting was based. But the mere fact that a number of unmistakable pentimenti in the work's genesis are clearly identifiable rules out that possibility (see *Radiography*). Indeed, it is the Kassel work itself which must have played an important role in Rembrandt's workshop since it was copied no less than three times in drawings, two of which are highly detailed. One of these is a cursory pen and ink drawing (fig. 15) attributed by both Gerson[29] and Sumowski[30] to Philips Koninck. In the present context, this latter drawing is of little interest, but the other two drawings, one now in Oxford,[31] the other in London[32] (figs. 3 and 16), certainly are. All three must be copies after the Kassel painting and none could have been based on a hypothetical lost prototype, since they reproduce the painting after the introduction of the pentimenti. Moreover, they unquestionably must have originated in Rembrandt's studio.

One of these drawings, the one in Oxford, has already been briefly considered above. As explained under *Support*, this drawing on vellum almost certainly corresponds to the painting in its original form, that is, before it was cut down by later hands. The drawing in London seems to be no longer complete, as Sumowski pointed out on the basis of the arbitrary cropping along the sides. That is not to say, however, that this drawing – in which the figures, incidentally, are depicted on a considerably larger scale than in the Oxford version – originally showed the whole painting, including the frame. For example, to the extent that it fits into the drawing in its present format, the bed is not an accurate copy. Behind Mary a large cloth is shown hanging over the horizontal beam in the background and partly takes the place of the back of the bed. This could mean that the front of the bed was also incomplete in the drawing in its original form.

A difference of this kind makes it necessary to focus more closely on the question of the relationship between the Oxford and the London drawings and between them and the painting. It is certain that neither drawing was a study for the painting because, as mentioned above, both

Fig. 18 Etching by J.J. Oortman

show the Kassel painting as it was after pentimenti were made. Our belief that these are copies after the Kassel painting itself and not after a putative hypothetical prototype stems from the numerous points of correspondence with the painting, both in many details and in design, the course of the contours and above all the faithful reproduction of 'mistakes', such as the placing of the porridge bowl in an incorrect perspective based on a significantly higher horizon than is implied, for example, by the perspectival construction of the cradle.

As to the relationship between the Oxford and the London drawings, the possibility that the London drawing is a copy after the Oxford one, as Sumowski suggested, can be ruled out. Certain details in the London drawing correspond to the Kassel painting more closely than the same details in the Oxford drawing (compare e.g. Mary's cuff, the child's right foot and the shape of his head). In turn, it is equally impossible that the Oxford drawing could be copied from the London one. The differences described above in the treatment of the passage behind Mary rule this out. The two drawings must therefore have been independently copied from the Kassel painting.

The next question is whether they were drawn by the same person. Both are generally attributed to Nicolaes Maes. Sumowski based this attribution in part on the mixed technique of red and black chalk, black ink and brown and grey washes in both drawings. He suggested on the grounds of the similarities with the drawing technique of Samuel van Hoogstraten that Maes was still under the former's influence when he did these drawings. There are reasons, however, to suppose that a mixed technique of this kind was normal practice in Rembrandt's workshop when paintings were copied in wash drawings as an exercise. The drawings after paintings from the mid-1630s also show the same technique.[33] The two drawings discussed here therefore are not necessarily by the same pupil.

In the present context, however, the identity of the pupil or pupils is far less important than the question of whether such drawings were done *only* after originals by Rembrandt, the master of the workshop. If this was the case, the existence of the Oxford and London drawn copies would support the thesis that the Kassel painting is by Rembrandt. Most drawn copies of this type appear to derive from an autograph work by Rembrandt. However, pen-and-wash drawings are known that relate to paintings which date from the same period as the Kassel work and originated in Rembrandt's workshop but are by a pupil. An example of this is a drawing linked to the genesis of the London *Nativity* (V 12 fig. 5). Another example of such work is a pen-and-wash drawing after the *Holy Family at night* in the Rijksmuseum (V 5, *Copy* 1 fig. 6), a painting now generally considered to be by a pupil of Rembrandt made during his period with Rembrandt. As in the case of the two copies after the Kassel *Holy Family*, this drawing shows slight variations which do not seem to be related to any alterations made while the original was being painted. This suggests that this drawing was also done after the painting had been completed. The existence of this drawing can be seen as evidence that drawn copies may also have been made by pupils after the work of other pupils in Rembrandt's workshop. This possibility must then be borne in mind in the case of the drawings after the Kassel painting, discussed above.

Reviewing all the evidence presented above, and after weighing the arguments both for and against an attribution of the painting to Rembrandt, one can say that there is much in favour of the attribution. Part of the argument against the attribution to Rembrandt might look very different if one could see the painting without the distorting layer of varnish and possible overpaintings. Moreover, if these were removed it might also be possible to investigate whether two hands might have been involved in the creation of this painting.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

1. Etching by Joachim Jan Oortman (Weesp 1777-Paris 1818) inscribed: *Rembrandt. / Dessiné par Plonski. – Gravé par Oortman. / La famille du Bucheron.* Published in: Filhol, *Galérie du Musée Napoléon* VI, Paris 1809, no. 410: '… Peint sur bois; hauteur quarante-huit centimètres ou dix-sept pouces six lignes; largeur soixante-dix centimètres ou deux pieds un pouce six lignes' (fig. 18).

5. Copies

1. Drawing, black and red chalk with brown wash on vellum, 22.4 x 28 cm; Oxford, Ashmolean Museum (fig. 3). Shows the painting fairly accurately with the complete frame, very probably as also seen in the painting before it was cut down. The drawing is generally attributed to Nicolaes Maes (see *2. Comments* and note 31).
2. Drawing, black and red chalk, pen xand black ink with brown and grey washes, 19.2 x 28.7 cm; London, The British Museum (fig. 16). With some variations shows part of the interior with Mary and child; the figure of Joseph is cut off. The drawing has probably been reduced in size. Like copy 1, this drawing is generally attributed to Maes (see *2. Comments* and note 32).
3. Drawing, bistre, 10.4 x 8.7 cm; Frankfurt am Main, private coll. (fig. 15). Reproduces part of the painting with Mary and

child; this partial drawn copy does not add substantially to our understanding of the painting. The drawing is attributed to Philips Koninck (see *2. Comments* and note 30).

6. Provenance

– Despite Hofstede de Groot's statement, not in the collection of Jacques de Roore in Amsterdam and sold to Willem Lormier (fl. 125); nor in the Jacques de Roore sale, The Hague 4 September 1747.[34]

– In the collection of Willem Lormier; loose sheets bound in a copy of the published stock catalogue Willem Lormier (in the R.K.D., Lugt -) contain annotations by Lormier regarding paintings sold by him that preceded the catalogue, which can be dated to *c.* 1754. It includes the following entry under 18 June 1752: 'Landgraaff Hesse Cassel. Rembrand. Roode gordijn, Mari[a] 735:-:-.' (Landgrave Hesse-Kassel. Rembrandt. Red curtain, Mary 735 guilders). The purchase of the painting at this time is confirmed by a letter from Wilhelm VIII to Baron von Häckel of 15 July 1752 (see note 10). The wax seal on the reverse of the Kassel panel with a coat-of-arms showing a chevron, three trees and a helmet is that of Lormier family (see note 3).

Because of the sale in 1752 and the different dimensions, the next reference given by Hofstede de Groot for the Kassel painting cannot refer to this work; in the sale of the collection of Willem Lormier in The Hague on 4 ff July 1763 (Lugt 1307), no. 218 is listed as: 'Rembrand van Ryn. De Heylige Famille, in een Vertrek met een vallend ligt. P[anel] Breet 1 V. 9 D. Hoog 1 V. 4.5 D.[= 51.3 x 39.9 cm] (400 aan de Cocq)' (Rembrand van Ryn. The Holy Family in a room with falling light. P[anel] width 1 V. 9 D. Height 1 V. 4.5 D. [= 51.3 x 39.9 cm] (400 to de Cocq) (Hoet-Terw. III. p. 313).

– Coll. Landgrave Wilhelm VIII of Hesse-Kassel. In the *Haupt-Catalogus* begun in 1749 it is described under no. 727: 'Rembrant. Eine Frau mit dem Kind, welche beym Feuer sich wärmet, dabei eine Katze, auf Holtz oben 8. eckicht, in vergoldeten Rahm … [Höhe] 1 Schuh 6 Zoll [Breite] 2 Schuh 2 Zoll [(Rhineland feet) = 47 x 68 cm]'. The Kassel catalogue of 1783 describes the work on p. 76 under no. 133.

– From 1807 to 1815 in Paris; the back bears a wax seal with the inscription 'Musée Napoleon'; thereafter back in Kassel.

NOTES

1. O. Eisenmann, *Katalog der Königlichen Gemäldengalerie zu Cassel*, Kassel 1888, p. 145.
2. J. Bruyn, 'Een onderzoek naar 17de-eeuwse schilderijformaten, voornamelijk in Noord-Nederland', *O.H.* 93 (1979), pp. 96-115.
3. J.B. Rietstap, *Armorial général*, II, Gouda 1887, p. 98.
4. Kühn, esp. p. 202; H. Kühn, 'Untersuchungen zu den Pigmenten und Malgründen Rembrandts, durchgeführt an den Gemälden der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Kassel', *Maltechnik/Restauro* 82 (1976), pp. 25-33, esp. 32.
5. The lead white contains an unusual ratio of 2PbCO3.Pb(OH)2 (about 40%) to PbCO3 (about 60%).
6. Information kindly provided in January 1994 by Mr H. Brammer, chief restorer at the Gemäldegalerie in Kassel. I.D. van der Werf, K.J. van den Berg, S. Schmitt, J.J. Boon, 'Molecular characterization of copaiba balsam as used in painting techniques and restoration procedures', in: *Studies in Conservation* 45(1) (2000), pp. 1-18.
7. See for example the description of the painting of velvet in: K. van Mander, *Het schilder-boeck*, Haarlem 1604, fol. 44r (quoted in: V 4 note 1).
8. Kühn 1976 (op. cit.[4]), examined three samples. The white taken from the rod from which the curtain hangs was lead white (with traces of copper and silver). Dark yellow taken from the frame consisted of brownish yellow ochre (with some lead white). The light yellow also taken from the frame proved to be lead tin yellow with some quartz added.
9. B. Schnackenburg, *Gesamtkatalog Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister Kassel*, Mainz 1996, pp. 242-243.
10. Eisenmann, op. cit.[1], p. LVIII.
11. Eisenmann, op. cit.[1], pp. 144-146.
12. W. Kemp, *Rembrandt. Die Heilige Familie oder die Kunst, einen Vorhang zu lüften*, Frankfurt am Main 1986, esp. pp. 21-30.
13. Adam Camerarius, *The regents of the orphanage at Naarden*, signed and dated 1644, canvas *c.* 230 x 345 cm; Naarden Burgerweeshuis; see P.J.J. van Thiel, C.J. de Bruyn Kops, exhib. cat. *Prijst de Lijst*, Amsterdam Rijksmuseum 1984, cat. no. 92.
14. Panel 100 x 130 cm; Antwerp, the Rubenshuis, inv. no. s.171.
15. This reference is found in the inventory of the goods which Dina Cornelis Lonck brought into her marriage to Jan Pietersz. Fortuijn. GAA, Notary Joh. Hellerus, NA 2088, pp. 961-968, dated 20 August 1655, esp. 968: 'drye zijde zeegroene gordijnen die men voor schilderijen hanght'. For other references in 17th-century documents, see Van Thiel, De Bruyn Kops, op. cit.[13].
16. G. Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (edizione critica e introduzione di Adriana Marucchi) I, Rome 1956, p. 146: 'Delle tende non è da dubitare che, per conservarle, convengono…'
17. C. Huygens, *Mijn jeugd* (My youth), translated and introduced by C.L. Heesakkers, Amsterdam 1987, pp. 80-81: 'daarop is het afgehouwen hoofd van Medusa geschilderd, omkranst door slangen die uit haar haar ontspruiten. Het gelaat van de wonderschone vrouw heeft zijn gratie nog bewaard, maar tegelijk wekt het afgrijzen door de zojuist ingetreden dood en door de krans van afzichtelijke slangen. De combinatie is zo geraffineerd uitgevoerd, dat de toeschouwer door de plotselinge confrontatie (normaal is het schilderij namelijk afgedekt) geschokt wordt, maar tegelijk de ontroering ondergaat van de levensechtheid en de schoonheid, waarmee het wrede onderwerp is weergegeven.' (It depicts Medusa's severed head wreathed by serpents springing from her hair. The face of the extraordinarily beautiful woman still retains its grace, but at the same time evokes horror through death just having occurred and through the wreath of hideous serpents. The combination is executed with such subtlety that the beholder is at once shocked by the sudden confrontation – because normally the painting is covered – and moved by the truth to life and beauty with which the cruel subject is depicted.)
18. 'L'inuention de couurir vos tableaus est exellente, et les fere voir à un à un fera que l'on s'en lassera moins, car les voyans tous ensemble rempliroit le sens trop à un coup.' Letter of 22 June 1648 to Paul Fréart de Chantelou included in: *Correspondance de Nicolas Poussin*, ed. Ch. Jouanny, Paris 1911 [Archives de l'art français, nouvelle période, V], p. 384; see also Nicolas Poussin, *Lettres et propos sur l'art*, (A. Blunt ed.), Paris 1964, p. 130.
19. Tümpel 1986, pp. 245-246.
20. Kemp, op.cit.[12], pp. 55-69.
21. Panel 97 x 245 cm; Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, cat. no. 1622 A. Canvas 269.5 x 201 cm; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 93.
22. J.K. Eberlein, 'The curtain in Raphael's Sistine Madonna', *Art Bull.* 65 (1983), pp. 61-77, esp. 63.
23. See also J.F. Moffit, 'Rembrandt, revelation and Calvin's curtains', *G. d. B.-A.*, sixth series, 113 (1989), pp. 175-186.
24. C. Plinii Secundi, *Naturalis Historiae*, Liber XXXV, 65.
25. Panel 48 x 37 cm; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. A 86; Sumowski *Gemälde* I, no. 271.
26. Panel 40 x 48.5 cm; Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal, inv. no. 109.
27. See exhib. cat. *Leidse Fijnschilders*, Leiden Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 1988, p. 116: in his notice of intended marriage dated 20 December 1646 at Leiden, Van Gaesbeeck's place of residence is given as Amsterdam.
28. See for example, P. Reuterswärd, 'Tafelförhänget: kring et motiv i holländskt 1600-talsmåleri', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 25 (1956), pp. 97-113; exhib. cat. *La peinture dans la peinture*, Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts 1982/83, pp. 234-237, 271; C.E. Gilbert, 'Grapes, curtains, human beings: the theory of missed mimesis', in: Th.W. Gaetghens (ed.), *Künstlerischer Austausch Artistic Exchange* (Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte Berlin, 15.-20. Juli 1992), Berlin 1993, Vol. II, pp. 413-422.
29. H. Gerson, *Philips Koninck: ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der holländischen Malerei des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1936, p_x161.
30. Sumowski *Drawings* VI, no. 1411 $_x$.
31. Sumowski *Drawings* VIII, no. 1791$_x$.
32. Sumowski *Drawings* VIII, no. 1790 $_x$.
33. J. Bruyn, 'Rembrandt's workshop: function & production', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, pp. 68-89, esp. 75.
34. HdG 90.

V 7 Rembrandt and pupil – Tobit and Anna with the kid

BERLIN, STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN, GEMÄLDEGALERIE, CAT. NO. 805

HDG 64; BR. 514; BAUCH 26; GERSON 209; TÜMPEL 20*

1. Introduction and description

Two small, closely related paintings, *Tobit and Anna with the kid*, discussed here, and *Joseph's dream* examined in the next entry (V 8), raise questions about working and teaching practices in Rembrandt's workshop. The entry on *Joseph's dream* will assess the relationship and the differences between these two paintings and propose an explanation of the genesis of these works based on a putative aspect of workshop practice. The present entry looks first at the question of what *Tobit and Anna and the kid* would have meant for a 17th-century viewer. Following this, the possible connections between the Berlin painting and a number of drawings of the same subject are considered.

The scene with Tobit, Anna and the kid is an episode in the apocryphal Book of Tobit. The blind and impoverished Tobit waits for his wife Anna, who is coming home with the earnings from her work. The painting is based on Tobit 2:11 And my wife Anna did take women's works to do.

2:12 And when she had sent them home to the owners, they paid her wages, and gave her also besides a kid.

2:13 And when it was in my house, and began to cry, I said unto her, From whence is this kid? is it not stolen? render it to the owners; for it is not lawful to eat any thing that is stolen.

2:14 But she replied upon me, It was given for a gift more than the wages. Howbeit I did not believe her, but bade her render it to the owners: and I was abashed at her. But she replied upon me, Where are thine alms and thy righteous deeds? behold, thou and all thy works are known.

3:1 Then I being grieved did weep, and in my sorrow prayed …

Tobit sits in an armchair before an open fire with Anna standing beside him at the centre of a rather dilapidated room, whose rear wall runs parallel to the picture plane. The room is lit by daylight entering through one of two large windows. Tobit is wearing a long robe and a cap; he holds a stick in his left hand, which rests on the arm of the chair, and gestures with his other hand as though arguing. This gesture and his open mouth indicate that he is talking to Anna and the tilt of his head seems to emphasize his dismay and sorrow. Anna is wearing dark clothes and a light neckerchief; a bag hangs from her belt. With her left hand at her waist and the other holding a rope to which the struggling kid is tied, she looks at Tobit.

The room in which Tobit and Anna are situated and its furnishings are depicted in considerable detail. Behind Tobit is a closed door; to his right, against the rear wall, stands a bed on a raised floor. From a cross beam fixed to the ceiling hang opened curtains that are draped over the foot and head of the bed. To the left of the kid there is a cupboard with its top right door open and on it lies a white cloth. In the wall above this cupboard there is a rough opening in which stand an earthenware pot in a yellow metal frame with ring-shaped handles and a copper bowl. There are two large windows with leaded glass; the lower part of the one further to the rear is covered by a curtain. The lower part of the nearer window is opened inwards. The post between the windows forms the support for a long beam running parallel to the rear wall. Behind this beam a second one can be seen in the opening in the wall with a plank leaning against it. At the top left the backlit brace strengthening a third beam is visible. On these beams rest five planks at unequal intervals. Between the fourth and fifth plank there is an opening in the middle of the ceiling through which a space above can be seen. Across the beams lies a nursing basket, which extends deep into the space behind. Beside it ropes hang over the middle beam. From the brace which supports this beam and which is fixed to the post hangs a vessel on red cords. Under the open window is a bench, to the left of which lies a red cushion, visible through the spokes of a spinning wheel. In front of this wheel there is a low basket.

Working conditions

Examined in November 1968 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.), in December 1988 (P.B., E.v.d.W.), in April 1992 (M.F., V.M.) and in July 1993 (M.F., V.M., E.v.d.W.): in good daylight and artificial light, out of the frame and with the aid of a stereomicroscope and an X-radiograph, covering the whole painting, infrared reflectography and neutron activation autoradiography. The painting is covered with a thin, yellowed layer of varnish which, together with local degradation of the paint surface (see *Paint layer* Condition), impedes examination.

Support

Jequitiba panel, grain horizontal, *c.* 20.2 (± 0.2) x 28 (± 0.2) cm. Thickness at left 0.4 cm, at right 0.6 cm. Single plank. A strip 0.7 cm wide was later added to the bottom edge, possibly to replace a strip of the original panel. Back bevelled on all four sides over a width varying from 1.7 cm (on the right and the greatest width on the left) to *c.* 0.7 cm at top and bottom.

The wood has been identified as 'Jequitiba' (*Cariniana sp.*); the panel of V 8 is from the same tree.[1] According to P. Klein (Hamburg) such panels of South and Central American origin were often parts of sugar cases.[2] See also *Corpus* IV, p. 657.

Ground

A yellowish ground almost everywhere covered by reddish-brown underpainting is visible to the left above the door, to the right of the slanting beam in the recess and just under the end of the nursing basket; it shows through in transparent parts of the background and in Anna's clothing.

Paint layer

Condition: The condition of the paint is good in the main parts of the painting, apart from a disturbance of the surface in which the contrasts and the light effects are impaired by a locally occurring grey haze of degraded paint. The paint is affected locally, particularly on the right, by severe shrinkage cracks. The appearance of the paint and crack pattern may have been influenced by one

Fig. 1. Panel 20.2 x 28 cm

or more Pettenkofer treatments. Thus, above the fire, particles of loose pigment were observed with a stereomicroscope in the varnish. At the top, in the middle of the planks and beams of the ceiling, there are quite extensive areas of retouching which are also visible by ultraviolet fluorescence. At the lower right, close to the edge of the original panel, another retouched spot can be seen.

Craquelure: The thickly painted greyish white of the window openings has a fine pattern of small, mainly horizontal fissures. Otherwise, as stated, at many points (e.g. in the floor, in front of the fire, above the door, beside and below the bench on the left under the window) an irregular pattern of shrinkage cracks is seen. On the right, in the bed, they are quite short and broad.

The appearance of this small painting is partly determined by the transparent, reddish brown underpainting which was applied over the yellowish ground and is locally exposed or shines through. This contributes to the warmth of the colour scheme based on grey and yellow but predominantly brown and black shades. The red cords by which the vessel is suspended in front of the window, the subdued red of the cushion behind the spinning wheel in the left foreground and the yellow and red flames of the fire form the strongest colour accents, though they merge into the general palette. As stated above, many details are depicted. Yet the execution is far from being detailed throughout. Some of the lit forms are executed in an uncontrolled manner with lumpy, thick paint. This is particularly so in the case of the windowsill, the cupboard and the lit parts of the wall and floor. Elsewhere, on the other hand, as in the figure of Anna, and in the rendering of the leaded-glass window, a very steady hand is evident. The lights in the earthenware and copper vessels are indicated by small, exactly placed dabs and thickly applied lines. The impastoed paint has been applied with a high degree of control. In the open lower near window through which light streams, the brushstrokes run in the direction of the light. The lit parts of the window frame are set against this in composed, opaque yellowish brushstrokes. In the upper half of this window the painter has indicated lead strips with very thin painted black lines.

The indistinctness of certain elements in the painting, for instance in the figure of Tobit and in the kid, can be explained to some extent by the degradation of small parts of the paint surface. Alterations can be seen in Anna's contour, particularly in her shoulders. Originally, a larger reserve was left in the background for her right shoulder, so that a narrow gap between the impasto of the background and her present shoulder remains. In the case

Fig. 2. X-Ray

of her left shoulder and upper arm, a correction has been made by applying grey paint over an earlier contour; this may have been intended to turn slightly the figure which was originally placed more frontally. See *Radiography* for alterations to the figure of Tobit and for a quite significant change, also visible in relief, where the cupboard is located.

Radiography

In the region of the window, the X-ray image is impaired by a large wax seal on the back of the panel. A horizontally running pattern is visible over the entire surface that corresponds with the ground-filled grain of the panel. Otherwise, the X-radiograph broadly corresponds to what might be expected from the paint surface. Passages in the painting which absorb X-rays are found in and near the window in particular and in the lit part of the wall in which a rough reserve has been left for the figures of Anna and the kid. The reserve for Anna is slightly larger at her right shoulder than the final contour. The reserve for the kid was considerably smaller than the final form and suggests that the painter did not yet have a clear idea of the pose and positioning of the animal. Where the cupboard stands, the X-radiograph shows a dark oval form left in reserve against the light surroundings which must have been part of an earlier version of the spinning wheel now placed in the left foreground. Above this oval shape the X-radiograph reveals a horizontal, light band which could be interpreted as indicating a board. In the wall above, which shows up less lightly, reserves are left for shapes which suggest that kitchenware was intended on this board. The spinning wheel and the board can be seen in relief on the paint surface by raking light. Where a curtain covers the window, two light areas are visible in the X-radiograph. It is possible that this window was first depicted uncovered. Vague shapes to the right of Tobit correspond in part to elements in the present painting, especially the bed curtains. The X-radiograph clearly shows the strip added to the bottom of the panel. Also evident in the X-ray image are the horizontal craquelure pattern of the window openings and the shrinkage cracks on the left below the window and in the chair, the curtains and the bed among other places. The long horizontal band just above the bottom edge appears to belong to the ground rather than to the paint layer, since the pattern of shrinkage cracks found in the latter is absent.

Infrared rays reveal hardly anything more than can already be seen in the paint surface (fig. 3). The black lines in which the contours and internal detail of the figure of Anna are executed do, however, emerge more clearly. In the figure of Tobit and in the chair on which he sits vigor-

Fig. 3. Infrared reflectogram assembly

ous dark lines are visible which cannot be seen on the surface. These dark lines and streaks, particularly near his legs, suggest that alterations were made during the execution of the work. This also applies to the left foreground, where several lines that show up dark may indicate that a form was painted out. This may have been part of the spinning wheel, which included the oval shape in the X-radiograph. Given the asymmetry of the roughly vertical two bands, one of which curves and is thicker towards the top, these lines could also be the hind legs of an earlier version of the kid.

Neutron activation autoradiography yielded no new insights.

Signature

At the lower right, on the side of the raised floor on which the bed stands, in dark paint which is locally strenghtened with transparant brown paint: <*Rembrandt. f 1645*>. The last digit is not clear; it can be read as a *5* but could also be a *6* (fig. 4).

2. Comments

Consideration of the painting's pictorial and stylistic characteristics, their implications for the question of authorship, the interpretation of the pentimenti and the significance of these aspects for the relationship between *Tobit and Anna with the kid* and *Joseph's dream* in the next entry (V 8) will be found in the comments on the latter painting. In what follows below the possible relations are examined between the Berlin *Tobit and Anna* and a number of drawings of the same subject, preceded by a consideration of possible allusions this subject could have had for the 17th-century viewer.

In the 17th century, the apocryphal Book of Tobit was one of the most revered biblical texts. After the Reformation, Christian theology and literature drew on the moral and didactic nature of the text regardless of denomination. The foreword to the Apocrypha in the *Statenbijbel* (authorised Dutch Bible) of 1637 contains a warning that these books '… should not be publicly read in the Congregation … and may [not] be used to confirm any article of faith'.[3] On the other hand, reading them is recommended because 'some good sayings, exhortations and examples may be found in them'.[4]

In general, the central features in the history of the exegesis of Tobit are the obedience of Tobit's son Tobias, who follows his father's instructions by marrying a woman from his own people, and the piety of Tobit himself.[5] It is this piety of Tobit that Rembrandt portrayed in the 1626

Fig. 4. Detail with signature (infrared photograph, enlarged)

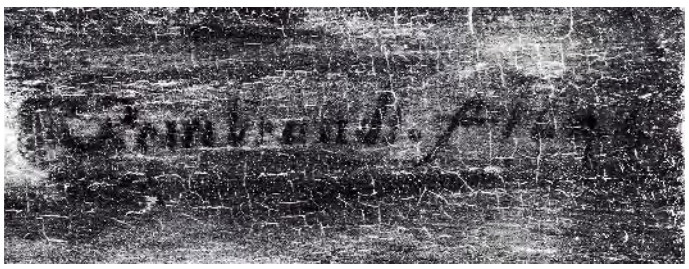


Fig. 5. Pupil or follower by Rembrandt, *Tobit and Anna with the goat,* 1640s, pen and brown ink, 11.9 x 20 cm (Ben. 561). Stockholm, Nationalmuseum

painting of this subject in Amsterdam (I A 3). In this picture, Rembrandt focused on Tobit praying in sorrow (Tobit 3:1-6), with a gesture of despair or remorse. Here, Rembrandt relied on a print by Jan van de Velde after Willem Buytewech with the inscription 'Come wife, return that stolen kid, says Tobit, who sees with his heart though robbed of his sight'.[6] The central theme of Van de Velde's print is not Tobit's praying in sorrow, but his accusation, a slightly earlier moment in the story (Tobit 2:13-14). Tobit's accusation that Anna had stolen the kid she was given in payment for her work is also the subject of the *Tobit and Anna* in Berlin, in which the allegation is expressed by Tobit's raised hand. In the 17th century, Tobit was not only appreciated for his piety, but also for his sense of justice. The Mennonite author Pieter Jansz. Twisck (1566-1636) mentions Tobit as a 'pious, righteous and God-fearing' man.[7] In connection with righteousness, Twisck refers explicitly to Tobit 2:13, which recounts Tobit's accusation.[8] Thus, while the early Amsterdam picture portrays piety, the Berlin painting may have alluded to righteousness in the eyes of the 17th-century viewer. However, the Berlin picture may contain yet another allusion. In the Amsterdam picture, Anna stares at Tobit wide-eyed, while in the Berlin picture, she reacts angrily to the charge of theft, as shown by the hand at her waist. Her gesture and subsequent indignant reaction to Tobit's unjust charge appears to follow contemporary interpretations. Twisck cited Anna's fierce reaction as an example of 'onverduldighe' (impatient) anger under the entry for 'Anger, wroth, indignation, persecution. Interdiction, warning and admonition against anger and indignation.'[9]

Most authors relate the Berlin painting to a group of drawings (Ben. 561, 572 and 584) which also show the accusation of Tobit. A drawing in Stockholm (fig. 5; Ben. 561), considered by Hofstede de Groot as a preparatory drawing for the painting,[10] is no longer regarded as being by Rembrandt, but as the work of a pupil or follower based on Rembrandt's drawing style of the 1640s.[11] With minor changes in the composition, the drawing depicts the same scene with the figures in reverse, Anna with her hand at her hip and the kid digging in its heels. The spinning wheel, however, is in the left foreground, as in the painting. On the basis of these resemblances it could be concluded that the Stockholm drawing is a paraphrase by a pupil of the painting discussed here. It could equally well be argued, however, that the Stockholm drawing and the Berlin painting are both related to a hypothetical, now lost third version.

Apart from slight variations, the poses and placing of the figures in the drawing in Stockholm correspond to those in a drawing in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin (Ben. 572). However, apart from the question of whether it can be attributed to Rembrandt, this drawing must be dated to the 1650s or later and is therefore not relevant to the painting under consideration here.[12] A drawing in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (Ben. 584), whose attribution to Rembrandt is also doubted, has the same subject as the Berlin painting, but this is the only point of resemblance. It is closer to a painting from the School of Rembrandt formerly attributed to Rembrandt, Jan Lievens, Gerrit Willemsz. Horst or Karel van der Pluym,[13] which is now thought to be by an anonymous Rembrandt pupil of the early 1650s. Thus the relationship between these drawings and the Berlin *Tobit and Anna with the kid* lies primarily in the depiction of the same scene from the Book of Tobit. The drawings mentioned here do not afford greater insight into the genesis of the Berlin painting.

For a discussion of the attribution of the painting, see V 8, under *2. Comments*.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance

– Hofstede de Groot mentions a sale Amsterdam 17-18 April 1759 (Lugt 1046) no. 103, described as: 'Tobias zyn Huisvrouw bestraffende, door Rembrand van Rhyn' (Tobit chastising his wife, by Rembrand van Rhyn) (to Yver - 27 guilders).[14] It is, however, unlikely that this refers to the painting discussed here

since there is no mention of *Joseph's dream* although both paintings always seem to have remained together.

– Mentioned in 1769 together with V 8 in the royal collection in Berlin and Potsdam: 'Der blinde Tobias und sein Weib mit dem Böckchen, von Rembrandt.'[15]

– Transferred in 1830 from the royal palaces to the Königliche Museen, Berlin.

– Since 1904 in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, cat. no. 805.

NOTES

1. J. Bauch and D. Eckstein, 'Woodbiological investigations on panels of Rembrandt paintings', *Wood Science and Technology* 15 (1981), pp. 251-263, esp. 254.
2. P. Klein, 'Hat Rembrandt auf Zuckerkistenholz gemalt?', *Zuckerhistorische Beiträge aus der Alten und Neuen Welt*, Schriften aus dem Zucker-Museum, Heft 25, Berlin 1988, pp. 37-43.
3. '… niet en behooren opentlick in de Gemeynte gelesen te worden… en [niet] mogen genomen om eenigh artijckel des geloofs te bevestigen'.
4. 'in deselve oock eenige goede spreucken, vermaningen, ende exemplen gevonden worden'.
5. See, for example, Georg Rollenhagen's *Tobias, eine schöne, tröstliche Comaedia oder Spiel vom heiligen Ehestand* of 1576 (*G. Rollenhagens Spiel von Tobias 1576*, ed. J. Bolte, Halle 1930) and *De historie van den ouden Tobias, ende van zijnen sone den Ionghen Tobias vol schoonder leeringhen*… of 1580 (B. van Selm, *Een menighte treffelijcke Boecken*, Utrecht 1987, p. 278 no. 25).
6. Hollst. IV, p. 77, no. 17: 'Furtivam Uxor, ait Tobias, age redde capellam,/Corde videns, quamvis lumine captus erat.'
7. Pieter Jansz. Twisck, *Concordantie der Heyligher Schrifturen, ofte: Vergadering vande ghelijckluyende Spreuken, Woorden, Gheschiedenißen ende t'Samen-stemmende plaetsen der Heyliger Schrifturen*, Haarlem (Thomas Fonteyn) 1648, p. 190: 'vromen, rechtveerdigen, ende Godt-vreesenden'.
8. Twisck, op. cit. [7], p. 190.
9. Twisck, op. cit. [7], p. 232: 'Toorn, toornigh, gramschap, vervolgentheyt. Verbodt, leer ende waerschouwinghe voor toorn en gramschap.'
10. C. Hofstede de Groot, *Die Handzeichnungen Rembrandts. Versuch eines beschreibenden und kritischen Katalogs*, Haarlem 1906, cat. no. 1549.
11. P. Schatborn in: *Het boek Tobit. Met etsen en tekeningen van Rembrandt en zijn leerlingen*. Foreword C. Tümpel, notes to the reader P. Schatborn, Zeist 1975, p. 56, ill. p. 15.
12. H. Bevers, *Rembrandt. Die Zeichnungen im Berliner Kupferstichkabinett*, Berlin 2006: Holm Bevers does not accept the drawing as autograph. See the forthcoming publication of the second volume of the Berlin catalogue.
13. Sumowski *Gemälde* IV, no. 1935.
14. HdG 64.
15. F. Nicolai, *Beschreibung der Königlichen Residenzstädte Berlin und Potsdam*, Berlin 1769, p. 367. In the third edition, of 1786, II, p. 885, no. 17 the painting is listed as: 'Tobias und sein Weib mit dem Böcklein, von Rembrand'.

V 8 Rembrandt and pupil – Joseph's dream in the stable at Bethlehem

BERLIN, STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN, GEMÄLDEGALERIE, CAT. NO. 806

HDG 85; BR. 569; BAUCH 76; GERSON 210; TÜMPEL 64*

1. Introduction and description

As announced in the entry on *Tobit and Anna with the kid* (V 7), an attempt will be made in this entry to gain insight into a complex and as yet insufficiently understood aspect of Rembrandt's studio practice by comparing and analysing these two paintings. See also Chapter V.

The scene of *Joseph's dream* is based on Matthew 2:13. After the departure of the Magi, an angel appears to Joseph in a dream saying: '… Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.'

In an interior illuminated by a heavenly light piercing the dark clouds above, the sleeping Joseph is slumped forward in the straw, his head supported by his right hand, and a walking stick rests against his pulled up right leg. Standing behind Joseph is the brightly lit angel who bends forward and nudges his shoulder with one hand while pointing to Mary and the Child with the other. Her upper body erect, the sleeping Mary leans against a tall bundle of straw. Her left arm surrounds the bundled up Christ Child lying on top of the straw and her right arm resting in her lap. The head of an ox juts over a slatted partition directly to their right. This partition extends further back and up; a saddlecloth or saddle hangs over it. A board lies on the ground in front of Mary's feet.

At the left is a wall with a door. A pump can be made out in the shadow to the left of the door, while above it is a dark partially boarded area, probably a hay loft. A dark beam can be discerned at the upper edge which partially conceals the heavenly light, and visible beyond and parallel to this beam is another one supported by a spandrel.

Working conditions

Examined in November 1968 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.), in December 1988 (P.B., E.v.d.W.), in April 1992 (M.F., V.M.) and in May 1995 (K.G.): out of the frame in good daylight and artificial light and with the aid of a stereomicroscope, an X-radiograph and an infrared reflectogram. A layer of yellowed varnish with a dense pattern of fine cracks as well as a locally degraded paint surface somewhat impedes observation.

Support

Jequitiba panel, grain horizontal, 20.7 x 27.8 (± 0.2) cm. Single plank. Back bevelled on all four sides, unevenly at the right with the greatest width of 0.9 cm. A horizontal crack extends from just above the middle from both the left and the right edge to *c.* ⅓ of the width of the panel.

The wood has been identified as 'Jequitiba' (*Cariniana sp.)*; the panel of V 7 is from the same tree.[1] See also *Corpus* IV, p. 658. On the possible reuse of the panel, see V 7, under *Support.*

Ground

A yellowish ground is visible or shows through in various areas.

Paint layer

Condition: Visible in large passages of the paint layer are shrinkage cracks with minor local losses. The disturbing effect has been reduced with a thin brown glaze, especially to the left in the architecture. The painting appears to have been retouched along the edges; two darkened retouchings are found at the lower right.

Craquelure: In addition to the shrinkage craquelure mentioned above there is a fine predominantly vertical pattern of cracks. The X-radiograph reveals much radio-absorbent paint which has cracked following this fine pattern. Both craquelure patterns are perceptible in various areas, for example in the lit wall to the left of Joseph.

Characteristic of the execution is an alternately thin and very thick application of paint. Impastoed areas largely correspond with an earlier stage of the painting, which can be discerned in the X-radiograph. In sections of the interior, such as the beam at the top and areas of the foreground, as well as in the shaded area of Joseph's body, thin dark paint has been applied directly over the ground which shows through.

More detailed, illuminated sections of the setting are executed in thin brownish blacks and opaque greys. Opaque black-grey has been used for the dark recesses above the angel and for the cloud at the upper right, which is edged by a light rim of grey adjoining the shaft of light. The light itself is done in a thin, muted yellow merging at the edges into zones where the ground has been left visible.

The figures of Joseph and Mary are depicted in a summary manner, with emphasis on their poses and the illumination. Mary and the angel are mostly done in thick paint. The angel is rendered in shades of broken white, with impastoed white in the light accents on the sleeve, the drapery folds curving along the body at the right, and on the wings. The hair is in yellowish ochre and the face in a pinkish flesh tone with tiny cursory dots of brown for the eyes. For the figure of Joseph, apart from the previously mentioned transparent dark brown in the shaded areas, a more opaque grey brown has been used for the lit parts and a subdued flesh colour for the face and hands. The spottiness of these opaque sections may be a consequence of the local blanching of the paint surface, as was also observed in the *Tobit and Anna with the kid.* A rather large dab of pink defines the ear. Mary's cloak is a thick blue in the lit area and a thinner dark blue in the shaded section, where a yellowish brown ground can be discerned in the shrinkage cracks. Underneath the blue cloak, a long-sleeved garment is indicated in fairly thin brown paint. The folds in the white head covering are described in strokes of thick paint. The face and hands are summarily described with some thick flesh colour, which seems to have been indented near the mouth and in the shadow under the nose. The head of the Child also consists of only a streak of flesh colour amidst the flatly painted red cloth in which he is wrapped. Depending on the angle of the light, the straw surrounding both figures is done in coarse dabs of a yellowish and (right) ruddy ochre. The ox head

Fig. 1. Panel 20.7 x 27.8 cm

in brownish paint is summarily detailed with strokes and dots of black and has been reserved at the left in the thick paint of the straw.

Radiography

The X-ray image is dominated at the left by a wax seal on the back of the panel. The X-radiograph only partially corresponds with what one would expect from the paint surface. The most striking deviation is that the radioabsorbency of the brushwork in the wall above Joseph at the left is as strong as in the most intensely lit areas of the now visible composition. Most likely, a stronger illumination in this area was toned down at a later stage of the painting process. Narrow, diagonal dark reserves with crossbars suggest that a ladder leaning against the illuminated wall was originally depicted here; the short reserve at the far left can perhaps be interpreted as part of the cast shadow of the ladder on the wall. Traces of the straight strokes defining the ladder can still be found in the paint relief. A dark reserve immediately to the right and above Joseph's head indicates that the angel's right wing was initially far less foreshortened. The light paint above this earlier wing is part of a zone showing up light that continues to the right above the head and the other wing of the angel. This wing was also originally rendered differently, in fact wider and higher. The radioabsorbency of the area above the angel is comparable to that above and to the side of Mary's head. Perhaps the section above and to the right of the angel was determined in an earlier phase by light radiating from this figure. While the light in the upper right of the composition barely shows up in the X-radiograph, it shows up very light in the infrared reflectogram assembly (fig. 3) indicating that the ground plays a role in the suggestion of light. For an interpretation of the changes observed, see *2. Comments*.

The shrinkage cracks in Mary's blue cloak and near Joseph's shaded leg are clearly visible in the X-ray image. The infrared reflectografic image reveals the same pattern as well as craquelure in a section at the upper left above the door which extends to the centre of the image.

Signature

At the bottom in dark, thin and severely cracked paint in the underpainting of the board at Mary's feet: <*Rembrandt f 16..*> (fig. 4). Presumably a *4* follows the *6*; traces of the fourth digit are visible, but not interpretable. The letters and digits of the inscription, shown in perspective, are irregularly spaced and shaped.

Fig. 2. X-Ray

2. Comments

The origin and significance of some Rembrandtesque paintings can only be comprehended by envisaging certain features of daily practice in Rembrandt's studio. Doing so requires gaining insight into who did what, how and why. Virtually no light is shed on this in the written sources directly related to Rembrandt and his studio; only the extant works from which these questions arise can serve as sources for answering them. This is the case, however, only when certain phenomena occur with some frequency, and when indirect, written sources contribute to an explanation of the observed phenomena. This pertains to literal copies and to variants made by pupils and assistants after compositions by Rembrandt (see Chapters III and IV). With respect to copies with a somewhat altered composition, or partial copies after works by Rembrandt – usually heads – their frequency betokens a more or less standard studio procedure, even though we have no direct or indirect written sources to elucidate the thinking underlying their production. However, some types of studio works seem so unusual that their function and significance cannot as yet be explained. These works are particularly interesting in that they challenge us to detect a possible unknown feature of the studio practice and stimulate our recognition of comparable instances (see Chapter V). The present painting and the equally enigmatic *Tobit and Anna with the kid* are cases, in point.

On the basis of their identical size and of their shared provenance, which dates back to 1769, the two biblical scenes are generally considered pendants. However, as Valentiner argued as early as 1908,[2] the scenes depicted display no apparent iconographic relationship, unless *Joseph's dream*, like *Tobit and Anna*, contained a specific allusion, familiar to a 17th-century viewer but no longer intelligible to us. Moreover, the difference in scale of the figures could indicate that the paintings are neither companion pieces nor part of an incomplete series. However, there are notable similarities in their material production. As mentioned already, their dimensions are identical and both are painted on panels of the same unusual type of wood originating from a single tree.[3] The patterns of shrinkage cracks, occurring with great frequency in the paint layers of both paintings, are so closely similar that this seems to point to an identical technique, unless they were in both cases caused by an identical restoration treatment, such as the Pettenkofer method. The strong formation of shrinkage cracks may also partly be due to the fact

Fig. 3. Infrared reflectogram assembly

that both paintings experienced similar fairly drastic changes, analysed below.

In the past, these paintings were always given to Rembrandt. Only Tümpel expressed doubt as to Rembrandt's authorship without, however, substantiating his view.[4] Apart from the question of a specific attribution, it is difficult to recognise the same hand in both paintings. Differences in quality and aspects, such as the treatment of details, are too great. In comparison, *Joseph's dream* is clearly the weakest of the two.

Admitting the possibility that more than one artist was involved, one of the two paintings could be by Rembrandt himself and the other by a pupil. Our initial examination of the paintings in Berlin yielded a working hypothesis that *Tobit and Anna with the kid* (V 7) was an autograph Rembrandt while *Joseph's dream* was by another, far less sophisticated painter. Nevertheless, Rembrandt's hand is not ubiquitous in *Tobit and Anna with the kid*. Doubts concerning its authenticity are prompted by weaknesses in the elaboration of certain parts, such as the indistinct figure of Tobit and the curiously formless kid, the clumsiness of the impasto, for example in the grey of the illuminated wall and the unconvincing handling of light. However, outright rejection of the painting is contradicted by the execution of other parts, such as the figure of Anna. She is defined in powerful black lines in Rembrandt's characteristic block-shaped forms and reveals great insight into pose and – only evident upon close scrutiny – an exceptionally effective depiction of the hands. The painting's most convincing aspect is the command of the spatial structure, designed with a surprising sense of detail and remarkable insight into the construction of things (cf. the window opening and the accompanying framework of beams). In this connection, the great consistency of the execution and the understanding of perspective, evident in such details as the leaded glass of the upper window and the intricacy of the piece of crockery hanging in the window, are telling features that favour an attribution to Rembrandt.

How, then, to interpret the weaknesses just described? They can be partly explained by the painting's condition. Microscopic analysis reveals that the peaks of the paint relief are degraded and display a microscopically fine pattern of cracks. This effect is probably reinforced by local erosion of the varnish layer. As a result, regardless of the actual colour, the tone of the paint in these areas is grey to light grey. The painting's small scale also contributes to the negative effect these discolourations have on the read-

Fig. 4. Detail with signature (1 : 1)

ability of the pictorial aspects. They disrupt the gradation of tonal values of the lit wall, for example, or passages such as Tobit's clothing, his raised hand and his beard, as well as the part of the background before which he is seated. Generally speaking they also interfere with contrasts and tonal relationships, such as near the left contour of Anna and within the silhouette of the kid, thereby disturbing the spatial relations within the painting. As a result of this damage to the surface, which manifests itself as grey blotches, the interrelation of light and space loses all subtlety. Furthermore, the painting's condition may have been adversely affected by the Pettenkofer treatment it probably was subjected to, which can dissolve detail. This effect of blurring also results from the shrinkage cracks, for example near the bed, which certainly degraded any sense of pictorial illusionism. These observations concerning the painting's condition would mitigate some of the arguments against Rembrandt's authorship.

Still, some stylistic and qualitative aspects do deviate from common features of autograph paintings by Rembrandt. The handling of the impasto, especially in the wall, the cabinet, the windowsill and the floor is unusual. These areas suggest a painter with but limited command of the workability of his impastoed paint: the fairly thickly applied paint in the lit parts of these areas displays a bumpy, syrupy, stringy texture alien to Rembrandt.

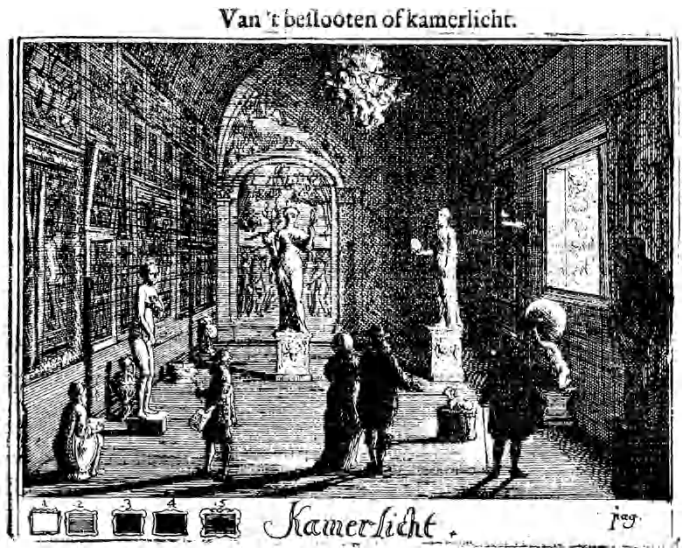
In short, while there is much in favour of *Tobit and Anna with the kid* being by Rembrandt, as has always been assumed, there are also arguments against this attribution. The above deliberations suggest that part of the painting was executed by Rembrandt and part, particularly the impasto, by another artist.

The striking pastose treatment of the paint characteristic of *Joseph's dream* is not unusual for Rembrandt's works of the mid-1640s; for example, the Munich *Nativity* of 1646 (V 11) and the figures in the Dublin *Nocturnal landscape with the Holy Family* of 1647 (V 13). However, these paintings display a logical interrelationship between the distribution of light and the impastoed application of paint which is absent in *Joseph's dream*. Furthermore, unlike the Munich and Dublin works, the way in which the paint was applied in *Joseph's dream* in no way contributes to a definition of form and texture. For example, with respect to the differentiation in the rendering of texture, no distinction can be discerned between the way the paint was applied near the straw surrounding Mary, in the wall to the left of Joseph and in the angel's robe. Such sections are characterised by an uncontrolled application of paint and unarticulated impasto. Moreover, the impasto in these and other areas, such as Mary's clothing and face does not suggest detail, unlike in the Munich and Dublin works. Thus, the final result is coarse. Mary's rounded head with the summarily indicated mouth, nose and eyes has virtually no plasticity. This lack of definition also typifies other areas, for example the flatly painted red cloth enveloping the Christ Child indicated by but a single brushstroke.

This could be seen as a form of sketchiness which, in combination with the small format of both paintings, prompted Schwartz's assumption that the two Berlin paintings may have been sketches by Rembrandt meant to function as *vidimi*. However, arguments supporting Schwartz's hypothesis that the two paintings were alternative designs for a possible patron – he suggested Johannes de Renialme – are lacking.[5] That paintings with this function did exist is certainly not to be excluded: one thinks of the *David presenting the head of Goliath to Saul* in Basle (I A 25) and the *Portrait of Ephraïm Bueno* in Amsterdam (Br. 252).[6] However it is not sketchiness that determines the character of *Joseph's dream*, but the clumsiness described above. It is quite striking that this clumsiness exhibits itself in the pictorial execution of the thickly painted passages. In contrast, Joseph's and Mary's poses, the brilliantly characterised ox head, and the architectural setting are qualitatively far superior. The same discrepancy seems to recur in the *Tobit and Anna with the kid*. It is essentially a strong painting; only the thickly painted areas – those which determine the course of the illumination – for the most part fall far short of the standard generally associated with Rembrandt's autograph work.

The most logical explanation for the marked differences of quality evident in each of the two paintings would seem to be that two hands were involved in their execution: the hand of Rembrandt and that of a still unexperienced painter. The second hand postulated here could have worked not only on the impastoed parts, which conceal the underlying 'skeleton', but also on the darker sections. Particularly in *Joseph's dream*, the discrepancy between the formal structure and the inferior degree of understanding with which it was elaborated certainly gives the impression that two artists were at work. The figures of Joseph and Mary may serve as examples. The pose of Joseph, seated on a low rise, is very intricate: his left leg, on which his left arm hangs limply, is tucked under the other; the right leg is pulled up to such an extent that the sole of the shoe is visible – both legs appear relaxed; and resting his head on his right hand, Joseph leans his right elbow on his right knee. Thus, while the body slants to the right, emphasising the impression that he is asleep, his slumped head resting on his hand is propped in a slightly straighter position than his body. The figure appears very relaxed precisely because of the complexity of this pose. The refinement of the posture is not affected by the clumsy treatment of final form, whereas in the case of Mary it certainly is. Her position suggests an intricate interplay of axes and a convincing disposition of the limbs. That her left leg is somewhat pulled up is evident from the position of her feet. While the blackness of her coarsely painted skirt makes it impossible to detect the position of her bent knees, the placement of her feet, such that the sole of the left foot is visible, suggests that her pelvis is tilted down and to the left, parallel to the diagonal axis of her shoulders. Thus the impression is created of a relaxed reclining

Fig. 5. S. van Hoogstraeten, *Kamerlicht*, etching for *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst*, Rotterdam 1678, p. 272



pose, an impression reinforced by the slackness of the arms. Moreover, the head is turned to the left and somewhat tilted back – a position that involves a very strong counter movement in relation to the stance of the body. Together with the limp arms, all of the features just described contribute to the impression, as with the figure of Joseph, of a relaxed, even limp, sleeping body. However, this interesting position is largely spoiled by the crude execution of the drape of the clothing.

Most of the changes in the two paintings seem to be in the impastoed section. This is highly significant for the hypothesis that will be presented below. The changes in *Joseph's dream* are primarily related to the orchestration of light, as Wolters already noted in 1938 after studying the X-radiograph.[7] The background to the left of Joseph and above and below the angel's wings appears to have been originally lighter. It appears as though the angel initially illuminated the background, which in the final painting was kept dark. The dark reserves for the earlier, much larger wings of the angel make the impression that they were in shadow and therefore showed up dark against the light background, while the reverse is now the case. Moreover, according to the complex of reserves visible in the X-ray image, a ladder was painted to the left of Joseph which, given that it was reserved in the light paint, must have been dark. In a following stage, large sections of the initially light areas were covered with dark paint and as a result, the angel is no longer the most important source of light in the composition. However, the interrelationship between the source of light in the upper right, the interior and the figures was not convincingly adapted. For example, the connection between the light from above and the remarkably strong illumination of Mary's head, head covering and right hand in the final composition is not clear. Summarising, one can say that the changes attest to a radical reformulation of the distribution of light, particularly abandonment of the angel's role as a source of light. Apparently, the scene was radically simplified. The ladder with a cast shadow against the wall next to Joseph was painted out and consequently the fall of the light there had to be simplified and clarified.

This latter change closely parallels what must have occurred during work on *Tobit and Anna with the kid*. The fall of light on the wall next to the window in the latter painting initially had to take into account an even more diaphanous object than the ladder in *Joseph's dream*, namely a spinning wheel placed before a wall with a high plinth on which crockery seems to have been depicted. All of this was painted out in order to make room for a simple cabinet covered with a white cloth. The progression of light on these clear shapes – interrupted at the right by cast shadows on the open door and wall – can be distinctly followed. The changes in both paintings have no iconographic bearing. The only object painted out that could be so interpreted, the spinning wheel (a standard attribute in the home of Tobit and Anna), found its way back, rather clumsily, to the left in the shaded foreground. That a ladder and a spinning wheel could have served in Rembrandt's workshop as useful objects for mastering pictorial skills, such as the play of light and shadow in interiors, is evinced by the Munich *Nativity* and the Amsterdam *Holy Family* (V 11 and V 5).

Consequently, we tend to consider the changes described above as solutions related solely to a convincing rendering of light. Samuel van Hoogstraten's treatise of 1678 provides insight into the problems confronting painters in this area. As is clear from Van Hoogstraten, as well as a substantial number of paintings since the 16th century and a series of written sources since Pliny, the depiction of a direct source of light in a nocturnal setting, as in *Joseph's dream*, constituted one of the greatest artistic challenges. Another less obvious though extremely difficult effect to achieve is the unfolding of light in a room lit by a window, as in the *Tobit and Anna*. In this connection, Van Hoogstraten spoke of enclosed or 'interior light' ('Van't beslooten of "kamerlicht"') and included a numerical diagram which the painter could consult when calculating the gradations of light values in an interior setting (fig. 5; see also Chapter I pp. 76-78).[8] The nature of the changes in the two paintings discussed here indicates an attempt to resolve problems related to this kind of illumination. The removal of the ladder and the spinning wheel must have been simplified the resolution of these problems.

The suggested explanation for these phenomena is that Rembrandt's pupils were sometimes given the freedom to elaborate on oil sketches by the master. This hypothesis is prompted by the essential difference in quality between the conception of both paintings as a whole (and parts of the execution thereof) on the one hand, and the execution of the light effects on the other. As outlined above, Rembrandt's initial conception was drastically simplified in the course of the work. On the basis of the brushwork, these changes cannot possibly be ascribed to Rembrandt (see Chapter V). Could the master have charged a pupil with the task of incorporating both artificial light (the heavenly light) and 'kamerlicht' in the initial, autograph lay-out of a very complex spatial setting? This could account for the wretched quality of the greatly altered angel in *Joseph's dream*, as well as the execution of the otherwise well-designed figures of Joseph and Mary because according to

Fig. 6. Non autograph enlargement of Rembrandt, *The Lamentation*, [1634/35]. London, The National Gallery (III A 107)

the hypothesis proposed here, these illuminated passages could have been executed by the pupil concerned. In accordance with Van Hoogstraten's system for depicting 'kamerlicht', it could be argued that the highest light had to serve as the point of departure, i.e. the day light streaming through the window. This could explain why the window in *Tobit and Anna with the kid* (in our opinion) could have been painted by Rembrandt himself, and the other sections with decreasing gradations of light by a much weaker hand. For the time being we leave aside the question of whether the two panels were 'completed' by one, or two (or even more) hypothetical pupils.

Such a novel hypothesis requires supporting evidence. This has yet to be found. However, in Chapter V (pp. 318-319) a framework for situating the participation of various artists on a single painting is proposed. It also suggests that the changes in *Joseph's dream* and the enlargement of the London *Lamentation* (III A 107) (fig. 6) were by the same primitive hand. The excessive, unnuanced impasto which excludes any subtlety of form or detail, the coarse, clumsy execution of the modelling and the anatomy of the crucified thief in the London picture are so close to that of the angel in *Joseph's dream*, that an attribution to the same hand seems entirely plausible.

Joseph's dream is a rare subject for Rembrandt and his circle. It figures only in an anonymous painting formally attributed to Rembrandt from the beginning of the 1650s in Budapest,[9] and a related drawing in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin (Ben. 879). Compositional differences preclude any connection with the Berlin painting. A deviant composition of the Berlin painting exists in the form of a drawing by Rembrandt in the Rijksprentenkabinet in Amsterdam (Ben. 915), which on stylistic grounds could only have been made around 1650, thus after the painting. The motif of an angel appearing to a seated or lying figure crops up with increasing frequency in Rembrandt's oeuvre and his circle as of the mid-1640s, and especially around 1650. Yet these works, too, have only a general formal relationship with the Berlin painting. The closest correspondence is found in the pose of the angel in the drawing *The angel appearing to Elijah* in the Fondation Custodia in Paris of *c.* 1652 (Ben. 907).

The *Abraham serving the angels* (V 9) dated 1646, a painting which has the same format and originates from the same period as the painting dealt with in this entry, shares with it a number of striking similarities. In both paintings, an angel is the most important source of light; and in both paintings figures are depicted in complex attitudes and in a complicated spatial setting. Confrontation of these two paintings allows a close comparison of these correspondences, clearly demonstrating Rembrandt's virtuosity and assuredness in contrast to the rather poor execution of large parts of the present painting.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

The print by Carl Ernst Christoph Hess (Darmstadt 1755 – Munich 1828) cited by Hofstede de Groot[10] is not mentioned by any other author and its existence could not be verified.

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance

– Mentioned in 1769, in the royal collection in Berlin and Potsdam: 'Die Geburt Christi, das Gegenbild zu obigem [i.e. V 7], von Rembrandt.'[11] In the 3rd edition of 1786, II, p. 885, no. 18 the painting is correctly described as: 'Der Engel weckt den schlafenden Joseph, bey dem Maria mit dem Kinde schläft; von Rembrand.' Nicolai mentions in a footnote that J. W. Meil advised him in the description of the paintings. Johann Wilhelm Meil (1733-1805) was a self-taught draughtsman and etcher. He was a member of the Berlin Akademie in 1766, of which he became dean in 1788.
– Transferred in 1830 from the royal palaces to the Königliche Museen, Berlin.
– Since 1904 in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, cat. no. 806.

NOTES

1. J. Bauch and D. Eckstein, 'Woodbiological investigations on panels of Rembrandt paintings', *Wood Science and Technology* 15 (1981), pp. 251-263, esp. 254.
2. W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt. Des Meisters Gemälde*, Zweiter Band, Stuttgart/Leipzig n.d. [1908] (Kl.d.K.), p. 558 under S. 282.
3. Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Genie auf der Suche*, Berlin 2006, nos. 48 and 49.
4. Tümpel 1986, cat. no. 64*.
5. Schwartz 1984, p. 230 under fig. 249.
6. E. van de Wetering in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt the printmaker,* Amsterdam/London 2000/2001, pp. 58-59.
7. C. Wolters, *Die Bedeutung der Gemäldedurchleuchtung mit Röntgenstrahlen für die Kunstgeschichte*, Frankfurt am Main 1938, pp. 60-61.
8. S. van Hoogstraeten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*, Rotterdam 1678, pp. 272-273.
9. Sumowski *Gemälde* I, p. 13, p. 23 note 47, p. 41 ill.
10. HdG 85.
11. F. Nicolai, *Beschreibung der Königlichen Residenzstädte Berlin und Potsdam*, Berlin 1769, p. 367.

V 9 Rembrandt – Abraham serving the angels 1646

U.S.A., PRIVATE COLLECTION

HDG 1a; BR. 515; BAUCH 27; GERSON 214; TÜMPEL 21

1. Introduction and description

As will be demonstrated in the *Comments* of this entry, this painting has been so convincingly documented that, if on this basis alone, there can scarcely be any doubt as to its authenticity. Arguments derived from the analysis of the painting's artistic quality and from insight into the role the work played, both in and later beyond Rembrandt's workshop, converge with the documentary evidence, leading to the certainty that this painting is from Rembrandt's hand.

The scene depicted is based on Genesis 18: 1-15,[1] which recounts that 'in the heat of the day' the Lord appeared to the aged Abraham in the guise of three men. Abraham invites these three men – traditionally depicted as angels – to rest under a tree and have their feet washed. After the feast in their honour, Abraham is told that despite her advanced age, his wife Sarah will bear a son, 'and he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son.' Astonished, the aged Sarah overhears this conversation from the tent entrance.

The scene is set in a hilly landscape. To the left, at the bottom of the hill, where the main figures are seated are a cow – undoubtedly alluding to the animal that Abraham would slaughter in honour of his visitors – and a few figures. The largest angel is so fully lit that he seems to function as the most important source of light for the entire scene.

The three angels are seated near Abraham's dwelling: in the Bible this is a tent and in the painting a house. Under a gnarled tree the angels recline around a table-like elevation over which is draped a large fringed cloth. This cloth also covers a lower rise on which the largest angel rests his left leg. This angel with blond hair falling over his shoulders wears a long, white robe. With his balled left hand at his hip, he directs his right hand in a speaking gesture at Abraham. His wings are spread. The angel at the far left seen in profile is brightly illuminated by the radiance of the largest angel. He takes something to his mouth with his left hand. The third angel is shown from the back and, in contrast to his table companions, wears a red cloak which is partially covered by his folded wings. He has short, dark hair. He appears to be sitting on a low section of the rocky site. That the ground before it slopes down somewhat to the left is evidenced by the angel's horizontally extended feet resting on the ground, and the stick leaning against the elevation on which he sits. A lappet of his red cloak hangs down from this elevation. He leans with his right elbow on the 'table' on which is set a plate whose edge reflects the light from the largest angel.

Abraham is shown kneeling. He wears a wide, grey brownish robe with a sash tied around his waist and a purse hanging to the side. He holds a large pitcher in his right hand, resting it on the ground and raising the lid slightly with his thumb. In his other hand he has a bowl. Although one would think that he is about to pour a drink, given the largest angel's outstretched bare foot it is quite plausible that Abraham is about to wash his guest's feet, for the washing of feet is mentioned in the biblical text.

Against this, the angel by the tomb in the *Risen Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene*, London, Coll. H.M. Queen Elizabeth, from 1638 (III A 124) is also shown with such an outstretched foot and with hand on hip without there being any possible question of feet being washed.

To the right of Abraham is a large metal pitcher in a decorated metal bowl, possibly a wine jug and a cooler. Behind Abraham at the right are four steps leading to an open door with Sarah bending forward and listening to the conversation. She wears a brown skirt, an apron and a red bodice over a shirt; her head is covered with a black cap. At her waist she wears a purse. The structure of Abraham's house is summarily indicated. There seems to be a window at the left and in front of the house is a low, dark fence. Set before it are two round earthen or metal containers with plants. David de Witt has recently pointed out that there would seem to be a lightly stretched bow fixed to the wall of the house. There is speculation that this bow could possibly be taken to be a reference to Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar (see also B. 29).

Working conditions

Examined on 31 August 1971 (J.B., S.H.L.) in the frame; and on 21 May 1992 (M.F., V.M., E.v.d.W.): out of the frame and in good daylight, with the aid of a stereomicroscope, an X-ray image covering the entire surface, and with infrared-reflectography. At the time of these investigations a thick varnish layer hampered observation. In 2004 old varnish layers and some minor overpaintings were removed and the painting restored. It was then studied on the wall by members of the RRP on different occasions.

Support

Oak panel, grain horizontal, 16.1 x 21.1 cm. A single plank with a thickness of app. 0.37 cm; the back has been planed and cradled; no traces of bevelling are visible. A thin slat of app. 0.3 cm has been applied to the bottom, which is related to the cradling.

Ground

A light yellow brown is visible in the drapery to the right of the stick, in Abraham's belt, and between the wings of the angel seen from the back. The ground shows through a brown underpainting in many places, particularly in the tree, the architecture, near the neck and shoulders of Sarah and in Abraham's clothing.

Paint layer

Condition: Good (see also V 6 figs. 10 and 11). Small areas of wearing are found, especially in the robe, the hand and the face of the largest angel, and at the left in the tree and in the shaded sections of the red robe of the angel seen from behind. Some of these slight damages have been retouched during the 2004 restoration of the painting. A flesh coloured impasto shines through at the left in the somewhat worn paint in the foreground. Dark tints show through in the sky. The thin parts of the red glaze on the cloak of the angel seen from the back seem to have lost their red colour through local fading.

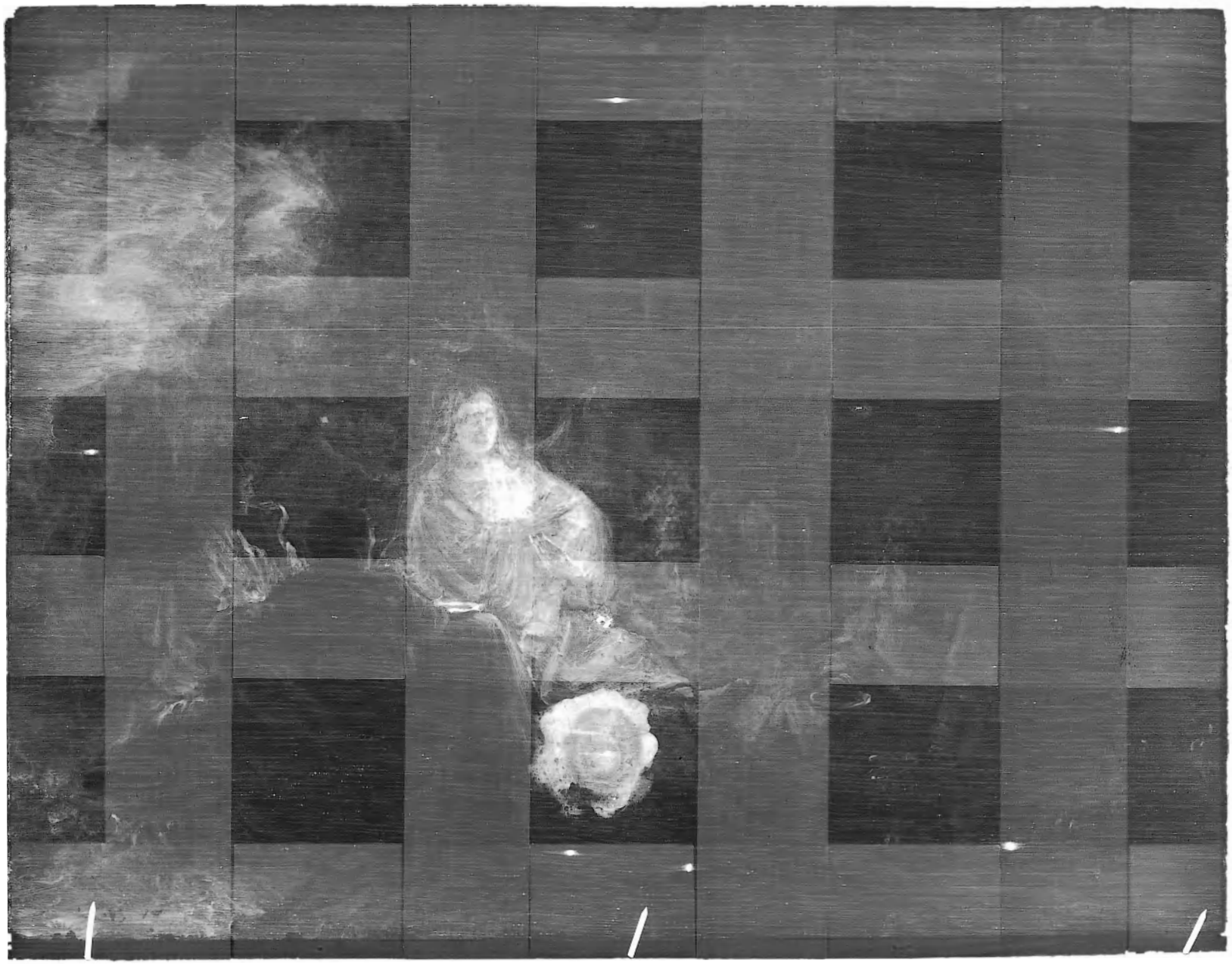
Fig. 1. Panel 16.1 x 21.1 cm (1:1)

Craquelure: Occasional fine horizontal cracks mostly running parallel to the grain, notably in the large, light angel.

As tiny as this painting is, and at first sight seemingly sketchy, an amazing amount of detail can be found in the scene depicted. The detail is suggested either with loosely applied brushstroke or with careful modelling, or a combination of both.

While the dark setting of the scene has for the most part been thinly painted, the group of figures in the foreground display a more pastose application of paint with strong accents of light and colour. The entire group is illuminated solely by the emanating from the largest angel. It seems as though the modelling in this angel's robe was created with thin yellowish and greyish paint layers over a pastose white, partly pink, underpainting. These layers have worn locally on the ridges of the impasto, as has the flesh colour of the face and the gesturing hand applied over either the white or pinkish underpainting. These traces of wear were minimally retouched in 2004, which substantially improved the legibility of the face and the hand. The painter largely avoided shading in this figure as few nuances were employed in the white of the robe, the flesh tints or the hair. This was undoubtedly done with a view to the angel's role as a source of light. Only the foot has been modelled with light and a darker shade. If one compares the white of the radiant angel with the white of the gleam on the rim of the flat dish on the elevation between the angels, one cannot but be struck by the careful thought the painter must have given to this painting: nowhere in the angel's dress does pure white appear. All 'whites', even the highest lights, are found to be off-whites, subtly toned to a range of fine greys. As a result, the beholder unconsciously perceives a space between the gleaming dish on the elevation and the radiant angel seated behind it. It has been heightened with either pastose or

Fig. 2. X-Ray



grazingly applied lights; under the sole of the foot in shadow is an accent of ruddy reflected light. The summarily indicated wings of this angel are provided with edges of light along the top.

In the case of Abraham, the illumination in an other way follows a clear hierarchy. The parts of his costume closest to the large angel are more strongly lit than the rest of the figure. The highlight on the bowl represents the strongest light accent. And, highlights on the pitcher and the metal utensils behind him are indicated with thin dots and lines of yellowish paint.

The suggestion of strong illumination on the right shoulder and upper arm and along the lost profile of the angel seen from the back is made with shades of yellow, yellowish-white and red. Bright red highlights are also found on the knee and lower leg of this angel. These red lights, which represent the most important colour accents in the painting, now seem somewhat isolated. One has the impression that the angel's robe, also in the shaded part, was originally dark red rather than brown, as is now the case; on the sleeve at the right, between the wings and under the left wing are remains of the original red lake which is elsewhere discoloured or overcleaned. The angel at the far left, who is predominantly done in browns and muted lights, has yellow-white highlights formed by linear clots and sometimes grazing dabs. The local grazingly applied thick, light paint in this angel also occurs in the lit folds of the cloth where the largest angel rests his leg. The rest of the cloth has been mostly left in its underpainted state, with a few linear indications of folds and fringe; the fold hanging from the 'table' has been modelled with subtle shades in the light paint.

The tree with its twisted trunk is painted with wavy brushstrokes in thin brown paint over the ground, which shines through. The trunk and branches are generally defined with a number of thicker deep reddish brown strokes, yellowish-ochre opaque dabs on the trunk, agitated undulating brush lines at the left along the trunk, and

Fig. 3. Detail with signature (enlarged)

scratches in the wet paint. Like Abraham's house it has apparently been left mainly in the transparent dead colour stage with local details in brownish paint.

Radiography

The image of the painted scene largely coincides with what one would expect from the paint surface. X-ray absorbing passages are found primarily in the face, in the chest and in the folds of the bright white robe of the large angel and, though to a considerably lesser extent, in the angel in profile and in the figure of Abraham. Also showing up clearly is the illuminated edge of the bowl on the table. The figure of the angel in the foreground has been reserved in the shapes behind him. The reserve for the shoulder is somewhat more circumscribed with a rounder contour than the one now visible. Radioabsorbent areas in the background at the upper left correspond with the lighter sections of the sky. The X-radiograph displays the craquelure pattern, particularly in the figure of the large angel. A wax seal on the back of the panel shows up as a light spot below the feet of this angel.

Signature

Below, to the left of centre, in small, slightly irregularly placed letters and numerals <*Rembrandt f.1646*> (fig. 3). The tiny inscription is somewhat worn in places. It makes the impression of being authentic.

2. Comments

This small painting, which became more widely known only at the beginning of the 20th century, has always been considered as a work by Rembrandt. This is understandable given the unmistakably Rembrandtesque character of its conception and execution, as well as the fact that it seems to be reliably signed and dated. Moreover, there are three old mentions of one or more works with this subject by Rembrandt (see *3. Documents and sources*). It is not absolutely clear whether these mentions refer to one and the same painting. As will appear below, this is certainly not implausible, even though the possibility remains that paintings with the same subject once attributed to Rembrandt existed in the 17th century.[2]

The first mention of a work by Rembrandt with this subject is from 1647, one year later than the date on the painting under discussion. A transaction between Martin van den Broeck and Andries Ackersloot concluded on 28 March 1647 obliged the former to deliver a set of diamonds, silverwork and several paintings to the latter in exchange for a supply of ropes, masts and iron that he had received worth 800 guilders. Among the paintings was an 'Abraham mette drye engelen van Rembrant' (Abraham with the three angels by Rembrandt).[3] Because it was a business deal between two merchants in which the paintings served as a form of payment, the new owner quite

Fig. 4. F. Bol, *Abraham and the three angels*, *c.* 1650, canvas 55.8 x 73.2 cm. Formerly The Hague, Galerie Internationaal

possibly resold the paintings some time later, or even shortly after the transaction.

The second 17th-century mention of a painting with this subject dates from 1669. The inventory that Ferdinand Bol drew up of the effects that he brought into his second marriage in that year lists seven works attributed to Rembrandt, including an 'Abraham en de engelen [van] Rembrant' (Abraham and the angels by Rembrandt). Bol probably worked in Rembrandt's studio between circa 1635 and 1640. Assuming that he was the owner of the present painting which, as will be shown, is highly likely, he must have acquired it after his training – perhaps even directly from the aforementioned Andries Ackersloot. However, it cannot be discounted that Bol owned a painting by Rembrandt that is now no longer known. Given Bol's familiarity with Rembrandt's work, one may in any event assume that the painting in his possession, which he recorded himself as being by Rembrandt was, in fact, by the master.[4]

In 1702 an 'Abraham by de Engelen, heel goed, van dito [Rembrand]' (Abraham with the angels, very good, by Rembrandt) was sold from the estate of Jan Six for 31 guilders and 10 stuivers (see *3. Documents and sources*). Of the three paintings attributed to Rembrandt in Six's sales catalogue, the Berlin *John the Baptist preaching* (III A 106) was sold for 710 guilders and the second, the Kassel *Portrait of Saskia* (II A 85) for 270 guilders.[5] The substantial difference in price between these two works and the 'Abraham by de Engelen', should it actually concern the present painting, could be explained by the great difference in size – the panel is tiny – and by its relatively unelaborated state. However, notwithstanding the attribution to Rembrandt in the catalogue of the Six sale, contemporaries may not have considered Jan Six's *Abraham serving the angels* as an authentic work, whereby it fetched a relatively modest sum. In that case, it could well have been another, larger painting rather than the present one.

As is argued below, it is highly probable that the present painting was the one owned by Ferdinand Bol and described by him as being by Rembrandt. And, should this really be the case, the painting's authenticity would be virtually certain. Ferdinand Bol was an acknowledged expert in the realm of painting and was repeatedly asked to make appraisals. For example, he acted in this capacity

Fig. 5. F. Bol, *Abraham and the angels*, early 1660, canvas 440 x 282.5 cm. 's-Hertogenbosch, Noord-Brabants Museum (on loan from Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum)

in 1655 (as 'overman', or master of the Guild of St Luke), 1665, 1667 and in 1669. He was familiar enough with Rembrandt's oeuvre to determine (in 1657) that an 'Abraham en Isaac' (Abraham and Isaac) was a 'cop[ie] van Rembrant' (copy after Rembrandt).[6]

The idea that Bol owned the painting under discussion can be supported by the fact that two works either by him or from his studio are so close to our painting that one could surmise that they were based on the present painting. The attribution of the first of these works, dated to around 1650 and formerly in The Hague, Galerie Internationaal (fig. 4), is still being debated: Blankert rejected it,[7] while Sumowski accepted it as by Bol.[8] If not an authentic painting by Bol, it could well be from his studio given the stylistic similarities with Bol's work.[9] In that case it would remain equally valuable for the sake of our purpose, as the issue at hand is whether the painting dealt with in this entry could have been in Bol's possession. This being so, also one of Bol's studio assistants could have known it and based a composition on it. The other painting with the scene of Abraham and the angels, in the collection of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (fig. 5) and bearing Bol's signature, must have been made in the beginning of the 1660s.[10]

Both Bol paintings display clear correspondences, though in reverse, with the present painting. The most striking similarities are in the figure of Abraham. In all three works, Abraham is shown *en profile*, bending on one knee and holding a tall pitcher, either tipped or leaning on the ground. Blankert believed that the position of Bol's figure was derived from *Abraham and the angels* by Pieter Lastman of 1621 in St Petersburg. There too Abraham is shown with his knee bent. However, Bol more likely based himself on the present painting as, in addition to the similar posture of Abraham, the grouping of the angels in the three pictures is comparable in the sense that an angel seen from the back is shown seated at a table with food, with a strongly lit angel seated at an angle behind it. In Lastman's painting these figures are quite differently arranged. The fact that members of Rembrandt's circle frequently used a reverse variant when adopting (and more or less varying) entire compositions makes the supposition that both of the works by (or attributed to) Bol rely on the present painting very attractive (see also Chapter III, Appendix 3).

Given the fact that Bol listed his *Abraham and the angels* as a Rembrandt, and given his expertise on Rembrandt this could then be taken as proof that the present painting is an autograph work by Rembrandt.

Nevertheless, we should take into account the possibility of its being by a pupil, whether or not with Rembrandt's involvement. A reason for doing so is the striking similarity between the rendering of the largest angel and one of the two angels on the grave in Rembrandt's *Risen Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene* of 1638 (III A 124). Though reversed, the pose with the outstretched leg and the fist of a somewhat bent arm leaning on this leg is virtually identical. The repetition of a figure from an earlier composition in such a way is unusual in Rembrandt's oeuvre, but does occur frequently in work by pupils. Another 'quotation' appears to be the head of the angel seen from the back. This solution as well as the angel's closely shorn head seems to have been inspired by an angel shown from behind and likewise serving as a repoussoir in *The Holy Family* in St Petersburg (V 4) of 1645. In both cases, the similarities could also be understood as repetitions or solutions that Rembrandt found successful enough to reuse. The fact that in the unquestionably authentic Dublin 1647 *Nocturnal landscape with the Holy Family* (V 13) Mary is depicted with her leg extended in the same way, with her sole visible to the beholder, could mean that Rembrandt considered such a pose typical for a resting position. The gesture with the propped fist is encountered not only in the London *Risen Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene*, but in works from other periods of Rembrandt's career.[11]

There is yet another reason for considering the theoretical possibility that the present painting may be a work by a pupil: its unclear relation to two drawings (Ben. 576 and 577; figs. 6 and 7) that display close similarities to the painting. There must be a direct relationship, whatever it is, between the drawings and the painting given the grouping of the figures, the position of the tree and the door with Sarah. On the basis of these correspondences as well as several differences between the drawings themselves and between the drawings and the painting, Benesch considered the drawings as preliminary studies for the painting under discussion. Since he assumed that the painting was an authentic work by Rembrandt, in his

Fig. 6. S. van Hoogstraten, *Abraham entertaining the angels*, pen and bistre, wash, 10.6 x 12.8 cm (Ben. 576). New York, Coll. Kathleen Reizler

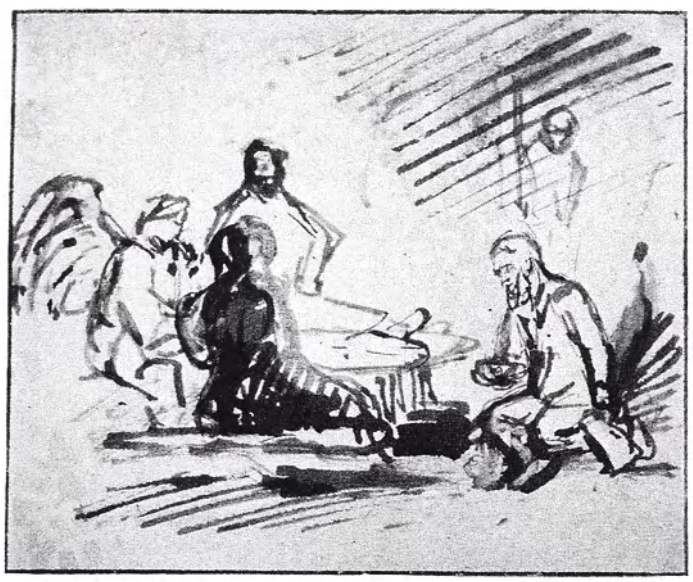


Fig. 7. S. van Hoogstraten, *Abraham entertaining the angels*, pen and bistre, heightened with white, 10.4 x 12.2 cm (Ben. 577). Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett

view the two drawings were also by the master – an opinion shared by Lugt, Weski and Drost.[12]

Other authors, however, held totally different views as to the authenticity of the drawings and their relationship with the painting. Attention was focused primarily on the Berlin drawing (Ben. 577; fig. 7), which was seen as being a copy of the painting made by a pupil. Nicolaes Maes, Samuel van Hoogstraten and Ferdinand Bol were all mentioned in this connection. Valentiner was the first to attribute the Berlin drawing to Samuel van Hoogstraten, who was active in Rembrandt's studio between *c.* 1642 and *c.* 1648 and thus precisely in 1646, the year of the present painting's origin. Sumowski attributed the drawing to Van Hoogstraten on the basis of correspondences with a number of drawings that are securely attributed to Van Hoogstraten on various grounds. Sumowski too considered the drawing as a derivative of the painting, which he took as being by Rembrandt. However, he did not so much perceive the drawing as being a 'copy' of the present painting but, given the many missing details, rather as an 'excerpt' from it. His attribution to Van Hoogstraten is convincing. Especially the background scene in Van Hoogstraten's signed drawing of *Eliezer and Rebecca* (fig. 8)[13] displays distinct parallels with the Berlin drawing, both in the handling of the pen and the way in which, for example, feet and heads have been drawn. Also, the hatching in the foreground and the handling in the vegetation are strikingly similar in both drawings.

Sumowski did not consider the other drawing (fig. 6), in a private collection in New York. Bruyn, however, correctly pointed out the striking similarities between that drawing and several sketches attributed to Van Hoogstraten by Sumowski.[14] In this connection, correspondences can also be noted in a few drawings not mentioned by Bruyn which, according to Sumowski, were executed by Van Hoogstraten (fig. 9).[15]

The first thought that arises is that the two drawings (figs. 6 and 7) are, indeed studio copies by Van Hoogstraten after the painting discussed here.

However, in his discussion of Van Hoogstraten's drawings, Sumowski commented that the artist was one of Rembrandt's few pupils to make preparatory sketches with a view to a more elaborated product.[16] Should both of the drawings discussed above be preliminary studies by Van Hoogstraten, then the painting under discussion would also have to be attributed to Van Hoogstraten. However, a comparison of the painting under discussion with two early paintings by Samuel van Hoogstraten, signed and dated 1647 and 1649 respectively,[17] excludes this possibility on stylistic and qualitative grounds. These paintings attest to such fundamental differences in the composition, and in the execution and the quality of the rendering of the figures' poses and drapery as compared to *Abraham serving the angels*, that an attribution of this painting to Samuel van Hoogstraten is simply out of the question.

What the objectives were of pupils copying works by Rembrandt very sketchily and with variations remains unclear. What is certain is that this took place on a large scale and the freedom with which this could happen is comparable to what we observe in the satellite paintings (see Chapters III and IV). Benesch 576 and 577 (figs. 6 and 7) also have to be considered as such free copies of the present painting. Given that most of such drawn copies were made after 'principalen' by Rembrandt, as in the case of Ferdinand Bol's adaptations of the prototype, this would again strongly argue in favour of the autograph nature of the present painting.

When one tests the style and quality of this painting against the criteria arrived at in Chapter IV of this book (see pp. 283-310) one is struck by how strongly this painting corresponds to the idea of Rembrandt's pictorial thought and practice developed there. An important characteristic of the present painting is related to the nature of the spatial illusion. This is thoroughly typical of the attention Rembrandt habitually paid to the provision of visual cues that contribute to our experience of space within the painting. For instance, one should note the considered placing of the various objects in the foreground, especial-

Fig. 8. S. van Hoogstraten, *Eliezer and Rebecca*, pen and brown ink, 18.2 x 20.3 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett

Fig. 9. S. van Hoogstraten, *Fragment of a sheet of sketches for a lamentation over Abel*, pen and brown ink, 7.7 x 4.6 cm. Present whereabouts unknown (1:1)

ly the leaning stick with its shadow skilfully suggestive of space. This shadow faithfully 'describes' the unevenness of the terrain where the angel in the front is placed. The same applies to the carefully thought out interrelation between the various colours and tonal gradations and their contribution to the *'houding'* of the painting – the illusion of space created by colour and tone (in addition, of course, to overlapping and the diminution of scale in space), with a minimal use of linear perspective.[18] Our analysis of Rembrandt's mastery of this aspect is commensurate with the praise Rembrandt received from his contemporaries for precisely this quality.[19]

The same is true for Rembrandt's sure grasp of the anatomy of his figures, even when they are concealed by clothing. No errors can be found in the complex poses of the figures, or in the articulations between different parts of the body – errors all to be found in the works painted by his pupils. In this respect, Rembrandt's unusual ability to visualize with the mind's eye is very evident in this painting, and the same applies to the manner in which the figures sit or kneel.[20] The relation of the draped clothes to the bodies depicted is remarkably differentiated. The way Rembrandt deals with costumes manifests his usual keen interest in the structure and make of the items of clothing he depicts (see also Chapter I, pp. 98-102). The placing of the figures with respect to each other, the direction of their gazes, their attitudes and the poses of the heads all contribute strongly to a unity in the treatment of the scene as a whole.

In view of the unusually small scale on which this scene is rendered, it is remarkable that the means, as it were, 'dissolve' in the evoked illusions, while the paint substance and the strokes nevertheless retain their autonomy. In these and many other respects, this painting is so specific for Rembrandt in his middle period, and in view of the documentary evidence discussed above, there can be no doubt about the attribution of this painting to Rembrandt.

Questions are raised by several of the scene's iconographical aspects. Among these is the muted play of light in the predominantly dark sky, which recalls sunrise or sunset. In the Bible the scene takes place in the heat of the day. In this regard there is a striking parallel with Rembrandt's 1647 *Susanna and the Elders* in Berlin (V 1). This scene, too, is mentioned in the Bible as taking place at mid-day, yet Rembrandt again opted for a shadowy setting. In the painting under discussion, the darkness may have been introduced in order to accentuate the radiant central angel. That one of the angels is given more emphasis through its radiance than the other two is most probably based on the commentary to this story in the Dutch Authorised Version of the Bible.[21] In one of the annotations to this text, Abraham believed that his guests were three men. According to the Authorised Version, they were actually two angels and God the Father himself.[22] Rembrandt's prominent treatment of the angel must have been intended to emphasise its true nature. In his etching of the same subject (B. 29) made ten years later, Rembrandt chose a different solution by showing two angels and God the Father as a wingless old man with a long beard.

Rembrandt's sound knowledge of biblical customs is evidenced by the fact that he shows the angels reclining rather than sitting at the table. It is precisely Rembrandt's striving to achieve the greatest possible authenticity in historical details that Angel so praised and set as an example for other painters in his treatise of 1642.[23]

3. Documents and sources

A transaction between Martin van den Broeck and Andries Ackersloot concluded on 28 March 1647 in Amsterdam obliged the former to deliver a set of diamonds, silverwork and several paintings to the latter in exchange for a supply of ropes, masts and iron that he had received worth 800 guilders. Among the paintings was an 'Abraham mette drye engelen van Rembrant' (Abraham with the three angels by Rembrandt) (see note 3).

The inventory that Ferdinand Bol drew up of the effects that he brought into his second marriage dated 8 October 1669

includes among numerous paintings an 'Abraham en de engelen, Rembrant' (Abraham and the angels by Rembrandt).[24]

In the sales catalogue of the collection of Jan Six, held on 6 April 1702 in Amsterdam (Lugt 183), no. 40, is an 'Abraham by de Engelen, heel goed, van dito. [Rembrand]' (Abraham with the angels, very good, by Rembrandt) (Sold for 31 guilders and ten stuivers) (see note 5).

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance

According to us (see *2. Comments*), the painting is most likely identical to one of the same subject in Ferdinand Bol's possession (see *3. Documents and Sources*).

According to Smith,[25] it is identical to the above-mentioned painting in the collection of Jan Six in 1702 (see *3. Documents and Sources*). The relatively low price that this painting fetched at the time would have been in keeping with the small format of V 9.
– Coll. Benjamin West, sale London (Christie's) 23-24 June 1820 (Lugt 9830), 1st day, no. 58 (to Samuel for 290 guineas, but bought in).
– Coll. Benjamin West, sale London (Christie's) 28 May 1824 (Lugt 10687), no. 53.
– Coll. J. Haldiman.
– Coll. Richard Saunderson, M.P. 1836.
– Coll. Sir Thomas Baring (exhib. British Institution 1840, no. 16).
– Coll. Lord Taunton.
– Coll. Stanley, Quantock Lodge.
– Art dealer Fr. Muller & Co., Amsterdam.
– Coll. A. Janssen, Amsterdam, 1923.
– Coll. Mrs C. von Pannwitz, Heemstede, later New York.[26]
– England, private collection.
– Coll. Aurora Art Fund, Inc., New York, 1986.[27]
– Art dealer O. Naumann Fine Arts, New York (till 2005).

NOTES

1. We used the Dutch Authorised Version of the Bible because it contains commentaries that may have played a role in the way in which the scene in this painting was presented. The following edition was used *Biblia, dat is de gantsche H. Schrifture, vervattende alle de Canonijcke Boecken des Ouden en des Nieuwen Testaments…*, Leiden 1637. See also Chr. Tümpel in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, 2006, pp. 127-129.
2. A large canvas with half-length figures of *Abraham serving the angels* in St Petersburg, formerly attributed to Rembrandt and later given with some questions to Gerrit Willemsz. Horst by Valentiner (*O.H.* 50, 1933, pp. 244-247), was subsequently attributed to Jan Victors (Sumowski *Gemälde* IV, no. 1722 and Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, cat. no. 67). That painting appears to have no direct links with the painting under discussion or the related works.
3. Strauss *Doc.*, 1647/1; cf. HdG *Urk.* no. 110.
4. See *Corpus* Vol. II, p. 48 and note 42. Bol appraised paintings as an expert on several occasions. He entered the names of the (presumed) artists for most of the paintings in his own inventory, see A. Bredius, 'Bol's kunstschatten', *O.H.* 28 (1910), pp. 233-238. He described one of the paintings as 'een lantschap *na* Molijn' (a landscape *after* Molijn). Most of Bol's paintings by Rembrandt cannot be securely identified. Bol seems to have owned both early and late works: 'een daer Joseph den droom uytleyt, van Rembrandt' (a Joseph explaining his dream, by Rembrandt) may be Br. 504, a painting from the 1630s (cf. *Corpus* II, p. 297), while 'een besnijdenis van do.' (a circumcision by the same [Rembrandt]) is presumably a late work (cf. V 30). Possibly 'een grafleggingh van Rembrant' (an entombment by Rembrandt) is the grisaille sketch in Glasgow (III A 105).
5. Lugt 183, nos. 38, 39 and 40, and see also *Biographical Information* under 5 October 1652.
6. GAA, not. J. van de Ven, NA 1119, fols. 308-315v, dd. 8 January 1657. With respect to Bol's expertise, the same source contains another noteworthy reference to a painting, namely one by Hendrick Cuyper 'door Camphuis[en] opgemaeckt' (finished by Camphuisen). Three years later Bol appraised a portrait by Rembrandt at 42 guilders, GAA, not. P. de Bary, NA 1714, pp. 361-375, dd. 16 October-11 November 1660, esp. 372.
7. Blankert *Bol*, no. R 5.
8. Sumowski *Gemälde* V, no. 2006. It is not included in the first volume, in which Bol's work is discussed.
9. On Bol's studio, see *Corpus* II, p. 47, and Blankert *Bol*, esp. pp. 22 and 74-75.
10. Canvas, 440 x 282.5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum; Sumowski *Gemälde* I, no. 107.
11. Compare *St Paul at his writing-desk* of 1629/30 in Nuremberg (I A 26), *Portrait of the Mennonite preacher Cornelis Claesz. Anslo and his wife Aeltje Gerritsdr. Schouten* of 1641 (III A 143) and *Juno* from the 1660s in Los Angeles (Br.-Gerson 639). The overpainted Esther in the *Ahasuerus condemning Haman, who begs mercy of Esther* (III B 9) in Bucharest makes the same gesture; this gesture possibly also occurred in the underlying, and we assume authentic, version of about 1635.
12. See the bibliography in Sumowski *Drawings* V, no. 1133[x].
13. Sumowski *Drawings* V, no. 1117.
14. As is evidenced by Bruyn's annotations in our file on Br. 515, see Sumowski *Drawings* V, nos. 1156[x], 1159[x], 1160[x].
15. Sumowski *Drawings* V, no. 1170[x].
16. Of interest in this context is the relationship between Sumowski *Drawings* V, nos. 1100 and 1101, and between nos. 1132a[x] and 1167a[x].
17. The *Adoration of the shepherds* in Dordrecht and the *Doubting Thomas* in Mainz, respectively, Sumowski *Gemälde* II, nos. 823 and 824.
18. P. Taylor, 'The Concept of *Houding* in Dutch Art Theory', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992), pp. 210-232.
19. E. van de Wetering, 'The miracle of our age: Rembrandt through the eyes of his contemporaries', in: exhib. cat. Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria/Canberra, National Gallery of Australia, 1997/98, pp. 58-68; Van de Wetering, 1997/2009, Chapter XI.
20. There is only one peculiar omission: the radiant angel seems to be missing one leg. But in two cases where Rembrandt used the same posture for one of his figures (the angel in the *Noli me tangere*, III A 124, and Mary in the Dublin *Nocturnal Landscape*, V 13) he chose the same solution.
21. See also: N. van de Kamp, 'Genesis: de oergeschiedenis en de verhalen van de aartsvaders', in: exhib. cat. *Het Oude Testament in de schilderkunst van de Gouden Eeuw*, Amsterdam, Joods Historisch Museum 1991, pp. 24-53, esp. 28-30.
22. Abraham realises only after the men have left that the Lord, accompanied by two angels, had visited him. According to the annotation in the Dutch Authorised Version of the Bible (fol. 8v, note 3), there were three men 'in gedaente ende nae de meyninge van Abraham: maer in de waerheyt twee Engelen ende de derde de Heere selfs die voor den tijt deser gesantschap met menschelicke lichamen haer vertoonden' (in appearance and in Abraham's opinion: but in reality they were two angels and the third the Lord himself, who for the duration of this visit, appeared as human beings). That one of the men was God is conveyed in the first sentence of the biblical text: 'Daerna verscheen hem de Heere aen de eycken bosschen van Mamre' (Then the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre), and the following.
23. Ph. Angel, *Lof der Schilder-Konst*, Leiden 1642, p. 47.
24. GAA, not. E. de Witt, NA 4512, pp. 533-552, dd. 8 October 1669, esp. 548, no. 42; Blankert *Bol*, p. 77.
25. J. Smith, *A catalogue raisonné of the works of the most eminent Dutch, Flemish and French painters…*, VII, London 1836, no. 2.
26. Cat. *Die Kunstsammlung von Pannwitz*, by M.J. Friedländer and Otto von Falke, Munich, n.d., I, no. 38.
27. Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt and the Bible*, Japan 1986-87, no. 7.

V 10 Copy after Rembrandt's (lost) Circumcision [1646]

BRAUNSCHWEIG, HERZOG ANTON ULRICH-MUSEUM, INV. NO. 241

HDG 82a; BR. –; BAUCH A31; GERSON –

1. Introduction and description

A number of paintings by Rembrandt are known that have been lost; that is, paintings which have disappeared but whose visual traces remain clearly evident in works by his pupils and followers. The fact that the original painting from which such works are derived is missing, however, leaves uncertainty surrounding a number of questions: for example, how reliable is the image we have from the derivative works? What place did it occupy in his oeuvre? What was the nature of its influence on Rembrandt's pupils and followers? This entry will address these questions with regard to the lost *Circumcision*. In this case, a comparative analysis of the derivative works can help answer these questions and will even provide insight into the genesis of the lost painting.

Between *c.* 1632 and 1639 Rembrandt painted five pictures of scenes from the Passion of Christ for Stadholder Frederik Hendrik. In 1646 he delivered two more paintings to the same patron. This time, the subjects, the Nativity and the Circumcision, were taken from the infancy of Christ. Six of these seven paintings, which were first listed as a series of related works in the 1668 inventory of Frederik Hendrik's widow, Amalia of Solms, are now in Munich.[1] The seventh, entitled 'de besnijdinge Christi' (the Circumcision of Christ) in the payment order to Rembrandt in 1646, vanished in the 18th century. It was still recorded as one of the seven paintings of the Passion Series in the catalogue of the electoral gallery in Düsseldorf compiled by Karsch in 1719. By 1756, however, one painting of the series had been lost, for only six are mentioned in a letter of that year by Brinckmann, court painter and curator to Carl Theodor, Elector Palatine in Mannheim (see V 11, *6. Provenance)*.[2]

It is generally assumed that a painting of a Circumcision in Braunschweig is a copy (fig. 1), possibly a workshop copy, after Rembrandt's lost original.[3] This *Circumcision* was catalogued in the ducal collection in Braunschweig as early as 1710.[4] This early mention, nine years before the last reference to the Passion series as still complete, thus eliminates the possibility that the Braunschweig painting could have been the original. The question must then be asked whether the Braunschweig *Circumcision* accurately reflects the work painted for Frederik Hendrik and if so, how accurately? Before addressing this matter, however, the painting should first be described.

The scene following the account of Christ's birth is taken from Luke 2:21: 'And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.'

Seated on a throne-like chair placed on a carpeted elevation in a vast building, a bearded priest holds the Christ Child over a basin. A mohel seated on a low chair at the left of the priest performs the circumcision. The priest is clad in a long gown, a headdress, and a cloak flowing over the back of his seat with a cushion. Towering above this group is a man holding a staff in his left hand, the other arm akimbo. Judging from his attire this must be the high priest, whose vestments are described in Exodus 28 and by Flavius Josephus.[5] A group of five women, four seen from the back, kneel before the elevation. Two are kneeling on a step just before the podium, each holding a chalice. Another woman with a staff with peacock feathers turns her head to the viewer. Directly to the left of the elevation and right below the priest kneels a barefoot, simply dressed man who may be identified as Joseph. He clasps his hands reverently and bends his head. If this is Joseph, then the woman kneeling to the left of him must be Mary. Several other figures are visible near Mary and Joseph though placed somewhat lower, among them a woman with clasped hands and a woman holding an infant. The space behind this group of attendants is closed off by a raised cloth-covered balustrade behind which sit three figures. One of them, the man at the right, is either writing or reading, while the two other men further to the left look down at the group below. A tall partition behind these three figures largely hides the rest of the dark building from view. The elevation is closed off at the right by an absis-like niche with an architrave embellished with cherubim. Vertical architectural elements and a few red drapes are visible above the architrave.

Setting the Circumcision in the temple belonged to an iconographical tradition that had been current since the 12th century. In the 17th-century theological interpretation of the biblical story, however, the stable in Bethlehem was considered the more probable location for this event.[6] In setting the Circumcision in the stable in his 1654 etching of the subject (B. 47) and V 30 of 1661 in Washington, Rembrandt reveals his awareness of this contemporary interpretation.

2. Comments

A range of mutually reinforcing arguments make the conclusion inescapable that the Braunschweig painting is a faithful depiction of Rembrandt's lost *Circumcision*. First, the painting's dimensions and rounded top correspond with those of the six extant paintings of the Passion Series. Although the dimensions of the individual paintings within the series vary slightly, the *Nativity* (V 11) that Rembrandt delivered in 1646 along with the *Circumcision* has almost exactly the same dimensions as the work in Braunschweig (see note 1). On the other hand, arguing against the fidelity of the Braunschweig painting, the scale of the figures in that painting is substantially smaller than in the contemporary *Nativity*. However, the five other pictures in this series painted in the 1630s also vary in this respect. Another important argument in favour of the accuracy of the presumed copy in Braunschweig can be inferred from the 1710 catalogue in which it is first mentioned. It is listed together with an *Entombment*,[7] which still exists and which actually closely corresponds with the Passion Series *Entombment* (III A 126, copy 3). A third argument supporting the accuracy of the Braunschweig *Circumcision* as a copy is that it contains 19 figures, the same number given in the description of the original in the 1719 Düsseldorf catalogue: 'N. 87 Die Beschneidung mit 19. Figuren.' (see V 11, *6. Provenance*).

Fig. 1. Rembrandt workshop, *The Circumcision*, canvas 97.8 x 72 cm.
Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum

Fig. 2. Attributed to G. van den Eeckhout, *The Circumcision*, red chalk, grey and brown washes, 26.4 x 19.5 cm. Brussels, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Coll. de Grez

Fig. 3. Rembrandt workshop, attributed to B. Fabritius, *Woman with a child in swaddling clothes*, panel 25 x 21.5 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen

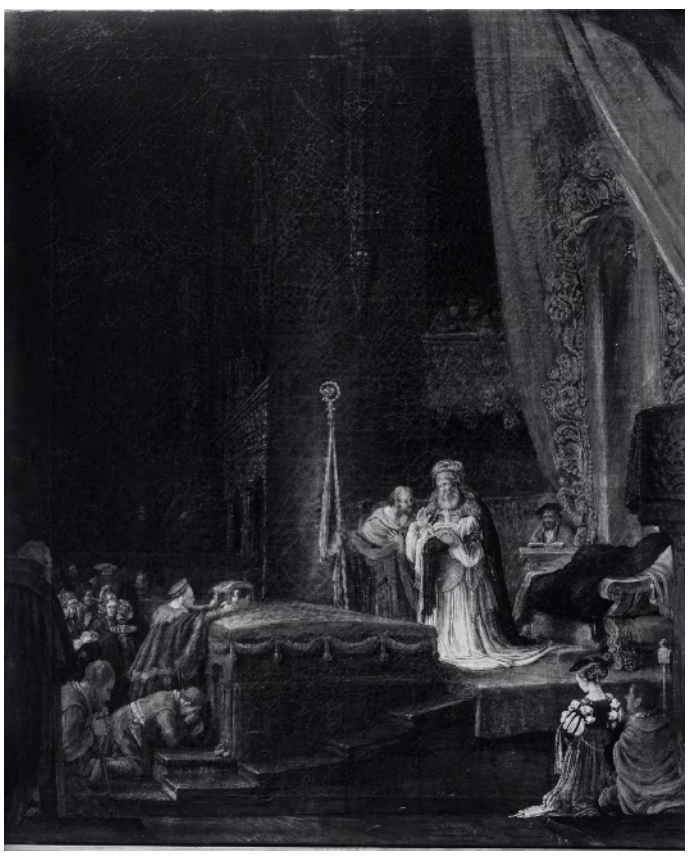
Fig. 4. Rembrandt workshop, *Bust of a young woman*, panel 23.7 x 19.2 cm (Br. 376). Whereabouts unknown

An assessment of the reliability of the Braunschweig painting should include an elaborate drawing in Brussels, which has been attributed to Gerbrand van den Eeckhout since the 18th century (fig. 2) and which closely corresponds with the Braunschweig painting.[8] It cannot be said with absolute certainty whether this drawing was made after the original or after the Braunschweig painting. Yet, with respect to technique, the drawing fits in with a group of drawn copies by various hands of paintings by Rembrandt and from his workshop from *c.* 1646, which in all instances follow the prototype quite closely.[9] Seen in this light, it is thus plausible that the Brussels drawing was made directly after Rembrandt's painting for Frederik Hendrik, and that it reproduces it very faithfully. By extension, we can then assume that, given the great similarities between this drawing and the Braunschweig painting, both documents are accurate depictions of Rembrandt's original. This is further supported by the colour scheme and the execution of the Braunschweig painting, which corresponds with Rembrandt's style of around 1645. With its juxtaposition of a rather bright blue, deep red and some green in the podium and the figures at the right, the *Circumcision* is especially close to Rembrandt's *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* of 1644 in London (V 3). While not as detailed as in the latter, the execution of the Braunschweig painting is far less bold than in the Munich *Nativity* of 1646. The type of brushwork (pastose in places, with freely yet effectively applied paint) is also similar to autograph works by Rembrandt from this period. Moreover, the London painting and the Braunschweig *Circumcision* (and, as we may by now assume, its prototype) are also related in the conception of space and the frieze-like arrangement of the figures.

The lost prototype must have been considered by Rembrandt and his circle as an important painting worthy of imitation. A number of works from Rembrandt's circle attest to this. First, there are two partial copies of isolated motifs, both on panel: the woman holding an infant in the left foreground recurs in the *Woman with a child in swaddling clothes* in Rotterdam attributed to Barent Fabritius (fig. 3),[10] and the woman turning her head in the right foreground is found in a panel whose present whereabouts are unknown (fig. 4).[11] Both these works deviate somewhat from their counterparts in the Braunschweig painting. However, this in no way implies that Rembrandt's original also differed in that respect from the Braunschweig painting. Motifs excerpted from an original work in partial copies were not always accurately reproduced. In other partial copies, either known or surmised to have been painted in Rembrandt's workshop, clothing in particular was altered to allow the partial copy to function as an independent work.[12] While there can be little doubt that the two partial copies mentioned above are workshop products, this cannot be said with any certainty about two other copies reproducing (a large part of) the entire composition of Rembrandt's prototype.[13]

Rembrandt's *Circumcision* also reverberates in other works by his pupils made either while they were still in the workshop, or after they had left it. An example of the latter category is Heinrich Jansen's 1649 *Presentation in the temple* in Copenhagen (fig. 5).[14] Jansen executed this painting in Flensburg in Schleswig-Holstein, after having worked in

Fig. 5. H. Jansen, *Presentation in the temple*, 1649, canvas 63 x 53 cm. Copenhagen, Statensmuseum for Kunst



Rembrandt's workshop in Amsterdam between 1645 and 1648. Thus, Jansen witnessed the genesis of Rembrandt's *Circumcision*, the composition and various figures of which he partially adopted. In this case, there is certainty about the relation to the prototype, especially given the dating of the derivative: in most other cases the relationship is less clear.

The Braunschweig painting's provenance cannot be traced with certainty to Rembrandt's workshop. We know, however, that a 'besnijdenisse Cristi, copije nae Rembrant' (Circumcision of Christ, copy after Rembrandt) was listed in Rembrandt's inventory of 1656.[15] This reference would seem to indicate that a copy remained in Rembrandt's workshop after the original had been delivered to Frederik Hendrik. Thus, in addition to Rembrandt's prototype, this copy (which may be, but is not necessarily the Braunschweig *Circumcision*)[16] could have served as the starting-point for the related works produced by Rembrandt's circle.

So far, this analysis creates the impression that the related works were done after the completion of Rembrandt's painting. However there are a few related drawings with some deviations from the prototype, as we know it via the Braunschweig copy, which may shed light on the prototype's genesis. These drawings could have been made at some time during the production of the painting, either by Rembrandt or by members of his workshop.

Benesch considered a drawing in pen and brush in bistre with brown and grey washes in Munich (fig. 6) to be Rembrandt's autograph compositional sketch for the painting. Wegner subsequently included it among his list of doubtful drawings.[17] Responding to Wegner and following Benesch, Schatborn reattributed the drawing to Rembrandt.[18] He based this reattribution on stylistic arguments, and also pointed out that the watermark is from the time when Rembrandt painted the *Circumcision*. The drawing bears comparison to the autograph sketch in Munich (Ben. 1061) for the *Claudius Civilis* (Br. 482; see p. 111 fig. 125). The Claudius Civilis sketch departs in a number of respects from the fragment of the originally larger painting, now in Stockholm, that Rembrandt made for the Amsterdam Town Hall. The most likely explanation for these deviations is that Rembrandt made the drawing to try out the changes he wished to introduce in the painting.[19] The way the Munich sketch of the *Circumcision* deviates from Rembrandt's prototype as conveyed in the Braunschweig painting points in a similar direction. Rembrandt seems to have searched for solutions for the grouping of the figures and the structure of the space in which they are placed. For example, standing behind the group of women at the far right is a figure with a headdress not found in either the Braunschweig copy or the drawn copy attributed to Van Eeckhout (see fig. 2). Moreover, a large rectangular shape, probably an altar or a baldachin, visible behind the priest holding the child, is lacking in the Braunschweig *Circumcision* and in the other copies. Thus, like the drawing for the Claudius Civilis, the deviations from the definitive composition lend credence to the idea that the Munich drawing is a compositional sketch by Rembrandt done in preparation for the painting or, more likely, in connection with changes he considered while making the painting. The reason why the second option – viz. that the drawing represents an intermediate stage – is more likely, is connected with the prevailing idea that Rembrandt apparently did not make preparatory compositional drawings for his paintings.[20]

Two other drawings in Munich, small cursory sketches in graphite of the entire composition, also suggest that Rembrandt's lost *Circumcision* went through various stages (figs. 7 and 8).[21] On the basis of stylistic arguments, these drawings cannot be considered autograph works by Rembrandt. They belong to a category of sketches of Rembrandt's paintings of this period apparently made by members of the workshop (see V 3 and V 11).[22] It should be noted that the number and placement of the figures differ from those found in the Braunschweig copy. While these deviations could be attributed to the liberties taken by the copyist(s), they can also be seen as documenting Rembrandt's struggle to find a satisfactory grouping of auxiliary figures in the foreground, a problem that must have preoccupied him around 1645. In the densely populated composition of *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* of 1644 (V 3), also situated in a cavernous temple, Rembrandt initially included a group of figures as a repoussoir in the left foreground, which he eventually painted out. The possibility cannot be excluded that while working on the right foreground of his *Circumcision*, Rembrandt envisaged fewer figures and added a repoussoir figure in the left foreground, which he later overpainted. The hypothesis that the two Munich sketches document Rembrandt's changes in the *Circumcision* seems to be supported by Jansen's 1649 *Presentation in the temple* discussed above (fig. 5). In this picture, which is evidently based on Rem-

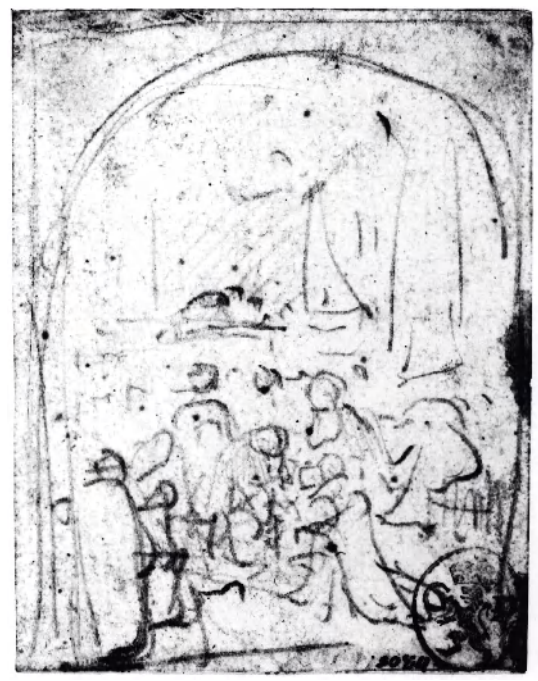
Fig. 6. Rembrandt, *The Circumcision*, pen and brush in brown ink with brown and grey washes, 23.3 x 20.3 cm (Ben. 581). Munich, Graphische Sammlung

brandt's *Circumcision*, a large standing figure is also present in the left foreground, while only two kneeling figures seen from the back are in the right foreground. Working from a sketch or from memory, Jansen may have based his *Presentation* on the stage of Rembrandt's *Circumcision* also documented in the two Munich sketches.

The numerous traces left by Rembrandt's lost *Circumcision* in the work of pupils, and the relatively few works directly derived from the *Nativity*, may perhaps be explained by a difference in the time it took to complete the two works, which were simultaneously delivered to Frederik Hendrik. If this was indeed the case, the genesis

Fig. 7. Rembrandt workshop, *The Circumcision*, lead pencil, 8.2 x 7 cm (1:1; Ben. A43). Munich, Graphische Sammlung

Fig. 8. Rembrandt workshop, *The Circumcision*, lead pencil, 8.9 x 6.8 cm (1:1; Ben. A43a). Munich, Graphische Sammlung



of the *Circumcision* took longer than that of the *Nativity*, and was therefore available as a model in the workshop for a longer period of time.

For an approach to the problems raised that is radically different from the above, see note 23.

NOTES

1. *The Descent from the Cross* (II A 65) 89.6 x 65 cm
   The Raising of the Cross (II A 69) 95.7 x 72.2 cm
   The Ascension (III A 118) 93 x 68.7 cm
   The Entombment (III A 126) 92.6 x 68.9 cm
   The Resurrection (III A 127) 91.9 x 67 cm
   The Nativity (V 11) 97 x 71 cm
2. It should be noted that J. van Gool, *De nieuwe schouburg der Nederlantsche kunstschilders en schilderessen*, II, The Hague 1751, pp. 538-539, does mention seven paintings. However, it is not clear where Van Gool got his information. Given the great similarities between Van Gool's catalogue and the one by Karsch of 1719, Van Gool may well have relied on Karsch. Van Gool thus appears not to be a reliable source concerning the time of disappearance of Rembrandt's *Circumcision*.
3. Canvas (relined) 97.8 x 72 cm; Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, inv. no. 241. Examined in November 1985 (J.B.), and again in January 1989 (E.v.d.W.). Prints of 15 X-ray films covering the entire painting were received later. These radiographs reveal no pentimenti, which supports our opinion that the Braunschweig painting is a copy. See also *Corpus* IV, p. 323 note 33.
   See HdG 82a; W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt, Wiedergefundene Gemälde*, Stuttgart/Berlin 1921, p. XXV, ill. p. 104; Bauch 1966, A 31; Gerson, pp. 90-92, ill.; Schwartz 1984, fig. 262; Tümpel 1986, cat. no. K 3; Sumowski *Gemälde* I, p. 22 note 23, p. 35 ill., VI, p. 3586; V. Manuth in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, p. 379 note 2, as possibly by G. van den Eeckhout; M. Franken, in: exhib.cat. *Rembrandt, Quest of a genius*, 2006. pp. 169-170.
4. T. Querfurt, *Kurtze Beschreibung des Fuerstl. Lust-Schlosses Saltzdahlum…*, Braunschweig n.d. [1710], n.p. See also note 7.
5. Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Book III, cap. 7, 4-6.
6. C. Tümpel, 'Rembrandt. Die Bildtradition und der Text', in: *Ars Auro Prior. Studia Ioanni Bialostocki sexagenario dicata*, Warsaw 1981, pp. 429-434, esp. 432; see also V 30.
7. Querfurt, op. cit.[4]: 'Rembrand. Nr. 240K *Die Grablegung Christi*, welches ein Stück, so wegen seiner ungemeinen Kunst aller Menschen Augen an sich ziehet, 4 Fuβ hoch, 3 Fuβ breit [= 116.72 x 87.54 cm]. Rembrand. Nr. 241K *Die Beschneidung Christi* von selbiges taille in einer gleichmäβigen force.'
8. Drawing, red chalk, grey and brown washes, 26.4 x 19.5 cm; Brussels, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Collection de Grez. Sumowski *Drawings* III, no. 709[x].
9. See V 11 Copy 1; V 5 Copy 1; V 6 Copies 1 and 2; V 1 Copy 1.
10. Panel 25 x 21.5 cm; Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. no. 2512. Examined Oktober 1988 (E.v.d.W.). Sumowski *Gemälde* III, no. 1327 (as N. Maes); Exhib. cat. *A glowing palette. Paintings of Rembrandt and his school*, Rotterdam 1988, pp. 32-34 (as B. Fabritius); Manuth, op. cit.[3] cat. no. 80 (as B. Fabritius).
11. Panel 23.7 x 19.2 cm (sight size); New York, Lamon collection. Examined April 1969 (J.B., B.H.). Valentiner, op. cit.[3], p. XX, ill. p. 59; Br. 376.
12. Compare the London *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* (V 3) and *A weeping woman* in Detroit (V 3 fig. 12).
13. A picture (according to a photograph in the RKD received in 1963), in the Rusch collection, Düsseldorf; support unknown, 95 x 77 cm. Awkwardly painted, the representation largely corresponds with the Braunschweig painting, however, without all of the details, for example in the garments of the standing priest.
    Moreover, the RKD has photographs of various fragments which must have been part of a single work. The RKD also has a photograph from around 1920 of a fragment of canvas measuring 32 x 47 in., or 81 x 119 cm; London, Art Collectors Association. In this fragment can be seen the main scene: at the right extending almost to the edge of the Braunschweig painting, and left to just behind Mary. At the bottom the fragment ends halfway through Mary, and just below the shoulder of the woman turning her head. At the top can just be seen the tip of the high priest's staff. Compositionally it agrees with the Braunschweig painting, though details differ. The painting style also appears to accord with a later phase of Rembrandt's development.
    It may be possibile that this photograph represents the same painting now known only from fragments: all sorts of details in this photograph accord with those in the above described fragments, although with fewer traces of wearing and damage. A larger copy in a later style is very reminiscent of the Washington version of the *Descent from the cross* (II C 49, copy 2).
14. Canvas 63 x 53 cm, signed <*H 1649 J*>; Copenhagen, Statensmuseum for Kunst, inv. no. 1524; Sumowski *Gemälde* II, no. 931.
15. Strauss *Doc.*, 1656/12 no. 92.
16. As stated in note 7, Querfurt mentions the *Circumcision* and another copy, namely of the *Entombment* (though they are not described as copies but as works by Rembrandt). Both pictures were probably acquired at the same time. They may be identical to two paintings from the Isaak van den Blooken collection that were auctioned in Amsterdam on 11 May 1707 as nos. 1 and 2; 'De Besnydenis Christus. (zynde een kapitael stuk) van Rembrant' (230 guilders) and 'De Graflegging van dezelve,…' (290 guilders) (Lugt 205; Hoet I, pp. 98-99). A 17th-century reference is also known

according to which two paintings with these subjects were both in the same collection. In the inventory drawn up on 8 October 1669 on the occasion of Ferdinand Bol's marriage, in addition to 'no 13 een grafleggingh van Rembrant' was also listed 'no 14 een besnidenis dito', see A. Bredius, 'Bol's kunstschatten', *O.H.* 28 (1910), pp. 233-238, esp. 234; also in Blankert *Bol*, p. 77. On the basis of the above mentions one could conjecture that both copies in Braunschweig were already kept together in the same place in the 17th century. Accordingly, the copy of the *Circumcision* mentioned in Rembrandt's inventory would then have to be related to another painting.

17. W. Wegner, *Die niederländischen Handzeichnungen des 15.-18. Jahrhunderts* (Kataloge der Staatlichen Graphischen Sammlung München I), Berlin 1973, cat.no. 1114.
18. P. Schatborn, [review of] Wegner, op. cit.[17], *O.H.* 92 (1978), pp. 132-135, esp. 134.
19. P. Schatborn in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Drawings and Etchings*, 1991/92, cat. no. 39.
20. M. Royalton-Kisch, 'Rembrandt's sketches for his paintings', *Master Drawings* 27 (1989), pp. 128-145.
21. Wegner, op. cit.[17], cat. nos. 1140, 1141.
22. Wegner, op. cit.[17], cat. nos. 1145, 1142, 1143. Wegner noted that on the back of no. 1143 was an unrecorded inscription: lower left: '15 Januw 1644'; and lower right: 'Rembrandt', both inscriptions are cut off. Although the two inscriptions are by the same hand, which appears to deviate from Rembrandt's handwriting, the date can provide an indication of its date of origin.
23. T. Ketelsen, 'Die Beschneidung Christi in München – eine ikonographische Annäherung', in: *Rembrandt-Zeichnungen in München. Beiträge zur Ausstellung Rembrandt auf Papier – Werk und Wirkung*, ed. by Th. Vignau-Wilberg, Munich 2003, pp. 95-113.

V 11 Rembrandt – The Nativity 1646

MUNICH, BAYERISCHE STAATSGEMÄLDESAMMLUNGEN, ALTE PINAKOTHEK, INV. NO. 393

HDG 78; BR. 574; BAUCH 79; GERSON 215; TÜMPEL 67

1. Introduction and description

This poorly preserved but exceptionally well-documented painting, unusually heavily impastoed in places, stands alone in Rembrandt's oeuvre of the 1640s. However, both the composition and the *peinture* were imitated in Rembrandt's studio, indicating that *de geboorte Christi* [the birth of Christ]– as the painting was mentioned in the Warrant Book of Frederik Hendrik in 1646 – had an impact on the production of his circle during these years.

Mary, Joseph, and the Christ Child are set in a dimly-lit stable with an open truss roof. The Christ Child is nestled in a bundle of straw. Mary sits next to him on a mound of loose straw near a porridge bowl and an open basket from which trails a white cloth. Mary extends one arm above the infant. Bending slightly forward over Mary's arm and holding an oil lamp, Joseph presents the child to three shepherds kneeling just before and to the left of the Christ Child. Their different poses will prove crucial to our understanding of the genesis of both this painting and one of the same subject in London that in our opinion is based on it. The shepherd at Christ's feet is seen from the back and in *contre-jour*, his arms outstretched. Clasping his red cap, the leftmost shepherd folds his hands before his chest in a gesture of adoration. The third kneeling shepherd is largely concealed by his companion, only his bearded head is visible. To their left a young boy looks on; his face and his raised left hand, in which he holds his cap, are illuminated by Joseph's oil lamp. Next to him is a dog, only partially visible and very difficult to distinguish in this dark region.

Two shepherds standing behind the kneeling figures also contemplate the newborn child. The left one, with a dark beard and a broad, flat hat atop his cloth-wrapped head, carries a burning lantern in his right hand and tucks the other hand into the folds of his jacket; a flask hangs down against the hip. Next to him, slightly to the back, stands another shepherd wearing a fur-trimmed cap and a swath of grey cloth wrapped around the lower part of his face – as though to ward off the cold. In his right hand he holds a shepherd's staff with a small 'shovel' at the end, visible to the left behind the shoulder of the figure near him with the lantern. From his belt hang a bag with a flap and bell-shaped bagpipes. The light of the lantern falls on a number of figures slightly further back at the left. A woman carrying a sleeping child holds open a door, and another figure can be discerned behind her and to the left. Directly to the right of the men in the middle ground can be seen the head of a child peeping over a partition, whose face is illuminated from below by an invisible source of light, creating the impression that he must be carrying his own lamp or candle.

Two cows are visible behind Mary and Joseph; the head of the one at the left is partially lit and turned to the centre, while the one at the right faces right. Above their heads is a little loft partly supported by a pole just behind Joseph, which can be reached by the ladder at the right. A cloth is draped over the pole; a chicken perches to the right of it and a rooster rests on a slat slightly higher up. The rafters and beams of the roof are indistinctly silhouetted in the dark.

Working conditions

Examined in January 1969 (S.H.L., P.v.Th.) and in March 1989 (E.v.d.W.): in good light and out of the frame and with the aid of an ultraviolet lamp and a stereomicroscope; four prints of X-ray films not encompassing the entire surface of the painting were available during examination. An infrared reflectogram computer assembly and a complete set of X-radiographs were received later. However, the legibility of these X-radiographs is impaired by the image of a panel comprising many thin strips of wood glued together as a composite whole, to which the canvas has since been affixed. A yellowed varnish hampers observation.

Support

Canvas, rounded at the top, 97 x 71 cm. Single piece. It is affixed to a support of blockboard which is covered over with canvas on both sides. An unusually fine weave is visible in the X-ray films. The fine canvas structure also runs through areas with the most serious damage in paint and ground layers, and locally along the edges. Consequently, it can be assumed that the canvas structure now visible in the X-radiographs is not the original canvas, but a new one to which the picture was transferred.

Ground

Not observed.

Paint layer

Condition: The painting has suffered greatly as a result of drastic restorations in the past (see *6. Provenance*). The paint layer must have been heavily flattened during these treatments, which included a transfer (see *Support*). The relief of the paint surface of the lit areas has largely vanished. In addition, the original paint layer and early overpaintings have been so compressed that they are difficult to distinguish. The image is probably also partly determined by more recent overpaintings. The shepherd in *contre-jour* in the foreground has certainly been overpainted with brown paint; this added paint presents a pattern of shrinkage cracks. Numerous inpaintings are also found in the shadowy lower corners of the picture. This is confirmed by infrared reflectography, according to which paint containing carbon seems to be applied more or less evenly in these areas, as well as in the background. Otherwise the infrared reflectography is not very informative. The rest of the painting is relatively better preserved, though the areas executed in thicker paint, such as the heads, hands, and the lantern, are also abraded to a lesser or greater degree. Inpaintings in warm brown are also found above and to the right of the lantern, in the bent arm of the shepherd holding the lantern, and below the extended hand of the woman and child in the left background. From the X-ray images it appears that fairly extensive paint loss in the dark areas of the stable interior has been restored.

An unusual feature can be discerned in the area encompassing the Christ Child, the luminous straw around him,

Fig. 1. Canvas 97 x 71 cm

Fig. 2. X-Ray (The pattern of wood grain visible in the image is due to the wood backing the canvas.)

Fig. 3. Detail (1:2)

and the lit parts of Mary in the form of grooves 1 to 2 mm wide, some of which are rather long. The majority of these have no bearing on the existing forms. A few, however, do. This is most clearly apparent in the upper body of the child, where a series of short grooves converge near the head, and in the upper body of Mary, where some of them coincide with parts of the inner contours of her grey-blue outer garment. While occasionally there is a correlation between parts of the grooves and the craquelure in the paint surface, in general there is no connection between the two and the craquelure pattern is not interrupted by the grooves. While examining the grooves under the microscope, we had the impression that attempts had been made to seal with some hot implement the disturbing cracks that had developed in the impastoed paint layer. Traces of deformed cracks can still be observed in a number of the grooves. That the frequency of grooves is greater in the figures than in the surrounding area may be related to the fact that the cracks in the lit areas of the figures were once experienced as very disturbing. That some of the grooves correspond with the contours or the internal detail of the figures may have been caused by the occurrence of the cracks in the paint where the impasto varied in thickness, thus along the edges of form-defining strokes. The fact that a large part of the craquelure runs independently of the grooves could indicate that this transpired later, after the attempt to fuse the earlier cracks postulated above.

For the rest there is an irregular craquelure that in general can be regarded as normal for a 17th-century painting on canvas.

Fig. 4. X-Ray, detail

The bad condition of the paint layer in the central group makes it impossible to establish precisely the nature of the original handling of the paint. What can be said is that initially it was closely related to the organisation of the light. The lit areas of the heads, hands and parts of the clothing are given in relatively broad and thick form-modelling strokes. The coarseness of the paint relief in the impastoed light areas is further emphasised by the remains of old varnish in the relief. It also gives these areas a fragmented aspect, which is reinforced by the above-mentioned grooves and the visibility in places of pentimenti, for example in Mary's extended arm and in her head covering.
The more intact areas around the central group are easier to assess. The high quality of some of these, for example, the little still life in the lower right corner, is still discernible. While the bit of exposed cloth has been awkwardly touched up, the basket is finely drawn in black over a grey-brown base and the catchlights are worked up with ochre and red. The porridge bowl with the spoon is securely delineated and the straw is rendered in grazing ochre streaks.

Despite its subordination to the light effect, the colour scheme is remarkably varied. Next to the white in the clothing of Joseph, Mary and the Christ Child, are a few vivid contrasting colours: red in Mary's robe and in the cap of the shepherd at the left, grey blue in Mary's outer garment, and yellowish hues in the straw and in the edges of light along the oil lamp held by Joseph. The colour scheme in the middle ground is more subdued. The head covering of the shepherd with the lantern is painted in tight, parallel greenish-grey strokes (with an edge of light in yellowish white above the forehead). His flat hat is red,

his coat grey shifting to light brown in the light. The waistcoat of the man to the right of the lantern holder is done in dark green and his doublet in dark brown. Further back, the colourfulness diminishes and is limited to greys and browns. Broad strokes of grey define the hat and scarf of the woman with the child, and the latter's head covering. Her coat is a dark red brown, her left inner sleeve brown, and the blanket wrapped around the sleeping child is grey. Her hand rests on an object rendered in brown with black stripes, presumably an open gate in a partition. The stable interior, painted entirely in dark greys and browns, merges into the shadows with the exception of a few vaguely highlighted elements. The paint surface in this zone is smooth. Finally, the aptly characterised cows below the little loft are in monochrome shades; the one at the left in predominantly grey tones and the one at the right in a variety of browns.

The coarse impasto of the heads in the immediate vicinity of the Christ Child adds to the intensity of the light effect – one that is reinforced by the fact that modelling by means of tonal differences is surprisingly scarce. The face of the shepherd with the lantern appears to have been carefully modelled with small strokes of flesh colour. Yet there, just as with the other heads in the middle ground, the limited gradation in tonal values adds to the impression of a gentle light bathing the faces. The light-catching parts of the countenance of the woman with the sleeping child are indicated with little strokes of dull yellow, and a dab of pink in the thick lips. The head of the boy in the left foreground is firmly shaped. Details are applied in grey, and bright red is used in the accolade-shaped upper lip and in three strokes in his scarf.

No matter how sketchily the little loft also appears to have been executed, as a spatial and carefully constructed part of the stable interior it plays a vital role in both the composition and in the suggestion of space. It is smoothly painted in brown and brown-grey strokes. Similarly, the ladder, on its lit side, is painted in greys and dark ochre with long strokes. A grazing brush stroke defines the left contour. The black shadow cast by the ladder on the wall above it contributes substantially to the light and spatial effect. The rooster and the chicken in the loft are depicted in what appear to be emphatically sketchy, broad strokes of grey and ochre, the rooster with a hint of red in its beak and throat.

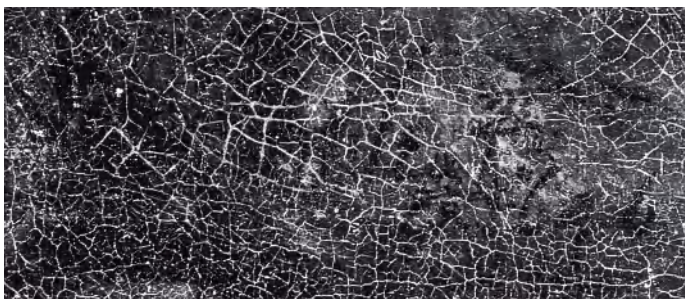
Radiography

A striking feature in the complete X-ray image is the radioabsorbency in the left background above the shoulders of the standing shepherds, which decreases towards the top. It may be assumed that the background there was initially lighter. The reserves for the figures in this light region broadly correspond with what can be seen in the painting. The most distinct is the figure with the lantern, whose headdress – as in the final version – widens at the top, although with a different contour. The shepherd's face and his beard in the X-ray image create the impression that he did not initially look at the Christ Child, but rather that he was shown *en face*. Protruding above his shoulder at the left is the reserve for the hand of the figure to his right with a scarf before the mouth; traces of the shepherd's staff held in this hand can be discerned in the direction of the brushstroke of the radioabsorbent paint in the background. The reserve for the head of the mother with the child to the left of the figure with the lantern is clearly visible. Here too the contour of the headdress seems slightly different. Showing up a bit darker in the garb of the woman lit by the lamp is the head of the boy to the left of the shepherds. Running through this area is a rectangular form with light edges that could have been part of the clothing of the woman. This can be taken as an indication that the boy was added at a later stage.

The most interesting pentimenti occur in the group of kneeling shepherds (figs. 3 and 4). The poses of the two foremost shepherds and the illumination of the centre of the composition were all radically altered. The shepherd in profile, whose hands are now clasped, originally had a staff nestled in the crook of his extended right arm. The repoussoir figure with both arms spread out is quite different in the X-radiograph. Only a vague reserve for the left arm, which is far less dark than that for the trunk, and a short reserve intended for the upper right arm are visible, which means that the figure initially had both hands raised before the body. The dark form (still somewhat determined by radioabsorbent paint) to the left of the torso is part of the present outstretched arm – a reserve for it was later left in the highlights applied during the alteration of the shepherd in profile described above. Remains of a reserve at the right of the shoulder of the repoussoir figure may coincide with the original position of the right hand (as confirmed by a drawing discussed below under *5. Copies*, 1, fig. 6). The extensive area with radioabsorbent paint makes it clear that significant changes were introduced here as well. For instance, there are no clear reserves for the right arm of Mary and the shadow it casts on Joseph. Forms show up above her arm that do not entirely correspond with what one would expect from the surface image. One of them suggests that Joseph initially raised his left hand to his chest, thereby casting a pronounced shadow on this part of his body, indicated by a reserve. Moreover, it is virtually certain that the oil lamp Joseph now holds in his right hand did not occupy this position at the stage when the foremost shepherd held his hands before his body. As neither the right arm of Joseph nor an oil lamp are found in the drawing listed below as Copy 1 (fig. 6), one must assume that these were not originally depicted and that an invisible source of light was situated behind the kneeling shepherd.

Finally it can be observed that Mary's headdress extended further to the right: evidently the back of her head was originally larger. Radioabsorbent forms to her right and higher up suggest that here, as well as to the left, the view through was lighter than it is now. These forms display reserves that do not correspond with anything in the paint surface. They might be related to the distribution of light and shade over the two cow heads, even though this is different in the final version and in the drawing (fig. 6): the head of the cow turned to Joseph's shoulder is partially lit, while the head of the cow facing right hardly at all.

Fig. 5. Signature (enlarged)



One could also imagine that a figure (with raised arm?) shows up against the light view. The ladder can be distinguished at the far right, as it is present in the painting now.

The grooves in the paint layer in the lit central area show up as relatively thick, dark lines. The direction of the craquelure pattern – sometimes only vaguely visible and at others quite clear as small dark lines – in general differs from the grooves, and only coincides with the latter in a single place. The varying degree to which the craquelure pattern shows up in the X-ray image may have to do with the angle of the cracks relative to the picture plane. That they are hardly visible in the grooves can be explained by the suggestion forwarded in *Paint layer*, namely that the grooves are the result of efforts made to seal cracks that occured early on.

Numerous serious losses in the paint surface and the ground show up as either dark or light irregular forms, depending on whether or not the paint losses were filled with radioabsorbent material.

Signature

At the lower left in black paint: <[…]*dt f 1646*> (fig. 5). While the date is clearly legible, only traces of the signature can be seen. Little, therefore, can be said concerning its authenticity. However, according to a document, the painting was indeed delivered in 1646, which speaks in favour of the signature's authenticity.

2. Comments

Like the other six scenes of the Life and Passion of Christ (II A 65, II A 69, III A 118, III A 126, III A 127 plus a lost *Circumcision,* V 10) delivered to Prince Frederik Hendrik, the *Nativity* in Munich is exceptionally well documented.[1] The documentation of this painting and the *Circumcision*, both delivered in 1646, consists in the first place of a passage in the prince's *Ordinantieboek* (Warrant Book), in which the order is given to pay the substantial sum of 2400 Carolus guilders to Rembrandt for making and delivering the two paintings on 29 November 1646 (see *3. Documents and sources*). In accordance with the 17th-century convention the painting is referred to as a 'geboorte Christi' (Nativity), rather than an 'Adoration of the shepherds', the title commonly used later on.

On the basis of the documentation and the painting's connection with the five other preserved works of the Passion series, its authenticity has never been doubted. It is difficult to imagine Rembrandt delivering anything other than autograph work to the stadholder. On the other hand, a serious attempt to interpret the painting's style and manner of execution in connection with Rembrandt's artistic development in the mid-1640s has never really been made. Doing so, however, is not so simple. To the extent that the paint layer's far from satisfactory condition allows us to assess the manner of painting, it reveals no marked similarity to authentic, approximately contemporary works. One does not find in those other works the same use of relatively broad strokes such as those that model the light areas of the heads and draperies with great directness and in thick, colourful paint is not found in this form in other works. And least of all in the elaborately detailed London *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* of 1644 (V 3), or in the St Petersburg *Holy Family* of 1645 (V 4), or the (in our view) faithful copy of the *Circumcision* in Braunschweig (V 10). The rather sketchy treatment of the figures near the light source, with their strong accents of light and shadow could have been connected with Rembrandt's conception of the effect of candlelight (or more properly in this case the glow of an oil lamp). Something similar, though on a smaller scale, is found in the figures huddling around a fire in the Dublin *Nocturnal landscape with the Holy Family* of 1647 (V 13). The locally extremely thick application of paint in the Munich *Nativity* is echoed in a number of studio works from the second half of the 1640s.[2]

However, it is also possible that Rembrandt was here consciously experimenting with the 'rough manner', an artistic concept used in art literature since Vasari, as proof of artistic brilliance. This type of virtuosity was known as *sprezzatura*, or in 17th-century Dutch *lossigheydt*, an effortless nonchalance serious art-loving courtiers were expected to appreciate. This interpretation of the *peinture* in this work is in line with the fact that Rembrandt made it for the court of Frederik Hendrik.[3]

The artificial lighting of the scene, in keeping with the iconographic tradition of the theme, naturally determines the composition to large degree, primarily the grouping of a number of figures around the light source in the middle, the use of a contrasting repoussoir figure, and the decreasing intensity of light near the periphery. Rembrandt had already employed similar motifs in some of the works in the Passion series destined for Frederik Hendrik, chiefly in the *Entombment* (III A 126) of *c.* 1635-39, where the main source of light – two shielded torches – is counter-balanced by the lantern in the dark lower right corner. Rembrandt's pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten, who may still have been in the master's studio during the genesis of the Munich *Nativity*, extols the way in which some great Italian painters included three or even more sources of light in a single scene.[4] It can hardly be a coincidence therefore that three sources of light are either depicted or suggested in both this painting and in the *Holy Family* in St Petersburg.

Before exploring the extent to which Rembrandt followed the traditional treatment of his theme, it might be useful to analyse the rather significant differences between the painting in its final form and earlier stages, in so far as they can be gleaned from the X-radiographs and a drawing in red chalk and bistre now in London (see *5. Copies*, 1; fig. 6). As was noted in the discussion of the X-radio-

Fig. 6. Copy 1. Rembrandt workshop, *The Nativity*, red chalk, pen and wash in brown ink, 26 x 19.1 cm. London, The British Museum

Fig. 7. G. van Honthorst, *The Nativity,* 1622, canvas 164 x 190 cm. Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum

graphs, the standing figures at the left must have initially been silhouetted against a relatively light background. A somewhat lighter view through an opening was evident at the right, but the reserves there visible in the X-radiographs do not really correspond with the final version of the two cow heads. Judging from the X-radiographs, it is doubtful whether the small boy with the dog was part of the initial design. Most interesting are the revisions to the central group (see figs. 3 and 4). The kneeling shepherd at the left seen in profile did not initially have his hands clasped, as now, but held what appears to be a completely executed shepherd's staff in the right hand extended near the body. His neighbour, the shepherd seen from the back, did not hold his arms spread but rather raised in front of him. Joseph probably held his left hand to his chest and in his right hand carried a candle or oil lamp which was covered by the head of the kneeling repoussoir figure. The motif of the hidden source of light, which recurs in countless works by the Utrecht Caravaggists (see fig. 7), was later eliminated by Rembrandt. He shifted the raised right hand of the kneeling repoussoir figure to make way for Joseph's oil lamp and depicted the arms of this figure spread out. This reconstruction of the compositional evolution is confirmed in a surprising fashion by the above-mentioned drawing in London. It must have been done when nearly all of the changes in the initial painted composition had already been made. Curiously, in addition to the two extended arms, as they are now also seen in the painting, the kneeling repoussoir figure has another, faintly indicated, raised right hand, corresponding to the earlier stage as visible in the X-radiographs. Moreover, Joseph's oil lamp is missing near the extended arm of the shepherd. The drawing probably depicts a stage when the source of light was still concealed. The great concentration of radioabsorbent paint in this area visible in the X-radiographs certainly does not conflict with the idea that several versions overlap here. It is noteworthy that virtually all other directly or indirectly known derivatives of this painting from Rembrandt's workshop (discussed under the London *Nativity*, V 12), are based on the earlier version of the composition. They include the shepherd seen from the back with his hands raised, the source of light masked by his head, and the kneeling shepherd diagonally behind him with a staff – virtually always in reverse as a result of the fact that the London painting, presumably the prototype for the other derivations, is a mirror image variant of the Munich original. Hence, this painting is also one of the many instances when a work by Rembrandt either before its completion or prior to a later autograph reworking, exerted influence on workshop variants not by Rembrandt (see Chapter III). The only known drawing that goes back to the painting in its final state is a Rembrandtesque sketch of uncertain status in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.[5]

The traditional iconographic coherence of the motifs as seen in the *Nativity* conforms to a type originating in Northern Italy, which in the course of its evolution continued to influence Dutch art.[6] The representation of the Nativity with shepherds worshipping in the dark of night is known from Correggio's painting in Dresden,[7] and numerous versions of the theme by Jacopo, or, primarily, Francesco Bassano.[8] In pictorial conception and the grouping of the figures, Rembrandt's painting is very close to this Northern Italian type. A similar relationship exists with later Caravaggesque variations of this tradition where, however, the monumental figure scale and the plasticity of the figures supported by the chiaroscuro is further removed from Rembrandt's scale and conception. Nevertheless, it is not implausible that Gerrit van Honthorst's painting of the same subject in Cologne (fig. 7), which may well have been a mantlepiece for the 'cabinet' of Prince Frederik Hendrik,[9] contributed to Rembrandt's conception of the central group, particularly when one considers that in Rembrandt's painting the foremost kneeling shepherd first had the hand raised before the body. By initially placing the shepherd so as to mask the source of light, Rembrandt may have intended the light to be supernatural, radiating from the Christ Child, as had been usual in the Italian tradition since Correggio, one also followed by Van Honthorst. In eliminating this supernatural radiation and substituting the oil lamp held by Joseph, Rembrandt deviates from this tradition. He reserves the radiation of an inner light for the risen Christ.[10] Another popular motif in 16th-century Italian art (including the Bassanos and later Van Honthorst), is the unveiling of the child by Mary, who raises two corners of the cloth – which Rembrandt also chose not to adopt. Remarkably, Hess reintroduced this motif in his reproductive etching of the 1770s (see *4. Graphic reproductions*, 1, fig. 10). Finally, Tümpel[11] has pointed out that Rembrandt was not the first to exclude the ox and the donkey, whose traditional presence was understood as the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 1: 2-3; in their place he has included two cows. This departure from tradition is also encountered in the derivations.

Of the drawings connected with the genesis of the painting – two small black chalk sketches in Munich (figs. 8 and 9 – neither of the two can be considered as a preparatory study for the painting, or even as being by Rembrandt. While they do include isolated motifs from the painting, the graphic handling is chaotic and they lack

Fig. 8. Rembrandt workshop, black chalk, 12.6 x 9.2 cm (1 : 1; Ben. 578). Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung

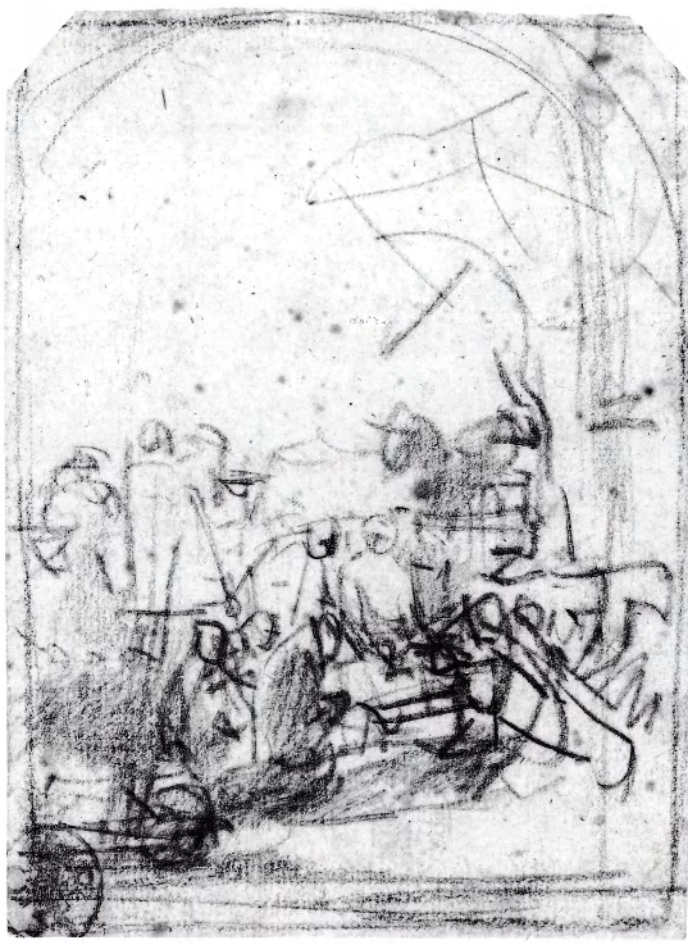


Fig. 9. Rembrandt workshop, black chalk, 13 x 9.8 cm (1 : 1; Ben. 579). Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung

organisational structure. Accordingly, their attribution to Rembrandt has been questioned.[12] Assuming that the painting was delivered to the stadholder immediately upon its completion and that this is the reason why most of the derivatives were made of the variant in reverse which apparently remained in the studio (the work now in London), one could speculate that these sketches were done by a draughtsman who had access to the original either in The Hague, or even later in Düsseldorf. However, with regard to the two chalk drawings in Munich, this is disputable. Indications of a wheelbarrow can be discerned in the lower left foreground in both these drawings. Neither the X-radiograph nor infrared reflectography show a trace of this wheelbarrow, which does not imply, however, that it could not have been painted in this section. Had it been a dark silhouette painted over the foreground, it would not show up in the X-radiograph as it would not contain radioabsorbent paint. Infrared reflectography would not reveal this wheelbarrow, as a layer of paint containing carbon – obviously a later overpainting – shields underlying elements in this area from being detected with this radiation. The wheelbarrow does occur – although it was later overpainted – in the London variant in reverse, which must have remained behind in Rembrandt's studio, and its derivatives. This would seem to indicate that the two Munich sketches also originated in Rembrandt's workshop. Additional support for this argument is provided by the fact that similar sketches were done after other paintings of the same time, namely one after the London *Christ and the woman taken in adultery* of 1644 (V 3) and two after the lost *Circumcision* (V 10).

For a further analysis of the painting in confrontation with the London variant, see Chapter IV, pp. 283 - 295.

3. Documents and sources

For the *Nativity* and the lost *Circumcision* delivered to Frederik Hendrik, Rembrandt was paid in 1646 by the Prince, according to his Warrant Book for 1641-1647, fol. 442 (Strauss *Doc.*, 1646/6): 'Syne Hooch[t] ordonneert hiermede synen Tresorier en Rentmeester Generael, Willem Ketting de Jong, te betaelen aen N. Rembrant, schilder tot Amsterdam, de somme van twee duysent vier hondert Carolusgulden, ter saecke dat hy ten dienste van Syne Hoochheyt, heeft gemaeckt ende gelevert twee schilderijen, d'eene van de geboorte Christi, en d'ander van de besnijdinge Christi, Ende mits enz …[*f*] 2400:0:0.

's Gravenhage, desen XXIX November 1646.'

(His Highness hereby orders his Treasurer and Paymaster General, Willem Ketting de Jong to pay to N. Rembrant, painter of Amsterdam, the sum of two thousand four hundred Carolus guilders, for having made and delivered two paintings in the service of his Highness, the one of the navity and the other of the circumcision of Christ, and therefore… 2400 guilders. The Hague, this 29 November 1646.)

See for the documents concerning all the paintings of the Passion series II A 65, *5. Documents and sources*.

Fig. 10. Etching by C.E.C. Hess (reproduced in reverse)

4. Graphic reproductions

1. Etching by Carl Ernst Christoph Hess (Darmstadt 1755-Munich 1828) for *La Galerie électorale de Düsseldorf…*, Basle 1778 (fig. 10). Inscribed: *Rembrandt p. – Hess fecit a.f.* and on an escutcheon the cypher *CT* of the Elector Palatine Carl Theodor (d. 1799). Reproduces the original in reverse. The dog, which can be distinguished with some difficulty near the small boy at the left in the painting is missing in the etching. Mary raises the cloth on which the Christ Child is lying with her outstretched arm; this traditional motif is not found either in the painting or in any of its derivations and was apparently added by the printmaker. Moreover, the way in which Mary holds the cloth in her hand with fingers extended is unlikely. A preparatory drawing for this etching is in the Louvre.[13]

5. Copies

1. Drawing in red chalk, pen and wash in bistre, 26 x 19.1 cm, London, The British Museum, often attributed to Nicolaes Maes (fig. 6).[14]

As can be deduced from the deviations from the painting in its final state, the drawing must have been done when the painting was in the process of being painted in the studio. As already noted by Hind, the attribution to Maes is 'by no means certain'.[15] An attribution to Van Hoogstraten might also be considered on the basis of style and technique. The drawing corresponds with the painting in its final state in many areas, also where it departs from an earlier design, the traces of which can be detected in the X-radiographs. This holds true for the elaboration of all of the figures grouped to the left of the shepherd with the lantern, including the small boy with the dog (most probably added at a later stage in the painting). Large sections of the left background behind the standing figures are darkly rendered. It was probably initially lighter. The leftmost kneeling shepherd shows his final form, hands folded before the body. With the exception of the right hand, the figure of Joseph displays the detail now visible, rather than that discerned in the X-radiograph. The cows' heads at the right correspond with those in the present paint surface (in which the one at the right is particularly difficult to distinguish). All of this indicates that the drawing reproduces the painting at a stage when many motifs had already found their ultimate form; perhaps the stage depicted was intended to be definitive. This does not hold true for the kneeling shepherd seen in *contre-jour*. While he does display the present pose with arms extended, one also faintly sees the hands folded before the body; as can also be discerned in the X-radiograph of the painting. The oil lamp Joseph holds in his right hand in the painting is not shown in the drawing, where the source of light is concealed by the head of the kneeling shepherd.

For other derivatives, see the *Nativity*, London (V 12).

6. Provenance

– Coll. Prince Frederik Hendrik of Orange, The Hague (see *3. Documents and sources*).

– The inventory, dated 20 March 1668, of Amalia of Solms, widow of Frederik Hendrik, mentions among the 'paintings in the Court in the Noordeinde':

'[1240] Seven stucken schilderije bij Rembrant gemaeckt, alle met swarte lijsten, boven ovaelsgewijse ende rontom vergulde gesnede feuillages:

De eerste sijnde de geboorte Onses Heeren Jesu Christi.
De tweede de besnijdenisse.
De derde de cruycinge.
De vierde de affdoeninge van den cruyce.
De vijffde de begrafenisse.
De sesde de opstandinge.
De sevende de hemelvaert Onses Heeren Jesu Christi.'[16]

(Seven paintings made by Rembrant, all with black frames, oval at the top and with gilt leaves all round:

The first being the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
The second the circumcision.
The third the crucifixion.
The fourth the descent from the cross.
The fifth the entombment.
The sixth the resurrection.
The seventh the ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ.)

The seven paintings are not mentioned in the 'Dispositions Book' of Amalia of Solms begun on 1 January 1673, nor in the deed of division of the estate of Amalia (d. 1675) dated 1676. They thus did not come into the possession of any of her four daughters, nor subsequently of their children; it must therefore be regarded as extremely unlikely that they could be recognized in any of the works in a motley collection of anonymous paintings that was described in 1696 as being in the estate of one of her daughters, Albertina Agnes. It must perhaps rather be assumed that they went to her grandson Prince Willem III, later King of England (d. 1702).[17] How and when they came to be in Düsseldorf is not known.

– Coll. Johann Wilhelm, Elector Palatine (reigned 1690-1716).

In the catalogue of the electoral gallery in Düsseldorf compiled by G.J. Karsch in 1719:

'Diese sieben folgende Stück *repraesenti*ren die *Passion* unseres HErrn *JEsu Christi*, seynd gemahlet von dem berühmten Mahler *Rembrandt*.

		Hoch		Breit	
		Fuss	Zoll	Fuss	Zoll
N. 86.	Die Geburt mit 11. Figuren	2-	9	2-	4
N. 87.	Die Beschneidung mit 19. Fig.				
N. 88.	Die Creutzigung mit 19 Fig.				
N. 89.	Die Abnehmung vom Creutz mit 15. Figuren.				
N. 90.	Die Grablegung *Christi* mit 13. Figuren				
N. 91.	Die Aufferstehung *Christi* mit 13. Figuren.				
N. 92.	Die Himmelfahrt *Christi* mit 12 Figuren.				

The following painting in this catalogue has the same dimensions (see IV 11, *5. Copies*, 1, fig. 4):

N. 93.	Das *Portrait* von *Rembrand*, gemahlet von *Rembrand*	2-	9	2-	4'.[18]

On a restoration of six out of the seven paintings – the *Circumcision* was evidently already lost – we are informed by a letter which Philipp Hieronymus Brinkmann (1709-1761), court painter and curator to Carl Theodor, Elector Palatine (reigned 1742-1799) in Mannheim, wrote to Carl Heinrich von Heinecken in Dresden on 30 March 1756: 'ich möchte wünschen Sie seheten unsere Rimbrand wie sie jetzt Seindt ich habe alle 6. wieder in guten standt gebracht'.[19] Removed from Düsseldorf to Mannheim before the bombardment of 1758 by the Prussian army, and returned there in 1764. Removed to Glückstadt at the approach of the French troops under Bernadotte in 1794, and returned some ten years later. Removed to Kirchheimbolanden before the Duchy of Berg (including Düsseldorf) was ceded to France in 1805. In Munich since 1806.[20]

NOTES

1. See for Rembrandt's series: E. van de Wetering, 'Remarks on Rembrandt's oil-sketches for etchings', in E. Hinterding e.a. *Rembrandt the printmaker*, exhib. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum/London, The British Museum, 2000/2001, esp. pp. 44-56.
2. *Holy Family*, Amsterdam (V 5); *Holy Family*, Kassel (V 6); *Joseph's dream*, Berlin (V 8); *Christ at Emmaus*, Copenhagen (V 15).
3. E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's manner: technique in the service of illusion', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, pp. 12-39; Van de Wetering 1997/2009, pp. 155-169. B. Schnackenburg, 'Young Rembrandt's «Rough Manner». A painting style and its sources', in: exhib. cat. *The mystery of the young Rembrandt*, 2001/02, pp. 92-121.
4. S. van Hoogstraeten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*, Rotterdam 1678, p. 262.
5. W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt. Des Meisters Handzeichnungen* I, Stuttgart/Berlin/Leipzig n.d. [1925] (Kl.d.K. XXXI), no. 297: 'Nicht ganz sicher'; not in Benesch.
6. F. Saxl, 'Rembrandt und Italien', *O.H.* 41 (1923-24), pp. 145-159; J.L.A.A.M. van Rijckevorsel, *Rembrandt en de traditie*, Rotterdam 1932, pp. 169-171.
7. Panel 256 x 188 cm; Dresden, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 152.
8. Compare, for example, canvas 72.5 x 99 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. 1581; canvas 128 x 104 cm, Madrid, Prado, cat. no. 26; see also E. Arslan, *I Bassano*, Milan n.d., I, pp. 38 and 219, and II, pl. 230.
9. Canvas 164 x 190 cm; Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, inv. no. 2122, signed and dated 1622. See also J.R. Judson, *Gerrit van Honthorst*, The Hague 1959, no. 20, fig. 20.
10. H.-M. Rotermund, 'The motif of radiance in Rembrandt's biblical drawings', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 15 (1952), pp. 101-121.
11. Chr. Tümpel (with the assistance of Astrid Tümpel), *Rembrandt legt die Bibel aus*, Berlin 1970, cat. no. 42.
12. W. Wegner, *Die niederländischen Handzeichnungen des 15. – 18. Jahrhunderts* (Kataloge der Staatlichen Graphischen Sammlung München I), Berlin 1973, cat. nos. 1142-1143.
13. F. Lugt, *École hollandaise* III, Paris 1933, (Musée du Louvre. Inventaire général des dessins des écoles du Nord), no. 1279.
14. Sumowski *Drawings* VIII, no. 1792.
15. A.M. Hind, *Drawings by Rembrandt and his school*, London 1915, p. 90, no. 3.
16. S.W.A. Drossaers and Th.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer (eds.), *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmede gelijk te stellen stukken, 1567-1795*, 3 Vols., The Hague 1974-76, I, p. 285.
17. Drossaers and Lunsingh Scheurleer, op. cit.[16], I p. xxx, II p. 237.
18. [G.J. Karsch], *Gründliche Specification derer vortrefflichen und unschätzbaren Gemählden welche in der Galerie der Churfürstl. Residentz zu Düsseldorff in grosser Menge anzutreffen seynd*, n.d. [1719].
19. N. Brochhagen, 'Beobachtungen an den Passionbildern Rembrandts in München', in: T. Buddensieg and M. Winner (eds.), *Munuscula discipulorum. Kunsthistorische Studien Hans Kauffmann zum 70. Geburtstag 1966*, Berlin 1968, pp. 37-44, esp. 42.
20. F. von Reber in: *Katalog der Gemälde-Sammlung in der kgl. Älteren Pinokothek*, Munich n.d. [*c.* 1883], pp. xix and xx; reprinted in several later editions.

V 12 **Pupil of Rembrandt – The Nativity** (free variant after V 11) 1646

LONDON, THE NATIONAL GALLERY, INV. NO. NG 47

HDG 77; BR. 575; BAUCH 78; GERSON 216; TÜMPEL A7

1. Introduction and description

The answer to the question of what the exact relationship might be between two or more obviously connected Rembrandtesque paintings can differ from case to case. While in many instances the nature of this relationship will never be known, in others it can be pinned down fairly precisely. Analysis of X-radiographs and related drawings can then provide insight into how the genesis and evolution of the paintings in question are interwoven. This is the case with the *Nativity* discussed here and the *Nativity* in Munich (V 11) that Rembrandt delivered to Frederik Hendrik in 1646.

Mary is seated in the left foreground of a predominantly dark stable with the cloth-swaddled Christ Child lying before her on a bundle of straw. Joseph stands behind her: his left hand and the lamp one assumes he is holding are obscured by the shepherd with folded hands seen from the back at an angle and kneeling before the infant. His staff lies near him on the ground. To his right is another kneeling shepherd lit from the front with both hands raised and resting his staff in the crook of his bent left arm. Behind him stand two women framing a child and leaning over what appears to be a low, partially lit wall. The righthand woman, whose skirt is visible behind the back of the illuminated shepherd, and the child both look down at the Christ Child. Lips parted as though speaking, the lefthand woman turns to her companion. In the dark wall above and to the right of their heads is a figure peering through an opening. Immediately to the right is an old man with a grey beard and wearing a flat hat. His right hand is raised and in his left he holds a lit lantern with an open door. The lantern casts a pattern of light on the ground and illuminates a boy entering the stable behind the old man and holding a dog by its collar. Behind the boy are a woman holding a sleeping child and a shepherd with a staff wearing a tall tapering hat. The woman turns to him, whereby her face is partially lit by yet another invisible source of light, which also illuminates the face of a woman just noticeable at the far right.

Parts of the shadow-filled stable interior are picked out by the glow from the three sources of light. Three cows stand at the left. The long back of the foremost cow extends behind the two conversing women and the child; the head of a second cow facing left can be distinguished behind the first one; and below both is yet a third head. A post supporting the open roof rises up behind Joseph. On the front of the post hangs what appears to be a *bakermat*, a reed nursing basket. Back and to the left is a loft, which can be reached by means of the ladders leaning against it. At the upper right is a pattern of intersecting rafters from which hangs a bundle of rope at the far right.

Dark spandrels are present in the upper corners of the image; the right one is provided with a light border and thus can be understood as part of a painted arch framing the scene.

Working conditions

Examined in May 1968 (B.H., E.v.d.W.) and again in October 1988 (E.v.d.W.): in good light with the painting out of the frame; an X-radiograph of part of the group around the Christ Child and the shepherd with the lantern was present. A complete set of X-ray prints and an infrared photograph of the entire composition were received later.

Support

Canvas, lined, 65.5 x 55 cm. Cusping at the top and bottom edges of the canvas varies between 8 and 10 cm, and extends inwards 23 cm. To the left the pitch of the cusping varies between 8 and 11 cm, with a depth of 26 cm. No cusping can be discerned at the right edge of the canvas. In view of the pronounced cusping at the left edge and the lack of cusping at the right edge, it may be assumed that the canvas came from the end of a longer strip of canvas primed as a single piece. In view of the cusping along top and bottom, this strip may have been one ell wide.

Thread count: vertical 12.35 threads/cm (11-13.5), horizontal 11.45 threads/cm (11-12). The coarse weave shows primarily in the short thicknesses of the vertical threads, so that one infers that the horizontal ones are the warp threads, which is in agreement with the observations on cusping mentioned above.

Ground

Visible as deep brown in the lower left corner. Little direct use is made of the brown colour of the ground. A brown colour, similar to that of the ground found in some places, is in fact part of a paint layer on top of the ground.

According to *Art in the making* 2006, p. 132: 'The ground has been identified as a rough-textured single layer of quarz (silica) combined with a quantity of brown ochre bound in linseed oil' (see note 1). For quartz grounds see *Corpus* IV, pp. 664-665 and 672-73.

Paint layer

Condition: Generally good, with some local damage: for example, in the head of the foremost cow; the skirt of the woman to the left of the old man with the lantern where, according to the X-radiograph, in an earlier version the lantern was located and held by the woman (see *2. Comments*); and presumably also locally in the foreground.

Craquelure: A fairly coarse craquelure with a somewhat square pattern in the most thickly painted areas, for example in Mary's face.

The work is relatively thinly painted in shades of brown. In the lit group gathered around the Christ Child, the paint has been more thickly applied in broadly brushed areas without much internal detail. This even applies to the faces, where (as is apparent from the X-radiograph) the eyes were painted over the flesh tones. In this group, shadow accents generally appear as small dark lines, for instance along the lower edge of Mary's right arm and hand, along the contour of the foremost kneeling shepherd's back, and here and there in the raised hands of the shepherd lit from the front.

Fig. 1. Canvas 65.5 x 55 cm

Fig. 2. X-Ray

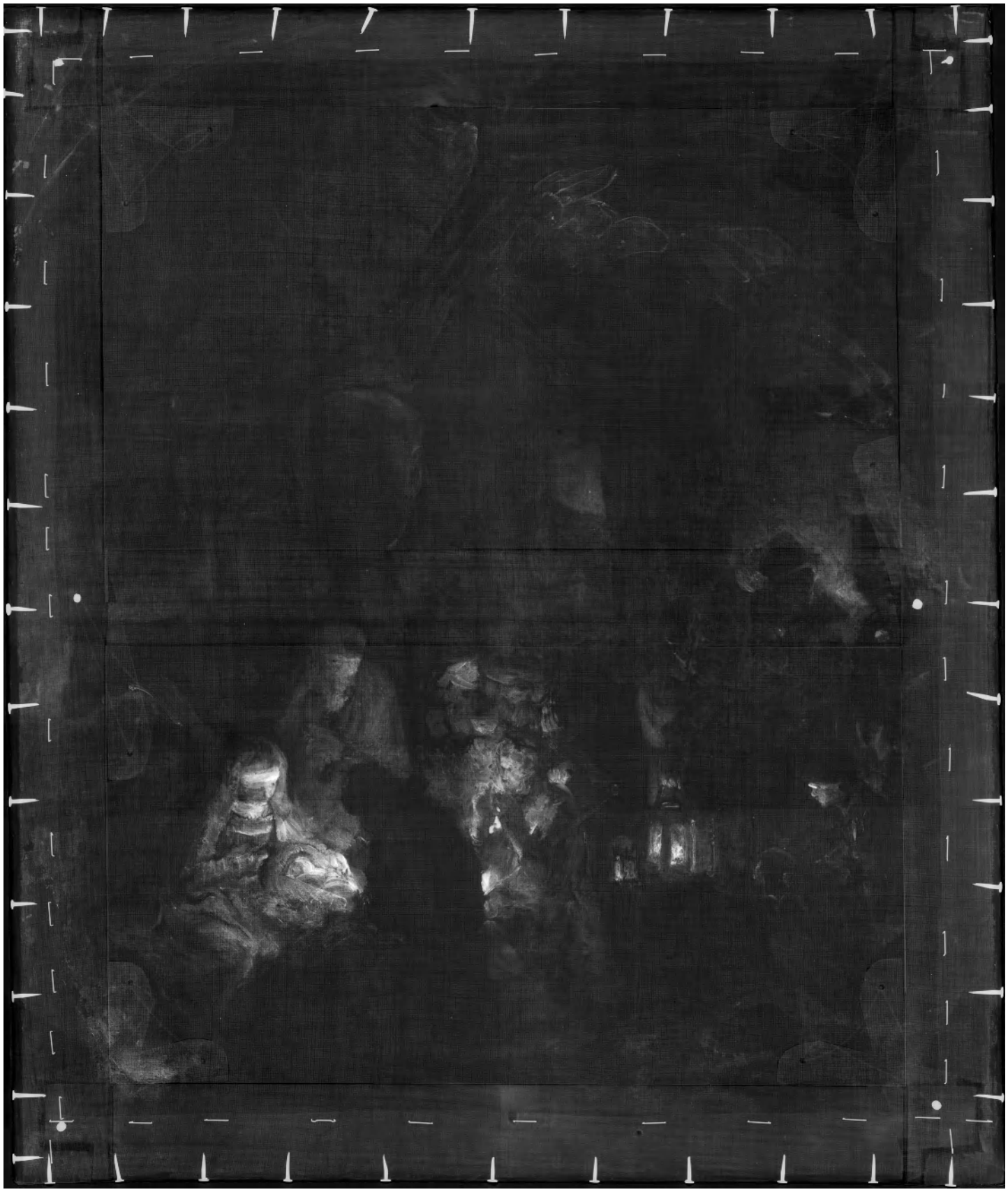


Fig. 3. Detail (1 : 1.5)

A dominant colour in the otherwise primarily brownish palette is the flatly applied brick-red in Mary's cloak, which contrasts with the grey blue of her robe draped over her knees and the pale yellow of the blanket enveloping the Child. A deeper red is also used in the bodice of the woman at the right leaning over the little wall. The broad execution focused on global contrasts of light and dark and of colour is somewhat differentiated by the addition of rims of light, for instance along fingers, in head coverings and in shirt folds, and on the staff of the shepherd kneeling at the right. Rather mechanically applied fine rims of light also play a role in the rendering of figures and objects set more in the dark, such as in the little boy and his dog, in the edge of the hat worn by the shepherd with the lantern, and in the *bakermat*. The light catching edges of the woodwork above the main scene are delineated with generally deft glancing touches of the brush.

What has been described by MacLaren[2] and Bomford et al. (see note 1) as pentimenti can largely be explained as minor deviations normally found between a preparatory and the final stage. Only two pentimenti can be discerned with the naked eye, namely in the head covering of the woman at the right behind the little wall in whose forehead a bit of red shines through; and a dark circular form at the lower right which can be identified as the remains of an overpainted wheelbarrow, an element also encountered in a related drawing formerly in the Henry Oppenheimer collection, London (fig. 6, see further *2. Comments*). However, the X-radiograph reveals several additional pentimenti.

Radiography

The radiographic image broadly coincides with what one would expect from the paint surface. As stated under *Paint layer* minor differences are related to the rough reserves for

Fig. 4. X-Ray, detail

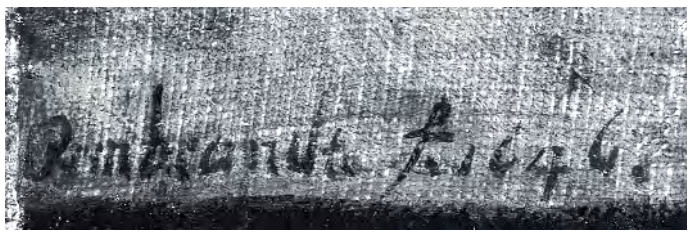
the forms, such as for the shepherd shown as a repoussoir and the woman turning around in the right background. In both figures there is some discrepancy between the reserve in the X-ray image and the actual painted form, which is a result of the figures being worked out in shapes slightly larger than the reserve.

Some other differences, however, can be considered pentimenti. This is certainly true of the form showing up light to the left of the lantern, which can be construed as a smaller lantern. A moderately light form above this small lantern can be read as a hand. In the drawing formerly in the Oppenheimer collection mentioned above (see fig. 6), the lantern was held by the figure in the area of the rightmost woman bending over the wall. Both in the drawing and in the X-radiograph of the painting this figure wears a large flat hat. Approximately above the figure is a reserve in a small, somewhat light area, corresponding with what can be identified in the drawing and (with some difficulty) in the painting as a figure looking through a window.

The background around the head of the woman turning in the group at the right shows up lighter than expected, both to the left where a reserve has been left for the shoulder and the back of the head of the man with the lantern, and to the right where the silhouette of the figure next to her with a tall conical hat shows up. This probably originally lighter background extends up to a vaguely delimited zone in which a number of more or less loop-shaped, light-edged forms can be distinguished. These match the thick brushstrokes observable in the paint surface. The function of these brushstrokes is not clear. Diagonal dark reserves appear to match the brown elements of the roofing.

The moderate light radioabsorbency in the region of Joseph's head and hands give the impression of being traces of very freely executed underpainting. This also

Fig. 5. Detail with signature, infrared photograph (1:1)



applies to the two women to the right of Joseph; in this stage the rightmost woman appears to have had a larger head covering.

Signature

At the lower left in dark somewhat worn paint: <*Rembrandt. f.1646*.> (fig. 5).

2. Comments

As long as the authenticity of the London painting was generally accepted in the literature, scholars disagreed on its relationship to the substantially larger version of the subject in Munich (V 11). Usually, it was considered a more successful free repetition in reverse by Rembrandt himself. On this point, for example, Weisbach was particularly emphatic. For him, the London version with its stronger illusion of space and the greater naturalness of the figures represented the more mature solution.[3] Gerson, on the contrary, called the London painting 'a first version of this same commission' (that is, the documented commission for the Munich painting by Prince Frederik Hendrik), but also found it 'livelier in conception.'[4] Meanwhile, several voices were raised rejecting the authenticity of the London version. Schwartz considered it a loose copy in reverse, clearer in spatial construction and design of the figures than the Munich painting;[5] and Tümpel saw it as a free variant in reverse by a gifted pupil.[6] The authors of the catalogue of *Art in the making*, however, still clung to the painting's authenticity on the basis of what they somewhat erroneously called 'numerous pentimenti' (see *Paint layer* and *Radiography*). Like Weisbach, they saw the painting as 'a variation on the composition used by Rembrandt in the Munich canvas, which is almost certainly the earlier of the two' (see note 1).

Various documents, the X-radiographs of the Munich and the London paintings, and the related drawings yield valuable information regarding their individual genesis. The interpretation of these for solving the problem of the relationship of the London picture to the one in Munich, however, greatly depends on an opinion concerning the authorship of the London *Nativity*. Assuming that the London painting is authentic, the fact that, for example, the kneeling silhouette-figure's arms are not spread but instead raised before the body, as was also initially the case in the Munich painting, could be seen as support for Gerson's argument that it is a first version. A drawing related to the London painting discussed below (fig. 6), which is clearly not by Rembrandt, could easily be considered (by MacLaren, see note 2, for instance) a copy after either a lost design by Rembrandt or the London painting.

The execution of the London painting, however, dispels any suggestion that it could be by Rembrandt (see also Chapter IV, pp. 283-295). The brushwork, primarily in the illuminated areas, has a quite specific individual character determined by an overall very sketchy, often rather flat application of paint. Nowhere in the individual shapes does the indication of form develop into plasticity, as one expects from Rembrandt. A striking example is Mary's flat arm and hand. The way the painter suggests form by means of thin, mostly very thin, dark (occasionally light) little lines, which provide articulation in the otherwise comparatively undifferentiated paint surface is foreign to Rembrandt. If the London painting is indeed a variant by another painter, then it would follow that it was made before the most significant changes, described primarily on the basis of the X-radiographs (see V 11), were introduced to the prototype. The most striking change in the Munich painting is naturally that of the kneeling repoussoir figure whose initially raised hands were changed into outspread arms. The inclusion of the shepherd with folded hands is an important argument in favour of the origin of the London painting in Rembrandt's workshop. It can then be classified in a group of works, which, in our opinion, were made by pupils or assistants as part of their training using a prototype by Rembrandt as their point of departure (see Chapter III). The treatment of the subject differs from that in the Munich painting in a way that is characteristic of the group of derivative works by pupils. While in the Munich painting the onlookers' attention is focused entirely on the Christ Child, the author of the London painting created small groups of figures conversing with one another. What the representation gains in liveliness – called naturalism by Weisbach (see note 3) – it loses in narrative focus and compositional coherence.

In addition to the aforementioned repoussoir figure with folded hands, other elements in the London painting are based on the Munich painting before Rembrandt introduced changes in it. In the latter painting, the shepherd in profile kneeling at the left initially held a shepherd's staff in his right hand. A recollection of this motif appears to be preserved in the staff resting in the crook of the left arm of the corresponding figure in the middle of the London painting. An equivalent of the light view through an opening which must have been located at the left in the Munich work, is afforded by the lit area at the right in the London painting. Above all, Joseph's oil lamp is missing from the London painting, as it is from the other derivatives from the Munich painting; an invisible light source behind the head of the foremost kneeling shepherd – as was initially the case in the Munich painting – largely determines the illumination.

The painter also took liberties with respect to his model. For example, Joseph is somewhat further removed from the centre of the composition and is shown standing. The long straight form of the back of the cow behind him creates closure to the space beyond. In the proportionally wider picture surface, the group of shepherds entering with a woman and a child occupy more space. In the London painting, this group is connected to the central group by means of the newly introduced women chatting behind

Fig. 6. Rembrandt workshop, *Nativity*, pen and washes in brown, 20.3 x 23.2 cm. Formerly Oppenheimer collection; present whereabouts unknown

the partition. In comparison with the lantern in the Munich painting, the one held by an old man with a flat hat in the London work has gained in importance and its light is cast on the ground at the right and on the boy and dog coming forward.

In addition to the X-radiographs, further information on the genesis of the London painting is provided by a drawing formerly in the Oppenheimer collection as a work by Rembrandt (fig. 6). Valentiner considered the attribution to Rembrandt as 'not certain'[7] and Benesch did not include the drawing – whose present whereabouts are unknown – in his corpus which, given the curious, somewhat uncontrolled draughtsmanship is not surprising. Nevertheless, this drawing is useful in interpreting the X-radiographs, particularly where they show deviations from the painting in its final state. The drawing, therefore, must somehow be connected to the genesis of the London painting. This is most clear from the position of the lantern. In the drawing it appears in the area where, according to the X-radiographs, it was also initially situated in the painting, that is under the tip of the staff of the kneeling shepherd in the centre. In the drawing it is held by a figure bending over, presumably a young woman with a flat hat, whose upper body coincides with the rightmost of the two women conversing behind the wall as seen in the painting. Evidently at some point in the painting process, the bent figure wearing a flat hat and holding a lantern was split as it were into an upright man with a lantern somewhat nudged to the right, and a woman bending over in whose forehead a bit of red can be detected belonging to her predecessor's head covering. Also visible in the drawing is an indication of the standing figure which was subsequently eliminated by means of hatching. From a reconstruction of the evolution of this figure, it would appear that it was initially present, then eliminated and finally reintroduced into the painting.

Fig. 7. N. Maes, *The Adoration of the shepherds*, 1658, panel 59.4 x 87 cm. Montreal, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Purchase Horsley and Annie Townsend Bequest

Fig. 8. Demonstration by Nigel Konstam of his hypothesis of Rembrandt's use of models and mirrors

The drawing also clarifies other changes to the London painting. The dark form visible in the paint surface at the lower right evidently belonged to a wheelbarrow which is present in the drawing and traces of which are also found in two small sketches in Munich (Ben. 578 and 579, see V 11, figs. 8 and 9). Although this motif may have been part of the Munich painting, no vestiges of this can be found. It was initially included in the London painting, but then painted out to make way for a dog, still visible in the final phase of the Munich painting. The drawing may thus occupy, as it were, an intermediary position between the two paintings. The same can be said regarding another point: in both the drawing and the Munich painting, the kneeling shepherd seen at an angle is shown in strict profile, while the corresponding figure in the London work is turned slightly, allowing a glimpse of his other eye. One other point should be mentioned where the London painting differs from the drawing and more closely resembles the Munich painting, namely the placement and pose of Joseph. The draughtsman took the greatest liberties with his model here by having him stand behind Mary and rise far above her (a cow head occupies this area in the Munich painting) and lean his shoulder against the back of a post of the stable – apparently not realising that Joseph was now too far removed from the Christ Child to illuminate him, leading one to assume that the left half of the representation is lit by supernatural radiation emanating from the Child itself. Knowing that Rembrandt reserved this effect for the risen Christ,[8] one could speculate that the master suggested a different solution. In the painting Joseph again appears near Mary, still standing, yet close enough to the kneeling repoussoir figure to be able to hold a burning lamp or candle behind his head.

All in all, the London *Nativity* must be considered a variant of Rembrandt's original in Munich. The accompanying changes of mind can be followed with the aid of the X-radiographs and the drawing formerly in the Oppenheimer collection. The latter is certainly an important document, and for the time being there is no reason to doubt that it served as a design for the London painting. That the London painting and drawing are by the same hand is at the very least probable. That the drawing is a free copy after the painting as MacLaren considered likely (see note 2), however, is out of the question. This, naturally, opens up new prospects for identifying the artist who was most likely responsible for both. Unfortunately, comparison – either with other paintings or with other drawings – has yet to yield an identification of this hand.

As a mirror image variant of Rembrandt's original, designed and perhaps also executed before the latter reached its final form, the London painting occupies a place in Rembrandt's studio production which, given the quantity of workshop variants related to Rembrandt's own work, should not be considered as exceptional (see Chapter III). Moreover, this painting appears to have served in turn as a model for a number of derivatives. This can be established not so much on the basis of the direction in which the composition is depicted (though this generally follows the London painting), as from the invisibility of Joseph's lamp and the arms raised before the body of the kneeling repoussoir figure. On the basis of the derivations from the London *Nativity,* one surmises that the London painting remained available to pupils after Rembrandt's prototype, the Munich *Nativity*, has been delivered to Frederik Hendrik. A possible indication of this is the relationship of the London painting with works by Nicolaes Maes (fig. 7),[9] whose apprenticeship with Rembrandt is usually situated around 1650.[10]

In connection with the mirror relationship between the Munich and the London *Nativities,* it is of interest to consider the theory of the English sculptor Nigel Konstam, who suggested that Rembrandt actually made use of mirrors or other reflective surfaces in order to be able to develop variety within an already developed composition.[11] He assumed that the figures in such a composition would have been modelled and grouped like small-scale puppets. Konstam believes he can demonstrate Rembrandt's use of this procedure in numerous drawings and also in the present painting in relation to the Munich *Nativity* (fig. 8). From this he infers that the painting dealt with in this entry must be an authentic work by Rembrandt.

It is in fact known that some 17th-century painters made use of models with miniature figures. We have no knowledge from written sources of this practise being

employed by Rembrandt or by members of his workshop, although this is of course no argument that it could not have occurred. But even if it did occur, there is no conclusion to be drawn from that regarding the attribution of a painting to Rembrandt. As explained in Chapter IV, we believe we can observe in the London *Nativity* enough characteristics relating to style, quality and other more specific pictorial aspects to be able to conclude that this painting is from a different hand from the Munich *Nativity*, which, if only on documentary grounds, has to be attributed to Rembrandt.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

1. Mezzotint (Charrington 29) signed at the lower right on the ground under Mary's back rest (that is to say, in the area where a Rembrandt signature appears in the painting): <*Bernard*> (fig. 9). Inscribed in the second state: *Rembrant pinxit – Bernard Page du Roi, Sculp.*. In the third state: *l'Ange ayant annoncé aux bergers la nativité du Sauveur il se hâteren dy aller,/ & trouverent Marie & Joseph, & l'enfant couché dans une crêche. Luc Ch.2.v.16./ a Paris chez la Veuve Chereau ruë St. Jacques aux deux pilliers d'Or avec privilege du Roy*. It very faithfully reproduces the picture in reverse. It is not clear who made this highly sophisticated mezzotint, which may be dated around or after 1750. A certain Samuel Bernard (Paris 1615-1687) is certainly not the author; Louis Bernard (born in Paris; mentioned in The Hague in 1717), is known to have made mezzotints. The catalogue of the Bandeville sale in 1787 (see *6. Provenance*) mentioned a mezzotint by Picart, which may be the one under discussion, however Bernard Picart (Paris 1673-Amsterdam 1733) is an unlikely candidate as his mezzotints demonstrate a less advanced technique and the print under discussion must be dated well after his death.

5. Copies

1. Panel 63 x 53.5 cm, formerly New York, Metropolitan Museum; sale New York, 7 June 1956, no. 30 (see note 2).
2. Three more copies are mentioned in the catalogue of the National Gallery in London (see note 2).

6. Provenance

– Coll. Maréchal de Noailles, sale Paris December 1767 (Lugt 1654), no. 53: 'Rembrandt van Ryn. Les Bergers à la Créche: quatorze figures d'environ huit pouces de proportion composent ce Tableau, qui est peint sur une toile de vingt-quatre pouces de haut, sur vingt de large [= 64.8 x 54 cm]. A gauche, sur le second plan, Saint Joseph est debout; à coté de lui, mais plus bas, la Vierge est assise, la main gauche appuyée sur sa poitrine & la droite sur l'Enfant Jesus qui est couché la tête de son côté, & duquel sort une éclatante lumiere qui éclaire la plus grande partie du Tableau & des figures qui l'entourent. Sur le devant, un Berger à genoux les mains jointes, est dans l'action de la plus ardente dévotion; à sa droite est un autre Berger à genoux, qui paroît ne pouvoir supporter cette lumiere dont il est ébloui, il se panche contre un petit pan de mur à hauteur d'appui, au-dessus duquel sont plusieurs femmes & enfants, qui regardent & témoignent beaucoup de surprise; l'une d'elles semble parler à plusieurs autres Bergers & Bergeres qui arrivent. Plus bas, sur le second plan, un homme vêtu & coëffé richement, tient une lanterne allumée qui éclaire tout ce côté, au-dessous est un jeune garçon qui s'appuie sur un gros chien; dans le fond, à gauche, on voit l'étable où sont renfermés différens bestiaux. Ce Tableau est des plus considérables de Rembrandt; il est rempli d'intelligence, & d'un effet clair-obscur qui séduit.' (2751 francs to Mme la Présidente de Bandeville)

Fig. 9. Mezzotint by Bernard

– Coll. Mme Bandeville, sale Paris 3-10 December 1787 (Lugt 4227), no. 15: 'Rembrandt Van-Ryn. Les Bergers à la Crêche, quatorze figures d'environ huit pouces de proportion composent ce Tableau, qui est peint sur une toile de 24. pouces de haut, sur 20 de large. A gauche sur le second plan, Saint Joseph est debout. A côté de lui, mais plus bas, la Vierge est assise, la main gauche appuyée sur sa poitrine, & la droite sur l'Enfant-Jésus qui est couché & duquel sort une éclatante lumiere qui éclaire la plus grande partie des figures qui l'entourent. Sur le devant, un Berger à genoux les mains jointes, est rempli d'expression; à sa droite est un autre Berger à genoux, qui paroît ne pouvoir supporter cette lumiere dont il est ébloui; il se panche contre un petit pan de mur à hauteur d'appui, au-dessus duquel sont plusieurs femmes & enfans qui regardent & témoignent beaucoup de surprise; l'une d'elle semble parler à plusieurs autres bergers & bergeres qui arrivent. Plus bas, sur le second plan, est un homme vêtu & coëffé richement; il tient une lanterne allumée qui éclaire tout ce côté; au-dessous est un jeune garçon qui s'appuie sur un gros chien: dans le fond, à gauche, on voit l'étable où sont renfermés des bestiaux. Ce Tableau est des plus conséquens de Rembrandt; il vient de la Collection de feu Monseigneur le Maréchal de Noailles, dont nous avons fait le Catalogue en 1767. On en trouve l'Estampe gravée en maniere noire, par Picart.' (3000 francs to Remy)
– Coll. Claude Tolozan, sale Paris 23 February 1801 (Lugt 6204), no. 95: 'Rhyn (Rembrandt van). Peint sur toile, haut de 24, large de 20 pouces. L'Adoration des bergers, composition capitale de plus de douze figures. La scène se passe dans une étable. A droite, et sur le premier plan, est la Vierge en contem-

plation devant Jesus nouveau né. Derrière elle, et debout, est St.Joseph voyant avec attendrissement l'extase et le respect des deux bergers, dont un, sur le premier plan et vu par le dos, est dans le plus profond recueillement. Derrière un pan de mur l'on voit encore deux femmes et un enfant qui font partie de ce groupe principal. Plus loin, sur la gauche, est un vieillard tenant une lanterne à sa main, dont la lumière frappe sur le visage d'un enfant qui retient un gros chien, et sert de repoussoir à d'autres personnages que l'on distingue à l'entrée. Ce serait entreprendre une tâche trop difficile, et les expressions nous manqueraient, si nous voulions rendre compte de la magie de couleur, aussi merveilleuse que savante, qui existe dans ce chef-d'oeuvre. Il n'y a que l'oeil et le sentiment du connaisseur qui puissent l'apprécier.' (10,000 livres to England)

– Coll. John Julius Angerstein by June 1807 (see note 2).

– Purchased with the Angerstein collection for the proposed National Gallery in 1824.

NOTES

1. Exhib. cat. *Art in the making* 1988/89, pp. 92-95; 2006, cat. 11 and p. 224.
2. N. MacLaren, *The Dutch School* (National Gallery catalogues), London 1960, pp. 311-312; revised and enlarged by Christopher Brown, London 1991, pp. 330-332.
3. W. Weisbach, *Rembrandt*, Berlin/Leipzig 1926, pp. 384-385.
4. Gerson p. 92.
5. Schwartz 1984, p. 239.
6. Tümpel 1986, cat. no. A7.
7. W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt. Des Meisters Handzeichnungen* I, Stuttgart/Berlin/Leipzig n.d. [1925], (Kl.d.K.XXXI), no. 294.
8. H.-M. Rotermund, 'The motif of radiance in Rembrandt's Biblical Drawings', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 15 (1952), pp. 101-121, esp. 101-102.
9. There are a painting by Maes with *The adoration of the shepherds* in Montreal, signed and dated 1658 (Sumowski *Gemälde* III, no. 1318; fig. 7); a drawing by Maes in Rotterdam, related to the picture in Montreal (Sumowski *Drawings* VIII, no. 1765); a drawing attributed to Maes in Bayonne (Sumowski *Drawings* VIII, no. 1861[x]) shows the scene in reverse - thus in the direction of the Munich prototype - yet nevertheless contains motifs that appear to be derived, if not from the London painting, then from the related drawing formerly in the Oppenheimer collection (fig. 6).
10. See Sumowski *Gemälde* III, p. 1951. However, for a possible earlier beginnings of Maes' pupillage, see J. Bruyn, [review of] Sumowski *Gemälde* III, *O.H.* 102 (1988), pp. 322-333, esp. 328.
11. N. Konstam, 'Rembrandt's use of models and mirrors', *Burl. Mag.* 119 (1977), pp. 94-98.

DUBLIN, NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND, INV. NO. NGI 215

HDG 88; BR. 576; BAUCH 80; GERSON 220; TÜMPEL 68

1. Introduction and description

This nocturnal scene is unique in Rembrandt's painted oeuvre. The principal figures, Joseph, Mary and the Christ Child, are incorporated as staffage in a landscape in such an unusual manner that their identity was not recognised in the past. It was only when Bode[1] indisputably linked the painting with a nocturnal *Flight into Egypt* by Adam Elsheimer (1578-1610) in Munich (fig. 5)[2] with a very similar composition, that it could be interpreted more accurately. However, the relationship with Elsheimer's picture extends beyond a similarity in subject and composition; it is highly likely that Rembrandt was emulating Elsheimer's work. In particular, he was commenting on Elsheimer's treatment of light and reflections.

Mary and Joseph are seated round a camp fire under a tree at the foot of a dark hill which slopes down from the left. Wearing a headcloth and a strip bound around her chin, Mary cradles the nursing Christ Child in her arm. Crouching and with his hand wrapped around his knee, Joseph looks on. Across from them a shepherd on hands and knees tends the fire. Behind him stands another shepherd with a few cows and sheep. The fire, the figures and several of the animals are reflected in the pool of water occupying almost the entire foreground. At the left, a section of the bank overgrown with grass and extending into the foreground is dimly lit by the fire, as is the foliage above Mary and Joseph. The rest of the landscape is almost entirely shrouded in darkness. At the right can only vaguely be distinguished what could be construed as the pool's bank or the lit crest of a low waterfall. In the background is a minute walking figure with a lantern, followed by a row of cows. On the ridge, trees and a large building with tiny lit windows stand out dark against the sky. The brightly shining moon is obscured by a cloud at the left behind the hill.

Working conditions

Examined on 25 September 1968 (J.B., P.v.Th.) and again in 1989 and 1991 in Boston and Amsterdam during exhibitions: in the frame in good light. Two X-ray films of the entire composition were received later. Studied again in October 1999 (E.v.d.W.) and in 2005 (M.F.).

Support

Mahogany panel (Swietenia sp.) (see *Corpus* IV, p. 658), grain horizontal, 34 x 48 cm. Thickness very uneven (10 cm from the left edge 2.1 cm, then gradually thinner to 7 cm from the right edge to a thickness of 1.1 cm, and again thickening to 1.6 cm). Unevenness in the thickness of the panel shows up in the surface both on the back and the front. Single plank, bevelled on all four sides. A slat can be seen at the bottom which, according to the X-radiograph, is attached to the panel with nails. A small section of the support is missing at the lower right corner.[3]

Ground

A brown yellow ground clearly shows through, particularly at the upper right in the sky and in and above the trees at the left.

Paint layer

Condition: Very good, aside from minor local shattering of the paint surface (compare the eye and the chin of the standing shepherd). However, it cannot be excluded that the surface has suffered somewhat in other respects. A reproductive print of 1752 shows more detail in some areas than can be discerned in the painting in its present state (see *4. Graphic Reproductions*, 1; fig. 7).

Craquelure: Various craquelure patterns are visible. The thick, dark areas, such as in the lower right, at the right and in the middle of the painting, display shrinkage-like craquelure. Fine, horizontal fissures can be distinguished in the sky at the left where various grey tints overlap. Furthermore, a fine craquelure pattern is visible in the kneeling shepherd's jacket and elsewhere.

The surface of the painting, in which the grain of the wood barely shows up in relief, displays an impastoed application of paint in the fire and its glow. Thickly applied paint occurs only locally in the dark landscape, for example in the large building on the ridge. In the sky, next to a thinly painted, grimy grey spot at the extreme left is a more opaquely applied grey paint, which thins at the right and up to a cluster of clouds. In the sky at the far right delicate strokes of black-grey and brown paint have been applied over the ground, which shows through locally.

The hill, in which some short strokes and streaks of olive green are visible near the left edge, is defined at the left by lightly applied black-grey and transparent paint over the ground; the stiff hairs of the brush have left scratches here allowing the ground to show through in places. Branches in the trees are defined with streaks and small strokes of grey paint; and those extending into the sky with very dark grey paint. The foliage of the tree illuminated by the fire is painted in small strokes of ochre brown with a little green and white. In the bank at the lower left, where the ground shows through the grey and blackish paint, light accents are indicated with primarily short vertical streaks of green and grey paint. The bank in the right middle ground, in the same thin grey over the ground, is bordered above and below by sections where the paint has been more thickly applied. Toward the top, the density of the dark grey black paint increases until the thickly painted fortress, in which the tiny lit windows are indicated with yellow white paint. The water in the lower right is a dark, almost black mass.

The fire is built up of thick light yellow, red, and some ochre paint; the figures are delineated with predominantly short strokes of muted earth colours, and a bit of pale purple paint is present in the doublet of the boy at the right. The cows are done in greenish tints and some browns, and toward the dark zone at the right are drawn in black over various shades of grey. The small figure with the lantern in red and yellow paint is vaguely defined, like the cows following him, in brownish and greyish paint. The amount of detail is sufficient for the hand holding the lantern and the other gripping a long stick to be distinguished as light flesh-coloured spots. The same colours as in the main group and

Fig. 1. Panel 34 x 48 cm

the fire recur, somewhat muted, in the reflection in the water. Pale purple dabs line the reflection of Mary's back.

Radiography

The X-ray image is predominantly determined by the structure of the wood. For the rest, the X-radiograph agrees with what one would expect from the painted surface: only the thickly painted fire and its glow clearly show up light. Two little spots showing up light are not related to the image.

Signature

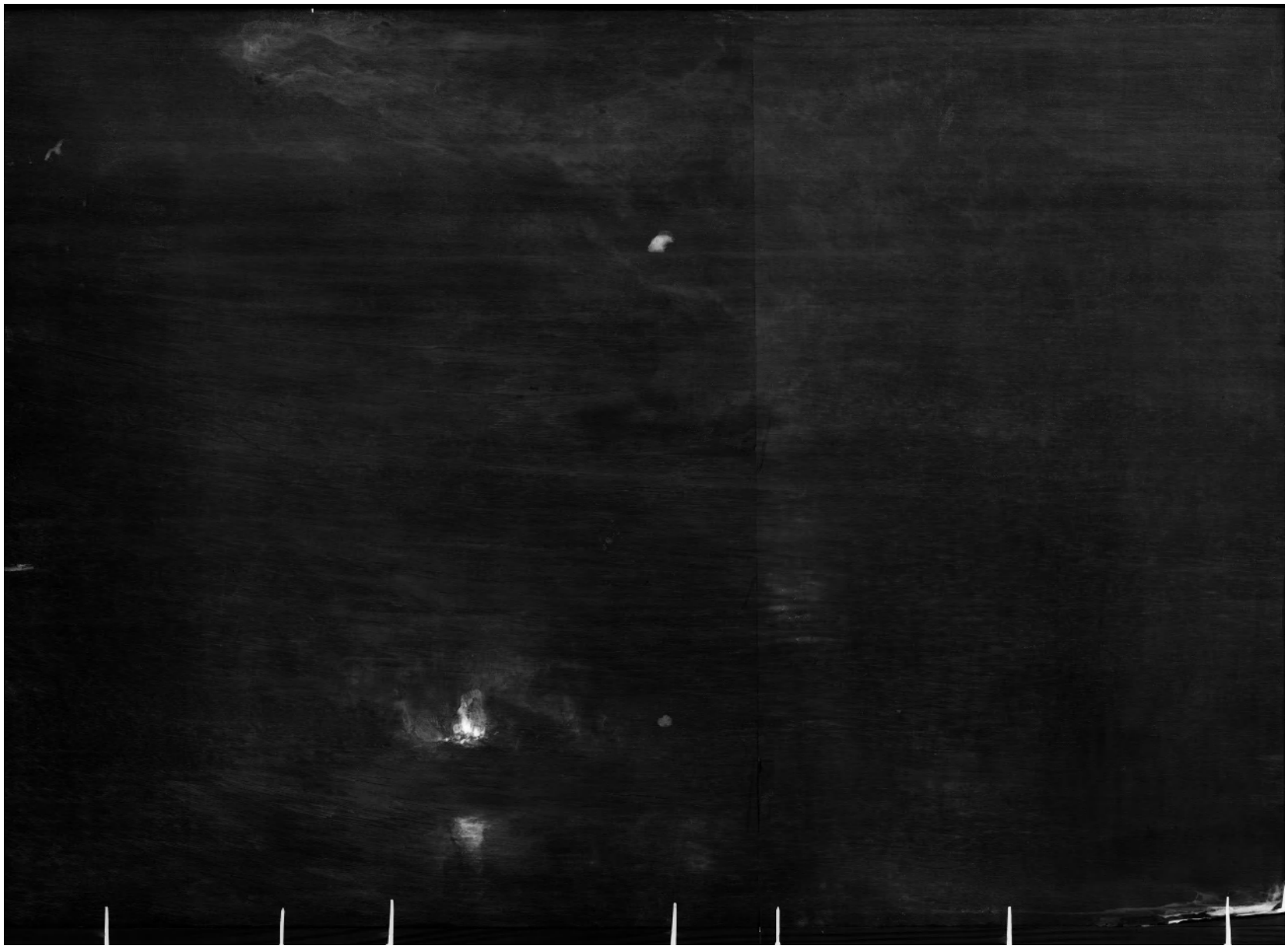
At the lower left in black <*Rembrandt. f.1647.*> (fig. 3).

2. Comments

For a long time, the subject of the Dublin painting was interpreted in various ways. In 1762 Horace Walpole described it simply as 'A Nightpiece',[4] in 1836 Smith called it 'A Landscape, represented under the aspect of night',[5] and in 1854 Waagen titled it 'Two gipsies by moonlight'.[6] The painting's relation to a composition by Elsheimer, discussed below, prompted Bode to identify the subject as the 'Rest on the flight into Egypt' (see note 1). Although suggested earlier by Turner in a lecture held in The Royal Academy in London in 1811,[7] this identification only gained general acceptance with Bode's publication. A number of traditional iconographic elements of this theme (not mentioned in the Bible) are, however, absent. The most conspicuous omission is the donkey. Moreover, the addition of shepherds and their cattle is exceptional in the depiction of this subject. It cannot entirely be discounted, as Kelch indicated,[8] that the subject might be the 'Adoration of the shepherds'. Here too, however, the deviations from the pictorial tradition are great.

The Dublin painting assumes an isolated position within the heterogenous group of Rembrandt's paintings of the 1640s. Nevertheless, its attribution to Rembrandt is unquestionable, and has never been doubted in the past.

Fig. 2. X-Ray



The brushwork, the treatment of form and light, the differentiation in the handling of paint, the construction of various elements, and the definition of space are so characteristic of Rembrandt's style and pictorial approach that no doubts are raised concerning its authorship (see also Chapter IV, p. 310).

For all of its wealth of detail, the painting's execution is typified by a certain sketchiness. Its varied brushwork and application of paint ranges from thin and broad and sometimes lightly brushed in the sky, to fairly impastoed and thick in the minute rendering of the fire. The palette, remarkably rich for a nocturnal scene, varies from fairly cool tints of grey in the sky to warm and subtly variegated brown, yellow, greenish, violet and ruddy tints in the fire and surrounding figures and animals. The summarily yet deftly designed figures betray a great sensitivity to the characteristic positions of the human body. Typical of the Rembrandtesque quality of the painting is the way in which the picture space is infused with an atmospheric quality through the sophisticated manipulation of tonal values and a subtly varied roughness of the paint surface.

This nocturnal scene incorporates various sources of light. The complexity of the light effects is further reinforced by the reflection in the water of the scene around the fire. In addition to the fire with all its warm reflections, the second light source, namely the moon hidden behind a cloud, plays a major role with its cold illumination of the sky. The cool muted tints of the terrain in the right background suggest that the moonlight plays over this area. Furthermore, the soft, ruddy glow of the brightly burning

Fig. 3. Detail with signature (enlarged)

Fig. 4. Detail (1 : 1)

Fig. 5. A. Elsheimer, *The flight into Egypt*, 1609, copper 31 x 41 cm. Munich, Alte Pinakothek

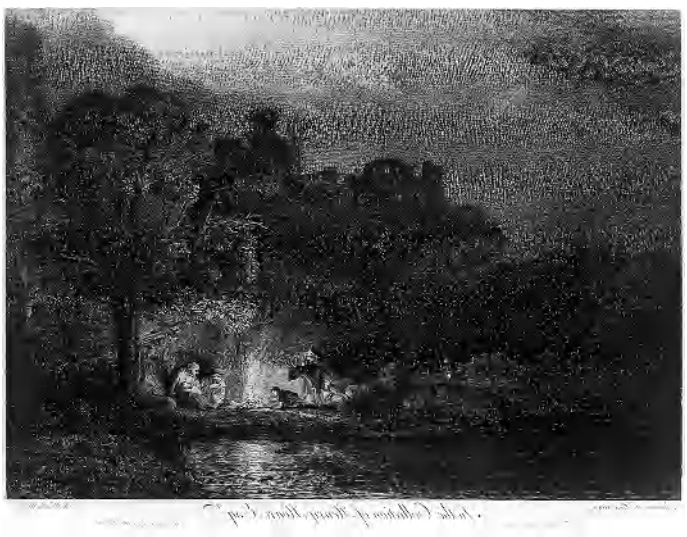
lantern carried by the shepherd in the distance generates a warm glimmer in this cool moonlight. The series of minuscule lit windows in the distant dark building on the ridge represents the fourth light source.

The seemingly effortless, almost nonchalant execution of all of these light effects, with an unerring control of the intensity of the light in proportion to the different light sources, underscores the remarkable quality of this small painting and also adds to its convincing spatial effect. The latter feature is further reinforced by the way in which the bank at the left curves toward the foreground, and in particular by the reflection in the finely rippling water of the group around the fire. Such an extensive reflection is rare in Rembrandt's oeuvre. Another closely related example is seen in *The Mill* in Washington. Like Van Mander, Samuel van Hoogstraten, who must have left Rembrandt's studio while work on this painting was in progress, has little to say about this phenomenon in his treatise on painting other than that: 'The most perfect reflection is the mirror image; because it is almost identical to that which is reflected, except that it shows everything opposite or in reverse.'[9] The Dublin painting is proof that Rembrandt understood that a convincing rendering of such effects demanded more. The complexity of the problems related to the painting of reflections was ultimately described by Gerard de Lairesse. In the beginning of his discourse, he notes: 'The rendering of the reflection in the water is no minor accomplishment.'[10] De Lairesse then makes clear that reflection is part of the central perspectival construction of the depicted space. According to De Lairesse, 'It is for this reason that some landscape painters often avoid and ignore the rendering of reflection in water, in order not to have to deal with perspective.'[11] Aside from the choice of the point where the reflected figures in the Dublin picture are cut off by the bank, and the different position in the reflection of the foremost cow's head in relation to that of the kneeling shepherd, the aspect of perspective plays a relatively minor role. More significant in this connection are De Lairesse's comments with regard to the colour scheme: 'The reflections in the water, even when it is very dark and clear, are never as light as the objects themselves, but always a shade or a half darker.'[12] 'The reason for this can best be understood through the mirror, in which [the appearance of] objects, no matter how clearly reflected, cannot compete with real life.'[13] Despite the seemingly casual execution of details, Rembrandt's approach to painting reflections in the Dublin painting corresponds with the insights published more than half a century later by De Lairesse.

Rembrandt painted the *Nocturnal landscape with the Holy*

Fig. 6. Detail (1 : 1)

Fig. 7. Line engraving by J. Wood, 1752 (reproduced in reverse)



Family at a time when he was focusing on landscapes, particularly in his etchings and drawings, but also in paintings, such as *The Mill* in Washington (see p. 61) and the *Landscape with a castle* in Paris (Br. 450; see p. 318). Unlike most of his landscapes of the 1640s whether drawn, etched or painted, this one is not 'realistic' or topographical, but imaginary, and includes biblical staffage just like the nine-year earlier *Landscape with the Good Samaritan* in Cracow (III A 125; see however, p. 209). In comparison with the latter and other landscapes from the late 1630s and the '40s, in the Dublin *Nocturnal landscape with the Holy Family* Rembrandt abandoned the repoussoir-like compositional scheme derived from Pieter Brueghel in favour of a type of landscape composed along a diagonal, one employed around 1600 by Elsheimer, among others. As mentioned above, Bode was the first to point out the correspondence with a nocturnal *Flight into Egypt* by Elsheimer of 1609, now in Munich (fig. 5; see notes 1 and [14]). In the latter painting, the Holy Family moves in the foreground in the middle of the composition and a group of shepherds with their cattle is gathered around a fire in the left middle ground. Rembrandt appears to have derived both the subject and the diagonal construction from this composition. His shepherd kneeling by the fire is an almost literal quotation from Elsheimer's model and confirms that Rembrandt based his painting on the older master's.

Elsheimer's painting was listed in the inventory drawn up in December 1610 during the five days following his death, and it may have been brought to the Netherlands prior to 1612 by Hendrick Goudt.[15] It has long been accepted that the painting was then, sometime before 1628, acquired by Maximilian I Elector of Bavaria.[16] This would mean that Rembrandt never actually saw it and only knew Hendrick Goudt's engraving after the work, made in 1613.[17] One can also speculate that Rembrandt could have known the work of Elsheimer in the form of one or more copies.[18]

However, in 2005 M. Dekiert corrected the previously generally accepted provenance of Elsheimer's painting of the *Flight into Egypt* by convincingly demonstrating that the report of a Flight to Egypt in the inventory of Maximilian I in Munich from 1627-30 bears no relation to Elsheimer's painting now in the Alte Pinakothek, but refers rather to a smaller painting that was probably lost in a fire in 1729. The painting that is now in the Alte Pinakothek is several times referred to in the 18th century in the collection of the Elector Palatine, Johann Wilhelm of Pfalz-Neuburg.[19]

This introduces the possibility that Rembrandt did actually see Elsheimer's original. Indeed, in view of Rembrandts attempts to emulate Elsheimer's exceptional masterwork, that would seem to be the most likely possibility.

It was suggested in the *Introduction* that in this painting, assembling in his composition more or less the same narrative and pictorial elements as his predecessor, Rembrandt may have been attempting to surpass Elsheimer – or at least to demonstrate how certain solutions are susceptible to improvement. It could well be one of those examples where Rembrandt, in the words of Willem Goeree, 'took the best feature of a famous master's work and cleverly worked on it with a view to a new invention'[20] and, as Goeree says elsewhere, 'in this wise attempted to surpass him, where they [other competent masters] had gone astray.'[21] There are several, apparently emphatic changes with respect to Elsheimer's solution: the Holy Family has been moved from its isolated position in the foreground to the circle round the fire; the moon, instead of being wholly visible is shown by Rembrandt veiled by the clouds; while the light source in the foreground, which only feebly illuminated Elsheimer's Holy Family no longer appears in Rembrandt's painting, although a minuscule lantern has been introduced, held by the approaching shepherd in the background. The most significant difference, however, is that the conspicuous reflection of the moon and the trees in the distant background of Elsheimer's composition has been replaced in Rembrandt's work by a reflection in the foreground, i.e. the reflection of the group round the fire.

Rembrandt's decision to incorporate the Holy Family as staffage is entirely in keeping with his usual practice of integrating biblical events or other elements – as in the *Nightwatch* – into as 'realistic' a context as possible. Furthermore, his interventions with regard to the illumination can be seen within the context of the connection he always made between the intensity of the light and the suggestion of space. The illumination in the Dublin painting is the reverse of that in Elsheimer's painting: the strongest light source having been shifted closer to the viewer instead of being far removed in the background. Moreover, the way in which Elsheimer's three light sources are distributed over the surface results in a fragmentation of the composition. In contrast, Rembrandt strove for a compositional unity with a clear 'hierarchy' in the effect of light, which he achieved by hiding the moon behind a cloud.

With respect to subject matter, the Dublin painting occupies an exceptional place in Rembrandt's painted oeuvre. Not only is it the only nocturnal landscape, it is, if Bode's identification mentioned above is indeed correct, also the only painted Rest on the flight into Egypt that can be attributed to Rembrandt with certainty. This subject does occur in two of his prints made prior to the painting in *c.* 1644 (B. 57) and in 1645 (B. 58). In contrast to the painting, the emphasis in these prints is on the figures

while the landscape plays a secondary role. Only B. 57 is a nocturnal scene in which the donkey, a standard feature in the older pictorial tradition of this theme (and absent in the Dublin painting), only occurs as of the third state.

In Hamburg there is a drawing of a river landscape at night with figures huddled by a fire once ascribed to Rembrandt and considered a preliminary study for the painting. This attribution is untenable on stylistic grounds. The drawing is now given to Barend Fabritius and may be loosely related to the Dublin painting.[22]

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

1. Line engraving by J. Wood (London 1720 - *c.* 1780), inscribed: *Rembrandt Pinxt. 1647. – J.Wood Sculpt. / In the Collection of Henry Hoare Esqr. / Publish'd Octobr: 1752. – The same size as the Print* (fig. 7). The image in reverse is very detailed. Details are visible in the print that are not observed in the paint surface; for example, next to the tree trunk behind Mary is a bird with a long tail and a bundle of wooden laths.[23]

Waagen mentioned an engraving by P. C. Canot (Paris ? *c.* 1710 - Kentishtown 1777), a French engraver who worked in England.[24]

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance

– Coll. Henry Hoare, Esq., Stourhead, Wiltshire (1752; see also *4. Graphic Reproductions*, 1).
– Thence by descent; Stourhead Heirlooms sale, London (Christie's), 2 June 1883, no. 68, where purchased for £ 514 (see note 3).

NOTES

1. W. Bode, *Studien zur Geschichte der holländischen Malerei*, Braunschweig 1883, pp. 491-492 and 592, no. 261.
2. Copper 31 x 41 cm; Munich, Alte Pinakothek, inv. no. 216.
3. H. Potterton, *Dutch seventeenth and eighteenth century paintings in the National Gallery of Ireland*, Dublin 1986, pp. 122-124, no. 215.
4. H. Walpole, 'Journal of visits to country seats', ed. P. Toynbee, in: *Walpole Society* 16 (1928), p. 42.
5. J. Smith, *A catalogue raisonné of the works of the most eminent Dutch, Flemish and French painters* VII, London 1836, no. 603.
6. G.F. Waagen, *Treasures of art in Great Britain* III, London 1854, p. 172.
7. J. Ziff, '"Backgrounds, introduction of architecture and landscape": a lecture by J. M. W. Turner', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 26 (1963), pp. 124-147, esp. 141: 'And in no picture have I seen that freshness, that negative quality of shade and colour, that aerial perspective enwrapt in gloom ever attempted by the daring hand of Rembrandt in his Holy Family Reposing, a small picture at Stourhead. But it must be acknowledged in justice to Correggio that Rembrandt has introduced two lights, one of the fire and the other from a window, to contrast the grey, glimmering dawn from gloom, …'
8. J. Kelch in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, cat. no. 38.
9. S. van Hoogstraeten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*, Rotterdam 1678, p. 262: 'De volmaektste weerglans is spiegeling; wantze haer oorzaek [datgene wat weerspiegeld wordt] byna gelijk wort, behalven datze alles averechts of omgekeert vertoont.'
10. G. de Lairesse, *Het groot schilderboek*, Haarlem 1740[2] (1707), I, p. 255: 'Het verbeelden van de weêrschyn in het water is zekerlyk van het minste niet.'
11. De Lairesse, op. cit.[10], I, p. 256: 'Het is om die reden, dat zommige Landschapschilders de weêrschyn in het water veeltydts voorby stappen, en achter laaten, om niet genoodzaakt te zyn zich met de Doorzichtkunde [het Perspectief] te bemoeijen.'
12. De Lairesse, op. cit.[10], I, p. 257: 'De schynsels in het water, schoon het zelve heel donker en klaar is, zyn nooit zo licht gedaagd, als de voorwerpen die 'er buiten zyn, maar altyd een tint of een halve donkerder.'
13. De Lairesse, op. cit.[10], I, p. 258: '…De reden daarvan is genoeg te begrypen aan de spiegel, waarin de voorwerpen, hoewel ze noch zo duidelyk daarin schynen, niettemin het leeven zelf niet konnen behaalen.'
14. A.E. Waiboer (with an essay by M. Franken), *Northern Nocturnes. Nightscapes in the Age of Rembrandt*, exhib. cat. The National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin 2005, no. 33; A. Waiboer, in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandts landschappen*, Leiden, Kassel 2006, pp. 102-109; E. Melanie Gifford, in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandts landschappen*, Leiden/Kassel 2006, pp. 120-143, esp. 132-137, figs. 11, 114a + b.
15. K. Andrews, 'The Elsheimer inventory and other documents', *Burl. Mag.* 114 (1972), pp. 595-600, esp. 597 and 599.
16. D. Hoek, 'Biografische byzonderheden over Hendrik Goudt (1583-1648)', *O.H.* 85 (1970), pp. 54-55.
17. K. Andrews, *Adam Elsheimer*, Oxford 1977, p. 155.
18. Hollst. VIII, p. 153, no. 3.
    The inscription on Goudt's print reads, 'Profugit in tenebris Lux mundi, et conditor orbis / Exul apud Pharios Latitat res mira Tyrannos. / Rebus in aduersis exemplum hinc sumite Christi;/ Quem semper tristi fortuna exercuit ira.' (The Light of the World flees into the darkness, and the Creator of the Earth / hides Himself as an exile, miraculously, among the Pharaonic tyrants. In misfortune take Christ as your example, whom fate always tortured in sad wrath.)
19. M. Dekiert, 'Adam Elsheimers *Flucht nach Ägypten* – Werk und Wirkung', in: exhib. cat. *Von neuen Sternen, Adam Elsheimers 'Flucht nach Ägypten'*, Alte Pinakothek, München 2005/2006, pp. 21-49, esp. 25-27.
20. W. Goeree, *Inleyding tot de praktyk der algemeene schilderkonst*, Amsterdam 1697[2] (1670), p. 85: 'de Deugd van een beroemd Meesters Werk, omtrent in een Nieuwe Inventie geleerdelijk oeffend.'
21. Goeree, op. cit.[20], p. 84: 'tragt in dat gene, in welke sy (andere Brave Meesters) gedwaald hebben, haar te overtreffen.' M. Franken, '"A race to win the honors": Rembrandt emulates Elsheimer in his Rest on the Flight into Egypt', in Waiboer, op. cit.[14], pp. 36-45.
22. Sumowski *Drawings* IV, no. 835[x] and Waiboer, Leiden 2006, op. cit.[14], p. 109, fig. 93.
23. The print was reissued by J. Boydell, *Catalogue raisonné d'un recueil d'estampes…*, 1779, IV, p. 54; see exhib. cat. *Rembrandt in eighteenth century England*, [New Haven] Yale Center for British Art 1983, p. 55 no. 92.
24. Waagen, op. cit.[6].

V 14 Rembrandt – The supper at Emmaus 1648

PARIS, MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, INV. NO. 1739

HDG 145; BR. 578; BAUCH 82; GERSON 218; TÜMPEL 69

1. Introduction and description

From the very beginning of the RRP there were serious doubts about the authenticity of this painting, largely fed by an *a priori* assumption concerning Rembrandt's stylistic development, viz. that Rembrandt's style had developed consistently from 'fine' to 'rough'. In view of the fact that, in places, there are extremely finely painted passages in this painting, it does not happily conform to that 'a priori' aspect of our idea of Rembrandt. In this entry particular attention is paid to the painting's genesis and the visual means employed by the painter. The insights resulting from this analysis allow us to relate the painting to Rembrandt's pictorial aims of the late 1640's and to set out the arguments for its authenticity.

In a high space, Christ is shown seated at a laid table before a niche flanked by two pilasters. He is set before what appears to be the massive back of a stone bench. A disciple is seated on either side. Behind the right disciple a servant is about to place a platter of food on the table. The moment represented here is when the risen Christ breaks the bread and is recognised by the two disciples: 'and their eyes were opened and they knew Him' (Luke 24:30-31) (see also V 16 *Introduction*).

Christ wears a pinkish-grey robe with a grey cloak draped over his left shoulder. His head is slightly tilted and his gaze directed upward. Like a halo, light wreathes his head, which stands out against the dark, high niche before which he is seated. The left disciple, seated on a three-legged chair and with hands raised in a gesture indicating inner turmoil, observes Christ. To his left a dog lies on the ground in the shadow, and behind it a stool on which rests a broad-rimmed black hat. The other disciple, recoiling, leans with his left arm on the armrest of the chair and looks up at Christ. He clenches a white napkin with his right hand, which rests on the table. His clothing consists of a brownish tunic with half-length sleeves from under which emerge red sleeves. The young servant is stationed behind this disciple. A leg visible to the right and behind the right-hand disciple makes it clear that the servant is in the act of walking. He is dressed in a white shirt and a dark doublet, and bends slightly forward as though about to place on the table a platter with two halves of what appears to be a lamb or sheep's head on a bed of vegetables.

The X-frame table is covered with a fringed tablecloth, in turn partly covered with a white sheet folded double. A tin plate is set before each of the dinner guests, somewhat overlapping the sheet. Christ's setting, moreover, includes an upturned glass and a little bowl with a silver sheen. Before the left disciple is a knife, the handle of which extends somewhat over the edge of the table.

Large sections of the architecture display a rough, apparently worn, surface. A part of what the observer might construe as the deterioration of the interior is, in fact, the result of damage to the paint layer itself (see *Paint layer* Condition). To the right of the servant is a tall wooden coat stand with a hanging coat, to the right of which can be seen a side wall with a doorway. At the left, a brightly lit patch on the base of the pilaster and the illumination of an incline in a side wall indicate that the light enters from an unseen window in this area.

Working conditions

Examined in October 1968 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.), November 1988 (E.v.d.W.), November 1990 (J.B., B.H., E.v.d.W.) and December 1997 (E.v.d.W.): in good daylight and artificial light, out of the frame, with the aid of copy films of the X-radiograph covering the entire surface, an infrared image and ultraviolet light.

Varnish: A thick cracked and yellowed varnish layer somewhat hampers observation.

Support

Panel, grain horizontal, 67.8 (± 0.1) x 65 (± 0.1) cm. Single plank. The panel evidences slight warping. Planed on the back to a thickness of about 0.5 cm and cradled. On the back at the upper right and lower left are traces of shallow gouged grooves as was sometimes done instead of bevelling (see also III A 135, *Support*). Running from the left edge are two horizontal cracks, one at about the middle and 17 cm long, the other about 20 cm from the top and measuring 6.5 cm. These cracks are filled with ground and for the most part show up light in the X-radiograph. Given the continuity of the paint surface there, it may be concluded that the cracks were already present in the panel and sealed with primer before painting was begun.

The wood type was identified by Hours[1] and subsequently at the Institut für Holzbiologie in Hamburg[2] as mahogany (*Swietenia Mahagoni Jacq.*). Such a tropical wood type was frequently first used for sugar crates.[3]

On the possibility that the painting may have initially been larger, see *2. Comments*.

Ground

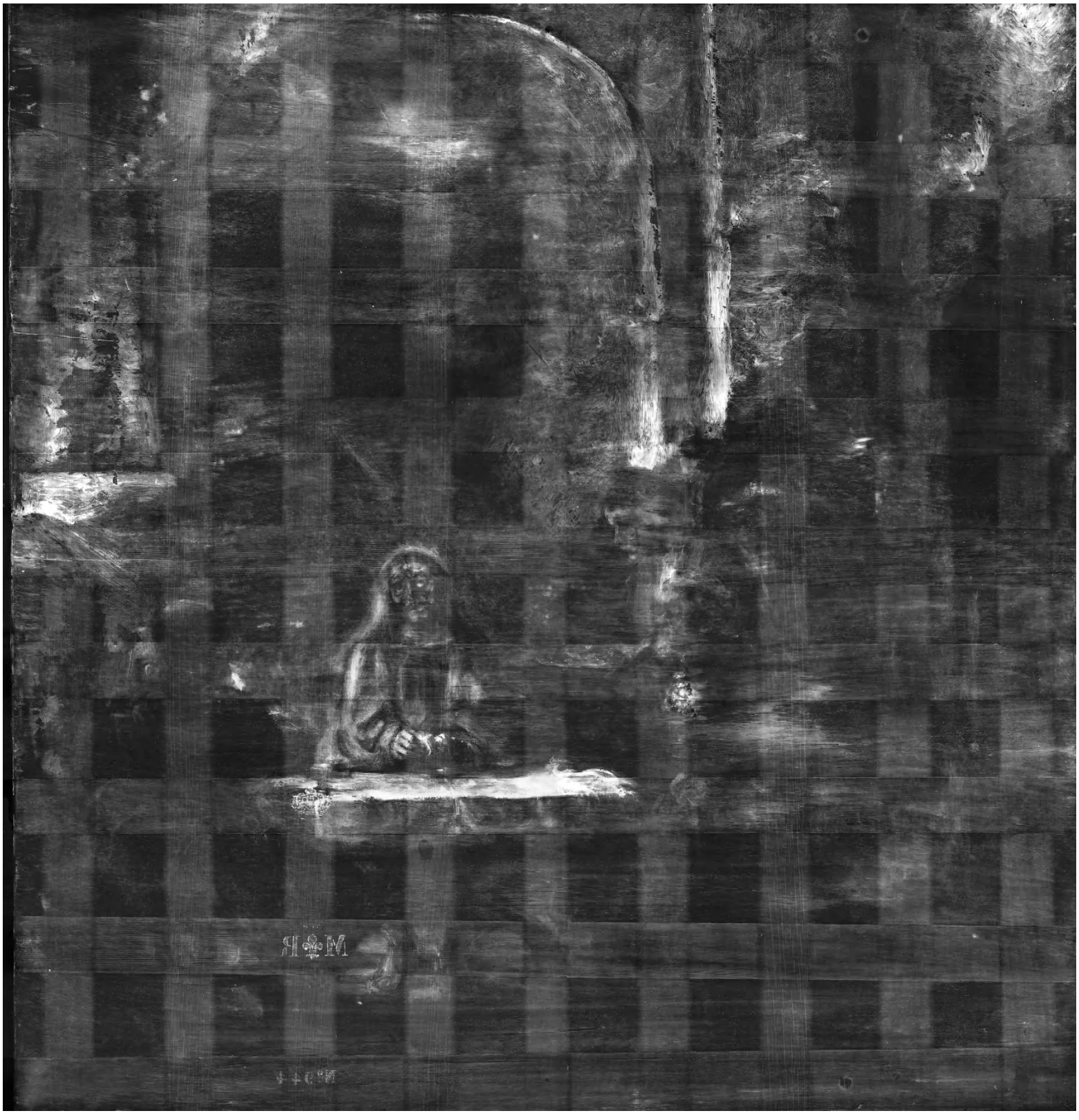
A yellowish ground can be discerned in various places, including the wall next to the door at the right and in other thinly painted sections. The relief of brush traces, most of them running more or less horizontally, is visible in places such as at the left in the pilaster, at the right in and near the door opening, and in the neck, the chest, and the left hand of the disciple at the right. This relief gives the impression of being related to the ground. Accordingly, one may tentatively conclude that the ground was deliberately kept rough, a practice apparently introduced in the 17th century (see IV 13 *2. Comments*). According to the X-radiograph, when the panel was primed some larger pigment nodules were moved around with the brush causing small scratches in the ground layer. Given that the ground here corresponds (at least optically) with the yellow grounds in other works on panel by Rembrandt and his school, it may be assumed that this work has the usual double-layered ground (see Vol. I, Chapter II, pp. 17-20).

Paint layer

Condition: To the extent that the thick, cracked varnish layer allows evaluation, on the whole the condition of the vital parts of the composition seems to be satisfactory. Paint loss can be detected on the chest of the right disci-

Fig. 1. Panel 67.8 x 65 cm

Fig. 2. X-Ray



ple, possibly as a result of a knot in the wood. Although its extent cannot be determined precisely, overpainting is evident in the back wall where there has been damage: both paint and ground layers are missing in dozens of flecks and spots. The cause of this damage is unclear. There appears to be no correlation between the paint loss and the warping of the wood. This paint loss is clearest in a large, irregularly shaped spot in the left pilaster and in smaller adjoining spots (in a vertical strip along the right edge of the niche) and elsewhere in the background in countless tiny scattered flakes. At first glance, this irregular complex of differences in the level of the paint surface creates the impression that the painter deliberately intended to suggest erosion of the stone wall. But closer inspection shows that any such suggestion of erosion is only plausible in relation to the series of slivers in the corner of the right pilaster (see fig. 2). Many of these lacunae are encountered in places with relatively high impasto and sometimes, for instance to the left of the servant's head, occur in a primarily diagonal constellation. This could indicate that the paint loss was due to mechanical causes, for example, scouring or scraping. Locally, the background has been thinly overpainted with translucent, predominantly brown paint in order to integrate the surrounding damages. In very large damaged areas, such as at the left in the architecture, an attempt has been made during restoration to imitate the structure of the stone with thin, opaque ochrish paint.

Despite the suspicion that the damage described above was mechanically inflicted, on the whole the painting has not suffered seriously. There seem to be no traces of overcleaning. For instance, infrared images confirm that the various thinly painted areas are still virtually intact. This applies chiefly to the two disciples, where the thin paint directly covers the ground and the dead-colour, as well as to the table legs and both chairs with their surroundings. More recent retouchings (showing up dark in ultraviolet fluorescence) occur in the locally blanched paint of Christ's hair at the left. Blanching is also found in the areas of shadow in Christ's face. These greyish-white spots disturb the suggestion of plasticity of the shapes in question and could have been caused by an earlier cleaning of the painting with water (see also V 18). In addition to Christ's hair and face, there are many of these light spots in the right disciple, for example in his hair, eye, moustache, chin, the contour of the neck and the chest; as well as in the contour of the servant's mouth.

Craquelure: At least partly because of the prominent varnish craquelure, it is impossible to ascertain with certainty whether there is craquelure in the paint layers.

The painting is characterised by a considerable variation in the treatment of detail. This discrepancy in the degree of elaboration may be due to the fact that certain passages remain in an 'unfinished' state. This applies, for example, to the shaded areas of the furniture and, given the exceptionally free, transparent treatment of this section, to the coat of the left disciple as well. Yet passages such as the red sleeves of the right disciple painted with loose strokes also seem to have been deliberately rendered in summary fashion. Other areas, however, are finely elaborated and evince great concern with respect to the role of the delicately applied highlights. This includes the tableware and the platter with the lamb or sheep's head, all constructed with the greatest care. Equally convincing in its execution is the coat stand, with highlights and a delicate treatment of light and shadow. The collar and one sleeve of the coat on the stand have been indicated.

The same variation in the degree of elaboration is also observed in the heads of the figures. The boy's face is particularly thoroughly worked out, whereas the weathered face of the disciple in front of him has been loosely, almost schematically, rendered. The strongly foreshortened head of the left disciple is minimally indicated with some muted flesh tones over the underpainting, which is still visible in the transparent hair. Christ's face, on the other hand, is built up by small, thin, overlapping brushstrokes. This also applies to Christ's hair, hanging in twisted locks and parted in the middle above the forehead, its sheen suggested with greyish dabs. Marked differences in the degree of detailing are also evident in the execution of the various hands. For example, the detailing is fairly sketchy and sparing in the finger nails of the disciple at the right; the hands of the disciple at the left are indicated such that the effect of light is shown to its full advantage; the servant's hand bearing a dish is rendered as a single shape; the depiction of Christ's gesture breaking the bread takes into account the complicated illumination arising from both the direct light falling from the upper left and the light reflecting up from the table.

In the treatment of the background, the precise and perspectivally accurate construction of the architectural ensemble as a whole is worth noting: an attempt has been made here to imitate the structure of the roughly hewn, grey stone by applying the paint in a coarse, grainy manner.

Radiography

In the X-radiograph, which is dominated by the cradling, a few main motifs executed in radioabsorbent paint are clearly recognisable, namely the white tablecloth, the figure of Christ and sections of the architecture. Other elements of the composition are also partly visible: the disciples and the servant are sketchily painted in non-radioabsorbent paint. Given the treatment of light in the painting, local concentrations of radioabsorbency are unexpected: in the base of the left pilaster, where diagonal brushstrokes show up light; in the upper right corner, where radioabsorbent paint brushed in various directions can be seen; and along the right pilaster and the right interior of the niche, where predominantly vertical strokes of radioabsorbent paint are visible. These areas showing up light do not indicate a change in the conception of light and dark but are caused by differences in the thickness of the paint layer, which can be detected in the relief of the surface. The large and small, mostly erratic spots of paint loss in the background mentioned in *Paint layer* show up dark.

The figure of Christ is largely circumscribed by a band showing up light, leaving a reserve for the skull that is

Fig. 3. Detail with signature (1:1)

smaller than its present size. Analysis of the paint surface shows that the head first extended beyond the reserve and was subsequently slightly reduced by the addition of a somewhat darker top layer in the halo. Patches of radioabsorbent paint show up clearly in the face, both in the forehead and in the lower part of both eyes (creating the false impression that there is an excessive amount of eye white).

With respect to the figure of Christ, the X-ray image agrees with what one would expect from the surface. This does not mean that only the paint visible on the surface is radioabsorbent, the constellation of strokes in Christ's feet indicates an underpainting (containing lead white) here. This also applies to other sections showing up light, including a light patch in the shaded part of the wall at the left above the left disciple and in the lit parts of the architectural elements above the servant. The X-radiograph also shows roughly applied strokes of the underpainting in the folded hands of the left disciple and the left hand of the right disciple. The narrow opening revealing a bit of the servant's shirt appears to have originally been wider in the underpainting. In this area can be seen a reserve for a lock of hair of the right disciple, which is higher than the present lock above the forehead.

The presence of radioabsorbent paint around the objects on the table indicates that the lit part of the tablecloth was laid in with paint containing lead white in the course of its execution.

Apart from the differences between the light underpainting and the further elaboration of the sections concerned, both the X-ray image and an infrared photograph – as well as traces of wear in the paint surface – reveal that other changes were introduced during work on the painting. The now rounded corner of the back of Christ's seat was first straight as can be observed in spots of wear in the paint. One wonders whether the head of the servant was originally depicted in profile. Above the platter held by the servant, the infrared photograph shows a cloud-like shape that was presumably only worked out in the non-radioabsorbent paint of the underpainting. Apparently this was intended to suggest steam rising from the food, and as a result of the increased transparency of the surface paint this shape is now again just visible to the naked eye. Hours' assumption (see note 1) that the servant was sketched twice must be a misunderstanding, probably based on concentrations of radioabsorbency in this area that are related to the ground.

The two cracks, starting from the left edge and running horizontally into the panel, are partially visible in the X-radiograph (see also: *Support*). The inscriptions of the Musée Royal (a king's crown, 'M R' with fleur-de-lys) and 'No. 944' on the cradling show up in reverse.

Fig. 4. Rembrandt, *Self-portrait drawing at a window*, 1648, etching 16 x 13 cm (B. 22^{II})

Signature

At the lower left in black paint <*Rembrandt. f 1648*> (fig. 3). The letters are meticulously rendered, with seemingly authentic retouchings added locally. This applies, for example, to the *m*, the loop of the *b* and the upper loop of the *8*. The marked angled placement of the signature may well have been done to accord with the scene's perspective.

2. Comments

Several aspects must be taken into account in the assessment of the painting's condition. The thick, very cracked and yellowed varnish layer hinders observation of the paint surface as well as an appreciation of the colour scheme. Not only the varnish, but also the extensive overpainting with transparent paint in the background influence the coloration which was undoubtedly substantially cooler. Another disturbing factor is that the raised tops of the brushstrokes (in Christ's face and clothing and in the right disciple) have blanched, with adverse effect on the contrasts of light and dark and thus the plasticity intended by the painter in those parts of the painting. The question of whether the painting's dimensions are the original ones is discussed below.

Aside from paintings such as the Berlin *Susanna* (V 1) of 1638/47 and the Braunschweig *Noli me tangere* (V 18) of about 1650, it is Rembrandt's ambitious etchings from the period between *c.* 1647/8 (when he worked on the *Hundred guilder print*) and 1653 (presumably the year in which the first state of the *Ecce homo*, B. 76, was made) that clearly

Fig. 5. Detail of *Susanna and the Elders* (V 1) (1:1)

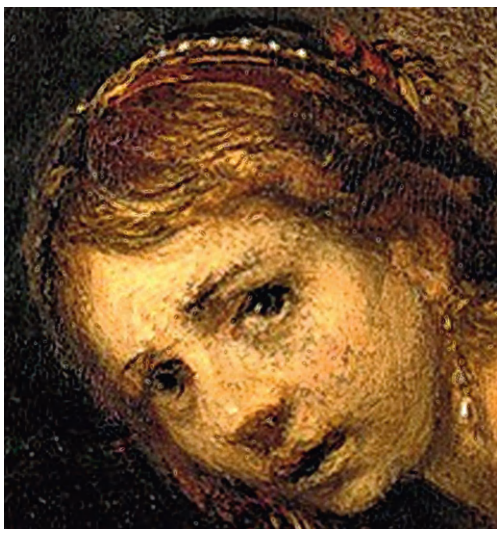


Fig. 6. Detail of fig. 1 (1:1)

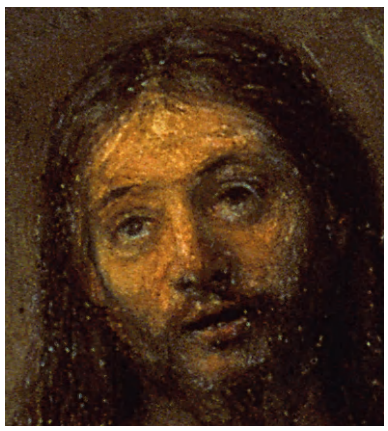
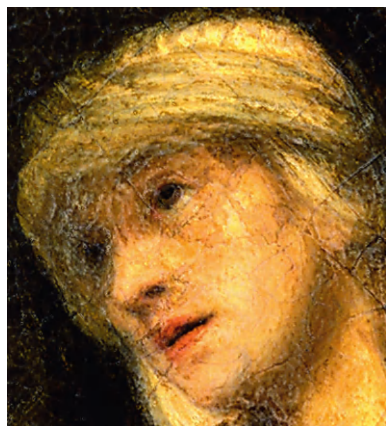


Fig. 7. Detail of *Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene* (V 18) (1:1)



elucidate his pictorial and narrative aims at the time when he painted *The supper at Emmaus* in 1648 (see also B. 22/fig. 4, B. 176, 277, 278, 285).

Comparison between the window in the etched *Self-portrait* of 1648 (fig. 4), the same year in which the painting under discussion was made, and the door in the Paris painting reveals that the architectural detailing is very similar. A comparison with the two small-figured history pieces (i.e. completed) shortly before and after the work under discussion, the aforementioned *Susanna* and *Noli me tangere*, allows one to evaluate Rembrandt's peinture in *The supper at Emmaus* in relation to the elements depicted in the scene. Christ's face, for example, is built up of small, overlapping dabs, avoiding sharp contours or internal drawing. A very similar working method is seen in the faces of Susanna and Mary Magdalene (figs. 5, 6 and 7). Other details, too, are strikingly similar; parallels that also shed light on the way in which Rembrandt – deliberately, it would seem – varied his peinture in this period in accordance with the position of the details within the entire scene. For instance, the way in which Christ's bare feet have been depicted in *The supper at Emmaus* and in the Braunschweig *Noli me tangere* is remarkably similar. In both paintings the feet are done in coarse paint. Their shape is almost identically generalized, obviously with conscious intent, and partly due to the peinture their contours are blurred. In principle, the same working method was followed for the left foot of Susanna (with the addition of more detail in the case of this larger scale figure). The range between such evidently deliberate simplification of form and the almost extreme detailing of certain other parts (the halves of the lamb or sheep's head on the platter carried by the servant in *The supper at Emmaus* (fig. 8), Mary Magdalene's hand, the red scarf hanging down behind Susanna) is very similar in all three paintings.

There are also striking correspondences in the way that the tableware has been painted in *The supper at Emmaus* and Mary Magdalene's ointment jar in the *Noli me tangere*, and remarkable parallels between the rendering of Christ's aureole in the Paris painting and that in the *Hundred guilder print* (see figs. 9, 10). In both cases there is an irregular, rather diffuse strip around Christ's head, from which radiates short and long rays. The plump seat on which Christ sits in the Paris painting is comparable with the almost equally plump and elaborately constructed form of the gate in the Berlin *Susanna* (see V 1 fig. 7).

The range between 'finished' and 'unfinished' described above can be seen in the light of Rembrandt's ideas about completion as recorded by Houbraken (see also pp. 161 and 238).

Alongside similarities in the elaboration of specific details and the varied approach to the aspect of 'finish', there are also features in the composition of *The supper at Emmaus* which are closely related to pictorial problems that preoccupied Rembrandt during this period. It was at this time, that Rembrandt devoted a great deal of attention to architectonic complexes and the perspectival means necessary to depict them. Moreover, he was also intensely interested in the interplay of symmetry and asymmetry, an aspect that assumes a particular prominence precisely in this painting. In this context one should, however, keep in mind that the painting may have been cropped on the left (see *2. Comments*).

The increased concern with architectural elements is clearly manifest in the Berlin *Susanna* and especially in the etchings of the same period, for example the aforementioned *Portrait of Jan Six* (B. 285), the *Beggars receiving alms at the door of a house* (B. 176), the *Self-portrait* (B. 22) and the *Medea* (B. 112) of 1648. In these works, Rembrandt exerted himself more than ever before in the creation of a perspectivally clear rendering of the setting for his figures. His landscapes of this period also display an unusually marked interest in the correct perspectival rendering of buildings (in *Three gabled cottages*, B. 217) or, for example, of an obelisk (in *Landscape with an obelisk*, B. 227). Although indications of architecture are also present in earlier and later works, they are suggestively indicated rather than emphatically constructed. The most striking example of a highly worked out perspectival construction is found in the etching *Ecce homo* (B. 76), the sixth, drastically altered, state of which is dated as late as 1655. However, one cannot exclude the possibility that he had begun working on this project earlier. It is also important for understanding the Paris *Supper at Emmaus* that in the first state of the *Ecce homo* (fig. 11), the vantage point is to the left of the sym-

Fig. 8. Detail of fig. 1 (3x enlarged)

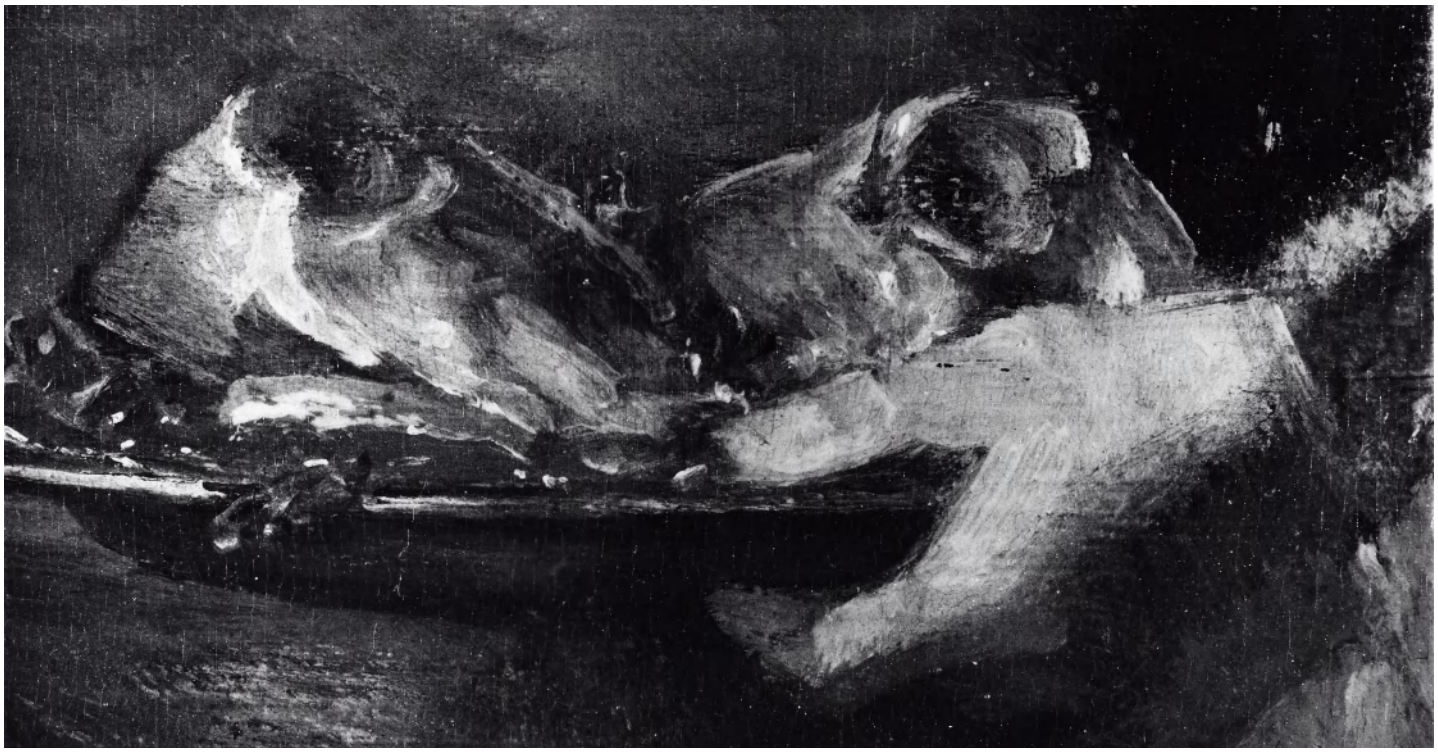


Fig. 9. Infrared photograph, detail of fig. 16

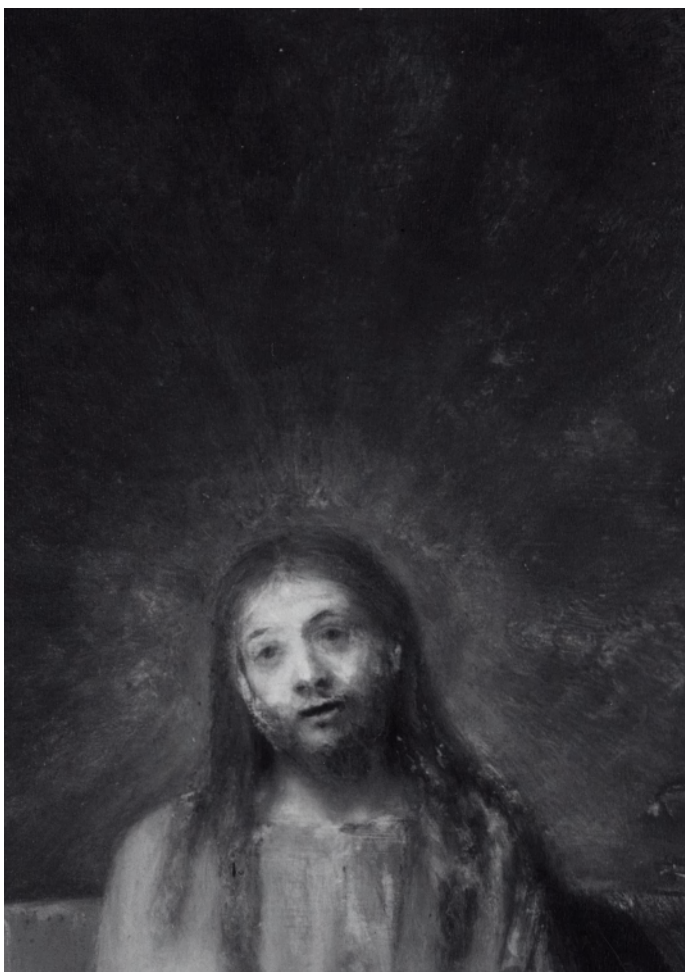


Fig. 10. Rembrandt, *Christ preaching ('The Hundred guilder print')*, *c.* 1648, etching (in reverse) 27.8 x 38.8 cm (detail; B. 74). Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis

Fig. 11. Rembrandt, *Ecce homo*, *c.* 1655, etching 38.3 x 45.5 cm (B. 76[I])

metrical axis in what appears to be a symmetrically organised architectural setting. A vanishing point has been chosen such that the left wall of the structure before which the scene is set is situated at right angles to the picture plane, while the orthogonals of the other wall, with clearly visible foreshortening in the roof line, converge toward that vanishing point. In this respect, the handling of perspective in the Paris *Supper at Emmaus* seems to anticipate the solution chosen for the *Ecce homo*. One also notices in *The supper at Emmaus*, particularly in the niche behind Christ, that the vanishing point is asymmetrically set in relation to the architecture, namely above the head of the disciple with folded hands. The emphatic frontal positioning of the scene and the nature of the architectural setting should perhaps be seen against the background of the rise of classicistic ideas in Dutch painting. Rembrandt seems to have (temporarily) adapted himself to this new trend.

Links to other works can also be drawn with regard to the rendering of texture. Up to the end of his career, in certain passages, Rembrandt used the paint surface to imitate the surface structure of the material depicted.[4] The way in which the stone in the architecture in the present painting has been done is clearly in keeping with this aim. A comparable rendering of stone is found in the architectural elements in the foreground of the Berlin *Susanna* (V 1).

Yet the brushwork in *The supper at Emmaus* is by no means clearly visible everywhere; pictorial aims regarding the relationship between light and dark were evidently more important (fig. 12). This applies especially to the lit part of Christ's clothing which shows remarkably little elaboration. This section, together with Christ's right hand, the just visible part of the hanging cloak, the gleaming metalware near his elbow, and the tablecloth, belongs to a complex of more or less light, adjoining sections in which one sees the use of 'related colours' which Van Hoogstraten describes Rembrandt using (fig. 13). The objective of this working method was to prevent a dis-

Fig. 12. Detail of fig. 1 in raking light

turbing alternation of dark and light. Rembrandt employed this device within the context of his quest for an immediately comprehensible composition.[5] A comparable solution on a smaller scale is found in the above-mentioned *Hundred guilder print*. In that etching, on which Rembrandt worked at the same time as *The supper at Emmaus*, one discerns in the rendering of the old man with a cane, illuminated from behind, and in the wheel barrow with a sick person, a very comparable solution with respect to the grouping of 'related colours', and by extension the manner in which the sleeve of the old man and the rest of the lit clothing are merged virtually without plastic elaboration (fig. 14). What is noticeable is that the plasticity of the forms and the distinctiveness of the contours in passages where Rembrandt used this pictorial strategy were sacrificed – deliberately it would seem – for the grouping of the lit or dark elements into interlocking complexes. Pentimenti intended to effect a reduction of lit details – as in the shirt of the young servant and on the chest of the right disciple – can be seen in the same context. It is part of Rembrandt's ongoing efforts to order and refine relationships of light and dark in his paintings, such that an image emerges which can be read at a glance, as it were. The presence of such pentimenti (deviations from the first layin of the painting) are so typical of Rembrandt that they can even serve as a criterion of authenticity.

Apart from the removal of the cloud of steam rising from the platter of food carried by the servant, no great changes were introduced during work on the painting (fig. 16). One could conclude from this that the painting's genesis was not protracted, as was the case, for example, with the Berlin *Susanna* (V 1). Other paintings from between *c.* 1645 and 1655, for example the *Winter landscape* in Kassel of 1646 (Br. 452), *A woman wading in a pond (Callisto in the wilderness)* in London of 1654 (V 19) and *A slaughtered ox* in Paris of 1655 (V 21), also had an unusually straightforward genesis.

With regard to an earlier stage of the painting – whether visible in the X-radiograph or in the paint surface – there are areas containing lead white, for example in Christ's right foot, strokes above the servant's head showing up light, and extremely loosely applied strokes in the lit part of the wall at the upper left, all indicate that the present painting must have been very freely underpainted. This is also indicated by the light area on the servant's chest, as well as the way in which the left hand of the right disciple was first suggested with a diagonal stroke of paint containing lead white which runs at an oblique angle to the direction of the fingers, a solution also used in the Amsterdam *Portrait of Ephraïm Bueno* of *c.* 1647 (Br. 252) made the previous year. This type of light underpainting is found in many of Rembrandt's paintings. Not only the function of these areas of lead white in the underpainting, but also the temperament evinced by their execution, and their relation to the definitive elaboration of such passages are remarkably similar to comparable

Fig. 13. Detail of fig. 1

Fig. 14. Detail of *The Hundred guilder print* (B. 74) (in reverse)

traces in the Braunschweig *Noli me tangere* of *c.* 1650 (V 18) and in works from the first half of the 1650s, such as the London *A woman wading in a pond (Callisto in the wilderness)* of 1654 (V 19), the Paris *A slaughtered ox* (V 21), the *Polish rider* in The Frick Collection (V 20) and the Berlin *Joseph and the wife of Potiphar* (V 22) of 1655. Thus, links can be demonstrated on various levels with securely attributed works from the same period.

There are several reasons for wondering whether this painting, whose width slightly exceeds its height, still has its original format. In the first place, it is the only 17th-century panel we know of with these unusual proportions. Secondly, certain parts, such as the dog and the hat to the left of the left disciple, are partially cropped. Moreover, the left pilaster is not shown to its full width, while the painter clearly devoted much attention to the symmetry of the architectural setting. It would be more logical if the composition continued further to the left, in which case, there is a likelihood that a window was originally included in the composition. In this context, it is significant that two of the three paintings related to this work (V 16 and Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, Rome, Galleria nazionale d'arte antica, fig. 15) with the same scene and a similar staging include a window (the third, the Copenhagen *Supper at Emmaus*, V 15), has a curtain in the same place), and that all three derivatives have a horizontal, rectangular format. If the painting under discussion originally had a rectangular format, it would certainly have been a horizontal rectangle as the wood grain runs horizontally. One could also

Fig. 15. Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, *The supper at Emmaus*, 1655, canvas 63 x 80 cm. Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica

conclude that something is missing on the right side given that the right door post is so very close to the edge of the panel. Naturally, an originally rectangular format would have consequences for the evaluation of the composition of the painting in its present state. However, the above analysis of Rembrandt's compositional intentions with respect to frontality and the interplay of symmetry and asymmetry, would hardly require readjustment.

Fig. 16. Infrared image of fig. 1

Fig. 17. Anonymous Italian engraving, after Leonardo da Vinci, *The Last Supper*, mid-16th century. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

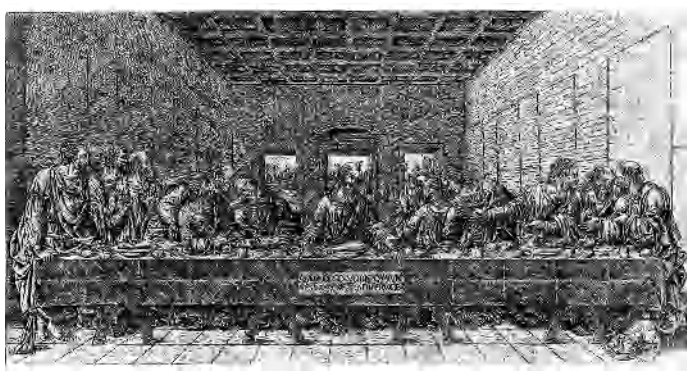


Fig. 18. Willem van Swanenburgh, engraving after Peter Paul Rubens, *Supper at Emmaus*, 1611.

Perhaps more than any other painting, *The supper at Emmaus* has elicited various suggestions of examples that Rembrandt might have used for his composition and which could have inspired its 'classic' balance.[6] In fact, a kind of standard formula was used for this subject in the 16th and 17th centuries, the result of which is a great similarity between the several potential models that Rembrandt might have used (from which, in other ways, he deviated radically in his earlier works on this theme).[7] This makes it difficult to ascertain whether Rembrandt consulted Titian's painting in the Louvre, Dürer's woodcut from the *Small Passion*, Caravaggio's painting in London or Rubens' famous version known through prints by Willem van Swanenburgh (1611) and Pieter Soutman (1643) (now in the St Eustache in Paris), or whether his principal source was Leonardo's *Last supper* in S. Maria delle Grazie in Milan, as many authors, especially Stechow, Clark and Gantner, have thought.[8] Rembrandt knew that work, he made a drawing of it around 1635 after a print (cf. the drawing now in New York, Ben. 443) and one may assume that the present painting's composition was indeed chiefly inspired by Leonardo's *Last supper* (fig. 17). The way in which Christ serves as the static central axis and also the axis on which the right disciple turns (comparable with the pose of Leonardo's Judas figure), indicates that the Italian master's work may be considered his decisive point of departure. Furthermore, it may be assumed that Rembrandt probably did not rely directly on paintings that were in Italy, and for this reason alone Titian and Caravaggio would have been less likely sources. No doubt he knew Dürer's woodcut – the somewhat turned-away pose of the left disciple could be an indication of this – but the crowded shapes in Dürer's scene treated almost as a relief contribute little to an understanding of Rembrandt's form, nor is the idea of the scene's arched framing very convincing as a precursor of Rembrandt's high niche. More plausibly, the prints after Rubens' famous painting might have been a source of inspiration as suggested by Van Regteren Altena (fig. 18).[9] Even though the composition of that work differs markedly from Rembrandt's conception in the impression it conveys of a rather compressed three-dimensionality and the agitated poses of the figures, there are discernible similarities, primarily in the position of the left disciple in front of the corner of the table and in a few details (e.g. the chair on which he sits). Moreover, in the Copenhagen derivative of Rembrandt's composition (V 15), as in the Rubens, an old woman is shown bringing a glass, which strongly suggests that Rembrandt had either Swanenburgh's or Soutman's print after Rubens' painting in his studio.

The theme of Christ at Emmaus, which Rembrandt depicted several times throughout his career, both in paintings and etchings, probably derived its significance entirely from the importance of the risen Christ appearing to the disciples who do not immediately recognise him. Given the attitude to the Holy Sacrament then prevailing in Holland, the analogy sometimes made between the bread that Christ breaks here and the Eucharist is not very probable. An even more far-fetched interpretation, in which the lamb's head symbolizes the sacrificial Lamb of God, the dog symbolizes death and the dark shadow in the niche the Devil who leads Christ into temptation, must be rejected as sheer fancy.[10]

The paintings of *The supper at Emmaus* in Paris and Copenhagen, particularly the present one, have given rise to various views about the Christ type used by Rembrandt, partly in connection with a number of small panels of the head of Christ attributed to him. Referring to earlier literature, Slive summarised the predominant view that these heads, or at least most of them, should be considered authentic preliminary studies by Rembrandt.[11] Accordingly, he considered a small painting in Detroit (Br. 621) as preparatory to the Christ figure in the Paris painting, with which it shares undeniable similarities, particularly in the tilt of the head and the upward gaze (fig. 19). Bauch[12] still considered this to be likely, and Gerson[13] too spoke of a study 'especially close to' the painting. We now believe that the Detroit *Head of Christ* and most other paintings of this type belong to a category of *tronies*, executed by pupils and based on heads of figures in Rembrandt's history pieces.

Aside from the Detroit *Head of Christ* (fig. 19) yet another *tronie* of this type can be connected with the composition of *The supper at Emmaus*, namely a *Bust of a man turned*

Fig. 19. Pupil of Rembrandt, part-copy after fig. 1, *c.* 1650, panel 25 x 23 cm. Detroit, Institute of Arts (Br. 621)

Fig. 20. Pupil of Rembrandt, partial copy after fig. 1. Formerly London, M.A.F. Reijre

to the left (fig. 20), formerly London M.A.F. Reijre.[14] The summarily sketched figure with white hair and a white beard broadly agrees with the right disciple; and his arm, like the Detroit *Christ*, closes off the composition at the bottom. Judging from the material at our disposal, this painting too could well have been made in the studio. Copies that reflect an original by Rembrandt occur relatively often precisely in the 1640s. The existence of such partial copies may be seen as an indication that the members of Rembrandt's studio and probably Rembrandt himself attached special significance to such history pieces, and thus also to the painting discussed in this entry.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

1. Etching by Johannes Pieter de Frey (Amsterdam 1770-Paris 1834) inscribed: *Rembrandt Van Rhyn pinx^t: 1648. – J: de Frey, aqua forte 1802. / Les Pelerins d'Emmaüs. / Gravé d'après le Tableau de Rembrandt, peint sur bois, qui se voit au Musée Central des Arts.* Reproduces the painting fairly accurately in reverse, though in a slightly narrower frame, especially on the side of the doorway.
2. Etching by Benoît Louis Prevost (Paris 1735-1804) and Joachim Jan Oortman (Weesp 1777-Paris 1818) inscribed: *Dessiné par Dabos. – Gravé. à l'Eau-forte par Prevost. – Termé. par Oortman. / Les Pélerins d'Émaüs*. Published in Filhol, *Galérie du Musée Napoléon* VIII, Paris 1812, no. 507: '…Peint sur bois; hauteur soixante-neuf centimètres deux millimètres ou deux pieds un pouce; largeur soixante-six centimètres six millimètres ou deux pieds. Ce tableau fut acheté par M. Dangevilliers, pour la collection royale.' Reproduces the painting in the same direction as the original; probably after the etching mentioned under 1.

5. Copies

1. Christ, partial copy on oak (cradled) 25.4 (0.1) x 21.2 cm. Detroit (fig. 19), The Detroit Institute of Arts (HdG 161; Br. 621; Gerson 257; Tümpel A17). Previously possibly sale coll. J. van der Marck & zn., Amsterdam 25ff. August 1773 (Lugt 2189), no. 264: 'Rembrand van Ryn. Een Christus Hoofd, op Paneel, h. 9 >> b. 8 duim [= 24.8 x 20,9 cm]. Het zelve is vlak van vooren te zien. Kragtig geschilderd' (sold together with no. 265, a so-called pendant, 'een Mans Hoofdje met een Baard', f 12, 10 to J. Wubbels); in the early 19th century in the collection of the Czar Paul I of Russia and subsequently Grand Duke Paul, Pawlowsk Castle. Acquired by the museum in 1930.[15] Studied 16 September 1972 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.). A representation of the figure of Christ, superficially executed, with very thin and sweeping paintwork in places, and in others thickly covering.
2. See fig. 20.

6. Provenance

– Possibly collection of Willem Six, sale Amsterdam 12 May 1734 (Lugt 441), no. 57: 'Christus by de Emaus-Gangers, van dezelve [Rembrand van Ryn].' (f 170 to Wilkens) (Hoet I, p. 413). Given the existence of a number of versions and the absence of any specific description or data, it cannot be said with certainty whether this refers to the present painting.
– Coll. Comte de Lassay; not in sale Paris 22ff May 1775 (Lugt 2413); as mentioned in the catalogue of the Randon de Boisset sale mentioned below.

– Coll. Randon de Boisset, sale Paris 27 February - 25 March 1777 (Lugt 2652), no. 50: 'Rembrandt Van Rhyn. Notre Seigneur à table avec les Pélerins d'Emmaüs, un domestique apporte un plat. Ce tableau précieux est peint sur bois de 25 pouces de haut, sur 24 pouces de large [= 67.5 x 64.8 cm]. Il vient du Cabinet de M. le Marquis de Lassay.' According to an annotation in the catalogue in the RKD, The Hague, for 10500 francs to: A. Paillet pour le Roy; according to F. Filhol, *Galérie du Musée Napoléon*, Paris 1812 (see *4. Graphic reproductions*, 2) 'acheté par M. Dangevilliers, pour la collection royale.' A third mention, usually taken to refer to the other painting of the *Supper at Emmaus* in the Louvre (Br. 597), is that a work with this scene as a 'saisie révolutionnaire' came from the collection of the Comte d'Angiviller in Paris on '16 Thermidor an II' (4 July 1794), though it cannot be established whether he had purchased the painting for the king, as a court official under the Ancien Régime, or owned it himself.[16] The former is more likely, in which case the dealer Paillet merely functioned as middleman on behalf of the Comte d'Angiviller at the Randon de Boisset sale, who in turn (presumably) bought for the king.

NOTES

1. M. Hours, 'Rembrandt. Observations et présentation de radiographies exécutées d'après les portraits et compositions du Musée du Louvre', *Bulletin du Laboratoire du Musée du Louvre*, 1961, pp. 3-43, esp. 26.
2. J. Bauch and D. Eckstein, 'Woodbiological investigations on panels of Rembrandt paintings', *Wood Science and Technology* 15 (1981), pp. 251-263, esp. 255; *Corpus* IV, p. 658.
3. P. Klein, 'Hat Rembrandt auf Zuckerkistenholz gemalt?', Zuckerhistorische Beiträge aus der alten und neuen Welt (Schriften aus dem Zuckermuseum 25), Berlin 1988, pp. 37-43.
4. Van de Wetering 1997/2009, pp. 181-186.
5. Van de Wetering 1997/2009, p. 252.
6. The following discussion of Rembrandt's possible examples was written by J. Bruyn and derives from an earlier version of this text.
7. Such as the painting of the same subject of *c.* 1629 (I A 16), an etching of 1634 (B. 88), as well as a drawing usually dated to the late 1640's in Oxford (Ben. C47).
8. W. Stechow, 'Rembrandts Darstellungen des Emmausmahles', *Zeitschr. f. Kunstgesch.*, new series 3 (1934), pp. 320-341; idem, 'The myth of Philemon and Baucis in art', *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4 (1940/41), pp. 103-113, esp. 111; K. Clark, *Rembrandt and the Italian Renaissance*, New York 1966, pp. 53-61; J. Gantner, 'Rembrandt und das Abendmahl des Leonardo', *Festschrift Friedrich Gerke*, Baden-Baden 1962, pp. 179-184.
9. J.Q. van Regteren Altena, 'Rembrandt's way to Emmaus', *Kunstmuseets Årskrift* 35-36 (1948/49), pp. 1-25, esp. 15-18.
10. J.L.A.A.M. van Rijckevorsel, *Rembrandt en de traditie*, Rotterdam 1932, p. 177.
11. S. Slive, 'An unpublished "Head of Christ" by Rembrandt', *Art Bull.* 47 (1965), pp. 407-417, esp. 408.
12. Bauch 195.
13. Gerson 257; Br.-Gerson 621.
14. G. Isarlov, 'Rembrandt et son entourage', *La Renaissance, Revue d'art*, juillet-september 1936, [p. 31]; see also W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt. Wiedergefundene Gemälde*, Stuttgart/Berlin/Leipzig 1923, p. 85.
15. W.R. Valentiner, 'Bust of Christ by Rembrandt', *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* 12 (1930), pp. 1-3.
16. J. Foucart, *Les peintures de Rembrandt au Louvre*, Paris 1982, pp. 50-53 and 91-92.

V 15 **Pupil of Rembrandt – The supper at Emmaus** (free variant after V 14) 1648

COPENHAGEN, STATENS MUSEUM FOR KUNST, INV. NO. KMS SP 405

HDG 144; BR. 579; BAUCH –; GERSON 219; TÜMPEL A8

1. Introduction and description

Opinion has been strongly divided over the past half century on the question of whether or not this painting is from the hand of Rembrandt. Among the 20th-century authors who compiled surveys of Rembrandt's painted oeuvre, Bauch was the first, in 1966, to disattribute the painting from Rembrandt. In his view it was a 'free, very good remake of the Louvre-painting' (V 14).[1] With equal conviction, in 1968 Gerson re-attributed it to Rembrandt, adding that 'a cleaning would probably restore to the curtain its proper function in the balance of colors'.[2] Tümpel, in his 1986 survey of Rembrandt's painted oeuvre, agreed with Bauch and suggested that it was a work by a pupil. He described the way he believed the painting had originated as follows: 'The pupil makes a variant on Rembrandt's painting [referring to V 14] using Utrecht methods and Utrecht school light effects. The framing of the work with rod and curtain is derived from the *Holy Family* in Kassel' (V 6).[3]

In 2004/5 a 'Rembrandt Advisory Committee' was appointed by the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen to tackle problems of attribution regarding a cluster of Rembrandtesque paintings from the museum's collection (see *Working conditions*). With regard to the present painting, after careful deliberation this committee came to the same conclusion as Tümpel, that this was a work by a pupil based on the *Supper at Emmaus* in the Louvre (V 14) and, as far as the *trompe l'oeil* elements were concerned, that these were derived from the Kassel *Holy Family* (V 6). In a subsequent essay, Lene Bøgh Rønberg draws together the conclusions of the Committee whilst at the same time justifying her own view that this painting is an exceptional one within the category of pupillary works.[4] This idea is discussed further below.

The painting takes its subject from the incident in which two of Christ's disciples, having walked to Emmaus, sit down at supper with a stranger who had joined them on the road. The moment shown is the same moment as depicted in V 14 and V 16 when, at the inn at Emmaus, the stranger breaks bread and the two disciples at once recognize him as the risen Christ, appearing to them the day after his resurrection For the whole passage from St. Luke which recounts the story, see V 16, *Introduction*. Compared with the Paris prototype (V 14) the figures are placed somewhat wider apart. Instead of a single young serving-man there are two servants, an elderly woman and a young man, found further to the right of the right-hand disciple than the servant in the prototype. A large dog, apparently accompanying the young servant, is sketchily indicated to the right of the room (see fig. 3).

The scene is lit by a candle or lamp that the old woman carries in her left hand and which is hidden behind the head of the right disciple. By way of a *trompe l'oeil* framing, a simple black frame has been painted rather summarily on the image. A rod is painted on the frame, and from it, at the left, a curtain hangs in folds and, at the extreme left, partly 'falls' on to the frame below. Frame and curtain are lit from the left, whereas – because of the light source held by the old woman – the light within the room mainly falls from the right.

Working conditions

Studied in March 1969 (B.H., E.v.d.W.) and again in 1975 (J.B.) and 1992 (E.v.d.W.): with the painting on the wall and in its frame in good daylight, with the help of 9 X-ray films, which covered virtually the entire painting. Later, a complete X-radiographic mosaic was available (fig. 2). The painting was again studied in June 2004 prior to, and in January 2005 after cleaning of the painting; on both occasions with the additional aid of a microscope and an IRR mosaic (fig. 3). This took place in the context of the investigation by the 'Rembrandt Advisory Committee' appointed by the Statens Museum for Kunst. This committee comprised David Bomford, Jørgen Wadum (who was attached to the Mauritshuis at the time of the first meeting in June 2004, subsequently to the Statens Museum), Karin Groen and Ernst van de Wetering from the Rembrandt Research Project. The participants from the Statens Museum were: Lene Bøgh Rønberg, Mette Bjarnhof, Henrik Bjerre, Kasper Monrad and Eva de la Fuente Pedersen. Between the two meetings of this workgroup the painting was stripped of its old varnish layer and locally retouched by Mette Bjarnhof.

Support

Canvas 89.5 x 111.5 cm. Single piece.

Below faint cusping. Above cusping of *c.* 6 to 8 cm length. On the left, very pronounced cusping of *c.* 7 cm length and on the right, very pronounced cusping of *c.* 6.5 to 7.5 cm length.

Thread count: 14.2 vertical threads/cm (13.5 – 14.5); 12 horizontal threads/cm (10.5 – 12.5). Judging by the wide distribution in the number of threads per cm in the horizontal direction, the warp runs vertically. The canvas derives from the same bolt as that of the *Rabbi* in the Berlin Gemäldegalerie (Br. 236). Since the height of the Berlin painting and the width of the present painting correspond and correlate with the direction of the weft, it may be assumed that the canvases of the two paintings both derive from a single bolt of linen *c.* 112 cm wide. Given that the linen was slightly extended in the stretching process during preparation of the canvas, it is probable that this bolt was of the often encountered, standard width of *c.* 1.5 els.

In the 18th century the painting underwent a marouflage, i.e. the canvas was attached to a rigid support, in this case wood. According to the museum, this was perhaps carried out in the 1770s. The wood was removed in the 1950s and in 1956 the painting was relined, using a wax-resin mixture with a relatively high proportion of colofonium. Given the absence of any stretcher marks, the marouflage of the painting could even have been much earlier.

Ground

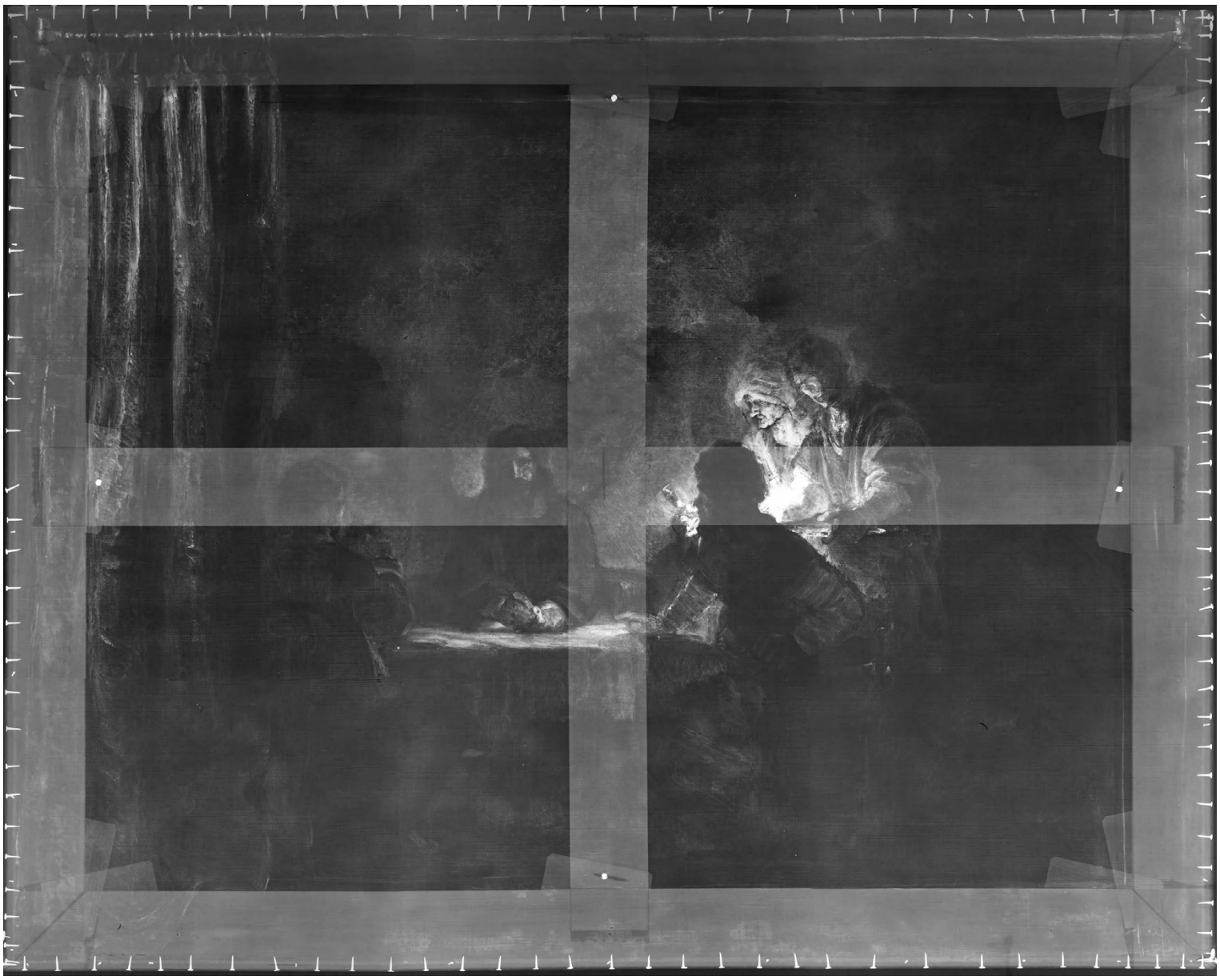
Quoting from the report drafted on 08-09-2004 by Karin Groen who carried out the analyses: three samples were removed along the edges of the painting to study the

Fig. 1. Canvas 89.5 x 111.5 cm

build-up and composition of paint and ground layers.

In the cross-sections, under the research microscope, the ground appears as a semi-translucent layer of a brownish-orange colour with a thickness of at least 140 µm. The ground is medium-rich, even more so towards the top of the layer; presumably an oil-medium (not analysed). A few reddish coloured pigment particles can be distinguished. The particles contained in the ground could be much more clearly distinguished by the differences in fluorescence under long wave UV radiation of the cross-section and even more so under the electron microscope. The material of the ground consists in large part of coarse fragments, which through electron dispersive X-ray analyses (EDX) turned out to contain silicon and oxygen only, and smaller fragments or crystals which, judging from their elemental composition and shape must be clay minerals. It is difficult and often even impossible to identify clay minerals for certain, because of their small particle size and because of the presence of an abundance of quartz which obscures an X-ray diffraction (XRD) analytical result. The results obtained by EDX were tentatively interpreted as pointing to the presence of: quartz, illite, albite, biotite, muscovite and dolomite and perhaps also vermiculite. Most of these are clay minerals. The ground in the present painting contains a high proportion of quartz-sand which was obviously ground up as the particles show sharp edges. It is of the so-called 'quartz' type, with the composition and thickness so far only found in paintings on canvas made by Rembrandt and in his workshop after 1640. The presence of clay minerals in this ground is tentatively based on chemical elements present. The exact composition does not influence the conclusion that the picture derives from Rembrandt's studio, like all paintings with a ground showing a similar composition (see *Corpus* IV Chapter IV, pp. 318-334). The brownish-orange ground of the present painting could originally have had a lighter colour; it could have become darker by the darkening of the medium and through penetration of restoration materials during lining, varnishing and possibly regeneration.

Fig. 2. X-Ray



Paint layer

Condition: The painting is in generally good condition. Along the left edge in the IR reflectograph (taken before the restoration mentioned in the introduction) numerous, local and sometimes quite serious areas of damage can be discerned, which appear as dark patches due to the composition of the paint used in retouching them. Minor paint losses, shown by X-radiography, have occurred in places in the back wall between Christ and the left-hand figure seen from behind, slightly above the level of their heads.

If it is assumed that the deep black parts in the IR reflectograph that deviate with respect either to peinture or shape betray later interventions, then, for example, the left part of the back of the left-hand disciple and a few black patches on his cloak should be considered as retouches and overpaintings, as should also the greater part of the dark shadow of Christ cast on the wall behind, against which the left-hand disciple stands out, and also parts of the background to the right of the servants or in places under the table. These could be generous overpaintings that cover over worn passages in dark zones in the painting which, by their nature, are vulnerable.

According to the files of the Statens Museum, the painting was treated *c.* 1957 with copaiva balsam, in an attempt to regenerate the varnish to create better visibility of the picture. Preparatory to this, the painting probably underwent a Pettenkofer-treatment, but no report of this can be found.

Gerson's prediction of 1968 that removal of the varnish, particularly from the curtain, 'would probably restore to the curtain its proper function in the balance of colors', could be verified after the restoration. Gerson did not say what he expected the original colour of the curtain would be. Presumably he deferred to the museum's restorer at that time, Steen Bjarnhof, who was of the opinion that the curtain must originally have been green. After removal of the varnish layers in 2004/5 the curtain turned out to have a greyish-brownish colour with grey lights and black shadows in the folds. The original dark

Fig. 3. Infrared-reflectogram

paint taken from the left-hand edge (sample 2), in the curtain consists of bone black with a tiny addition of bright red ochre. In the darks of many of Rembrandt's pictures small quantities of coloured pigment, often blue or red, are added.[5] The reason for the curtain's slightly greenish appearance to the naked eye before the painting was cleaned could have been that the black was covered by yellowish brown, discoloured layers of varnish including a pigmented one containing red, black pigment particles and white chalk.

The way the curtain is painted can be characterized in general by a rather imprecise indication of the forms with mainly streaky, frequently sketchy brushwork. This is true not only for passages of secondary importance, such as the dog or the furniture, but also of faces and hands and of Christ and his disciples. This treatment strikes one as rather crude, certainly when it is compared with the execution of comparable passages in the Paris version V 14. The lit figures of the old woman and the younger man are executed with thick impasto, and strong colour. Only in these figures, and to a lesser degree also that of the right-hand disciple, does the paint surface possess a more varied character, serving to suggest plasticity.

Craquelure: In irregularly changing patterns, depending on the thickness of the paint.

Radiography

The X-ray image largely corresponds with what the paint surface would lead one to expect. Thus, the lit parts of the old woman and the servant, the table cloth, the hands and half-face of Christ, the hand and arm of the right-hand disciple leaning on the table, and the lit part of the back wall, all show strong radio-absorbency. The borders of the reserves of the disciple to the right and Christ match the contours of these figures exactly.

The IRR image shows many clarifying details: the servant's bent leg and the dog's head and front paws, the fluently painted chair of the disciple to the right with its cushion, the detailed modelling of the curtain.

Signature

Below right, just above the painted frame, done in dark brown paint: <*Rembrandt. f / 1648*> There are retouches either side of the *e* between the legs of the *m* and the *n* and within the curve of the *a* (fig. 4). It would seem that these retouches were executed at the same time as the signature

itself. The ciphers of the year are cramped and remarkably widely spaced. The signature is so placed above the painted frame that it seems as though it belongs (along with the frame, the rod and curtain, and the painting within this frame) to the *trompe l'oeil*.

2. Comments

The following commentary draws, where relevant, on the text of the catalogue, *Rembrandt? The master and his workshop*, which accompanied the homonymous exhibition in Copenhagen in May, 2006 (see note 4). That catalogue contains the results of an investigation of the present painting, an investigation in which the RRP was closely involved.

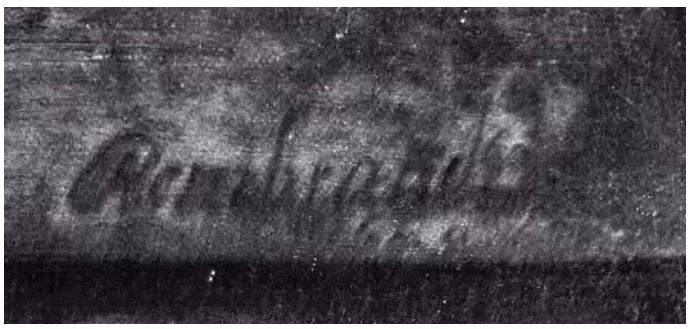
Starkly conflicting opinions have been expressed over the attribution of this painting ever since – as far as is known – the mid-19th century. A major role in this clash of opinions was played by the relation, for so long unclear, between this painting and the painting of the same subject in Paris (V14) which resembles it closely in many respects and yet in others is strikingly different. The Danish Rembrandt expert and former director of the Statens Museum in Copenhagen, Karl Madsen, considered his painting to be of a better quality than that in Paris. He even believed the painting to be 'the most important work in the museum'.[6] The French Rembrandt specialist Émile Michel, on the other hand, in 1888 expressed his conviction that the Copenhagen version was a copy after the Paris painting.[7]

The differences in execution between the two paintings are very conspicuous. In V 14 a remarkable variation in the execution can be observed – from extremely delicate in objects on the table, to very sketchy in the dress of the disciples and crude and grainy in the plasterwork. The Copenhagen version, on the other hand, is much more homogeneous in its in relatively broader general brushwork.

In view of these remarkable differences, it would at first sight seem surprising that both paintings were for so long seen as works from the same hand. The idea that Rembrandt's style underwent a progressive evolution was partly responsible for this: it was generally thought that Rembrandt's stylistic development followed a linear path from a 'fine' to a 'coarse' manner. It was this notion which led Wilhelm Bode, in his extensive catalogue of the artist's oeuvre, to consider the Louvre version of the Emmaus scene as the first of the two, both of them being by Rembrandt.[8] Bredius, to judge by the order in which he reproduced both paintings in his own book, shared this view.[9]

The consequence of this view implied, as Madsen expressed it, that the present painting has to be considered 'the second, carefully reviewed, augmented, and in certain respects significantly improved version of the composition in the Louvre painting'.[10] That Bauch, as mentioned in the Introduction, confidently disattributed the painting from Rembrandt in 1966 must in fact have come as a huge – and for many, unintelligible – surprise (see note 1). As J.Q. van Regteren Altena put it in a discussion of Bauch's survey of Rembrandt's painted oeuvre: 'Nor can we follow him [Bauch] with regard to the *Supper at Emmaus* in Copenhagen. This painting provides such an original variant on the even more impressive piece in the Louvre, and is so spontaneously executed and possesses such powerful light effects, that it seems most unlikely that a pupil would have been capable of producing it. Moreover, it seems to me that the simplicity of the composition, with the space of the room as a 'sounding board' surrounding the centrally placed group, and the expressive colours can only point to Rembrandt.'[11]

Fig. 4. Signature (IRR), reduced



The stark discrepancy between the confident view of Gerson, who, like Regteren Altena, was utterly convinced of the work's authenticity, and Tümpel's opinion that it was a pupillary variant based on the work in Paris, has already been remarked in the *Introduction*. The first steps toward forming an opinion within the RRP, regarding the attribution of the painting, developed out of several visits (see *Working conditions*). In 1969 and 1975 the painting was studied by members of the RRP, who recognized that the composition of the painting had special qualities, but that the handling of the forms and the manner of painting was rather weak. These, however, were provisional impressions. Our hope rested on being able to study the painting whenever the exceptionally disturbing layer of varnish should be removed from the paint surface. As already mentioned, the opportunity presented itself during the Danish Rembrandt project organized by the Statens Museum in preparation for the Rembrandt year 2006, a project in which we were closely involved. Within the RRP over the preceding years, ideas had gradually developed on the functioning of Rembrandt's training and, closely associated with it, his workshop practice,[12] and in turn, these ideas contributed to our gradual realization of the original *raison d'être* of the Copenhagen *Supper at Emmaus*. The painting seemed to belong to the category that we referred to as 'satellites' of – copies of, variants on – Rembrandt's autograph 'principaelen' (prototypes) (see Chapter III with its Appendices, and Chapter IV of this Volume).

As was demonstrated in Chapter IV, to determine the chance of whether a painting is a free variant, painted by a pupil, of a prototype painted by Rembrandt demands that its quality and style are further tested against what is characteristic of Rembrandt in that area; and more importantly, that the genesis of the putative variant be compared with that of the assumed prototype. With regard to this latter test, it is very striking in the Copenhagen painting that the three main figures – Christ and

the two disciples – show no sign whatever of an exploratory, searching execution such as one finds to be the case with the figures in the Paris painting (compare V 14 figs. 1 and 2). The contours of the reserve for the Christ figure in the Copenhagen painting so closely correspond with the contours of Christ in the Paris painting, even though these figures are on a larger scale, one can safely assume that the Copenhagen Christ is in its outline form copied after the Paris work. The difference between the two Christ heads is mainly to be explained by the fact that the author of the Copenhagen painting has placed the face slightly lower within the outline form of the head. This is a typical copyist's mistake, and there are others. In this connection, it may clarify the argument to quote the report of Lene Bøgh Rønberg where she deals with 'copyist's traces'.[13]

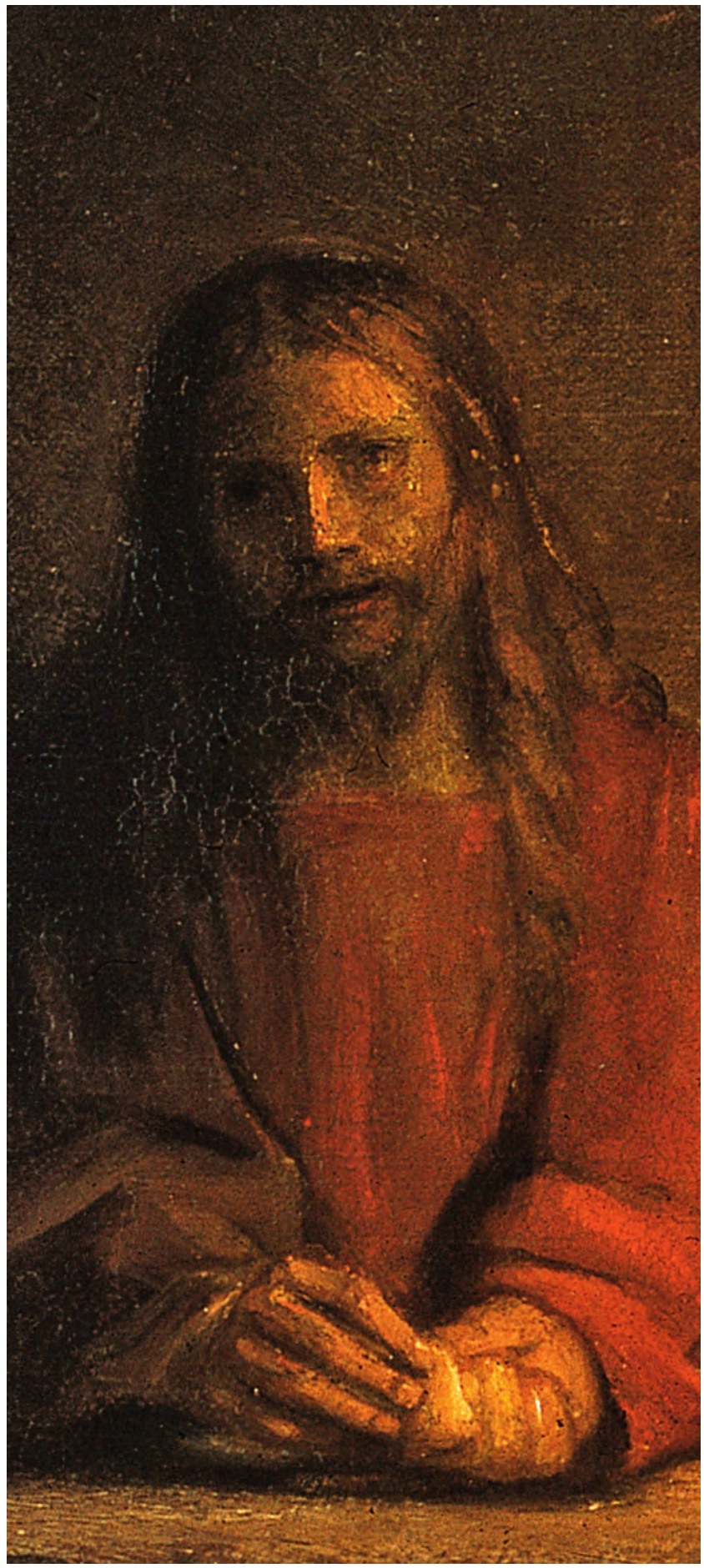
' …, the Danish Emmaus scene does not provide a clear rendition of the main character's [Christ's] left hand and how it holds the bread he is breaking. We do not see the fingers; it is almost as if they were plunged into the hollow bread. Precisely this detail is also somewhat unclear in the prototype where Jesus' thumb merges with the uneven, highlighted surface of the bread while the fingers underneath the bread are lost in shadow. […] [The Copenhagen] *Supper at Emmaus* features several examples of a typical phenomenon: the artist copying parts of the prototype has remained very faithful to the original painting, refraining from improvising or rethinking the subject matter in the places where the original is imprecise or complicated. See, for example, the right hand of the disciple on the right: the fingers do not rest on the tabletop. Even though the disciple's pose has been changed to posit the figure more diagonally, reaching more dramatically into the space, the hand itself appears to have been largely copied directly after the prototype, which shows the hand holding a napkin. This napkin is not included in the copy, but no steps have been taken to avoid the empty space left behind by its absence. An X-ray [fig. 8] showing a protruding index finger might give the impression that the artist has worked to have the finger, which stuck out even more in an earlier stage of the painting's creation, touch the table.'

One could add to this that the way in which the male servant looks directly out of the painting and his disproportionately thick forearm betray an (as yet) inadequately skilled draughtsman, an impression that is confirmed by the clumsy way, described above, in which the constellation of Christ's hands and the bread he is breaking is painted.

Bøgh Rønberg continues:

'Another example would be the strangely empty dish carried by the servant. This empty dish represents a departure from the iconography commonly employed for Emmaus scenes during the period and raises questions, much like the strongly lit old woman. Closer study of the complicated motif created by the two half lamb's skulls on the dish in the prototype soon gives rise to the theory that the copying artist quite simply gave up in the face of such a complex motif. The indefinable green scraps of food glimpsed around the small still life in the original painting also appear along the rim of the dish in [the Copenhagen]

Fig. 5. Detail (1:1)



Supper at Emmaus. Perhaps the student repeating the motif never got further than that.'

As noted above in the X-ray of the Copenhagen version 'the contours around Christ and the disciple to the left are precisely delineated; so precise, in fact, that is does not seem likely that the artist worked independently with the subject matter before arriving at the end result. By contrast, traces of brushwork and several pentimenti around the two "new" figures – the kitchen lad and, particularly, the old woman – shows that the artist has struggled more to position these two figures in the overall composition. The same is true of the disciple to the right whose pose is also different from that of the original.'[14] (Compare figs. 7 and 8)

A typical difference between Rembrandt's prototype and the Copenhagen version is also that Rembrandt usually defined the fingernails very discretely, whereas in the Copenhagen version the borderline between the nails and the skin of the fingers is clearly marked with dark lines.

This and numerous other differences indicate that the two paintings cannot be from the same hand, while the weaknesses pointed out, together with the locally observed, rather passive quotations of elements from the Paris painting, constitute compelling evidence that we are dealing with the work of a relatively inexperienced painter. Equally compelling arguments based on the nature of the canvas (see *Support*) and the ground (see *Ground*) indicate that the painting must have originated in Rembrandt's workshop.

On the basis of the foregoing, the conclusion seems unavoidable that this painting is indeed a 'satellite'.

The young painter must have immersed himself in an intensive engagement with Rembrandt's works. For example, he must have been familiar with Rembrandt's unusual use of impasto in the Munich *Nativity* of 1646 (V 11; see esp. Chapter IV fig. 9), and imitated it in an (all too) emphatic manner here. As Tümpel has already pointed out, he must have borrowed the motif of a curtain rod with a partially drawn curtain fixed to a *trompe l'oeil* frame from the *Holy Family* in Kassel (V 6), similarly dated 1646. Such stylistic and iconographic connections suggest that the author of the Copenhagen painting must have already been present in Rembrandt's workshop in 1646. In this context, it is not without interest to point out that the free variant discussed in this entry is actually more ambitious than its prototype. Even if one accepts, as we are inclined to do, that the Paris *Supper at Emmaus* (V 14) once extended further to the left, the Copenhagen variant can still be considered as to be an unusually ambitious studio work. The painting is larger and it contains more figures. More significantly, both the application of a *trompe l'oeil* formula and a complex lighting situation – such that the light on the frame and curtain falls from above left while the light *within* the painting, given the position of the candle, mainly comes from the right – betray considerable ambition.

The question of whether the signature could have been applied by Rembrandt himself or by the pupil who produced the painting is also not without interest. There are several reasons for believing that pupils were not allowed by guild regulations to sign works they had painted during

Fig. 6. X-Ray, detail

Fig. 7. Detail (1:1)

Fig. 8. X-Ray, detail

their apprenticeship with their own name. There are also enough cases known where paintings produced by Rembrandt's pupils in Rembrandt's workshop were left wholly unsigned, either by the relevant pupil or by Rembrandt. There is therefore sufficient reason for thinking that Rembrandt, contrary to what is sometimes asserted, may in some cases have signed paintings produced by his pupils in his style. In the case of those 'satellites' that carry a Rembrandt signature, this inscription sometimes clearly appears to have been added later. But with some of them, one cannot exclude the possibility that the signature belongs to the painting. Of the paintings dealt with in this volume, this could be the case, for example, with V 2, the New York *Bathsheba*, V 12, the London *Nativity*; but with the present painting the (probably) contemporary retouches to the signature suggest that this was not introduced by Rembrandt himself. Yet it cannot be excluded that the signature should perhaps be seen as an indication that the painting was put on the market – with Rembrandt's approval – as an autograph work by the master, falling under the category *'Rembrant, verandert en overgeschildert'* [Rembrandt, altered and painted again]: i.e. that this is a version of the Paris prototype (V 14), now painted afresh by a pupil, whose concept has been altered in various regards following directions from Rembrandt himself. If such is the case, would it, in 17th-century eyes, count as a Rembrandt or not?

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic Reproductions

None.

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance

– Sale Amsterdam 5 July 1759 (Lugt 1058: après décès); according to the notice in the exemplar of the catalogue in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Cabinet des Estampes), Paris: (N.B. 'De meeste Schilderyen en Teekeningen behoorden toe aan den Rotterdamschen Kunstkooper Sonne'), no. 7: 'Een fraai stuk, door Rembrandt, verbeeldende Christus met de Emmausgangers aan tafel zittende, hoog 33 duim, breed 42 duim [= 84.8 x 107.9 cm]' (A fine piece, by Rembrandt, showing Christ sitting at table with the two disciples at Emmaus.) (115 guilders to Wede Koopman).
– According to Lene Bøgh Rønberg: 'Madsen states that it may have been part of the collection of Baroness van Loehorst, Vrouw Van der Meer en Marsen, a collection which the royal collector Gerhard Morell appears to have purchased in 1759 in Amsterdam from the heirs of the estate for the royal palace at Christiansborg.'[15]

NOTES

1. Bauch 1966, p. 49: 'Freie, sehr gute Wiederholung des Louvre-Bildes'.
2. Gerson 219.
3. Tümpel 1986, A 8.
4. L. Bøgh Rønberg, 'Rembrandt or not? Works by Rembrandt and his school at Statens Museum for Kunst', in: Lene Bøgh Rønberg, Eva de la Fuente Pedersen e.a., *Rembrandt? The master and his workshop*, Copenhagen 2006, pp. 54-104, esp. 95.
5. D. Bomford e.a., *Art in the making*, rev. ed., London 2006, p. 74.
6. K. Madsen, 'Larpents Gave til Kunstmuseet', in: *Kunstmuseets Aarsskrift* 1 (1914), pp. 120-141.
7. E. Michel, *De Stockholm à Copenhagen*, Copenhagen [1888], p. 307 ff.
8. W. Bode and C. Hofstede de Groot, *Rembrandt*, Paris 1879-1905, vol. 5, p. 7.
9. Br. 578 and 579.
10. K. Madsen, *Billeder af Rembrandt og hans Elever i den Kgl. Malerisamling*, Copenhagen 1911, p. 29. Karl Madsen concluded that, 'In purely painterly terms, our painting is certainly superior to the Louvre piece.'
11. J.Q. van Regteren Altena, review of Kurt Bauch, in: *O.H.* 82 (1967), p. 70.
12. E. van de Wetering, 'Het formaat van Rembrandts "Danae"', *Met eigen ogen. Opstellen aangeboden door leerlingen en medewerkers aan Hans L.C. Jaffé*, Amsterdam 1984, pp. 67-72; J. Bruyn in: *Corpus* Vol. III, Chapter II, pp. 12-50 and J. Bruyn, 'Rembrandt's workshop: its function & production' in: Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, pp. 68-89.
13. Bøgh Rønberg, op. cit.[4], pp. 88-89.
14. Bøgh Rønberg, op. cit.[4], p. 89 and notes 127, 128; see also J. Wadum, 'Uncovering Rembrandt', in: *Rembrandt? The master and his workshop* (see note 4), pp. 124-148, esp. 138-139.
15. Madsen, op. cit.[10], p. 26.

V 16 Unknown painter – The supper at Emmaus (free variant after V 14)

PARIS, MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, INV.NO. 1753

HDG 146; BR. 597; BAUCH –; GERSON 352; TÜMPEL –

1. Introduction and description

Now that a sharper picture has emerged of the production by Rembrandt's pupils during their apprenticeship with Rembrandt (see Chapter III), the question is whether or not this painting might have been a pupil's 'satellite' after the master's 'principael'. Like the painting in Copenhagen dealt with under V 15, we have here a work in which so many elements of the composition, and of the positions, relations and actions of the figures, correspond with the other *Supper at Emmaus* in the Louvre (V 14) that a direct relation between the two paintings can scarcely be denied. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that V 14 must also originally have had a horizontal format, and that there may well have been a window visible to the beholder at the left of the composition.

Whereas the painter of the Copenhagen variant has carried out a major alteration in the lighting (and introduced the trompe l'oeuil curtain and a frame), the author of the present painting has radically changed both the spatial working, by opting for a lower viewpoint, and the light effects by electing for a large window, placed lower down.

Whether the present painting is really a work from Rembrandt's workshop or by an artist from his wider circles, or whether it is (as has been thought) a later imitation, will only become clear once the painting can be subjected to a thorough material investigation, perhaps in the course of a restoration. The facts, observations and considerations presented here should help to articulate more sharply the questions that ought to be asked during such future investigations.

The scene represented in the painting is based on an account in St. Luke 24, 13-35, the only gospel to describe the journey to Emmaus.

13: And behold, two of them went, the same day, to a town which was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem, named Emmaus. 14: And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15: And it came to pass that while they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus himself also, drawing near, went with them. 16: But their eyes were held, that they should not know him. 17: And he said to them: What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk and are sad? 18: And the one of them, whose name was Cleophas, answering, said to him: Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days? 19: To whom he said: What things? And they said: Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people. 20: And how our chief priests and princes delivered him to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21: But we hoped that it was he that should have redeemed Israel. And now besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. 22: Yea and certain women also of our company affrighted us who, before it was light, were at the sepulchre, 23: And not finding his body, came, saying that they had all seen a vision of angels, who say that he is alive. 24: And some of our people went to the sepulchre and found it so as the women had said: but him they found not. 25: Then he said to them: O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things, Which the prophets have spoken. 26: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so, to enter into his glory? 27: And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things that were concerning him. 28: And they drew nigh to the town whither they were going: and he made as though he would go farther. 29: But they constrained him, saying: Stay with us, because it is towards evening and the day is now far spent. And he went in with them. 30: And it came to pass, whilst he was at table with them, he took bread and blessed and brake and gave to them. 31: And their eyes were opened: and they knew him. And he vanished out of their sight.

The scene with Christ and the disciples in the inn is lit by daylight entering in through a large open window, which illumines up the yellow coat of the left-hand disciple, the greyish-white robe of the risen Christ and the patchy red of the robe worn by the disciple on the right. The faces of the figures are indicated with a few touches of a reddish flesh tint. To the right, behind the right-hand disciple, can be discerned the extremely vague head and upper body of a figure seen frontally, either a servant or the inn-keeper. A lit edge marks the upper surface of the table, which is seen from a viewpoint slightly below the level of the table top, such that the right-hand disciple' right hand, lying on the table, is half-hidden by the table edge. In the foreground, a simple balustrade extends across virtually the whole width of the painting, with a dark and a light cloth hanging over it to the right of centre. To the very right the vague indication of a door opening is just visible. In the brownish background in somewhat lighter paint a vague aureole is indicated round the figure of Christ; within it are six lighter splodges placed in a circle.

Working conditions

Studied 22 December 1970 (S.H.L., P.v.Th.) and February 2009 (E.v.d.W.). An X-radiograph received later.

Support

Canvas 50.5 x 64 cm. Madeleine Hours[1] pointed out that the weave of the fabric is unusually fine and regular. Because the X-ray image is so difficult to read, a count of the gauze-like woven threads can make no claim to accuracy, but both horizontal and vertical counts yield the unusually high total of an average *c.* 27 threads per cm. The exceptionally regular aspect of the weave suggests that the fabric was mechanically manufactured (fig. 3). The poor legibility of the weave in the X-radiograph is directly related to a peculiarity in the preparation of the canvas. This is discussed under *Ground*. The reader is referred to *Comments* for a discussion of our surmise that we could be dealing here with a transfer of the painting to a new canvas (see note 14).

Fig. 1. Canvas 50.5 x 64 cm (reproduced after printed reproduction)

Ground

The concentrations of the radioabsorbent material of the ground seem to lie mainly not in the depths of the fabric but on the surfaces; only here and there is this material concentrated around the threads to leave the tops free. The conclusion has to be that the ground has not penetrated into the structure of the fabric, as it usually does in 17th-century paintings, but on the contrary has been applied entirely superficially. This also explains the visibility of a weave structure on the surface of the painting.

Paint layer

Condition: The condition of the painting is difficult to assess. Beneath a strongly discoloured and darkened layer of varnish can be discerned a partly worn, perhaps also crushed, certainly disturbed paint surface. This surface is also partly determined by the structure of the weave mentioned under *Ground*, which has a disturbing influence on observation mainly in the background. The craquelure (as is also clearly visible in the X-radiograph) sometimes follows the canvas structure, particularly in the upper half. Elsewhere relatively long cracks follow a capricious, coarse pattern. According to this X-ray image, these cracks below right have been filled with a slightly radioabsorbent material.

Radiography

The way in which the distribution of radioabsorbent paint is registered on the X-radiograph is unusual. There are no clearly visible traces of brushstrokes. Apart from local paint losses and a number of spotty areas of radioab-

Fig. 2. X-Ray

sorbency that are difficult to explain, the X-rays reveal a pentimento in the form of a bulge in the dress of the left-hand disciple, roughly corresponding to the cloak of the left-hand disciple in V 14 where it hangs over the back of his chair.

Signature

None observed.

2. Comments

As the historiographic surveys by Foucart[2] and Sumowski[3] both demonstrate, this unusual painting has a remarkably turbulent record of evaluation. This is hardly surprising in view of the stylistic singularities, to be discussed later, and the painting's condition, which is very difficult to establish. In the France of the second half of the 19th century, the attribution to Rembrandt was rejected. In 1874 the piece was moved by the Louvre to its annexe in the chateau of Compiègne. It was Hofstede de Groot who in 1901 'rediscovered' it there as an authentic work by Rembrandt, following which it was brought back to the Louvre. Since then the painting has remained the subject of discussion.

Hofstede de Groot's positive opinion[4] was shared by Bredius[5] among others, and later also by Gerson.[6] A considerable number of art historians, however, including Lilienfeld,[7] Martin,[8] Van Regteren Altena,[9] Benesch,[10] Bauch[11] and Sumowski[12], rejected the attribution to Rembrandt and sought the work's author in the immediate circle of Rembrandt's workshop. Names such as Gerbrand van den Eeckhout and Aert de Gelder have been suggested.
The authors cited above speculated over what model or

Fig. 3. Detail of X-Ray

models the unknown painter could have based himself on. Van Regteren Altena and Sumowski pointed to similarities with the *Supper at Emmaus* by Gerbrand van den Eeckhout in Rome, dated 1655 (V 14 fig. 15). The fact that there is similarly a window at the left of the composition certainly influenced this suggestion. However, it is now suspected that V 14 was originally wider and that the missing piece also included a window higher up, which makes the link with the Van den Eeckhout less compelling, the more so since the placing of the disciples does not sufficiently correspond with that in the Eeckhout but rather with their placing in V 14.

If the present painting was directly based on V 14 it is by no means certain that it was painted at the same time as, or shortly after the origin of the prototype, as is the case with most pupillary works based on prototypes by Rembrandt, such as V 2, V 11, V 15 and V 23.

The remarkably widely separated spacing of the slender figures differs fundamentally from the ordonnance in Rembrandt's small-figure history pieces from the late 1640's (fig. 4). They remind one rather of later works (whether or not by Rembrandt) such as the Washington *Jupiter and Mercury visiting Philemon and Baucis* (V 27) and the *Esther and Ahasuerus* in Moscow (V 29). Are we then dealing here with a free workshop variant that was painted considerably later than Rembrandt's prototype? This would not be the only case, but could be compared with the Antwerp variant from *c.* 1650 after Rembrandt's Kassel profile *Portrait of Saskia van Uylenburgh* from 1633/42 (II A 85 *Copies* 4); and the Washington variant from the 50's after the *Large Descent from the Cross* from 1634 in St Petersburg (II C 49 *Copies* 2; see also Chapter III, Appendix 1, p.264, 20b).

The difference in style from V 14 and Rembrandt's work in general is so great in other respects, particularly the *peinture* and the character of the form of the three figures, taken in conjunction with the unusual technical features described under *Support* and *Ground*, that other options have to be considered. The first alternative to consider is that this painting might be a much later imitation or forgery. Such was the suspicion of Simon H. Levie and Pieter J.J. van Thiel of the RRP during their investigation of the painting in 1970. The interpretation of the X-radiograph by M. Hours in her article also gave grounds for such an idea (see note 1). Moreover, the history of the painting can only be traced back with certainty as far as 1852. In the 19th century, Rembrandt's fame was nowhere as great as it was in France, as Alison McQueen has demonstrated.[13] This was a fertile climate for the production of Rembrandt imitations.

However, the material and technical peculiarities that gave rise to the idea that this work could be a forgery could have another explanation: the painting could have undergone a transfer, possibly poorly executed, as a result of which not only both the original canvas but also the original ground was (perhaps partly) replaced The technique of transferring a painting from its original support to a new one was developed in 1740 by Robert Picault in Paris, and for the first time applied to easel paintings in 1748. From that moment on, in France and beyond, the technique was widely applied – often unnecessarily.[14] Comparison of the canvas structure visible at the surface with the extremely fine woven fabric described as the support should be able to show whether indeed a transfer has been carried out (see also V 27).

If the painting has in fact undergone a transfer, the possibility opens up once more that we are dealing with a 17th-century painting. That would not necessarily mean, however, that it originated in Rembrandt's workshop. It could also have been painted by a painter outside his workshop, perhaps not even in the Netherlands. All these options can only be further investigated once the painting itself is subjected to in-depth investigation.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic Reproductions

None.

5. Copies

None.
The pen drawing with washes that Hofstede de Groot (no. 1276) mentioned, allegedly related to the present painting, has nothing to do with it.

6. Provenance

– Not, as was assumed on the basis of data concerning no. V 14, from the coll. Comte d'Angiviller, see Foucart.[15]
– At an unknown date taken by the Musée du Louvre, before 1852 as Rembrandt, after 1852 as Rembrandt school, cat. 1872 no. 420.
– Between 1874 and 1901 Palace in Compiègne as Rembrandt school, no. 172.
– Since 1901 back in the collection in the Louvre in Paris.

Fig. 4. Detail of fig. 1 (reproduced after printed reproduction)

NOTES

1. M. Hours, 'Rembrandt. Observations et présentation de radiographies exécutées d'après les portraits et compositions du Musée du Louvre', *Bulletin du Laboratoire du Musée du Louvre*, 1961, pp. 3-43, esp. 27.
2. J. Foucart, *Les peintures de Rembrandt au Louvre*, Paris 1982, pp. 76-79 and 92.
3. Sumowski *Gemälde* IV, no. 1961.
4. HdG 146.
5. Bredius 597.
6. Gerson 352, Br.-Gerson 597.
7. K. Lilienfeld, *Arent de Gelder, Sein Leben und seine Kunst*, The Hague 1914, no. 98.
8. W. Martin, 'Rembrandt. Rätsel II', *Der Kunstwanderer* 3, 1921/2, p. 33.
9. I.Q. van Regteren Altena, 'Rembrandt's way to Emmaus', in *Kunstmuseets Aarsskrift* 35/6, 1948/9, p. 24, notes 43 and 44.
10. O. Benesch, *Collected writings*, Vol. I, *Rembrandt*, London 1970, p. 167.
11. Bauch 1966, p. 49.
12. W. Sumowski, 'Nachträge zum Rembrandt 1956', *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe* 7, 1957/58, pp. 223-278, esp. 226.
13. Alison McQueen, *The rise of the cult of Rembrandt. Reinventing an old master in nineteenth-century France*, Amsterdam 2003.
14. V. Schaible, 'Die Gemäldeübertragung. Studien zur Geschichte einer "klassischen Restauriermethode"', *Maltechnik/Restauro* 89 (1983), pp. 96-129, esp. 97.
15. Foucart, op.cit.[2], pp. 92: 'Saisie révolutionnaire de la collection du Comte d'Angiviller, Paris, 16 Thermidor an II (4 juillet 1794). On ne peut savoir si le tableau était chez d'Angiviller en tant que fonctionnaire royal ayant fait acheter le tableau juste à la fin de l'Ancien Régime ou en tant que collectionneur privé, mais la première hypothèse ne saurait être exclue; exposé au château de Compiègne (galerie annexe de peintures du Louvre) de 1874 à 1901, ainsi qu'à la galerie du Sénat au Palais du Luxembourg à Paris de 1800 environ à 1820.'

V 17 Rembrandt or pupil – The prophetess Anna in the temple 1650 [?]

EDINBURGH, NATIONAL GALLERY OF SCOTLAND, ON LOAN FROM THE DUKE OF SUTHERLAND

HDG 154; BR. 577; BAUCH 81; GERSON 223; TÜMPEL A9

1. Introduction and description

As will become evident from this entry, there have long been differences of opinion about the meaning of this painting. Thanks to the ground-breaking work of Christian Tümpel that puzzle has now been convincingly resolved. The question of its attribution, on the contrary, has become even more complex. It still cannot be entirely ruled out that we are dealing here with an autograph work by Rembrandt and in this connection, several strong similarities with the Kassel *Holy family with painted frame and curtain* (V 6) demand consideration. But then is that a work painted by Rembrandt?

As first proposed by Tümpel and described in detail in *2. Comments*, the scene depicts two consecutive passages from the Gospel of Luke: in the background Simeon, singing his song of praise (Luke 2:25-35), and in the foreground the prophetess Anna, who remained in the temple night and day to worship God (Luke 2:36-37). Anna is shown with a young servant or helper – who, although not mentioned in the Bible, is part of the iconographic tradition. Luke 2:38 then tells how the prophetess joined the group gathered around Simeon with the Christ Child.

In a temple-like setting, Anna is seated on something that most closely resembles a choir stall. Leaning against the empty bench next to her is a black cane with a shiny knob and on the ground near it is a red slipper. The shallow niche before which the prophetess sits is flanked by two cherub's heads, the right one only partially visible. The heads are located above the corbels of pilasters belonging to the choir stall on either side of the niche.

Anna is dressed in a red gown, whose skirt, low bodice and part of the left sleeve are visible. The full sleeve is gathered at the wrist and the elbow with gold coloured bands. Over the gown she wears a black cloak or shawl. Her head is covered with a black cloth lined with green fabric. The black cloth draped over the shoulders partially covers a large pleated white cloth falling in folds over her shoulders, chest and right arm. She also wears a white chin cloth, part of the traditional widow's weeds. Her right hand, clasping a pair of spectacles, rests on a book in her lap. Two fingers of her left hand are keeping her place in the book.

Kneeling beside her is a boy, his hands in a gesture of prayer. His costume is as complex as the woman's. At the wrist can be seen a bit of the sleeve of a white shirt peeking out from a dark, close fitting sleeve made of a shiny, violet material which appears to be part of an undergarment. This violet sleeve, in turn, extends from a short sleeve ending above the elbow, which seems to belong to a gleaming, dark ruddy overgarment with a large, raised collar. This short sleeve is fringed with light, slashed fabric. It is not entirely clear whether the narrow light strokes along the lower contour of the sleeve of the overgarment also belong to the fringe. At the open neck of the cloak, above the horizontal top of the undergarment, can be seen a small section of a light shirt (whose sleeve is visible at the wrist). Finally, the boy wears a grey cloak, which appears to have a high fastening and drapes in large, loose folds on the ground where he kneels. James Fittler gave a different interpretation of this garb in his 1807 print of the painting (see *4. Graphic reproductions*, 1; fig. 11). Fittler depicted the cloak as continuing over the shoulder to a chest panel and considered the raised collar as a part of this sleeveless garment. The prophetess and the boy are illuminated by an invisible source of light at the upper left.

Above the boy's blond, fluffy hair can be discerned a tall black tablet, the right-hand one of a pair of such tablets with Hebrew inscriptions secured to the back wall that runs parallel to the picture plane. These tablets are separated by a gigantic, sculpted serpent wound around the stem of a T-shaped cross.

On a dais at the far left in the background, Simeon worships the Christ Child. He has a grey beard and is dressed in brown: he kneels while holding the Christ Child in his arms. Opposite Simeon is Joseph, with Mary kneeling in between, her head covered. Behind Joseph at the left is another head with a light headcloth largely obscured by Joseph's shoulder and cut off at the left by a dark shape, which Fittler, in his print, rendered as another human figure. In the shadow behind and below Simeon at the right are two more figures, both with head coverings: the one at the left decorated with a sash or feather. The group surrounding Simeon and the section of the wall behind them is gently lit from the left.

Working conditions

Examined on 4 June 1971 (B.H., P.v.Th.) and 9-10 June 1983 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.): the painting out of the frame in good artificial light with the aid of a surgical microscope; the print of an X-ray film was available. A fairly thick yellow varnish considerably hampers observation.

Support

Panel, 43 x 34.8 cm; the panel is relatively thick, app. 19 mm; it has been bevelled on all four sides to a thickness of app. 10 mm. Single piece. The wood has an irregular grain: although running mainly horizontally; its deviations indicate that the panel was sawn close to large knots. According to a letter by Colin Thompson of March 1977, on the basis of microscopic analysis the wood is most probably walnut.[1] The upper half of the panel displays horizontally oriented, broadly curving cracks throughout the background and above the architectural structure at the right.

Ground

A yellow-brown ground can be distinguished in the thinly painted areas of the architecture and in places in the boy's head.

Paint layer

Condition: Aside from the fissures caused by the cracks in the panel, the condition of the paint layer is good. Overpaintings can be discerned only in the background, particularly above and around the head of Anna and above the head of Joseph. Craquelure: The thicker paint layers reveal a fine craquelure. Shrinkage cracks can be seen in the dark parts of Anna's costume.

Fig. 1. Panel 43 x 34.8 cm

Fig. 2. X-Ray

Fig. 3. Detail with signature, infrared (enlarged)

This small painting is characterised by many marked differences in execution. This variation is closely connected with the diversity of textures and materials depicted. For instance, the wood of the choir stall, the cane and the pilasters with their corbels either side of Anna has been thinly painted in browns and blacks, acquiring its smooth, gleaming character through meticulously applied highlights. When comparing the highlights on the corbels, those of the left-hand one, further back, appear more muted. A similar differentiation in the intensity of highlights is seen in the armrest to the left of the cane: the protruding part displays a clearer highlight than the section of the armrest further back.

The stone walls both in the foreground and the background are rendered with rather coarsely applied paint, with the more brightly lit parts more coarsely painted.

The shiny gold cherub above Anna's head is done in transparent browns and provided with a multitude of partially pastose, yellow sheens, effectively conveying a sense of the plasticity of the sculpted face, hair and feathers. The foremost cherub at the extreme upper right – to the extent that it is visible – together with the pilaster and corbel below, functions as a repoussoir.

This whole passage stands out darker against the more lightly executed wall with the niche, while the hindmost cherub stands out against the dark wall of the temple. In the case of the foremost cherub, it would seem that this difference in pictorial function is the reason for making the highlights more muted compared with those on the hinder one.

With respect to the two figures in the foreground, Anna and the boy, the diversity in the execution is also largely determined by the nature of the textures rendered (fig. 4).

Anna's chin cloth or wimple is particularly coarsely executed: the clarity of the form here appears to have been sacrificed to the coarseness applied for the benefit of the intensity of light and 'kenlijkheyt', or perceptibility.[2] A similar coarseness is evident in the yellowish brown book binding, creating the impression of gleaming parchment. A marked coarseness predominates in the paint surface even in the strongly lit hands of the child, in this case brought about by the relief of the underpainting of the hands.

The paint surface of Anna's face and hands is also coarse, applied in brushstrokes that only partially correspond with the shapes. In contrast, the head of the child has been painted smoothly, with softly merging transitions. The paint in the child's face is so thin in places that the ground shows through. The peinture in the clothing shows variations related to the fabrics depicted. The folds in the red material of Anna's gown have been heightened with coarse, sometimes grazingly brushed red lights on a dark, transparent red underlayer. Applying this sheen near the contours of the folds suggests velvet. The black shawl may also have been meant to be velvet. Fine lights demarcate the contours of the fabric hanging from the shoulder and bulging over the arm. A lighter underlayer is visible in the craquelure of the black paint of the headcloth. Evidently this passage was originally intended to be lighter – an impression confirmed by the X-radiograph (see *Radiography*). The coarse surface of the paint of the headcloth is determined by this underlayer. The headcloth is lined with another fabric – a phenomenon familiar from, for example, the *Bust of an old woman* in Windsor Castle (I A 32 and II *Corrigenda et Addenda* pp. 839-840). Here, this lining is indicated near the contour of the face by some streaks of green paint. The many folds in the white cloth draped over Anna's chest and right arm are largely suggested by the pastose quality of the paint. The gathering of the fabric is done in very free, varied strokes, without any modelling of individual folds by variations in tone. In this passage, the relief of the underpainting (which, according to the X-radiograph, was extremely freely executed) plays a significant role in determining the paint surface. In a narrow opening between the panels of white fabric hanging down the chest can be seen the decoration of a dark band, presumably belonging to the gown, executed in a varied impasto and probably intended to be shiny. Also, the sheen on the left sleeve of Anna's gown as well as the sandal on the ground are suggested with series of meticulously applied, fine strokes. In fact, sheen plays an important role in this painting. In the case of the boy's clothing it is the most important means of clarifying the structure of his complex costume; while in the case of his fluffy hair, it is the individual, gleaming strands of hair done with pointed strokes that differentiate this passage. The sheen of the wooden choir bench, Anna's cane and the cherub have already been mentioned in this regard. Lesser lights, which seem to have originated almost in passing when the inscription was added to the tablets of the law, add to our impression of the importance the painter gives to highlights in general.

For this reason, the painting technique employed for the group of figures in the background, is all the more conspicuous for its difference (fig. 5). Here, the approach is broad and predominantly tonal, no doubt because of the placing of this group deeper in the background. These figures are very summarily executed with coarse, relatively broad, strokes. The somewhat clumsy peinture in this iconographically important part of the painting is striking. However, apart from the multitude of highlights described above, the execution of the painting as a whole is typified by the same awkward discrepancy between facture and form. This also applies to the execution of the cross with the brazen serpent. The plasticity of these forms has been indicated with muted cross-hatching and lines in a rela-

Fig. 4. Detail of fig. 1 (1:1)

Fig. 5. Detail of fig. 1 (1:1)

tively careless manner. The precision of the 'calligraphy' of the inscription, especially on the left table of the law, is therefore all the more remarkable.

Radiography

The X-radiograph is largely determined by the relatively strong radioabsorbent ground, which has been applied in broad strokes in a predominantly horizontal direction. In an agitated image can be discerned the dark scratches caused by the brush hairs; the locally filled, fine grain of the panel, in part showing up as dots; the fissures in the wood showing up dark; and the long scratches in the ground, showing up light and dark, which originated while the ground was still wet. This is further complicated by strokes of radioabsorbency, which are presumably due to material on the back of the panel.

Anna's upper body and head, which show up extremely light, display several features in the X-ray image that deviate from what one would expect from the paint surface. First, the degree of lightness of Anna's head covering: there appears to be a repentir here, corroborated by the pastosity of the paint layer, which is highly unusual for a dark passage. Moreover, a large section of her upper body, the right part of which is now hidden under the black cloth, shows up light in the X-radiograph; the white shawl seems to continue here. The dark cloth over her shoulder was evidently an afterthought.

The sections of coarse brushwork showing up light in the X-radiograph give the impression of being areas of underpainting heightened with light paint. In the X-radiograph can be seen an unexplained, irregular white spot to the left of Anna's right hand that probably also belongs to the underpainting. With respect to the boy, whose upper body shows up as a dark reserve in the background, the left lower arm and in particular the hand are visible as light shapes in the X-radiograph. The visible strokes running diagonally over the back of the hand, which manifest themselves in strong relief in the paint surface, are evidently part of the underpainting (see the left hand of the disciple to the right in V 14 and Br. 253).

Signature

In black or dark grey on a panel just under the seat of the chair at the right, and overpainted in brown <*Rembrandt f./ 1650*> (see infrared photograph, fig. 3). In the course of overpainting the last digits may have been changed. For a possibly earlier dating (around 1646), see V 6.

2. Comments

The subject of the painting has caused a great deal of confusion. In 1969 Tümpel analysed the various iconographic interpretations, testing their plausibility.[3] The variety of interpretations was due in part to the unusual combination of two spatially, distinctly separate scenes. The only point of agreement was that the setting of the scenes could be identified as the temple of Jerusalem. Both pilasters to the left and right of the niche before which the old woman is seated are decorated with gold-coloured cherubs in high relief. Cherubim are mentioned as part of the decoration of the Temple in 1 Kings 6:29 and in 2 Chronicles 3:7. This motif also occurs in another painting with a scene in a temple, namely the copy in Braunschweig after Rembrandt's lost *Circumcision* (V 10). The identification of the setting as the temple of Jerusalem is reinforced by the two tablets of the law in the background (1 Kings 8:9).

It has never been doubted that the group in the background at the left represents Simeon who, in the presence of the kneeling Mary and Joseph, raises the Christ Child in his arms. This scene accords with the account in the Gospel of Luke of Simeon's song of praise on the presentation of the Christ-child in the Temple (Luke 2:25-32). The painting shows the moment when the devout Simeon experiences the fulfilment of the prophecy of the Holy Spirit; 'that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ' (Luke 2:26) and in his prayer of thanksgiving: 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel' (Luke 2:29-32).

Fig. 6. Rembrandt's workshop, *Old woman in fanciful costume (Prophetess Anna?)*, 1643, panel 61 x 49 cm. St Petersburg, The Hermitage Museum (Br. 361)

In contrast, opinion has long differed over the interpretation of the scene in the foreground. The first mention of the painting in the sales catalogue of 20 April 1700 of the collection of Philips de Flines refers to the painting as: 'Anna instructing her son Samuel, by Rembrandt van Rijn' (see *6. Provenance*). Because the catalogue does not include the dimensions, the identification of the De Flines painting with that in Edinburgh cannot be established with certainty. The same painting is described in 'Eerzangen. Aan den heere Filips de Flines, op zyne Kunstkamer van beelden, medalien, schildereyen …' in the posthumously published (1719) *Mengelpoëzy* by Govert Bidloo (1649-1713) as follows: 'But what a solemnity comes to delight my sight? With what pride Rembrandt is able to capture Anna's eye?', but here too, this description does not provide an unequivocal link with the Edinburgh painting.[4]

With regard to the figures mentioned in the De Flines sales catalogue, i.e. Anna and her son Samuel, there are no related biblical texts that obviously correspond with such an interpretation of the Edinburgh painting. It would appear that this Old Testament Anna, a pious, initially childless woman, whose repeated prayers to bear fruit were finally heard (I Samuel 1:1-20), was confused with her namesake, the prophetess in the New Testament (Luke 2:36-37). That this conflation occurred more frequently is indicated by the following: a work listed in the inventory of Lambert Doomer, who died on 2 July 1700, is described as: 'A painting of Anna, the prophetess, and her son Samuel, painted by the deceased'.[5] The iconographic tradition of the consecration of Samuel in the service of the Lord, as recounted in I Samuel 1:25-28, and as Tümpel has demonstrated, clearly deviates from what is shown in the Edinburgh painting.[6] The combination of 'Anna, die haar zoon Samuel aan de tempeldienst wijdt' (Anna, offering her son Samuel to serve the Lord) and the 'Presentatie' (Presentation), or the event described as the 'Lofprijzing van Simeon' (Simeon's song of praise) as a typological combination of two scenes from the Old and the New Testament set in the same interior would, moreover, be unique and highly improbable for Rembrandt and his circle.

Early on, Bauch rightly expressed his doubts of another identification, first introduced by Dyserinck, of the figures in the foreground as 'Timoteus en zijn grootmoeder Lois' (Timothy and his grandmother Lois).[7] Bauch noted that, apart from the religious zeal of both of these figures in II Timothy 1:4-5, there exists no biblical passage that corresponds to this theme, nor is there any iconographic tradition for it.[8] Tümpel demonstrated that the old woman in the foreground is in all probability the prophetess Anna mentioned in the Gospel of Luke. In various respects, the figure is similar to Rembrandt's type of seated prophetess, for example as depicted in a painting dated 1631 in Amsterdam (I A 37). This type underlies numerous variations by Rembrandt and his circle, such as the painting by an unknown pupil from 1643 in St Petersburg (fig. 6).[9] This interpretation of the old woman in the Edinburgh painting as the prophetess Anna, which had already been proposed by Smith,[10] does however present an iconographical problem: that is, there is no single biblical passage that fully corresponds with the scene in the painting. Despite this, the iconographical details can been explained in the context of the iconographic tradition of the prophetess in conjunction with the presentation in the temple.

The evangelist Luke describes the prophetess Anna as being 'of a great age, and [who] had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years' (Luke 2:36-37). In accordance with this description, the painting shows Anna in characteristic widow's weeds – especially the white wimple – a separate piece of fabric covering the neck and chin. Anna is also shown wearing this item of clothing in Rembrandt's etching of the *Presentation in the Temple* from 1640 (fig.7; B. 49). In both images, the frailty of old age is also symbolised by the cane. Diminished eyesight due to ageing is, moreover, underscored in the painting by the spectacles in her right hand. Tümpel pointed out that in the aforementioned etching, Rembrandt shows the prophetess walking in the company of a boy who carries her attribute, a large book, under his arm (fig. 7).[11] In a drawing by Rembrandt of *Simeon's song of praise* (Ben. 575; see p. 62) now in the Berlin Kupferstichkabinett, the standing Anna leans both on her cane and on a youthful servant. Evidently, Rembrandt incorporated the boy in his iconography of the theme as an attribute of Anna's old age. This could explain the presence of the boy in the Edinburgh painting.

Another unusual aspect, namely the linking of the subject of 'Simeon's song of praise' with the seated prophetess Anna prominently situated in the foreground is found in a print by Jacques de Bie after Maarten de Vos (fig. 8),

Fig. 7. Rembrandt, *The Presentation in the Temple*, *c.* 1640, etching and drypoint, detail 1:1 (B. 49^{II}; see also p. 215)

which shares other iconographical details with the painting in Edinburgh.[12] Thematically, the print corresponds with the meeting of Christ with Simeon and Anna in the Temple, known since early Christianity as *hypapanthe*. The moment depicted is when Simeon hands the Child to Anna immediately following the song of praise. In the print the latter is presented sitting on a chair in the foreground, dressed in widow's weeds and supporting an opened book on her knees. The tablets of the law are set on an altar in the background on the left as part of the interior of the temple. Moreover, a group of figures in the print shows clear similarities with the main group in the Edinburgh painting: in the middle ground to the right, a seated woman with covered head instructs a child standing next to her from an open book. The child is bending towards her. This motif characterises the temple as a place of learning and instruction. The very similar presentation of Anna and her servant boy in the Edinburgh painting may be intended to convey the same connotation.

Thus, all of the iconographical elements of the scene in the foreground can be clarified in the context of an iconographic tradition relating to the prophetess Anna. Incidentally, the isolation of a 'tête-à-tête' between Anna and a boy was used as a theme for a somewhat later painting from Rembrandt's circle.[13]

The inclusion of Hebrew-Aramaic letters in works by Rembrandt and his studio is not exceptional, and has given rise to various speculations and interpretations. On the one hand, authentic works by Rembrandt include what appears to be Hebrew lettering to establish the biblical setting of a history, such as that found on the papers in the Berlin *Parable of the Rich Man* of 1627 (I A 10). In other examples, the inscriptions appear to be legible and reliable Hebrew-Aramaic texts. But even in those cases in which the writing is by and large correct, such as in the London *Belshazzar's feast* of 1635 (III A 110), small deviations in the rendering of the Hebrew letters can be noted from which it may be concluded that Rembrandt took liberties in copying Hebrew examples.[14] The inscription on the tablets of the law in the background of the painting in Edinburgh, together with that of the stone tablets in the Berlin *Moses* of 1659 (Br. 527), ranks among the most extensive Hebrew texts in paintings from Rembrandt's circle (figs. 9 and 10). The fact that the Ten Commandments are included in both paintings begs comparison.

In contrast with the Berlin painting, where the tablets of the law overlap each other, in the Edinburgh painting they are shown side by side. However, in the latter work only the small Hebrew letters in the left tablet are legible. As in the foremost stone tablet in the *Moses*, the left tablet in the *Anna* contains the sixth through the tenth commandment. Looking more closely at the wording and the lay-out of the commandments in both paintings, a striking similarity between the tablets of the law in the *Anna* and the *Moses* becomes evident. With the exception of a missing letter in 'thy neighbour' in the fourth line of the Berlin *Moses*, an error that probably crept in while copying the text, the Hebrew text in both paintings follow the same version.

To date, no printed Hebrew text has been found that could have served as the model for the inscriptions on the tablets of the law in the Edinburgh and Berlin paintings. Shabar, from whom much of the above information is derived, surmised that a handwritten model was used because of the differences between examples of the same letter.[15] An identical division of words and the unusual shortening of the text in both paintings – not encountered in printed versions of the text – supports this supposition. The presence of such a handwritten example in Rembrandt's studio, perhaps provided by a learned Jew or Hebraist, would explain the distinct similarities in the rendering of the Decalogue in both paintings, which originated several years apart.

On the basis of the legible left tablet in the Edinburgh painting and that in the Berlin *Moses*, a division of five commandments per tablet can be distinguished, in keeping with rabbinical tradition. The Roman Catholic Church as well as Luther, who followed Augustine, adhered to a division of the Ten Commandments into three and seven respectively. Calvin divided them into four and six per tablet. This Calvinist custom is reflected in paintings with the tablets of the law that hung in countless Reformed churches of the 17th century, and in which the Decalogue was given in Dutch for didactic purposes. Thus, the division of the tablets of the law in the Edinburgh painting follows the Jewish tradition.

Another conspicuous feature is that the tablets of the law in the Edinburgh painting are separated by a brazen serpent. While there appears to be no older iconographic tradition for this combination, it can perhaps best be explained by the Presentation scene depicted in the immediate vicinity. Here, one is reminded of the typological analogy of the Christ's elevation and the raising of the

Fig. 8. J. de Bie after Maarten de Vos, *The Presentation in the Temple*, etching 18.5 x 22 cm (Hollst. XLIV, no. 281)

brazen serpent by Moses, as is suggested by the text in the Gospel of John 3:14: 'And this Son of Men must be lifted up, as the serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness.' Another plausible correspondence is that the Presentation as well as the brazen serpent were perceived as images foreshadowing Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Bredius already had difficulty with the question of whether it was, indeed, an authentic work by Rembrandt, as had been assumed up until then. He carefully phrased his concern as follows: 'In my view, the authenticity of this painting is not entirely free of doubt'.[16] Bauch harboured similar doubts. Gerson stated somewhat more forcefully that it was not by Rembrandt, but rather by a pupil, 'somebody in the manner of Samuel van Hoogstraten, perhaps Abraham van Dijck.'[17] Tümpel labeled it a shop work.[18] We, too, are of the opinion, as indicated in *Paint layer*, that idiosyncrasies in the execution of the painting do not correspond with the idea we have developed of Rembrandt's style and pictorial qualities (see Chapter IV). However, it is not yet possible to attribute the painting to a known pupil, as Sumowski did when (on the basis of the attribution suggested by Gerson) he attributed it to Abraham van Dijck. Sumowski even spoke of: 'an exceptionally good work by this pupil from the first half of the 1650s'.[19] He saw a connection with a drawing that he had initially attributed to Nicolaes Maes.[20] In the light of his emphasis on this correspondence between that drawing and the painting, he later considered attributing the drawing to Abraham van Dijck. In our view, however, the relationship between the painting and the drawing is not particularly compelling. There is really only a thematic correspondence: an old woman holding her glasses in her hand and with a closed book on her lap. The differences between the works in all their details, such as the clothing and the position of the body, the tilt of the head and the like, are so great that there is no reason to posit any specific connection between the drawing and the painting. One should bear in mind, moreover, that the subject of a pious old woman with a Bible and a pair of glasses is by no means infrequent. Finally, an attribution to Van Dijck founders with respect to dating. If the date of 1650 of the Edinburgh painting actually reflects the year of origin, then it would be the artist's earliest (and by far his best) painting. The earliest work that can be securely attributed to this painter bears the date 1655.[21] Abraham van Dijck was born in 1635. If he were indeed the author of the Edinburgh painting – and if the date on it is reliable – it would be the work of a 15-year-old painter. We therefore reject an attribution of this painting to Abraham van Dijck.

In seeking a convincing attribution to one or other painter, the correspondences between the present painting and the *The Holy Family with painted frame and curtain* in Kassel (V 6), hitherto attributed to Rembrandt, must be taken into account. Should these similarities be taken to mean that the *Anna in the temple* under discussion here is after all wholly or partly from Rembrandt's hand? The similarities with the Kassel *Holy Family* and the attribution problems concerned are discussed in more detail in V 6, *Comments*.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

1. Engraving by James Fittler (London 1758-1835). Inscribed *Rembrandt pinxit. – J.Fittler A.R.A. sculpsit. / Samuel and Eli*, 1807 (fig. 11). See W.Y. Ottley, *Engravings of the most noble The Marquis of Stafford's Collection of Pictures in London, arranged according to schools and in chronological order, with remarks on each picture*, London 1818, Vol. IV, no. 68, pl. 27: 'Rembrandt. Samuel and his mother…on panel, and measures 1 foot 4 7/8 inches in height, by 1 foot 1 1/4 inch in width.'
2. Engraving by William Finden (London 1787-1852). Inscribed *Rembrandt. - 1.1 1/4 by 1.4 7/8*; is broadly similar, although details such as the slipper in the right foreground have been omitted.

5. Copies

1. According to Hofstede de Groot,[22] there was a copy around 1903 in the Paris art trade from the collection of the Prince de Chimay. Presumably, this was the painting listed under no. 122 in the 1831 *Catalogue des Tableaux…* of M. le Chevalier Séb. Érard and subsequently sold at his auction in Paris, on 7-14 August 1832 (Lugt 13071): 'Rembrandt. L'éducation de Joas. – Bois; hauteur quinze pouces, largeur douze. Le fond du tableau représente un endroit un peu obscur, dépendant de l'intérieur d'un temple. Sur le devant est assise une vieille femme qui enseigne à lire à un enfant. Cette femme, pour rapporter l'intention de Rembrandt, est Josabeth, épouse du grand prêtre Joiada, instruisant en secret le petit Joas, quelle a eu le bonheur de dérober à la cruauté d'Athalie. L'enfant est à genoux et familièrement appuyé sur celle qui lui sert de mère; la soumission est peinte sur sa figure. Sur un plan reculé et dans l'ombre, se voient encore trois personnages parmi lesquels se trouve une femme tenant un enfant dans ses bras. C'est apparemment un second épisode tiré de la vie de Joas, où Rembrandt a voulu montrer Josabeth apportant aux prêtres du temple l'enfant royal qu'elle vient de sauver. Ce petit tableau est au-dessus de tout éloge. Il charme par cette exécution pleine d'énergie, cet effet magique, cette piquante originalité qui ont fait de Rembrandt un chef d'école; on pourrait presque dire, un peintre à part.' (1690 francs)

Fig. 9. Detail of fig. 1 (1:1)

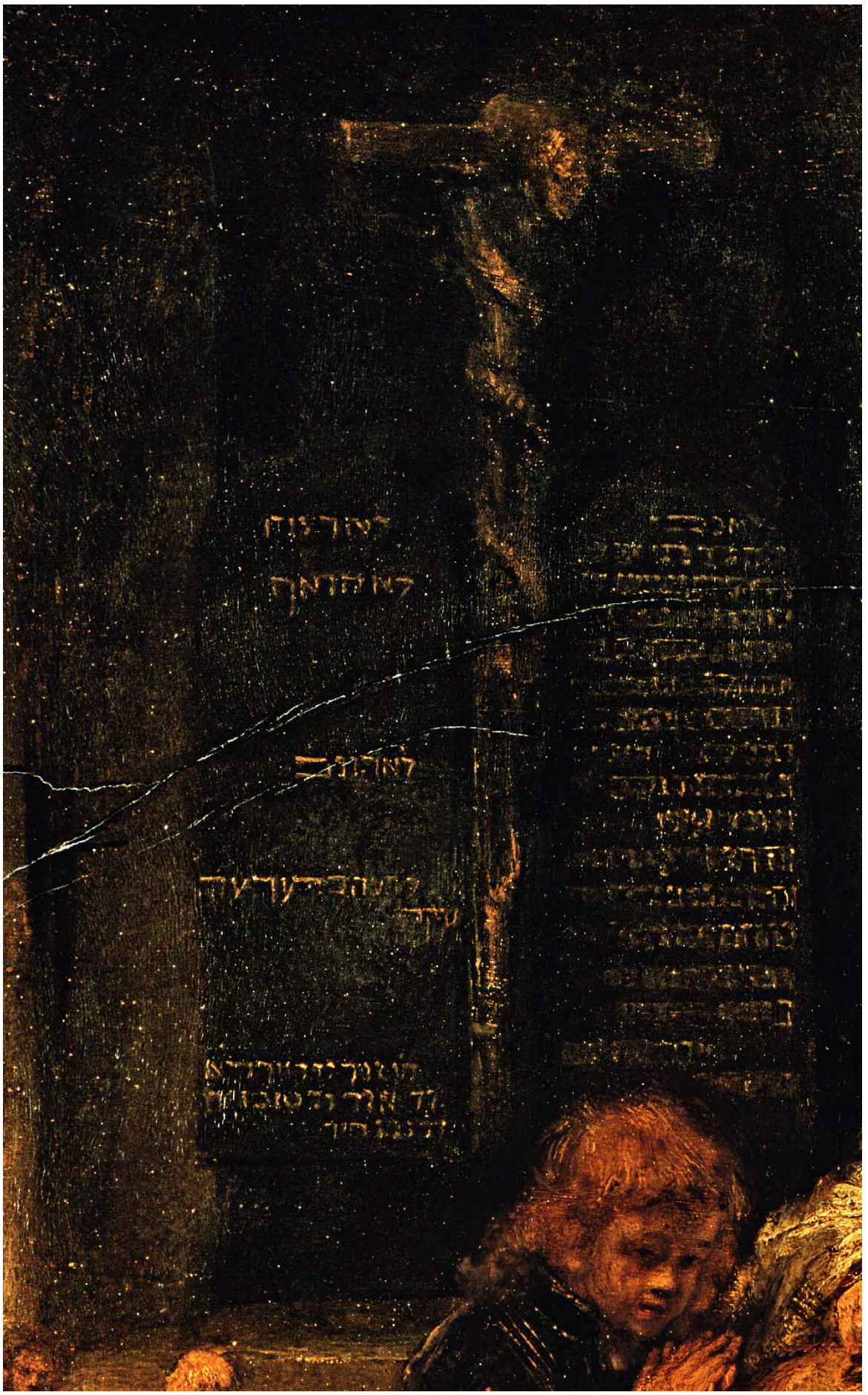


Fig. 10. Rembrandt, *Moses smashing the Tablets of the Law*, 1659, canvas 168.5 x 136.5 cm (detail).
Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (Br. 527)

6. Provenance

– Coll. Philips de Flines, sale Amsterdam, 20 April 1700 (Lugt 174), no. 30: 'Anna Onderwysende haer Soontje Samuel, van Rembrand van Ryn' (Anna instructing her son Samuel by Rembrandt van Rijn). (300.-) (Hoet I, p. 55).
– Coll. Jacques de Roore, sale The Hague, 4 September 1747 (Lugt 672), no. 106: 'Een zittende oude Vrouw, waarby een Jongetje op zyn kniën bid, met figuren in 't verschiet, door Rembrand, h. 16 en een half d., br. 13 en een half d.' (A seated old woman with a little boy on his knees praying, with figures in the distance, by Rembrandt, h. 16 and a half d., w. 13 and a half d. [= 42.4 x 34.7 cm]). (350.- to Hoedt) (Hoet II, p. 208)
– Coll. De Julienne, sale Paris 30 March-22 May 1767 (Lugt 1603), no. 129: 'Rembrandt van Ryn. Sainte Anne assise dans un fauteuil tient un livre fermé sur ses genoux, la Sainte Vierge est à genoux les mains jointes. Ce Tableau est d'un beau faire & très lumineux. Il est peint sur bois: sa hauteur est de 16 pouces & sa largeur de 12 pouces 6 lignes [= 43.2 x 33.7 cm]'. (1801 francs, according to the copy in the RKD to Langlier)
– Coll. Marquis of Stafford (see *4. Graphic reproductions*, 1).
– Coll. Lord Francis Egerton.
– Coll. Earls of Ellesmere in Bridgewater House in London, cat. 1851, no. 168.

NOTES

1. To date, the wood of three paintings has been identified as walnut: II A 45, II C 80 and IV 13, see J. Bauch and D. Eckstein, 'Wood biological investigation on panels of Rembrandt paintings', *Wood science and technology* 15 (1981), pp. 251-263, esp. 254; see also *Corpus* IV, pp. 649-658.
2. E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's manner: technique in the service of illusion', in exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, pp. 12-39, esp. 33.
3. Tümpel 1969, esp. pp. 187-194.
4. Govert Bidloo, *Mengelpoëzy (…)*, Leiden 1719, p. 181: 'Maar welk een stemmigheid komt my 't gezicht verrukken? Hoe fier weet Rembrand 't oog van Anna uit te drukken?'.
5. GAA, not. N. Brouwer, NA 3975, document 52, fols. 234-239, dated 15 July 1700, esp. fol. 235v: 'Een schilderye van Anna de prophetesse met haer soon Samuel, door den overleden geschildert'; see also Br. *Künstler-Inv.* I, p. 75.
6. Tümpel 1969, p. 189.
7. J. Dyserinck, 'Rembrandts Anna en Samuel in de Eremitage te St.-Petersburg en de Bridgewater-gallery te London', *Leidsch Jaarboekje* 3 (1906), pp. 103-109.
8. Bauch 1966, 81.
9. Gerson (Br.-Gerson 361) erroneously attributed this painting to Abraham van Dijck, who in 1643 was only eight years old. Gerson must have confused this with another painting in St Petersburg (Sumowski *Gemälde* I, no. 367).
10. J. Smith, *A catalogue raisonné of the works of the most eminent Dutch, Flemish and French painters*… VII, London 1836, no. 123.

Fig. 11. Engraving by James Fittler, 1807

11. Tümpel 1969, pp. 190-91.
12. Hollst. XLIV, 281.
13. Cf. Sumowski *Gemälde* I, no. 313; Sumowski *Gemälde* VI, p. 3598.
14. On this, see R.J. Littman, 'An error in the Menetekel inscription in Rembrandt's *Belshazzar's Feast* in the National Gallery in London', *O.H.* 107 (1993), pp. 296-297.
15. S.Shabar, 'Hebrew inscriptions in Rembrandt's art', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt's Holland*, Jerusalem (The Israel Museum) 1993, pp. 169-189.
16. Br. 577: 'Mijns inziens is de echtheid van dit schilderij niet van allen twijfel ontbloot.'
17. Gerson 223; Br.-Gerson 577.
18. Tümpel 1986, cat. no. A9.
19. Sumowski *Gemälde* V, no. 2047.
20. Sumowski *Drawings* VIII, no. 1973x.
21. Sumowski *Gemälde* I, nos. 357 and 388.
22. HdG 154.

V 18 Rembrandt – The risen Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene ['Noli me tangere'] [*c.* 1651]

BRAUNSCHWEIG, HERZOG ANTON ULRICH-MUSEUM, CAT. NO. 235

HDG 143; BR. 583; BAUCH 83; GERSON 269; TÜMPEL 70*

1. Introduction and description

When the Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg's Schloss Salzdahlum was expanded in 1709/10, this painting was hung in a room that was partially built over a canal. Apparently climatic conditions were so unfavourable that the work had to be restored several times within a short period.[1] This episode in the painting's material history may explain why the paint layer is so seriously damaged and why the original aspect of the painting is more than usually disturbed. The X-radiographs, however, provide insight into a complex genesis which, as is the case with several other works from Rembrandt's middle period, evinces the painter's keen search for solutions to compositional and narrative problems in this phase of his career (see for instance V 1, 3, 11, 22).

Several events between Christ's Resurrection and Ascension are related in the Gospels, but the Gospel of St. John is the only one to give an account of Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene. The painting in Braunschweig is based on the detailed description of this encounter given there:

1: The first day of the week [following Jesus' crucifixion and deposition] cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. [….]
9: For as yet they [Jesus' disciples] knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. [….]
11: But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,
12: And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.
13: And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.
14: And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.
15: Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.
16: Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.
17: Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

The scene depicted here shows the risen Christ addressing Mary Magdalene, with the words: 'Touch me not (Noli me tangere)' (John 20:16-17). Mary Magdalene kneels, her jar of ointment beside her on the ground, and turns to Christ. A large black mantle is loosely draped over her head and covers most of her body. Hanging from her waist is a metal knob holding together the fringe of a sash apparently tied around her waist. Underneath the mantle she wears a dark grey robe with long, close fitting sleeves that widen at the wrist. The upper sections of the sleeves appear to be decorated with red fabric. Mary Magdalene's robe covers a white shift just visible at her left wrist and (finely pleated) at her neck. Wound around her head is a white scarf, covered at the back by the black mantle. A long, gathered piece of white cloth conceals her right hand, extends over her right shoulder and upper body, and disappears under the mantle. The glass ointment jar with a large, round cork lid is half filled with a reddish brown substance.

Christ wears a white cloth, evidently his shroud, which is wrapped around him and trails behind him on the ground. His upper body is mostly nude. The wound in his right side is just visible behind his forearm, which is raised in a warding off gesture. Another wound is visible in his left hand, which is placed before his body. The aura of a faint halo surrounds Christ's head.

Behind and to the right of Mary Magdalene is a door-like opening in a rock face, undoubtedly the entrance to the tomb. The contour of the cliff runs steeply down to the left behind Christ. The viewer's eye is led along the sloping terrain below, where indistinct grey and reddish forms may serve to indicate the entrance of the garden in which the encounter takes place. Plants can be distinguished in the foreground. A grey sky announcing the first signs of dawn is largely screened off by tall trees.

Working conditions

Examined in October 1968 (J.B., B.H.) and again on 31 January 1989 (E.v.d.W.): in good artificial light and out of the frame, with the aid of ultraviolet light, a stereomicroscope, and nine X-ray films covering almost the entire surface.

Yellowed varnish hampers observation. The blanching of several ridges of dark brushstrokes distorts the tonal coherence in certain parts of the image, especially in the figures (see *Condition* below).

Support

Canvas, lined, 65 x 79 cm. Single piece. The X-radiographs, which do not extend all the way to the edges of the painting, reveal cusping on all four sides. Along the left and right edges the pitch of the cusping varies between app. 6 and app. 9 cm, extending some 17 cm into the canvas. Along the top and bottom edges the deformations caused by cusping extend about 6 cm into the canvas, and in so far as it can be measured, vary in pitch between 6 and 9 cm. The difference in the depth of the cusping horizontally and vertically may have to do with a difference in the elasticity of the fabric in the warp and weft directions.

Thread count: 14.88 vertical threads/cm (14-16), 14.47 horizontal threads/cm (13.5-15). In the X-radiograph, diagonally below Mary Magdalene's left hand over a length of app. 4 cm, vertical threads are visible in the weave that run alternately over and under two adjacent horizontal threads: a horizontal thread between these two threads may have snapped here. The same occurs in the lower right corner over a length of app. 1 cm. This phenomenon, as well as the slighter spread of density of the horizontal threads, indicates that the warp direction is horizontal. However, the fact that the fabric is more elastic on the left and right

Fig. 1. Canvas 65 x 79 cm

sides suggests the opposite, as a handwoven fabric tends to be more elastic in the direction of the weft.

Ground

Kühn observed a ground layer in which he distinguished quartz, and an oil and resin medium.[2] One wonders whether the resin was actually part of the original medium, or whether it represents traces of varnish or lining adhesive. Quartz grounds have a greyish brown or yellowish brown colour.

Nowhere does the ground appear to have been left uncovered. A black layer under the surface paint layer is locally visible in the upper left corner above the crests of the trees, to the left of Christ near his knee, and in the lower left corner. Red-brown spots, which may also belong to an underlying layer, were observed to the left of Christ and in Mary Magdalene's lap. Both these layers may be traces of local imprimatura layers.[3]

Paint layer

Condition: As stated above, the painting is in very poor condition. Areas of flaking in both figures have been retouched, particularly in Christ's white shroud, in his right elbow, and in Mary Magdalene's face at the right. Damage due to flaking has also been retouched in the dark background, for example at the left near Christ's shoulder and above Mary Magdalene on a level with Christ's head. Retouchings also occur in Mary Magdalene's wrap and above her ointment jar. The paint surface shows blanching in and around the figures, a deterioration of the paint surface which partially disrupts the tonal relationships in the painting. In the Christ figure such

Fig. 2. X-Ray

blanched spots are particularly noticeable in the beard and hair, in the right half of the face, along the right contour of the face, and to a lesser extent at the right along the contour of the upper arm, locally in the white shroud, and in and around the feet. The surface also shows blanching in the zone between Christ and Mary Magdalene, and around Mary Magdalene's right eye, around her chin and in the adjoining part of her neck, as well as at the left near the entrance to the garden and at the right in and around the signature. Overpaintings are found along the edges in areas of about 4 cm wide.

Despite the above, the condition of the paint layer may not yet have been adequately described, for the yellowed varnish – particularly in the dark areas – makes it difficult to clearly ascertain whether there are overpaintings in these places. Yet given the relative vulnerability of dark paint, it can safely be concluded that many of these dark sections – bearing in mind the condition of the rest of the picture – have been overpainted. This is certainly the case in the shaded sections of Christ's legs, which have been partially overpainted in a disturbing red brown colour.

Craquelure: Three different craquelure patterns are distinguished. The predominantly diagonal course of many of the cracks indicates that the painting was very tautly stretched in the past. Running through this is an irregular pattern of fine spiderweb-shaped cracks, which betray other forms of mechanical damage. The third pattern is a normal canvas craquelure resulting from ageing.

The *peinture* in the sections that can be properly evaluated is extremely varied. Christ's white shroud is characterised by broad, partially impastoed strokes. In contrast, the

Fig. 3. Detail

Fig. 4. Detail of X-Ray

nude parts of the body are painted in a refined manner, with delicate transitions of light and shadow, and a strikingly convincing rendering of the skin. The placing of Mary Magdalene's face in relation to the neck is not straightforward, being somewhat turned to the right and titled such that the painter has had to represent it from slightly below. Partly for this reason, perhaps, specifically the nose, the mouth and her left cheek and cheekbone are rendered in considerable detail with fine lights on the relevant parts. In addition, certain parts of the strongly foreshortened hand – the ring and middle fingers, the thumb and the ball of the hand – have been worked out with remarkable precision. The sense of depth created by this greatly foreshortened hand, set against the shift painted in gradations of white, is highly convincing. Her clothing and the ointment jar, on the other hand, seem rapidly executed in a loose, almost casual manner. It is difficult to assess the facture of the dark background and sky because of the thick layer of varnish and the severity of past interventions suffered by the painting.

Radiography

In the X-radiograph, the paint losses mentioned in *Paint layer* Condition show up clearly in the form of polygonal-shaped patches, either light or dark. The difference in radioabsorbency of these lacunae betrays the use of various fillers, which must have been applied during the successive restorations.

The painting experienced radical changes in the course of its execution. While the background to the right of Christ shows up dark in the X-ray image and is entirely in keeping with what one can observe in the paint surface, the background to the left of Christ was done with radioabsorbent paint in distinctly perceptible brushstrokes which, however, are hardly visible in the paint surface. In this section of the background there was probably more sky and a distant view much like that in the 1638 London *Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene* (see fig. 6; III A 124). A darkish strip and some light spots may be traces of buildings that were once in the background. More toward the foreground, in the area with the presumed entrance to the garden at the left, a dark form is visible in which three roughly arched shapes are given in broad strokes of radioabsorbent paint.

In and around Christ and Maria Magdalene changes can also be observed in the X-radiographs. Christ's upper right arm shows up very light as a shape that does not quite correspond with the present arm. A dark strip along the right side of Christ could indicate that his arm originally hung down at his side. This is supported by traces of flesh colour showing through the paint surface in this area. Extending somewhat beyond the hanging arm is an irregular reserve which, given the traditional iconography of the scene, may be the stem of a shovel. Thus, Christ would have originally been depicted as a gardener (see *2. Comments*), as in the London painting. Furthermore, on the basis of the shape of the head showing up light with two dark reserves for the eyes, it could be assumed that the head was at first shown more *en face*. A pentimento, only vaguely visible in the X-radiograph but clearly discernible

Fig. 5. Detail with signature (slightly reduced)

in the paint surface, coincides with the flow of the shroud draped over Christ's left arm. Initially the shroud hung down diagonally over his wrist like a loose open sleeve. Perhaps the flow of the fabric was altered into a diagonally upward one to create the impression that the cloth is wrapped around the body.

There is a discrepancy between passages near Mary Magdalene's head which show up very light in the X-radiograph and the corresponding passages in the surface image. A few strokes showing up light in the X-radiograph above Mary Magdalene's right hand could imply that it was once differently posed. Undulating strokes at the right behind Mary Magdalene denote now no longer visible vegetation, while strokes of radioabsorbent paint just to the left of Christ betray the presence of forms that are no longer apparent in the surface image.

Signature

At the lower right in black <*Rembrandt.f.165[.]*> (fig. 5). The last digit is so damaged that it must be considered as being irrevocably lost. In view of the painting's overall poor condition, one wonders whether the complete signature was retouched by a later hand. This question, however, cannot be answered given the condition of the present varnish layer. During our inspection of the painting in 1989, the museum's conservator, Mrs. Kaul-Krause, expressed her conviction that the digits of the date have been retouched. The often mentioned date of 1651 is open to discussion. The execution of parts of Mary Magdalene's face and the ointment jar are reminiscent of similar sections in the Paris *Supper at Emmaus* of 1648 (V 14), so that, given the remaining digits *165.*, a date early in the 1650s seems likely.

2. Comments

Until now, the painting's attribution to Rembrandt has not been seriously doubted, although Tümpel did express some reservations, but these were not substantiated.[4] In addition, it should be noted that Gerson suggested that 'some connection with the work of Samuel van Hoogstraten seems likely'.[5]

Indeed, given the painting's poor condition it is difficult to arrive at a definite attribution on stylistic grounds (see *Paint layer* Condition). However, we are wholly convinced of the authenticity of this work. Despite the poor condition of the painting, a variety of independent data and observations all point to Rembrandt's authorship. The convergence of evidence is such that doubt as to the work's authenticity can be ruled out. As so often in such cases, no single one of these arguments is sufficient to decide the issue, but when taken in conjunction they form an almost unassailable basis for the attribution. In this

Fig. 6. Rembrandt, *The risen Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene*, 1638. London, Buckingham Palace, Coll. H.M. Queen Elizabeth II (III A 124)

Fig. 7. Rembrandt, *Portrait of Jeremias de Decker*, 1656, panel 71 x 56 cm. St Petersburg, The Hermitage Museum (Br. 320)

instance, the quartz ground establishes with almost certainty that the painting originated within Rembrandt's workshop (see *Corpus* IV, pp. 325-334). The complex genesis of the painting which one can read from the X-radiograph and (in places) from the surface paint exclude the possibility that it could be a workshop copy. The radical nature of these changes during the work also exclude the suggestion that it could be a free variant by a pupil after a (lost) original by Rembrandt (see Chapter III). Moreover, one is struck by the variation in execution – from extremely fine to rough – that is so often conspicuous in Rembrandt's work from the years 1642-'52. The faces, especially the face of Mary Magdalene, recall the way Rembrandt executed the face of Susanna in the Berlin *Susanna and the Elders* from 1647 (V 1) or that of Christ in the Paris *Supper at Emmaus* from 1648 (V 14). Finally, it seems highly likely that this painting is the one mentioned in a contemporary document, in which it is explicitly described as a work from the hand of Rembrandt. This document is a poem by Jeremias de Decker (1609-1666), first published in 1660 in the *Hollantsche Parnas*. The poem deals with a painting with Christ and Mary Magdalene by Rembrandt (see *3. Documents and Sources*).

In the following, considerable attention will be paid to this document and the degree of certainty with which it can be associated with the present painting.

'On the Representation of The Risen Christ and
Mary Magdalene, Painted by the excellent
Master Rembrant van Rijn, [the poem being dedicated] to H.F. Waterloos.

When I read the story as told us by Saint John,
and beside it I see this artful scene,
Where (I wonder) did brush ever follow pen so closely,
in bringing lifeless paint so close to life?

It seems that Christ is saying: Mary, tremble not.
It is I; Death has no part of your Lord.
She, believing this, but not being wholly convinced,
appears to vacillate 'twixt joy and grief, between fear and hope.

The grave-rock rising high in the air, as art requires,
and richly shadowed,
dominates the painting and gives majesty
to the whole work. Your masterful strokes,
friend Rembrandt, I first saw move on this panel.
Thus my pen was able to rhyme of your talented brush
and my ink to speak of the fame of your paints.'

The significance of De Decker's poem for the question of attribution of the Braunschweig *Noli me tangere* under discussion is vested in the passage: 'Your masterful strokes, friend Rembrandt, I first saw move on this panel'. This line could be interpreted as a metaphor for the handling of the brush as observed by the poet in the completed painting. However, a more obvious explanation is that De Decker was actually looking at a painting of this subject being created, either the present one, or the painting in the British Royal Collection to be discussed below (see fig. 6), unless one postulates, as did Hofstede de Groot,[6] that there was a third painting of the same subject, now lost.

Formerly, the poem was generally thought to refer to the London *Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene* of 1638 (fig. 6). It was not until 1988, that Klessmann argued that it actually pertained to the Braunschweig painting.[7] In part prompted by Klessmann's arguments, to be discussed below, we feel compelled to reassess our earlier opinion (expressed in III A 124) that the poem cited above alludes to the London work. Although a handwritten copy of De Decker's poem is attached to the back of that painting, this is by no means conclusive evidence that the London panel is the very painting praised by De Decker. The dedication 'Micat inter omnes' (he stands out among all) written above this copy of the poem means that it was copied either as the poem appeared in the posthumously published *Lof der geldsucht* of 1667, compiled by De Decker, or in *Alle de rym-oeffeningen van Jeremias de Decker* of 1726 (see *3. Documents and Sources*). It is true that the poem refers to a panel rather than a canvas, and that the London painting is on panel, whereas the Braunschweig painting is on canvas. This, however, cannot be taken as compelling evidence that the text could not refer to the Braunschweig painting, as the use of the Dutch word *paneel* (panel), in connection with the subsequent rhyming word *pinceel* (brush), could easily be a matter of poetic license.

Moreover, the date of the poem's first publication in 1660 makes it rather unlikely that it is describing a painting of 1638, the date on the London painting, despite De Raaf's demonstration that a few poems written by De Decker in his youth were only published much later. Had the poem been written around the time of the London painting's genesis in 1638, it could have been incorporated either in De Decker's *Gedichten* of 1656, or in one of the anthologies of poems by various authors – including De Decker – in 1651, 1653, 1658 or 1659.[8] Karsemeijer, who introduced the latter argument, pointed out that there was no demonstrable reason why De Decker, given these opportunities, should have waited so long to publish his poem on Rembrandt's painting if it pertained to the London painting. According to Karsemeijer, although he provides no supporting evidence for this claim, De Decker's poems in the *Hollantsche Parnas* of 1660 were all written in 1658 or 1659. He points out that such a relatively late date for the poem is corroborated by the fact that it is a sonnet, a verse form that De Decker favoured in his later work.[9] Such a late date for the poem would imply that the poem would have been written some seven or eight years after the Braunschweig *Noli me tangere* was painted.

All in all, there seems little likelihood that the poem quoted above could have been written as a response to the London *Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene*. The probability that De Decker's poem refers to the Braunschweig painting is accordingly increased. The question then arises: does the description of the scene in De Decker's poem provide clues that would identify the present painting as the subject of the poem? Klessmann believed that there are such clues and put forward strong arguments in support of the link between the poem and the Braunschweig painting. Klessmann's comparison of the poem with both the London and Braunschweig paintings (figs. 6 and 1) is instructive; if only because it sharpens our eye to the specific narrative and pictorial aspects that De Decker felt were important.

Klessmann noted that De Decker's description of the painting makes no mention of various elements in the London painting, such as the angels on the grave, the departing women, the fact that Christ is represented as a gardener, and the garden with a distant view of a city. Moreover, the London painting shows Mary Magdalene's initial reaction to the gardener's presence, underscored by a gesture of alarm, before she recognises him as Christ, whereas in the Braunschweig painting she has already recognized him, for she stretches out her covered hand reverentially toward Christ, who seems to recoil from her while fending her of with a warning gesture. As to the setting in which the encounter takes place, the poem only mentions '[the] rock rising high in the air' and the fact that it is 'imbued with shadows'. In the Braunschweig painting the 'graf rots' (grave-rock) concealed in shadow is evidently so prominent that it determines the appearance of the background – in De Decker words, 'lending beauty and majesty to the entire work.'

The most relevant descriptive section of the poem is the following: 'It seems that Christ is saying: Mary, tremble not / It is I, Death has no part of your Lord / She, believing this, but not being wholly convinced / Appears to vacillate 'twixt joy and grief, and between fear and hope./ The grave-rock rising high in the air, as art requires / And richly shadowed, dominates the painting and gives majesty to the whole work.'

Also the fact that in the Braunschweig painting the space behind the figures is virtually entirely enveloped by the shadow in which the rock rises up, correlates with De Decker's description.

Although 17th-century texts containing descriptions of paintings – which should primarily be considered a literary genre – are used as a source for identifying paintings, their reliability varies greatly. However, in this case, the similarities between De Decker's sonnet and the Braunschweig painting lend strong credence to the idea that this is the painting to which the poem refers. The fact that De Decker mentions having observed Rembrandt working on the painting therefore contributes an important argument in favour of the attribution of the Braunschweig painting to Rembrandt.

We have no information that could shed light on when the friendship between Rembrandt and De Decker was forged. They were the same age and De Decker had been living for years in Amsterdam when Rembrandt settled there in the early 1630s. The fact that De Decker's name is mentioned in connection with Rembrandt at a fairly late date is noteworthy. This first occurs in the above-discussed poem dedicated to Rembrandt's painting in *Hollantsche Parnas* (1660) and in a poem by H.F. Waterloos (*c.* 1625-1664) in the same volume.[10] The latter bears the following dedication: 'To the very famous painter Rembrandt van Rijn, when the honourable gentleman painted the recondite poet Jeremias de Dekker.'[11] This almost certainly relates to Rembrandt's portrait of De Decker, which is now in the Hermitage, currently considered to be a work from 1666, but much more probably originating from

1656 (fig. 7). A poem of gratitude by De Decker himself, dedicated to Rembrandt's portrait, and two poems by other poets eulogizing De Decker would appear in the posthumously published *Lof der geldsucht* of 1667. De Decker's poem relates that Rembrandt painted his portrait 'strictly as a favour…for love of art,'[12] thus not as a paid commission – yet another indication that Rembrandt and De Decker must have been good friends.

Rembrandt and De Decker must moreover have felt a strong kinship in the way they both practised their art. In 1651 – probably in the same period that Rembrandt was working on the *Noli me tangere* – De Decker published his moving book-length poem *Goede Vrijdag*. The two men were true kindred spirits in their ability imaginatively to relive the events of Christ's Passion.

At the beginning of these Comments, it was suggested that the nature of the genesis of this painting can be taken as a strong argument in favour of the attribution of the painting to Rembrandt. The creative freedom evinced in this complex genesis is in various respects typical of Rembrandt. The way the figures' poses reflect their sudden response to each other heightens the sense of Mary Magdalene's adoration and Christ's reaction, thus constituting an appropriate reinforcement of the emotions associated with the 'Noli me tangere' scene. Noteworthy, too, are the changes in the background which create the impression of daylight having been transformed into dusk or dawn. The reduction of daylight, as discussed in the entry on the Berlin *Susanna and the Elders* (V 1), dovetails with our notion of Rembrandt's changing pictorial ideas of the 1640s. In the Braunschweig painting, the alteration of the illumination can in this case also be understood as modifying the moment in time at which the scene occurred according to the biblical account. After all, the Gospel of Saint John recounts that it was still dark when Mary Magdalene set out for Christ's grave.

One change which allows for yet another change in the iconography is cautiously introduced here. Taking into account the shadowy, vertical reserve near Jesus' right arm, which appears originally to have hung down, and the fact that the reserve for this lower arm continues to the ground, one could speculate that this Christ figure – like the one in the London *Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene* of 1638 (see fig. 6) – originally held a shovel, and was thus initially depicted as a gardener. Should this have been the case, some of the aforementioned changes would not have been introduced so much for pictorial reasons, as for iconographical ones. In comparison with the London painting, the Braunschweig work in its present state depicts a later moment in the story as described in the Gospel of Saint John. As mentioned above (when weighing Klessmann's arguments), the fact that Mary Magdalene looks up and hesitantly extends her right hand covered by her veil denotes her *recognition* of Christ. Further emphasis of this moment of recognition is provided by the halo around Christ's head. It has been previously noted that Rembrandt sometimes introduced radical changes in a painting for primarily narrative reasons.[13] For the possibility that Jeremias de Decker could, for theological reasons, have had a hand in the decision to depict the 'noli me tangere' moment of this biblical episode, see pp. 234/235.

That the scene in the painting under discussion was originally closer to that in the London painting – not only in the depiction of Christ, but in other respects as well – is also evinced by significant changes in the left background. Although the X-radiograph does not allow for a detailed reconstruction of the earlier phase of that part of the composition, it may be assumed that more sky and a distant view were visible to begin with, the horizon approximately level with Christ's shoulder. The putatively greater similarity with the background in the London painting extends not only to the vista but also, one suspects, to the originally lighter colour of the sky. Furthermore, the landscape seems to have been built up by means of coulisses. A dark strip with light spots in the background may indicate the initial inclusion of buildings. More in the foreground, the large dark mass with three arched shapes defined by coarse brushstrokes could have been a bridge or an aqueduct similar to one in the background of a drawing of *Ruth and Naomi* attributed to Willem Drost now in Bremen (fig. 8).[14] This is one of the works of the School of Rembrandt which seems to contain echoes of the Braunschweig painting in its earlier appearance, including Naomi's pose which appears to be based on that of the Christ figure. Jonathan Bikker has established 1648-1652 as the most likely period for Willem Drost to have spent his training with Rembrandt, which implies that Drost may well have witnessed the entire genesis of the painting and thus could have been inspired by the painting's composition in an early phase of that genesis.[15]

A drawing attributed to Abraham van Dijck in Stockholm (fig. 9)[16] – a variant in reverse of the Braunschweig composition – also has an architectonic element with large arches in the background, probably the gateway to the cemetery. Although there is no documentary evidence on this point, it seems likely that Abraham van Dijck worked with Rembrandt around 1650. If so, it would mean that – like Drost – he may have known the present painting in an early phase of its genesis.

Finally, a vista with buildings in the background seemingly based on the Braunschweig painting, occurs in a drawing by Drost in Copenhagen (fig. 10),[17] which he probably used in the 1660s for his signed painting with the same subject in Kassel (fig. 11).[18]

Although not literal copies, these three drawings do support the hypothetical reconstruction of the first state of the painting under discussion, in particular the background, as seen in the X-radiograph. One could conjecture that they were made when the painting was still in the phase documented by the X-radiograph, before receiving its present appearance. However, the plausibility of the ideas proposed here can only be ascertained by a thorough laboratory analysis of the painting's original appearance and present condition (especially the extent to which it was overpainted by later hands).

There is yet another related drawing – accepted by Benesch and Peter Schatborn as being by Rembrandt – which shows Christ and Mary Magdalene in postures similar to those in the Braunschweig painting, although in mirror image (fig. 12; Ben. 993). This drawing is executed in what seems to be Rembrandt's style from around 1660.

Fig. 8. Rembrandt School (attr. to W. Drost), *Ruth and Naomi*, pen and brown ink with white body colour, 18.7 x 23.5 cm. Bremen, Kunsthalle

Fig. 9. Rembrandt School (attr. to A. van Dijck), *Noli me tangere*, pen and brown ink and brown washes, red chalk and white body colour, 16.1 x 22.6 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum

This would exclude the possibility that it could have been made in preparation of the Braunschweig painting – quite apart from the fact that Rembrandt hardly ever made preporatory drawings of this sophistication in connection with paintings. If this drawing is indeed by Rembrandt himself, its relation to the Braunschweig painting is of no obvious relevance. If it is by a pupil, the similarities between this drawing and the painting – in particular the poses of the figures – are so great that a direct connection between the two works can scarcely be doubted. We know that drawings by pupils frequently reverse the model (see also some of the painted 'satellites' (Chapters III and IV figs. 1 and 2).[19] The suggestion frequently encountered in the literature, starting with Voss,[20] that Rembrandt drew his inspiration for the present painting from Titian's *Noli me tangere*, now in London, was rightly rejected by Stechow.[21] Similarities with a print by Johannes Sadeler after Maarten de Vos[22] introduced by Tümpel (see note 4), and a composition by Pieter Lastman that is only known from copies, are only general and consist primarily of the disposition and poses of the figures. From the Middle Ages onward, the representation of 'Noli me tangere' as a theme, particularly with respect to the main figures, experienced a relatively constant iconography. A standard feature of this iconography is that Christ is shown standing and Mary Magdalene kneeling. Thus, any formal resemblance in the poses of the figures between depictions of this subject does not necessarily imply a direct link.

3. Documents and sources

Sonnet by Jeremias de Decker, published in: *Hollantsche Parnas, of Verscheide Gedichten, (…), door T. van Domselaar verzamelt*, Amsterdam 1660, p. 405.[23]

'Op d'Afbeeldinge van den Verresen Christus en
Maria Magdalene, Geschildert door den uytnemenden
Mr Rembrant van Rijn, voor H.F. Waterloos

Als ick d'History lese, ons by sint Ian beschreven.
En daer benevens sie dit kunstrijck Tafereel,
Waer (denck ick dan) is pen soo net oyt van pinceel
Gevolgt, of doode verw soo na gebrogt aen't leven ?
't Schynt dat de Christus segt: Marie, en wilt niet beven.
Ick ben't, de dood en heeft aen uwen Heer geen deel :
Sy sulcx geloovende, maer echter nog niet heel,
Schynt tusschen vreugde en druck; en vreese en hoop te sweven.

De graf rots na de kunst hoog in de lucht geleyd.
En rijck van schaduwen, geeft oog en majesteyt
Aen all de rest van 't werck. Uw' meesterlycke streken,
Vriend Rembrant, heb ick eerst sien gaen langs dit paneel;
Dies mocht mijn' Pen wat Rijms van uw begaeft Pinceel
En mijnen Int wat Roems van uwe Verwen spreken.
J. de Decker'

For the translation, see under *Comments*.

The addition 'voor H.F. Waterloos' (for H.F. Waterloos) to the title of the poem by Van Decker published in 1660, has been perceived in the literature as an indication the painting by Rembrandt discussed in the poem was made for Waterloos. It is more probable however, as brought to the fore by us in III A 124, that De Decker's poem was dedicated to Waterloos. After Waterloos' death in 1664, the poem was included in De Decker's *Lof der geldsucht*, posthumously published in 1667; 'voor H.F. Waterloos' (for H.F. Waterloos) is replaced by the motto 'Micat inter omnes' (he stands out among all).[24] This motto was also included in the 1726 reprint of the poem.[25]

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

5. Copies

1. Panel 20 x 29.5 cm; Bayonne, Musée Bonnat, inv. no. 1011 (fig. 13). A very mediocre copy; it could be quite old. Noteworthy is that in the left background is found a descending diagonal dark shape, corresponding with what can be seen in the X-radiograph of the Braunschweig painting (fig. 2).
2. According to Hofstede de Groot, a late 18th-century painted copy is in Schloss Podhorce in Galicia.[26]
3. Canvas lined on oak panel, 55 x 35.6 cm, private collection, Moscow. Purchased in London (Christie's), 27 April 2007, no. 47. Assessed on the basis of good quality photograph and ditto X-radiograph. It is tempting to identify a hitherto unknown, sketchily executed painting in a private collection in Moscow as a preparatory oil study for the Braunschweig painting (fig. 14).

Fig. 10. W. Drost, *Noli me tangere*, pen and brown ink with white body colour, 19.6 x 18.3 cm. Copenhagen, The Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Department of Prints and Drawings

Fig. 11. W. Drost, *Noli me tangere*, *c.* 1660, canvas 95.4 x 85.4 cm. Kassel, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie

Fig. 12. Rembrandt, *Noli me tangere*, pen and brown ink, 22 x 18.5 cm (Ben. 993). Boston, Coll. Sheldon Peck

But arguing against such an identification, this painting reproduces the Braunschweig Christ figure with a few differences in the eventual form, whereas the Braunschweig figure of Christ (as discussed under *Radiography* and *Comments*) has had a complex genesis of which there is no trace to be seen either in the Moscow sketch itself or in the X-radiograph of it (fig. 15). The work, if only on this basis, must be considered as a free (part-) copy after the Braunschweig painting, of the type exemplified by the Paris partial copy (Br. 518) after the Berlin *Susanna* (V 1 fig. 17). Further analysis of the posture, the anatomy and the drapery in which the Christ in the sketch discussed here is wrapped, betrays the liberties and weaknesses typical of free variants made by pupils (cf. also the Chapters III and IV). In view of the way in which this painting conforms to the category of free partial copies, we have no doubt that this is a work from Rembrandt's workshop.

6. Provenance

– From the collection of Duke Anton Ulrich (1633-1714), housed in Salzdahlum Castle near Wolfenbüttel which was completed in 1694, and subsequently expanded. First mentioned in: *Beschreibung des Frsch. Lusthauses Saltzdahln von hr Flemmer aus Kassel ausgesest.* 1697 (cf. Bibliotheca B.L. ed. 1744), no. 551: 'Rembrant van Rijn. Christies so der Marie Magdalena er scheine*. 2.3½ h 2.9½ br. (v. 697) kg [Kleine Galerie]'. *Kurtze Beschreibung des Fürstl. Lust-Schlosses Saltzdahlum herausgegeben und dem Durchl. Fürsten und Herrn, Herrn Anthon Ulrich, Hertzogen zu Braunschweig, und Lüneburg unterthänigst gewidmet von Tobias Querfurt*, Braunschweig n.d. [1710]; see *Catalogus derer vornehmsten Schilderyen so in dem Fürstl. Saltzdahlischen Lust-Schlosse befindlich*: no. 235 'Rembrand. Christus wie er nach seiner Auferstehung der Maria Magdalena erschienen ist, 3 Fuß breit, 2 Fuß hoch [= 87.5 x 58.4 cm].' Also mentioned in an undated manuscript catalogue of the paintings in Salzdahlum in the Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv in Wolfenbüttel (inv. no. VI HS 17, no. 2) no. 551: 'Christus so der Marie Magdalena er scheint. 2.3½ h. 2.9½ br. [= 68.6 x 86.1 cm] (v. 697) kg [Kleine Galerie]'. Since the manuscript refers to Querfurt's description, it must have been made after 1710. Moreover, mention may also be made to Flemmer's description of 1697. Should 'v[ide].697' refer to Flemmer's

Fig. 13. Copy after fig. 1, panel 20 x 29.5 cm. Bayonne, Musée Bonnat

inventory of 1697, then the painting was already in Salzdahlum in that year (see note 1).
Described again in: Chrêtien Nicolas Eberlein, *Catalogue des Tableaux de la Galerie Ducale a Salsthalen*, Braunschweig 1776, under no. 1 (Premier Cabinet): 'Paul Rembrant van Ryn. Le Sauveur apparoissant après sa résurrection à Marie Magdelaine auprès du sepulchre. Elle est à genoux devant lui, & Jésus qui ne veut pas qu'elle le touche, fait quelques pas en arrière. Sur toile, de 2 pieds 8 pouces de large, sur 2 pieds 3 pouces de haut [= 77.8 x 65.6 cm].'
– Since 1811 in the Herzogliches Museum in Braunschweig.

Fig. 14. Rembrandt's studio, *Figure of Christ*, canvas 55 x 35.6 cm. Moscow, private collection

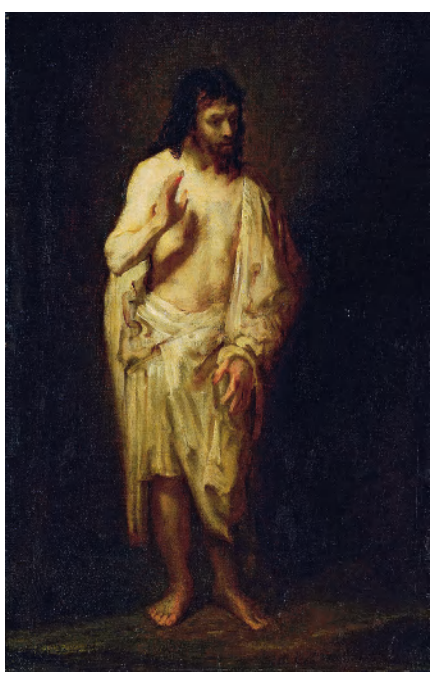


Fig. 15. X-Ray

NOTES

1. A. Fink, *Geschichte des Herzog-Anton-Ulrich-Museums in Braunschweig*, Braunschweig 1967, pp. 35-36.
2. Kühn, p. 202.
3. Van de Wetering 1997/2009, pp. 211-215.
4. Tümpel 1986, cat. no. 70*. The asterisk against the Catalogue number indicates that Tümpel is not fully convinced of the painting's authenticity. See Tümpel 1986, p. 387.
5. Br.-Gerson 583; Gerson 269.
6. HdG *Urk.*, no. 221.
7. R. Klessmann, 'Rembrandts "Noli Me Tangere" - Mit den Augen eines Dichters gesehen', *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* 27 (1988), pp. 89 -100.
8. K.H. de Raaf, 'Rembrandts Christus en Maria Magdalena', *O.H.* 30 (1912), pp. 6-8.
9. J. Karsemeijer, *De dichter Jeremias de Decker*, Amsterdam 1934 (diss.), esp. pp. 41-42.
10. H.F. Waterloos, in *Hollantsche parnas, of verscheide gedichten (..)*, collected by T. van Donselaar, Amsterdam 1660, p. 406 (Strauss *Doc.*, 1660/26); K.H. de Raaf, 'Rembrandt's portret van Jeremias de Decker', *O.H.* 30 (1912), pp. 1-5.
11. Waterloos, op. cit.[10]: 'Aan den wytberoemden Schilder Rembrant van Ryn, Toen zijn Ed. den diepzinnighen Poët Jeremias de Dekker schilderde.' (Strauss *Doc.* 1660/26).
12. 'louterlijck uyt gunst…uyt liefde tot de kunst.' in Jeremias de Decker, *Lof der geldsucht ofte vervolg der rijm-oeffeningen*, Amsterdam 1667, vol. 2, pp. 34-36 (Strauss *Doc.*, 1667/11).
13. For example in the London *Lamentation* of 1634/35 (III A 107). In this grisaille - undoubtedly a design for an unexecuted etching - the number of elements was increased so that more aspects of the story could be presented.
14. Sumowski *Drawings* III, no. 546. Willem Drost's apprenticeship with Rembrandt is generally situated in the late 1640s and early 1650s; thus he was probably active in Rembrandt's studio when the Braunschweig painting was being made. J. Bikker, *Willem Drost* (1633-1659). *A Rembrandt pupil in Amsterdam and Venice*, New Haven/London 2005, cat. no. 1, fig. 1[a].
15. Bikker, op.cit.[14], p. 11.
16. Ben. 1377; Sumowski *Drawings* III, no. 574[xx].
17. Sumowski *Drawings* III, no. 547[x]; Bikker, op.cit.[14], p. 63, fig. 5[b].
18. Sumowski *Gemälde* I, no. 315; Bikker, op.cit.[14], cat. no. 5.
19. In particular, compare the drawing *A group of Orientals*, London private collection (Sumowski *Drawings* V, no. 1052). See also P. Schatborn in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Drawings and Etchings*, 1991/92, cat. nos. 47-49.
20. H. Voss, 'Rembrandt und Tizian', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 28 (1905), pp. 156-162, esp. 161.
21. W. Stechow, 'Rembrandt and Titian', *The Art Quarterly* 5 (1942), pp. 135-146, esp. 142.
22. Hollst. XXI, no. 257.
23. Strauss *Doc.*, 1660/25.
24. De Decker, op.cit.[12], p. 85.
25. *Alle de rym-oeffeningen van Jeremias de Decker*, ed. M. Brouërius van Nidek, Amsterdam 1726, II, p. 230.
26. HdG 143.

V 19 Rembrandt – A woman wading in a pond (Callisto in the wilderness) 1654

LONDON, THE NATIONAL GALLERY, INV. NO. 54

HDG 306; BR. 437; BAUCH 278; GERSON 289; TÜMPEL 122

1. Introduction and description

Although at first sight this well preserved work may appear sketchily executed, it is a very subtle painting, epitomising Rembrandt's artistic and pictorial genius. Its authenticity has never been questioned. This entry considers the various interpretations of the painting's iconography in the art-historical literature, and attempts to shed new light on its meaning and function.

A young woman has entered a shallow pool, which appears to be in a natural setting in the wild. She is dressed in a loose white shift which she lifts at the hem with both hands. The low neck of her shift, the rolled-up sleeves and the fact that she has lifted the front of her shift means that much of the woman's body is exposed to view. As she wades out into the water she bends her head forward, looking downwards, seemingly with a smile. Her brown hair is combed back and caught behind her head. A ringlet hangs beside her right cheek, grazing her ear, which is just visible and is adorned with a pearl earring. Although the background is largely shrouded in darkness, heavy, dark red and gold draperies catch the light to the left where they are draped over a low rock, the dark red cloth hanging down almost to the water. This sumptuous material seems to be a cloak (or some overgarment) which the woman has discarded before descending into the water. To her right is a dark rock wall with vaguely discernible vegetation and a deeper recessed cave. The water which extends the full width of the foreground reflects the rock wall in shadow at the right, the woman's legs and the red section of the cloak.

Working conditions

Examined on numerous occasions; first in May 1968 (B.H., E.v.d.W.): out of the frame in good daylight and with the aid of X-radiographs and infrared images.

Support

Oak panel, vertical grain, 61.8 x 47 cm. Thickness app. 1 cm. Single plank. The back is bevelled on all sides. A restored irregular crack extends from the top right of the panel to the bottom, along the woman's left eye and the inside of her left knee. The painting appears to have once been split into two pieces along this crack which, after repair, has been reinforced on the back over the full height of the panel with a *c.* 7.5 cm wide oak strip. The crack is related to the fact that the plank is a radial board which must have broken along its line of greatest weakness, viz. at the core of the trunk. Dendrochronological investigation by Dr. P. Klein, Hamburg, yielded the following information: 323 heartwood growth rings were counted in the section to the left of the crack: the youngest dates from 1590. This gives an earliest possible felling date of 1599 (see also *Corpus* IV *Table of dendrochronological data*, p. 657). The panel's format is identical to that of others from Rembrandt's Leiden and early Amsterdam period. Rembrandt used this format repeatedly particularly between 1625 and 1631. In 17th-century sources it is referred to as *salvator* and measures app. 62 x 48 cm.[1]

Ground

A light yellow-brown ground is visible in places (see *Paint layer*). Analysis of the ground conducted by Dr. Ashok Roy from the Scientific Department of the National Gallery revealed a layer of chalk and glue covered by a 'primuersel' of yellow brown earth pigment, a little umber and lead white that 'shows a few quite large scattered nodules that protrude into the paint layer above.'[2]

Paint layer

Condition: The paint layer is in excellent condition with the exception of the break in the panel described in *Support*, where retouchings have been applied. There are also a few retouchings in the shadow between the lower edge of the cloak and the woman's right calf, and in the white shift just below the shadow of her left breast.

Rembrandt's working procedure is clearly legible in this painting. The results of Roy's analysis of a number of paint samples published in *Art in the making* (see note 2) have been incorporated in the following description of this procedure.

The ground, whose light yellow brown colour and layered composition correspond with the grounds found in all of the panels by Rembrandt that have been examined in this respect, plays a major role in the painting's tonal cohesion.[3] It is locally exposed, for example, in the lower fold of the raised part of the shift (see fig. 5). Elsewhere it shows through thinly applied paint, such as in the shaded sleeve and the rock wall in the background. The light tone of the ground in such passages mixes optically with the dark paint covering it. The painter has apparently deliberately used this effect to avoid the use of opaque mixtures with white to produce intermediate tones.

A tonal lay-in was applied probably following a rapid initial sketch, no traces of which can be discerned.[4] This tonal lay-in, or dead colouring stage, was done with brown, almost transparent paint. This stage of the work is still visible locally, for example in the shaded sleeve and arm, in the hair and the shadow on the forehead, in the lower fold of the shift and, clearly, also in the thin sections of the background. An impression of the freedom with which Rembrandt wielded the brush in this phase is provided by the infrared photograph (fig. 3).

The light areas were laid-in with paint containing lead white either at the same time as, or later than this brown tonal lay-in. Analysis of a cross-section of a paint sample taken from the shin of the woman's left leg revealed a layer of flesh colour more muted in tone than that actually visible on the surface. This agrees with our observation (also with respect to other late works by Rembrandt) that the master painted a coloured version in muted tints over a first monochrome lay-in.[5] The woman's sketchily executed hand appears to be a remnant of this muted underpainting deliberately left exposed. The nature of the brushwork in this hand corresponds with the traces of the underpainting, as can also be observed in the X-radiograph (see *Radiography*). The general indications of patches of light on the shaded arm and sleeve may also belong to that stage of execution, as may large parts of the shift. The background as well must have received its more or

Fig. 1. Panel 61.8 x 47 cm

Fig. 2. X-Ray

Fig. 3. Infrared photograph

Fig. 4. Detail with signature (enlarged)

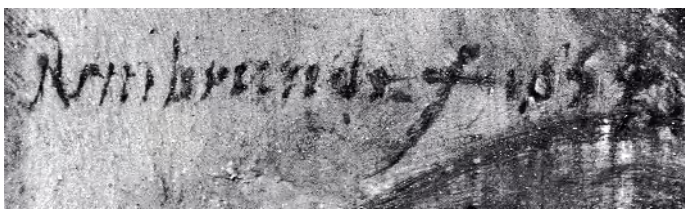


Fig. 5. Detail

less definitive tonal structure at this stage.

Given the way they are overlapped by the strokes defining the shift, the draperies behind the woman must have been given their almost final appearance before further elaboration of the figure. As Bomford established in his excellent description of the execution of this painting, no matter how dynamically it appears to have been painted, it was not done *alla prima*.[6] The paint must have been applied in several phases, the exact number of which however remains unclear; while the length of the intervals between them must have depended on the speed with which the paint dried sufficiently to resume work. On the basis of the fact that the white brushstroke extending up to the index finger did not blend with the underlying dark brown paint, Bomford points out that the latter paint – undoubtedly belonging to the dead colouring stage – would have been quite dry when the light stroke was applied. Furthermore, the paint over which the modelling of the exposed parts of the body and the face was executed must have already been relatively dry when the delicate gradations of cool and warm flesh tints were added. An idea of the subtlety involved in painting these sections is provided by the rich mixture of pigments in the flesh colour of the woman's left breast. Here were found 'small amounts of charcoal black, red, yellow and brown earths, red lake pigment, vermilion and even traces of blue in the form of a few grains of natural azurite.' Furthermore, 'the cool tone of her lower shin also contains a range of earths, brown and black mixed into the matrix of white.'[7]

Radiography

The X-radiograph corresponds only roughly with what the paint surface leads one to suspect. This contributes to our understanding of the working method, particularly the steps in the execution of the lit areas of the face and the other uncovered parts of the body. Given the far coarser brushwork that appears locally in the X-radiograph of these passages, the body was initially sketchily indicated in paint containing lead white. This is clearest in the face, in the forehead, nose, chin, cheekbone and cheek, and at the shoulder, breast and right thigh. These passages, which seem to correspond with the muted underpainting described above, must have originally been indicated with a few, clearly discernible licks of paint bringing the painting to a stage such as can still be observed in the woman's right hand. The streaks showing up light in the X-radiograph that also initially indicated the headdress or cap, and the broader light reflection in the water behind the woman's right leg must also be part of the same stage.

At that stage, the plastic forms differed somewhat from what can now be seen in the paint surface; one sees this, for instance, if one compares the contour of the shoulder or the set of the nose and the illumination of the neck. On the basis of this rough lay-in, the nude body parts were then carefully modelled with flowing transitions, the inclination of the head was corrected, and the physiognomic refinements were indicated.

Signature

On the boulder at the lower right in brown: <*Rembrandt. f 1654*> (fig. 4). In 1960, MacLaren read the date incorrectly as 1655.[8]

2. Comments

A woman wading belongs among those works that originated in a period of Rembrandt's artistic development that one might call 'heroic'. Each of the supremely executed works from this period seems at first sight to stand by itself: the New York *Aristotle* (1653) (Br. 478); the Paris *Bathsheba* (1654) (Br. 521); the *Portrait of Jan Six* in the Amsterdam Six Collection (1654) (Br. 276); several paintings from 1655: the *Old woman reading* from the collection of the Duke of Buccleuch (Br. 385); *Titus at his reading desk* in Rotterdam (Br. 120); the Paris *Slaughtered ox* (V 21), the Berlin *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* (V 22); from around 1655, *The Polish rider* in the New York Frick Coll. (V 20); and from 1656 *Jacob blessing the children of Joseph* in Kassel (Br. 525) and, surviving as a mutilated fragment, *The anatomy lesson of Dr. Deyman* in Amsterdam (Br. 414). All these works demonstrate, each in its own way, an amazing originality and pictorial power. With respect to brushwork, treatment of light and several other stylistic aspects the present painting has numerous points in common with these works. The discrepancy between the intense vitality with which the woman and her cloak are painted and the summary, though evocative, treatment of the background is very characteristic. A remarkable differentiation in the rendering of texture has been achieved by means of a highly varied application of paint.

A number of technical similarities are particularly clearly evident between the present painting and the *Portrait of Jan Six* (Br. 276) from the same year. In both paintings there is the conspicuous contrast of the sketchy execution of the hands with the refined modelling of the face. Again in both paintings, the exposed ground is integrated into the painterly 3-dimensional illusion in remarkably many places. The most telling correspondence, perhaps, is the stunning sureness of the brushwork in suggesting the

Fig. 6. Rembrandt, *Half-figure of a young woman*, 1652, canvas 72 x 60 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (Br. 111)

Fig. 7. Rembrandt, *Hendrickje Stoffels with fur cloak*, 1659, canvas 103.3 x 86.5 cm. London, The National Gallery (Br. 113)

forms, in which the apparent sketchiness characterising both paintings in no way detracts from the atmospheric quality of the setting and the refined distribution of light and tonal values.

The meaning and possible function of the painting under discussion have given rise to numerous speculations without, however, yielding a conclusive, generally accepted solution.

The wading woman could be the female figure encountered in other works by Rembrandt created between *c.* 1650 and the early 60s. In the literature this figure is usually identified as Hendrickje Stoffels, who probably came to Amsterdam in 1647 and began working in Rembrandt's house some time later. She lived together with Rembrandt as his common law wife until her death in 1663.[9] There is, however, no absolutely sure portrait of Hendrickje. Although there is no evidence to show that she served as the model for this painting, this woman could certainly have been Hendrickje, as it was common workshop practice at the time for family members or employees to serve as models for genre or history scenes.[10] In the traditional Rembrandt literature, it is assumed that Hendrickje posed for a whole series of paintings. A few of these were and are still usually designated 'portraits' of Hendrickje (figs. 6, 7, 13) although they do not meet the accepted conventions of portraiture; we are rather inclined to refer to them as *tronies*, i.e. as half-figures whose identity and physiognomy do not seem, *as a matter of principle concern*, to relate to the actual person who served as the model. Other paintings in which it has been thought, or is still thought to be able to recognize Hendrickje are allegories (Br. 117), or a history piece such as the famous *Bathsheba* in the Louvre (Br. 521). In connection with this latter painting, the question of whether Hendrickje posed has been given additional interest by the work of Eric Jan Sluijter.[11]

Sluijter emphatically rejects the suggestion that the woman who posed for the Bathsheba (assuming that someone did pose for it) could have been Rembrandt's common law wife. In the light of 17th-century norms of decency, according to him, it would have been inconceivable for a painter of that time to have allowed his wife (although Rembrandt and Hendrickje were not officially married) to pose naked, even if in the form of an Old Testament figure. The tendency to suppose this in the case of the Paris *Bathsheba*, of course, stems from the fact that the Bathsheba in this painting is not an idealized nude. Until now, therefore, it has always seemed a matter of logical inference that a female model must have posed for it. Moreover, this would seem a particularly obvious surmise in the case of Rembrandt, who, according to Sandrart and Houbraken, followed only nature.[12]

The question must be asked, however, whether all the women who are usually 'recognized' in Rembrandt's works as Hendrickje are in fact painted after the same model. It has to be conceded, or at least considered – as argued by Scallen – that the tendency to recognize members of Rembrandt's family in his *tronies* (and sometimes also in figures in his history pieces) has led to a great deal of confusion. It was a habit initiated by Bode and taken to its extreme by Valentiner in his dissertation *Rembrandt und seine Umgebung*.[13] Sluijter rightly points out how little the

Fig. 8. Rembrandt, *Woman at a window (Hendrickje Stoffels)*, *c.* 1655, pen and brush, 16.5 x 12.5 cm (Ben. 1102). Stockholm, Nationalmuseum

Fig. 9. Rembrandt, *Woman at a window (Hendrickje Stoffels)*, *c.* 1655, pen and brush, 16.2 x 17.4 cm (Ben. 1101). Stockholm, Nationalmuseum

Fig. 10. Rembrandt, *A young woman sleeping (Hendrickje Stoffels)*, *c.* 1654, brush and brown wash, 24.6 x 20.3 cm (Ben. 1103), detail. London, The British Museum

Fig. 11. Rembrandt, *Woman at an open half-door (Hendrickje Stoffels?)*, *c.* 1655, canvas 88.5 x 67 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (Br. 116)

Fig. 12. Rembrandt (autograph?), *Hendrickje Stoffels and Amor*, *c.* 1655, canvas 110 x 88 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (Br. 117)

Fig. 13. Rembrandt, *Hendrickje Stoffels*, *c.* 1659, canvas 78.4 x 68.9 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Br. 118)

different 'Hendrickjes' resemble each other.[14] Rembrandt's strength as a painter perhaps lay not so much in his drawing a convincing likeness in his portraits[15] – and in *tronies* and history pieces it was absolutely not an issue whether an accurate likeness of the model was achieved. But the differences in physiognomy between, for instance, the so-called 'Portrait' of Hendrickje Stoffels in Paris (fig. 6) and, say, the 'Portrait' of Hendrickje Stoffels in a fur cloak in London (fig. 7) are so great that one can scarcely believe that it is the same woman who posed for these two paintings, even when one allows that these are *tronies* rather than portraits. There is also insufficient reason to identify the model for the Paris *Bathsheba* as one and the same woman who might have sat for the two paintings cited above. This is not to exclude the possibility, of course, that Hendrickje's facial features may be found in some of Rembrandt's works, but the so-called 'Hendrickje' who until now has been recognized in a considerable number of his paintings cannot always have been the same woman.

Assuming that Rembrandt's drawings of clothed women would have originated in domestic situations, one has good grounds for wondering whether, for example, the two rather moving drawings of a woman resting in a window frame, which apparently originated in a single sequence, could have been drawn after Hendrickje (figs. 8 and 9). In these two drawings, we have a small, stocky woman with a strikingly round forehead and a broad face with fleshy cheeks. One finds the same facial type, showing similar physiognomic characteristic, in the famous *Young woman sleeping* in The British Museum (Ben. 1103; fig. 10) and several of Rembrandt's paintings from the 1650's (figs. 7, 11, 12, 13). The woman discussed in this entry shares these same characteristics, and not only of facial features (fig. 14) but also in build. One cannot therefore totally exclude in advance – as Sluijter in fact does – the possibility that Hendrickje Stoffels may have posed for the bathing woman. This suggestion, already proposed by others, is reiterated here and in the following argument it will be made clear why we believe that this possibility should be kept open.

Although the present painting is usually referred to in the literature as 'A woman bathing in a stream', it is not clear whether she is actually bathing or is merely wading in the water for some other reason. The earliest known description of the painting of 1756 speaks of 'a Woman going into the Water holding her Coats pretty high, and laughing at what she sees reflected' (see *6. Provenance*). It is, indeed, tempting to discern a smile on the woman's face. However, caution is here urged. In drawing or painting a head bent forward, the rules of perspective dictate that the parts of the face, particularly the eyes and the mouth, must follow an oval cross-section of the roughly cylindrical skull. The resulting apparent 'rise' of the corners of the eyes and the mouth can contribute to the impression of a smiling face, as may be demonstrated by the drawn example of a forwardly inclined head taken from Crispijn van de Passe's drawing book *'t Light der teken en schilderkonst*, published in 1643 (fig. 15).[16]

The mischievous 19th-century interpretation quoted above, that the woman was smiling because she could see her private parts beneath her shift reflected in the water, is not wholly unrelated to an interpretation for which Jan van der Waals thought he had found the iconological key in 1987, an idea on which Herman Colenbrander subsequently elaborated. Van der Waals pointed out that the motif of the shift being lifted up occurs in a print by Giovanni Federico Greuter after an antique sculpture. The print bears the caption 'Mulier Impudica', the shameless or unchaste woman (fig. 16).[17] The decolleté and the way in which the woman in the London painting displays her legs are not incompatible with this allegorical formula sug-

Fig. 14. Detail

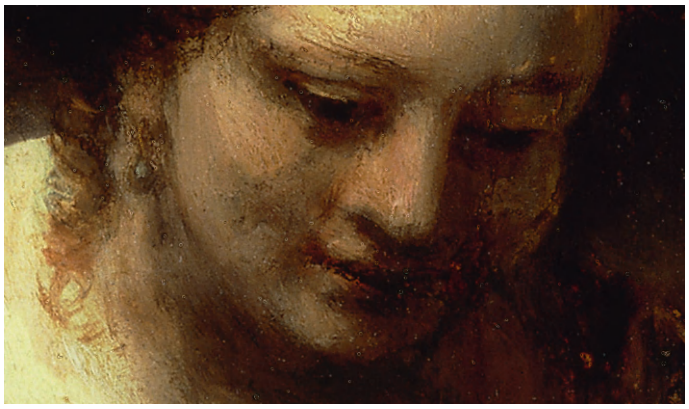


Fig. 15. C. van de Passe, engraving from *'t Light der teken en schilderkonst*

gesting indecency. In this context, Ripa's commentary in his *Iconologia* under the lemma 'Senso' (feeling, or sensation) is relevant, even though in relation to an entirely differently conceived image: 'water is sometimes understood as sin, and those standing in it as the sinners[18]; Ripa refers to Psalm LXIX in which David sings 'the waters are come in unto my soul'.[19]

Such allegorical figures, albeit presented differently, also occur in Cats' *Spiegel van den Ouden en Nieuwen Tijdt* as 'Mulier sine verecundia' (shameless woman). The collection of the 17th-century collector Michiel Hinloopen (1619-1708) included not only the previously mentioned 'Mulier impudica' print (to which Hinlopen added the annotation 'Verbeelding van de schaamteloosheid', or 'an image of shamelessness') (see fig. 16), but also a 'Pudicit[i]a' ('De schaampte', or shame).[20]

The above makes an interpretation of the London painting as an allegory of indecency quite plausible. Should the theme therefore be understood as being primarily a moralising message for the 17th-century viewer? This reading calls for further investigation; on the basis of the material advanced by Van der Waals and Colenbrander, at least, it can certainly be entertained as a possible option. However difficult it may seem to allow that this glorious painting could be the vehicle for such a joyless message, such a meaning would be compatible with the possible raison d'être of Rembrandt's *Joseph and Potiphar's wife* as an exhortation to unbending chastity, a type of painting to be hung 'in the room where the young ladies sleep' (see V 22).

Earlier, at an iconologically less sophisticated stage of art history and in the spirit of the 19th- and early 20th-century conception of Dutch painting, the painting in question here was still considered as an example of a 'pure genre' scene. This is evident from the painting's inclusion among the genre scenes in Bredius' oeuvre catalogue, under the title *Woman bathing*. Against the idea that this could be a genre scene, however, there is the fact that a sumptuous red and gold gleaming cloak lies on the bank behind the wading woman. As a rule, such a cloak occurs in Rembrandt's symbolic language in scenes where a woman of high birth is depicted. One encounters such removed cloaks and costly garments in Rembrandt's paintings with the stories of Susanna and Bathsheba (V 1 and Br. 521). In subsequent decades, therefore, most authors interpreted the painting as a biblical or mythological scene (with Hendrickje Stoffels as the model) (see below).

There is another significant element from Rembrandt's iconological language which conflicts with Bredius' classification of the painting as a genre piece, in the sense of a scene taken from everyday Dutch life: that is, the surroundings in which the wading woman is depicted. Such a combination of still water with a wild, overgrown bank,

Fig. 16. Etching by G.F. Greuter, *Mulier impudica*

Fig. 17. Rembrandt, *Diana at the bath*, etching (B. 201)

with a tree stump at the edge and the indication of a dark entrance to a cave, with no trace of any cultivation, either in terms of architectural elements or of deliberately introduced vegetation, is found where Rembrandt indicates a wilderness or an arcadian setting, as in the etching with Diana (fig. 17; B. 201) and the associated drawing (Ben. 21); the *Diana bathing with her nymphs* (II A 92; see Chapter II fig. 105), in pastoral scenes (B. 188) and scenes with St. Jerome writing or of other monks (fig. 18) (B. 103 and 107). If only for this reason, earlier attempts to identify the female figure in the painting under discussion here as Susanna or Bathsheba fail. Both scenes, the Susanna with the two Elders and the Bathsheba at her toilet (whether or not she is spied upon by King David), are enacted in gardens. For this reason, in Rembrandt's works on this theme, the pond in which Susanna is about to bathe is provided with stone steps. Likewise, the sophistication of the garden where Bathsheba is attended is indicated by similar and other architectonic elements, such as fountains.

Ignoring this basic difference of setting, there have been attempts to read the present painting as a Susanna or Bathsheba by referring to the concept, developed by Tümpel, of 'Herauslösung' – the isolation of a figure or scene from its wider, traditional narrative context. These attempts also fail, for other reasons. Tümpel referred to a drawing (fig. 19; Ben. 977) in which Susanna is shown standing in water almost to her knees, from which he cautiously concluded that the present painting could also be a representation of Susanna. But in the drawing and in earlier illustrations of the Susanna theme (III A 117 and V 1), Rembrandt always included the two Elders, however summarily. They do not appear in the London painting. Furthermore, the wading woman in that painting does not display the startled reaction typical of Susanna. Tümpel rightly concluded that, to the extent that one might wish

Fig. 18. Rembrandt, *St. Jerome beside a pollard willow*, 1648, etching and drypoint, 18 x 13.3 cm (B. 103^{II}).

Fig. 19. Rembrandt, *Susanna and the two Elders*, *c.* 1655, reed-pen and bistre 17.7 x 12.7 cm (Ben. 977). Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett

Fig. 20. Rembrandt, *Diana bathing with her nymphs, with the stories of Actaeon and Callisto*, detail of fig. 105 on p. 195, 1634. Anholt, Museum Wasserburg (II A 92)

Fig. 21. Titian, *The discovery of Callisto's pregnancy*, *c.* 1559, canvas 187 x 205 cm. Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland

to speak of any connection between the present painting and the theme of Susanna, it would have to be a loose one. We, however, are convinced that there are insufficient indications to justify entertaining the Susanna reading further.[21]

The same applies to Kelch's opinion that the London painting represents Bathsheba.[22] Generally, Bathsheba is shown at her toilet. At times she is nude, at others dressed and washing her hands or feet with the assistance of one or more servants. Sluijter's investigation of the visual tradition of the Bathsheba theme provides no support for the hypothesis that the painting under consideration could represent Bathsheba.[23] As we have argued above, Bathsheba, like Susanna, is usually placed in a constructed rather than a natural setting. However, the strongest argument against the Susanna- or Bathsheba interpretation is that in both stories it was the overwhelmingly seductive nakedness of the women that led to the subsequent events in which they were both embroiled. (Daniel 13:19-21 and Samuel 11:2). One would therefore have to be able to indicate this nakedness as their most significant 'attribute'. That attribute is lacking in the painting under discussion here.

The authors of *Art in the making* suggested that the woman in the painting under discussion could represent *Diana*.[24] This option was rejected by Jan Leja on good grounds.[25] Rembrandt represented Diana in nature three times, each time naked, twice (see fig. 17) with her hunting weapons – the bow and full quiver of arrows – and once in the Anholt *Diana bathing with her nymphs* (II A 92) similarly naked and surrounded by her retinue of nymphs, but this time with a half-moon on her head by way of attribute. A fourth image of Diana by Rembrandt can be added to these: in his Berlin *Abduction of Proserpina* (I A 39), he depicts Diana (recognizable by the cresent as a diadem) among the maidens picking flowers with Proserpina, who, as sumptuously clad as Proserpina herself, try to prevent the abduction by Pluto. Leja points out that, although Diana could be depicted either naked or clothed, depending on the setting, she never appears in the iconographic tradition in a simple shift in the wilderness.

However, Leja has also suggested the most convincing interpretation of the scene to date. She argues that the wading woman's shift can be interpreted as a reference to the story of Callisto, the Arcadian maiden in the band of warrior nymphs led by Diana, for whom chastity was an absolute commitment. Callisto, however, was violently raped by Jupiter and became pregnant. When her loss of virginity was discovered, Callisto was banned by Diana from her retinue. As Sluijter has demonstrated, the discovery of Callisto's pregnancy was the most frequently depicted scene from the story of Callisto.[26] Given the relative frequency with which this episode appears in paintings and prints, the story of Callisto must have been well-known in Rembrandt's time. In his own painting of *Diana bathing with her nymphs* (II A 92) of 1634, Rembrandt actually included the scene in which Callisto's pregnancy is exposed by the other nymphs (fig. 20). Ever since Titian's introduction of this theme into painting (fig. 21), Callisto was always shown wearing a shift that was clearly visible under her sumptuous gowns, which the other nymphs opened to discover her pregnancy. From this iconographic tradition, one may conclude that the shift was considered to be her 'attribute'.

The weak point in Leja's hypothesis is that, in other respects, *A woman wading* falls entirely outside the pictorial tradition of Callisto. In an attempt to overcome this objection, Leja resorts to Tümpel's concept of the *'Herauslösung'* mentioned above. Leja implicitly assumes that in the London painting Callisto has been isolated – *herausgelöst* – from the wider scene of Diana bathing with her nymphs.[27] This suggestion is unsatisfactory, however, since immediately after the discovery of Callisto's pregnancy, according to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which is after all the only source of the Callisto story referred to by Leja, she was immediately dismissed from Diana's company. The whole scene is described by Ovid as follows:

Now the moon's horns were filling out to complete their

> ninth circle, when the Goddess wearied with hunting in the fierce heat of the sun, came to a cool grove, from which there flowed a murmuring stream that rippled over its smooth sandy bed. Diana exclaimed with pleasure at the sight, and dipped her foot in the water: delighted with this too she called to her companions: 'There is no-one here to see us – let us undress and bathe in the brook.' The Arcadian maiden blushed. All took off their garments, while she alone sought excuses to delay. As she hesitated, the others pulled off her tunic, and at once revealed her body and her crime. She stood dismayed, and with her hands vainly tried to cover up the evidence of her guilt. But Diana cried: 'Off with you! Do not defile this sacred spring!' and ordered her to withdraw from her company.'[28]

According to this original version of the story, Callisto dared not bathe and after the discovery of her pregnancy was forbidden to pollute the 'sacred spring'. Leja's reading of the painting as a *herausgelöst* Callisto would only be possible if Rembrandt had based his painting on a *Herauslösung* from the scene *before* Callisto's pregnancy was discovered. But the woman in the present painting has removed her outer garments and has already entered the water. This episode from the Ovidian narrative simply does not allow for a reading of this painting as a *Herauslösung* from the scene of the bathing Diana and her entourage.

However, Leja overlooked the possibility that Rembrandt may not have been working from the original Ovidian myth, but rather from a version of the myth current in his own time. Indeed, there had long been a tradition of interpreting Ovid's pagan fables so as to give them a less pagan import; they were subjected to a process of cleaning up, with minor plot changes and shifts of emphasis in order to derive from them a suitable (usually Christian) moral. An early 17th-century version of the Callisto story, a version in Dutch, which Rembrandt would certainly have known, differs significantly from Ovid's account. The text in question is in Karel van Mander's chapter dealing with the 'Fable of Callisto and Arcas' in his 'Wtlegghingh' [Commentary] on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Van Mander recounts that Callisto, after the discovery of her pregnancy

> 'was chased from the sacred place, which sacred place the poet [Ovid] had embellished with the pool of Diana: she then took secret refuge in the wilderness for some time'.[29]

Van Mander has here changed the nature and significance of the expulsion: whereas Ovid has Diana cry 'Off with you! Do not defile this sacred spring!', Van Mander removes all reference to sacred waters; instead he writes that Callisto 'was chased from the sacred *place*, which sacred place the Poet [Ovid] had embellished with the pool of Diana'. Van Mander had an important motive for removing this pagan motif of 'sacred water' from the story, since his purpose was to draw morals from the Ovidian texts according to the standards of his own [Christian] time, and to render them suitable for a modified iconography.

If one admits that Rembrandt could have based a painting of a Callisto on the Dutch version of the story rather than on Ovid's tale, the narrative objection to identifying the woman as Callisto at once disappears; and crucially, the woman's shift indicates that if she is indeed Callisto it is a representation of her *after* the discovery of her pregnancy. She would not be the apprehensive, still secretly pregnant Callisto in Diana's sacred pool, which Leja's suggested solution of a *Herauslösung* would imply, but rather the disgraced Callisto in the wilderness. Not only can the Van Mander version support Leja's identification of the wading woman as Callisto, it may also contain the key to the *raison d'être* of this painting, which seems to escape the customary Callisto iconography.

At this point, parallels between Callisto and Hendrickje Stoffels seem to emerge more obviously. Although Leja was unable to proceed with her identification of the woman bathing as Hendrickje, ending her article with the inconclusive remark:

> 'Why, in 1654, Rembrandt created the *Woman bathing*, probably using Hendrickje as model, may never be known with certainty, …'

she nevertheless continues:

> 'but few commentators, particularly those who believe the model to be Hendrickje, have failed to mention the probability of a connection with the artist's personal life. If one is inclined to accept the identification of the *Woman bathing* as Callisto and the notion that Hendrickje served as Rembrandt's model, then one might reasonably ask, given Hendrickje's pregnancy in 1654, whether the painting represents a nexus, rarely found, between the artist's work and life'.[30]

In 1654, when the present painting was painted, Hendrickje was summoned before the Reformed Church Council and accused of 'hoererij' – unwedded cohabitation – with the explicitly mentioned Rembrandt. After Hendrickje had appeared before the Council and had confessed to having 'fornicated' with Rembrandt, she was admonished and barred from 'The Lord's Supper' (see *Corpus* IV, *Biographical information*). In *Art in the making*[31] it was suggested, for a variety of reasons, that the painting's origin could well have been related to these events. If the woman represented was indeed modelled on Hendrickje Stoffels, a distinct possibility as outlined above, this biographical interpretation deserves consideration, even if it may at first sight appear anachronistic.

One understands why Leja was reluctant to draw a connection between, on the one hand, Rembrandt's painting and the figure of the pregnant Callisto (with the assumed features of Hendrickje Stoffels), and on the other hand the biographical fact that Hendrickje was pregnant that same year. In the current art historical world there is an understandable aversion to any all-too-facile connections between the life and work of an artist, particularly in the case of Rembrandt. As Catherine Scallen demonstrated[32], beginning with Wilhelm Bode's attempts to approach Rembrandt's oeuvre in a systematic manner, and in order to get some grip on the background of Rembrandt's development as an artist, drawing this kind of relation became a 'method' that was then taken to absurd lengths. It was an approach that fitted seamlessly with the Romantic vision of the creative artist and precisely for this reason, in present-day art historical scholarship, this

approach has acquired the taint of anachronism.

Another reason for Leja's hesitation is that, apart from her pregnancy and its unlawful status, Hendrickje's situation in 1654 would seem to provide few points of contact with Ovid's grisly tale in its entirety. According to Ovid, Callisto was deceived by Jupiter, raped, and subsequently drawing down the wrath of Juno was punished as though she were the lover of the latter's faithless husband. Juno's punishment consisted in being metamorphosed into a bear. Jupiter then had to intervene to save her from being killed by her now adult son, the hunter Arcus, and for her own protection gave her a place in the firmament. According to Ovid, Juno ensured that her place in the firmament was as ignominious as possible by ensuring that her constellation, *Ursa major* – the 'Great Bear' – was so placed in the firmament that it would never touch the 'sacred water' because, seen from the northern hemisphere, it never disappears below the horizon. Callisto's disgrace would be permanent, her sinfulness for ever exposed.

But none of these dissimilarities between the careers of Callisto and Hendrickje add up to such an overriding objection to a connection between the painting and Hendrickje's situation that all speculation on such a relation can, *a priori*, be dismissed as anachronistic. As has already been seen above, comparison of Ovid's and Van Mander's versions of the episode of Callisto's expulsion, there is a significant shift in the moral of the story as related by Van Mander. In his version, the emphasis lies on the 'sacred place' from which Callisto was banned. At the very least, this reminds one of Hendrickje's exclusion from participation in the most important ceremony of the church calendar, 'The Lord's supper', charged with its Christian symbolism.

Van Mander subsequently explains that Callisto was called 'Beyrinne', she-bear, because of her stay in the wilderness, 'which was later believed to be the cause of her ascent into the heavens'.[33] 'And that these stars [the Great Bear] were raised so near to the top star [North Star] that they did not drown in the waves', in other words, never dipped below the horizon.[34]

The crucial part of Van Mander's account of Callisto pertinent to this line of reasoning is that following the discovery of her unchastity and her pregnancy, she was chased from the 'sacred place', withdrew into the wilderness and finally was awarded a place of honour 'in the heavens'.

Art historians tend to privilege specific written sources that appear to have played a role in the development of a particular idea as peculiarly authoritative, canonical texts. These texts assume an almost exclusive status as the 'authorized versions' of certain narratives or ideas that may well have been more widely circulated in other versions. This remark may well apply, for example, to a text of Ovid that lies at the root of an iconographic tradition (which was how Leja regarded Ovid's Callisto text). When we subsequently discover that a commentary on such a canonical text was written in the 17th century, one that is thought to have been widely read – such as, for example, Van Mander's *Uytleggingh van Ovidius Metamorphosen* [his 'Commentaries on Ovid's Metamorphoses', which includes the story of Callisto], then the same tendency leads to canonize that text too, i.e. to accept it as the normative standard for our interpretation of the way Ovid's texts were interpreted in the 17th century. Yet apparently there was considerable leeway for different kinds of interpretation, or *Uytlegginghe*, even in Van Mander's book – sometimes Christian, sometimes pagan. For instance, one is struck by the fact that, in his re-telling of Ovid's Callisto text, he does not make the leap from the fable to a Christian moral, whereas in the tale of Andromeda for example, he does. In the latter case, his text ends with the words:

> 'The innocent Andromeda released by Perseus shows us that the pious are often freed by God's merciful bounty, seeing them often in extreme distress and that 'God with all gratitude should be given the honour.'[35]

That the reader was also apparently always free to give the pagan story of Callisto a Christian meaning is evident from the way in which Gerard de Lairesse, in his *Groot Schilderboek*, develops Ovid's fable – at the same time implicitly building on Van Mander's *Uytleggingh*. Having related the beginning of the story, De Lairesse continues:

> 'That Ovidius gives her … a substantial place in the … heavens, … he does so to show her eternal shame in a marvellous way, … Yet one can also give this a much more Christian interpretation, namely that this tainted soul having turned away from the offence she had committed, her genuine reform and sincere repentance were so marked, and God so gracious, that he gave her a much more honoured place and a more brightly shining countenance in the heavens, close to a fixed point [the Pole Star]; so that all mortals, following her example, may reform and conduct themselves virtuously; …'[36]

One could now canonize De Lairesse's text as a unique authority and assert that, because this interpretation was only published in 1707, it cannot be considered relevant to the question we are concerned with here, viz. the question of Rembrandt's ideas on possible parallels between Callisto and Hendrickje during her pregnancy in 1654. But it might be wiser to stress the room for different interpretations that such an ancient story of forbidden pregnancy offered in the 17th century. The kind of gesture toward a Christian moral that we find in De Lairesse was also there for Rembrandt to exploit, when Callisto's unhappy story was, in an unpredictable way, much more applicable to Hendrickje's (and Rembrandt's) situation in 1654. An interpretation of the Callisto story such as given by De Lairesse would certainly have been a fitting answer to the condemnation of Hendrickje by the Church Council.

It is not claimed here that the Callisto interpretation of the London painting has been established, nor that we have taken the biographical turn that Leja still recoiled from. The intention of the argument above was rather to clear a space for new interpretations and to enlarge the the room for speculation.

One would not expect art in the 17th century to be employed to give voice to strictly personal emotions or as

Fig. 22. P.P. Rubens, *Portrait of Hélène Fourment*, panel 176 x 83 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Fig. 23. Detail (1:1) before cleaning in 1946

a response to personal tribulations, but it is certainly conceivable that painting could have been used as a means of defense, for instance in the case of personal affront. Indeed, Rembrandt's pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten deals with this very usage in his *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*. Under the heading *'Hoe zig een Konstenaer te draegen heeft tegens 't gewelt der fortuine'* (How an Artist should act against the forces of fortune), he suggests, among other means, *'de wraecke des penseels'* (the revenge of the brush).[37] Van Hoogstraten cites a series of examples in which artists defended or avenged themselves by making a work that alludes to a particular situation, usually an artist's response to an offense with regard to his art. Could Rembrandt's painting, the *Woman wading*, be considered as a *'wraecke des penseels'* for an offence against his person, and at the same time a gift to Hendrickje – Rembrandt's equivalent of Rubens' gift of *Het Pelsken* to Hélène Fourment (fig. 22).[38] We shall never know.

The obviously unfinished character of the work, as well as the fact that it bears Rembrandt's signature, raise the possibility of yet another *raison d'être*. This is related to a 17th-century public which would have particularly valued a painting such as this one. By public, we mean Rembrandt's contemporary art lovers and collectors (see Chapter II pp. 238/239).[39] The idea that the true connoisseur would appreciate the special qualities of an unfinished work of art is already found in classical antiquity, and it would have been reinforced by some of the stories about artists and connoisseurs that circulated in the 17th century. It is not irrelevant to point out in this connection that Hendrickje Stoffels, together with Titus van Rijn (and with Rembrandt in the background), was active as an art dealer (Strauss *Doc*., 1660/20). Astrid Waltman's recent biography of Hendrickje Stoffels[40] considers in a wider perspective the fact and the circumstance that we see here a woman dealing in art.

One such story, passed on by Titian's last pupil Jacopo

Fig. 24. Detail (1:1) after cleaning in 1946

Palma Giovane (1544-1628) and recorded by Marco Boschini in 1664, relates that the most knowledgeable connoisseurs purchased unfinished paintings that Titian had turned facing the wall, intending to finish them at a later date.[41] Given the emphatic lack of finish in parts of Rembrandt's *Woman wading*, particularly in the woman's hand and elsewhere – and not forgetting that the signature is a sign that the painter acknowledged the work – the reason for the London painting's existence might possibly be that it was intended as a collector's item, to be acquired by the most knowledgeable connoisseurs. In this connection it is interesting that the hand was 'completed' by a restorer, possibly in the 18th century. The hand in its present state only came to light in 1946 (figs. 23 and 24). If it was originally painted for a select public, the specific iconographic meaning of the painting would have been secondary; that would in no way exclude the hypothesis suggested above that the painting may also have served as a *'wraecke des penseels'*, a 'revenge of the brush' (see also Chapter II p. 163).

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance[42]

– The present painting was erroneously connected with a work in the possession of Arthur Pond in 1739 and sold at auction in 1759 (date unknown, and not in Lugt), on the second day as no. 76 ('A Woman going into a Bath Rembrandt', for £ 16. 5s. 6d. to Reynolds). Broun convincingly identified this painting with the *Susanna* in the Louvre (V 1, copy 4) and mentioned that Reynolds in his journal of his trip to the Netherlands in 1781, spoke of a preliminary study in his possession of *Susanna and the Elders*.[43]

– Possibly coll. Andrew Hay, sale of 'Pictures […] collected abroad', London 4-5 May 1739 (Lugt 504), first day no. 20: 'Rembrant – A Woman going into a Bath' (sold for £ 6. 19s. 0d).

– Almost certainly in the Blackwood coll., sale London 18-19 March 1756 (Lugt 909), first day no. 60: 'Rembrandt. A Woman going into the Water holding her Coats pretty high, and laughing at what she sees reflected; high 2 ft. 1 in., wide 1 ft. 7 in. [= 64.4 x 49 cm]' (for £ 19. 8s. 6d. to Raymond).

– Coll. Baron Gwydyr of London; as the painting is not described in a manuscript inventory of the paintings at Grimsthorpe Castle corrected up to 1 January 1812, it may have been acquired at a later date; sale London (Christie's) 8-9 May 1829 (not in Lugt) second day no. 72. Bought by the Reverend William Holwell Carr for 165 guineas.

– Coll. William Holwell Carr; given by him to the National Gallery in 1831.

NOTES

1. J. Bruyn, 'Een onderzoek naar 17de-eeuwse schilderijformaten, voornamelijk in Noord-Nederland', *O.H.* 93 (1979), pp. 96-115, esp. 106-107, 108-109 and 111.
2. Exhib. cat. *Art in the making*, 1988/89, pp. 31 and 96; 2006, pp. 138-145, esp. 140 and p. 224.
3. *Corpus* IV, pp. 660-663 (Table II).
4. *Corpus* I, Chapter II, pp. 20-25; Van de Wetering 1997/2009, Chapter II, pp. 23-32.
5. Van de Wetering 1997/2009, Chapter VIII, esp. pp. 203-211.
6. Exhib. cat. *Art in the making*, 1988/89, p. 98; 2006, p. 141.
7. Exhib. cat. *Art in the making*, 1988/89, p. 100; 2006, p. 142, which includes other mixtures found in the paintings and reproductions of cross-sections.
8. N. MacLaren, *National Gallery catalogues. The Dutch school*, London 1960, p. 313.
9. Hendrickje Stoffels became pregnant with Rembrandt's child in 1654. Their daughter Cornelia was baptised on 30 October of that year: see *Corpus* IV *Biographical Information*, pp. 335 and 339: dd. 25 June 1649 and 25 June 1654 and days following. In 1654, Hendrickje was approximately 28 years old (see also Strauss *Doc.* 1654/11 and 1654/18).
10. In this context one thinks of Rembrandt's father (in a Leiden inventory is listed 'een out manstronie sijnde 't conterfeytsel van den vader van mr. Rembrant' [a *tronie* of an old man being a likeness of master Rembrandt's father], Strauss *Doc.* 1644/1), the wife of Hendrick Uylenburgh (in the shop inventory of Lambert Jacobsz. in Leeuwarden was 'een cleine oostersche vrouwentroni, het conterfeisel van H. Ulenburgh[s] huysvrouwe, nae Rembrant' [a small oriental female *tronie*, the likeness of H. Ulenburgh[s] wife, after Rembrandt], ibidem, 1637/4) and of Geertje Dircx (in a conveyance of goods is mentioned 'de minnemoer van Rembrant' [Rembrandt's nursemaid], ibidem, 1647/1 and compare *Corpus* IV, *Biographical Information* pp. 335-336: dd. 24 January 1648 and 23 October 1649).

11. E.J. Sluijter, *Rembrandt and the female nude*, Amsterdam 2006.
12. A.R. Pelzer (ed.), *Joachim von Sandrarts Academie der Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste von 1675: Leben der berühmten Maler, Bildhauer und Baumeister*, Munich 1925; A. Houbraken, *Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (3 vols), Amsterdam, vol. I, 1718, p. 262.
13. W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt und seine Umgebung*, Straatsburg 1905.
14. Op. cit.[11], pp. 327-331.
15. Strauss *Doc*. 1654/4; *Corpus* III, p. 223.
16. Chrispijn van de Passe, *'t Light der teken en schilderkonst*, J. Bolten ed., Soest 1973, part I, p. 31.
17. J. van der Waals, *De prentschat van Michiel Hinloopen. Een reconstructie van de eerste openbare papierkunstverzameling in Nederland*, The Hague/Amsterdam 1988, pp. 63-64 and figs. 65 and 66.
18. 'Het Waeter wort somtyts, voor de sonde, verstaen, en de Mensche die daer in staet voor den Sondaer, gelijck David singht, "de Waeteren zijn tot aen mijn ziele gekomen"'. C. Ripa, *Iconologia of Uytbeeldinghe des Verstandts*, Amsterdam 1644, p. 469.
19. H.Th. Colenbrander, 'Rembrandt's *A woman bathing in a stream* in London's National Gallery', in: M. Roscam-Abbing, *Rembrandt 2006*, Leiden 2006, pp. 57-62.
20. Liber no. 4 vol. 79 and liber no. 10 fol. 89 (a). A Latin concept for 'onkuisheid' or a lack of chastity does not appear to have existed (pudere, to be ashamed).
21. Tümpel 1986, p. 405, no. 122; Sluijter op. cit.[11], pp. 112-141.
22. J. Kelch in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, no. 40 opts for this possibility. For the iconography of Bathsheba, see V 2.
23. E.J. Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen' in de Noordnederlandse schilderkunst, circa 1590-1670*, n.p., n.d. [1986]; Sluijter op. cit.[11], pp. 332-368.
24. Exhib. cat. *Art in the making*, 2006, p. 140.
25. J. Leja, 'Rembrandt's *Woman bathing in a stream*', *Simiolus* 24 (1996), pp. 320-327.
26. Sluijter, op. cit.[11], p. 188 ff.
27. Leja, op.cit.[25], p. 326, Unaware of Leja's interpretation, in 2006 Lyckle de Vries also proposed that the wading woman represents Callisto. Like Leja, he too believed that this was a *Herauslösung* from the episode of Diana with her bathing nymphs. L. de Vries, 'Enkele opmerkingen over Rembrandts eensaeme historien', *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 2006/1-2, pp. 34-41, esp. 39-41.
28. Penguin Classics trans. Mary M. Innes.
29. 'Uyt de heylige plaets verjaeght, welcke heylige plaets den Poeet het badt van *Diana* versiert te wesen: doe [toen] heeft sy haer [zich] voor eenighen tijdt onthouden heymelijck in den wildernissen'. K. van Mander, *Wtleghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidii Nasonis*, in: idem, *Het Schilder-Boeck*, Haarlem 1603-1604, esp. fol. 17v.
30. Leja, op.cit.[25], p. 327.
31. Exhib. cat. *Art in the making* 1988/89, p. 96; 2006, p. 138.
32. C. Scallen, *Rembrandt, Reputation and the rise of connoisseurship*, Amsterdam 2004.
33. Op.cit.[29]: 'het welck namaels te ghelooven veroorsaeckte datse in den Hemel opgevoert waren'.
34. 'En dat dese Sterren so by de Topsterre verheven wesende, [niet] in de Zeegolven […] verdrencken'. Op.cit.[29], fol. 18r: Although Ovid explains this in primarily negative terms in the sense that Callisto's shame was always so visible, Van Mander's account is surprisingly neutral. See also Sluijter, op. cit.[11], p. 165 ff.
35. 'D'onschuldigh *Andromeda* van [door] Perseo verlost, toont ons, dat de vrome door de goedertieren beschickinge Gods, dicwils in d'uyterste benoutheyt wesende, onversiens verlost worden' en dat 'Gode, met aller danckbaerheyt den prijs [voor bijv. een overwinning] gheven.'
36. G. de Lairesse, *Groot Schilderboek*, Haarlem 1740[2], Vol. 2, pp. 126-132: 'Dat *Ovidius* haar … aanmerkelyke plaats aan de … hemel doet hebben, … zulks doet hy om op een verwonderlyke manier haare eeuwige schande aan te toonen, … Doch hierop kan men mede een veel Christelyker gedachte vormen, naamentlyk dat deze besmette ziel een afkeer van haare bedreevene misdaad krygende, haare opregte bekeering en waar berouw zo aanmerkelyk en Gode zo aangenaam is geweest, dat hy haar een veel heerlyker plaatse en blinkender gelaat aan den hemel toegevoegd heeft, nevens een vaste standplaats; op dat alle stervelingen haar voorbeeld volgende, zich tot bekeering en deugd mogen voegen; …' We are most grateful to Lyckle de Vries for verbally referring us to this passage.
37. S. van Hoogstraeten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*, Rotterdam 1678, pp. 309-324.
38. Panel 176 x 83 cm; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. 688 and exhib. cat. *Art in the making*, 1988/89, p. 96; 2006, p. 140.
39. Van de Wetering 1997/2009, p. 164, note 22.
40. A. Waltmans, *Hendrikje Stoffels. Een meisje uit de provincie in een Amsterdams kunstenaarsmilieu*, Yzerlo 2006, esp. pp. 3-9 and 45-58. One can certainly expect that a 17th-century art dealer with some understanding of art – and given her constant proximity to Rembrandt, Hendrickje would surely have acquired such an understanding – would be familiar with the well-known topos of the 'non-finito' and associated workshop anecdotes as part of his – in this case her – intellectual baggage.
41. M. Boschini, 'Le minere della pittura', Compandiosa informazione di Marco Boschini, non solo delle pitture pubbliche di Venezia, ma delle isole ancora circonvicine, Venice 1664, pp. 119-120 and Van de Wetering 1997/2009, p. 164.
42. Based on the provenance in: N. MacLaren and C. Brown, *National Gallery catalogues, The Dutch School 1600-1900*, London 1991, p. 333.
43. F. Broun, *Sir Joshua Reynolds' Rembrandts*, unpublished manuscript 1984, pp. 28-33.

V 20 Rembrandt (with later additions), The Polish Rider* *c.* 1655

NEW YORK, N.Y. THE FRICK COLLECTION, INV. NO. 10.1.98

HDG 268; BR. 279; BAUCH 211; GERSON 287; TÜMPEL 123

1. Introduction and description

The *Polish Rider* has always stirred the imagination because of its intriguing subject; but in recent decades, the question of its attribution has also attracted wide attention. Ever since Bruyn cautiously suggested in a book review in 1984 that the *Polish Rider* might possibly be by Willem Drost, controversy has surrounded this famous work.[1] The unusual nature of the subject contributes in no small measure to the difficulties of interpreting both the iconography and function of the painting, and its attribution. The condition of the work, especially in the background and the terrain in the foreground, moreover, makes it hard to assess the painting properly. In this entry the attribution of this unfinished painting to Rembrandt will be defended. Certain areas, however, may have been completed by another hand.

A heavily armed rider on a grey horse stands out against an uneven landscape with a steep hill topped by a huge edifice. In the course of the debate about the identity of the rider, a great deal of research has been done into the nature of his costume and his arms, which can be identified as Polish. This debate will be summarised under *Comments* below. Here it will suffice to describe his arms and dress which, thanks to Żygulski, could be identified in its detail as distinctly Polish (see note 9).

The rider wears a long coat, the so-called *żupan*, which is closed down to the waist at the front by numerous small buttons, with a sash round the waist. A split in the side makes it possible to spread out the coat-tail on the horse's back. The colour of the coat is hard to determine given that the low light shining on the rider from behind gives the fabric a yellow glow, while on the chest and on the parts of the sleeves turned away from the light greyish and yellowish reflections predominate. The strong reflections on the right sleeve show that the painter intended to depict a shiny, satin-like fabric. Where the *żupan* is turned back below it reveals a brown lining. It has a small standing collar, while the loose-fitting sleeves are gathered at the wrist. The rider wears red breeches and yellowish-brown calf-length boots. On his head he has a red, fur-lined cap (*kuczma*), with the flaps turned up on both sides. Long, curling hair hangs from under the cap almost to the shoulders.

On the right of the saddle with its high pommel hangs a sabre in a scabbard over which the rider has thrown his leg and the side of his *żupan*. At his left hip can be seen the hilt of a second sabre. In the hand at his side he holds a war hammer (*nadziak*). Lastly, he has a bow, which hangs on his left side, and a quiver full of arrows at his right hip. Three of these, their shafts partly red, are thrust into the front pocket of the gleaming, black leather quiver. The bottom of the quiver reflects the red of the breeches.

The motion of the walking horse is suggested by the swinging of a long tassel of whitish horsehair (*buntchuk*) which is attached to the bridle. The tassel is held by a pomegranate-shaped boss with decorative strings terminating in knobs. The bridle and reins are made of narrow, red straps. The horse has a metal bit in its open mouth, with a copper-coloured knob at the side. It is a lean horse with cropped ears and a tail either docked or tied up. A spotted animal skin serves as the saddlecloth, its two forelegs held together by a ring on the horses' breast.

The terrain, the landscape and the architecture will be described in *Paint layer*, since these elements, in part because of the painting's complicated condition, are not easily legible.

Working conditions

Examined 21 April 1969 (J.B., B.H.) out of the frame by strong artificial light with the aid of X-radiographs of the entire painting; again in December 1989 (E.H.B., E.v.d.W.) and in November 1994 (M.F., E.v.d.W.); and again in May 1996 and on many other occasions (E.v.d.W.): in the frame on the gallerywall using a ladder and under artificial light.

Support

Canvas, lined, 117.1 x 134.8 cm (measured along the stretcher); a single piece with a strip from 10 (left) to 9 cm (right) wide added later along the bottom, evidently to replace a lost strip of the painting. Along the top edge the original canvas has been drawn over the edge of the stretcher. Here cusping is clearly visible in the X-radiograph extending up to *c.* 12 cm into the weave. This cusping is so marked as to lead to the conclusion that little or nothing of the original canvas is missing along the top edge. At *c.* 5 cm from the present top edge there is a row of irregularly spaced nail holes, indicating that the canvas was once turned over here. This might explain a reference to the painting from 1795 which gives the height as *c.* 7 cm less than now (see *6. Provenance*). Along the lower edge of the original canvas, which runs just under the horse's raised hooves, faint cusping can be seen. Comparing this with the deformation along the top edge it can be concluded that *c.* 10 cm of the original canvas is missing from the bottom. Because of interference between the wood grain of the stretcher and the weave in the X-radiograph, the cusping on the left and right cannot be traced exactly; on both sides a pattern of waves seems to show up in the canvas. Like the top edge, the right-hand side bears traces of a line of nail holes. The canvas has been roughly cut along this line such that only towards the top are a few intact holes left. Here there is a strip of filler measuring *c.* 1.5 cm up to the present edge. The signature is now cut off by the present right edge (see *Signature*), indicating that at least 8 to 10 cm of the original canvas are missing on the right.

In conclusion, it can be said that the height of the painting in its present form, including the added strip below, is more or less original. Only the width has been reduced, which offers an explanation for the painting's somewhat square format.

Thread count: 17.32 vertical threads/cm (15.5-22); 17.84 horizontal threads/cm (15.5-19). The smaller spread of the number of horizontal threads and a weaving flaw at the lower right edge below the centre (X-ray film no. 9 shows that three horizontal threads have been woven together), indicate that the warp runs horizontally. The added piece has a weave density of 12.9 vertical threads/cm (11.5-14); 12.9 horizontal threads/cm (12.5-

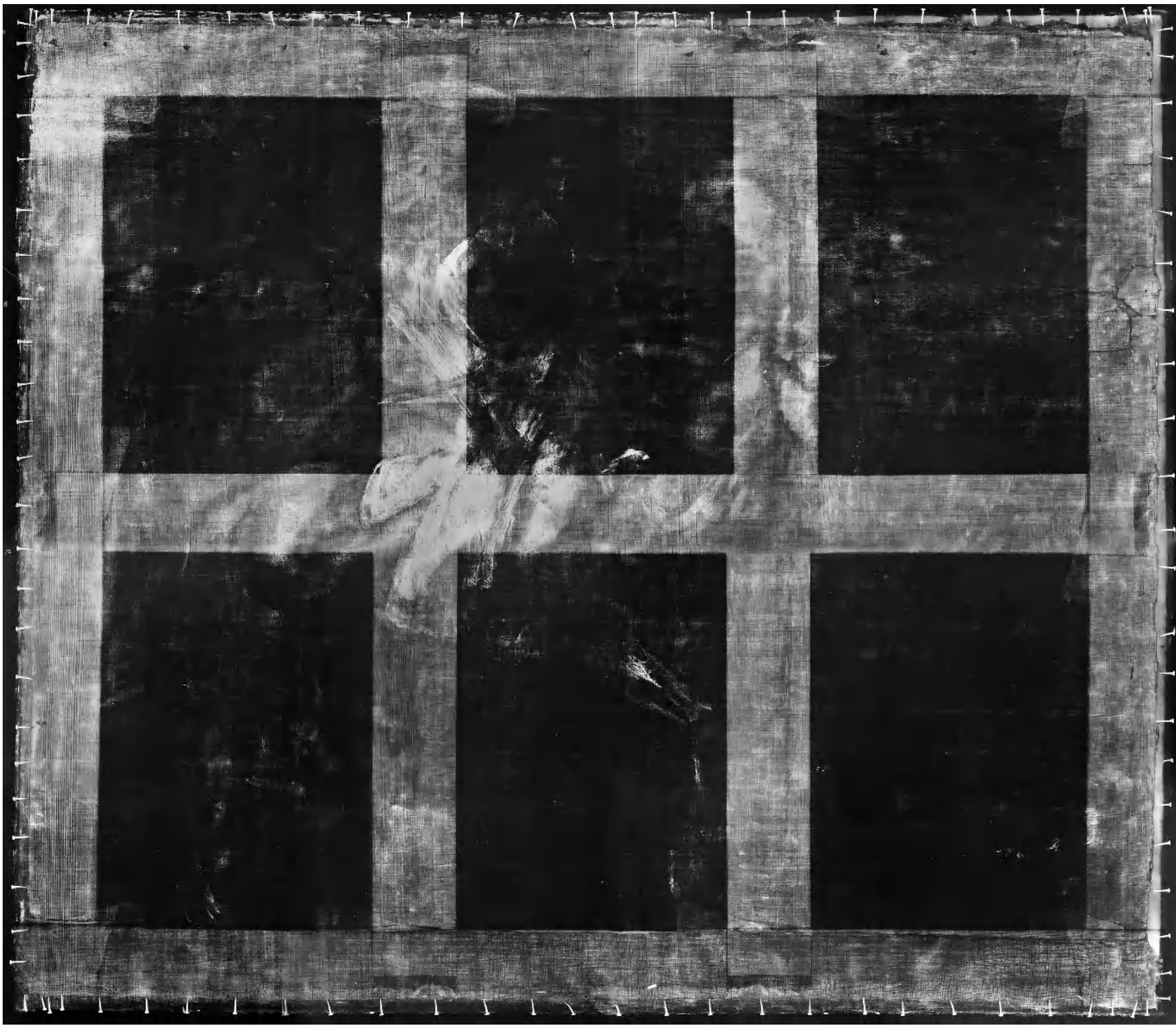
Fig. 1. Canvas 117.1 x 134.8 cm

13.5). This strip, whose warp also runs horizontally, is not sewn onto the original canvas but glued to the lining canvas. It must be regarded as a relatively late replacement of a section of the original canvas which for unknown reasons (possibly as a result of rising damp) could not be preserved. The presence of cusping in the addition indicates that a piece of canvas from another old painting was used for this purpose. This would accord with normal restoration methods in the past, in which old painted canvas was used to fill up gaps (see, for example, the strip added after 1723 to the *Anatomy lesson of Dr Deyman*, Br. 414, and the fillings in the *Night watch*, III A 146, for example in Van Ruytenburgh's boot).

Ground

A thin greyish brown layer in which the texture of the canvas is clearly visible has been left visible in various sections: in the horse's legs and head, in the spotted animal skin and

Fig. 2. X-Ray



locally in the landscape. A similar greyish brown layer lies exposed at many points in the landscape, especially on the right. Since the grey layer in these places shows lively brushstrokes, it is most unlikely that it is also simply exposed ground but is rather part of the paint layer.

Paint layer

Condition: The painting was cleaned and restored by William Suhr in 1950 (see fig. 3). The 1968 catalogue of the Frick Collection says of the condition of the *Polish Rider*, probably on his authority: 'Despite damage in limited areas, the general condition is good.' The initial examination by the RRP established that the impasto was slightly flattened and that there were repaired tears in the canvas in the rock on the left, below the stirrup and in the sky near the right edge. In addition, retouched paint losses were found in the horse's tail, behind its right hind leg and in front of its right foreleg. There was also some wearing

Fig. 3. During cleaning in 1950

and a small lacuna in the rider's left eyebrow. Further examinations led to the opinion that, while it was difficult to determine the extent to which the painting had been retouched, its condition was less good than first thought. The X-ray image reveals, for instance, that under the stirrup there is not only a tear but a much larger area of damage. A hole there has been filled with a separate piece of fabric. In the retouching at that spot free, black-brown strokes have been applied that are so well integrated in the overall paint surface that the damage is not noticeable. The question whether similar black strokes and lines found all over the background, are authentic is difficult to answer. To the left of the tail, locally along the horse's legs, to the left of the rein, to the right of the rider's head and along his sleeve and to the left and right of his leg and around the sabre there are blackish passages defining the contours. The question arises whether these are later additions or the remains of overcleaned paint. A point in favour of the latter theory is that remains of similar paint, giving the impression of having been overcleaned, are also found elsewhere, for example in the bare, greyish brown zones on the right of the background. The dark strokes in the tower in the right background have a glossy surface and were probably added during a restoration. To the left of the horse's tail there is a vertical area of deep damage, of which nothing can be seen on the surface.

In considering the painting technique one is faced by the question of which parts of the painting still correspond to the artist's intentions, and in which parts has its appearance been affected by later interventions. This does not apply, of course, to the strip along the bottom added and painted by later hands, although it too has a material history of its own. Compared with the pre-1950 reconstruction (fig. 4), the painting of this strip was radically revised by William Suhr (fig. 1) who accurately copied the worn character of the original passage above the strip. While this would seem to be only a minor part of the painting, it is important to realise that the reconstructed hooves contribute significantly to the general impression of the painting. For the viewer these hooves are the points on which the whole weight of the horse and its rider rest, as it were. It might be asked whether the fact that both hooves are slanted to the right and bear no sign of a cast shadow is not one of the main causes of a certain unstable impression given by horse and rider in the composition. To assess the impact of this intervention, one need only compare the painting in its present state (or a reproduction, see fig. 1) with the earlier attempt at reconstructing both hooves shown in the book by Bredius and elsewhere (fig. 4). In that rather primitively executed reconstruction, the bottom of the hooves formed a straight line and cast shadows running horizontally towards the right. In his reconstruction, Suhr omitted these shadows, thus weakening the sense that the hooves make contact with the ground. It seems, moreover, that in Suhr's reconstruction the legs became slightly longer than the artist intended. This could also be a major factor in the impression of instability produced by horse and rider. One must ask whether the apparently greater sophistication of Suhr's reconstruction did not do more damage to the painting as a whole than the earlier, rather more primitive attempt. (It may also have contributed to the attribution problems that have arisen.)

The issue of the effect of the condition on the appearance of the painting arises chiefly in connection with the background. Does the at first sight worn and locally retouched quality of this area, which extends like a backdrop behind the figure, reflect the intentions of the painter? Or, should we assume that this passage in its present condition no longer gives us an image of the maker's intentions? It is virtually certain that hardly any light-catching elements were included in this landscape, as is usual in Rembrandt's landscapes. If the landscape was, indeed, overcleaned, it would be exactly these lit parts – better able to withstand cleaning – that would be preserved.

The landscape is silhouetted against an opaquely executed, overcast grey sky in which on the left the impression is given in yellow and white paint that the sun is breaking through. To the left and right of the rider a rich variety of greys and browns together with dark, linear accents and occasional highlights in yellows and reds are used to depict an imposing hillside with buildings, which has suffered somewhat from overcleaning. The architecture and greenery are indicated in partly transparent, partly opaque greys and browns. The right-hand, lower part of the background and the foreground are particularly puzzling. The partially covered white and reddish strokes in the terrain to the right of the horse are curious; these touches and strokes look as though they are part of an underpainting now partly exposed, probably through wearing. The large shape at the right in the foreground, part of a boulder that was cut through when the canvas was trimmed on the right side, forms a kind of repoussoir in relation to the light strokes, behind which a road – possibly the one on which the horseman is riding – seems to disappear. The bank along the road is suggested in browns and ochrous yellows and judging by some dark-brown

Fig. 4. Pre- 1950 reconstruction of the strip added along the bottom

strokes and lines, appears to consist partly of rocks. Behind it, something is indicated by dark paint in horizontal bands which might be a pond or some such. This impression rests largely on the fact that on the top edge of this passage there is a small shape in yellow touches, which is repeated directly underneath in reversed form and a in a paler yellow. It looks like a fire reflected in the water. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that there is a figure to its right, done in a few strokes, on whom the fire's light shines. The execution in thin greys and browns of a large building on the hill behind the fire is conspicuously coarse. The building has a tower with a taller section on the right. The building itself appears to have transepts. The rounded shapes tending towards greyish green in front of and beside the tower on the right suggest trees. Above the line dividing sky and background rises an irregular treetop indicated by a few strokes. Dark green, rounded forms immediately next to the horse's head and

along the edge of the hill may indicate that the painter intended this part of the hill to be covered by yet more trees. All the elements mentioned in that part of the landscape seem to have suffered badly from overcleaning and to have been partly gone over by later hands.

When it comes to the dark areas (described above under *Condition*) along parts of the contours of the horse and rider, it is difficult to distinguish between what the painter intended and what is due to the condition of the work. Although they occur along the horse's breast and neck and along the outline of the rider's neck and arm on the right, they nevertheless belong to the landscape. Yet they are so tied to these forms that the curious effect is produced of horse and rider seeming to be directly connected to the background.

The *peinture* and the degree of detailing in the rider and his horse are remarkably varied. In the initial lay-out the horse's legs are indicated with sketchy, somewhat chaotic muddy brown strokes and lines, with an occasional arbitrary rim of light: the grey ground is left uncovered at many points. The lights in the body of the horse are shown by broad strokes and licks placed next to each other. Remarkably, the highlights in the horse's tail and haunch do not come near the contour, as they do at the rider's shoulder and elbow. The horse's shoulder is done with similar sweeping strokes. Only at the neck is the handling of the paint so homogeneous that a sense of its smooth muscularity is created. The structure of the horse's head is most convincingly and economically realised, with loose touches playing an important role. Grey reflections have been used in the breast of the horse, evidently in order to indicate the anatomical forms. This also occurs at the groin, where a pale brown reflected light indicates the transition from belly to haunch.

The harness is painted with great attention to detail. Linear edges, which appear as narrow cast shadows, separate the components from the horse's body. Strong highlights play a part at the bit, and are differentiated according to the metal depicted. Glancing touches at the right-hand part of the rein and the shadow it casts on the horse's neck suggest space in that part of the harness. The rendering of the animal skin which serves as a saddlecloth is achieved through yellowish touches that blur together and rather more clearly defined yellow and dark brown spots along the edge. The tail of the animal skin lies over the horse's hindquarters. The hind leg of the skin flaps upwards with the motion of the horse.

In the figure of the rider, the greatest care has been given to the accurate depiction of the weapons. This is equally true of the cut of the clothes and the shape of the boots, particularly in the foot and stirrup, the construction of the cap and the folds of the *żupan*. The rugged handling of paint in the coat draped over the horse's back enhances the effect of this passage where it catches the light of the low sun. This also applies to the sheen on the foot of the boot and the elbow thrust forward. The treatment of the weapons is markedly descriptive; they seem like a series of individual portraits done with meticulous precision. On the other hand, there are curious weaknesses in the construction and modelling of the rider. These include the failure to properly join the thigh, which is too short, to the buttock, the rightward shifting of the crown of the cap in relation to the skull, the incongruous length of both arms, and the noticeably weak construction of the hands, the one at the hip being especially oddly positioned in relation to the forearm. As discussed further under *Radiography* and *Comments*, we are dealing here with elements that are partly incomplete and in part seem to have been worked up by another hand.

Radiography

The X-ray image is substantially determined by cloudy marks that have nothing to do with the subject. For the rest, it largely corresponds with what is visible on the surface, apart from a few pentimenti or deviations from the underpainting in the final execution. It is hard to distinguish between these different types of variations between the X-ray image and what can be seen in the paint surface. An additional complication – as will be explained under *2. Comments* – is the possibility that the painting may have been partly completed by another hand. The greatest differences between the X-ray image and the paint surface occur where the *żupan* hangs down and in the rider's breeches and boot. It is precisely at these points that a very freely executed underpainting containing a great deal of lead white plays an important role in the radiograph. Two roughly sketched brushstrokes (running down from the bottom of the quiver) delineate the edge of the hanging part of the *żupan*. As indicated by paint along the bottom edge that shows up white, this part was originally longer (see fig. 7). In the area of the present tight red breeches, trunk hose was suggested by roughly placed brushstrokes. Next to the hollow of the knee, the leg of a boot is indicated. The red of the breeches covers up the forms painted earlier, though traces of them can be seen in the relief of the paint surface. In addition, at the position of the thrust-out elbow, the X-radiograph shows vigorous strokes in radioabsorbent paint which evidently belong to the underpainting and are covered by rather greyish paint in the shadowed area. Given the relative roughness of the brushstrokes used, it would seem that the hilt of the sabre, which was originally further to the left, the arrows, originally longer, and the bow, which was slightly higher, all belong to the initial design as well.

Signature

On the rock at the far right in black paint <*R*>> (see fig. 4).[2]

2. Comments

The attribution problem

In 1984 Bruyn suggested in passing that the *Polish Rider* might possibly be by Willem Drost (see note 1). He wrote: 'As the field [of the oeuvre of Drost] is further explored, one should not forget to take into account a number of paintings that until recently were accepted as Rembrandts or still are: the *Seated man with a stick* in London (National Gallery, no. 51), for example, already questioned by MacLaren, or the so-called *Polish Rider* in the Frick Collection, which shows striking affinities, to say the least, with

Fig. 5. W. Drost, *Ruth and Naomi*, early 1650s, canvas 87 x 71 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum

Drost's early, Rembrandtesque work.' Since Bruyn made his remarks on the *Polish Rider* there has been ongoing controversy about the attribution of this painting, and the myth that the RRP had definitely eliminated the *Polish Rider* from Rembrandt's oeuvre has been repeatedly voiced. Bruyn's doubts about the attribution to Rembrandt did find support, but until now no detailed analysis of the style and workmanship of the painting has been undertaken.

Bruyn's doubts are understandable from several points of view. The work lacks the coherence in the handling of space and light that characterises Rembrandt's paintings of full-length figures in a landscape or other setting. This point was also made by Grimm, who described the work as 'eine herausragende Komposition der Rembrandt-Nachfolge' ('an excellent composition from Rembrandt's circle').[3] Moreover, an almost excessive amount of attention is given to certain details whose meticulous execution does not match the rest of the brushwork, which is in places much freer. The fact that the figure is curiously 'loose' in the picture plane, in the sense of not being compositionally anchored – and hence unsteady – and the prevailing red-yellow colour values may have led Bruyn to embrace the view that an attribution to Drost could not be ruled out; compare, for example, the *Ruth and Naomi* attributed to Drost in Oxford (fig. 5).[4] The *Vision of Daniel* in Berlin (Br. 519) at that time still attributed to Drost by Kelch and Manuth among others – and formerly generally accepted as a Rembrandt – also shares some of the characteristics of the *Polish Rider* described above.[5] Once sown, the gnawing doubt took root. Each time we (from the RRP) were able to view the painting, we felt the same uncertainty. There are parts that are, indeed, too weak in execution and handling of form to be regarded as the work of Rembrandt, while others are typically Rembrandtesque in style, execution and quality.

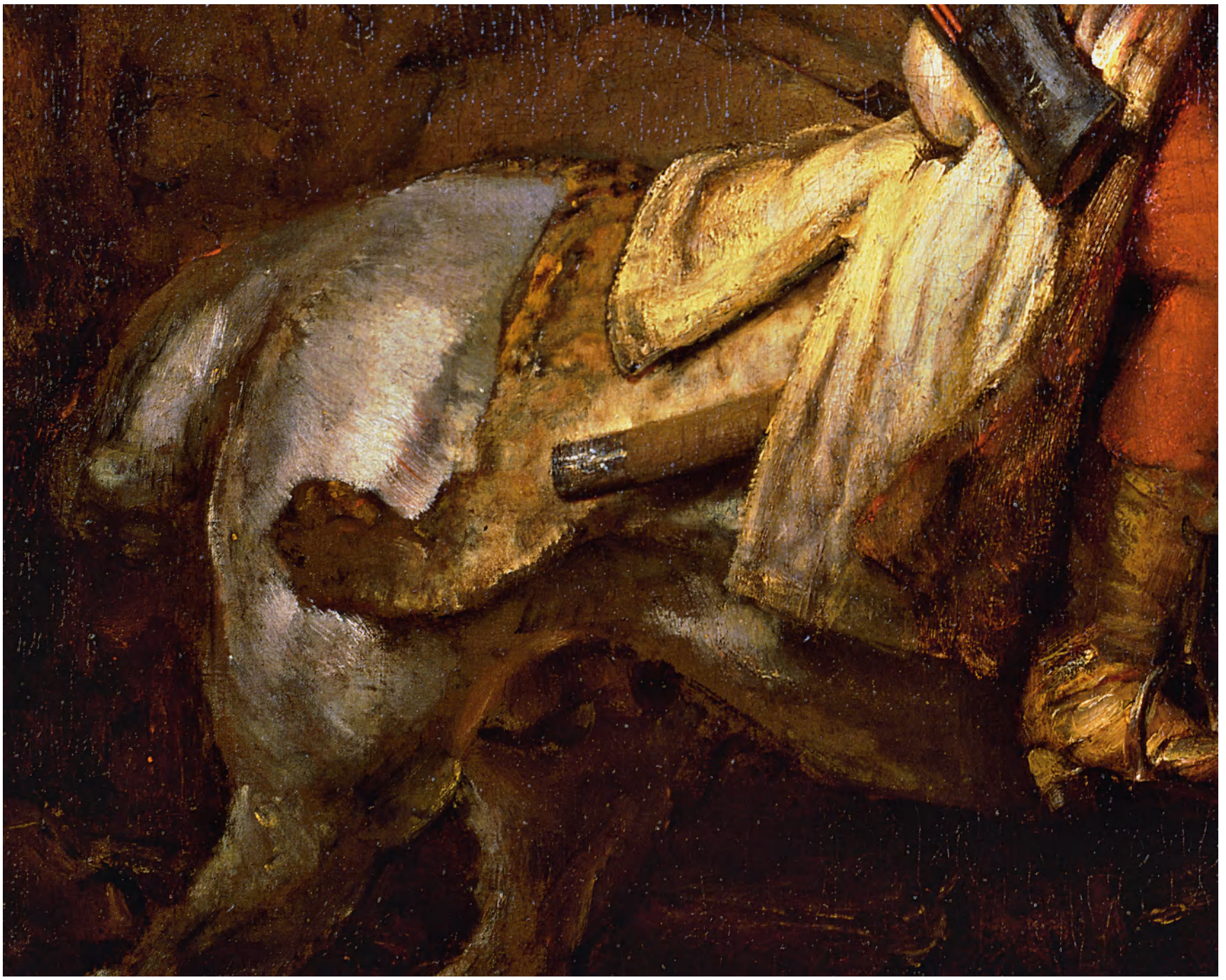
The disturbing areas include the horse's legs (to the extent that they are not by William Suhr), the hindquarters and tail. But the proportions of the figure of the rider are also oddly weak: the thigh is too short and does not align with his clearly marked buttock; the course of the outline of the calf is anatomically weak, and so are both hands, even more so. The crown of the cap done in the same red as the breeches appears to be out of alignment with the skull. These are primarily shortcomings in the definition of form. It is precisely in these passages that the *peinture* often lacks composure and where Rembrandt's typical efficient relation between form and brushwork is absent. This is especially evident in the horse's hind quarters and legs. Moreover, in these passages the treatment of light does not have the coherence and persuasiveness characteristic of Rembrandt.

On the basis of such passages, it is indeed difficult to believe that this is a work by Rembrandt.

On the other hand, other parts do not display such weaknesses and, as said, can even be regarded as characteristic of Rembrandt's hand and pictorial vision. They are the head and neck of the horse, where the complex forms and lighting are suggested with sureness of touch and an exceptionally efficient and differentiated *peinture*. The harness at the head and neck is also highly effectively handled in its clear structure, taut execution and differentiated rendering of materials. The role played by the highlights on the metal parts in suggesting their sheen and structure is characteristic of Rembrandt, as is the handling of the quiver with its sheaf of arrows, the war hammer, the bow and the scabbard of the sabre which emerges to the left of the *żupan*. Time and again, the superior mastery of form, rendering of materials and lighting is conspicuous; despite the depth of detail, the treatment is never finicky. The substance of the paint plays a role in the evocation of materials and in the strength of the reflection of light that is typical of Rembrandt. One need only look at how the intensity of light is augmented where the sheaf of arrows protrudes from the quiver, in part because of the concentration of roughened highlights there. The treatment and quality of such still-life-like elements are familiar from Rembrandt's finest and most ambitious paintings, such as the *Holy Family* (V 4) of 1645 in St Petersburg or the in certain details sublime *Portrait of Catharina Hoogsaet* (Br. 391) of 1657. There are also passages in the *żupan*, notably in the lit areas, which in their *peinture* and in their handling of the fall of the folds fit effortlessly into Rembrandt's oeuvre.

The same can be said of the approach to the landscape. The motif of a building with a depressed dome located high in the landscape is found in several works by Rembrandt and is marked by tectonic and perspectival strength. It is one of the motifs that contribute to the impression of stability that emanates from Rembrandt's landscapes and landscape background. (Compare the

Fig. 6. Detail (1:2)



Visitation of 1640 in Detroit, III A 138, *David's parting from Jonathan* of 1642 in St Petersburg, III C 84, reattributed to Rembrandt in this volume, *Susanna and the Elders* of 1638/47 in Berlin, V I and the *Landscape with a castle* of *c.* 1645 in Paris, Br. 450.)

How can these discrepancies in style and quality between the elements of this painting be explained? The first step towards a possible – and we believe convincing – answer can be found by looking more closely at the rider's boot (fig. 6), which displays a clear break in execution and approach to form. The foot of the boot is superbly modelled with a subtle perspective, so that the viewer sees the underside of the sole and the heel. The direction of the strokes depicting the golden sheen of the leather suggest a series of folds on the instep and at the ankle. At this point there is a striking break in the modelling and execution of the boot. The heel does not align with the contour of the boot leg. The direction of the folds in the leather in the boot-leg, bears no relation to that of the folds around the ankle. Moreover, the viewer has the impression that he is seeing the foot slightly from below, whereas in the case of the boot-leg, his eye must be above the boot in order to be able to see the elliptical segment of the inner edge at the left. The handling of paint and light in the boot leg differs completely from that in the foot. All things considered, the boot leg is not only fundamentally weaker than the foot; it also betrays a totally different painting temperament and a substantially more limited pictorial intelligence.

Fig. 7. X-Ray, detail (1:2)

A plausible conclusion from this analysis is that two hands were involved in the painting of the boot. Once this possibility is admitted, the division between the two hands at various places seems to become clear. For example, it runs immediately under the strongly lit parts of the hanging folds of the *żupan*. Below that point the *żupan*, including the turned-back corner, shows the same lack of ability as the boot leg. It is precisely in this passage that underpainting characteristic of Rembrandt shows up in the X-radiograph (see figs. 2 and 7). Could it be that the forms roughly indicated by Rembrandt were worked up by the second hand? The areas in question are the leg of the boot, the red breeches and the turned-back skirt of the *żupan*, the downward pointing tip of the horsehair tassel attached to the horse's bridle, and probably also a passage like the breast with the parts with the linked forelegs of the animal skin shown on it, and the red in the rider's cap.

Other parts which contribute to the impression that the painting is not by Rembrandt's hand may have been left in the underpainting stage. This applies, for example, to the horse's legs, hindquarters and tail as well as the landscape and the terrain in which the rider is placed. With very good lighting it can be seen that the complicated forms of the legs are sketched with grey, and here and there lighter, highlights. In these passages, at many points the ground has remained uncovered. A similar working method is evident in the largely unfinished *Portrait of a young boy* in Pasadena (Br. 119). Equally, the way in which the rider's

hands are indicated in opaque, flesh-coloured paint, with little differentiation in form and lighting, gives the impression that, compared with the delicately handled parts of the costume and the weapons, these elements are in a provisional state. The shirt of the boy in the painting in Pasadena, which is also depicted in pastose paint but shows neither detailing nor indications of the highlights, may provide a parallel. The difference is, however, that we have the sense that in the *Polish Rider* another hand has been at work locally to make certain passages 'presentable'. It is not inconceivable that some paintings, among them the *Polish Rider*, were hastily finished by others in connection with Rembrandt's impending bankruptcy. They may also have included the Berlin *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* (V 22).

The possibility that Rembrandt left other works unfinished, which were then brought closer to completion by other hands – inside or outside his workshop – is considered in Chapter V of this volume. The work to which the *Polish Rider* seems most closely related in this respect is the *Moses with the tablets of the law* in Berlin (Br. 527). There, too, the figure is placed against a background which is a transparent brown, worked up here and there with opaque grey paint, and clearly unfinished. Again, some parts of the *Moses* are close to completion – the tablets of the law, the strongly lit areas of Moses' robe – while the head seems to be done only in a light underpainting and the hands are merely sketched. Thus, another hand appears to have brought parts of the painting, particularly in Moses' torso and hip, done in hatching strokes, to a certain level of 'completion'.

While earlier viewers of the *Polish Rider* were blind to its weak elements and read the qualities of the strong parts into the less successful ones, in recent years the opposite seems to have been the case. Partly as a result of Bruyn's questioning the painting's authenticity, the deficient, possibly non-autograph parts, as well as the passages that must be regarded as unfinished, have predominated in the view some have taken of the work's style and quality. The explanation offered here may be said to take full account of the curious discrepancies in the *Polish Rider* and will hopefully reopen viewers' eyes, where necessary, to the unmistakably Rembrandtesque qualities of this exceptional painting.

The *Polish Rider* is normally dated to around 1655. Rembrandt's production of the 1650s does not, however, show the kind of logical development that would make possible such an exact dating. However, one argument in favour of a date of 1655 is that in that year Rembrandt painted two other works showing the characteristic combination of a broad, 'rough' treatment and meticulous, almost still-life-like definition of certain elements that is typical of the *Polish Rider*. They are the Berlin *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* (V 22) and the *Slaughtered ox* in Paris (V 21). Another point they have in common with the *Polish Rider* is that the scenes depicted full-length within this group in Rembrandt's oeuvre are relatively large in scale.

Iconographic problems

Bode introduced the *Polish Rider* in the art-historical literature in 1883 as 'an equestrian portrait by the hand of Rembrandt'. In his view, the painting showed a young Polish magnate (a nobleman) in national dress.[6] His interpretation was in line with the name normally given to the painting in Poland at the time. Since then, numerous attempts have been made to arrive at a more specific interpretation. So far none has been found that is satisfactory in all respects. Is it, indeed, a portrait of a Pole, as Bode proposed? Or can the rider be identified, as has been attempted in the many interpretations put forward, as an allegorical figure or a historical hero?

In most of the suggested readings, great importance is attached to the fact that the painting was in Poland for a long time, although its presence there cannot be traced further back than to 1791. In that year, it was sent by Michał Kazimierz Ogiński (1730-1800), grand hetman (commander-in-chief) of Lithuania, to his cousin by marriage, the Polish king Stanisław Augustus.[7] A letter written by Ogiński, which was dated 'mediis Augusti 1791' by the Polish king on receipt, begins with the cryptic lines: 'I am sending Your Majesty a Cossack, whom Rembrandt has set on his horse. The horse has eaten during his stay with me for 420 German gulden' (see *6. Provenance*).[8] In the inventory drawn up in 1793 of the Polish royal collection in the Łazienki palace in Warsaw the painting is also listed as a 'Cosaque à cheval' (see *6. Provenance*).

Only after it had been in the possession of the Stroynowski family for a considerable time[9] was the work seen as a portrait of a 'Lisowczyk', an officer in a famous regiment that was commanded by Aleksander Lisowski from early in 1600 to about 1630. This new reading was most probably a reference to an ancestor of the Stroynowskis who had served in the regiment. At the 1898 Rembrandt exhibition in Amsterdam, where the painting became widely known through the efforts of Bredius, it was described in the catalogue as a 'portrait of a Polish rider in the dress of Lisowski's regiment in a landscape'. However, since the name 'Lisowczyk' crops up only after the painting came into the possession of the Stroynowksi family, this identification, as Held demonstrated, rests on nothing more than a supposition.[10]

Still, this does not rule out the possibility that it is a portrait. In 1904 it was suggested that the rider might be Titus, an idea which has found little support in the literature.[11] However, great efforts have been made to identify the *Polish Rider* as the portrait of another Pole, rather than the anonymous 'Lisowczyk'.[12] Two specific identifications have been proposed. On the assumption that the painting had long been in the possession of the Ogińskis, Broos argued that the rider must be a member of this family. Several Ogińskis spent lengthy periods in the Netherlands in the 17th and 18th century. Broos believed the most likely candidate to be Szymon Karol Ogiński (*c.* 1621-1699). Szymon Karol was enrolled at Franeker as a student of 'eloquentia' in 1641; he married a Dutch woman a few years later and lived in Groningen during 1648-1653.[13]

Chrościcki, on the other hand, saw it as a portrait of Marcjan Aleksander Ogiński (1632-1690), a cousin of Szymon Karol, who was enrolled at the University of Leiden in 1650 and joined the Lithuanian army a year later. Chrościcki saw similarities in physiognomy between the

Fig. 8. S. della Bella, *Moorish horseman*, etching

Fig. 9. S. della Bella, *Hungarian horseman*, etching

rider in the painting and a portrait (formerly attributed to Ferdinand Bol) which in his view, also showed Marcjan Aleksander Ogiński.[14] However, in our view these similarities are not compelling. Moreover, it is not clear whether this Ogiński came back to the Netherlands after 1651. Assuming, as is normally done, that the painting dates from around 1655, this makes Chrościcki's identification rather improbable. Another argument against both the above identifications is that there is nothing in the letter of 1791 quoted to suggest that the work had long been owned by the family. On the contrary, the amount cited in German guilders leads one to suspect that Michał Kazimierz Ogiński bought the painting during his stay in 1791 in the Netherlands (or Germany) – unless the amount mentioned of '420 German gulden' which 'the horse has eaten during his stay with me' should be read as an elegantly formulated claim for expenses. But even then, it cannot have been purchased much before 1791.

As to whether the *Polish Rider* can be viewed as a portrait, it has been pointed out that the equestrian portrait was not a widely practised genre in the Dutch Republic of the 17th century.[15] Held distinguished two standard types, of which the first showed the sitter life-size on a prancing horse. Rembrandt's *Portrait of Frederick Rihel* in London (Br. 255) belongs to this category. The second type is small in format and shows the subject on a reduced scale. Since the *Polish Rider* does not match either of these types, Held concluded that it could not be a portrait. While recognising the categories described by Held, Broos was not prepared to relinquish the idea that it is a portrait.[16] He argued that, because there was no strong tradition of equestrian portraits in the Northern Netherlands, Rembrandt had here created a new type, also taking as his model prints of horsemen of various nationalities by Abraham de Bruyn and Stefano della Bella (figs. 8 and 9).[17] Broos further pointed out that the horse, with its characteristic build, could possibly be regarded as a portrait of a Polish breed.[18]

In addition to suggestions that the painting is a portrait, attempts have been made to identify the rider as an allegorical figure. The young man's idealised, or at least not markedly individualised, features led Held to identify him as 'Miles Christianus': '[one] of those soldiers of Eastern Europe who were still carrying on the traditions and ideals of Christian knighthood', that is, in their struggle against the Muslim Turks.[19] It might be argued against Held's proposal that the Polish cavalry did not exclusively fight the Turkish infidels. In the 17th century, the Poles were just as well known as the opponents of such fellow Christians as the Russians, the Prussians and the Swedes.[20]

Along the same lines, Białostocki saw the rider as a champion of religious freedom. He suggested, though with some reservations, that the *Polish Rider* could be linked to the pamphlet *Apologia pro veritate Accusata* which the Socinian Jonasz Szlichtyng published in Amsterdam in 1654 under the pseudonym 'Eques Polonus'.[21] Such a connection, however, is extremely unlikely because the image of the heavily armed rider hardly accords with the ideals of the pacifist Socinians.[22]

Lastly, there are the various interpretations of the *Polish Rider* as a historical or literary figure. Valentiner thought that the rider represented the hero of a play by the poet Vondel, Gijsbrecht van Aemstel, after his arrival in East Prussia or Poland after fleeing from Amsterdam.[23] Other suggested identifications – also taken from the theatre – are 'Sigismund, Prince of Poland'[24] and 'Tamerlan' of Turkey by Joannes Serwouters.[25] Slatkes believed he could recognise in the rider the 'young David (…), as an example as well as a prefiguration of Christ' whom Vondel described.[26] The problem with all these interpretations is that none covers all the elements of the work.[27]

In 1970 Campbell proposed that the painting depicted

the departure of the Prodigal Son.[28] Going back to a pictorial tradition developed mainly in prints, he suggested that the young man's clothing, his horse and his weapons were signs of his initial wealth and status. According to Campbell, the brightening sky and the low yellow light shining on the rider from the left indicate dawn, the time at which the Prodigal Son left his father's house. While there is much to be said for this interpretation, serious objections can also be raised. The purse normally carried by the Prodigal Son is missing, as is the dog who in the pictorial tradition always accompanies him. It has been remarked, moreover, that the absence of these attributes would be understandable only if the painting in New York were part of a series, because then the meaning would be apparent from the context.[29] Tümpel argues that the horseman has been taken out of the framework of a particular scene ('Herauslösung') and that therefore Campbell's proposal is the most persuasive, although he concedes that a conclusive identification of the rider is scarcely possible in the absence of further clues.[30]

The rider's typically Polish outfit makes it unlikely, however, that he is intended to be a biblical figure.[31] Authors like Campbell and Slatkes thought that no special importance should be attached to any nationality possibly indicated by his attire, claiming that the dress and weapons were not specifically Polish but might also be of Hungarian or more generally East European origin.[32] Żygulski, however, produced telling reference material which convincingly demonstrated that the dress and weapons were characteristically Polish. The rider's pose, and even the horse's build, according to Żygulski were also typical of the Polish light cavalry of the 17th century.[33]

In the Northern Netherlands there was evident interest in, and detailed knowledge of, Polish dress and weapons. This was reflected in contemporary inventories in which portraits of people are described as 'Polish'. These may have been portraits of Poles[34] or portraits of Dutch sitters who had themselves depicted in Polish dress.[35] A comparison, such as drawn by Broos among others, between the dress and weapons of the *Polish Rider* and those of Otto van der Waeyen in a portrait painted in 1656 by Ferdinand Bol reveals some striking similarities.[36] The boy wears a yellow *żupan* of the same type, red breeches and boots. He holds a similar kind of war hammer and on the ground lies a quiver of virtually the same shape (figs. 10 and 11).[37] We know that Polish clothing was available because in their will an Amsterdam couple left their son his portrait together with his Polish clothes.[38] The fact that boys or young men in particular were portrayed in Polish outfits can be explained by the martial associations evoked by the Poles in the 17th century.[39] In paintings by Albert Cuyp, for example, young riders are shown dressed in a costume with many Polish elements.[40] Here the Poles' reputation for being excellent horsemen may well have played a role.

Another type of painting is the 'Polish *tronie*' mentioned in a Haarlem inventory of 1662.[41] A number of these *tronies* have been preserved, for example the *Boy with cap* by Jacob Adriaensz Backer in Rotterdam.[42] His dress can be characterised as Polish because of the braiding where the cloak closes and similar decorations on his shoulder together with the fur cap. It is clear that this is not a portrait, but a *tronie* in the Polish manner.[43] Related examples include the paintings listed as 'a Polish ensign',[44] and the 'Polish trumpeter' which was owned by Gerrit Uylenburg in 1675.[45]

Portraits or *tronies* in Polish dress were not the only reflection of the Dutch fascination with Poland. Broos pointed out that there were – and still are – many stone tablets on houses, especially in Amsterdam, depicting Poles or Polish riders, like the one with a '[P]oolse Cavelyie[r]' (fig. 12), which has much in common with the painting under consideration here.[46] As emerged above, many Poles featured in Dutch theatre, often as the stereotypical short-tempered, proud nobleman.[47] This knowledge of and interest in Poland no doubt arose from the close trade relations with the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth and in particular Gdańsk, where in the 16th and 17th centuries the Dutch bought grain, timber and furs. This business was so vital to the Netherlands that it was sometimes called the 'mother trade'.[48] For this reason, the many wars in which the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth was involved during the 17th century were closely followed in Holland, especially the Second Northern War between Poland, Russia and Sweden from 1655 to 1660. The stream of Dutch pamphlets from these years attests to the Dutch interest in the Polish cause.[49] They reveal a great admiration for the courage of the Poles in this war, which from 1656 took on the character of a daring and effective guerrilla campaign in which a decisive factor was that 'de Polen seer wel te paerden saten en bereden waren' (the Poles were very well mounted and experienced horsemen).[50] The larger part of the cavalry was made up of members of the Polish nobility, whose proud character and their equipment were described by several Dutchmen.[51]

The painting of a young, armed Polish rider considered here fits in well with the image of the valiant Polish nobleman found during this period in Dutch writings and graphic art. Given that, as stated, the painting is not related to Dutch equestrian portraits and that it offers too few clues for an identification with an allegorical, historical or biblical figure, it is possible that here a more general, idealised image is presented of the brave Polish cavalryman such as evidently stirred the imagination, especially during the 1650s. In that case the traditional title 'The Polish Rider' is appropriate. Contemporaries would then have placed it in the same category as the paintings listed in inventories as 'Polish ensign' or 'Polish trumpeter'.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

Fig. 10. Detail (1:2)

Fig. 11. F. Bol, *Otto van der Waeyen in polish costume*, 1656, canvas 158 x 120 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen

5. Copies

In 1910 a copy of the *Polish Rider* was made in London for Count Zdzisław Tarnowski by the portraitist Ambrose McEvoy. This copy was lost in a fire at Castle Dzików.[52]

6. Provenance

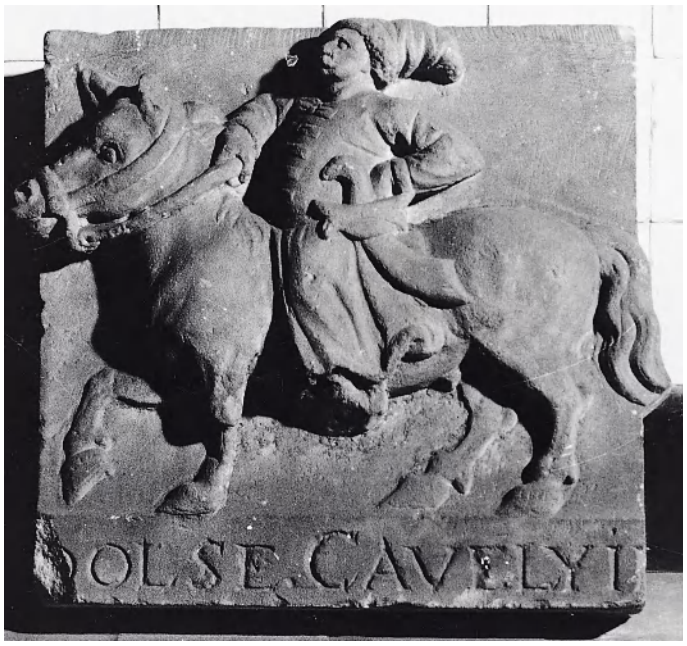
– Possibly bought in Holland or Germany by Michał Kazimierz Ogiński (1730-1800). According to a letter, received 'mediis Augusti 1791', to the Polish king, Stanisław II Augustus, Ogiński wrote he was in the process of sending the Rembrandt painting to the king in exchange for some orange trees: 'Sire, Odsyłam Waszey Królewskiey Mości Kozaka którego Reinbrand osadził na koniu, zjadł ten koń przez byność swoją u mnie 420 guldynów niemieckich. Sprawiedliwa Łaska Waszey Królewskiey Mości spodziewać mi się każe, że pomarańczowe drzewa w tey proporcyi zakwitną, do nóg upadam. Waszey Królewskiey Mości, PMM nayniższy sługa, Michał Ogiński HWL.' (Sire, I am sending Your Majesty a Cossack, whom Rembrandt had set on his horse. This horse has eaten during his stay with me for 420 German gulden. Your Majesty's justice and generosity allows me to expect that orange trees will flower in the same proportion. Bowing to your feet, Your Majesty's – My Lord Master's – most humble servant, Michał Ogiński G[rand] H[etman] of L[ithuania]).[53]
This letter was probably sent from The Hague, where Ogiński spent most of 1790 and the spring of 1791, though he had been in Berlin in April. The mention of German guilders leaves open the possibility that the painting was not acquired in the Netherlands but in Germany.
– Royal Collection of King Stanisław II Augustus (1732-1798) at the Łazienki Palace, Warsaw, where it is included in the inventory of 1793 as a 'Cosaque à cheval', and where the dimensions are given as 44 by 54 cals [= 109.1 x 133.9 cm] (180 ducats).[54]
– By descent to Prince Józef Poniatowski (d. 1813).
– In 1813 by descent to Countess Teresa Tyszkiewiczowa née Poniatowska.
– Sold on 3 June 1814 in Warsaw to Prince Franciszek Ksawery Drucki-Lubecki (1779-1846) through the intermediary Sartorius von Schwanefeld (150 ducats).
– Coll. Bishop of Vilnius (Wilno), Count Hieronim Stroynowski (d. 1815) (500 ducats).
– By descent to Walerian Stroynowski, Palace Horochów in Volhynia.
– In 1821 by descent to Waleria Tarnowska née Stroynowska and her husband Jan Feliks Tarnowski, Castle Dzików. The painting remained in the collection of this family until it was sold in 1910 by Count Zdzisław Tarnowski.
– Carfax Gallery, London.
– M. Knoedler & Co., New York.
– Coll. Henry Clay Frick since 1910 (purchased for $ 308,651.25).

NOTES

* The conclusions of this entry have already been summarized in E. van de Wetering, *The painter at work*, Amsterdam 1997/2009, pp. 207-21.
E. van de Wetering, 'Thirty years of the Rembrandt Research Project: The Tension Between Science and Connoisseurship in Authenticating Art.' in: *IFAR Journal*, International Foundation for At Research, New York, Vol. 4, Number 2, 2001, pp. 14-24.

1. J. Bruyn, '[review of] Sumowski *Gemälde* I', *O.H.* 98 (1984), pp. 146-162, esp. 158. For a discussion of the controversy, see: A. Bailey, *Responses to Rembrandt*, New York 1993, esp. pp. 83-96.
2. According to Br.-Gerson 279: <*Re*>.
3. C. Grimm, 'Gewitterlandschaften zur Ausdruckssprache des späten Rembrandts', *Kunstpresse* 5 (1991), pp. 23-28, esp. 24.
4. Sumowski *Gemälde* I, no. 311; J. Bikker, *Willem Drost (1633-1658). A Rembrandt pupil in Amsterdam, Rome and Venice*, doct. thesis Utrecht 2001, p. 63 no. 1.
5. Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, cat. no. 82.
6. W. Bode, *Studien zur Geschichte der holländischen Malerei*, Braunschweig 1883, p. 499: 'ein junger polnischer Magnat in seinem Nationalkostüm'.
7. A. Ciechanowiecki, 'Notes on the Polish Rider', *Art Bull.* 42 (1960), pp. 294-296. Before Ciechanowiecki published this letter, it was generally assumed that the painting had been bought by Michał Kleophas Ogiński, who was Polish Envoy Extraordinary to Holland and England in 1790-91, for the collection of the Polish king. The article discusses the source of this misunderstanding.
8. See Ciechanowiecki, op. cit.[7], p. 295. See also J.S. Held, 'Rembrandt's Polish Rider', *Art Bull.* 26 (1944), pp. 246-265. In this entry use has been made of the revised version in: *Rembrandt's "Aristotle" and other Rembrandt studies*, Princeton 1969, pp. 45-84, esp. 49; B.P.J. Broos, 'Rembrandt's portrait of a Pole and his horse', *Simiolus* 7 (1974), pp. 192-218, esp. 214.
9. See Held, op. cit.[8], p. 51.
10. Held, op. cit.[8], pp. 51-52. See also J.A. Chrościcki, 'Rembrandt's Polish Rider. Allegory or portrait?', *Ars Auro Prior. Studia Ioanni Białostocki sexagenario dicata*, Warsaw 1981, pp. 441-448, esp. 443.
11. See Chrościcki, op. cit.[10], p. 443.
12. Bode, op. cit.[6], p. 499; Z. Żygulski, 'Rembrandt's "Lisowczyk": a study of costume and weapons', *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie* 6 (1965), pp. 43-67, esp. 55; J. Białostocki, 'Rembrandt's "Eques Polonus" ', *O.H.* 84 (1969), pp. 163-176, esp. 167; Broos, op. cit.[8], pp. 194 and 218; Chrościcki, op. cit.[10], p. 446.
13. Broos, op. cit.[8], p. 194.
14. Chrościcki, op. cit.[10], pp. 446-47. Blankert *Bol*, p. 175, no. R 117, rejects the attribution to Bol. The theory that the painting depicts Marcjan Aleksander Ogiński rests on the initials M.O. and below them the letters (S)T.R. in the bottom right-hand corner. Chrościcki says that the second abbreviation refers to Ogiński's post of ensign or 'chorąży trocki' in Polish, which he held from 1647 to 1654.

Fig. 12. Tablet, Schapensteeg 12, Amsterdam



15. See Held, op. cit.[8], pp. 55-56 and Broos, op. cit.[8], pp. 194-198; on the equestrian portrait in the Netherlands see also C. Dumas, exhib. cat. *In het zadel. Het Nederlands ruiterportret van 1550 tot 1900*, Fries Museum, Leeuwarden/Noordbrabants Museum, 's Hertogenbosch/Provinciaal Museum van Drenthe, Assen, 1979/1980.
16. Broos, op. cit.[8], p. 198.
17. See Held, op. cit.[8], Żygulski, op. cit.[12], and Broos, op. cit.[8]. Della Bella made the etchings of Polish riders in 1633 during the arrival of the envoy Jerzy Ossoliński in Rome. In 1647 Della Bella visited Amsterdam, and he may then have visited Rembrandt's studio.
18. Broos, op. cit.[8], pp. 202-206. The specifically Polish breed, which in its build could be distinguished from heavier Western breeds such as the Frisian and Spanish, died out at the beginning of the 19th century. See also Żygulski, op. cit.[12], p. 53.
19. Held, op. cit.[8], pp. 78-81.
20. See W. Majewski, 'The Polish art of war in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in: J.K. Fedorowicz (ed.), *A republic of nobles: studies in Polish history to 1864*, Cambridge 1982, pp. 182-197.
21. Białostocki, op. cit.[12], pp. 174-175. Soon afterwards the pamphlet was translated into Dutch and played an important part in the theological debate.
22. Moreover, during the 17th century the prefix *eques* was used in Poland to distinguish members of the non-senatorial nobility (*Ordo equestris*). Broos, op. cit.[8], p. 216, note 61, also makes this point and Białostocki, op. cit.[12], p. 175, concedes as much. E. Haverkamp-Begemann, 'The present state of Rembrandt studies', *Art Bull.* 53 (1971), pp. 98-99, refutes Białostocki's interpretation altogether.
23. W.R. Valentiner, 'Rembrandt's conception of historical portraiture', *Art Quarterly* 11 (1948), pp. 116-135, esp. 130-135. Bauch 1966, p. 12, agrees with Valentiner's interpretation. This identification is, however, most unlikely since according to Vondel's text Gijsbrecht was already very old when he undertook this journey; moreover, he travelled by boat.
24. By J.Z. Kannegieter, 'De Poolse Ruiter I-II', *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 24/4 (1970), pp. 81-88. The play was first performed in 1647 and was published as: *Sigismundus, prince van Poolen*, Amsterdam 1654.
25. Schwartz 1984, pp. 277-278. It appeared in print as: J. Serwouters, *Den grooten Tamerlan, met de doodt van Bayaset de I, Turks Keizer*, Amsterdam 1657. A particular difficulty with this identification is that the first performance of the play was not until 1657. Schwartz accordingly dates the painting around 1657.
26. I Sam. 18:27; see L.J. Slatkes, *Rembrandt and Persia*, New York 1983, p. 84, and in: L.J. Slatkes, *Rembrandt, catalogo completo*, Florence 1992, no. 28, pp. 68-70.
27. For a critical review of Rembrandt's supposed borrowings from the Amsterdam theatre and in particular criticism of Schwartz's standpoint, see: M. Meyer Drees, 'Rembrandt en het toneel in Amsterdam', *Nieuwe taalgids* 70/5 (1985), pp. 414-421.
28. C.G. Campbell, 'Rembrandt's Polish Rider and the Prodigal Son', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970), pp. 292-303, and by the same author: 'The identity of Rembrandt's Polish Rider', in: O. v. Simson and J. Kelch (eds.), *Neue Beiträge zur Rembrandt-Forschung*, Berlin 1973, pp. 126-134.
29. This is one of the points raised by M. Winner in the discussion of Campbell's contribution, see Campbell, op. cit.[28] (1973), pp. 135-136. In the same discussion Held rightly remarks that the 'outspoken military character of the horseman as well as the setting' do not support an identification as the Prodigal Son. See also Broos, op. cit.[8], p. 194.
30. Tümpel 1986, p. 405, no. 123.
31. On the Polish costume, see: I. Turnau, *History of dress in central and eastern Europe from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century*, Warsaw 1991, pp. 71-85. On Polish weapons, see: Z. Żygulski,, *Broń w Dawnej Polsce*, Warsaw 1975. Compare also the weapons and dress in the portraits in the exhib. cat. *Where East meets West. Portrait of personages of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1576-1763*, The National Museum Warsaw 1993, nos. 28, 56, 57, 64, 106, 174.
32. Held, op. cit.[8], p. 60; Slatkes op. cit.[26], pp. 66-80, emphasised that the Polish weapons and dress had come from the Near East and Central Asia. This was indeed the case originally, but from the 16th century onwards it is possible to speak of a specifically Polish national costume. See Turnau, op. cit.[31].
33. Żyygulski, op. cit.[12]. Cropping horses' ears was not a typically Polish practice but a fashion that was common throughout Europe in the 17th century. Especially in Germany but in other Northern European countries too the nostrils of almost all horses were also slit open. See J. de Solleysel, *Le parfait Maréchal*, The Hague 1691 (8th edition), vol. II, p. 8; D.J. Kok, *Wahrheit und Dichtung in den Reiter- und Pferdegemälden und Zeichnungen berühmter holländischer Maler*, Würzburg 1933, p. 14.
34. The 1645 inventory of Willem Hendricksz. and his wife Delia Hoogenhuys lists, for example, '1 contrefeytsel van een Poolse eedelman' (1 portrait of a Polish nobleman). In this case there can be no doubt that a portrait of a Pole was involved. GAA, DBK 351, fol. 64v-69v, dd. 20 May 1645.
35. For example, the 1680 inventory of Joan Snel lists the portraits of a man and a woman 'op sijn Poolsch uytgehaelt' (dressed Polish style). GAA, not. M. Baars, NA 3758 A, act 687, pp. 228-259, dd. 7 February 1680.
36. Blankert *Bol*, cat. no. 139. Although the arms of the Van der Waeyen family at the top right are a later addition, the identification of the sitter is fairly certain. Such arms were often added on the basis of the family tradition about the person portrayed, and the inventory of Dirck van der Waeyen, Otto's father, of 14 July 1670 lists 'een conterfeytsel van Otto van der Waeyen door Ferdinand Bol' (a portrait of Otto van der Waeyen by Ferdinand Bol). GAA, not. N. Brouwer, NA 3928, fol. 139-150, dd. 14 July 1670. The inventory does not mention any of the weapons depicted in the painting. Otto van der Wayen's clothing is also missing. This identification is further supported on the grounds of the provenance by R.E.O. Ekkart in: exhib. cat. *Nederlandse Portretten uit de 17e eeuw*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam 1995, pp. 54-56.
37. Other interesting portraits in Polish costume which appear to have been done after existing models include the *Portrait of a man in Polish costume*, once attributed to Ferdinand Bol, in Santa Barbara, University of California (Blankert *Bol*, cat. R[ejected] 142) and Caspar Netscher's *Portrait of a boy in Polish costume*, panel 26 x 21.5 cm, Cracow, Museum Czartoryski, inv. no. XII-263. This boy wears a yellow *żupan* and a blue *kontusz* (outer caftan). Incidentally, the man painted by Rembrandt in 1638 who is called *Man in Polish costume* (III A 122) must be identified on the grounds of the costume as a Russian boyar, and not as a Pole.
38. GAA, not. J. de Vlieger, NA 3656, fol. 452, dd. 27 January 1705. Will of Joan Cloppenburch and his wife Geertruijd van Swaenswijk in which they bequeath to their son Johannes Cloppenburch: 'mede noch desselfs pourtraict oft schilderije, mitsgaders oock sijn Poolse clederen' (also his portrait or painting, together with his Polish clothes).
39. For example, in the sale of the estate of the painter Abraham Vinck on 24 August 1621: 'Een Poolsche jongen *f* 24:10:-' (A Polish boy *f* 24:10:-), see N. de Roever, 'Drie Amsterdamsche schilders', *O.H.* 3 (1885), pp. 171-222, esp. 185. In the inventory of Coert Cooper: '1 schilderij van een jonge Pool' (1 painting of a young Pole). GAA, DBK 356, fol. 50v-65v, dd. 21 March-2 April 1650. In the inventory of Jacobus Bernardus de Bruyn is: 'Een jongelings contrefijtsel ophebbende een Poolsche muts met een pluym, in een swarte lijst' (A portrait of a young man wearing a Polish cap with a feather, in a black frame). GAA, DBK 365, fol. 159-162, dd. 26 February 1659.
40. For example, in Albert Cuyp's *Michiel and Cornelis Pompe van Meerdervoort with their tutor starting for the hunt, c.* 1652-53, canvas 109.9 x 156.2 cm; New York,

Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 32.100.20.

41. GA. Haarlem, not. H. van Gellinckhuysen, NA 341, p. 3, dd. 4 September 1662, inventory of Josina van Nesten: 'een Poolse tronij met een ebben binne lijst' (a Polish *tronie* with an ebony inner frame). Also: GAA, not. L. Lamberti, NA 569, pp. 355-363, dd. 7 May 1638 (partially published in *O.H.* 5, 1887, pp. 236-237), in the inventory of Cornelis Aertsz. [van Beijeren]: 'Poolse troni [crossed out and replaced by: Antyckse trony] met een pluim' (Polish *tronie* [crossed out and replaced by: *tronie* à l'antique] with a feather).
42. Sumowski *Gemälde* I, no. 48.
43. Another painting that can be characterised as a Polish *tronie* is Pieter Quast's *Man in Polish costume* of 1638 (III A 122 fig. 5). See also the painting of a *Boy in Polish costume* by Karel Slabbaert (ill. in Sumowski *Gemälde* I, p. 519).
44. In the 1701 inventory of Angenietje van Paderode, widow of the Dordrecht painter Pieter Calraet: 'Noch een Poolse vendrich' (Another Polish ensign), see Br. *Künstler-Inv.* I, p. 316, no. 173.
45. Inventory of Gerrit Uylenburg: 'Poolse trompetter van Jan Bor *f* 54:-:-' (Polish trumpeter by Jan Bor *f* 54:-:-). GAA, DBK 879, part 340, dd. 16 October 1675. See also: Br. *Künstler-Inv.* V, p. 1671, no. 140.
46. Broos, op. cit.[8], pp. 208-209. For additional examples, see P. van Leeuwen, *Amsterdamse gevelstenen*, Amsterdam 1974, esp. p. 186.
47. In Bredero's *Lucelle* of 1622, for example, the irascible Polish captain Baustruldes threatens to lay about him with his hammer. G.A. Bredero, *Lucelle*, Rotterdam 1622, Act II, Scene 5: 'Ick sloech u liever met de hamer onder voet' (I would rather strike you down with my hammer).
48. See J.Ph.S. Lemmink & J.S.A. van Koningsbrugge (eds.), *Baltic affairs; relations between the Netherlands and North-Eastern Europe 1500-1800*, Nijmegen 1990; M. North, 'Kunst en handel, culturele betrekkingen tussen Nederland en steden in het zuidelijk Oostzeegebied', *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 87 (1995), pp. 259-266; L. Thijssen, *1000 jaar Polen en Nederland*, Zutphen 1992.
49. For an overview of these pamphlets, see F. Muller, *Essai d'une Bibliographie Neerlando-Russe*, Amsterdam 1859. The Dutch were particularly sympathetic when the Swedes invaded Poland in the spring and blockaded Gdańsk. At this the Polish king asked the States-General to help by sending a fleet to Gdańsk. On 9 March 1656 the Dutch sent a delegation to negotiate with the Swedes. On 28 May 1656 a fleet under the command of De Ruyter sailed for the Baltic. See R. Frost, *After the Deluge: Poland-Lithuania and the Second Northern War 1655-1660*, Cambridge 1993.
50. *Oorspronck Begin en Voortgank, der Oorloghe tusschen de Cosakken, Polen, Moscoviters en Sweeden 1650… als oock de Gelegentheden der Steden, haer manier van Wapenen, Nature van de Volckeren en Landen, beschreven door een Liefhebber, die de meeste dinge selve by ghewoont heeft*, Amsterdam 1657, p. 17 (Knuttel 7843).
51. Such as A. Booth, *Iournael, van de legatie gedaen in de Iaren 1627 en 1628*, Amsterdam 1632, p. 12: '… wat militie ghemeenlick in Poolen wert gevonden: De Hussaren ofte Lanciers op wiens forces zy haer meest vertrouwen, sijn int gemeen vande voorneemste Edellieden vant Lant, zijn seer prachtigh in Kleederen ende gewaet van hare Paerden, … boven haer Sabel diese op de zijde draghen, hebben noch een Palache onder de Sadel van haer Paerden steekcen, 't welck by naer soo langh is, als een steeck-kade.' (… the militia normally found in Poland: The Hussars or Lancers, on which they rely the most, are generally made up of the principal nobles of the country; they are splendidly dressed and their horses finely caparisoned, … as well as the sabre carried at the side they have a sabre stuck under the horse's saddle which is almost as long as a rapier); A. Cellarius, *Het Koningryck Poolen en toebehorende landen*, Amsterdam 1660 (earlier Latin version Amsterdam 1659), p. 34: 'Oock wort'er gheseyt dat den Konick hondert en vijftigh duysent Ruyters, soo van lichte als sware wapeninge ten oorlogh in 't velt kan brengen: dese winnen geen soldy,… ' (It is also said that the King can put into the field one hundred and fifty thousand horsemen, both lightly and heavily armed: they receive no payment,…); ibid., p. 45: 'Alsoo dat in der Polen Oorloghen den Edeldom de meeste ende beste Ruytery maeckt' (So that in the Polish wars the nobility form the best and larger part of the calvary).
52. Bailey, op. cit.[1], p. 5.
53. Ciechanowiecki, op. cit.[7], p. 295. The translation in English is his as well.
54. See Held, op. cit.[8], p. 47 note 9 and Ciechanowiecki, op. cit.[7], p. 295.

V 21 Rembrandt – A slaughtered ox 1655

PARIS, MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, INV. NO. M.I. 169

HDG 972; BR. 457; BAUCH 562; GERSON 291; TÜMPEL 124

1. Introduction and description

In the 19th and early 20th century, Rembrandt's *Slaughtered ox* must have been perceived chiefly as a 'painter's painting': Delacroix, Daumier and Soutine were among the artists it inspired. One wonders whether Rembrandt also considered the depiction of this subject primarily as an artistic challenge. This entry adds several new arguments to the established interpretation of the painting, namely that to the 17th-century viewer images of a slaughtered ox symbolised either the prudent anticipation of winter or contained references to 'memento mori'. This is not to suggest, however, that such metaphorical allusions are the key to the 17th-century view of the painting's raison d'être.

A splayed carcass of a slaughtered bovine is suspended from a structure of standards and beams. Given the thickness of the neck it seems to have been a bull or an ox. The hind legs are bound with ropes to a spar that in turn appears to have been hoisted up by ropes which run through square openings in the beam above. A length of rope tied around the spar evidently bears some of the weight of the carcass. The construction is parallel to a brick wall receding diagonally into the space. In this wall, grey corner stones alternate with bricks around a window with a stone sill. A flight of three stone steps leads to a small landing before a doorway. A woman leans over the lower half of the door. Such a stairway in combination with a stone wall suggests that the building rendered is a type of house with a cellar. These architectural details betray the house's relatively high status. Finally, there are strong indications that this scene is set at the front of the house. Given that a wooden construction has been added to the front of the house, it can hardly be considered a city dwelling.[1] A container or basket is partially visible in the dark right foreground on the floor, which displays an irregular pattern of joints or cracks. The woman wears a red bodice over a white shirt, and a white cap on her head; she seems to look out at the viewer. The carcass is brightly lit from an opening higher up. The cast shadow of the cap on the woman's face and the spots of light on the threshold and the wall around the door on which she leans suggest yet another source of light.

Working conditions

Examined in October 1968 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.) and re-examined on 13 November 1990 (E.v.d.W.): out of the frame in good daylight and good artificial light, and with the aid of two X-radiographs covering the greater part of the painting. A complete X-radiograph was made available in 2009 (see fig. 2).

Support

Panel, beech (*Fagus sylvatica*),[2] vertical grain, 95.5 x 68.8 cm, rounded off at the top in the shape of a somewhat irregular basket arch. Single plank. Thickness app. 3 cm. The sides of the back have been lightly bevelled over a width of app. 2.5 cm. At the bottom edge the bevelling is app. 4 cm wide, while the top edge reveals no traces of bevelling. The back, which is entirely covered with a layer of brown paint, has been exceptionally roughly worked with a plane or an adze. Deep tooling marks or damaged areas running diagonally to the grain have been partially filled with a now cracked substance. A short vertical crack in the panel runs from the centre of the top edge. Further below several smaller cracks are seen which do not extend to the top. Several of these show up in the paint on the front. A few cracks running more or less in a line beginning at the ox's chest and continuing to the bottom of the painting have been reinforced with two swallowtail joints. Since the ground and paint layers are continuous over the cracks in the support and the swallowtail joints, the latter must already have been present when the ground was applied, they must have been applied before the panel was painted. Small pieces of wood have broken off along the edges at the top right and the lower left.

The panel is seriously worm-eaten. There are wormholes on the back and even more on the sides. The entire paint surface on the front of the panel is studded with retouched wormholes (whose size ranges between 1 and 2 mm, indicating *Anobium punctatum*). Beneath the original paint layers and ground, the open burrows of worm activity are visible, evidently exposed by planing the panel and subsequently filled with the ground. Moreover, given the fact that the beetles escaped through the ground and paint layers they must still have been alive when the present work was painted. While the larvae develop into beetles during the summer months, one should bear in mind that their metamorphosis occurs after at least two to three years. The high concentration of burrows in the middle of the panel could have to do with the fact that the largest fissures in the panel are found there. The *Anobium punctatum* prefers to lay its eggs in the cracks of fissured wood.

This painting on beech is the only known instance of Rembrandt using this kind of wood as the support: he generally used oak. An explanation for this may be related to the fact that when the painting was produced, the supply of oak from the Baltic region was cut off as a result of the Swedish blockade of Gdańsk during the Second Northern War (1655-1660).[3]

Ground

A light brown ground is visible in the left standard, in the left front leg of the ox and shining through the transparent red paint suggesting the animal's bloody left flank. It also shines through in a few places in the background.

Three paint samples were taken from the painting in the Laboratoire de Recherche des Musées de France in Paris. The bottom layer of the ground probably consists of a chalk-glue layer. Given the light brown colour of the ground – either exposed or shining through – this chalk-glue layer is covered, as usual, with a brownish 'primuersel' (see: *Corpus* Vol. I, pp. 18-19 and Vol. IV, pp. 662-663).

Paint layer

Condition: Apart from numerous local retouchings, the paint layer is in reasonable condition. In addition to the aforementioned retouchings over worm holes, there are a

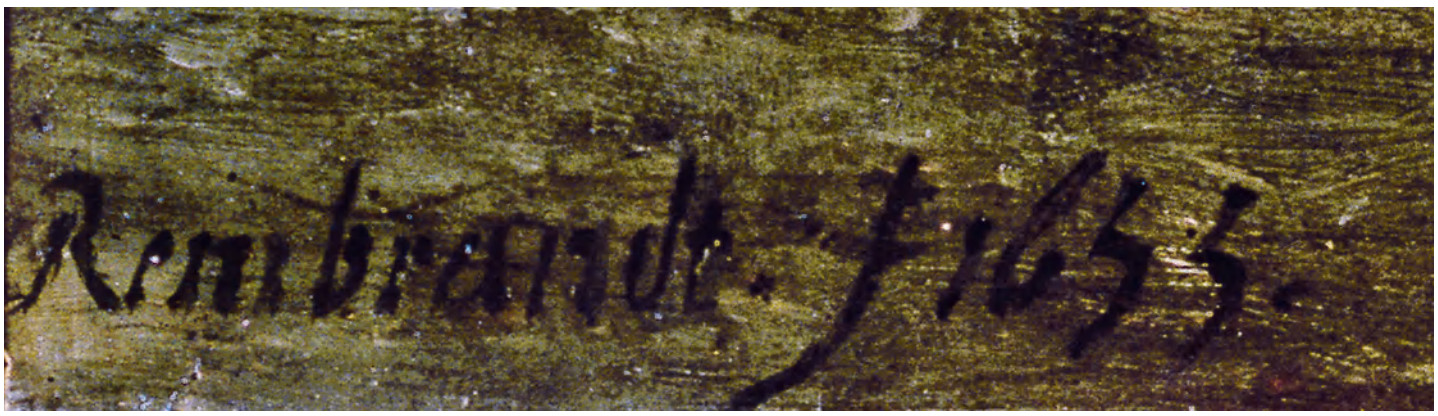
V 21 A SLAUGHTERED OX

Fig. 1. Panel 95.5 x 68.8 cm

Fig. 2. X-Ray

Fig. 3. Ultraviolet photograph

Fig. 4. Detail signature (1:1)



few other larger retouchings: namely in the lit part of the wall to the right of the door and just below it; to the left in the shaded side of the ox; and at the uppermost left of the painting.

Over the light brown ground (see *Ground*) it seems as though a transparent brown paint, was applied as a 'dead-colour' stage for the composition. Because traces of this initial stage are exposed on the surface in various places, it may be assumed that there are no local underpaintings of the kind encountered in this period in paintings on canvas, for example in *The anatomy lesson of Doctor Joan Deyman* in Amsterdam, Historical Museum (Br. 414)[4]. In so far as the available X-ray material allows for such a conclusion, it seems probable that the light parts of the 'deadcolour' have been locally 'heightened' with strokes of white lead-containing paint.

In the further elaboration of this work, the application of alternately transparent and opaque or pastose paint is exceptionally richly varied, depending on the intended interplay of light and dark or the rendering of texture. The natural stone architectural elements around the window before which hangs the carcass are executed in locally dabbed brushstrokes in thick greys. In contrast, the wooden upright in front of it is so thinly painted that the yellow ground and brown underpainting serve a role in the rendering of those parts of the wooden frame which are more or less in shadow. In the horizontal wooden elements of the ceiling and the structure from which the carcass is suspended, the lit parts are indicated with long, partially impastoed and swiftly applied strokes. The lightest paint ridges in these passages assume the role of highlights on the smooth wood. Grazing grey strokes merging tonally with the dark surroundings appear in the lit areas around the bottom half of the door on which the woman leans, and darker ones are found in the left foreground near the lit floor tiles. The woman is rendered in carefully applied, thin, opaque paint in subtly varied, muted values of grey, cool and warm flesh tones and some red for her jacket and lips. The spatial effect created by the 'thickness of the air'[5] has been used in a spectacular way with respect to the differences between the interplay of light and dark within the figure of the woman in the background on the one hand, and the carcass in the foreground immediately next to her on the other. An extreme intensity of light has been achieved in the carcass, and not solely through the lightness of the paint with which the lit parts of the carcass that cast strong shadows have been rendered. The local application of a rugged impasto is also essential to the heightening of the intensity of the light, as the light is reflected locally on the uneven paint surface. The subtle diminution of the intensity of the light from the top to the bottom, as can be observed in the carcass, contributes to the credibility of the suggested illumination.

The carcass has been largely realised with a varied, very effective impasto: the length, the tempo and thickness of the brushstrokes vary depending on the texture depicted. The seemingly rough, rather generalised painterly handling, as well as the differentiation in the suggested plasticity and in the rendering of texture of the sundry parts of the carcass are exceptional. The stretched membranes, the lumpy accumulations of fat, the contours of ribs and muscles, the anatomy of the legs, and the locally severed bundles of muscles, have all been painted in such a surprisingly suggestive manner that one can only conclude that they were faithfully observed after nature. The hunks of suet towards the top, for example, are done with an impasto worked with dabbing and turning movements; in other passages, such as the sectioned layers of fatty meat in the groin, the lumpy paint coincides with the actual form, while in those places where the membranes surrounding the muscles are visible the brushstrokes are smoother and thinner. In such areas, rugged highlights have been applied here and there to suggest the glimmer of the flesh. The bloody parts of the carcass have been locally indicated with red glazes.

Particularly striking are the green-blue areas where the membranes near the front and back legs have been suggested with thin, transparent paint (here and there mixed with white) in fluent strokes.

Radiography

With respect to the paint layer, condition and construction of the panel, the X-radiograph at first sight yields little more information than can be observed with the naked eye. However, some of the radioabsorbent brushstrokes, particularly those that are broader and rather imprecisely defined, do not correlate with the brushwork visible on the surface. Thus, there must have been an initial 'deadcolour' stage with radioabsorbent paint on the basis of which the painting was then further elaborated (compare for instance V 19 *Radiography*). It may well be that the foreground was intended to be somewhat lighter. The worm damage men-

Fig. 5. Rembrandt, *Two butchers at work on a carcass*, *c.* 1635, pen and brown ink, 14.9 x 20 cm (Ben. 400). Frankfurt-am-M., Städelsches Kunstinstitut

Fig. 6. After M. van Heemskerck, *Return of the Prodigal Son* (engraving by Ph. Galle)

tioned in *Support* can be detected in countless black and white dots and spots. Where wormholes in and adjacent to the ox show up light, these have been filled with ground after the panel was planed and before it was painted (see *Support*). The black dots are the escape holes of metamorphosed beetles still living in the panel and are clearly visible beneath and between the front legs of the carcass and in small concentrations dispersed throughout the X-radiograph. Although the holes in the paint were later retouched, they appear in the X-radiograph as small black more or less circular dots, because the original ground filler had been gnawed through, and the later filler is barely radioabsorbent. The large white blotches at the lower right on and next to the ox, near the right hind leg and to the left of the left foreleg are caused by the strongly radioabsorbent cracked filler used to fill the deep tooling marks or damaged areas that run in various directions on the back of the panel.

Signature

Lower left in black: <*Rembrandt. f 1655.*> (fig. 4). The signature is remarkably large.

2. Comments

Until recently it was assumed that Rembrandt had treated the theme of a slaughtered ox at least once previously. The painting in question (in Glasgow; III C 122), however, was rejected in Vol. III. Although difficult to date, that painting was presumably made well before 1655 and can be placed in Rembrandt's circle, making it quite possible that an earlier version of this subject by Rembrandt once existed. The master had already addressed the theme of a slaughtered animal in a drawing dated *c.* 1635 (Ben. 400; fig. 5), for which he may have relied on a print by Philip Galle after Maerten van Heemskerck (fig. 6) where the slaughtering of a calf is represented in connection with the return of the Prodigal Son.[6]

At the time, the theme of the slaughter already had a long tradition. From the Middle Ages on it appeared in depictions of the activities associated with the month of November (the slaughtering season). A slaughtered ox as an independent motif first arose in the Southern Netherlands in the mid-16th century and probably derived from 16th-century kitchen scenes with one or more figures, like those painted by Pieter Aertsen and Joachim Beuckelaer. The subject, however, was only introduced in the Northern Netherlands in the first half of the 17th century possibly by or under the influence of Southern Netherlandish immigrants.

The scene is frequently situated in a stable or out of doors in a country setting. The organs of the animal have been removed and the carcass – the chest cavity splayed open with a stretcher – is hung on a ladder or a beam to mature. The background and the foreground generally include figures at work processing the organs, or children playing with the inflated bladder.

The mention of an 'ossie van Lasman' (little ox by Lastman) in Rembrandt's 1656 inventory could be construed as an indication that the subject made its appearance in the Northern Netherlands before 1633, the year of Lastman's death. Slaughtered animals were frequently depicted as of the early 1640s by painters such as Egbert van der Poel and the Van Ostade brothers.[7] The subject was common in the 1640s and 1650s, particularly among a number of painters in Rembrandt's circle, including Gerbrand van den Eeckhout (1646), Jan Victors (1647 and 1648), Barent Fabritius (*c.* 1655 and 1656) and Nicolaes Maes (*c.* 1655).[8]

Seventeenth-century probate inventories contain repeated mentions of paintings of slaughtered oxen and pigs in particular. Perhaps these subjects were depicted as pendants; an Amsterdam inventory of 1676 lists 'twee stucx sijnde een os en een varcken aende balck gedaen door Victor(s)' (two pieces of an ox and a pig [hanging] from a beam by Victors).[9] In the 17th century, the word 'ox' was frequently used to refer to cattle in general, or more specifically a bullock.[10] As only a few bulls were needed for breeding purposes, the vast majority of male bovines were castrated and fattened up for their meat. In the province of Holland pastures were well-suited for raising livestock and West-Frisian cattle in particular were

famous. Important ox markets existed in Amsterdam, Hoorn, Enkhuizen and Purmerend.[11] A phenomenon prevalent in the mid-17th century was the so-called 'ossenweiderij' (ox-grazing), an agrarian industry in which members of the (Amsterdam) city council and wealthy merchants had vested interests. These investors, called 'ossenweiders' (oxen graziers), imported lean oxen from Denmark (Jutland, Schleswig), fattened them up on leased pastures in Holland and subsequently had them slaughtered.[12]

Rembrandt's inventory of 1656 – thus one year after the Paris painting – lists the aforementioned 'ossie van Lasman' (little ox by Lastman) and 'een ossie naer 't leven van Rembrant' (an ox after life by Rembrandt).[13] It may be assumed that 'ossie', the diminutive form of the word ox, refers to the dimensions of the painting rather than the size of the animal depicted. It is unclear whether the description of the ox as being 'naer 't leven' (after life) betokens a living or a slaughtered ox. The term may be understood in this context as an indication that the painter was looking at an actual specimen, which could just as well have been an ox carcass. After all, the same inventory lists 'een vissie, nae 't leven' (a little fish from life) and 'een pitoor nae 't leven' (a bittern after life),[14] descriptions which we may assume concern images of dead animals (cf. III A 133).

Naturally, it cannot be entirely discounted that the mention of an 'ossie naer 't leven' could refer to a living ox. For instance, a *Standing ox* in the Statens Museum in Copenhagen (Br. 459)[15] which must have originated in Rembrandt's circle, may be cited in this connection. And, Lambert Doomer – who owned an 'os van rembrant' (ox by Rembrandt) in 1677 (see *3. Documents and sources*), painted many animal scenes. In his inventory of 1700, four oxen are listed, one by his own hand.[16] A few of his animal pieces of living goats and horses have been preserved. It seems highly likely that the aforementioned four works were of living oxen.

The existence of a painting of the same subject in Glasgow, which is similar in many respects to the painting under discussion and was erroneously long attributed to Rembrandt, raises the question of possible interrelations, of whatever kind, between such similar works.

A discussion of influence, or of the borrowing of motifs, may not be the most useful approach to understanding this painting.

Alternatively, one might see the work's large scale, and the central placing of the carcass (shown three-quarters) in the picture plane, as the obvious way of depicting the subject to its best advantage. This pictorial formula followed a fairly standard iconography. Taking into account the known group of Dutch 17th-century scenes of slaughtered oxen hanging from a beam,[17] this more pragmatic explanation of the numerous similarities between the various paintings of this theme would seem to be tenable. Rembrandt's *Slaughtered ox* in the Louvre need not be linked by putative influences or borrowings to specific works by other artists; nor does the Glasgow painting have to be explained by positing, for example, some related but now lost prototype by Rembrandt.

In so far as it can be verified, the absence of an iconographic key allowing an unambiguous interpretation of the theme of this painting does not necessarily mean that the ox in this painting should not be understood in metaphorical terms. In fact, the following makes clear that there are several well-founded metaphorical interpretations of the ox. However, in the light of the current discussions on methodology and the fruitfulness of the iconological interpretation of 17th-century Dutch paintings it is prudent to refrain from immediately taking the metaphorical route. After all, no matter how convincing, this kind of interpretation does not necessarily clarify why the painting was made, purchased or commissioned. Now that we are steadily gaining insight into the buying behaviour of 17th-century art lovers, we may ask whether specific artistic considerations could, in fact, have determined the acquisition (and production) of such a painting.

Given the flourishing business of grazing oxen (osseweiderij) described above, one wonders whether a connection exists between this phenomenon and the relatively large production of paintings of slaughtered oxen in this period. Could the group of wealthy investors in this particular agrarian activity also represent the public that purchased such paintings? But if so, a similar explanation would have to exist for the even more frequent depiction of slaughtered pigs on a beam.

The unusual type of wood used as the support and its thickness could lead one to speculate that the painting was not intended as a wall decoration (in the broadest sense of the word), but rather as a signboard, for example. We know that in the 17th-century butchers advertised their occupation on the awnings of their houses. The text of such a 'luyffel-schrift' (awning sign) has come down to us in Jeroen Jeroense's *De koddige en ernstige opschriften op luifens…* of 1698.[18] However, the text in question was an inscription on a facade. Signboards such as the one reproduced in that book as well as other 17th-century visual material hung from a construction mounted at a right angle to the building front so that both sides of the signboard could be seen. The back of the painting of the ox in the Louvre has, as described in *Support*, the same rough tooling marks found on other 17th-century paintings that were intended to be seen from only one side. There is absolutely no indication that the back of this painting was once provided with a painted image. Arguing against the supposition that the painting might have been a signboard, there is the rather significant fact that the painting belongs to an established thematic tradition and that we have no indications of such paintings functioning as signboards. On the contrary, the relatively frequent mention of paintings with slaughtered pigs and oxen in 17th-century inventories seems to indicate that these works must have been a fairly common form of wall decoration.

Whatever the immediate reason may have been for either the production or the acquisition of such a painting, it is certain that a scene of a slaughtered ox could have raised various metaphorical or pious associations in the 17th-century viewer, a number of which will be discussed below.

As noted in the entry on the Glasgow painting (III C

Fig. 8. Detail (1:1)

122), Emmens was the first to connect the scene to an older iconographic tradition.[19] He referred to a slaughtered ox in a print after Pieter Brueghel's drawing of the allegory of Prudentia. Slaughtering livestock before the onset of winter was one of the activities symbolising the prudent anticipation of a barren season. That this association was still common in the 17th century is evinced by a 1662 manual on stocking up before the winter entitled *De Hollantsche slacht-tyt, of de kloecke huys-houder met de sorghvuldige Martha* (The Dutch slaughter time, or the prudent housekeeper with the careful Martha). A two-line poem at the front informs us that '… For he who has saved in the summer, will fare well during the winter'.[20]

Craig, too, linked the scene to an older iconographic tradition. He considered the scene in the Paris and the Glasgow paintings – at the time both attributed to Rembrandt – as part of an episode from the parable of the Prodigal Son.[21] However, as Winner[22] and Tümpel already noted, the allusion to the parable of the Prodigal Son is not very obvious in the case of a painting such as the Paris *Slaughtered ox*. First, the carcass depicted is not that of a calf but of a mature animal, and second, other explicit references to the biblical story, such as the butchers and the merrymakers in the background, are absent.

In 1969 Müller[23] introduced the idea that the suspended carcass represented death and shortly thereafter De Jongh placed it in the context of the more general theme of *memento mori*.[24] The latter primarily pointed to the fact that the *vanitas* symbolism of paintings with this subject is further reinforced by the motif of children playing with an inflated bladder, which is frequently included in scenes of a slaughtered ox, and as a reference to the *Homo Bulla* motif also functions as a *memento mori*.[25]

The suggestion that the association of the ox with imminent death was current in the 17th century is supported by contemporary literature that has never before been cited in this context. For example, there is a poem by Jeremias de Decker, who was a friend of Rembrandt at the time that this painting was produced. The poem entitled 'Gelijck den Os voor de bijl' was published in 1656 – one year after the painting was made:

'The lean ox is herded into the lush grass
But it grazes itself large and fat for the axe (oh poor soul)
Thus man also enters the pasture of this life
The further he forages, the closer he comes to death.
Our gain is our loss; the more we grow in years,
The more our fragile life declines.
Whether we are old or young, fading or blooming,
We hasten steadily from the cradle to the grave.'[26]

This poem by De Decker is but one of many containing this symbolism. Other examples are the lines by Six van Chandelier of 1657: 'No mighty king can avert […] that arrow. But so frail, goes like an ox to the axe';[27] and those by Cats: 'When seeing a fattened ox in a well-grazed pasture, who does not think that he is growing to meet the axe one day?'.[28] In all of these cases the ox is mentioned in the context of reflections on mortality. Like man, the ox advances toward death. In an anonymous rhyme in the so-called *Groote Comptoir Almanach* of 1667, a direct link is made between the observation of a slaughtered animal and the contemplation of one's own death: 'You who for your own pleasure slaughter ox and swine and calf; consider how on the Last Day you will be subjected to God's judgement.'[29] The woman looking out at the viewer in the background of the Paris painting (fig. 8) could be seen as an intermediator conveying such a message to the viewer. Her clothing betrays her modest station. The fact that she leans on the bottom half of the door, her hands tucked into her sleeves, could, however, also be explained as idleness, the symbolism of which was investigated and analysed by Koslow.[30] One wonders whether idleness and transience were perceived as related concepts in the 17th century. This would certainly clarify the presence and the pose of the woman. However, 17th-century sources with such an explicit link have yet to be found. If the predominant allusion in the painting could more readily be tied to Prudentia, the woman's pose (as the 'kloecke huys-houder met de sorghvuldige Martha' [diligent housekeeper with the careful Martha] of the rhyme cited above) may also have functioned as a reference to rest following labour.

The raison d'être of this painting cannot be pinpointed with certainty. If the above mentioned 'ossie naer 't leven' in Rembrandt's 1656 inventory is the painting under discussion – and we will never know for sure – then it was in all probability not made on commission but for the free market. Should this be the case the suggestion that the subject of the painting accorded with the wishes of a possible patron is undermined. One should bear in mind, however, that not every painting listed in this inventory as by Rembrandt must have been an autograph work.

Nevertheless, the temptation to identify the painting in question with the 'ossie naer 't leven' explicitly cited as having been painted by Rembrandt in the 1656 inventory is especially great as the matter of its authenticity would then be settled. From the mentions of scenes of oxen that were allegedly painted by Rembrandt listed in *3. Documents and sources*, it appears that there were several other paintings that theoretically could be identified with either the painting mentioned in Rembrandt's 1656 inventory or with this painting. The documents that refer to paintings of this theme as by Rembrandt were drawn up in 1661, 1674, 1677 and 1681. Three of these works turn up in Amsterdam inventories, and one in an Alkmaar inventory. The rapid succession of these documents makes it virtually impossible that they all refer to the same painting, let alone that it could be conclusively identified with the painting cited in Rembrandt's inventory on the one hand, or with the painting under discussion on the other. Joshua Reynolds' description of the Paris painting when it was in the Amsterdam collection of Pieter Locquet (see *6. Provenance*) is the first reliable trace we have of this work.

However, although welcome, documentary support of the attribution of the Paris painting to Rembrandt with a view to determining its authenticity is unnecessary. No matter how exceptional it is in Rembrandt's oeuvre, the painting is in many respects securely connected to the group of works he produced around 1654/55 that we and others consider to be authentic. The paintings in question

are *Bathsheba* in Paris (Br. 521), the *Woman wading in a pond (Callisto in the wilderness)* in London (V 19) and the *Portrait of Jan Six* in the Six collection in Amsterdam (Br. 276), all from 1654; and *Titus at his desk* in Rotterdam (Br. 120), *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* in Berlin (V 22) and the *Slaughtered ox* discussed here from 1655. Thematically, these paintings do not form a homogeneous group. Yet, because the differences in scale, subject and conception within the group are so extreme, the Paris *Slaughtered ox* fits in effortlessly – if this word can still be considered appropriate in the face of so much variety. However, the paintings do form a homogeneous ensemble in one respect. In fact, the paintings in this group share a remarkably adventurous peinture; they are of comparable quality; and are stylistically closely related in many respects (see also V 19).

Greater diversity in the oeuvre of a single artist within such a short period is scarcely conceivable. In this respect, the period 1654/55 is comparable to the period 1628/29 which is marked by the same momentum in Rembrandt's changing approach to the use of pictorial means. What binds the 1654/55 group of paintings pictorially is the far greater looseness and variety in the handling of the brush and the application of paint, coupled with a radical change in the conception of illumination. Where in his earlier paintings Rembrandt tended to work with spotlight effects, the 1654/55 group of paintings is typified by the introduction of an almost entirely frontally lit, large pictorial element set before a summarily defined dark space.

It can hardly be a coincidence that the colour red plays an important role in virtually all of these paintings. Due to its relatively dark value it is primarily a 'foreground colour' and contributes to a tonal, and thereby spatial anchoring of large lit objects in the foreground of the picture plane.

The agitated paint surface also contributes to the creation of an exceptionally strong and convincing effect of light and space. The locally applied impastoed paint assumes a role both in the reflection of light on the paint surface and in the suggestion of space, particularly by means of what Van Hoogstraten described as 'kenlijkheyt',[31] or the use of coarse elements in the surface on which the eye can focus and through which arises a (seemingly) accurate determination of the coarsely painted object's position in the space.

The display of an astonishingly free *peinture* on the one hand and Rembrandt's mastery of form on the other, make the viewer forget that such tricks of the trade were used. The highly individualistic and uniquely Rembrandtesque character of these works is ultimately their most dominant aspect. The Paris *Slaughtered ox* is entirely in keeping with this image and this must also be the reason why its authenticity has never been doubted.

3. Documents and sources

A number of 17th-century documents refer to 'an ox by Rembrandt', whether or not described as slaughtered. None of these references can be identified with certainty as being V 21, III C 122 or Br. 459.

– The inventory of Rembrandt's possessions drawn up in 1656 mentions 'In de Agtercaemer offte Sael': 'Een ossie naer 't leven van Rembrant' (In the back room or parlour: An ox after life by Rembrandt).[32]

– On 6 October 1661 the possessions of the barber-surgeon Christoffel Hirschvogel were appraised by David van den Berch, broker in drugs, on behalf of the physician Theodorus Ketjes. Hirschvogel, originally from Nuremberg and having been a boarder in Ketjes' house for quite some time, went abroad on 31 July 1661 leaving behind a number of his possessions, including many drugs. Ketjes had the goods appraised in connection with a claim that he had on Hirschvogel. These included: 'buyten de kelder, [een] schilderije affbeeldende een geslachten osch van Rembrant *f* 30:-:-' (outside the cellar, [a] painting showing a slaughtered ox by Rembrandt *f* 30:-:-). In the margin is a note stating that on 29 July 1661, Hirschvogel himself had estimated the value of the painting at 72 guilders, GAA, not. S. van der Piet, NA 1032, fol. 685-687, d.d. 6 October 1661 (Strauss *Doc.*, 1661/10).

– The inventory of Pieter van Cronenburgh and Aerlant Roeters includes: 'Een schilderij zijnde een geslagen os, van Rembrant' (A painting of a slaughtered ox by Rembrandt), GAA, not. D. Doornick, NA 1970, fol. 1155-1172, d.d. 23 January 1674.

– The inventory of Lambert Doomer of Alkmaar dated 3 January 1677 includes: 'Een os van Rembrant' (An ox by Rembrandt).[33]

– A protocol drawn up by notary J. Matham in Amsterdam on 14 April 1681 states that on that day in the house of Michiel van Coxie's father-in-law Pieter de Vos, merchant in Amsterdam, hung: 'In de Sijdelkamer: 't Schilderij, sijnde een os van rembrand.' (In the side room: the painting of an ox by Rembrandt), GAA, not. J. Matham, NA 4495, pp. 1016-1023, d.d. 14 April 1681, esp. 1017 (HdG *Urk.*, no. 353).

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance

– For possible 17th-century owners, see *3. Documents and sources*.

– Seen by Joshua Reynolds in 1781 in the collection of Pieter Locquet in Amsterdam and described by him as follows: 'A Butcher's shop, an ox hanging up, opened, by Rembrandt: a woman looking over a hatch, so richly coloured, that it makes all the rest of the picture seem dry'.[34]

– Coll. Pieter Locquet, sale Amsterdam 22-24 September 1783 (Lugt 3611), no. 324: 'Door Denzelven [Ryn. (Rembrand van)]. Hoog 37½, breed 27 duim [= 96.3 x 69.3 cm; gemeeten met de Amsterdamse voetmaat van Elf Duim in de Voet]. Paneel. In een Binnenhuis hangt een geslagte Os aan den Balk, verder ziet men een Vrouwtje over de Deur kyken; dit S[t]uk is verwonderlyk natuurlyk, zeer krachtig en Meesterlyk fix gepenseelt' (By the same [Ryn. (Rembrand van)]. High 37½, wide 27 thumbs [= 96.3 x 69.3 cm; measured in Amsterdam feet with eleven inches to the foot]. Panel. In an inner house hangs a slaughtered ox from a beam, one sees further a woman looking over the door; this piece is amazingly natural, very powerful and masterful in its sure execution) (52 guilders to Nyman).

– Coll. Louis Viardot until 1857.

– In 1857 purchased by the museum for 5000 francs.

NOTES

1. The architectural historian P. Zantkuyl contends that the carcass could have been placed under a wooden lean-to or another annex at the front of the stone 'voorhuis' or fore-room of a farmstead. On the other hand, the farmhouse historian E. van Olst did not reject the possibility that the back part of a city dwelling is shown here and that the ox is situated under a covered courtyard.
2. J. Bauch and D. Eckstein, 'Woodbiological investigations on panels of Rembrandt paintings', *Wood Science and Technology* 15 (1981), pp. 251-263, esp. 254; *Corpus* IV, p. 657.
3. T. Ważny and D. Eckstein, 'Der Holzhandel von Danzig/Gdańsk - Geschichte, Umfang und Reichweite', *Holz als Roh- und Werkstoff* 45 (1987), pp. 509-513, esp. 513.
4. Van de Wetering 1997/2009, pp. 211-215.
5. E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's manner: technique in the service of illusion', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Paintings*, 1991/92, pp. 12-39, esp. 37; op.cit.[4], p. 187.
6. Hollst. VII no. 150. The drawing displays a number of elements that are conspicuously similar to those in the left of the print: the right butcher with the axe wears a sheath with knives around his waist in a comparable fashion; the left butcher in both scenes clenches a knife in his mouth. Following the print, the skin of the slaughtered animal hangs down at the back. This gains further emphasis through Rembrandt's inscription: ''t vel daeraen ende voorts de rest by sleependen' (with the skin and the rest dragging along). The basin with the wide rim in the foreground is so reminiscent of the one in the print after Van Heemskerck, that this motif must have been borrowed. See also: C.G. Campbell, *Studies in the formal sources of Rembrandt's figure compositions*, London 1971, p. 111. It is highly probable that Rembrandt knew the print because his 1656 inventory lists 'Een dito [boeck] van Heemskerck, sijnde ael 't werck vanden selven' (A ditto [book] by Heemskerk, being all of his work), Strauss *Doc.*, 1656/12, no. 227. Such direct similarities to the print are entirely missing in the Paris painting, however. Another drawing of a slaughtered ox by Rembrandt dates from *c.* 1655 (Ben. 1160). Apart from the chiaroscuro, this drawing is too far removed from the painting under discussion to warrant detailed discussion.
7. For these and other examples, see: J. Foucart, *Les peintures de Rembrandt au Louvre*, Paris 1982, pp. 66-71.
8. Sumowski *Gemälde* II, nos. 500; 595-6; III, no. 1375 and IV, nos. 1790-91.
9. GAA., not. J. de Winter, NA. 2410, dd. 5 March 1676, inventory of Harman Claesz Spaeroogh, fol. 62.
10. *WNT*, s.v.: Os.
11. J.G. van Dillen, *Van rijkdom en regenten*, The Hague 1970, pp. 218-219.
12. W. Gijsbers, *Kapitale ossen. De internationale handel in slachtvee in Noordwest-Europa (1300-1750),* Hilversum 1999.
13. Strauss *Doc.*, 1656/12, nos. 119 and 108.
14. Strauss *Doc.*, 1656/12, nos. 307 and 348.
15. Sumowski *Gemälde* IV, no. 1937, as anonymous Rembrandt school.
16. Br. *Künstler-Inv.*, pp. 75-78: 'een os, noch een van een os; een van een koe; een osje; een bul; Twe koeytjens; een Os door den Overleden geschildert' (an ox, another one of an ox; one of a cow; a small ox; a bull; two cows; an ox painted by the deceased).
17. In addition to the above mentioned examples from the School of Rembrandt, may be cited: the to Isaac van Ostade attributed *Slaughtered ox*, panel 53 x 44 cm, Budapest, Szépmüvészeti Múzeum, inv. no. 51.2880; the anonymous *Slaughtered ox*, panel 49.5 x 36.8 cm, in Philadelphia, Johnson Collection, inv. no. 475 and the anonymous *Slaughtered ox*, canvas 75.5 x 57.5 cm, Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, inv. no. 820.
18. J. Jeroense, *Koddige en ernstige opschriften op luifens, wagens, glazen, uithangborden en andere tafreelen*, Amsterdam 1698, p. 67.
19. J.A. Emmens, 'Reputatie en betekenis van Rembrandt's "geslachte os"', lecture given at the Nederlandse Vereniging van Kunsthistorici in Leiden on 17 December 1966; published in an abridged form in: *Museumjournaal* 12 (1967), p. 81, and in: J.A. Emmens, *Kunsthistorische opstellen* II, Amsterdam 1981, pp. 133-138.
20. '… Want wie des Somers heeft gespaert, Des Winters hy daer wel af vaert'. In: *De Hollantsche slacht-tyt, of de kloecke huys-houder met de sorghvuldige Martha. Door goede onderrichtinge hoe men in de slacht-tijdt of in de maent van october en november van winter-provisie sal versien. Seer noodigh die ossen of verckens willen slaen, hoe men dat met groot profijt kan doen*, Amsterdam 1662.
21. K.M. Craig, 'Rembrandt and "The slaughtered ox"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 46 (1983), pp. 235-239.
22. M. Winner, in: O. v. Simson and J. Kelch (eds.), *Neue Beiträge zur Rembrandt-Forschung*, Berlin 1973, pp. 135-136.
23. J.-E. Müller, *Rembrandt*, New York 1969, p. 173.
24. E. de Jongh 'Realisme en schijnrealisme', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt en zijn tijd*, Brussels 1971, p. 171.
25. E. de Jongh, in: exhib. cat. *Tot lering en vermaak*, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 1976, cat. no. 24.
26. *J. de Deckers Gedichten, versamelt en uytgegeven door J.K.*, Amsterdam 1656, p. 37: 'Het mager Osken word in 't vette gras gedreven / Maer 't weyd sich voor de bijl (och armen!) vet en groot / De mensche treed oock dus de wey in van dit leven / Want hoe hy verder weyd, hoe naerder aen de dood. / Ons winnen is verlies; soo veel ons jaren groeijen, / Soo veel neemt even oock ons teeder leven af. / 'T sy dat wij oud of jong in 't dorren sijn of bloeyen, / Wy spoeyen van de wieg gestadig naer het graf.'
27. *Poësy van J. Six van Chandelier,* Amsterdam 1657, p. 558: 'Geen machtigh Vorst keert […] Die Pyl. Maar gaat zoo bros, gelyk een os, Ter byl.'
28. J. Cats, *Sinne- en Minnebeelden*, Amsterdam 1664, p. 36: 'Wie siet 'er een vetten os in een wel-begraesde weyde, die niet en denckt datse teghens de byle opwast?'
29. Cited by E. de Jongh, op. cit.[24], p. 170: 'Ghy die naer u welbehagen, Os en Swijn en kalf doet slaen; Denckt hoe ghy ten Jongsten Dage Voor Godts Oordeel sult bestaen.'
30. S. Koslow, 'Frans Hals's "Fisherboys": Exemplars of Idleness', *Art Bull.* 57 (1975), pp. 418-432.
31. Van de Wetering, op. cit.[4], pp. 182-184 and op.cit.[5], p. 33.
32. Strauss *Doc.*, 1656/12, no. 108.
33. Th. Wortel, 'Lambert Doomer te Alkmaar', *O.H.* 46 (1929), pp. 171-187, esp. 176.
34. J. Reynolds, 'A journey to Flanders and Holland in the year MDCCLXXXI', *The works of Sir Joshua Reynolds* …, ed. E. Malone, London 1809[4], II, p. 365.

HDG 17; BR. 524; BAUCH 32; GERSON 274; TÜMPEL 25

1. Introduction and description

Rembrandt's *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* in Berlin presents several problems. Its relation to a variant of the same subject in Washington (V 23) is considered in more detail in the following entry. Here, emphasis is placed on the complex genesis of the Berlin painting. As pointed out by Rüdiger Klessmann, not only is the present *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* painted over an entirely different, unfinished painting of a seated old man, but the image which is now visible has itself undergone changes.[1] These are more radical than previously thought. Moreover, it can now be demonstrated that the painting was regarded as finished at an earlier stage. The genesis of the Berlin painting not only sheds light on its relation to the work in Washington; it may also explain discrepancies in the quality of its execution. These discrepancies raise the question of whether the painting, as we now see it, is entirely by Rembrandt (see also the appendix to V 23). For an analysis of the differences of style and quality between the present painting and V 23 see Chapter IV, pp. 300-309.

Like the Washington version, the Berlin painting depicts a scene from the story in Genesis 39: 11-19. After Joseph had been sold into slavery, he was bought by Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officers, in whose household he was given a position of trust. One day when Potiphar was not at home, his wife attempted to seduce Joseph. He managed to evade her, but in his escape he left his cloak behind. When Potiphar came home, his wife showed him Joseph's cloak: 'And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, the Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me. And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out' (Genesis 39: 17-18).

Beside a large canopy bed with the curtain drawn back, Potiphar's wife sits at an angle in a chair. Beneath a pink robe lined with spotted fur she wears a white shift that has fallen open. On her feet she has slippers with a gold sheen. She turns to Potiphar with her right hand raised in a speaking gesture and her left hand held to her breast. Her right leg is crossed over her left leg, and her left foot is placed on Joseph's abandoned cloak, which trails over the edge of the raised section of the floor on which her chair stands. Potiphar, wearing a turban, stands beside his wife and leans his forearm on the back of the chair as he looks down at her. Joseph stands at the far left on the other side of the bed, which is covered by a gold-brown blanket, a sheet and a pillow. He wears a dark jacket over a white shirt. His left hand is raised in what appears to be a gesture of innocence and his gaze is directed upwards. In his right hand he holds a cap.

Working conditions

Examined November 1968 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.), again on several occasions (E.v.d.W.); last examined July 1993 (M.F., V.M., E.v.d.W.); out of the frame in good daylight, with the aid of a stereomicroscope and 15 X-ray films covering the whole painting, infrared reflectography and six autoradiographs.

Support

Canvas, lined, 113.5 x 90 cm. A single piece. Cusping visible along all four edges of the canvas. Along the bottom, the cusping varies in length from 7 to 10 cm, and is particularly pronounced in the middle of the canvas, where cusps extend to *c.* 23 cm into the canvas. Pronounced cusps are also visible along the top, with a length of 7 to 10.5 cm, but here they only extend as far as 15 cm into the fabric. It may be inferred from this that a strip approximately 8 cm wide has been cut from the top edge of the canvas. This would seem to be confirmed by the fact that in the X-radiograph one can see that the top edge transects a passage that shows up light, in which the shape of the headgear of a bearded man – only visible in the X-radiograph – appears to have been reserved. If the canvas was indeed originally taller by 8 cm and if hardly anything has been removed from right or left sides, the original format would correspond with the standard format of the so-called *daeldersmaet* (*c.* 123 x 92 cm).[2] It is conspicuous that along both top and bottom edges the cusping is most pronounced in the middle of the canvas. This could indicate that during stretching the unprimed canvas was first secured to the frame in the middle. This would seem to be confirmed by the deformations along the left and right sides, where, on both sides, two large bow-shaped deformations can be seen extending far into the fabric.Here too the canvas must have been first fastened at the corners and roughly in the middle during the stretching process. In addition to these major deformations, smaller cusps are also feebly visible along both left and right sides. In as far as this can be measured, their length is between 8 and 10 cm, and they extend several centimetres into the canvas. A drawn version in Munich of the scene in V 22 and 23 (see V 23 fig. 7) raises the possibility that the format of the present painting may originally have differed not only in height but also in width. Perhaps too much significance has been accorded here to the *daeldersmaet*. There is perhaps just as strong a case to be argued that the linen used was of the most frequently occurring standard width, 1½ el = 105 cm wide (i.e. 13 cm wider than the present canvas). This raises the possibility that the original size of the painting was 121.5 x 105 cm, a not uncommon standard size for paintings on canvas (see *Corpus* II, p.38).

Thread count: 13.23 vertical threads / cm (12.5 –14); 11.04 horizontal threads / cm (9.5 – 11.5). In view of the numerous short slubs in the horizontal threads and the greater regularity of the vertical threads, it may be assumed that the warp runs vertically.

Ground

Nowhere in the paint surface was a layer observed that could be regarded as a ground. In part, this may be related to the fact, revealed by the X-radiograph, that the painting was executed over another painting, a presumably unfinished image of an old man. With the stereomicroscope, at the position of the old man's head flesh tones and the white of the eye can be seen showing through in the paint surface, indicating that the underlying image was not covered by a new ground layer before work com-

Fig. 1. Canvas 113.5 x 90 cm

Fig. 2. X-Ray

Fig. 3. Neutron activation autoradiograph no. 6

Fig. 4. Neutron activation autoradiograph no. 1

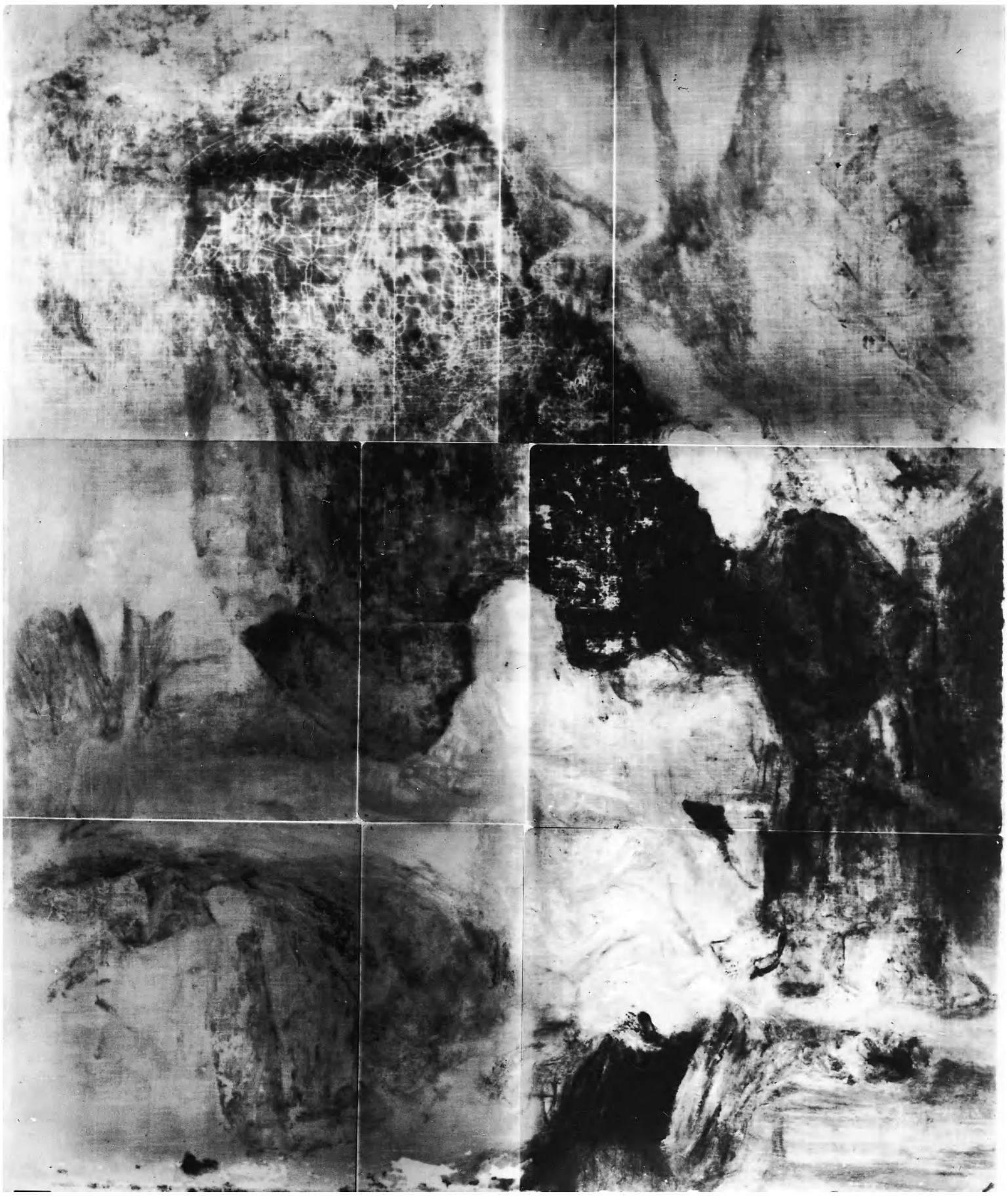
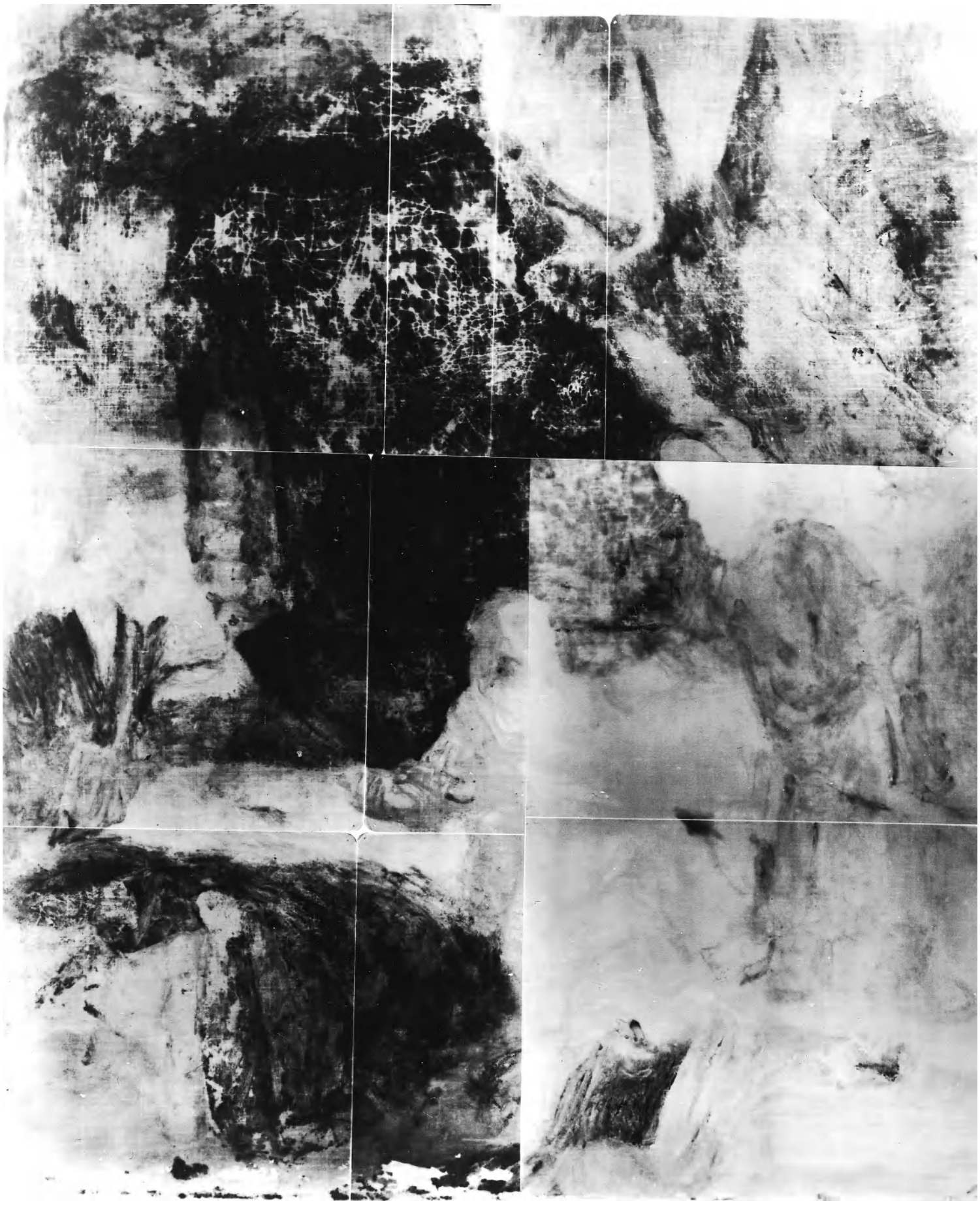


Fig. 5. Neutron activation autoradiograph no. 2



menced on *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife.*

On the basis of paint samples, Hermann Kühn and Karin Groen determined the presence of a quartz ground such as is frequently found on canvases in Rembrandt's late period.[3]

Paint layer

Condition: The condition of the paint layer suggests that the painting has had an eventful material history. Impastoed areas are considerably flattened or otherwise distorted, probably as a result of the lining. The appearance of the paint layer is largely determined by its worn condition, which is partly masked by later overpaintings, particularly in the hanging curtain and the background. In several areas, brushstrokes bearing no relation to the present image have become visible in the paint surface as the result of wear. They are related either to pentimenti or to the underlying image of the old man. In Potiphar's right hand, for example, pinkish strokes running perpendicularly to the hand and continuing into the background above show through. To the left, under the arm of the chair can be seen an underlying streak of blue, while traces of underlying blue can also be detected between the wife's nose and Potiphar's elbow. The infrared photograph (fig. 3) confirms the worn condition of the painting, especially in the dark area above Joseph's head, in the curtain hanging from the canopy, along the top edge and to the right above Potiphar. Old photographs in the museum files reveal that prior to the last restoration in the 1960's there were curtains to the right of the bed above Potiphar. These photographs also reveal the sheen of the heavy folds and the top of the canopy over the bed. However, no trace of these elements can now be discerned either in the surface image, the X-radiograph or the infrared photograph. It may be assumed that they were added by a later hand to mask wear in that part of the painting and that they were subsequently removed.

Craquelure: An irregular craquelure, common for a painting on canvas.

The execution of this painting is extremely variable, with the emphasis on the unusual combination of impasto and a high degree of detail in the woman's clothing. The dress, with its complicated folds, was done wet-in-wet in shades of pink, after which a range of impasto highlights in pale pink and white were added. The vertical pinking in the bulges of gathered material of the dress is indicated in dark red with accompanying highlights. The effect of a shiny material is strengthened by locally applied red glazes and the suggestion of reflected light by means of subdued highlights. Dark red and black are used to suggest the very deep folds that result from the fall of the fabric. In the other elements of her clothing too – the shift, the spotted fur lining of the dress and the slippers – the use of impasto predominates. The appearance of agitation in the wife's clothing is enhanced by factors that are partly related to the painting's condition. For instance, in the vicinity of the highlights, lumpy remnants of dirty varnish have been impressed in the surface during the process of (re)lining. These are difficult to remove and leave a disturbing pattern of dark spots. A similar phenomenon occurs in the impasto of the woman's face and the flesh of her arms. The resulting effect of coarseness may, however, have been intended by the painter. The cloak beneath the woman's foot is of a shiny material, like her dress, but in silver, gold and subdued shades of blue. The impastoed, coarsely applied highlights follow the long folds trailing over the edge of the raised floor and mark the twisted creasing at the sleeve.

The role of green and blue in the (original) colour scheme of the painting is not entirely clear. The blue that shows through in the background between Potiphar and his wife suggests that there was once more blue here (as will prove to be the case in the Washington version). A very dark, transparent green in the curtain, visible in the lit parts along the left contour, appears to have supplanted this blue. This, however, can be no more than a provisional supposition.

The execution of Potiphar's outfit is completely different from that of his wife and similar to the way the gilding of the canopy's post is suggested. Over a dark brown underlayer, scattered highlights in yellow and white, and red reflections, give the impression of a shiny surface with relief, caught here and there by the light. The reflections thus catch the beholder's eye. The extreme variety in the way these highlights are realized, and the role that chance appears to play in this, give a certain richness to such passages, an effect to which the pentimenti that show through, and the associated irregularities in the paint relief, also contribute.

The painting of Potiphar's head, seen with its complex turban in the half-light, is a marvel of controlled refinement without any suggestion of being excessively finicky. Apparently the painter was mainly concerned with the way the forms are affected by an indirect, reflected light that 'floats', as it were, in the pictorial space. The clearest example of this is the soft light that catches the front of Potiphar's turban from below, a light that is reflected from the brightly lit bed-clothes and the woman. Through the relative force and the placing of that light effect on the underside of the forwardly projecting turban, the figure of Potiphar, painted in otherwise subdued tones, is, as it were, drawn into the play of the light and hence into the pictorial space. As a result, the beholder becomes aware in passing that the back of the turban and Potiphar's left forearm also emerge out of the half-light as a result of reflected light. But that light is caused by forms (e.g. a wall) that are situated outside the image of the painting.

The glow of the material covering the chair has been achieved by applying a red glaze over underlying yellow and grey patches whose placing and execution seem to have been determined by chance. Glancing brushstrokes play a particularly large role in the treatment of the blanket on the bed. In a range of hues varying from cool to warm, these strokes run with the fall of the blanket, giving the impression of a soft, hairy fabric. The course of the folds and damask lines in the white bed-linen, on the other hand, is indicated mainly by paint relief and direction of brushstrokes. There are conspicuous differences of quality in the execution of the sheets: the drab, almost grubby

Fig. 6. Detail with signature (enlarged)

Fig. 7. Detail with signature (enlarged) of fig. 4

execution and the unconvincing pattern of the folding of part of the sheets and the pillow on the left of the bed are particularly conspicuous. The handling of the back (canopy) bedpost as well as the foreground (foot) post is also weak, and the execution of the figure of Joseph is similarly feeble. In tentatively applied and rather dingy paint, the forms of his face and raised hand have been painted over much more decisive brushwork that scarcely corresponds with the surface image. When the differences of quality are taken together with the complicated genesis of this Joseph part of the painting, to be discussed in more detail below in relation to a variety of radiographic images below, the question is inevitably raised of whether the entire painting is from the same hand.

Radiography

An immediately striking feature of the X-radiograph is the presence at the top right of the head of an old, bearded man. In addition to the head, done in radioabsorbent paint with fairly rough strokes, a dark shape can be seen above it, possibly a reserve for a cap which probably also belongs to this old man, together with a light indication, possibly, of the outlines of the shoulders. In discussing the interpretation of the X-ray image, Klessmann drew attention to a drawing in Dresden (Ben. 1069; see fig. 10) attributed to Rembrandt, in which a seated old man holding a stick is portrayed in three-quarter length (see note 1). The head pose and physiognomy in this drawing do indeed closely resemble the head visible in the X-radiograph. On the reverse side, the drawing bears the date 1650, which is accepted by Benesch and others as its year of origin. Klessmann believes this drawing was a study for the painting in its earliest form. However, according to the current view of Rembrandt's working method, it would not have been a likely procedure to make such a drawing in preparation for a painting. Klessmann also believed that he detected traces in the X-radiograph of the old man's right arm which, as in the drawing, was shown extended and resting on the arm of a chair or a table. He saw a hand at the place now occupied in the present image by the bed. However, the bed here has been painted with a strongly radioabsorbent paint, so that it is impossible to see any hand that might have been there in the X-radiograph.

The scene of *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* is clearly visible in the lower half of the X-ray image, where many elements are at variance with the visible surface image. These traces all appear to be connected to pentimenti in the execution of the scene.

To the right above the present foot of the woman can be seen bold brushstrokes in the radioabsorbent paint, which indicate that the foot was at an earlier stage raised slightly higher. The X-radiograph also reveals the contour of the dress running differently on the left, with a much smaller reserve for the part of the dress that hangs down from the arm of the chair in the final version, and the bedclothes continuing further to the right. The woman's extended hand seems to be only partly reserved in the white of the bed linen: her gesture was originally probably slightly different. It can also be clearly seen that Joseph's cloak on the floor, underpainted in strongly radioabsorbent strokes, originally spread further to the left.

In and around the figure of Joseph the X-ray image is hard to read. This probably has to do with major changes that appear to have been made here at different stages of the painting's genesis. For example, in the left part of Joseph's face and clothing (i.e. left from the viewpoint of the beholder), which show up clearly in the X-ray image, predominantly vertical brushwork can be distinguished that does correspond with the present image. In Joseph's hair on the right, and in the background just to the right of it, radioabsorbent paint and dark reserves can be seen that do not seem to relate to the present image but may be related to a change in the position of the raised right arm. No reserve was left for the arm and hand in their present position; they were painted over radioabsorbent paint in the background. Various changes were introduced in and next to the sleeve where it falls open near the volute-shaped, ornamental extension of the canopy bedpost, near the pillow, but these are difficult to interpret on the basis of the X-radiograph.

However, important information is yielded by the infrared photograph and one of the neutron-activation autoradiographs in which the beta-emission indicates phosphorus, a component of bone black (fig. 3). These reveal the presence of a signature (see *Signature*) over which the shiny reflections on the volute-like form were subsequently introduced. There are also bold strokes of a brush or palette knife that show up slightly in the X-ray image,

in the bed to the left and also above the pillow just to the left of the shoulder of Potiphar's wife. These run obliquely to the brushstrokes with which the white bedsheet is painted, indicating that the bed formerly continued further upward to the height of the wife's shoulder. A reserve, running obliquely, and rounded above, partly filled with the radioabsorbent paint of brushstrokes that render part of the sheet, suggests that it may originally have been intended to paint Joseph's cloak hanging over the foreground bedpost at the foot of the bed. If so, this placing would correspond with that in the Washington painting, where that bedpost is higher. Diagonal strokes of red paint which show through to the right of the foreground bedpost in the Berlin painting also contribute to this impression. Despite these indications, however, there is no further evidence that would permit us to conclude that the cloak in the Berlin painting originally hung in the same place as in the Washington version. Moreover, it is evident from the X-radiograph that a reserve for the wife's foot was left in the radioabsorbent underpainting of the present cloak, which must therefore have been painted at an early stage.

Furthermore, it may be noted in the X-radiograph that Potiphar's head shows up, partly in thin lines and also, in the turban, in more robust light lines, as though drawn with radioabsorbent paint. In this light drawing, Potiphar's head is turned more three-quarters than in the final image.

In the first autoradiograph (fig. 4), in which beta-emissions show principally the distribution of manganese and copper, a curtain that seems to hang in front of the canopy post to the right of Joseph is continuous with the dark form which, in the final image, overlaps the volute-shaped element of the bed. A horizontal line is also visible to the left of the wife. In the second autoradiograph (fig. 5), which mainly registers the beta-emissions of copper and arsenic, this line continues to the right of the wife as far as Potiphar. It indicates a no longer visible upper edge of the bed's head-piece. The sixth autoradiograph (fig. 3) (which indicates the presence of phosphorus, a component of bone black) reveals, as well as the signature mentioned above, a first linear design of the painting, particularly in the costumes of Potiphar and his wife and Joseph's cloak lying on the floor, but also in the podium on which the chair stands. For a full discussion of these technical documents, see *Comments* below.

Signature

Signed on the right below the wife's raised foot <*Rembran / f. 1655*.> (fig. 6). The signature is fairly worn. The infrared photograph and more particularly one of the autoradiographs reveal a second signature (fig. 7), undoubtedly applied earlier and subsequently covered during the extended genesis of the painting: <*Rembrandt / f 1655*>, in the volute-shaped ornamental post toward the head of the bed. After the *f* there are visible traces of another mark which cannot be deciphered.

2. Comments

As may be gathered from the above discussion of the X-radiographic images, the Berlin *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* had a complicated genesis which casts an interesting light, not only on Rembrandt's working procedure in this case, but also on the present painting's relation to the version in Washington. The latter aspect will be touched on only briefly here and given further attention in the next entry (V 23). The following comments begin by dealing at some length with the genesis of the Berlin painting.

As Klessmann demonstrated (see note 1), the complete set of X-radiographs revealed that the Berlin work is painted on a previously used canvas; it is superimposed on the depiction of an old man (see *Radiography*). Twice-painted supports (palimpsests) are encountered fairly often in Rembrandt's oeuvre, although they are usually self-portraits or early, small history pieces (see *Corpus* IV, pp. 96 - 98). A case like this, however, where an ambitious history piece has been painted on a previously used support is unusual. However, as explained under *Radiography*, it is significant here that the first painting (i.e. the painting of the old man which now lies under the present image, see figs. 2 and 8) had to be released in its (partially?) unfinished state shortly after it was begun. It may be that the Dresden drawing (fig. 9; Ben. 1069)[4] originated at that stage of the work. Most drawings related to Rembrandt paintings were apparently not preliminary studies but sketches of work-in-progress that were made in the quest for solutions to particular problems during the conception of a work. One is left to speculate whether it could have been this drawing which led Rembrandt to abandon work on the painting.

In the case of this old man we have to ask whether, as Klessmann suspected, he was completed or almost completed when *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* was painted over him (see note 1). It is very much open to doubt, however, whether the work depicting the old man was as close to completion as Klessmann thought. As discussed under *Radiography*, only the head of the old man and possibly a reserve for a cap as well as a light indication of the outlines of the shoulders are visible in the X-ray image. Moreover, the six autoradiographs (see figs. 3-5) and the infrared photograph show nothing that appears to be connected to the figure of the old man. It can also be inferred from the X-radiograph that the head was painted in radioabsorbent paint with quite coarse brushstrokes, which would seem to indicate that it was executed only as an underpainting; in the face, as can be seen in worn areas, this is flesh-coloured. This kind of rough underpainting is also found in several self-portraits from the 1650s and 1660s and seems to be characteristic of Rembrandt's working method of this period.[5]

Rembrandt must have begun work on *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* without first covering the old man with a new ground layer. As has been noted earlier by several authors on the basis of the X-radiographs, he subsequently made many alterations. With the results of radiography now available, various stages in its genesis can be reconstructed with more precision. Thus the X-ray image (fig. 2) and the autoradiograph reveal a number of features

Fig. 8. Detail of fig. 2

Fig. 9. Rembrandt?, *Seated old man with a stick*, 1650, pen and brown ink, 13 x 10 cm (Ben. 1069). Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kupferstichkabinett

that can be linked to the initial design of the work. The autoradiograph reproduced in fig. 3 (which shows the emission of phosphorus, a component of bone black) reveals dark sketch lines in Potiphar's clothes, indicating a first outline of this figure in bone black. Similar lines can also be discerned in the figure of Potiphar's wife. For example, such a sketch line marks a fold in her dress where it is draped over her left leg which stands on the floor. To the right of this a slanting line indicates the contour of the right leg crossed over the left, although not in the position visible in the surface image, but in the earlier, higher position also seen in the X-ray image. According to the X-ray image, this previous higher-placed leg and especially its slipper are rendered with rough strokes of radioabsorbent paint. Thus, both dark and light paint were used in the underpainting stage. Furthermore, the X-ray image reveals that Joseph's cloak lying on the floor was underpainted in similarly rough strokes of light paint. At that stage the cloak extended further to the left than in the final version. The contours of the woman's leg standing on the cloak are also marked in lines of bone black, while the foot, which in the final version is painted over the cloak, was originally depicted higher, in two different positions, in light paint. The bold brushstrokes of radioabsorbent paint extending up the left of Joseph's chest and head and into his eye probably also belong to the underpainting. Klessmann suggested, unconvincingly, that these strokes indicated an earlier position for Joseph's arm, as though in an impulsive reaction, he had raised it to cover his cheek or mouth.[6] Light paint was generally used by Rembrandt in the underpainting to indicate light-catching forms, while the contours of the forms in the initial design were sketched in lines of bone black, a method of working which in the investigation employing neutron-activation radiography at the Metropolitan Museum in New York was found primarily in his later works.[7] In the Berlin *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife*, not only black but also light paint was used for sketching. The X-radiograph shows that in the initial design the pose of Joseph's head differed from that in the final, now visible version, where it is rendered in strict profile. The head and turban were earlier indicated in white paint, with the head evidently turned more toward the three-quarter position, as Potiphar's right eyebrow is clearly visible. It should be noted that this earlier head pose closely corresponds with that in the Washington painting. This is one of the indications that the Berlin version was not yet finished when work was begun on the version in Washington. Incidentally, it is this part of the painting, just below the beard of the underlying old man, which suggests why the painter used white paint in outlining the figure of Potiphar. The old man's clothing would, it may be assumed, have been dark, so that the initial sketch of Potiphar immediately superimposed on the old man would have necessitated a light colour here rather than black.

The sketched image was developed on the brownish-grey quartz ground, probably predominantly uncovered, with black (or at least carbon-containing) brush lines and

locally light (or at least lead white-containing) highlights. It is interesting that the turban and head of Potiphar were not indicated with dark lines but with lead white-containing brush lines. We suspect that the reason for this is that there could have been dark paint from the first sketch for the underlying old man in this place.

With help of radiography it can further be demonstrated that, in the Berlin work, alterations were not only made after the dead-colour stage but even after a subsequent stage which the author must have regarded as finished, since, as mentioned above, the infrared photograph and one of the autoradiographs shows that it was signed. This signature is revealed to the right of Joseph, below his raised right arm, in the volute-shaped extension of the bedstead: <*Rembrandt / f 1655*> . It might be argued that this signature could have belonged to the underlying painting of the old man. However, if it is assumed, as above, that the painting of the old man was unfinished, it is unlikely that it would have been signed. The position of the signature in the picture plane and its small lettering (compared with the size of the depicted old man) would also seem to rule this out. It would seem much more like that it belongs to an earlier phase of *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife*, which must have been thought finished before Rembrandt had second thoughts and painted it over with the rather elaborate volute-shaped extension of the canopy bedpost. (This elaborate structural form is referred to below as the 'bedpost'.)

The problem is that a complex pattern of radioabsorbent strokes, shown by the X-radiograph in this area where the volute-form and Joseph's raised arm are seen in the present image, makes it very difficult to reconstruct earlier phases of the work here. However, it was Rembrandt's usual practice, particularly in history pieces, to integrate his signature in the work by placing it on one of the objects depicted. If the original signature was placed on the top-piece of a 'bedpost' which was rather lower than the present elaborate extension, that 'bedpost' would have been of a similar size to the one seen in the Washington version.

Given the forms visible in the area in the autoradiographs, the present canopy post was probably painted at a later stage to replace a hanging curtain. Oddly enough, in the Washington painting, there are traces of yellow and red paint showing through at the place where this gilded upright is shown in the Berlin version, which suggests that the painter may have intended to follow the alteration of the 'bedpost' in the prototype, but changed his mind. In both paintings, however, related changes are visible in the area of the curtain, which seems to indicate that the pupil followed the master in his corrections. Specifically, underlying blue paint is found in the worn background here in both versions. There are also other indications that at an earlier stage of the Berlin painting the bed resembled in its broad outlines the bed in the Washington version. Thus, as the X-radiograph reveals, in the Berlin painting the pillows on the bed extended further upward to just below the wife's shoulder, as in the Washington version. At the level of her eyes, the autoradiographs of the Berlin painting reveal a horizontal line, which can be seen in the present surface image to the right of her head as a bluish line. This line marks the top of the head-piece of the bed. In the Washington version there is similarly a horizontal line here, in this case the fringed edge of a curtain reaching the pillow.

The various radiographic images show that there were numerous greater or lesser corrections and modifications during the stages between the first design and the completion of the painting. The candid manner in which this was done and the angular, rough style of drawing with which the sketch lines that are seen in the several images were introduced suggest that the present painting is a '*principael*' executed by Rembrandt himself. The quality of execution of large parts of the painting, specifically the wife and Potiphar, also argues for this conclusion. A comparative analysis of the wife in this painting and the woman in the Washington version (in Chapter IV, pp. 301-309) clearly showed that the quality of the woman in the painting discussed here is in all respects superior – the figure, her pose and the details of her anatomy, clothing and facial expression have been executed with a pictorial intelligence that is typical of Rembrandt. The same is true *mutatis mutandis* for the figure of Potiphar: as explained in the above description of the painting, the play of reflected light on the turban and the face is typical of Rembrandt's thoughtfulness and refinement in his use of light effects. At this point of the argument we could assert that the Berlin version of *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* is the prototype and the Washington version of it is a free variant of the type that was frequently produced in Rembrandt's workshop – and by pupils as part of his teaching practice. There is however a problem!

Given that the highlights on the volute-shaped 'bedpost' were applied over this signature, the only possible conclusion is that they were painted after the signature had been applied, and that work was resumed after the first 'completion' of the painting. We know of several examples of work on a painting being resumed after it had been completed and copied: the *Self-portrait with poodle* of 1631 in the Paris Petit Palais (I A 40), *The Blinding of Samson* of 1636 in Frankfurt (III A 116), the *Danaë* in St Petersburg (III A 119) and the *Resurrection* in Munich (III A 127). But in the case of the Berlin *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife*, the changes that were made in the vicinity of the first signature covered by the volute-shape and therefore after the first 'completion' are qualitatively much inferior to the rest of the painting (fig. 10). This applies primarily to the figure of Joseph, which is remarkably weakly executed. One sees in his face and his raised left arm that these have been carefully painted in rather dirty-coloured paint over much more decisive brushwork. The same is true of the grimy-grey bed sheet and pillow on the left, whose folds and creases are unconvincingly rendered. This, coupled with the weak execution of the volute shaped 'bedpost' – and indeed the post at the foot of the bed, raises the question of whether these elements are autograph. If one assumes that these changes were introduced by another hand, then one's first thought is that they must have been done much later. Given the characteristics of the paint and brushwork, however, this does not seem to be the case. Moreover, this

Fig. 10. Detail (1:1.5)

Fig. 11. Jan Pynas, *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife*, 1629, canvas 101.6 x 127 cm. Milwaukee, coll. Dr. A. and I. Bader

phenomenon of another, weaker hand completing or altering a work by Rembrandt, has been previously encountered in other paintings (see Chapter IV). The fact that in the Washington work traces of a similar golden canopy bedpost appear to underlie the paint of the curtain would also seem to cast some doubt on the idea that the alterations to the Berlin painting were made subsequently, while the Washington version is a copy by a pupil, made after the prototype of Rembrandt's first signed version of the Berlin painting, but before it was revised by a second hand. It would seem more probable that this bedpost had already been painted in the Washington work by the master himself. Here we encounter one of the mysteries of what actually transpired in Rembrandt's workshop. The geneses of a number of 'satellites' (dealt with on p. 282) after the *Danaë* and after the Munich *Nativity* (V 11), document the fact that it was possible for a pupil to begin the production of a variant, whether free or not, before the completion of a work by his master.

In addition to the genesis and the relation to the painting in Washington, the iconography has received considerable attention in the art historical literature. Both the Berlin and the Washington version show only the three main protagonists of the story in a broadly similar composition, although the poses and gestures differ. In the Washington painting, Potiphar's wife clearly points to the cloak (even if her hand was originally more closed – see V 23, *Radiography*), but in the Berlin version the meaning of the hand gesture is less easily understood. The usual interpretation is that she is pointing at Joseph,[8] but another reading is possible: namely, that it is the gesture of someone demonstrating a self-evident fact. The position of the hand with the thumb extended corresponds to the gesture illustrated by John Bulwer in 1644 with the legend 'perspicuitatem illustrat' ('it illustrates the fact or quality of being obvious').[9] The most conspicuous differences between the two paintings are seen in the figure of Joseph: in the Washington version he looks down with hands crossed, while in the Berlin version he gazes upward with his left hand raised.

It is the presence of Joseph in particular that has given rise to different views of the iconography of the painting. The scene most often depicted from the story of Potiphar's wife's attempt to seduce Joseph was that in which Joseph escapes from the room leaving his cloak behind. Several authors have remarked that the scene depicted by Rembrandt differs from the biblical account of events, in which she makes her false accusation that Joseph had tried to molest her, when her husband returns home. There is no suggestion in this biblical account that Joseph was present when she makes her accusation, yet Rembrandt shows all three protagonists present. Various explanations for Joseph's presence have been proposed. In 1906/7 Wustmann[10] suggested that Rembrandt's source may have been Vondel's play *Joseph in Egypten* which was first performed at the Amsterdam theatre in January 1641.[11] More recently, Kauffmann (see note 8) and Schwartz[12] also pointed out a possible connection with this play. Schwartz further cites the success of this play's production in 1655, the year in which Rembrandt's work was painted. However, Vondel's portrayal of the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife differs in certain respects from Rembrandt's depiction, casting doubt on whether this really was Rembrandt's source. As in the Bible, Joseph is absent when Potiphar's wife voices her accusation in a monologue during the last act of the play, appearing on stage only at the very end of her monologue. This is evident from her concluding words: 'daer komt die fraie gast'('Here comes the fine fellow'). In Vondel's version of the Old Testament story Potiphar then has to be restrained to prevent him attacking Joseph, whereas in Joseph's painting he is still stands listening attentively to his wife.

It is in any case doubtful whether we need to look for a 17th-century literary source for Rembrandt's treatment of the subject. Tümpel rightly refers to Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, a copy of which is listed in the 1656 inventory of Rembrandt's possessions.[13] As Tümpel points out, the prominent position of the canopy bed in Rembrandt's painting can be linked to a passage in *Jewish Antiquities* in which the bed is explicitly used as a metaphor for marriage. In the same book, however, Joseph is not present when the wife makes her accusation. Whatever the case, therefore, it seems that Rembrandt took liberties with his literary source(s). But this has its precedents in the iconographic tradition of this scene. Bauch was the first to point out that in a painting by Jan Pynas from 1629 several figures, including Joseph are present when the wife denounces him to Potiphar (fig. 11).[14]

One might wonder whether the addition of Joseph was connected with a possible moralistic purpose behind the work. In his foreword to *Joseph in Egypten* Vondel recommends hanging up a picture of Joseph as a 'perfect example of unbending chastity' in the 'bedroom of youths who, though bathed in beauty and grace from their mother's body on, are often shipwrecked in the spring of their life through the siren song of mermaids.'[15] It is worth noting in this context that, according to the Bartolotti family inventory of 1664, a 'Joseph met Potiphaer's Huysvrouw' hung 'in de camer daer de jonghe Juffers slaepen' [in the room where the young ladies sleep].[16] The didactic significance of the tale of Joseph and Potiphar's wife in the

17th century is also evident in *Selfstrijt* ([Christian] Self-Struggle) by Jacob Cats,[17] although it must be said that several contemporary poets seriously doubted whether Cats' model of chastity was an apt one because of the erotic nature of the story.[18]

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

5. Copies

1. Panel (cradled) 55.3 x 47 cm; Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery. Seen by S. H. L. and J. B. in April 1970: 19th-century (?) copy.
2. Canvas 112 x 89 cm, sale Paul Brandt, Amsterdam 17/18 December 1963, no. 17 (as Aert de Gelder). This canvas seems to be a fairly faithful copy; at the right can be seen curtains that are no longer visible in the prototype (see *Paint layer* Condition).

6. Provenance

*– Ford sale, 1744, no. 70;[19] not in Lugt.
*– Possibly coll. John van Spangen, sale London 10 – 12 February 1748 (Lugt 681), 2nd day no. 76: 'Joseph accus'd by Potiphar's Wife' – Rembrandt' (28.7 to Raymond).
– Sale coll. Lord Willoughby in London in 1820 (for £ 189 to Hickman & Carpentier);[20] not in Lugt.
– Coll. Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), sale London (Christie's) 15 May 1830 (Lugt 12373), no. 126: 'Rembrandt, The Wife of Potiphar accusing Joseph; a picture of great expression, and inimitable for its brilliancy of colouring, and power of effect, height 44 by 34.5.' (£ 598 s 10 to Neeld)
– Coll. Sir John Neeld, Grittleton House.
– Dealer Charles Sedelmeyer, Paris 1883.[21]
– Bought from Sedelmeyer in 1883 for the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin (see note 20).

NOTES

1. R. Klessmann, 'Zum Röntgen-Befund des Potiphar-Bildes in Berlin', in: O v. Simson and J. Kelch (eds.), *Neue Beiträge zur Rembrandt-Forschung*, Berlin 1973, pp. 44-49.
2. J. Bruyn, 'Een onderzoek naar de 17de-eeuwse schilderijformaten', *O.H.* 93 (1979) pp. 96-115.
3. Kühn, p. 200; K. Groen, in: *Corpus* IV, pp. 672-673.
4. C. Dittrich et al., *Rembrandt, Les dessins de Dresde*, Dresden - Paris 2006, cat. 74, pp. 141-143.
5. For Rembrandt's manner of underpainting in his late works, see Van de Wetering 1997/2009, pp. 203-214.
6. Another possible hypothesis is that an earlier stage this figure represented a servant, not Joseph. One piece of evidence for this hypothesis is that in several autoradiographs a folded cloth seems to be hung over his right arm. It is conceivable that this cloth is Joseph's cloak, introduced by the servant as evidence – as one finds for example, in a painting attributed to Pieter Potter (present whereabouts unknown, in auction collection De San of Brussels, The Hague (Kleykamp), 6-11-1917) (Lugt 77209).
7. P. Meyers, M. W. Ainsworth and K. Groen, 'Pigments and other painting materials', in: *Art and autoradiography: insights into the genesis of paintings by Rembrandt, Van Dyck, and Vermeer*, New York (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) 1982, pp. 101-104, esp. 103.
8. For example by Ben. 958; H. Kauffmann, 'Anmerkungen zu Rembrandts Potipharbildern', in: O. V. Simson and J. Kelch (eds.), *Neue Beiträge zur Rembrandt-Forschung*, Berlin 1973, pp. 50-57.
9. J. Bulwer, *Chirologia or the naturall language of the hand*, London 1644. This gesture is also found in Rembrandt's *Staalmeesters* (Br. 415), see W. Gs. Hellinga, 'De bewogenheid der Staalmeesters', *N.K.J.* 8 (1957), pp. 151-184, esp. 180-181 and H. van de Waal, 'The mood of the *Staalmeesters*, A note on Mr. De Tolnay's interpretation', *O.H.* 73 (1958), pp. 86-89, esp. 89.
10. R. Wustmann, 'Die Josephgeschichte bei Vondel und Rembrandt', *Kunstchroniek* NF 18 (1906/1907), pp. 81-84.
11. E. Oey-De Vita and M. Geesink, *Academie en schouwburg. Amsterdams toneelrepertoire 1617-1665*, Amsterdam 1983, p. 176.
12. Schwartz 1984, pp. 274-5. However, *Joseph in Egypten* was not only staged in 1655, the year in which this work by Rembrandt was painted. Between 1663 and 1664 was performed 23 times, together with the two other Joseph plays by Vondel. See E. Oey-De Vita and M. Geesink, op. cit.[11].
13. Strauss *Doc.*, 1656/12 Fol. 36v: '284 Een hoogduijtsche Flavio Fevus gestoffeert met figuren van Tobias Timmerman' (284 A High German Flavio Fevus furnished with illustrations by Tobias Timmerman).
14. Bauch 1960, p. 258, note 96.
15. J. van den Vondel, *Joseph. Begrepen in drie Treurspelen. Ioseph in Dotan. Ioseph in Ægypten. Ioseph in 't Hof,* Amsterdam 1640: 'als een zuiveren spiegel van onverzettelijcke kuischeit, op te hangen, in de slaepkamer der jongelingen, die, van moeders lichaem aen, met schoonheit en bevalligheit overgoten, menighmael, in de lente van hun leven, door den toverzang dezer meerminnen, schipbreuck lijden.'
16. Personal communication from Gustav Leonhardt dated 3 August 1979.
17. J. Cats, *Self-stryt, dat is crachtighe beweginghe van vlees en gheest, poëtischer wijse verthoont in den persoon ende uytte ghelegentheyt van Joseph, ten tijde hy by Potiphars huysvrouwe wiert versocht tot overspel…*, Middelburg 1620.
18. See E. de Jongh, 'Erotica in vogelperspectief. De dubbelzinigheid van een reeks 17de eeuwse genrevoorstellingen', *Simiolus* 3 (1968-1969), pp. 22-74, esp. 62-64, note 121; E. J. Sluijter, *De 'Heydense Fabulen' in de Noordnederlandse schilderkunst, circa 1590-1670. Een proeve van beschrijving en interpetatie van schilderijen met verhalende onderwerpen uit de klassieke mythologie,* Leiden 1986 (diss.), pp. 289-290.
19. Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt in eighteenth century England*, [New Haven] Yale Centre for British Art 1983, p. 112, no. 95.
20. HdG 17; *Katalog der ausgestellten Gemälde des 13. - 18. Jarhunderts, Gemäldegalerie Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin*, Berlin-Dahlem 1975, p. 349.
21. *Illustrated catalogue of 300 paintings… formed part of the Sedelmeyer Gallery*, Paris 1898, no. 141.

HDG 18; BR. 523; BAUCH 33; GERSON 275; TÜMPEL A2

1. Introduction and description

In the older Rembrandt literature, two deviating versions of thematically and compositionally related Rembrandtesque paintings were frequently considered as steps in the master's artistic development. In other words, following a first attempt, the artist sought a second, better solution to a given problem. In the meantime, it has become increasingly clear that usually only one of the paintings is by Rembrandt and served as the prototype for the other, done by one of Rembrandt's pupils/workshop assistants. The two versions of *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* in Berlin (V 22) and Washington respectively are such a pair of paintings. As long as both were considered autograph Rembrandts, they were interpreted as consecutive steps in the artist's search for a satisfying composition or narrative solution.

Because the connection between the two pictures sheds interesting light on Rembrandt's studio practice, the Washington version will be analysed in relation to the Berlin prototype. These two works make especially clear just how closely intertwined the genesis of such pairs of paintings can be. As explicated in the earlier entry (V 22) and in Chapter IV, we have no doubt that the Berlin version is the prototype and the Washington version a free variant based on it (for Arthur Wheelock's reaction to this opinion and further comments see below *Appendix*).

The composition of the Washington *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* generally resembles that of the painting in Berlin. Notable differences include the position of Joseph, the place of his cloak, the pose, gesture and clothing of the woman, and the construction of the bed.

Joseph is standing upright next to the bed, his head tilted. His left hand is shown as if resting on his right in which he holds his cap. In the opinion of Arthur Wheelock Joseph's left hand is shown slightly separated from his right as though he is about to raise it to protest his innocence (letter to the RRP of 13-4-05; see also note 1, p. 316). From his belt hangs a bunch of keys symbolising his position of trust in the house of Potiphar. His red cloak is draped over the front bed post. The woman's extended hand points to the cloak. Unlike in the Berlin painting, her feet rather than her legs are crossed. The canopy of the bed and the gilded standard at the head of the bed are absent in this version. A flattened ball decorates one end of the short, rear bedpost.

Working conditions

Examined in April 1970 (J.B., S.H.L.) and after conservation, in November/December 1989 (E.v.d.W.): out of the frame in good light and with a binocular microscope, X-ray films covering the entire paint surface and with the results of the 1979 scientific investigation provided by the Scientific Research Department of the National Gallery of Art.[1] Again (E.v.d.W.) during the exhibition *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, Amsterdam Rembrandthuis, 2006.[2]

Support

Canvas, transferred, 105.2 x 97.9 cm (measured along the stretcher). According to an inscription on the back, the original canvas was removed by E. Sivers in St Petersburg in 1854. The painting was transferred onto fabric with an open-weave, gauze-like fabric interleaf. During this process, the ground was thinned to such an extent that the impression of the original canvas in the ground was removed and is thus no longer visible in the X-radiograph. The X-radiograph only shows traces of fairly coarse stitches along two seams. These seams result from the attachment of an approximately 6 cm wide L-shaped strip of canvas along the left and bottom sides of the original canvas. That this L-shaped piece is not a later addition, but was present when the painting was made (or, as we surmise, was added in the course of the work's production) was determined by the pigment analyses conducted at The National Gallery (see note 1). The pigments of the ground and the paint from the central piece of canvas match those from the L-shaped addition. Analysis of the paint sample cross-sections revealed that the bottom layer consists of lead white and 'whiting'. This layer must have been the adhesive used during the transfer. The presence of lead white in this layer explains why the gauze-like interleaf shows up in the X-ray images. According to an inscription on the inner edge of the stretcher, the support was again treated in 1935 by the Amsterdam restorer Jenner. At that time, the transfer fabric was removed and the painting relined, while the interleaf was retained.

Ground

Directly on top of the lead white and chalk layer applied during the transfer (see *Support*) is a brown ground layer containing iron oxides, organic brown and some quartz (see note 1). According to Karin Groen the ground is of the quartz ground type (see *Corpus* IV, pp. 666-667, 672-673). The brown ground shows through the woman's hair in places.

Paint layer

Condition: See also *Support*. That the painting had been heavily overpainted was noted as early as 1783 (see *6. Provenance*). The painted surface was thoroughly restored in 1979/80, at which time various layers of pigmented and discoloured varnish with, in some areas, a broad shrinkage craquelure were removed. It was clear that the condition of the figures was relatively good; they display only minor losses and little wearing. Losses in the right background and in the figure of Potiphar were probably caused by small mishaps when the painting was transferred in 1854. As a result of wearing, blue paint shines through or is exposed in the curtain, which takes up most of the background.

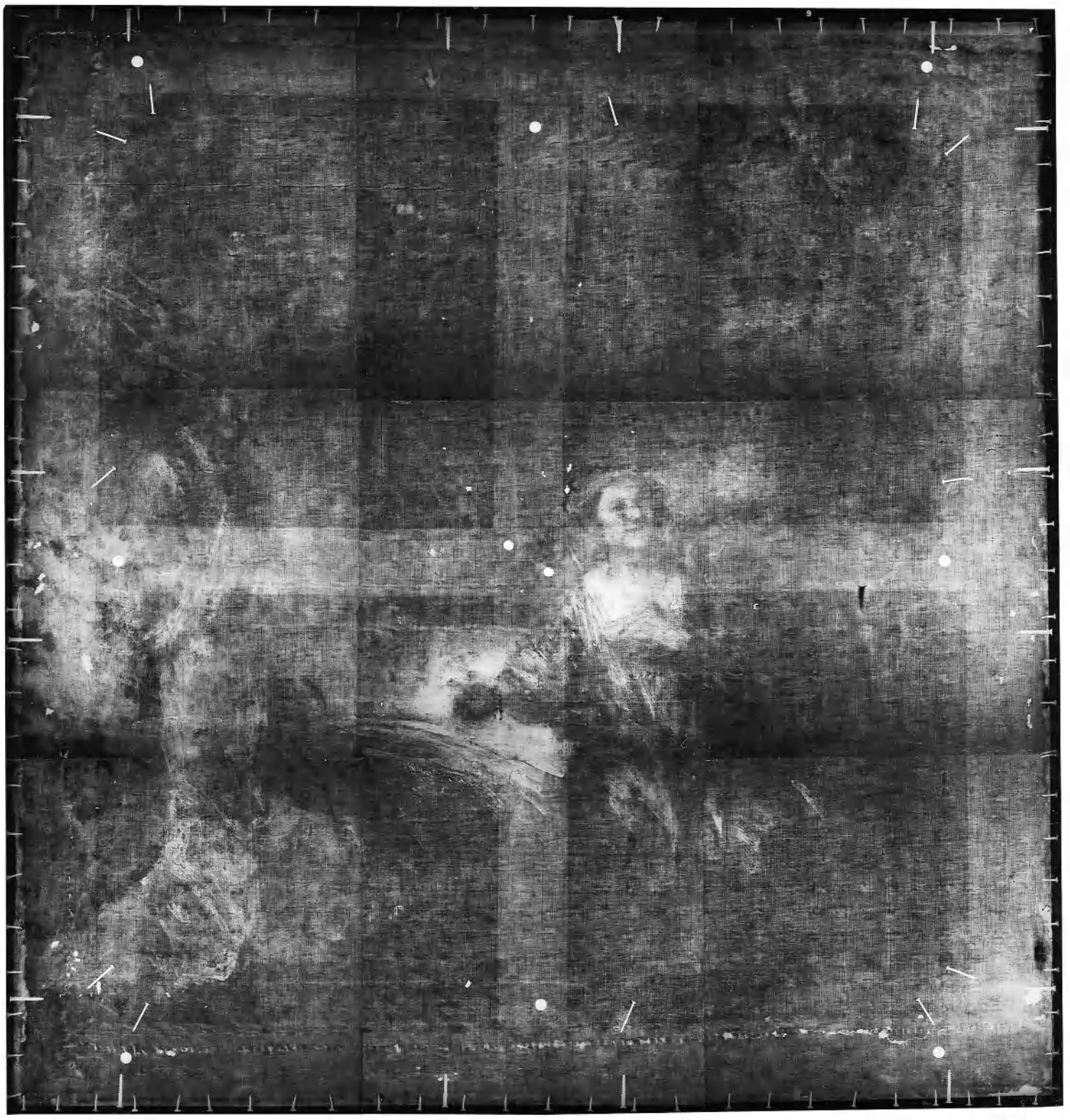
Craquelure: The uneven craquelure is usual for a 17th-century canvas.

The Washington version is far less differentiated in execution than the Berlin one. The brushstrokes are generally longer and not as impastoed resulting in a less emphatic

Fig. 1. Canvas 105.2 x 97.9 cm

variation in the rendering of texture. The woman's pink dress is a radically simplified repetition of the one in the Berlin painting. Moreover, while in both paintings the execution of the figure of Potiphar follows the same system, the richness and effectiveness of the highlights in the Washington painting are far inferior to their equivalents in the Berlin work. The same holds for the differences in the way that Potiphar's head is executed. As explained in the description of V 22, the lighting of Potiphar's head in the Berlin version is the result of reflected lights from various directions, whereas it appears in the Washington painting that Potiphar's head is lit by a single incident light, falling from above such that the turban casts a shadow over the eyes, the upper part of the nose and the cheekbone. The execution of the bedding in both paintings is closely related without, however, being exactly the same. In general the

Fig. 2. X-Ray



handling in the Washington painting appears to be simplified and the technique employed easier to follow than in the Berlin prototype, for instance in the red cloak (in its present form, the Berlin painting has no counterpart to this motif except for the red armrest and the back of the chair). Hesitantly applied yellow piping affords this piece of clothing some structure. Curiously, the vivid red catchlights on the folds are on the side facing away from the light and therefore function more as indications of reflected light.

The pictorially most interesting part of the painting is the figure of Joseph. With a strikingly varied interplay of greens ranging from yellow to blue green enlivened with orange and red accents, the rendering of this figure is especially convincing. Nonetheless, despite the rich colouristic conception, in execution the figure is as weak as the rest of the painting.

Scientific investigation of the build-up of the paint layers disclosed the presence of black paint under the surface paint layer in places, particularly in the figures, which could belong to either an underdrawing in black paint or a black local underpainting or imprimatura.

Radiography

The utility of the X-radiographs is seriously limited as a result of the transfer (see *Support*). The X-radiograph shows little contrast or detail because part of the X-rays are absorbed by the lead white of the lining adhesive. Still, the main features of the representation are clearly recognisable. Several pentimenti can be detected. The reserve for the woman's right hand in the white of the pillow deviates from the hand in the final result: the extended index finger is not reserved, but was first bent, as can be seen in the infrared photograph. Joseph's cloak draped over the foot of the bed was initially more to the left, as indicated by the bold streaks of radioabsorbent paint in the X-ray image. Also visible in the paint surface is the continuation of the pillow and bedding at the right under the cloak in its definitive form.

Signature

At the lower right (on the strip added before or during work on the painting) in black <*Rembrandt.f.1655.*> (fig. 3). Early literature on the painting involves some controversy around the reading of the date.[3] Bode suggested that the last digit was a 4 that was later changed to a *5*.[4] According to Somof, the date could not have been changed because the colour of the last digit *5* matched that of the other numbers. He noted that the little stripe that appeared to turn the *5* into a 4 was darker and seemed to belong to a constellation of small stripes that he observed above the signature.[5] Somof's assumption that the stripe, which Bode saw as a 4 turned into a *5*, is connected to a later treatment of the painting receives confirmation in the fact that traces of this little stripe can no longer be found.

Fig. 3. Detail with signature (reduced)

2. Comments

The differences between the paintings in Berlin (V 22) and Washington have long played a role in the discussion of their relationship. Authors considering both versions as being autograph Rembrandts used the more pregnant portrayal of the accusation of the woman in the Berlin painting as an argument for placing it after the work in Washington. Initially, this sequence of production received support from Bode's observation (published in 1883) that the date in the Washington picture was changed from 1654 to 1655 (see note 4). Although Bode's reading was convincingly corrected by Somof as early as 1901 (see note 5) (see *Signature*), the putative changing of the date nevertheless persisted in discussions on the chronology of the two paintings.

As mentioned above, differences between the paintings in the depiction of the subject as well as in their execution have long been noted. On the basis of the execution, various authors stated their explicit preference for the Berlin painting. As long as the authorship of the two works remained unquestioned, the more powerful execution and – as was thought – the more varied colour scheme of the Berlin painting were singled out in support of a later origin of this version than the one in Washington. Bauch reversed this order in his oeuvre catalogue of 1966, and proposed that the Washington version was a replica of the Berlin picture executed by a competent pupil of Rembrandt and subsequently largely retouched and signed by the master.[6]

Gerson expressed his support of Bauch's suggestion in 1968 and brought up the condition of the two paintings as a complicating factor. At the time of Gerson's publication, the Berlin painting had just been cleaned and, as Gerson noted: 'disclosed earlier damage to pigments closest to the surface, so that the balance of colors is now slightly off'. According to Gerson: 'the quality [of the Washington painting] is difficult to ascertain through the heavy varnish and the curious craquelé.'[7] However, we know from various sources that this painting, too, experienced an eventful material history (see *Paint layer* Condition). The 1979 restoration of the Washington painting clarified its condition and greatly facilitated comparison with the Berlin work.

As described in *Paint layer*, comparison of the execution of the two paintings makes clear that the *peinture* of the Washington version is far poorer than the Berlin one and that many details are less secure and effective. The question thus arises whether the Washington version is by Rembrandt, a copy by a pupil with corrections by Rembrandt (as Bauch and Gerson considered possible), or a copy by a pupil or a workshop assistant who introduced changes with respect to the original.

In our view, Rembrandt's hand is nowhere to be detected in the Washington version. Comparisons of identical sections in the two paintings (see pp. 304-309), for instance the head of the woman, her hand on her chest, as well as the figure of Potiphar immediately expose the flaws in the execution of this painting. The hesitant execution of certain features, such as Joseph's red cloak and the figure of Joseph himself not to mention the hopeless defects in anatomy and foreshortening, evident when one compares the length of the extended arm of the woman with that on her chest or attempts to reconstruct the pose of the legs under the skirt in relation to her feet, all betray the weakness of the maker (see also Chapter IV). Examining the women in both paintings, it is striking that even though their heads are on the same scale, the body of the one in the Washington version is substantially larger than its counterpart in Berlin. The inclination to enlarge forms in relation to the prototype in the process of copying is a common copyists' 'mistake'.[8] As a result of this 'enlarging', the feet of the woman in the Washington version are situated close to the edge of the central canvas (see *Support*). This could have been the reason for the addition

of a small strip of canvas at the bottom, which could then have compelled the painter to also enlarge the canvas at the left in order to maintain the original proportions of the support. The fact that the imprint of the cusping of the original canvas is no longer visible, having been sanded off during the transfer, makes any statement about the original format impossible. Comparing the measurements of the two paintings, the width of the Washington example prior to the enlargement agrees with that of the Berlin work. In that painting, we presume that a strip of some 8 to 10 cm is missing at the top (see V 22 *Support*). The original size of the Berlin version consequently was approx. 123 x 92 cm (a *daeldersmaet* in Dutch 17th-century terms). The height of the Washington canvas before enlargement and the original height of the Berlin painting differ substantially, namely by 24 cm. Assuming that the formats were originally identical – not uncommon for copies – it follows that the Washington version is missing approximately 25 cm, most likely at the top. This could explain its unusual, almost square format.

If Rembrandt's hand cannot be detected anywhere in the painting while everything points to its having been produced in his workshop, the only conclusion possible is that it is a workshop copy in which a number of changes have been introduced with respect to the original. Thus, the painting belongs to a category of shopworks by pupils who introduced variations in a copy of a work by the master. Given the frequency with which this occurred, it is tempting to think that this represents a step in the independent development of one's own inventions, or as Goeree described it ''t beleyd der Onderwijsinge' (the educational process) by learning to walk by holding on to chairs and benches ('te leeren aan stoelen en banken gaan').[9]

Important support for the notion that the Washington *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* must have originated in Rembrandt's workshop is found in a reconstruction of the complex genesis of the Berlin painting. It would appear that the Washington painting was closer to earlier phases of the Berlin prototype than to its final form. For example, in an earlier stage of the Berlin work Potiphar's head was turned more in three-quarters, like in the Washington version, and the top edges of the pillows on the bed in the Berlin painting were placed higher up to just below the woman's shoulder, again like in the Washington painting. Autoradiographs of the Berlin painting reveal a horizontal line at the height of the eyes of the woman which is also visible in the paint surface to the right of her head as a bluish line (see V 22 fig. 4). This line indicates the top of the head of the bed. In the Washington painting, this also appears to be indicated, though somewhat lower, by a horizontal border here connected to the fringe of the curtain. A remarkable similarity is that in both paintings blue paint is found in the worn background in the area of the curtain. This indicates that related changes were introduced during work on the two pictures. From this can be deduced that the pupil incorporated the corrections Rembrandt introduced into his prototype, as was also the case with parallel changes (also in the background) in the *Susanna and the Elders* in Berlin (V 1) and the closely related *Bathsheba* in New York (V 2). Exceptional in this connection, moreover, is that in the Washington painting yellow and red paint show through in the area where in the Berlin painting a gilded bedpost is shown. This suggests that the painter also wanted to include these alterations in the Berlin prototype, but for some reason changed his mind. From the above can be concluded that the Washington painting must have been executed not before or after, but at the same time as the Berlin work.

Fig. 4. Rembrandt, *Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph*, 1656. Kassel, Staatliche Museen Kassel, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (Br. 525)

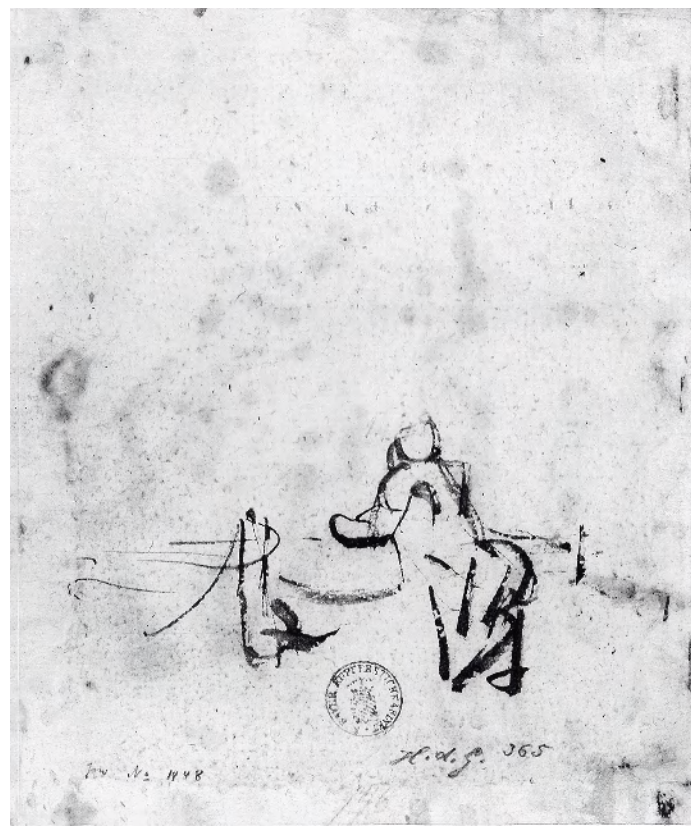
Another indication for the production of the Washington painting in Rembrandt's workshop can be inferred from the figure of Joseph, which, as mentioned earlier, deviates from his counterpart in the Berlin painting, whoever may have painted the Joseph figure there. Given the changes in this part of the painting, one may assume that the pose of this figure in the Berlin painting was initially different. However, there are not enough indications to suppose that earlier phases of the Berlin Joseph agreed with the one in Washington. On the other hand, the pose of Joseph in the Washington painting closely corresponds with a figure in another painting by Rembrandt, namely that of Asenath in *Jacob blessing the children of Joseph* in Kassel (fig. 4; Br. 525). Although dated 1656, one could infer that, given the substantial compositional changes,[10] Rembrandt began working on it one year earlier. In that event, a figure from it could have been quoted in the Washington *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife* in 1655.

Appendix

It would seem that the complex of problems arising from the two versions of *Joseph and Potiphar's wife* is in several respects impossible to resolve satisfactorily. Over the years, we had many times discussed these problems, in particular with Arthur Wheelock Jr., the guardian of the Washington version. In connection with both the painting's restoration in 1979 and the museum's systematic catalogue of Dutch paintings, published in 1995 (see note 1), Wheelock and his colleagues have studied this painting in

Fig. 5. Rembrandt School, *Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife*, pen and wash in brown, 18.2 x 15.1 cm (Ben. 958 recto). Munich, Graphische Sammlung

Fig. 6. Rembrandt School, *Potiphar's wife*, pen in brown, 18.2 x 15.1 cm (Ben. 958 verso). Munich, Graphische Sammlung



considerable depth. In the context of the present discussion, we sent him our draft entries for his reaction. The following passages from his responses (13 April and 28 May 2005) convey the essence of his opinion:

'To my mind, it is mistaken to characterize this work [the Washington version] as a copy of the Berlin painting, for there are too many differences between the works for it to be so designated. In fact, when I saw the two paintings together in Tümpel's Old Testament exhibition in 1994/1995 in Münster, I was struck by how the narrative is presented in a very different way in the two works, and, in many respects is more successfully told in the Washington painting, where the red robe takes a central position in the story. Joseph's reaction, where he is just slightly raising his hand in protest, is moreover, far more subtle and effective than is the gesture of the Joseph figure in the Berlin painting.'

'… It seems that the [RRP's] attribution of the Berlin painting to Rembrandt is based on generic similarities to his work rather than to specific analyses of the type that you utilized for the Washington painting, … My experiences in seeing them together in Munster reinforced my sense that the Washington and Berlin paintings were created in the workshop at the same time (partly because of the complex structure of the Washington support) and by two different artists. In my entry on the painting in the 1995 systematic catalogue, I call the Gallery's painting "Rembrandt Workshop" and note that the weaknesses in modeling and the painting's subdued narrative style remind me of Constantijn van Renesse. Seeing the paintings together in the exhibition reinforced my sense that the Berlin painting is not by Rembrandt but by another assistant in the workshop (see my note 31 on p. 321 of the 1995 systematic catalogue where I suggested as a possibility Willem Drost). Part of my issue with the Berlin painting (which I only noticed in the exhibition) is, of course, the illogical position of the bed, where half of it is situated on the floor level and half one step down (seems very un-Rembrandt-like to me).

I can well imagine Rembrandt setting out a competition for two of his assistants, asking them to come up with a composition containing certain components like the three figures, the bed and the robe, etc. Maybe there is a lost Rembrandt prototype of some type or other. In any event, it seems probable that they were both signed and dated to be sold as Rembrandts. … If the weaknesses in the figure of Joseph and the bed [in the Berlin version] are to be attributed to a student reworking the master's initial efforts, I have a problem figuring out why a pupil would be entrusted to execute such major changes in the very year that the master had "completed" and signed his work. … I can well imagine Rembrandt setting out a project for two of his assistants, perhaps based on some sketch or verbal description of the scene (perhaps inspired by a theatrical production), that they were supposed to master – perhaps even as a competition between them. The various changes and modifications that occur in both works could well be seen as a result of Rembrandt's critiques of their original efforts. Presumably the two works were both signed and dated Rembrandt 1655, and sold as works by the master.'

Wheelock's response contains several stimulating suggestions that are addressed below.

Certain strong similarities in the forms and effects

depicted force one to accept that the paintings are very closely interconnected. Nevertheless, despite the unmistakable similarities, we feel that when the two paintings are compared they also display significant differences, particularly when the figures of both Potiphar and his wife are compared with regard to their form, quality, expression, anatomy, lighting and positioning. Evaluating these differences, the conclusion seems to us inescapable that the Washington version has been executed by a much weaker hand after the Berlin version (see also Chapters III and IV, esp. p. 302-310). Wheelock on the other hand rightly claims that the Washington version is in the narrative sense more balanced and coherent: the placing of Joseph's cloak hanging on the bedpost, and the attitude of Joseph himself, convey a much more convincing rendering of the biblical story. Joseph's protest in the Berlin version and the disturbing depiction of the garment under the foot of Potiphar's wife do indeed make that version less successful as a narrative painting. However, Wheelock's suggestion that perhaps neither painting was by Rembrandt, but that both might be efforts by two different pupils after a lost prototype by Rembrandt, is in our view unsustainable. Apart from the clearly Rembrandtesque qualities in the depiction of Potiphar and his wife in the Berlin version (as described in entry V 22 and in Chapter IV), there are other features that speak in favour of the attribution of the greater part of that version to Rembrandt. The way in which changes have been carried out is so strongly reminiscent of Rembrandt's way of composing, drawing and painting that we cannot endorse Wheelock's suggestion that that painting is entirely the work of a pupil. The question still remains, however, as to why Rembrandt should have allowed such a grubbily painted Joseph, acting so unconvincingly, to be added together with adjacent elements by another hand.

The key to a possible solution to this puzzle is twofold. In the first place, there is the fact that Joseph – whether in the biblical story or in the contemporary theatrical version of the same episode alluded to above – was simply not present in this specific episode of the story. Our hypothesis, put forward with all due caution, is that Joseph was originally missing in both paintings. The cloak hanging over the bedpost to the left in the foreground of the Washington version refers to Joseph's role in the story; the woman's gesture would seem to relate to this cloak.

Secondly, it would seem that Joseph's cloak originally hung in the same place in the Berlin version, i.e. on the foreground bedpost. In view of the specific nature of the execution of that part of the bed in the Berlin version, the hand that subsequently added Joseph must have been the same as the hand which changed the bed by removing the cloak. The enlargement of the Washington painting with 6 cm wide strips of canvas along the left and bottom side may also be correlated with the decision, at some point, to add Joseph to the scene. The added strips provide more space for the figure of Joseph which, we surmise, is quoted (in reverse) from Asenath in Rembrandt's *Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph*, on which Rembrandt must have been working at that time. The decision to add Joseph in both paintings is likely to have been taken after the Berlin version was finished, as it was already signed on the bedpost which was then repainted in the process of changing the composition.

We earlier observed that Rembrandt, for narrative or other reasons, occasionally developed further ideas about a work that he had already finished which entailed drastic changes. It would seem that he sometimes gave pupils the task of implementing such changes, but then in new versions of the same scene. This was probably the case in the *Abraham's sacrifice* in Munich (III A 108 fig. 6). Another example may be the extended copy after the Berlin *Samson threatening his father in law* (III A 109 fig. 6), which recently resurfaced. For another example, see our discussion in this Volume of the Emmaus paintings in Paris and Copenhagen (V 14 and 15). (On the complex problem of collaboration in Rembrandt's workshop more generally, see Chapter V in this Volume.)

To summarize, the following order of events could be imagined. First, the Berlin version, without Joseph, was executed by Rembrandt. Joseph's cloak was in all probability originally hung over the bedpost in the left foreground. Subsequently an unknown pupil painted a free variant after that painting: we know many examples of this type of variant (see Chapter III and IV). Then the idea must have arisen to add Joseph to the scene – first in the Berlin version – and it would seem that a pupil was given the assignment to carry out this operation. This would not have been so unusual. We think it likely that during that operation the cloak was painted out and transferred by the same hand to the right foreground, in order to create space for the gesticulating Joseph. That too was probably Rembrandt's own afterthought, to be realized by the same pupil. The Washington version, conceived as a satellite painting (also initially without the Joseph figure) executed by a pupil after Rembrandt's Berlin prototype, may well have been enlarged for the purpose of creating sufficient room for a more satisfactory version of the Joseph figure, to be carried out by the painter of the Washington 'satellite' after Rembrandt's Asenath.

As in the cases cited above, Rembrandt could well have been closely involved in this process of further developing the ordonnance in both paintings, whilst leaving the implementation of these new ideas to pupils – one changing Rembrandt's own painting while the other altered his own 'satellite' painting.

If this reconstruction of events is correct, the Washington version would have been the final product of Rembrandt's continuing thoughts regarding the narrative conception and composition. Seen in this way, both the Berlin and Washington paintings can be considered as belonging to Rembrandt's oeuvre, despite the fact that he himself did not actually execute considerable parts of these works – in the case of the Washington version none at all.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

1. An etching by Ch. Exshaw (d. 1771) shows the painting in reverse, freely interpreted.[11]

5. Copies

1. The recto of a drawing in Munich (fig. 5; Ben. 958) displays the figures in accordance with the scene in the Washington painting; the verso (fig. 6) contains a sketch of only the woman. Benesch, who considered both the Berlin and the Washington painting as autograph works by Rembrandt, believed that the drawing was a preparatory study for the Washington painting. According to Benesch, however, the drawing subsequently also played a role in the genesis of the Berlin version because of a change in the position of the legs of the woman. In our view, a change in pose from closed legs to one in which one leg is slung over the other is out of the question. The legs appear to have been only placed somewhat more at an angle. Such a correction does not allow the drawing to be situated in the genesis of either the Washington or the Berlin painting. In our view, the drawing should be considered a copy after the Washington picture, even though it displays a complicated construction of the canopy bed, not a trace of which can be detected in the Washington work probably because it was cut down at the top.

6. Provenance

– Sale G. Hoet, The Hague 25-28 August 1760 (Lugt 1109), no. 44: 'Jozef, beschuldigd van Potifars Huisvrouw: kapitaal en uitmuntend Stuk, met drie Beelden. Door Rembrant. Hoog 39 1/2 duim, breed 37 Duim [= 102.3 x 96.2 cm]'. [Alle de schilderyen zyn gemeeten binnen's Lyst's, met Rynlandse Voetmaat]. (100 aan Yver) (Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife: capital and excellent piece, with three figures. By Rembrandt. High 39 1/2 duim, wide 37 duim [= 102.3 x 96.2 cm]. All of the paintings were measured in the frame in Rhineland feet.) (100 guilders Yver)
– Coll. J.E. Gotzkowski (1710-1775), Berlin.
– In 1764, with 224 other paintings belonging to Gotzkowski, acquired by Empress Catherine II (1729-1796; Czarina from 1762) as her first purchase. *Catalogue raisonné des Tableaux qui se trouvent dans les Galeries, Sallons et Cabinets du Palais Impérial de S. Petersbourg, commencé en 1773 et continué jusqu'en 1783. incl* (MS in the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg) no. 7: 'Paul Rembrant. La femme de Putiphar et Joseph. Ce Tableau de trois figures n'est pas du meilleur faire de Rembrant, et il a souffert par les repeints. Sur toille. haut 1 arch.[ine] 7 1/2 V.[erchokk] Large 1 A.[rchine] 5 3/4 V.[erchokk] [=104.4 x 96.63 cm]'.
– Sold 1931 through (Matthiesen Gallery, Berlin, P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., London, and M. Knoedler & Co., New York) to Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh and Washington.
– Deeded 1 May 1937 to the A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh.

NOTES

1. A.K. Wheelock Jr., *Dutch paintings of the seventeenth century. National Gallery of Art Washington*, Washington 1995, cat. no. 1937.1.79.
2. E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's art; attempting an objective evaluation', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, Amsterdam/Berlin 2006, pp. 235-248, esp. 239-244; M. Franken, 'Learning by imitation: copying paintings in Rembrandt's workshop', idem, pp. 153-177, esp. 160-169; J. Kelch, in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Genie auf der Suche*, Berlin 2006, cat. nos. 62-63, pp. 366-369.
3. According to Wheelock, op. cit.[1], G.F. Waagen (*Die Gemäldesammlung in der kaiserlichen Ermitage zu St. Petersburg*, Berlin 1864, p. 179 no. 794) read the date on the Washington painting as 1657, while in the 1870 catalogue of the Hermitage the date is given as 1654.
4. W. Bode, *Studien zur Geschichte der holländischen Malerei*, Braunschweig 1883, p. 508.
5. A. Somof, *Catalogue de la galerie des tableaux II. Écoles neérlandaises et allemandes*, St Petersburg 1901, p. 308 cat. no. 794.
6. Bauch 1966, 33.
7. Gerson 274 and 275.
8. For example, in this respect can be mentioned the Kassel copy in relation to the Amsterdam *Self-portrait* (I A 14).
9. W. Goeree, *Inleydinge tot de algemeene teyken-konst*, Amsterdam 1697[3] (1668), p. 28.
10. I. Manke, 'Zu Rembrandts Jakobsegen in der Kasseler Galerie', *Zeitschr. f. Kunstgesch.* 23 (1960), pp. 252-260; H. von Sonnenburg, 'Rembrandts "Segen Jakobs"', *Maltechnik/Restauro* 84 (1978), pp. 217-243.
11. See H. Potterton, 'Charles Exshaw, a commonplace practitioner in painting and in etching', *The Connoisseur* 187 (Dec. 1974), p. 273.

V 24 Rembrandt and pupil – Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well [1655]

NEW YORK, THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, ACC. NO. 60.71.14
BEQUEST OF LILLIAN S. TIMKEN, 1959

HDG 101; BR. 589; BAUCH 87; GERSON 273; TÜMPEL A13

1. Introduction and description

There have long been differences of opinion expressed in the art historical literature concerning the attribution of the New York *Christ and the Samaritan woman*. While some art historians support Sumowski, who in 1957 declared it to be a work of a pupil,[1] others vigorously defend Rembrandt's authorship. To date, scarcely any attention has been paid in this discussion to the complex genesis of the work. In the following discussion, the weaknesses of the end result are analyzed while, in the *Radiography* section, attention is paid to the question of whether and/or to what extent another hand – possibly Rembrandt's – may have been involved in the origin of the painting. This question is discussed under *2. Comments*.

The subject of this painting is taken from a passage from St. John's Gospel which tells how Christ, while travelling through Samaria on his way from Judea to Galilee, rested by Jacob's well near the city of Sychar (John 4: 5-28). 'There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, 'Give me to drink' (for his disciples were gone into the city to buy meat). Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.' At the end of the subsequent dialogue he reveals himself as the Messiah: 'The woman saith unto him, I know that the Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*. And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman; yet no man said; What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?'

Christ is sitting by the well before a landscape, while the Samaritan woman stands to the right in front of the well. To the left, behind Christ seven of the apostles can be seen approaching.

Christ, with a short beard and shoulder-length hair, is seen almost frontally. He is dressed in a long brownish robe which covers his feet. From his left shoulder hangs a dark cloak that was probably originally green. The small dark stripe visible along the other side of his body also belongs to this cloak. Christ stretches out his right arm, apparently in the direction of the approaching disciples. His left foot, covered by the cloak, rests on a block of stone that forms part of the well and arches over a drainage culvert.

The woman, seen in profile, is leaning on the edge of the well with her left hand, from which a rope hangs over the edge of the well. With her scarcely visible right hand she grasps a pitcher which balances on the edge of the well. The woman is wearing a white shirt with sleeves rolled up to the elbow, a long, golden-yellow skirt and a dark brown apron, pushed back in front and tied at the back with a red belt. Around her middle a red sash is visible, into which her shirt, billowing out over the red sash, appears to be tucked. Obliquely over her back runs a thin cord to which appears to be attached the large round hat with a round button, that hangs against her right hip. Under the skirt, just above the ankles, can be seen the piping of brownish charwar (a type of harem trousers), apparently decorated along its bottom edge with a red material. On her feet, over red stockings, she wears socklets and slippers. Her hair is worn up and decorated with a red and white ribbon; a pearl hangs by a gold pendant from her ear. Behind the woman, a niche can be seen in the back wall of the well. The light that illuminates the scene from the top left falls with greatest intensity on the woman and on that part of the back wall behind her.

The leading disciple, who can be identified as Peter by his bald head and short beard, is preparing to ascend the incline to the terrace where Christ is seated. In front of the disciples, the beginning of this rise is marked by a dark stripe which perhaps indicates the border of the terrace. Peter is dressed in a whitish-grey robe and a yellow cloak fastened in front by a red belt (fig. 3). He holds a staff in his right hand and with his raised left hand he gestures toward the scene in the foreground. The face of another disciple, with dark hair and in reddish attire, is partially visible over Peter's left shoulder. To the right, walking beside Peter, a disciple with a long red beard and dressed in a cloak that falls over his arm in great folds, turns his face toward Peter, giving the impression that they are conversing. To the right and behind this figure, partly overlapping each other and partly cut off by Christ's raised arm, the heads and shoulders of four more disciples are visible. Remarkably, these figures project above the foremost figure of Peter, which seems to be in visual conflict with the suggestion that they are about to climb up to the terrace where Christ is sitting. Further away in the landscape, two other figures are walking.

To the left in the far background can be seen a building with windows rounded above and with a pointed gable or tower. In front of this, one sees houses with red roofs. In front of these a tall tower rises up, with a buttress on the right and windows or niches rather unclearly indicated. The tower is divided higher up into two blunt, truncated towers. Several small houses with slanting roofs can be seen in front of the tower; to the right, beside and in front of these are trees, one of which is presumably meant to be a palm with its fan of branches. The tops of the trees and the tower stand out against a grey-blue sky.

Working conditions

Studied on 15th April 1969 (J.B., B.H.) and again on 8th May 1991 (M.F., K.G., E.v.d.W.) and on 28th November 1995 (P.B., M.F., E.v.d.W.): out of its frame in good light, with the help of a stereomicroscope, an infrared photograph and X-radiographs covering the entire surface.

Support

Panel of an unspecified kind of wood, vertical grain, 63.5 x 48.9 cm. Perhaps oak, in view of the short, wavy course of the grain visible in the X-radiograph above the building in the far background on the left. Single piece. Both on the right and the left, the original panel has been extended by *c.* 0.7cm wide lathes that have been painted. The

Fig. 1. Panel 63.5 x 48.9 cm

Fig. 2. X-Ray

Fig. 3. Detail

image itself continues over both these lathes. It can be clearly seen in the sky, where a break appears between the blue on the original panel, painted with a clearly visible brushstroke, and the smoothly applied blue paint on the lathes, that these painted lathes are later additions.

The reverse side of the panel has been planed and affixed to a larger panel that extends another *c.* 0.4 cm on all sides and is cradled. Unpainted lathes have been added all round to the protruding edges of this supporting panel. Because of these lathes, dendrochronological investigation was not possible.

Ground

A yellow-brown, perhaps belonging to the ground, is indistinctly visible in the sky to the left and, to a lesser extent, also to the right of the tower. The yellowish-brown ground appears to be exposed locally in the woman's left hand. In the light brown zone in the right foreground there is also a suggestion of the ground showing through. In places, where the paint has been applied thinly, a vertical pattern of thin brown lines is visible that probably corresponds to the grain of the wood.

Paint layer

Condition: The paint layer on the original panel is in reasonable condition, though here and there overcleaned. The somewhat disturbed aspect of the paint surface is mainly due to the way the thick, dark covering zones contrast with transparent passages. It appears from the X-radiograph that tiny flakes of paint have been lost from the back wall above the niche to the right of and above the woman, and in the woman's clothing on the upper arm and in the shadow of her armpit. According to Von Sonnenburg[2], areas of paint loss, especially in the sleeve, 'have been touched up by a restorer with strokes of heavy impasto'. Von Sonnenburg suggested that the restorer's intervention has had a far-reaching effect on the way one sees the woman, because it involved overpainting the woman's head as well as the sleeve and the arm. In our view, however, the effects of the intervention are certainly not as great as Van Sonnenburg indicated. In the woman's sleeve, the sharp edges of minor paint losses are clearly visible in the paint surface, both in the painting itself and in the X-radiograph; and here, indeed, although only on a very minor scale and very locally, one can see the relief of

small, thick paint strokes that have been applied by a later hand. From the manner of the painter's retouching evident in the sleeve, Van Sonnenburg thought that the face had also been overpainted, and in this instance on a larger scale. In view of the coherence of the handling of the brushwork there, his words could be interpreted as meaning that the face, including the eye, has been almost completely overpainted. Von Sonnenburg seems mainly to have come to this conclusion on the basis of the 'modern look' (to use his own words) of the woman's face. However, we are of the opinion that what Von Sonnenburg took for overpainting in the woman's face in fact properly belongs to the original painting.

Craquelure: In the thick dark passages, such as the cloak and parts of Christ's robe, the passage to the left of and above his knee, the tree passage on the extreme right and left under the tower the paint shows shrinkage cracks. Elsewhere a finer and quite regular pattern of ageing cracks is visible.

Over large parts of the painting, the paint has been applied irregularly. In places it is thick and even cakey, while in other parts there are extremely thin passages. The woman's face, sharply contrasted against the brown background, is painted rather flat in a light yellow flesh tone, in which the presence of a broad curving brushstroke from forehead to cheekbone is rather striking. Accents have been added to the mouth and the shadow under the bottom lip in a rather strong carmine red. The dark shape formed by the eye shadow and eyebrow has been executed in a dark tone, for the most part transparent, although more opaque toward the nose. In the eyebrow this dark tone has been applied over the flesh tone with a thin, attenuated swipe. The hair, put up behind, has probably been painted directly onto the ground with a few strokes of light and dark brown. The white ribbon indicated by small strokes was originally slightly larger and is partly covered by red paint; the relief of the white paint stripe shows through the red. Her left hand and arm are painted with a pale grey flesh tone that seems to have been applied very thinly in the hand, with a few strokes over the yellow-brown ground that has been left visible in places. The highlights on the folds of the woman's skirt have been added with yellowish-white paint to a brownish underlayer. This light paint has been rather roughly applied with such an irregular course that the fall of the folds is not really satisfactorily suggested. Here and there the shadows are intensified with black or brown brushstrokes. Above the dark brown slippers, the stockings are indicated in a pastose brown and in red. The slippers and the few ornaments are characterized with small, vivid, succulent lines, giving an impression of rich decoration.

The ground beneath the woman has been done in grey, with a large area of light brown below right where the ground of the painting lies exposed, and to the left with uncontrolled grey and brown flecks that extend to the drainage culvert and which may have been intended to indicate mud. The well has been executed in grey, applied over red in the middle part, more thickly applied in lighter grey and reddish grey over brown near the rim. The differences in tone and graininess of the paint contribute to the suggestion of stone. In the background to the right of the woman, a light place is indicated in the well's niche, executed in a grainy grey which, by means of slightly hatching brushstrokes, merges into the dark paint used to indicate the niche, now partly cleaned. To the right of the hat, the niche in the back wall of the well is indicated in a pastose light paint merging above into a thin, semi-transparent, light paint that only partially covers the ground.

The lit half of Christ's face has been done in a flesh tone using thin, granular paint. The brushstrokes show little correspondence with the shape of the face; indeed the execution of the head is very like that of the woman in this regard. There are also similarities in the hands of the two figures, with sweeps of a grey flesh tone over the ground. In the face of Christ, the eyebrow and the eye are indicated in a graphic manner and a creamy light has been introduced along the nasal bone and on the point of the nose. The shadowed half of the face and the beard have been done with a rather smoothly applied grey-brown. The white of the eye and the slightly lit bag under the eye are formed by the transparent light brown underpainting, which is there left uncovered. The hair is painted with a mixture of yellow, brown and reddish brushstrokes, loosely applied, wet in wet. The left contour of the hair is created by the overlapping dark paint of background. In Christ's right hand, painted on the ground in a greyish flesh tone, the contours of the fingers are marked in a dark brown. To the right, this hand is summarily indicated with a light spot at the knuckle of the forefinger. Christ's robe is painted with a pastose, yellowish and greyish paint over which reddish glazes have been applied, generating a varied violet-brown.

The suggestion of a highly complex pattern of folding in this robe cannot be considered everywhere successful. In particular, the large pointed, branching fold above Christ's left knee disturbs the effect of the forwardly directed knee; while the zigzagging upper border of the sleeve of Christ's outstretched arm is especially clumsy, for it fails to align properly with the wrist and, as a result, fails to give any plasticity to the fold it indicates. Christ's cloak hanging from the shoulder is rendered in thickly applied dark paint (possibly originally green?) and gives a rather shapeless impression.

The disciples are sketched in tones of dark brown and red; in the figure of Peter the paint has been employed in a somewhat grainy fashion. The landscape has been executed in rather dark brown. Over the brown, the trees and houses with sloping roofs have been done in dark brown and some greenish-grey. The trees to the right are painted in a pastose, dark brown with some thick olive green and stand out sharply against the light sky in which they are roughly reserved. The tree to the right, whose top was not reserved in the sky (as the X-radiograph shows), has been rather clumsily executed in olive green. The tall, brown tower, done in thicker and lighter reddish-brown and greenish-grey to the left on the lit side, originally had a different, somewhat lower superstructure; in the added upper part the sky shows through in places.

The sky has been painted in a rather stripy manner,

Fig. 4. Detail

with paint of grey-blue, grey, dirty white and above to the right some brown, applied in long strokes of even thickness. To the left, parallel to the tower, a zone roughly 1 cm wide is visible that has been executed with short, thick, horizontal strokes that correspond with the way the sky to the right of the tower has been painted. To the left of this zone, in the larger zone which continues almost to the left edge of the panel, the paint has been more thinly applied (see *Radiography*).

Radiography

The grid of the cradling is clearly seen in the X-radiograph. In view of the many pentimenti, the image must have undergone radical changes during the course of its

genesis. In the foreground plateau, significant changes can be observed concerning not only the construction but also possibly the organization of light. In the image now visible, to the left the light intensity on this foreground plateau increases forward; whereas in the X-radiograph, on the contrary, the intensity of the light seems to decrease strongly to the fore. Although the impressions of light in the X-ray image do not necessarily have to correlate with the lighting in the painted image, in this case the very light markings in the X-ray image of the dark, horizontal band which, on the surface image, delimits the plateau behind Christ on the left can surely only be explained if the intensity of the light falling on the foreground plateau originally increased from front to back. It should be noted here that the function of this horizontal delimiting band is not entirely clear. As already mentioned above, it could be the top step of a stairway. The most remarkable change to the foreground relates to the construction of the plateau with the well. Where one sees in the paint surface the platform and drainage culvert of the well, in the X-ray image one sees two steps. These are also clearly visible in the relief of the paint surface. They are so constructed in perspective that they run sloping up and backward to the left. A light area in the X-ray image to the left of Christ's right leg could also indicate that at an earlier stage it extended to the left of Christ.

There is another visible change in these steps, moreover, that concerns Christ's posture. Where in the surface image Christ's long robe falls to the ground, in the X-ray image his left foot can be seen on the first step as a dark reserve and within it a light patch. A reserve for the other foot resting on the ground is also visible in the indicated light ground. Nor is it only his feet; there are also changes evident in other parts of Christ's figure. An earlier version of Christ's outstretched hand was further to his right, and the sleeve of this arm appears to have been wider. The position of Christ's left arm was perhaps originally totally different from what it is now. The dark shape high up on Christ's chest, which becomes lighter as it passes below right, could correlate with a hand held before the chest or a hand gesture. In addition, Christ's dark cloak (which shows up remarkably light in the X-ray image and could possibly have been painted with a copper-containing green) originally fell much wider to the left. This broader zone of the cloak occurs just where the two furthest right disciples are seen in the surface image. From this, and on the basis of reserves visible in the X-ray image in front of the disciples, one can infer that the row of approaching disciples was differently arranged at an earlier stage. To the right of Peter the reserves of three figures are visible that are placed lower than Peter himself. This placing of the figures contributes to the suggestion that the disciples are coming up the hill. It is remarkable that in the final version this impression is nullified because the row of disciples to the right of Peter becomes larger rather than diminishing.

There also appear to have been changes in the setting in which the Samaritan woman is placed by the well. The lit zone to the right of the woman is not only situated higher in the X-ray image but also extends to the left of the woman. This could mean that the back wall was flat in an earlier stage and not indented by a niche as in the eventual image.

Fig. 5. Rembrandt, *Christ and the woman of Samaria among ruins*, 1634, etching 12.3 x 10.6 cm (1:1) (B. 71[I])

In the background and in the sky, similar radical changes are evident, with major consequences for the ordonnance of the painting as a whole. Whereas the now visible image shows trees in the background to the right, standing out darkly against the sky, and buildings placed one behind the other to the left, with a strong recession in depth from the middle of the painting to the left margin, the X-radiograph shows that this background was differently constructed at an earlier stage. It is striking that the high tower and other buildings silhouetted against the sky are not reserved in the paint of the sky that shows up light in the X-radiograph. In the area of the tower, rather lightly showing, unevenly applied paint can be seen in a zone that continues to the underside of the tower, indicating that in the first stage of the painting's genesis the buildings now visible, including the tower, were not envisaged, and that the boundary between sky and background elements of the landscape was placed lower. The role of the background in the composition at that stage shows similarities with that in Rembrandt's print of the same subject from 1634 (B.71; fig. 5). Here too the horizon behind the disciples climbing out of the landscape is low in relation to the background against which the main figures are placed.

The sky in this first stage of the painting scarcely shows in the X-radiograph and was apparently painted thinly. Parts of this earlier sky are still to be seen, where the yel-

Fig. 6. Infrared-photograph

Fig. 7. Detail with signature

Fig. 8. Detail

lowish ground shows through the sky in a zone to the left and also, to a lesser extent, to the right of the tower. In a subsequent stage the large tower in the background had to be painted over the first sky. This tower was initially lower with a domed top (see fig. 6). A second sky has been painted over the first, with strong X-ray absorbent paint to the right of the composition and round the tower. The contours of the tower both left and right have been corrected to its present shape using short, horizontal brushstrokes with the blueish paint of this second sky. Strongly X-ray absorbent paint can also be seen along the top edge of the first form of the tower, above which the eventual superstructure with its two block-like towers has been placed.

To the right in the background, the reserves of the palm trees and a deciduous tree can be seen in the X-radiograph as dark forms in the strongly X-ray absorbent paint of the second sky. In these reserves there are no traces of the first sky in the X-ray image; nor can one see any evidence in the surface paint of the thinly painted first version of the sky in these trees. Apart from the olive green with which these trees are indicated (partly applied over the second sky), we also find a reddish-brown in the palm trees and in the deciduous tree that can also be seen elsewhere in the background (to the left and right of Christ but also in the niche behind the Samaritan woman). This reddish-brown, in many places covered with black paint, could well belong to the underpainting of the first stage. It is possible that originally an entirely different solution had been chosen for the right background. A part of the sky to the right of the tower appears to have been added over a zone with dark paint that shows up clearly in the infra-red photograph (fig. 6). This dark zone is bounded above by a horizontal line. It is now impossible to discern whether the dark paint indicated a lower construction of the tower in an earlier stage or a building that was envisaged in the first stage of the background to the right. It is quite conceivable that more buildings were indicated to the right and that they could even have extended further upwards under the second version of the sky. It can be deduced from the shrinkage cracking in the paint layer above the first horizon and to the right in the trees that the changes were introduced while the underlying paint had not yet completely dried.

All in all, it may be inferred – particularly from the X-radiograph – that the painting has been radically changed in a great many points. For an evaluation of these radical changes in the light of the role that Rembrandt may have played in the genesis of the painting, see *2. Comments*.

Signature

Below, middle on the front of the stone of the culvert, in dark brown, clear letters <*Rembrandt. / f 1655.*> (fig. 7). The *R* has been re-done several times and the whole inscription is uncertainly executed. It occurs in an area where the light brown layer has been applied over a lighter colour painted with forceful brushstrokes. Along the relief tips in this part of the painting, white has become visible as a result of wear. The signature partly covers these worn light ridges (although not everywhere), confirming the impression that the inscription is not reliable.

2. Comments

The question of whether the New York *Christ and the Samaritan woman* is from Rembrandt's hand has led to very different standpoints, often very firmly stated. In 1957, Sumowski was the first to claim that the painting was a compilation from the hand of one of Rembrandt's pupils (see note 1) Sumowski's view was echoed by various other authors, but was not unanimously accepted. Convinced that it was a work by Rembrandt, Gerson spoke in 1968 of the 'powerful interpretations' in the New York painting and the two other versions of the same subject (V 25 and V 26), which are 'quite distinct from each other in emotional content and compositional structure'. What the three works have in common, in Gerson's view, is a strong Venetian flavour.[3] This divergence of standpoint is also found in the more recent literature. In 1995, Von Sonnenburg endorsed Gerson's positive judgement, resolutely rejecting any doubts as to the attribution of the New York painting to Rembrandt.[4] On the other side, Tümpel[5] and Liedtke[6] did not accept the painting as an authentic work by Rembrandt but placed it within his circle. Liedtke not only argued that qualities of style and expression were inconsistent with Rembrandt but also thought he could point to similarities with paintings attributed to Constantijn van Renesse (see below).

In view of the weaknesses in execution, described under *Paint layer*, we too are disinclined to believe that Rembrandt had a hand in most of the final execution of the New York painting. It is possible that Rembrandt's sole contribution is

Fig. 9. G. van den Eeckhout, *Christ and the woman of Samaria*, grisaille on paper, 12.7 x 11.4 cm (1:1). The Hague, Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis

the Samaritan woman's slippers, anklets and stockings. The wealth of detail created in this part of the costume, so much more succesful than the rest of the painting, betrays Rembrandt's sense of form, feeling for detail and control of the brush (fig. 8). For the rest, the execution of the painting could be called clumsy and coarse in large parts and certainly different from what one would expect from Rembrandt. In the first place this applies to the greater part of the Samaritan woman. In other passages of the painting too, the scale of the brushwork bears no relation at all to the expected depth and spatiality of the image or of the forms depicted. This is true, for example, of the architecture, which seems to be ill-thought through, awkwardly articulated and unclear. Much the same can be said of the foliage, which is suggested somewhat chaotically in an alternation of transparent brown, barely functional dark sketch lines and rather randomly placed green accents. In the group of disciples too the paint has been applied clumsily and with little regard to pictorial function. The execution of such details as Peter's hands and the indication of their attire is primitive.

Besides all this, the strong contours of details in the woman's dress, such as the skirt and the red sash, as well as of the arm, the hand and the cord are not characteristic of Rembrandt's method of working, and the same is true of the way the structure and plasticity of the well are suggested. The successful suggestion of rich ostentation in the ankle adornments and the woman's slippers, which, as already said, we believe was executed by Rembrandt, emphasize how clumsily and awkwardly many other parts of the painting are rendered, for example the unsuccessfully realized fall and the wooden pleating of Christ's robe. (For our evaluation of Rembrandt's hand and mind in pictorial matters in the 1650s, see Chapter IV, p. 310.)

However, the weakness of the painter of this work manifests itself not only in the relatively coarse execution, the lack of success in the rendering of materials and the poor handling of form; there is also little evidence of a convincing sense of spatial suggestion. It has already been pointed out under *Radiography* how the placing of the disciples conflicts with the suggestion that they are approaching from the valley. There is also the fact that the way the background is constructed does not contribute to the clarity of the image or of its composition. This remark particularly applies to the unclear distinction between the buildings set one behind the other in the left part of the background and the trees standing out against the sky to the right. As argued under *Radiography*, it was precisely in these passages that the painting underwent radical alterations.

In this context, the possibility raised by Slatkes should be considered: that not just one, but possibly two hands could have worked on the painting. According to Slatkes, it could have been begun by a pupil and subsequently finished or fundamentally reworked by Rembrandt. In support of this hypothesis, Slatkes pointed to the pentimenti in the architecture and elsewhere in the composition.[7] As indicated above, however, these changes have not resulted in improvements. On the contrary, the pentimenti would seem to have impoverished the painting, for example, in the disposition of the row of disciples, discussed above, and the construction of the background. This is also true of the changes in the foreground plateau where the figures are placed beside the well. Here, as discussed under *Radiography*, the perspectival depth in steps up to a rise on which the well is situated was replaced by a much simpler flat plateau.

From the analysis of the X-radiograph in confrontation with the image in the present paint surface, the differences in relief and the local occurrence of shrinkage cracks in the paint it can be inferred that the painting has undergone a complex genesis. As far as we are able to form a picture of the earlier appearance of the image, it appears remarkably to be the case that the original conception must have been in many regards more sophisticated than is now visible on the surface. This is clearest in the figure of Christ, whose feet were clearly visible and placed on two levels of the originally stepped base of the well's construction. His original position therefore demonstrates a clear dynamic, now obscured by the absurd accumulation of folds in Christ's far too long habit in place of his feet. (The author of the painting in its present form evidently had problems in painting feet, as is also witnessed by the fact that the woman's feet have been painted by another painter – whom we believe to have been Rembrandt himself, see fig. 8.) Considerable interventions in the background also appear to have been carried out by the painter of the final version of the painting, to the detriment of its original design. The original composition would seem to have shown more dynamic cohesion than the present image with its arbitrary assemblage of architecture and foliage.

Fig. 10. Moretto da Brescia, *Christ and the woman of Samaria*, *c.* 1520, canvas 38.9 x 31.2 cm. Bergamo, Accademia Carrera

Fig. 11. Palma il Vecchio, *Christ and the woman of Samaria*, canvas 140 x 275 cm. Private collection

This is not the only case where a pupil's work appears to have been introduced over a much more sophisticated, though freely executed earlier version of the image. See particularly V 8 and locally in V 7. In the *Comments* relating to these paintings, and more extensively in Chapter V, p. 318, we suggested the hypothesis that in these cases – and also in the case of the present painting – the initial design of the painting was painted by the master himself and that the pupil then had the opportunity to paint over it a free variant of his own. In the case of the present painting, the idea that Rembrandt himself may have conceived the original composition seems to be supported by its unusual iconography.

The choice of episode from St. John's Gospel depicted in the New York painting points much more to an individual invention than to an imitation, in whatever form, of a work by Rembrandt. In Rembrandt's print of 1634 (see fig. 5) and the works based on it, for instance Gerbrand van den Eeckhout's small grisaille from the early 1640s, now in The Hague (fig. 9), one can see the conversation between Christ and the Samaritan woman. Although one cannot discern precisely what passage from the long dialogue between the two protagonists is portrayed, one can tell from their gestures and facial expressions that Christ, seen more or less in profile, is directing himself toward the woman who, in turn, listens attentively. In this respect, the New York painting differs from other portrayals of the subject by Rembrandt (V 26 fig. 6) and by his imitators (V 25 and 26): it would appear to be a different passage from St. John that is depicted. This can be inferred from the striking manual gesture and possibly also from the rather frontal placing of Christ. An almost identical hand gesture also occurs in the Berlin *Joseph and Potiphar's wife* (V 22). In our treatment of that painting and referring to Bulwer's *Chirologia*, we suggested that this was a gesture of someone demonstrating a self-evident fact. This could mean that Christ in the present painting is shown whilst revealing himself to the woman as the Messiah, the culmination of the conversation which occurred while the disciples were already nearby.

A painting listed in Rembrandt's inventory as a work by Giorgione, showing Christ and the Samaritan woman, has often been cited as the source of inspiration for the New York painting and the two other paintings of this subject (V 25 and V 26).[8] However, no such painting of this subject by Giorgione is known. Paintings by Moretto da Brescia and Palma il Vecchio (figs. 10 and 11) have been proposed as possible candidates for a work by some other painter that might have been mistaken in the 17th century for a work by Giorgione.[9] So far it has proved impossible to demonstrate that these paintings could ever have been in Rembrandt's possession and furthermore, the correspondences between the three Rembrandtesque paintings discussed above and these works by 16th-century Italian artists are certainly not enough to justify identifying either of the latter with the hypothetical Venetian prototype in Rembrandt's collection. It has not previously been remarked that the present painting shows resemblances (the pointing Christ) to a print with the same subject by Agostino Carracci (fig. 12). In this context, another item in Rembrandt's inventory of 1656 should perhaps be pointed out: it is highly conceivable that one of the books mentioned in his inventory, between whose pages were kept prints by Annibale, Agostino and Ludovico Carracci and other artists, contained this print by Agostino Carracci.[10]

It has been suggested by Liedtke that the execution of (the visible part of) the present painting could have been by the hand of Constantijn van Renesse, and in relation to this suggestion he also observed: 'There are vaguely similar figures, and an analogous arrangement of them and of the setting into planes in the *Good Samaritan* in the Louvre, which is attributed to Renesse by Sumowski' (fig. 13). In conception and quality, the present painting does indeed remind one somewhat of this painting which, since Bredius included it in his survey as a work by Rembrandt, has generally been considered as a work from Rembrandt's work-

Fig. 12. Agostino Carracci, *Christ and the woman of Samaria*, engraving

Fig. 13. Attr. to C.D. van Renesse, *The good Samaritan*, canvas 114 x 135 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (Br. 581)

shop or by an imitator. The similarity between the two paintings mainly concerns the treatment of light, where one is struck by the tendency to isolate the lit passages in a surrounding darkness, as a result of which there is neither coherence in the overall lighting design nor plasticity nor spatial structure. Furthermore, the way in which the possibilities of achieving some perspectival organization of the pictorial space are either taken up or ignored is very similar in the two works. In both cases, a well is depicted that lacks this spatial structure and in both paintings the positioning of the horizon is only vaguely signalled. Yet another similarity is that the painter in both works appears to lack any natural feel for the rendering of drapery: in both works one sees that the way the folds of material are handled is as emphatic as it is unsuccessful. And yet there are also too many differences, particularly in the peinture, between the present painting and the Paris *Good Samaritan* to allow a convincing clustering with other works from the same hand – let alone an attribution of the work to any artist known by name.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

5. Copies

1. Canvas 57.1 x 48.2 cm, signed <Rembra.d>; according to Von Sonnenburg the signature has been carved with a hot instrument in the dry paint. The painting corresponds rather accurately with the painting in the Metropolitan Museum; it is less tall and shows less sky. Inscription on back of: photograph woman of Samaria, attributed to N. Maes; Coll. Palmer, Clapton Reval, Wooburn Green, Bucks, England; Coll. Inskipp – Hawkins, Montmartre Galleries, London; sale London (Christie's), 23 March 1990, p. 60, no. 70 [ill.] (£4.000-6.000).

6. Provenance

*?– Collection De Klenglin, Straatsburg sale 18 November 1754 (Lugt 849), no.12: 'Un Tableau représentant Rebecca auprès du puits, peint par Rembrandt, sur bois, de 2 pieds de long sur 1, pied 6 pouces & demi de haut (pied de France)' [64.96 x 50 cm].
Remarks: the format has been rotated; it is a horizontal format.
– Amsterdam, coll. Hendryck Reydon; sold on 5 April 1827, no. 130 (for 550 guilders to Brondgeest; 55 x 45 cm).
– Coll. of Rev. T. Sheepshanks in Harrogate (by 1906).
– Art dealer R. Langdon Douglas, London.
– Coll. Marcus Kappel, Berlin (by 1914).
– Art dealer M. Knoedler & Co., London.
– In 1930 in coll. William R. Timken, New York; by descent to mrs. Lilian S. Timken.

NOTES

1. Sumowski 1957/58, pp. 223-278, esp. 231.
2. H. von Sonnenburg, *Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Aspects of connoisseurship*, Vol. I, Paintings: Problems and issues, 1995/96, p. 61.
3. Br.-Gerson 589.
4. See Von Sonnenburg, op. cit.[2], pp. 100-104.
5. Tümpel 1986, no. A 13.
6. W. Liedtke, *Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Aspects of connoisseurship*, Vol. II, Paintings, drawings and prints: Art historical perspectives, 1995/96, pp. 74-76; W. Liedtke, *Dutch paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York 2007, cat. 168, pp. 731-738.
7. L.J. Slatkes, *Rembrandt. Catalogo completo dei dipinti*, Florence 1992, no. 64.
8. Strauss *Doc*. 1656/12, no. 109: Een groot stuck vande Samaritaense vrouwe van Sjorjon, waervan de helfte Pieter de Tombe is toekomende (A large picture of "The Samaritan woman" by Giorgione, of which a half share belongs to Pieter [de] la Tombe).
9. See for instance Von Sonnenburg, op. cit.[2], pp. 102-03, fig. 129.
10. Strauss *Doc*.1656/12, no. 209.

V 25 Pupil of Rembrandt – Christ and the woman of Samaria [1]65[9]

BERLIN, STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN, GEMÄLDEGALERIE, CAT. NO. 811 B

HDG 100; BR. 588; BAUCH 86; GERSON 272; TÜMPEL A10

1. Introduction and description

Up to 1986, three late paintings with Christ and the woman of Samaria (see also V 24 and V 26) were all considered to be works by Rembrandt. This is an unusual number of works with the same subject for Rembrandt to have painted within a relatively short period. Horst Gerson wrote about them: 'I see powerful emotional interpretations in all the painted treatments of the subject, related yet independent works of art'. [1] The relation that Gerson remarked was that they all treated the same subject; but the mutual 'independence' of the three paintings could of course be variously interpreted. In his 1986 Rembrandt monograph, Christian Tümpel saw three different hands in the three paintings. In his view, the difference from works that he considered to be autograph works by Rembrandt were in all three cases such that he attributed them to separate, anonymous painters from Rembrandt's circle or from his workshop.[2] We largely share this opinion (cf. V 24 and 26).

The reasons for our assessment that the present painting in Berlin is not from Rembrandts hand are elucidated in the following. The painting will also be tentatively attributed to the author of a painting, the Stuttgart *'Self-portrait'* (IV 17) (see fig. 7), which is now generally agreed to be the work of a pupil but which has also been attributed to Rembrandt by, for example, Cornelius Müller Hofstede[3] and Werner Sumowski, who has since acknowledged that he now is convinced that it is not by Rembrandt's hand.[4]

The scene depicted in the painting dealt with here is based on St John 4: 5-30. Arriving at the city of Sychar, Jesus asks a Samaritan woman to give him some water from the Jacob's well, which was situated on land that Jacob had bequeathed to his son Joseph. Jesus' request leads to a long conversation, towards the end of which he reveals himself. This is the moment depicted in the painting: 'The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman…' (St. John 4: 25-27)

Christ sits in shadow to the right, in front of the doorway of a decrepit building. Seen from a viewpoint across the well, his body appears above the edge of its further wall. With his right hand lifted in a speaking gesture, he is turned toward the woman, who is also standing behind the wall. She is seen in the act of raising (or lowering) a bucket into the well by a chain. Between Christ and the woman the head of a child protrudes above the wall. Three disciples returning from the city are seen approaching from a dip on the left. Across the further side of this dip a decayed building can be seen with two window openings, through which blue sky is visible. Above, the image is rounded off.

Working conditions

Studied November 1968 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.): in good daylight and artificial light, out of the frame; four X-ray films were later received covering the entire paint surface. On later working visits to Berlin the painting was again studied under various circumstances.

Support

Oak panel, grain vertical, 48.2 (47.1) x 41.2 (40.8) cm; Thickness 0.7 / 1 cm. A panel of roughly these measurements was referred to as a *'grote stooter'* (see also I A 17, I A 26 and IV Corr. I A 22).[5] The panel comprises two planks, of widths from left to right app. 21.5 and 19 cm (measured along the bottom edge on the X-radiographs). Bevelling, maximally 2 cm wide, is evident along the right, left, and top edges. In places along the whole length of the right edge and on the left and top edges the panel has been bevelled at a sharper angle. Along the bottom edge, only such a sharper angle of bevelling is to be seen, partly smooth, partly rough.

Dendrochronological investigation (Prof. Dr. P. Klein, Hamburg) yielded the following information: Baltic origin; 191 heartwood annual rings were counted in the right plank, and 202 heartwood annual rings in the left plank, both from the same tree and together covering 207 heartwood annual rings, the youngest dates from 1632. This gives an earliest possible felling date of 1641 (see also *Corpus* IV *Table of dendrochronological data*, p. 658).

According to Klein's data, the planks are glued together such that their sapwood sides are located at the seam. Wormholes along the right edge of the panel could indicate that there is still wood from the heart of the tree to be found there.

Ground

In thinly, transparently painted passages, a yellow layer is visible, probably a ground of the type that was normally used in Rembrandt's time.

Paint layer

Condition: the condition of the paint layer appears to be good, apart from a few minor retouches in the foreground. Craquelure: fissures are visible here and there in the wall in the foreground. These may possibly only occur locally in the varnish.

The execution of the painting is characterized by a major contrast between very thinly painted dark passages, mainly in browns, in which the ground shows through in places, and otherwise very pastose, freely painted passages in the lit parts of the architecture and in and around the approaching disciples. In the architecture in the background remarkably pastose touches of medium-grey have been introduced locally. The sky, graduating from light to dark, is also executed in thick, long, mainly horizontal strokes. Above, in the deep blue part of this sky, a few broad strokes are visible which tend to follow the half-round boundary of the image.

The back wall of the well is painted in dark browns and blacks. Locally, below the woman and to the right and left below Christ, pinkish paint appears to be covered over. The bucket is summarily indicated with a few lines of pinkish the handle with black lines and lights in ochre and little touches of white for reflected glints. Like the dark and semi-dark parts of the buildings, the figure of Christ

Fig. 1. Panel 48.2 x 41.2 cm

Fig. 2. X-Ray

Fig. 3. Detail of fig. 1

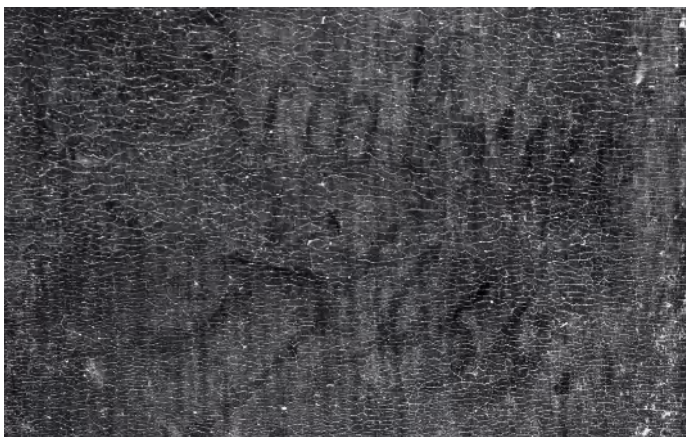
in the shadow is very thinly painted, in the face in a grey-brown tone with dark brown for the summary indication of eyes, mouth and beard and the hair hanging down to the shoulders. Christ's robe is done in a pinkish-brown with a few small brownish lines to indicate the collar and folds of its drape. Christ's gesturing but rather shapeless hand is painted thinly in brown, wet-in-wet over the more pastose light paint of the architecture. The child's head is summarily indicated in thin brownish paint, with a pinkish touch to indicate the nose and dark brown spots for the eyes and sweeping little strokes for the hair. Along the right contour the head seems to have been given too large a reserve in the more pastose, greyish paint of the building against which the head is silhouetted.

The woman is painted in rather thicker paint with clearly visible brushstrokes in the lit parts of her face, particularly the neck, in the whitish shirt and in the sleeve of her right forearm. In the thinly painted part of the sleeve a few light accents have been applied with robust, yellowish grazing touches. In the shadowed part of the face, on the contrary, the paint has been thinly applied over the ground. In the eye sockets the eyebrows and eyes are briefly indicated by a few black touches; in a similar manner the nostril is indicated with a black little touch and the mouth with red. In the hair, a hair-band is indicated with a streak of red and some black. The contour of the hair, in predominantly brown paint, is set over the more pastose light paint of the architecture. In the bodice, similarly executed with robust strokes of red paint, a degree of detailing has been introduced with black paint.

The three approaching disciples are summarily indicated with pastose touches such that, among other things, the friable character of these touches of light paint in the faces, and also in the buildings in the background, contribute to the ill-defined aspect of the two figures catching the light.

The exaggerated contrast described above between thinly painted and pastose passages is most conspicuous in the execution of the buildings. Here, in the predominantly thinly painted shadowed passages, mainly done in browns, a little detailing and articulation is indicated in dark brown. Set in the wall running obliquely away above Christ's head, one sees the frame of a doorway done in a fairly broadly painted dark brown. Above the lintel of this entrance frame, done in grey paint applied with a zig-zag movement, is possibly the indication of a frieze. In the short wall abutting the wall with the doorway at right angles, almost parallel to the image plane, are two openings, one placed vertically above the other. Separating these openings a wall feature, possibly the balustrade of a balcony, is also indicated by a zig-zagging brushstroke in yellow paint. Both in the building to the right and in the background, pastose paint is used in the lit passages. Especially in the building to the right, this pastose paint is partly covered with yellow, brownish and pinkish paint. The pastose passages in the building do not altogether correlate with the lighting. In the building to the left, pastose paint, grey and pale green and locally pinkish, is patchily applied and again seems not to correlate with the lighting, but rather to have been introduced to suggest the trees and the overgrowth of the walls. Two pastose white patches indicate openings in the back wall of this building through which the sky is visible. The zone between the building and the three figures of the disciples is indicated with grainy, pastose paint, in which the heads of the three figures are reserved. The reserve for the middle figure appears to be larger than the eventual head.

Fig. 4. Detail of signature



Radiography

The X-radiograph corresponds with what one would expect from the paint surface. The pastose passages show up more or less light, as do the reflected lights on the bucket and chain. For the rest there is hardly any visible radioabsorbency apart from the many stripey fillings in the grain of the panel. A few light spots above right in the image could be caused by radioabsorbent material on the reverse side of the panel.

The X-ray image does not give the impression that changes were introduced to the image during the painting. Locally, where the streaks of paint indicating the fingers of Christ's hand have been introduced, the pastose paint of the architecture has been pushed aside. This suggests that the work was painted wet-in-wet. In other similar places this has not occurred, for example with the uppermost contour of the woman's head. It should be borne in mind, however, that lead white-containing paint – which means almost all the paint showing up light in the X-radiograph – dries quickly.

Signature

Right, below <*Remb*[…] / *f* [.]*65*[.]> (fig. 4). Traces of *ran* are discernible, but there is nothing to be seen of the *dt.* Traces of the last cipher of the date can also be discerned, which has been read as a 5, specifically by Bredius,[6] but also as a 9 by Bode / Hofstede de Groot,[7] and by Jan Kelch in his Berlin catalogue.[8] It is also possible, however, that it could be an 8.

2. Comments

In our discussion of the problems of attribution with regard to the *c.* 1655 '*Self-portrait*' in the Uffizi (IV 12) and the '*Self-portrait*' in Stuttgart (IV 17) we identified a phenomenon which we referred to as the '*plus Rembrandt que Rembrandt*' phenomenon (see *Corpus* IV, p. 288). Rem-

Fig. 5. Derivate of V 25 or a lost prototype of both paintings, *Christ and the woman of Samaria*, panel 42 x 36 cm. Aberystwyth, Visual Arts Department, University College of Wales

Fig. 6. Detail of fig. 5

brandt's own use of impasto is characterized by a functional differentiation and the rich variety which stems from that. With the authors of the 'self-portraits' mentioned above, who were in all probability pupils of Rembrandt, this handling of impasto degenerated to a mannerism, such that this painterly resource was applied in an all too arbitrary and exaggerated manner. *Mutatis mutandis* one finds this *plus Rembrandt que Rembrandt* character in paintings by pupils throughout Rembrandt's whole career. Dou's fellow-pupil, the young painter of the London *Scholar in a lofty room* (I C 14), for example, carried the technique of scratching in the wet paint to absurd lengths.[9] Aert de Gelder exaggerated the role of chance in the application of paint and the consequent degree to which the ground of the painting was left visible.[10]

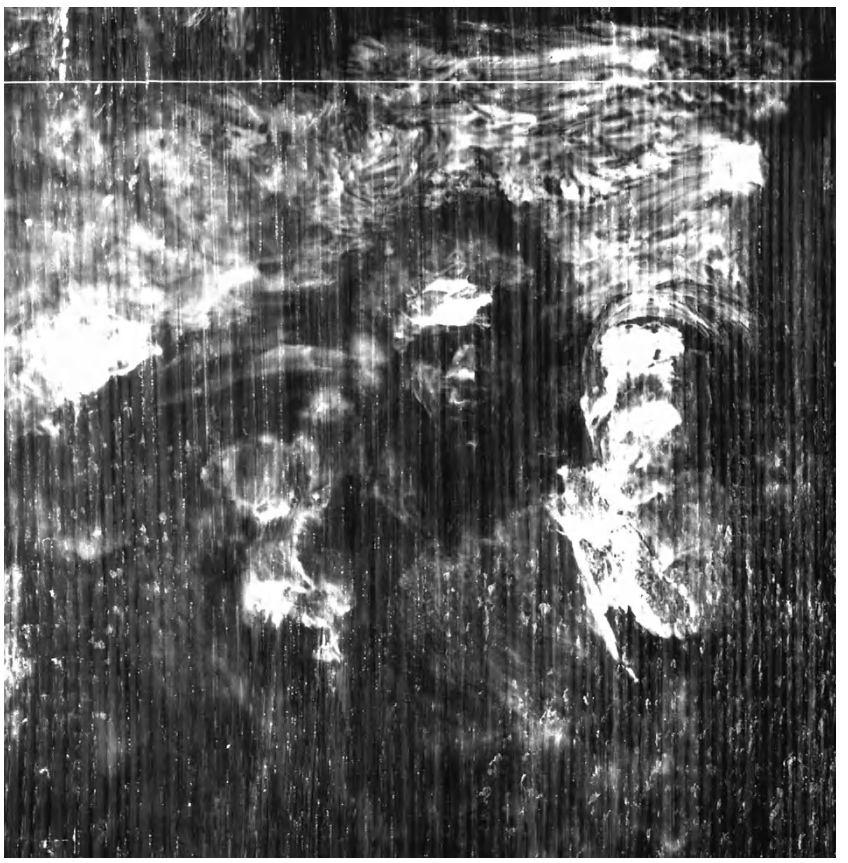
With its uncontrolled mannerism, the way the impasto is applied in the present painting reminds one so forcefully of the way of working of the painter of the Stuttgart '*Self-portrait*' that it raises the question of whether these two paintings could be from the hand of the same pupil. This question will be discussed further below.

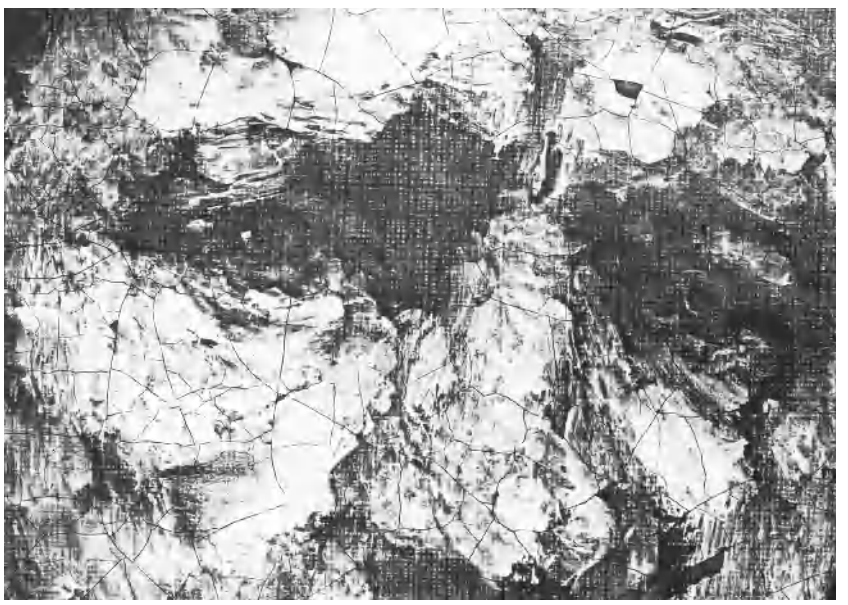
Quite apart from the question of its authorship, the exaggeration *ad absurdum* of a particular aspect of Rembrandt's way of working in the present painting is a strong argument against attributing the painting to Rembrandt. However, there is a complicating factor: a same-sized painting exists with roughly the same image, which could have been based on the present painting (see figs. 5 and 6). This latter painting is in the School of Art Gallery and Museum at Aberystwyth University in Wales. It can

Fig. 7. Rembrandt's workshop '*Self-portrait*', *c.* 1659, canvas 68 x 56.5 cm. Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie (IV 17)

Fig. 8. Detail of figs. 1 and 7

Fig. 9. Detail of X-Rays of figs. 2 and 8





scarcely be doubted that this second version is also a 17th-century painting. In view of the nature and handling of the paint, moreover, it is highly probable that it originated in Rembrandt's workshop. Given the attribution problems attaching to the Berlin version – the subject of this entry – the question of its relation to the Aberystwyth painting needs to be answered. Was the Berlin painting the point of departure for the other version? If so, it could be an argument in favour of its attribution to Rembrandt, in which case the painting in Wales could then be considered as a 'satellite' – a free variant – of the Berlin painting. Or should it be vice versa? There are several interesting differences in the iconography of the two paintings. In the Berlin painting Christ makes a demonstrative gesture whilst at the same time looking at the woman. If one assumes that the three men behind the well and to the left are some of the disciples returning from the city it is clear that it is the end of the long conversation between Christ

and the Samaritan woman that is depicted, the moment when he reveals that he is the Messiah. In the Aberystwyth painting, Christ lays his right hand on his chest and points toward with the well with his left hand, with the index finger more strongly lit than the other fingers. These manual gestures would seem to indicate that Christ is asking for water. The passage from the Gospel according to St John depicted in this the painting then reads: Ch.4:6: 'Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. 4:7: There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. 4:8: (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) 4:9: Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.'

It may be argued against this reading of the Aberystwyth painting that the disciples are approaching – or, perhaps one should say, *appear* to be approaching, for the situation here is different. Instead of the three figures in the Berlin painting, one of whom looks in the direction of the well while the other two look aside in other directions (toward the middle figure?), in the Aberystwyth version a fourth male figure can be distinguished, seen from the back and also looking to one side but certainly not toward the three men approaching. Next to this figure seen from the back there is a large area of abrasion, making it impossible to distinguish anything in this part of the image.

The addition of this figure seen from the back may be taken to suggest that the painter of the Aberystwyth version has interpreted the group of men in the background differently – perhaps as some of the citizens whom the Samaritan woman would call upon (in verses 28 and 29 of the same chapter) to see the Messiah with their own eyes. It is not unusual for a free variant to represent a different episode, but the above reading of the image would not fit the iconographic tradition of this subject.

The existence of a satellite from Rembrandt's workshop does not prove that the 'principael' on which it was based must necessarily have been an autograph work by Rembrandt himself. We now know of examples where the satellite – in our judgement, at least – is based on a workshop piece (see V 2 fig. 16; and V 5 fig. 5). However, it may also be that both paintings – the Berlin and the Aberystwyth versions – are satellites of a lost original by Rembrandt. There are in any case several arguments against the Berlin version being the prototype from Rembrandt's hand:

a. the already mentioned *'plus Rembrandt que Rembrandt'* character of the painting;
b. the doubtful signature;
c. the fact that there are no pentimenti to be seen on the X-radiograph, at least not in those places where dark reserves appear in the lead white-containing passages. This would mean that either the composition of the present painting was accurately prepared in advance, which was not Rembrandt's usual practice, or that the author of the present painting already had a complete 'design' in front of him that he could follow or – as perhaps was the case with the Aberystwyth version – could vary. In this context it should be noted that the composition of the present painting is strikingly original. The high horizon and the unusually large dark repoussoir-like wall of the well, behind which stand Christ, the woman and the child and, much lower down, appear the three disciples, is an exceptionally original solution. It is usually the case when one finds Rembrandt employing such an unusual invention that it was more or less part of a 'searching' process.
d. As well as the immoderate use of impasto in many places in the painting, another unusual feature is that the remaining parts of the image are remarkably thinly and not infrequently transparently executed. Such a division between pastose islands of paint and the underlayers on which they are placed is exceptional in works by Rembrandt.

At the beginning of this commentary, the *plus Rembrandt que Rembrandt* effect was referred to in the Stuttgart '*Self-portrait*' (IV 17) attributed to an anonymous pupil (fig. 7). The way in which similarly uncontrolled, restricted islands of impasto are introduced onto a remarkably thin, smooth underlayer in both paintings is very similar (cf. figs. 8-9). One could speculate on the possibility that the two paintings are from the same hand.

In the discussion of the painting in the Rembrandt literature, it has often been remarked that this painting and the other works that show the same subject – including also etchings and drawings – show a Venetian influence. The entry in Rembrandt's 1656 inventory of '*Een groot stuck vande Samaritaense vrouwe van Sjorjon waervan de helfte Pieter la Tombe is toekomende*' (a large piece of the Samaritan woman by Sjorjon [Giorgione], the half of which belongs to Pieter la Tombe)[11] is largely responsible for this. Because no painting by Giorgione with this subject is known, this entry probably refers to a work by some other 16th-century, probably Venetian painter.[12] There is also a suggestion, specifically in two etchings by Rembrandt showing the same subject (B. 71 from 1634 and B. 70 from 1657/8; p. 591 fig. 5 and p. 611 fig. 6) of borrowings from 16th- century prints. In this connection see V 24.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic Reproductions

None.

5. Copies

For a free variant after this painting or its possible prototype, see figs. 5 and 6 and *2. Comments*.

6. Provenance

*– Collection [Prince de Conti, e.a.], sale Paris 15ff March 1779 (Lugt 2975), no. 128: 'Rembrand van Rhim, Un Tableau composé de six figures, dont le sujet est la Samaritaine. Il est

d'une force de couleur & d'une maniere dont les beautés n'échapperont pas aux Connoisseurs. Hauteur, 18 pouces; largeur, 15 pouces 6 lignes [= 48.6 x 41.8 cm]. B[ois].' (for 160 francs to Boileau). Described and in an illustrated sketch in *Catalogues de ventes et livrets de salons illustrés par Gabriel de Saint-Aubin*, ed. E. Dacier, X, Paris 1919.
– Coll. van Mulden in Brussel.
– Coll. Lewis Fry in Bristol.
– Art dealer Ch. Sedelmeyer in Paris, *Cat. of 300 paintings*, no. 151.
– Coll. Rudolf Kann in Paris, cat. 1907, no. 71.
– Art dealers Duveen Brothers, Paris.
– Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin. cat. 1911 no. 811B.

NOTES

1. Gerson 1968, p. 499, no. 272.
2. Tümpel 1986, nos. A10, A11 and A13.
3. C. Müller Hofstede, 'Das Stuttgarter Selbstbildnis von Rembrandt', *Pantheon* 21 (1963), pp. 65-90.
4. W. Sumowski, 'Kritische Bemerkungen zur neuesten Gemäldekritik', in: O. v. Simson and J. Kelch (eds), *Neue Beiträge zur Rembrandt-Forschung*, Berlin 1973, p. 105. See for Sumowski's change of mind Corpus IV, p. 283 note 380.
5. J. Bruyn, 'Een onderzoek naar 17de-eeuwse schilderijformaten, voornamelijk in Noord-Nederland', in: *O.H.* 93 (1979), pp. 79-113.
6. Br. 588.
7. W. von Bode and C. Hofstede de Groot, *Rembrandt*, Paris 1901, vol. VI, p. 50, no. 408.
8. J. Kelch et al., Gemäldegalerie Berlin. *Gesamtverzeichnis der Gemälde*, Berlin 1986.
9. Exhib. cat. *Rembrandts moeder. Mythe en werkelijkheid*, Leiden 2005, p. 94.
10. E. van de Wetering, 'Opmerkingen over de relatie tussen techniek, stijl en toevalt bij Arent de Gelder; een vergelijking met Rembrandt', in: Exhib. cat. *Arent de Gelder (1645-1727). Rembrandts laatste leerling* (Dordrecht/Cologne 1998/99, Gent 1998.
11. Strauss *Doc*. 1656/12, no. 109.
12. Tancred Borenius, 'A re-discovered work by Palma Vecchio', *Pantheon* 6 (1930), p. 426. Borenius remarked on a similarity between the Christ figure in Palma Vecchio's painting, since lost, and in Br 592A; W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt und seine Umgebung*, Strasbourg 1905, p. 80: a work by Moretto, canvas 40 x 33 cm, Bergamo, Accademia Carrara.

V 26 Pupil of Rembrandt (?) – Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well 1659?

ST PETERSBURG, THE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, NO. 714

HDG 102; BR. 592A; BAUCH 91; GERSON 349; TÜMPEL A11

1. Introduction and description

In view of the difficulties of assessing its condition, the unreliability of the signature and date and the disfiguring layer of varnish, the task of evaluating this painting is harder than usual. In this entry, therefore, it will suffice in the main to give a description of the painting and the partial X-radiograph made of it and, as far as possible, the presentation and evaluation of the data available at present. Finally there follows a brief exposition of the production in Rembrandt's workshop of works with the same subject and in the same period, together with remarks that relate to the situation of the work within the cluster of comparable works from the same period and a provisional opinion on the question of whether it could be an autograph work by Rembrandt.

The foreground of the painting is largely occupied by a monumental stone well, covered by an arched vault which rests on short, heavy, half-round pillars made of shiny stone. The well is situated on a rise in a hilly landscape. Buildings can be seen on a higher hill in the background, apparently part of the entrance gateway to a city. From this direction and in a dip, a group of men are seen approaching. These are five of the disciples returning from the city where they have been buying provisions. The first two – a young man and an older man with a white beard – appear to be talking to each other whilst looking up at the scene in the foreground where the woman of Samaria stands by the broad rim of the well under one of the arches. In one hand she holds the handle of a metal bucket which sits on the edge of the well, while with the other hand she grasps the chain which hangs down from a round opening in the vault of the construction and is now attached to the bucket. She is dressed in a white blouse with wide, half-length sleeves, and over it a red bodice. She has a chain around her neck and an earring in her ear and on her head she wears a hat with a wide brim. Immediately next to her a child's head protrudes above the edge of the well. He leans with both hands on the rim of the well, with an apple grasped in one of them.

The woman looks at Christ, who is seated under the next arch. He is depicted with a short beard and longish hair that falls down to his shoulders. He faces the listening woman and his right hand is raised in a gesture augmenting his speech. He is dressed in a brown tunic. A dark bluish green cloak hangs over one shoulder. Through the arches, behind Christ and the Samaritan woman, can be seen foliage.

Working conditions

Studied 22-08-1969 (J.B., S.H.L.); December 2006 (E.v.d.W.); the painting out of its frame, with the help of X-radiographs which do not, however, cover the entire painted surface.

Support

Canvas, lined, 59.8 x 74.5 cm. Single piece.

Thread count: 14.2 horizontal threads/cm (13.5-15.3); 12 vertical threads/cm (10.5-13); warp horizontal. Canvas with about this density is frequently found with paintings by Rembrandt and his pupils in the 1650s.

Ground

In thin places where the canvas is visible, a yellow-brown layer can be seen that may perhaps be regarded as the ground.

Paint layer

Condition: In its present condition the appearance of the painting is to a large extent determined by its poor condition. In the 1970s the former curator of the Hermitage Museum, Irena Linnik together with W. Löwinson Lessing described the work's condition and material history as follows: 'The painting had seriously suffered in the eighteenth century and since then was subject to multiple restorations. The upper painting layer is washed out in many places. There are numerous later inpaintings both on the figures and on the sky and the well'.[1] In many small lacunae of the canvas's fine weave has become visible, as though the painting has been badly abraded without being drastically overpainted. Given the chaotic mix of scattered remnants of old paint inpaintings in these lacunae the actual condition of the original paint layer can scarcely be assessed. The radiographic images do not give the impression that there has been any major loss of paint. The painting seems to be seriously darkened in its dark passages. It is covered by a thick layer of yellow varnish. Only with a further restoration will the true extent of the damage caused by this painting's unsettled material history become clear.

Three photographs – one from the end of the 19th century, the other two from *c.* 1920 and *c.* 1965 give an impression of the turbulent history of restoration that this painting has undergone (figs. 3, 4, 5). The differences in the rendering of the architecture (compare, for example, the pillar in the right foreground), the foliage (e.g above Christ's head) and in the background (e.g. the situating of the horseman and other minute figures in the light organization of the folds in the landscape behind the approaching disciples) lead one to suspect that the painting was drastically overpainted in the past and subsequently stripped again. It should, however be taken into account that the photographs themselves may have been manipulated as well.

Given the major alterations the painting has undergone since its discovery in 1899, it would be of great interest to locate the 18th-century mezzotint by R. Houston (see *4. Graphic reproductions*), of which we were not able to find a print. Houston's print could yield information on the painting's appearance in the 18th century.

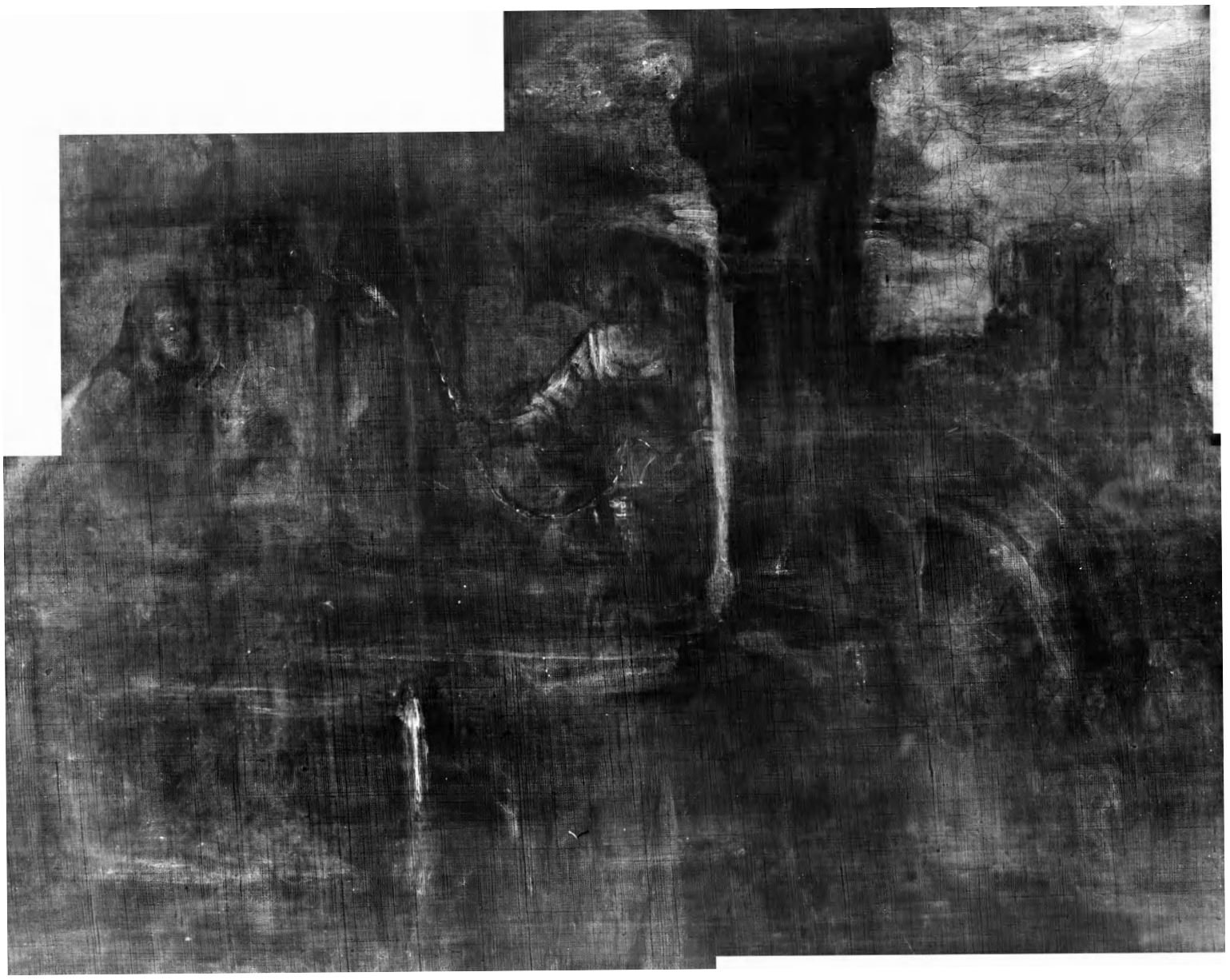
Craquelure: In and around the figure of Christ, and in the sky to the right large patterns of craquelure are visible, which in the sky have opened up somewhat. On the sleeve and in the bucket can be seen a smaller pattern of craquelure. The predominantly vertical orientation of the cracks, specifically in the right of the image, may indicate that the painting was at some stage rolled up.

Fig. 1. Canvas 59.8 x 74.5 cm (reproduced after a printed reproduction)

Radiography

The impression given by the X-radiograph is, that the painting went through a complex genesis. However, forms which may well have originated in the application of the ground are partly responsible for this, or are perhaps related to paint on the reverse side of the canvas or traces of the lining. A light, arch-shaped form beginning at the height of the bucket to the right of the pillar finishes up in the group of disciples. This form is probably not caused by lead white-containing or any other radio-absorbent paint, used in the production of this work; the structure of the canvas is so clearly visible in this arch that it is more likely to be caused by ground more thickly pressed into the weave or something radio-absorbent on the reverse side of the canvas. Below to the left, in the extension of the vertically hanging chain and immediately to the right of the signature a vertical, irregular, broad white band of paint is locally visible at the surface. In all probability this light stripe is related to the side of the pillar placed close to the well that is turned towards the incident light. A similar vertical stripe is visible further to the right. It is possible that this has to do with a general intensification of the light introduced during the painting of the first lay-in of the painting. Another vertical lightly showing narrow stripe seems to begin in the sky above and adjacent to the woman's hat. This could also have to do with an originally light-catching part of the architecture. This stripe then runs vertically downwards, through the woman's sleeve, and is still partially visible in the sleeve and the pillar. It finally ends by widening inexplicably to the right, below the bucket. It is striking that the cloak hanging over

Fig. 2. X-Ray



Christ's left shoulder and down his back shows up light. This can be explained by the fact that the paint used for the cloak is (dark) bluish-green in colour and evidently contains much (radioabsorbent) copper.

From a comparison of the X-ray image with the now-visible surface image, it may (with the appropriate degree of caution) be inferred that several changes were executed during the work. Thus, the dark reserves and light-showing parts of Christ's head differ from their eventual form. His outstetched hand and forearm do not fit with their corresponding dark reserves.

In addition, the woman's head in the X-ray image only very generally corresponds with its final shape and position. The hat and the head are only crudely reserved in the first rough indication of the sky. Three parallel lightly folds showing in the X-ray image fail to correspond with the costume in its present form. Also, the outstretched arm appears to have been differently designed. The background behind the woman has perhaps been lighter. All this indicates that the original lay-in of the painting was only very general and must have been remarkably roughly executed.

Signature

On the flat pilaster placed close to the well <*Rembrandt / f. 1659*.> (fig. 7). The inscription appears to have been applied to a damaged and subsequently retouched underlayer.

In, below and around the letters is such a mess of worn or scraped-off parts, inpainted places and retouched (or supplemented) letters, that the signature and date simply cannot be judged in this state. What can be said is that the

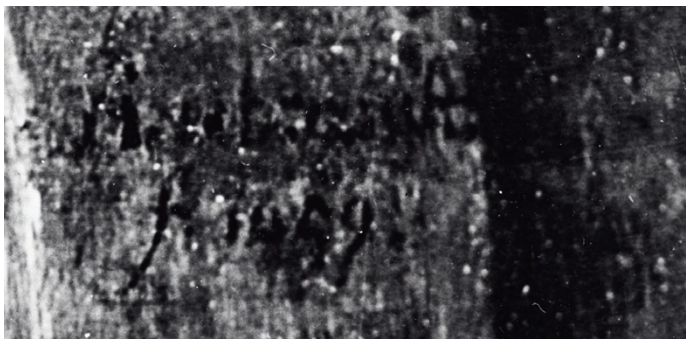
Fig. 3. State of fig. 1 in 1899

Fig. 4. State of fig. 1 in *c.* 1920

Fig. 5. State of fig. 1 in *c.* 1965

Fig. 6. Rembrandt, *Christ and the woman of Samaria*, 1658, etching 12.5 x 16 cm (B. 70^{III})

Fig. 7. Signature



date 1659 could well correspond with the year of the painting's origin.

2. Comments

The theme of Christ and the Samaritan woman had a particular significance in Rembrandt's workshop in the later years of the 1650s. Not only was Rembrandt himself engaged with this New Testament episode, as in his etching from 1658 (fig. 6), but several pupils were also involved with this subject. It is unclear whether or not they were so directed by Rembrandt but it is certainly possible they were working on the basis of one or more prototypes by the master, among which fig. 6. In the commentary on V 24 it was pointed out that Rembrandt was co-owner of a painting attributed to Giorgione with the same subject. This painting could have played a part in the interest in this theme and in the Venetian overtones in these compositions. One can also speculate that the impressive way in which Christ, in the Bible story, reveals himself as the Messiah could have been an important factor in the popularity of this theme, so that there could have been a ready market for any pupils' works showing this scene. But this is not the only possible explanation for the relatively sudden rise of interest in this subject. One may also consider this from the perspective of the painter's art; for we have here a theme in which a few figures of narrative significance appear in a rich landscape with some architecture, a combination which for an aspiring painter could be very instructive.

Where Gerson[2] attributed to Rembrandt himself all three of the paintings with this theme, as discussed in entries V 24 and 25, the inclination by later art historians is to attribute all three to painters from his immediate circle. Yet the possibility that one of these works could be autograph should not be ignored. In the New York painting (V 24) we left open the possibility that it could have been begun by Rembrandt himself, worked by a pupil into an altered composition, in which Rembrandt subsequently added or improved parts himself – specifically the woman's feet. In the Berlin painting we thought we were able to distinguish characteristics that are also to be found in the Stuttgart *'Self-portrait'* (see p. 604, figs. 8, 9 and IV 17); but the possibility was not excluded that it was based on a lost prototype by Rembrandt. And as for the present painting, as explained above, its material history makes any judgement difficult. However, both the conception of the whole and – in as far as it can be judged – the quality of the execution seem to be too poor for an attribution to Rembrandt himself. Comparison with the etching mentioned above, from the same period, strengthens this doubt, both with regard to the view of the landscape and the way in which the woman is placed in the pictorial space (see fig. 6). The peinture, as well as the appearance of the radio-absorbent passages in the X-radiograph, also seem to rule out an attribution to Rembrandt. Both the first lay-in and the execution of the eventual painting are of a roughness that reminds one of the *'plus Rembrandt que Rembrandt'* tendency that we earlier remarked in the work by pupils from this period (see p. 601). If it is indeed the work of a pupil, the possibility that comes immediately to mind is that we are dealing here with a 'satellite' (see Chapter III App. 1). A comparison with the etching dated 1658 raises the strong possibility that the painting could have been a free variant based on that etching (fig. 6). The image as a whole, the placing of the figures with regard to each other and the organization of the landscape and the figures within it (including a horseman) certainly allows for the possibility of such a relationship.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

1. Mezzotint bij Richard Houston (Dublin *c.* 1721 - London 1775) inscribed: *Rembrandt Pinx*^{t}*. R: Houston Fecit.* In the Collection of John Blackwood Esq^{r} – 2 feet 6 inch wide- 2 feet 1 inch high. Sold by R Houston N12 Furnivils Inn Court Holbourn. Published According to Act Jan^{y}. 1, 1772 (Charrington 80)[3]. To date we have been unable to locate this print.

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance

According to Hofstede de Groot[4]:
– Coll. van Zwieten, sale The Hague, 12 ff April 1741 (Lugt 537), no. 133: 'Christus by het Vrouwtje aan de Water Put door den selve [Rembrand van Ryn] hoog 2 v 1.5 d breed 2 v 4.5 d [=60.4 x 68.2 cm]' (voor 6 gulden).
– * Possibly Coll. Batt, sale London, 14-15 April 1756 (Lugt 919), no. 43: 'Rembrandt — Our Saviour and the Samaritan Woman'. (EBNP: aan Reynolds 8-17-6) (see note 3, no. 109).
– According to the caption on the mezzotint by R. Houston (see *4. Graphic reproductions*): coll. J. Blackwood, sale London (Christies), 20-21 February 1778.
– Coll. Potemkin 1780/91 (see note 1)
– Bought in 1792 by the Hermitage Museum; until 1898 Yekatereninsky Palace Collection in Tsarskoye Selo, since 1899 in the Hermitage

NOTES

1. I. Linnik in: V. Loewinson-Lessing (ed.), *Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn Paintings from Soviet Museums*, Leningrad [*c.* 1971], p. 27 and no. 25.
2. Br. Gerson 589.
3. Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt in Eighteenth Century England*, New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, 1983, p. 131, no. 80.
4. HdG 102.

V 27 Rembrandt or pupil – Jupiter and Mercury visiting Philemon and Baucis 1658[?]

WASHINGTON D.C., NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WIDENER COLLECTION, CAT. NO. 661

HDG 212; BR. 481; BAUCH 106; GERSON 278; TÜMPEL A 26

1. Introduction and description

The Washington *Philemon and Baucis* is a small-figured history piece painted in Rembrandt's late style. Its extremely poor condition makes it difficult to ascertain whether it is by Rembrandt, or by one of his pupils or assistants who produced Rembrandtesque paintings on a relatively large scale in the second half of the 1650s. This entry will focus on the work's state of preservation in order to isolate elements, which could bear on the discussion of its authenticity.

The painting depicts an episode from the story of Philemon and Baucis recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Seeking a place to rest during a visit to Phrygia, Jupiter and Mercury – disguised as mortals – are turned away from a thousand homes. Finally they are courteously received in the humble abode of the aged Philemon and his wife Baucis. During the meal, the two gods drink plentiful amounts of wine from a pitcher, which to their hosts' astonishment never becomes empty. Philemon and Baucis suspect that their guests must be gods and, in their honour, the elderly couple decides to slaughter their only goose. Catching the goose, however, proves beyond their powers. The bird takes refuge with the two guests, who forbid its slaughter. They reveal their identity and promise to reward Philemon and Baucis for their hospitality, and punish those who denied them entry to their houses.

The thick layer of varnish and the painting's poor condition make it difficult to describe the image in detail, particularly the interior in which the scene is set. Thanks to an extremely detailed reproductive print by Thomas Watson of 1772 (see *4. Graphic Reproductions*, 1; fig. 6), some of the difficult to distinguish shapes in the complex space can be interpreted, though with the necessary caution.

In an interior with an open roof, Mercury and Jupiter are seated at a table on which rests a bowl with fruit. The elderly couple kneels before the two gods. Philemon and Baucis' goose seeks refuge with Jupiter, who by stretching out his right hand seems to extend his protection to the bird. The white-bearded Jupiter is in a frontal position, his head slightly turned toward the old couple and his gaze fixed on them. He wears red and gold-coloured clothing and is illuminated from the right by a light hidden behind Mercury. Mercury's profile stands out against the lit wall. Only his right shoulder, his right forearm leaning on the table, and a glass filled with red wine are picked out by the light. The band in his chin-length hair displays a few highlights. The old couple are shown in semi-darkness across the table from Mercury. While Baucis attempts to catch the goose, Philemon reverently folds his hands, his cap clutched between them, out of respect for Jupiter and Mercury.

Behind Philemon is a post with a truss on which rests a beam. The ends of two boards are fastened to the bottom of this beam and the other ends rest atop a parallel beam in the foreground. These boards form a loft on which are placed a bottle and a basket. Hanging down from the foremost beam at the right is an object resembling a hammock made of some woven material. In this 'hammock' is a large round shape that looks like a filled bag. The string with which this 'bag' is fastened extends to the beam in the foreground and appears to be looped around it. A slack rope hangs above the heads of the figures. Several pots line the furthest beam, which can be reached by means of the ladder partially visible behind Philemon. On a ledge behind Baucis is a bulbous bottle. At the extreme left a fire glows in an open hearth framed by a basket arch, above which can be distinguished a small boarded attic. A large object with a rounded top and stripes or bands running diagonally over the spherical surface, possibly a mattress, is partially visible before the fire.

Working conditions

Examined on 16 April 1970 (J.B., S.H.L.) and in November 1994 (M.F., E.v.d.W.): out of the frame and in good artificial light, with the aid of a stereomicroscope and the X-ray mosaic, an infrared photograph and an ultraviolet photograph of the entire work. Observation is hindered by thick yellowed varnish.

Support

At first glance the painting seems to have been made on an oak panel. Upon closer scrutiny, however, a gauze-like canvas with a very regular weave can be detected in numerous damaged areas indicating that the painting was transferred at some point. This is confirmed by the X-radiograph in which can be seen that the ground and paint layer stop approximately 2 mm from the edge of the panel. A layer of priming was applied all around on the remaining unpainted border. According to the New York conservator Louis de Wild, the painting underwent a transfer. The long, somewhat S-shaped cracks running more or less parallel in two, partially interlocking series are strongly reminiscent of cracks that occur in panels made of certain kinds of tropical hardwood. This may be an indication that the painting was originally painted on a tropical hardwood panel. Similar cracks are also found in the panels of the *Bust of a rabbi* in Hampton Court (III C 102), the *Portrait of Anna Wijmer* in the Six Collection, Amsterdam (III C 113) and *Saskia* in Berlin (Br. 109).

The gauze with the paint layer was applied onto an oak panel, grain horizontal, 53.5 x 69 cm. Single plank, thickness 0.85 cm. Should this panel have been applied during a relatively recent transfer, it is surprising that it was cradled. In the first half of this century, however, it was not uncommon for new panels to be cradled prior to use.[1]

Ground

According to Wheelock 'no ground layer is present; it was probably removed during transfer.'[2] The grey layer, which has become visible through wearing in many areas, may be related with the transfer procedure.

Paint layer

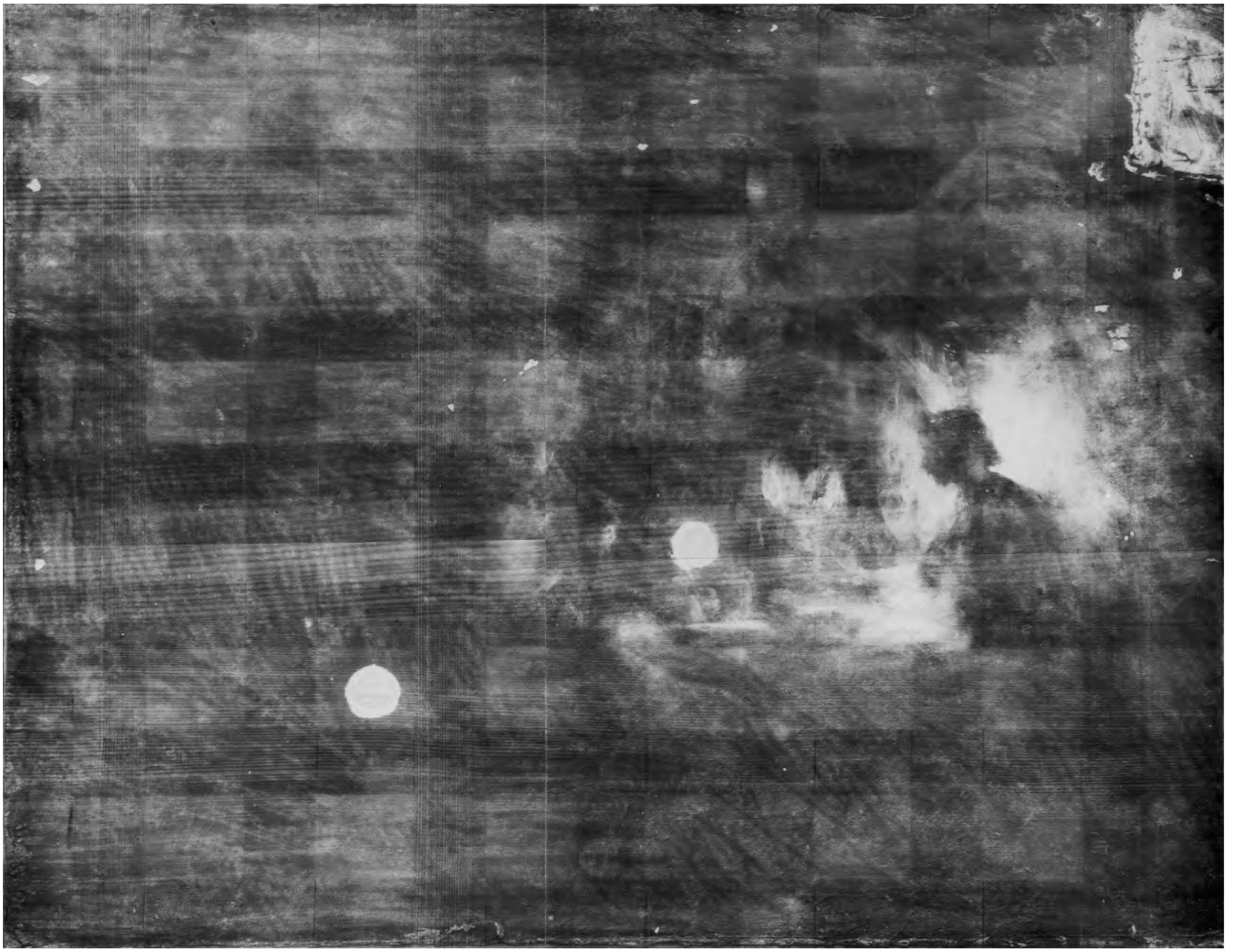
Condition: This painting is a ruin. Not only has the original support disappeared, but the ground and paint layers have suffered extensively from various kinds of damage. The gauze, described in *Support* as being visible in many places, for example in Philemon's arm, is the first sign that

Fig. 1. Panel 53.5 x 69 cm

substantial parts of the original ground and paint layer have disappeared. The paint loss must have occurred in various phases: according to the X-ray image, the painting has undergone several restorations. This can be deduced from the application of various generations of fillers. The fillers that show up light in the X-ray image contain lead white; those that show up dark may consist of chalk or wax. There appears to be a third kind of filler, particularly in the borders which have suffered substantial paint losses. In the X-radiograph these can barely be distinguished from the ground and paint layer with respect to absorbency. The present paint surface still shows traces of cupping and flaking. In addition to paint loss due to flaking, there are areas seriously damaged by overcleaning. Only those parts that include lead white or lead-tin yellow applied with a certain degree of impasto are still somewhat 'legible'. This pertains to the lit zones around the head of Mercury and the highlights on the clothing of Mercury and Jupiter. The tablecloth and the fruit basket as well as the woven hammock are also still in reasonable condition.

For the rest, at some time the scene may have been reduced to a collection of apparitions which, without the innumerable later retouchings, must then have been barely legible. The grey ground undoubtedly determined the appearance of the painting in this condition. Its present appearance is largely due to restorations. Countless little dabs, lines, and strokes were added to reinforce what was still perceptible. Nevertheless, these must be considered as rather unsuccessful attempts to reconstruct the details, which rightly or wrongly were presumed to have been lost. The overcleaning of large parts of the subsequent reconstruction must have taken place before 1772. The representation in the print by Thomas Watson from that year

Fig. 2. X-Ray



(see *4. Graphic Reproductions*, 1; fig. 6) is remarkably close to the painting in its present form, to the extent that this can be ascertained on the basis of the painting's current condition.

Mercury's head is representative of the nature of the restorations and the degree to which they determine the aspect of the painting (fig. 3). At least two generations of retouchings can be distinguished. Mercury's jaw line is indicated with a few thin, hesitantly placed lines on the worn ground. Found throughout the entire painting, these lines make the impression of being fairly recent and seem to have been applied in paint with a watery binder rather than in oil paint. As a rule, these generally fine lines were added to amplify detail. They do not appear in Watson's print, which can be construed as an indication that they are of a more recent date. Such lines are present in the hair and near the eyelids and eyebrow of Mercury. Entirely different in nature are the overpaintings in broad brushstrokes, for example on Mercury's lips. That they are overpaintings is manifest in the way in which the paint has filled the craquelure. This generation of retouchings appears to be older. As they correspond with the details in Watson's print, they must have been applied prior to 1772. At that time, the pupil of Mercury's left eye was also strengthened. Furthermore, the yellow background along the contour of the face was reinforced with yellow paint, when most of, if not the entire, right eye was added. Were one to disregard the overpaintings determining Mercury's present appearance summed up here, little more would remain than an unarticulated apparition with some highlights.

Another example of such radical intervention is found near Mercury's right hand. In the catalogue of the National Gallery it is suggested that the hand and the glass were entirely redone and that the original contour of

Fig. 3. Detail (1 : 1.5)

the arm was higher, approximately in line with the upper rim of the glass (see note 2). However, this is a pentimento by the maker of the painting, who placed the arm and hand lower while working on the painting. The impastoed light accents near the sleeve and the rim of the glass are part of the original paint. The direction of the thumb also appears to have been preserved in the original paint. The rest of the hand, however, was mostly or entirely reconstructed during the two aforementioned restorations. In the reconstruction, it is unclear whether Mercury's hand is holding the glass – the thumb disappearing behind the glass seems to suggest this – or whether the hand assumes a speaking gesture while partially overlapping the glass behind it.

Analysis of the condition of Jupiter's head and large parts of the figures of Philemon and Baucis, for example, yield the same image of a turbulent material history making it impossible to arrive at a useful description of the maker's working method.

Craquelure: To the extent that the varnish craquelure does not disturb the craquelure pattern, the impression is created of a generally horizontal and vertical craquelure pattern, usually found in a painting on panel. However, some aspects of the craquelure in the present painting do not concur with such a pattern: the shape and size of individual islands of paint are very irregular and the edges of numerous islands are curved. This might be taken as an indication that the craquelure pattern was in part affected

Fig. 4. X-Ray, detail

by the transfer of the painting. For an interpretation of the long, somewhat S-shaped cracks, see *Support*.

Radiography

The radiographic image is disturbed by the cradle on the back of the panel. Of the two round wax seals one shows up light near Jupiter's forearm. In the upper right corner is a section showing up extremely light, in which the weave structure of the gauze used in the transfer is visible. Evidently, a radioabsorbent material was applied in this area during the transfer, in which the gauze left an impression. Moreover, lacunas showing up either light or dark can be distinguished in various areas. The fact that there are also lacunas in the paint layer, particularly along the borders, which can barely be observed in the X-radiograph indicates that they must be filled with a material whose radioabsorbency is, curiously, the same as that of the ground (see *Paint layer* Condition). Of the scene itself, only the lit areas in and around Mercury are visible in the X-radiograph (fig. 4): namely, the background surrounding his silhouette, the highlights on parts of Jupiter and Mercury's costumes and the tablecloth with the basket of fruit on it. Also showing up is a pentimento near Mercury's right sleeve.

Signature

At the lower left in thin black <*Rembrandt f. 1658*>. Given the condition of the fragile dark sections in the painting it

Fig. 5. After A. Elsheimer, *Philemon and Baucis* (engraving by H. Goudt, 1612)

may be concluded that the signature in its present state is unreliable. Due to the nature of the current varnish layer, the extent to which the inscription has been added later or strengthened cannot be evaluated.

2. Comments

Tümpel was the first to doubt the painting's authenticity.[3] He argued that the painting deviated from Rembrandt's works on stylistic grounds and considered it a shopwork. Whether Tümpel was partially influenced by the numerous later additions (described in *Paint layer* Condition) is not clear. In so far as this ruined painting can be evaluated, based on the nature of the design and the poor handling of the extant impasto we, too, have the impression that it is more likely by a pupil or studio assistant than by Rembrandt. However, we do not entirely exclude the possibility that it is a work by Rembrandt.

While the theme of Philemon and Baucis was frequently represented in the Southern Netherlands, it is rarely encountered in 17th-century Northern Netherlandish painting.[4] A connection is usually made between the painting under discussion and a small picture of the same subject by Adam Elsheimer of *c.* 1608.[5] The latter work was owned by the Amsterdam painter Jan van de Capelle, and listed in his estate inventory of 1680.[6] Hence, other Amsterdam painters could well have seen it.[7] Knowledge of Elsheimer's painting, however, was available at an earlier date in the form of a print after it by Hendrick Goudt of 1612 (fig. 5). The print gives Elsheimer's composition in reverse and it is this image that the Washington *Philemon and Baucis* resembles. The division of space is very similar and both works include two light sources. Several details have also been adopted in the painting, such as the ladder and the slack rope parallel to the picture plane from which, in contrast to Elsheimer's composition, no cloths hang. The seated figure at the right, who is shown *en profile* in both cases, is also related, although in the Washington painting it is not Jupiter who is shown, as is the case in Goudt's print, but rather Mercury.

The fact that a number of Rembrandt's works are based on Elsheimer (see I A 16 and V 13), must have contributed to the long acceptance of the Washington painting's authenticity. The possibility that an assistant or pupil could also have based himself on a print by Elsheimer should, however, not be excluded. After all, Rembrandt's pupils and assistants must have had access to the stock of prints in his studio.

In addition to similarities, there are also some striking differences between the Washington painting and Goudt's print after Elsheimer's *Philemon and Baucis*. While Elsheimer – and in his wake Goudt – portrayed the warm reception accorded the gods, the Washington painting depicts a slightly later episode of the story in which the goose plays a major role. This prompted Stechow to suggest a correspondence with a lost painting of the same subject by Rubens, which has survived in the form of a workshop copy now in Vienna.[8] In the latter painting, the goose's role is indeed prominent. Stechow assumed that Rembrandt (whom he considered the maker of the Washington painting) knew Rubens' composition from a reproductive print in reverse after the original published by Joannes Meyssens. As Sluijter correctly noted, it is primarily the difference in interpretation between the two works that is striking (see note 4).

Because Rembrandt's 1629 *Christ at Emmaus* (see p. 163 fig. 38) is formally based on Goudt's print after Elsheimer's *Philemon and Baucis*, a link has frequently been made between this early Rembrandt picture and the painting in Washington.[9] In the literature it has repeatedly been noted that the way in which Jupiter is positioned behind the table in the Washington painting recalls Rembrandt's later pictures of Christ at Emmaus (V 14 and B. 87, p. 248 fig. 256), which in turn relate to *The last supper* by Leonardo da Vinci. As Stechow and Kieser, independently, pointed out, there are also analogies between the stories of Philemon and Baucis and Christ at Emmaus.[10] In both cases an unknown visitor (or visitors) reveals his divine status during a meal. However, Stechow rightly observed that no reference is made in 17th-century texts with respect to these analogies.[11] For instance, in his *Wtleggingh op de Metamorphosis* (1604) Van Mander only perceived the story of Philemon and Baucis as proof of 'how poor humble people / living in dwellings with roofs made only of reeds / are more ready to extend friendly hospitality than the splendid wealthy in their magnificent large houses and palaces.' He emphasised that hospitality is always rewarded and greed punished.[12]

Hofstede de Groot thought that two drawings of scenes of Philemon and Baucis by Rembrandt in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin (Ben. 960 and Ben. A76) were preliminary studies for the Washington painting.[13] Gerson considered these two drawings, correctly in our view, as

Fig. 6. Mezzotint by Th. Watson, 1772

irrelevant.[14] Wheelock, too, made a link between a (part of a) drawing by Rembrandt and the *Philemon and Baucis*. He observed a 'closeness in concept' between the pose of the figure of Philemon in the Washington painting and that of the praying Peter shown in reverse in *St Peter's prayer before the raising of Tabitha* (Ben. 949).[15] Both works, indeed, show a kneeling bearded old man with folded hands in profile. However, as no salient correspondences can be distinguished between the two works, the drawing does not contribute to a better understanding of the genesis of the Washington *Philemon and Baucis*.

3. Documents and sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

1. A mezzotint by Thomas Watson (London *c.* 1743-1781) is a faithful rendering of the painting: '*Rembrandt pinx*^{t}:–Tho^{s}. Watson fecit. / Publish'd March 1st: 1772 for S. Hooper, at N^{o}:25 Ludgate Hill, W. Shropshire, New Bond Street, & T: Watson, N.8 Broad Street.' (fig. 6; Charrington 182 II). The inscription in the third state after 'Watson fecit' reads: '*BAUCIS AND PHILEMON. From an ORIGINAL-PAINTING by Rembrandt*'. And further: (at each side of the title 8 lines of verse) '*Devotion seiz'd the Pair… Jove she lies. DRYDEN.*'[16]

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance

*– Coll. William Baillie (1723-1792), sale London 1-2 February 1771 (Lugt 1885), 2nd day no. 73: 'Rembrandt. Jupiter and Mercury visiting Baucis and Philmon; a most high finished picture; the character of Jupiter is full of dignity and affability, and the respect of the old couple to the deities well described; the effect and richness of colouring extraordinary. high 21 inches, wide 27 inches [= 54.2 x 69.6 cm].'

– Possibly English private collection by 1772 (see 4. *Graphic reproductions*, 1).

– Coll. Earl of Essex [Capel (William Anne Holles)], sale London (Christie's) 31 January – 1 February 1777 (Lugt 2634),

2nd day no. 75: 'Rembrandt – Baucis and Philimon – the grandeur and taste in the group is not inferior to the first Italians, and has ever been justly admired one of the finest pictures of the master.' (£ 32/11/- to Morris)

In a copy of the Earl of Essex sale catalogue at Christie's, London, the consignor's name is written in the margin as Maj. Stanton.[17]

– Charles Sedelmeyer Gallery, Paris.[18]
– Coll. Charles T. Yerkes, Chicago by 1893, sale New York (American Art Association) 5-8 April 1910, no. 1160.
– Scott & Fowles, New York.
– Coll. Otto H. Kahn, New York, by 1914.
– Coll. Joseph E. Widener, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, in 1922.

NOTES

1. Compare D.V. Thompson Jr., *The practice of tempera painting*, second edition New York 1962, pp. 11-12.
2. A.K. Wheelock Jr., *Dutch paintings of the seventeenth century. National Gallery of Art Washington*, Washington 1995, cat. no. 1942.9.65, pp. 247-252, esp. 247.
3. Tümpel 1986, cat. no. A26.
4. E.J. Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen' in de Noordnederlandsche schilderkunst circa 1590-1670. Een proeve van beschrijving en interpretatie van schilderijen met verhalende onderwerpen uit de klasssieke mythologie*, Leiden 1986 (diss.), p. 100.
5. Copper 16.5 x 22.5 cm; Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, inv. no. 1977.
6. A. Bredius, 'De schilder Johannes van de Cappelle', *O.H.* 10 (1892), pp. 26-40, esp. 33 no. 52: 'Een Philemon en Baucis van Elzhamer'. It is not known when this painting came into Van de Cappelle's possession.
7. Bredius, op. cit.[6], pp. 29 and 33. The notion that Rembrandt and Van de Capelle were acquainted gained currency when this article by Bredius was published. While it should not be discounted, it also cannot be proven. For the provenance of Elsheimer's *Philemon and Baucis*, see also: K. Andrews, *Adam Elsheimer*, Oxford 1977, p. 153 no. 24.
8. W. Stechow, 'The myth of Philemon and Baucis in art', *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4 (1940/41), pp. 103-113, esp. 108-113.
9. See especially K. Freise, 'Rembrandt and Elsheimer', *Burl. Mag.* 13 (1908), pp. 38-39, esp. 39; J.L.A.A.M. van Rijckevorsel, *Rembrandt en de traditie*, Rotterdam 1932, p. 78; Stechow, op. cit.[8], p. 110.
10. Stechow, op. cit.[8], p. 105; E. Kieser, 'Über Rembrandts Verhältnis zur Antike', *Zeitschr. f. Kunstgesch.* 10 (1941/42), pp. 129-160, esp. 147.
11. Stechow, op. cit.[8], p. 111.
12. K. van Mander, *Wtleggingh op de Metamorphosis*, Haarlem 1604, fol. 72v: 'hoe dat arme gemeene luyden, nederige stroodacksche huysen bewoonende, tot den dienst der vriendlijcker beleeftheyt veel veerdiger bevonden worden, dan de prachtighe rijcke in hun hooveerdige groote ghebouwde huysen oft Palleysen.'
13. HdG 212.
14. Br.-Gerson 481.
15. Wheelock, op. cit.[2], p. 251.
16. Exhib. cat. *Rembrandt in eighteenth century England*, [New Haven] Yale Center for British Art 1983, p. 146 no. 182.
17. Wheelock, op. cit.[2], p. 251 note 3.
18. *Catalogue of 300 Paintings* ..., Paris 1898, no. 137.

V 28 Rembrandt – Tobit and Anna 1659

ROTTERDAM, MUSEUM BOIJMANS VAN BEUNINGEN, WILLEM VAN DER VORM FOUNDATION, CAT. NO. 65

HDG 65; BR. 520; BAUCH 30; GERSON 348; TÜMPEL 28*

1. Introduction and description

The painting shows an episode taken from the Apocryphal book of Tobit, chapter 10, verses 1-7, in which the blind Tobit and his wife Anna anxiously await the return of their son Tobias. The latter, accompanied by the archangel Raphael, who had been sent by God, had gone to Rages in Media to fetch money which Tobit had once entrusted for safe keeping to a certain Gabael, a member of the family. For various reasons, Tobias has been away much longer than agreed.

Tobit 10: 1-3 'Now Tobit his father counted every day: and when the days of the journey were expired, and they came not, Then Tobit said, Are they detained? or is Gabael dead, and there is no man to give him the money? Therefore he [Tobit] was very sorry.'

According to iconographic tradition, Tobit's wife Anna is shown at work in the same room, earning their living by spinning (see Tobit 2: 12). To understand the painting, it is important to know that the once wealthy Tobit, having fled from the wrath of the King of Nineveh, on return to his house had found all his goods plundered and that all that remained to him, apart from the house itself, were his wife Anna and Tobias, their son (Tobit 1: 23).

Head bowed, the bearded Tobit sits in an armchair beside a fire burning behind a low grate in a recessed fireplace with a large hood. The chair has sloping armrests that join a low, rounded back. Tobit's right hand appears to clasp the head of a stick resting between his legs. He wears a black cap and a long grey, fur-trimmed tabard, over which is draped a brownish garment that leaves his lower arms and breast free. To the left, seen obliquely from behind, Anna is seated at her spinning wheel on a low, square-backed wooden chair, both chair and spinning wheel situated on a low, wooden platform with rounded (perhaps worn) corners. With her left hand she is spinning a large clump of raw wool into yarn, while with her right hand keeps a spinning wheel turning. She wears a red dress with, at the neck, a white collar or possibly a shawl. The dress, irregularly folded at the back, has rather wide half-length sleeves trimmed with a dark border. Protruding from the right sleeve is seen a sleeve with a white cuff or border. A white garment can be seen round her hips and on her lap, possibly an apron. Unclear shapes at her right hip and apparently hanging from it may suggest that perhaps a bag and a chatelaine hang there. Anna is also depicted with a bag and/or chatelaine in several drawings with Tobit and Anna – whether by Rembrandt himself or by one of his pupils.[1] A chatelaine was a relatively long chain or cord on which hung such implements as scissors, glasses, keys and cutlery that could be used without detaching them. Anna wears a white head-cloth with the knot visible at the back of the head.

Anna sits by a large window which is divided horizontally into an upper and a lower half, the whole contained in a stout frame. The intensity of the light falling through this window rapidly diminishes as it reaches further into the sparsely furnished interior of a very tall room. The upper half of the window is divided into five rows of five vertically rectangular lead panes, the top row being half-rounded above. Before the right side of the window a flimsy, almost transparent curtain hangs from a rod indicated with dark paint. The bottom window stands wide open, opening inwards to the left. The edge of this lead-paned window, strongly foreshortened, is just visible at the left of the painting.

Seen through the open window is a complex prospect with, in the foreground, what seems to be a portal constructed of large stone blocks, set in a wall overgrown with luxuriant, hanging foliage. Beyond this rises a red stone building whose scale is difficult to ascertain. It could be a large building with square towers or a house with an oblique roof and square chimney. In the shadow of the overgrown portal a somewhat bent figure with a flat, beret-like hat is seen approaching. It seems that a flesh-coloured blob indicates his left hand. Is this perhaps an indication of the returning Tobias? Julius Held read this figure as 'a neighbour'.[2]

To the right of the window is a birdcage on a short plank, one end of which rests on the horizontal frame piece separating the two halves of the window, while the free end seems to be suspended by a strong thread fixed above to the top of the window-frame. Below the window is a fairly wide window sill, partially covered by a piece of grey cloth. To the right of the window can be seen a closed door whose projecting left doorpost appears to catch the light from the window. However, it is more likely that this white trace has arisen because the paint of the doorframe has worn through precisely where the flame of a candle had been painted as part of an underlying *vanitas* still-life (see *Radiography* (fig. 2) and *Paint layer*, Condition). Toward the top of the door can be distinguished a long metal strip, widening at its end, which can only be seen as part of a hinge.

The right half of the back wall is taken up by a large chimney piece. The lower part of the wall appears to be plastered. Above, there are three projecting supports on which rest the beams bearing the wooden ceiling. In the left foreground can be seen a broom, evidently leaning against a wall which is outside the frame of the painting, and vague indications of other objects. The right-hand wall is indicated with a few brushstrokes that follow the perspective.

Working conditions

In January 1974 (B.H., P.v.Th.) the painting was studied out of its frame in good artificial light, with the help of a stereomicroscope, ultraviolet light and a print of the X-radiographic film encompassing the whole surface of the painting. Again studied in October 1988 and on 11 March 2009 (E.v.d.W.) in the frame with a hand-held magnifying glass and lamp and with the help of four 1:1 X-radiographic films. On these various occasions observation was seriously hampered by a thick, yellowed layer of varnish. In 2010 the painting could be studied under ideal conditions in a restoration studio.

Support

Oak panel with horizontally running grain, 41.8 x 54.6 cm. A single piece, approximately 7 mm thick, bevelled on three sides. Toward its bottom the panel becomes gradu-

Fig. 1. Panel 41.8 x 54.6 cm

ally thinner without any obvious bevelling. The reverse side is covered up to the bevelled sides with a layer of dark brown paint.

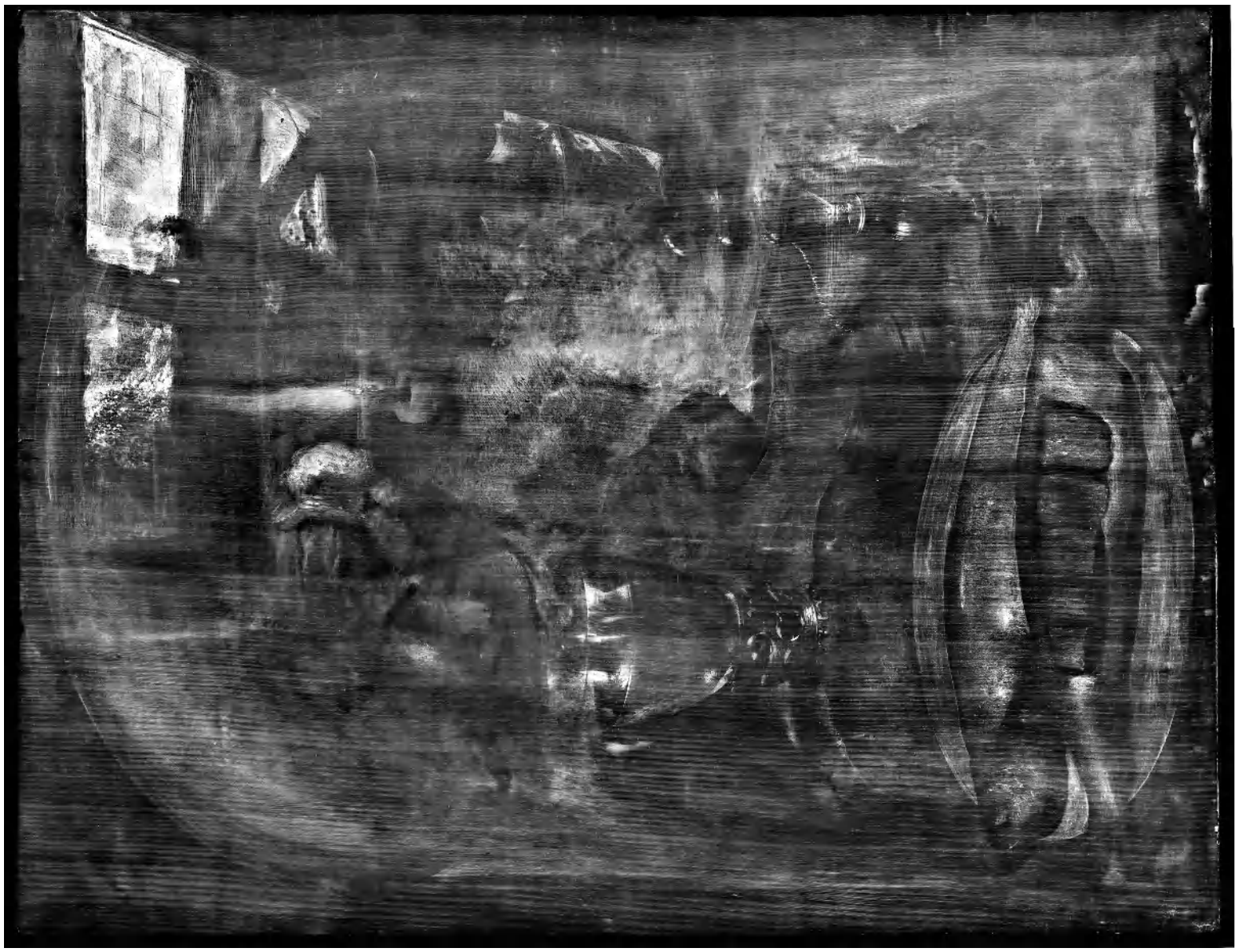
Dendrochronological investigation produced the following results: the oak panel contains 238 growth rings, while the wood concerned originates from the region of the Netherlands/West Germany. With this information the rings could be dated between the years 1592 and 1355.

Relating this to the sapwood statistics of Western Europe, an earliest felling date can be derived for the year 1599, a more plausible felling date between 1607…1609… 1613 + x … Given a minimum of 2 years for seasoning, an earliest possible date for the creation of the painting is 1601. Assuming a median of 17 sapwood rings and 2 years of seasoning, one is led to a plausible date of origin for the underlying still-life from 1611 upwards.

Ground

To the right and especially below left a yellowish brown shows through in places. It is not clear, however, whether this is the ground, because the painting of *Tobit and Anna* has been done over another painting. It would seem that no new ground was applied on top of the underlying painting before executing the painting that is now visible (see *Radiography* and *Paint layer*). The cross-section of a paint sample taken from close to the bottom edge, in the place of the signature, shows a chalk ground and above it an imprimatur with chalk and charcoal black. This is most probably the ground on which the underlying still life was painted although, in view of its composition, it must earlier have had a blue-grey colour. The yellow-brown ground mentioned above could have been either this original ground that has yellowed as a result of ageing, or the old varnish layer that covered the whole painting.

Fig. 2. X-Ray



Paint layer

Condition: in general the paint layer is in a fairly good state, although here and there it is worn to such an extent that paint of the underlying still life has become visible in places. There has been an attempt at some stage to cover the red edge of a dish [?] near the fire in the hearth, part of the underlying still-life that has become visible as a result of abrasion. For other places where the underlying paint has become visible, see *Comments*.

Investigation with ultraviolet reveals that a few lines in the window passage and in the birdcage have been enhanced. There are also retouchings in both figures and at a point above Tobit's shoulder.

Craquelure: clear, quite large irregular fissuring in the sky; but there is a much finer craquelure pattern over the entire surface of the painting and specifically in Tobit's brown sleeve and Anna's dress. This fine craquelure could well be restricted – partially, at least – to the varnish layer.

As far as can be seen despite the obscuring varnish layer, the execution and handling of paint is highly variable in this painting. The sky visible through the window has been painted with rather thick, pale blue paint, using preponderantly horizontal brushstrokes; the building in the background was indicated with pastose paint in clear tones of red and pink, the foliage with thick dots of saturated greens and yellows (fig. 3). The approaching figure mentioned in the description of the image stands out in the smooth, brown shadow passage beneath the foliage, summarily indicated with a few dark brushstrokes and a small blob of pink. The lead strips in the upper half of the window are drawn with fine grey-black brush lines – executed while the paint of the sky was still wet, according to the X-radiograph. On several of the horizontal lead strips, thick brush lines have been applied with white paint, apparently intended as highlights. The curtain of the upper window, lit by the sun, is indicated with a long, flowing, drawn-out stroke of light brownish, pink, yellowish paint. The complex construction of the rebates of the window,

Fig. 3. Detail of fig. 1 (1:1)

with the bottom half of the window open, is indicated with loose strokes of reddish-brown, ochre yellow and in places black. The wall edge visible outside the bottom window is done more smoothly with an even greater range of colours, including blue-grey. The birdcage in front of the upper half of the window is elaborated without becoming excessively detailed. A narrow little roof on the window side, done with light grey paint, forms part of the otherwise dark-painted covering of the cage. The suggestion of small bars against the light blue sky and, below the cage, the narrow view through to the sky, the indication of the curtain behind the cage in part painted over the slit of sky, give the cage the suggestion of having been effected with a constructive and perspectival logic, despite its sketchy elaboration.

On the left-hand doorpost, what appears to be a highlight has been introduced on to the wood with a light yellowish paint. But as briefly referred to above, this effect was probably not intended in this way by the painter, but is rather the consequence of abrasion of the paint surface at this place, with the result that a part of a candle-flame from the underlying still-life has become visible. A light place in the brown of the door itself also appears to be related to this candle-flame. There are further such abraded passages. In the chimney breast, for example, four highlights that belong to the foot of a glass in the underlying still-life have become visible; while in the area of the hearth, the edge of the red dish, and less obviously the grey of the fishes of the still-life show through.

The back wall is highly varied in its execution. Extending above Tobit's head and along the contour of his left shoulder and back, and to his left, a plastered area of the wall seems to be indicated with grainy, grey paint, horizontally bounded above. The part of the wall above this horizontal line is painted in dark greys that vary greatly in both tone and peinture. The intended surface structure of that part of the wall and the zone extending up from it to the ceiling will only become clear when the painting is cleaned. The same holds for the effect of the light falling on this wall, in which, as will become clear in the discussion of the X-radiograph, radical changes have been introduced during the work on the painting. The chimney breast painted in mixed greys is disrupted by the lights, mentioned above, of the foot of one of the glasses that now show through in places. Below these there is a band, difficult to interpret, done with a series of parallel vertical touches, wet in wet in ochre and brown paint. In view of their relation to the almost vertical lower part of the left contour of the chimney breast, these could well be a row of bricks set in the plastered stonework of the chimney.

The floor is predominantly done in long, horizontal strokes, against which the rounded corner of the platform stands out as a 'mini-repoussoir'. The fire itself, which seems to be in Tobit's shadow, is painted with thick dots of orange-yellow. A simple grate in front of the fire is indicated with one horizontal and several vertical strokes of black paint. The vertical bars glow brightly along their contours. The fire illuminates the floor of the hearth in places and causes a glow, painted as a narrow reddish strip, on the material of the tabard hanging from Tobit's

Fig. 4. Detail of fig. 1

Fig. 5. Detail of fig. 1

left knee. A rounded form placed or hanging above the fire appears to be a cooking pot. In the back wall of the hearth, in places, can be seen inexplicable dark lines.

The way in which Tobit's head is painted is characteristic of the variety in the peinture of this painting (fig. 4). His cap is designated with a few dashes of black that lapse into grey toward its bottom edge. The light falls on Tobit's neck and temple such that the dark shadows of the ear and the eye socket are reserved in the muted flesh colour. The way in which the contours round the head have been reserved, so that underlying dark paint remains visible, and then 're-written' with free movements in dark paint, demonstrates the freedom with which the head has been executed – an almost casualness resulting from chance in the execution – which is nevertheless functional, suggesting Tobit's old age and blindness with minimal means. The tabard is painted entirely differently. The softness of textile is suggested in the plastic modelling of its folds. The end of the sleeve with its light cuff casts a shadow reserved in the flesh tone of the hand. Tobit's chair is given form and is defined in space by means of effectively placed shadows.

With Anna (fig. 5), the peinture is mainly determined by the fact that she is placed closer to the window through which light enters the room. Red covering dots and streaks of varying colour intensity place the dress in the light; in the case of the headscarf, collar and apron, dabs and streaks of muted white paint shading to grey have the same light-suggestive effect. The shapes on her right hip (and bag) and of details hanging lower on her dress (a chatelaine?) are indicated by light grey strokes, black and a few lights. With regard to the cursorily indicated hands, engaged in spinning, the left is shown with the palm turned inwards, so that thumb and forefinger appear to be twisting the fibres pulled from the ball of wool into a thread. A few fingertips of this hand catch the light. The right hand, even more briefly indicated, works the spinning wheel, apparently turning so fast that the spokes are depicted as a blur.

The large clump of light grey wool is placed so close to Anna's head that there is only a small space in between her oblique profile – only the cheek and a small part of the nose are visible – and the wool. The tonal difference between the knotted white headscarf and the vaguely outlined clump of wool gives the impression that the wool seems to be deeper in the space, which also contributes to the successful rendering of its fluffy texture.

Radiography

The X-ray image is largely determined by a still-life beneath the present image (fig. 2). It consists of a dish or plate with two fishes, the foremost of which is cut in slices. Behind the fish stand two full glasses and a candelabra with a burning candle. It would seem to be a *vanitas* still-life. In view of the arch that encloses this still-life above and the horizontal enclosure at the bottom, the objects depicted seem to be placed in a niche out of which the edge of the plate projects forward slightly.

Although the X-ray image is dominated by the underlying still-life, parts of the now visible painting are also revealed. The X-radiograph shows two conspicuous and unquestionably correlated repentirs: next to the upper part of the window there is a third, slightly smaller window that was situated above the door. In this painted-out window can be seen the reserve for an oblique beam which apparently had the same kind of function as the vaguely indicated supports that brace the ceiling beams from the back wall. In the view through to the sky above the oblique beam in the painted-out window, a thin stripe is apparent which may be a rope, as there seems to be something hanging from the reserved, oblique beam in front of the window.

Another alteration concerns the part of the wall above Tobit. This contains much more radio-absorbent paint (undoubtedly lead white) than the part of the same wall to the left of Tobit which, in the surface paint now visible, is lighter that the upper half of this back wall. It is highly likely that the upper part of the wall was originally lighter than the part below it. The change carried out above can be explained by the position of the (subsequently overpainted) window above the door, which was close to the back wall. Evidently the painter must have let more light fall on this part of the wall than on the lower part. The disappearance of the window thus had drastic consequences for the organization of the light within the room as a whole.

A third, much smaller repentir occurred in the lit part of Anna's apron on the right side of her waist. Here, there was originally a freely applied touch of white paint, whose upper and lower contours were at a later stage reworked, apparently in order to give sharper definition to the light falling on the apron.

Equally important for an understanding of the painting's genesis is the fact that in the part of the wall behind Tobit there was a crudely outlined reserve for his cap and shoulder. Further to the left there is a similarly rough reserve for the spinning wheel. Anna's headscarf and collar appear as light shapes that correspond with what is now visible in the surface paint.

The two halves of the great window can be most clearly seen in the X-radiograph. The lead strips in the upper window were apparently introduced while the sky was still so wet that in places the brush could push the paint aside such that the lead strips show up in the X-radiograph slightly darker in places. The curtain pulled back from the upper window has been delineated with a broad, whisking brushstroke, while the birdcage, which was first reserved in the light paint of the sky, was subsequently elaborated using both light and dark paint. Below the cage, a wide reserve is visible for the division between the two parts of the window.

Signature

In black <*Rembrandt f.1659*> (fig. 8). Hofstede de Groot, Bredius and Bauch still read the date as 1650. Gerson reported that the cleaning in 1947 revealed the date to be 1659. This dating was also maintained by Tümpel.[3] J. Giltay also mentions that a restoration of the painting in 1947 brought to light the date 1659.[4] Microscopic examination of a paint cross-section of a sample removed from

Fig. 6. Infrared photograph

Fig. 7. Infrared reflectography

one of the characters in the signature proved that no (recent) varnish was present between the two paint layers (signature and underlying paint of the foreground). A thin intermediate layer of organic material, showing fluorescence in long-wave UV (perhaps mastic?) and containing a few pigment particles was found instead. This observation suggests strongly that the signature was applied not long after the completion of Tobit and Anna (summary of the report by Karin Groen). Handwriting experts have confirmed that in entire autograph Rembrandt signatures the large loop of the *R* was usually resumed at about about 10 o'clock (of the clockface).[5] That is also the case with this signature.

2. Comments

For a long time the attribution of this painting remained undisputed. In 1986, however, Tümpel let it be known that he was 'not completely convinced of its authenticity'.[6] Giltay in 1994 also thought there was justified reason for doubt about its authenticity. He based his doubt on what he considered to be an insuperable weakness in the quality.[7] In view of the fact that the painting was done over a 17th-century still-life totally unrelated to the work that is now visible, Giltay referred to the possibility, once voiced by members of the RRP, that perhaps it should even be considered a 'deliberate falsification'. He tentatively attributed the painting to Barent Fabritius, referring in particular to a painting in York that is attributed to this painter.[8]

It can now be confirmed that the painting certainly cannot be a modern forgery. A printed text stuck on the back of the panel comes from a still unidentified 18th-century sale catalogue contains the description of a painting which corresponds with the present painting in so many respects that it can scarcely be doubted that it refers to the same work:

'Rembrandt van Ryn. 7. An interior, where an old man seated by a blazing fire, over which hangs a kettle. There is also an old woman sitting and spinning by an open window through which a few houses can be seen. A forceful, natural and beautiful painting on panel, 16½ (sic) inches high, 21 inches wide'.[9] (fig. 9)

The measurements given in the text (16½. inches high, 21 inches wide, or 42.4 x 53.97 cm) correspond almost exactly with the measurements of the present painting. It is true that this format corresponds to a standard size, which Bruyn identified as 'groote [large] stooter' (*c.* 55 x 40 cm),[10] but there was such a margin of tolerance in the size of different panels, all considered to be of 'standard size', that a strict correspondence between measurements, such as we have in this case, only very sporadically occurs. The correspondence here is therefore further evidence that we are dealing with one and the same painting.

In view of its iconographic, stylistic and technical features – among which may also be included specific aspects of the handling of light and peinture – plus the fact that it has been executed on top of another painting, it can scarcely be doubted that the painting must have originated in Rembrandt's workshop. The relevant arguments will be dealt with in more detail below.

With regard to iconography: even though paintings and prints with scenes from the story of Tobit and his son Tobias occur from the early 16th century onward, particularly the scene with Tobias, Raphael and the fish, one finds such themes treated unusually often in Rembrandt's workshop (either by himself or by his pupils). In 1964 Julius Held even devoted a book to the subject, titled *Rembrandt and the book of Tobit*, in which painted and drawn 'illustrations' of almost every episode from the story could be shown.[11] In his book Held dealt with 33 of these works, some of which show the same scenes. At the same time he records some twenty drawings emanating from Rembrandt's circle with Tobit/Tobias themes.[12] Further, there are several paintings with such images by Rembrandt or one of his (former) pupils, reported in inventories from the 17th and early 18th centuries. For example, a report from 1674/5 cites '*een stuck van Rembrant, zijnde de historie van Tobias*'[13] and another from 1682 '*een copie van Rembrant van Tobias*'.[14] Rembrandt's pupil Lambert Doomer possessed in 1677 '*een Tobias*' by Rembrandt. The same painting was

Fig. 8. Signature (enlarged)

Fig. 9. Back of panel

rather more extensively described in 1700 as '*een historie van Tobias met den Engel door Rembrand van Rhijn*'.[15]

Although Held adduced the (assumed) blindness of Rembrandt's father as an explanation of the artist's preference for this scene,[16] there are less speculative, iconological reasons for the popularity enjoyed by this story particularly in the 17th century. First and foremost, it has to be realized that the apocryphal books, such as Tobit and Judith, were generally counted – even though with reservations in certain quarters – as properly belonging to the Bible. For example, albeit with a warning in advance they were still incorporated in the *Statenbijbel*, the Dutch authorized version, in 1637.[17] Images showing episodes from the book of Tobit were probably not always primarily construed as illustrations of the Bible itself. For the 17th-century viewer they could also have had a mainly metaphorical, moralizing significance. For Rembrandt and his contemporaries the depiction of the aged, once-wealthy Tobit and his spinning wife would have evoked associations of piety, mutual assistance and industry. Where we – and also Giltay – think to see the subject of this work as a specific narrative episode from the story of Tobit (see above), Tümpel pointed out that an engraving from the 1630s, with the same subject as the present painting, bore the following inscription: 'Under a humble roof, the devout Tobit meditates on the destiny, / the pleasures and fleeting joys of man. / Fate brings riches and fate takes them away: to you, O piety, be ever praise and honour.'[18]

This is an engraving by Willem [van] de[r] Leeuw (Antwerp 1603? – *c.* 1665?) (fig. 10) after a painting that must have been very early attributed to Rembrandt (*Corpus* I C 3). Rembrandt is given as the 'inventor' of the image reproduced in the print, and thus as the author of the painting copied in the print. Apart from the question of whether that painting is or is not an authentic Rembrandt,[19] it is also significant in this context that the theme with the waiting and the spinning Anna had attracted the attention of Rembrandt and/or his circle. Held pointed to the striking similarity between the present painting and the emblem no. XLIV in the *Emblemata ofte sinnewerck* by Jan de Brune (Amsterdam 1624, XLIV, p. 318, in which a woman sits on the left spinning while her husband to the right carries on with his work by the fire (fig. 11) under the motto 'Wat rust en gewin geeft luttel onderwin' ('What peace and prosperity come from a modest life'). Iconographically, however, the emblem has no immediate significance for the present painting.[20]

Fig. 10. Etching by W. de Leeuw

However the painting discussed here may have been intended, the image clearly fits into the 17th-century iconographic tradition, in particular within the repertoire of subjects that were (very frequently) treated by Rembrandt and his pupils. Assuming that it originated in the 17th century – of which there can be little doubt – this argues for an origin within Rembrandt's workshop. In addition, the fact that it is a superimposed painting is not insignificant

Fig. 11. J, de Brune, *Emblemata*, Amsterdam 1624, XLIV, p. 318

for placing it in the workshop. To date we know of some 25 such 'double' paintings from Rembrandt's hand.[21] Although the underlying painting in most of these cases shows the style of Rembrandt or his school, there are exceptions. The *Self-portrait* in Karlsruhe (IV 5) is painted over a portrait head that almost certainly originated in another environment. The same is true of one of the *Senses* (the *Sight*) (I B 3; see p. 148), which is painted over a nude figure that is stylistically entirely foreign to Rembrandt's earliest works. The fact that the still-life over which the present image has been painted has nothing whatever to do with Rembrandt and his school does not therefore exclude the possibility that the *Tobit and Anna* could have originated in Rembrandt's workshop. The fact that it is a superimposed painting actually suggests that it did.

Fred G. Meijer of the Netherlands Institute for Art History has given as his opinion that, in as far as a determination is possible on the basis of an X-radiograph, the underlying still-life can be attributed to Osias Beert (1622-1678). The still-life also shows similarities to the works of Georg Flegel (Olmütz 1563 – 1638 Frankfurt) or Gottfried von Wedig (Keulen 1583-1641 Cologne). Regarding the reutilization of the works of other artists, it is quite possible that a painter like Rembrandt could have purchased for his own use stocks of unfinished paintings (on panel) when deceased artists' goods were auctioned off, since these would probably have been cheaper than new panels. If this hypothesis is correct, either Flegel and Von Wedig, who died in 1638 and 1641 respectively, would be the more likely author of the underlying still-life; whereas if Osias Beert was the author, the above explanation for the use of one of his panels would not fit. Beert only died in 1678. In this context, it is interesting that four still-lifes are mentioned in Rembrandt's inventory of 1656 – obviously not by Rembrandt – on which he had evidently painted: 'Een still leggent leven van Rembrant geretukeert' (A still-life retouched by Rembrant) and three times 'Een Vanitas, geretukeert van Rembrant' (A "Vanitas" retouched by Rembrant).[22] To date, not one of these mysterious retouched still-lifes has been recovered. However, these records do seem to document that Rembrandt openly made use of still-lifes by others.

Another feature of the painting which points to an origin of the painting in the immediate vicinity of Rembrandt, is the way light and shade are treated. As discussed in more detail in Chapters I and II of this volume (see pp. 76-78 and 196), the so-called *'kamerlicht'* – room light – played a major role in Samuel van Hoogstraten's chapters on light and shadow in his *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst*. The theory he expounds there on 'kamerlicht' must have been based to a considerable extent on Rembrandt's ideas about painting interiors, ideas that gradually developed in his early period. These ideas concerned the question of how to achieve a well-considered gradation of the light intensity in an interior space that is illuminated by a single window, visible in the painting. This window, as the strongest light, served as the standard for determining the diminishing tonal values within the painting as a whole. Rembrandt's concern with this problem should be seen in the context of his investigations regarding the *'gronden'*, the basic aspects of the art of painting (see Chapter I). As discussed in the section on light and shadow in this Volume, this was one of the 'gronden' which not only fascinated him as a painter but which also must have intrigued art-lovers like Jan Six (see pp. 80 and 237). The length and detail of Samuel van Hoogstraten's treatment of *'kamerlicht'* suggest that this *'grond'* may have been an important part of Rembrandt's teaching as well. In this context, therefore, it is very interesting that in the present work, another, smaller window above the door was painted out (see *Radiography*). This intervention was probably carried out in order to reduce the light source in the interests of a clearer organization of the *'kamerlicht'*. The systematic manner in which the attenuation of the light is graded from the window to the right end of the room is in keeping with Rembrandt's ideas on *'kamerlicht'*, developed in a number of works between 1631 and 1646 and later codified by Van Hoogstraten in a numerical system (see esp. pp. 76/77).

These considerations thus also point toward the origin of the present painting in Rembrandt's workshop. For instance, if one compares the painting with the *Tobit and Anna* by Abraham de Pape (before 1621 – 1666) in the National Gallery, London (fig. 12) one is immediately struck by the sophistication with which the light is treated in Rembrandt's paintings with *'kamerlicht'* and also in the present painting.

Several arguments have already been considered above when discussing whether the painting could have originated in Rembrandt's workshp. These dealt with:

- the special attention paid by Rembrandt and his school to the theme of Tobit – with the added assumption that it was Rembrandt who initiated this remarkably lively concern;
- the striking frequency with which one encounters superimposed paintings by Rembrandt and his school;
- the use of still-lifes painted by others as fortuitous supports for Rembrandt's painterly activities;
- the major concern for the intelligent organization and graduation of light in a room, the so-called *'kamerlicht'* with Rembrandt and his school.

To these, a number of weightier arguments can be added that relate to features specific to Rembrandt. There is the painting's genesis, so typical for Rembrandt, the handling of paint and the role of chance in this, the characteristic attention to details and to the construction of the different objects depicted in relation to the relatively free and varied peinture, significant similarities between this work and (other) works by Rembrandt. In addition, the situating of the work within Rembrandt's oeuvre (and therefore the dating of the painting) will be dealt with.

- Certain features that give insight into the genesis of the painting are highly significant for a possible attribution to Rembrandt. As a rule, Rembrandt worked out his sketch for the image he had in mind, usually executed directly on the support, from back to front. Consequently, during the working out of the more general background, forms situated more in the foreground are reserved in that background. In places where the paint of the background contains radio-absorbent pigments – mostly lead white –

Fig. 12. A. de Pape, *Tobit and Anna*, 1658/59, panel 40.7 x 56 cm. London, The National Gallery

these reserves are visible on the X-radiograph, as long as the relevant forms in the foreground contain little or no lead white (see also *Corpus,* Vol. I, pp. 25-31). With this painting, because of the underlying still-life which largely dominates the X-radiograph, only limited areas of the X-ray image are legible with respect to the image of Tobit and Anna. Nevertheless, the reserve for the head and part of the trunk of Tobit can be seen, showing the approximate and in places cursorily delimited form to be executed subsequently. This rough regard for reserves is so characteristic of Rembrandt. This is also true of other reserves visible in the X-radiograph, such as the spinning wheel, the cross-frame and the birdcage.

• Equally typical of the genesis of Rembrandt's paintings is the nature of the frequent repentirs, i.e. the changes introduced during the course of the work. In this painting too, repentirs are evident that will prove to be typical for Rembrandt. As discussed under *Radiography*, these include the painting out of a window above the door in the corner of the room and correlated changes in the illumination of the wall. Such changes that have to do with the organization of the light in the painting are among Rembrandt's most frequently observed alterations during the work. As a rule, it is a matter of reducing the ratio of light to dark. Undoubtedly, this was to concentrate the light in the lit passages and to manipulate the attention of the beholder by reducing the number of 'focal points of attention' on first glance. An early example of this type of intervention can be seen in the *Simeon in the Temple* in the Mauritshuis (I A 34) from 1631, and a late example in the London *Self-portrait* from 1669 (IV 27).

Turning to elements in this painting that are comparable to like elements in works that are unquestionably attributable to Rembrandt:

• the depiction of Tobit in the etching B. 42 from 1651 (p. 233) which shows Tobit going to the door to welcome the return of Tobias and Raphael. Tobit is wearing the same cap and his 'hollow' eye, indicating his blindness, is shown in a similar manner;

Fig. 13. Rembrandt, *Peter and John healing the cripple at the gate of the Temple*, 1659, etching 18 x 21.5 cm (B. 94^{II})

Fig. 14. Detail of fig. 7

Fig. 15. Rembrandt, *Christ and the woman taken in adultery, c.* 1659-60, pen and different shades of brown ink (colours added by a leter hand), 17 x 20.2 cm (detail). Munich, Graphische Sammlung (Ben. 1047)

• the foliage above the portal seen through the window is rendered in a manner closely related to the way the trees are painted in *Abraham serving the angels* from 1646 (V 9);

• the remarkably precise way in which the lead-paned window is executed shows striking resemblance to the windows in *The labourers in the vineyard* from 1637 (St Petersburg) (disattributed in *Corpus* Vol. III and since re-attributed to Rembrandt[23], see pp. 206-07 in this Volume) and the *Tobit and Anna with the kid* in Berlin (V 7).

There are also features of a more general nature that are typical of Rembrandt.

• For all the freedom with which the countless details in the image are depicted – the finely worked out details of the window, the door with its fittings, the chairs, Tobit's and Anna's clothes, the view through the window, the shelf on which the birdcage stands, suspended in place by a cord, the fire in the hearth with its grate – their execution is never finicky. There is, however, a great imaginative force behind these details which is typical of Rembrandt's work.

• Also typical of the (later) Rembrandt is the way in which he allows chance to play a role in the application of the paint. Tobit's head has already been mentioned in this connection, but it is perhaps even more striking in the way the wall and the chimney breast are painted, as well as the fire in the hearth. There is considerable variation in the substance of the paint, but this will only become really clear once the varnish is removed.

• The malleability of particularly the paint containing lead white is typical for Rembrandt. This can best be seen in the X-radiograph in passages such as Anna's headscarf, the patch of light on her lap, the light passages in the upper reaches of the wall – which were painted out at a later stage. In all these places, one sees on the X-radiograph that because of the influence of uneven pressure of the brush hairs the paint is of conspicuously uneven thickness in a manner typical for Rembrandt: it not only says something about the consistency of the paint used but also about the nature of the brushes used and the temperament of the painter. A comparison with the lead-white-containing passages in the X-ray image of the underlying painting immediately demonstrates what is meant here.

In the chair and in Tobit's lower body, the infrared reflectographic image reveals a constellation of lines, sketched with a brush. These lines apparently are part of a first design introduced on top of the underlying still life. These lines are not only executed in the most fleeting, almost whisked manner, in places they abruptly change in thickness. One finds a similar manner of drawing in a drawing securely attributed to Rembrandt (Ben. 1047) from 1659, the year in which the present painting originated (compare figs. 14 and 15; for the whole drawing see p. 96 fig. 110).

All this taken together leaves scarcely any room for doubt in the mind of the author of this entry (E.v.d.W.) that we are dealing with an autograph work by Rembrandt.

Most telling is the comparison with the only other small-scale history originating from the same year of 1659, the ambitious etching *Peter and John healing the cripple at the gate of the temple* (fig. 13; see also p. 254). The specific feeling for detail in general, evident in both the depiction of the figures and their contextual surroundings is strikingly similar. The way in which perspective is employed in these two works is also very similar, as is the introduction of a step in the floor immediately in the foreground. Comparing the cripple beggar in the foreground of the etching with Anna in the present painting, one is struck by the similarities in posture and the attention to the draped garment on the backs of both figures. The careful definition of Tobit's cloak also betrays the same attitude to the modelling of costumes as the main figures in the etching. The way costumes are rendered in this etching differs significantly from the treatment of costumes in the etched histories in the 1650s, where the clothes of protagonists are executed much more sketchily. Both in the etching and in the present painting, Rembrandt seems to return to a concentration on detail that still characterized his work up to the late 1640's.

3. Documents and Sources

None.

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance

– Possibly sale Pieter van Buytene, Delft, 29 October 1748 (Lugt 691), no.102: 'De blinde Tobias met zyn Vrouw, door Rembrand' (fl.28.0) (cf. Hoet II, p. 231, no. 91). This reference already mentioned in Vol. I under A 3.
– Sale David Fiers Kappeyne, Amsterdam, 25 April 1775 (Lugt 2401), no. 81: 'Rembrand van Ryn. Een Binnenvertrek; op Paneel, h.16 b.21 duim. (De Schilderyen zyn alle gemeeten binnen de Lysten, met de Amsterdamsche Voetmaat van 11 Duimen.) [= 41.1 x 53.9 cm] In het zelve zit een oud Mannetje by het Vuur, over het welke een Ketel hangt; verders ziet men een Vrouwtje, zittende by een Venster te spinnen. Dit is ongemeen fraay en in alle deelen zeer natuurlyk behandeld.' (200 gulden aan Yver)
– Perhaps sale Robert de Saint-Victor, Paris, 26 November 1822 – 7 January ff. 1823, no. 68 (Lugt 10344): 'Par le même [Rembrandt (Van Ryn)]. Un Intérieur de maison, qui n'offre que la simplicité de la nature. On y découvre, à gauche, un vieillard en vêtement d'hiver, assis sur un fauteuil, au coin de son feu, les mains croisées, et la tête appuyée sur le manteau de sa cheminée; à gauche, à quelque distance, sa femme ou sa domestique, file au rouet. Au bas des croisées, à l'extérieur, on voit une servante; plus loin, l'on aperçoit une fabrique frappée d'un coup de soleil, dont les rayons pénètrent à travers les fenêtres, et éclairent l'intérieur de la scène, mais avec une telle sagesse et un tel ménagement que cette lumière ne préjudicie en rien à l'effet général du clair obscur, ni à la tranquillité ni à l'harmonie mystérieuse du sujet. B. l.[argeur]15 p.[ouce] h.[auteur] 12 p. [= 40.5 x 32.5 cm] (1800 francs)'.
– Perhaps sale Chevalier Erard, Paris, 23 April 1832, to Chaplin.
– Collection Sir Frederick Cook in Richmond, by inheritance Sir Herbert Cook.
– Art dealer D. Katz, Dieren; bought by Van der Vorm on July 8, 1940 (fl. 125.000).

NOTES

1. Julius S. Held, *Rembrandt and the book of Tobit*, The Gehenna Press, Northampton (Mass.) 1964, figs. 4, 7, 9, 23, 24; Bredius [??]
2. Held, op.cit.[1], p. 14.
3. HdG 65; Br. 520; Bauch 30; Gerson 348; Tümpel 28*.
4. J. Giltay, *De verzameling van de Stichting Willem van der Vorm in het Museum Boymans-van Beuningen*, Rotterdam, 2. pl. 1994, cat. no. 30.
5. W. Froentjes, H.J.J. Hardy, R. ter Kuile-Haller, 'Een schriftkundig onderzoek van Rembrandt signaturen', *O.H.* 105 (1991), pp. 185-204.
6. Tümpel, op. cit.[3].
7. Giltay, op.cit.[4].
8. Sumowski *Gemälde* II, no. 553.
9. J. Giltay, op.cit.[4], p. 140, note 1: 'Rembrandt van Ryn. 7. Een Binnehuys, daar een Oudman is zittende by het Vuur, het welk Natuurlyk legt te branden en waarover een Ketel hangt, verder een Oud Vrouwtje zittende te Spinnen by een open Venster waar door men eenige Huysen ziet, alles kragtig, natuurlyk en fraay op Paneel Geschildert, hoog 16½ (sic) duym breed 21 duym.' [= 42.4 x 53.97 cm]
10. J. Bruyn, 'Een onderzoek naar 17de-eeuwse schilderijformaten, voornamelijk in Noord-Nederland', *O.H.* 93 (1979), pp. 96-113, esp. 107; a stooter was a silver coin worth 2… stuivers.
11. Held, op. cit.[1].
12. Held, op. cit.[1], note 1, p. 29: 'Of the drawings omitted, some, though genuine, seemed of minor importance (Otto Benesch, *The Drawings of Rembrandt, London*, 1954-7) 131, 546, 608, 638, 881 (only in part by Rembrandt), 981, A101a]. Others are either copies of lost originals or of doubtful genuineness, or both [B. 130, 492, 497, 559, 573, 582, 639, C6, C 24, C44, C61, C74, A26] (Wilhelm R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt, Des Meisters Handzeichnungen*, Berlin-Leipzig, I, n.d.), 217, 220, 230, 237, 241, 249, 250; (H.M. Rotermund, *Das Buch Tobias*, Stuttgart [1960], 14, 18).
13. It was valued at 90 guilders by the painters Adriaen van Ostade and Willem Romeyn, GA Haarlem, not. P. Baes, NA 461, fol. 163-179v, dd. 18 December 1674-28 April 1675; Br. *Künstler-Inventare*, p. 1586.
14. Br. *Künstler-Inventare*, p. 1999.
15. Resp. Th. Wortel, 'Lambert Doomer te Alkmaar', *O.H.* 46 (1929), pp. 171-187 and GA Amsterdam, not. N. Brouwer, NA 3975, akte 52, fol. 234-239, dd. 15 July 1700 (Br. *Künstler-Inventare* I, p. 76).
16. Held, op. cit.[1], pp. 24-28; see also exhib. cat. *Rembrandts moeder. Mythe en werkelijkheid*, Leiden 2005/06, pp. 190-91.
17. 'Waerschouwinge aen de lesers vande Apocryphe Boecken', *Statenbijbel*, 1637.
18. See *Corpus* I C 3, fig. 4. [C.G. Plempius: Paupere sub tecto Tobias perpendit manes [inanes] / Delicias hominum, et gaudia fluxa pius / Sorteque divitiae veniunt, et sorte recedunt: O pietas, laus est semper, honorque tibi.] and *Corpus* I, Chapter III, p. 48 and fig. 26.
19. *Corpus* I C 3 as Dou; Chr. Brown in *The Dutch School, National Gallery Catalogues*, London 1991, Vol. I, pp. 109-112, esp. 110, as Dou.
20. J.S. Held, *Rembrandt's 'Aristotle' and other Rembrandt studies*, Princeton 1969, p. 112 and note 12.
21. *Corpus* I A 8, 9, 18, 20, 29, 38, B 3, 4, C 5, 11, 22, 27, 38; II A 58; III A 133, B 10, C 96; IV 1, 5, 9, 10 (version 2), 11, 12, *Addendum* 3; V 22 and *Handjeklap/La main chaude* in Dublin and *Rembrandt laughing*, London, Hazlitt Gooden & Fox.
22. Strauss *Doc.* 1656/12, nos. 25, 27, 120 and 123.
23. See A. von Ulmann, 'Rembrandt gepaust "Das Gleichnis der Arbeiter im Weinberg" in der St. Petersburger Ermitage und eine weitere neu entdeckte Version mit einer Nachschrift von Ernst van de Wetering', in *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums* 2007, pp. 85-102, esp. 99-102.

V 29 Rembrandt – Esther and Ahasuerus [1660?]

MOSCOW, PUSHKIN MUSEUM, NO. 297

HDG 46; BR. 530; BAUCH 37; GERSON 351; TÜMPEL 30*

1. Introduction and description

The Moscow *Esther and Ahasuerus* is one of the few paintings by Rembrandt whose provenance can be traced back to a time shortly after its completion. In 1662 a poem appeared in a collection of verse by Jan Vos on a painting of 'Haman bij Hester en Assueer te gast door Rembrandt geschildert' in the collection of Jan Jacobsz. Hinloopen. Although there is now little doubt that this is the first known report of the Moscow *Esther and Ahasuerus*, there are nevertheless differences between the painting and the description in the poem that inevitably raise other questions. In the following commentary these differences will be scrutinized more closely with an eye to the question of whether we are in fact here dealing with a reliably documented autograph painting by Rembrandt.

Additional questions are raised by the condition of the painting. We know that the painting has had an eventful material history. In the manuscript catalogue of the Hermitage in St Petersburg compiled between 1773 and 1783 it is recorded that the painting was in a bad state of preservation (see *6. Provenance*). Moreover, the painting has undergone several radical interventions since 1819, when the first transfer was carried out.[1] The question of the extent to which the painting's present appearance may have been affected by these interventions is one which will be returned to below. Only when these questions concerning its condition and its attribution have been clarified can we turn to the further question of the painting's significance for our knowledge of Rembrandt's way of working and style around 1660.

The image is based on the text of Esther 7:1-10, where the story is related of how Esther, at a meal together with her husband, King Ahasuerus, revealed to him Haman's plans to slaughter her people, the Jews. This revelation aroused the wrath of Ahasuerus and led to the fall of Haman and to his death by hanging.

In the painting, the richly dressed Esther, seen in profile on the right, sits at a table on a seat covered with cushions. She wears a red dress of gleaming material with wide puffed, half-length sleeves from which protrude long yellowish sleeves. A yellow brocaded cloak hangs from her shoulders and collects in thick folds behind her. A golden headdress with pearls and feathers adorns her head. Her rich finery further consists of earrings, chains and armbands set with pearls. She holds in her outstretched hands what appears to be a fine white cloth or handkerchief – or possibly a piece of paper – above a large dish. Ahasuerus sits close beside her behind the table. He is dressed in a yellow cloak with a broad ermine collar. He wears a large turban decorated with gold chains and a small crown. In his right hand he holds a golden sceptre just above the dish. His gaze is fixed on Haman, who sits opposite Esther across the table, his hand clasping a tazza which rests on the table. Haman is dressed in red, with a turban, and a shirt with long sleeves and a dark red cloak which hangs from his shoulders. In front of the table is a low, smaller table bearing an amphora-like jug with thin neck and two ears. The light falls on Esther and Ahasuerus from above left; Haman sits somewhat in the shadows. The figures are seated before a dark background in which, between Haman and Ahasuerus, a curtain can just be made out.

Working conditions

Studied 4-9-1969 (J.B., S.H.L.) Examined again in April 1988 (E.v.d.W.) and in February 1998 (M.F., E.v.d.W.): with good light in its frame behind glass.

Support

Originally canvas, transferred to a new canvas 71.7 x 93.2 cm. The painting underwent its first transfer in 1819. Because of the poor attachment with the lining canvas, new restorations were required in 1829 and on various subsequent occasions. During the most recent intervention, in 1973-1974, the painting was again transferred to a new support (figs. 4 and 5).[2]

Ground

A light brown layer, which is possibly the ground, shows through in the background, above right and below Esther's train. During the 1819 transfer, a layer containing lead white was introduced between the original ground and the new canvas.

Paint layer

Condition: It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the painting's present image may differ from the original as a result of its turbulent material history. The painting must have suffered badly before and during the interventions referred to under support, which must have been carried out because of the poor adhesion of the paint (see fig. 3). The paint layer in places shows marked flaking.

Certainly, wear, retouches and overpaintings appear to have significantly affected the painting's appearance. Yet enough of the original paint seems to have been preserved, particularly in the impasto passages, to provide a basis for judgement of the work's authenticity.

In the more thinly painted areas it was extremely difficult to determine where paint losses and possibly associated retouches and overpaintings begin and end. Not only were the circumstances under which it was possible to study the painting relatively unfavourable (in the frame, behind glass); the paint itself is covered by a thick but uneven layer of varnish. Moreover, in this case we had to do without an X-radiograph because radioabsorbent material has been used in the transfer(s). The sole technical assistance by which a small part of the overpaintings can be identified is a partial infrared photograph that is in fact only known to us from a reproduction (see fig. 2). The reading of this IR-image is complicated by the fact that the darkly registering traces of what seems to be the underpainting (for instance, the contours of Ahasuerus' turban, drawn freely with broad brushstrokes and similar lines in his costume) interfere with retouches and overpaintings that also show up dark because carbon-containing pigments must have been included in the paint mixture used for these interventions (for example, in the face and on the left shoulder of Ahasuerus or in the background).

Fig. 1. Canvas 71.7 x 93.2 cm

In some cases overpaintings could be distinguished on the paint surface by the way in which they interfered with the limits of wear in the original paint or of a pentimento (which will be discussed below). A clear area of damage can be seen in the background to the left of – and next to the highlight in – Ahasuerus yellow turban. There has been paint loss here (see fig. 2). The resulting lacuna having been subsequently filled with a white filler, shows up light in the IR photograph. The wear of the paint surface can be deduced from, for example, the shadows of the fruit in the large dish. It is also striking that these fruits, specifically on the left, seem to have been 'reserved' in the dark paint of an extensive overpainting, with which the contours of the dish are also defined both to the right and more especially the left. To the left this dark paint also continues over the sleeve of Ahasuerus, stopping abruptly on the left under his right hand.

In other parts of the painting too, mainly dark paint has been later added either to bring out the forms or to clarify passages that have become unclear. Thus, the brown-black lines in Esther's bodice appear to be later additions. Pastose, light highlights protrude through this dark paint to the surface. The impression that these dark lines are later additions is enhanced by the fact that they do not follow the shape of the underlying red and pastose light brushstrokes. A possible explanation for this addition of dark lines could be that they were intended to re-define the form of the bodice. Perhaps this was seen as necessary, because immediately behind Esther's bodice in what is now the reddish cloak of Ahasuerus, can be seen light yel-

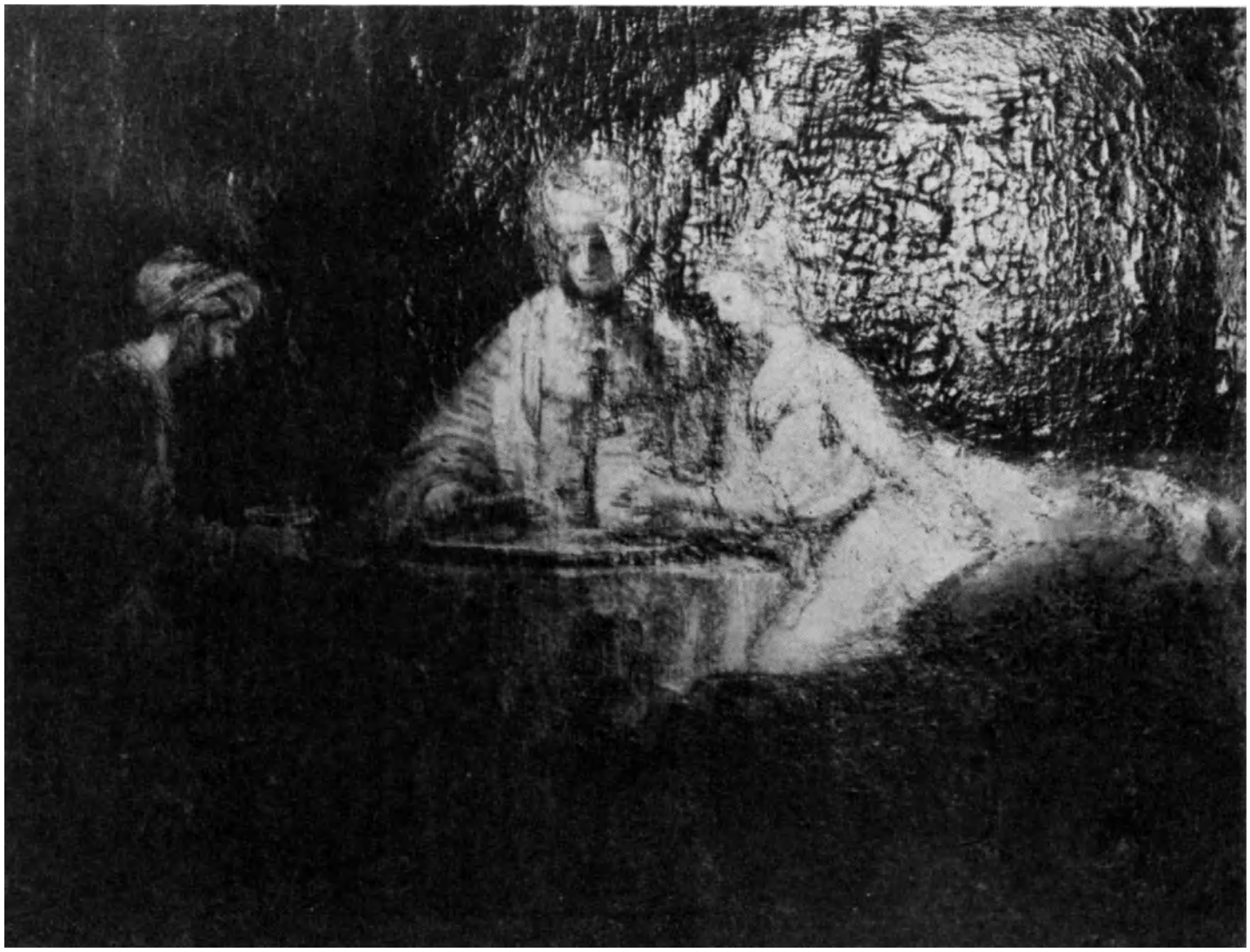
Fig. 2. Infrared photograph, detail of fig. 1

low, pastose streaks of paint, possibly worn through, that are partly covered by brown paint.

It is certainly conceivable that this is a worn-through pentimento, which could relate to an earlier design in which Esther holds a handkerchief to her face with her right hand. A drawing in Rembrandt's style with Esther and Ahasuerus in the Fondation Custodia in Paris adds weight to this suspicion of a pentimento (see fig. 6). The dark paint placed in the background along the contour of Esther's face could be similarly explained. A pentimento here could also explain a dark stroke beneath her chin as a later addition. The fact that dark paint covers light paint both in the garment worn by Ahasuerus and along the contour of Esther's face is also clearly visible in the infrared photograph (see fig. 2).

The image of Ahasuerus also appears to be significantly distorted by wear and, later, by paint introduced because of that wear (see fig. 2). However, as noted above, the constellation of thick dark lines that show up black in the infrared photograph should probably not be interpreted as later interventions, but rather as free sketch lines that indicated the turban at an early stage of the painting's genesis. Another of the many uncertainties in trying to read the painting as intended by its author, despite its present condition, is the course of the sleeve in Esther's right forearm, which now seems to be determined by overpaintings. As a result, it is difficult to ascertain just how this forearm articulates with the upper arm. The paint of the white 'handkerchief' in her hands seems to be very worn; the thumb and forefinger of the left hand are

Fig. 3. The painting in reflected light



difficult to distinguish from horizontal strokes in the yellow garment worn by Ahasuerus beneath his cloak. Was the paint surface of this hand also worn and then worked up? Does the bold stroke showing through above the thumb belong to the 'handkerchief' held by Esther, or is it part of Ahasuerus' garment?

The hand of Haman holding the tazza also appears to be very worn. The cushions Esther is sitting on appear to show blanching or some such phenomenon. Much of the dark, blackish paint in the foreground is suspect, in particular along the contour of the draped train of the cloak behind Esther and on the left in the tablecloth by Haman. To what extent is the foreground worn? The jug seems to partially dissolve into the tablecloth: is this a result of wear and has the jug for this reason been subsequently worked up by a later hand with dark lines here and there?

In the dark part of the background, reddish brown paint shows through in numerous places. In the partial infrared photograph (see fig. 2) the background around Ahasuerus and Esther shows irregular spots and craquelures here and there. Has the background been largely touched up at a later date? Could it be the case that it was originally (far) more differentiated with architectonic and other elements referring to the furnishing of the room? The infrared photograph seems to suggest as much.

For a characterization of the *peinture* and the pictorial aspects aimed at, see *2. Comments*.

Radiography

During the 1819 transfer, an adhesive was used that contains lead white, which so totally dominates the X-radiograph as to render it unusable. For an interpretation of the infrared photograph (fig. 2) see *Paint layer, Condition*.

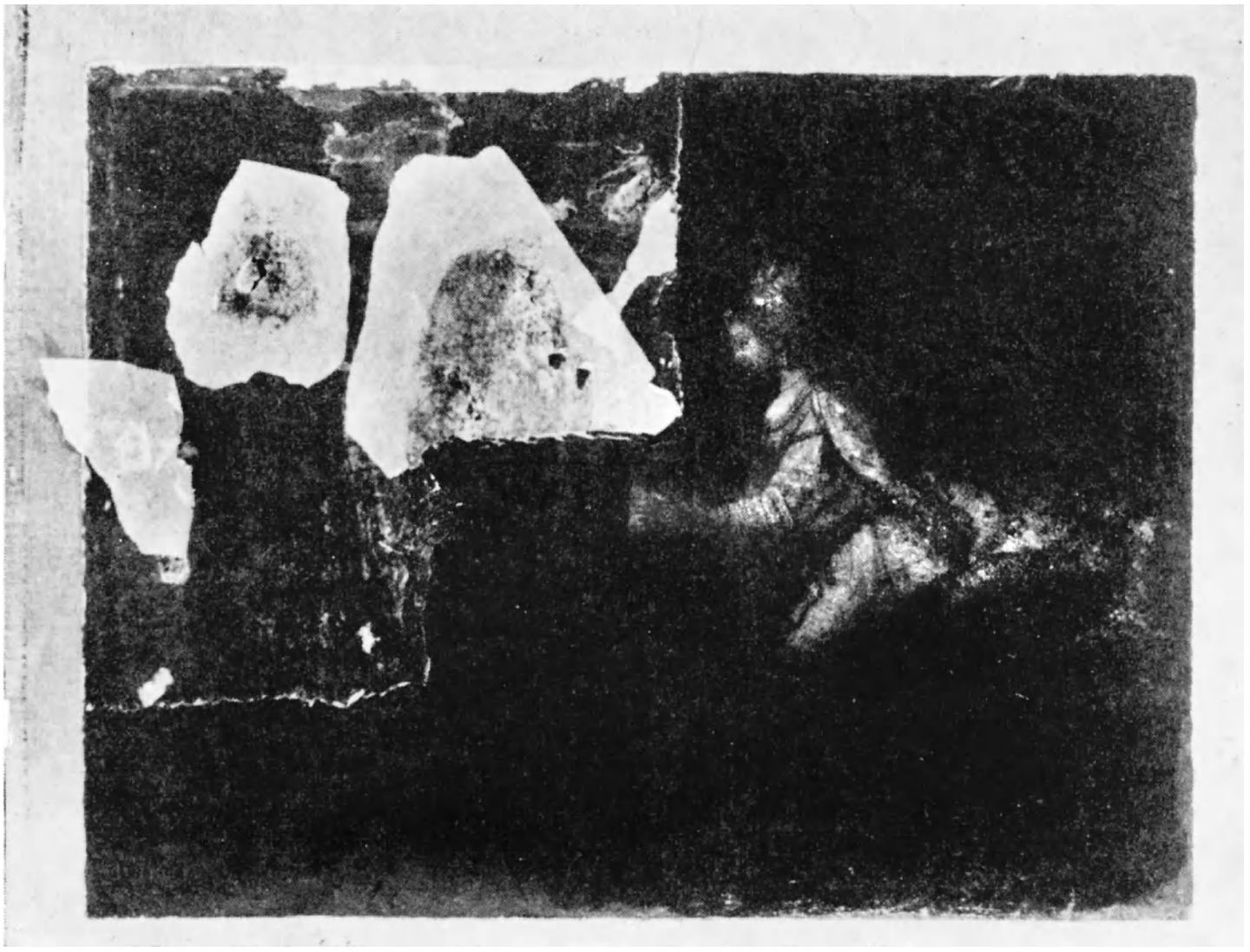
Signature

Below left in dark brown <*Rembrandt f.1660*>; difficult to see, the last letters decreasingly legible; the extension below of the *f* is destroyed. It appears that the letters and digits have been partly enhanced. The paint with which the *0* is written appears to run over craquelure, so that one has to place a question mark against the painting's current dating to 1660.

2. Comments

In 1662 the collected poems of Jan Vos (1610-1667) were published in Amsterdam. This volume contained eight *beeldgedichten* – poems describing paintings (ekphrasis) –

Fig. 4. Photograph taken during transfer of the painting to a new support in 1973-1974.



from the collection of Jan Jacobsz. Hinloopen (1626-1666), Alderman of Amsterdam.[3] The first that is devoted to a painting from this collection is titled: 'Haman by Hester en Assueer te gast & door Rembrandt geschildert.' (Haman visiting Hester and Assuer painted by Rembrandt (see *3. Documents and sources*). With reference to this poem by Vos, Hofstede de Groot observed that of all the works by Rembrandt that have been preserved, the Moscow painting was the only one to which the poem could refer.[4] He did, however, add that in 1657 another painting, no longer known, with 'een Hester ende Assuerus van Rembrant van Rhijn' was entered as no. 306 in the inventory of the estate of Johannes de Renialme.[5] Strong support for Hofstede de Groot's suggested identification of the work in the Hinloopen collection, whose praises were sung by Vos, with the Moscow painting comes from the catalogue of a sale held in 1760. There, the Moscow painting was entered with the statement that it came 'from the Kabinet of the Heer' Geelvink'. Sara (1660-1749), daughter of Jan Jacobsz. Hinloopen and a childless widow, had made the relatives of her first husband (Nicolaas Geelvinck, lord of Castricum, (1706-1764) and his sisters) the sole beneficiaries of her will. It is therefore highly plausible, as Dudok van Heel proposed,[6] that the painting from the collection of Jan Jacobsz. Hinloopen descended to the family Geelvinck via his daughter, Sara. Thanks to this reconstruction, we can be fairly certain that we are dealing with one of those rare cases where the provenance of a painting by Rembrandt can be traced to its first owner, very shortly after the painting had been acquired.

Despite this, the relation between the Moscow *Esther and Ahasuerus* and the painting eulogized by Jan Vos in his poem still raises questions. It has already been frequently observed that there is no sign at all in the Moscow painting of the powerful feelings described by Jan Vos – such as Haman, for example, as 'full of remorse and distress' and Ahasuerus 'filled with rage and revenge'. Of course, it should be acknowledged here that parts of the painting that are most important for the protagonists' expressions, such as the head of Ahasuerus, have been badly damaged and reworked.

Nonetheless, Gerson assumed that the poem by Jan Vos referred to the Moscow painting, and with regard to the differences between painting and poem he opined that the poem demonstrates how 'Rembrandt's contemporaries were much more sensitive than we are to the suppressed emotions of characters in history paintings.'[7] On the contrary, Van de Waal concluded from the differences in

Fig. 5. Photograph of the back of the paintings during transfer.

expression that the painting discussed by Jan Vos with Esther's meal could not refer to the Moscow painting[8], and instead suggested that an *Esther and Ahasuerus* in Cologne that is currently attributed to Jan Victors could be a copy of a lost painting by Rembrandt.[9] The Cologne painting does indeed match the expressiveness of the gestures of the figures in the description of Jan Vos. But then in other 17th-century depictions of *Esther and Ahasuerus*, both in the Rembrandt school and elsewhere, the drama of the scene was generally emphasized by means of powerful gestures.[10]

Despite their very different conclusions, both Gerson and Van de Waal assumed that it was the poet's intention in his poem to represent faithfully what is to be seen in Rembrandt's painting. In the genre of the 17th-century *beeldgedicht*, however, the demand was not so much for an accurate description of the image concerned as for a lively treatment of the history depicted in the painting.[11] As far as can be seen, Vos should be seen in the light of this tradition of the *beeldgedicht*, and this also applies to the anomalies that his *beeldgedichten* show with regard to the paintings he deals with. Specifically, these anomalies make it clear that Vos is primarily relating the history that is depicted in the painting and in doing so is deliberately enhancing its dramatic effect.[12] Thus, when confronted with the difference between the painting and the poem with regard to the strength of affects on display, this need not present any impediment to the identification of the Moscow *Esther and Ahasuerus* with the painting in the collection of Jan Jacobsz. Hinloopen eulogized by Vos.

Despite the high probability that the painting referred to by Vos in the 17th century as a work by Rembrandt was indeed the Moscow painting, a certain reservation has been voiced in the recent art historical literature about accepting the painting as a work by the master. It seems that it is not only the painting's condition (see *Paint layer* Condition, see fig. 3) that plays a role here; doubts over its authenticity have also been occasioned by its relation to a particular sheet of drawings (see fig. 6)[13]. Apart from the head and profile of a man wearing a turban (possibly Ahasuerus), this sheet shows a woman seated at a table who, in her dress, hairstyle and the cushions she is sitting on, bears a striking likeness to the Esther in the Moscow painting. Even the poses of the two women correspond in many points, although in the painting she bows her head and holds out both arms in front of her, whereas in the drawing she holds what appears to be a handkerchief to her face with her right hand. On the basis of the similarities the drawing has been associated with the genesis of the Moscow painting, although diverse positions have been taken on the attribution and the dating of the drawing.

The drawing has been thought to be a first design by Rembrandt from *c.* 1650, for a painted composition which was to achieve its definitive form ten years later in the Moscow painting.[14] Like most authors, however, Schatborn considered the drawing to be not a work by Rembrandt but by an imitator working in a style of draughtsmanship comparable to Rembrandt's style in the early sixties. Moreover, Schatborn pointed out, non-acceptance of the drawing as a work by Rembrandt puts in question the authenticity of the Moscow painting.[15] Tümpel also adduced the Paris drawing when setting out his reservations over the attribution of the Moscow painting to Rembrandt. If it were the case that the drawing is a preliminary study for the Moscow *Esther and Ahasuerus*, in Tümpels view, this would cast serious doubt on the attribution of the painting to Rembrandt. The drawing does indeed seem to be connected to the process of the genesis of the Moscow painting. As remarked under *Paint layer* Condition, a pentimento seems to have become visible as a result of wear, from which it is evident that the woman originally held a handkerchief to her face with her right hand. It is not however a necessary inference from this that the drawing is a preliminary study for the painting. We know a number of drawings by pupils that were probably made in the workshop, where the motifs and even entire compositions were more or less faithfully taken over from paintings in which Rembrandt himself then made alterations at a later stage. We encounter the motif of the handkerchief held to the face in another drawing with *Esther and Ahasuerus* in Berlin, which was also earlier attributed to Rembrandt but now to Arent de Gelder and dated to the early 1660's, when De Gelder was active in Rembrandt's workshop (fig. 7).[16] It is striking that various different motifs from this drawing, including a handkerchief in Esther's hand, recur in a signed painting by De Gelder in Amiens with *Esther and Ahasuerus* from the early 1680's (fig. 8).[17]

In addition to the drawing in the Fondation Custodia,

Fig. 6. Rembrandt or school, *Esther and Ahasuerus*, pen and brown ink, 17 x 23.7 cm. Paris, Fondation Custodia

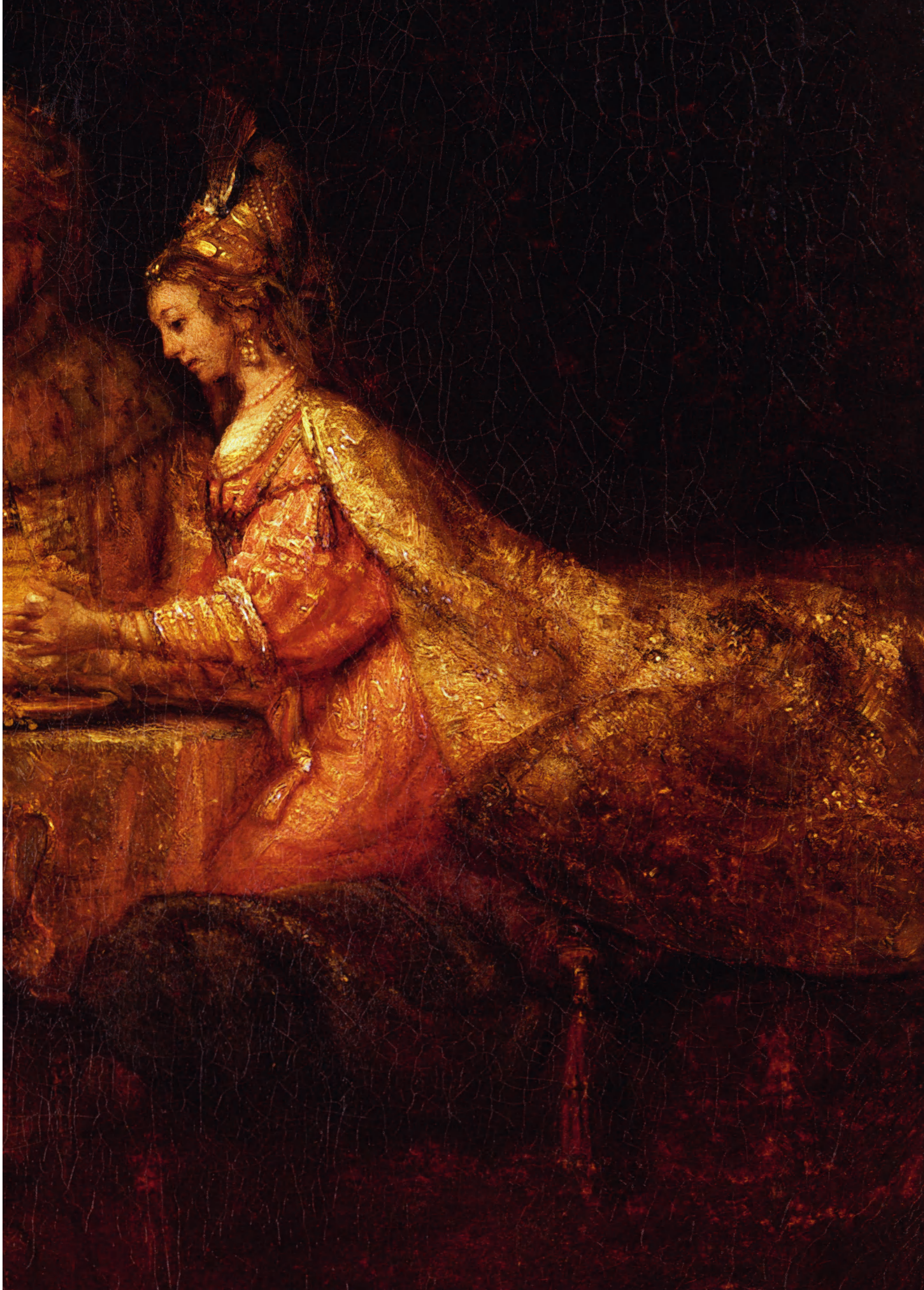
there is yet another work that was in the past claimed to be a preliminary study for the Moscow painting. The possibility was proposed by Valentiner that a small panel with a tronie of an oriental man with a turban in Copenhagen could be a study from Rembrandt's hand for the figure of Ahasuerus (Br. 301; fig. 10).[18] Admittedly, the painting is in

Fig. 7. Attn. to A. de Gelder, *Esther and Ahasuerus*, pen and brown ink with brown and grey washes, 16 x 22.2 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett

a poor state of preservation. For some time now it has no longer been accepted as work by Rembrandt,[19] but is rather considered to be a free partial copy after the figure of Ahasuerus. In this context, the differences with regard to costuming between the small Copenhagen painting and the figure of Ahasuerus are explicable: in other partial copies too one often observes that it is precisely the costuming that differs from the Rembrandt prototype. Like the Paris drawing (if that is not in fact by Rembrandt) and the works just mentioned by Arent de Gelder, the small

Fig. 8. A. de Gelder, *Esther's feast*, canvas 104 x 163 cm. Amiens, Musée de la Picardie

Fig. 9. Detail of fig. 1 ▶



painting in Copenhagen would seem to confirm that the Moscow *Esther and Ahasuerus*, as a work by Rembrandt, played a significant role in his workshop, serving as a model for variation and emulation.

As argued above, in the past both the *beeldgedicht* by Vos and the Paris drawing have been unjustly adduced as reasons for doubting the authenticity of Rembrandt's *Esther and Ahasuerus*. The stylistic characteristics described under *Paint layer* and the painting's pictorial qualities, as far as these can be reliably judged given the poor state of preservation, would seem to remove all doubt. Admittedly, as a type the painting stands alone in the period round 1660. As far as we know, the last previous small-figured history piece with relatively large figures is the *Joseph and Potiphar's wife* in Berlin (V 22).

Of those paintings after 1660 that could provide us with a point of reference to situate the present painting within Rembrandt's late oeuvre, the Amsterdam *Jewish Bride* (Br. 416) is the first to be considered. This undated painting is usually placed around the mid-sixties, with an origin in the first half of the sixties as a possibility.

An analysis of the pictorial aspects of the present painting demonstrates a rich texture of the paint surface grown from the bottom up, as it were, and highly comparable to that in the *Jewish Bride*, taking into account the differences in the scale of the figures. The growth of this paint skin seems to have been determined by chance – that is, chance which is controlled and in a manner specific to Rembrandt, always differently graduated according to his illusionistic and other pictorial aims (fig. 9).

The richest variation in pictorial means is shown in the figure of Esther, placed in a strong light, particularly her costume. In the execution of her figure, use has been made of a marked variation and manipulation of the paint substance, employing a strong impasto with an eye to the reflection of the natural light on the lumpy paint surface. This is conspicuous in the sleeve of Esther's undergarment, where the yellow paint is modelled in a manner that points ahead to the handling of paint in the sleeve of the man in the *Jewish Bride*. The impasto is applied more moderately in the red dress, where it plays a role in the suggestion of the shine on the folds of the material. In Esther's cloak the impasto has been applied in threads drippings, and in coarse, grainy zones such that, aided by a varied paint relief, it suggests the richness of the material and the increase in the light intensity toward the shoulder. A similar thread-like and clotted impasto has been applied in Esther's skirt. Both in the red sleeve and in the skirt, the impression is given that the impasto was built up with yellowish-white paint in order then to cover it with red glazes. (This is comparable to the method used in the lit corner of the table cloth in *The Syndics*, Br. 415.) The blouse and the necklaces are summarily indicated with rhythmically placed brushstrokes and touches. The same is true for the earrings which, as so often with Rembrandt, do not hang vertically but seem to be swinging in motion and seem to play a role in suggesting movement of the whole figure.

In the painting of the complex headdress, long and broad strokes of relatively thin paint contribute to the suggestion of the form and structure of the material, rather like a veil, that hangs in folds from the back of the headdress. The tempo and rhythm with which these strokes were applied is reminiscent of the way the headdress of Asnath is painted in *Jacob's blessing* in Kassel from 1656. Where the feather is attached, the reflections on the shafts and the strings of pearls and other jewellery worked into the headdress are indicated by rhythmically placed clots of paint. This mix of very freely executed effects of surface structure, which nevertheless suggests great precision, achieved by means of light-reflecting unevenesses in the paint surface, evinces that rhythmicity and suggestivity which is so characteristic of Rembrandt during the fifties and sixties. The same is true of the way the light is treated and the role the reflections play – as, for example, between Esther's lap and the tablecloth. Here, in the space in between, a powerful red glow is created whose effect is amplified by the fact that the red light radiates further into the room, illuminating folds on the front of the tablecloth and causing the large jug in front of the table take on a red glow.

One also notes the way this extraordinarily free handling of paint is allied to great precision as in, for example, Esther's hand, and the subtlety of the gesture suggested by the different ways the fingers are lit. This too is highly typical of Rembrandt. On the one hand there is the richly varied *peinture* in the evocation of the forms, and the precision with which this sometimes occurs e.g. in the sceptre of Ahasuerus; and on the other hand the magic of chance: the combination is so characteristic that there can really be no doubting Rembrandt's authorship of this painting.

The two men in the scene are executed in a more restrained manner (fig. 9). Because they are predominantly painted with much thinner paint than the Esther, the indistinctness of the condition necesarily affects judgment of the *peinture* and the pictorial quality in these parts to a much greater extent. Parts of the figure of Ahasuerus, such as his crown and sceptre, display similar characteristics to those described in the Esther; while for the rest, in its execution the costume of this figure is subordinated to that of Esther, which plays the main role in the hierarchy of illumination. The drape in Ahasuerus' robe is summarily suggested with, in places, predominantly straight, grazing streaks of lighter paint over dark underlayers. The execution of the Haman is even more restrained (fig. 9). As far as the condition allows for assessment, dark licks with locally introduced highlights to play the chief role in the suggestion of form, manner and drape of Haman's dress.

The control over the variation of the artistic means employed in the hierarchy of lighting in the painting is just as typical of Rembrandt as the way in which, in the male figures, the precision of form and attitude of the figures are suggested with minimal means. This is also true of such props as the large metal dish with its grazing touches on the rim turned toward the beholder. The muted tonality of the dish and this handling of the paint, together with the subtly introduced reflections, ensure a convincing spatial image of this object. The *peinture* corre-

Fig. 10 Rembrandt school, *Tronie of an oriental*, panel 26 x 22 cm. Copenhagen, Statens Museum (Br. 301)

lates with the perspectival information provided by the painter with the extremely protracted elliptical shape presented by the dish. Modest gleams and reflections on such objects as the bowl held by Haman and on the jug in the foreground ensure that such elements of the image are integrated, in a manner typical of Rembrandt, within the play of light and shadow in the painting as a whole.

In connection with the progressive reduction of the illumination of the three figures in the Moscow *Esther and Ahasuerus*, Schwartz[20] has pointed out an interesting passage in De Lairesse's *Schilderboek*. In a chapter that deals with the choice of lighting in relation to the nature of the narrative episode to be depicted, De Lairesse actually discusses the theme of *Esther and Ahasuerus* as 'a story in which the three chief passions have to be shown.' De Lairesse goes on to say that in a painting with this subject, 'I would place Esther in the greatest light, somewhat in profile; then the King in the very strongest light, that is, where most light falls and has its effect…, but I would have Haman sit on the other side of the table in a sombre light, in order to hide him more from the king's rage.' As Schwartz remarks, this passage of De Lairesse corellates to a certain extent with Rembrandt's painting, although there the strongest light falls on Esther rather than the king, whereas De Lairesse recommends that the king should get the most and 'very strongest' light. Perhaps it goes too far to suppose, as Schwartz in fact does, that De Lairesse here had Rembrandts painting specifically in mind, as the scene with Esther, Ahasuerus and Haman was a not uncommon subject in the 17th century (see e.g. fig. 8).

3. Documents and sources

The following poem was published in the book printed in 1662 that contains all Jan Vos's poems:

'Eenige Schilderyen in 't Huis van den Heer
Jan Jakobsen Hinloopen, Scheepen t'Amsterdam.
Haman bij Hester en Assueer te gast &. door Rembrandt geschildert.
Hier ziet men Haman bij Asueer en Hester eeten.
Maar 't is vergeefs, zijn borst is vol van spijt en smart.
Hy byt in Hesters spijs: maar dieper in haar hart.
De Koning is van wraak en raazerny bezeeten.
De gramschap van een Vorst is schriklyk alsze raast.
Die alle mannen dreigt, wordt door een vrouw verbaast.
Zoo stort men van het top in 't dal der teegenspoeden.
De wraak die langzaam komt gebruikt de wreedtste roeden.'

['Some Paintings in the House of the Hon.
Jan Jakobsen Hinloopen, Magistrate of Amsterdam.
Haman Visiting Hester and Assueer, etc., painted by Rembrandt.
Here we see Haman dining with Asueer and Hester.
But in vain: his heart is filled with remorse and sorrow.
He bites into Hester's food, but deeper into her heart.
The King is possessed by rage and revenge.
Enraged, a Monarch's wrath is terrible.
Which threatens all men, when by a woman aroused.
Thus one plunges from the heights to the valley of misfortunes.
Gradual revenge employs the most cruel punishment.']
(*Translation:* Strauss *Doc.*, p. 521)

The connection between this poem and the Moscow painting was pointed out by Hofstede de Groot.

In his biography of Rembrandt of 1719, Houbraken includes the poem by Jan Vos in its entirety, without giving any report of the painting's whereabouts at the time.[21] Houbraken does mention the deceased Jan Jakobsen Hinloopen (d. 1666) as the previous owner,[22] from which one infers that when he brings up Rembrandt's painting, Houbraken is relying totally on the Vos poem, never having seen the painting himself: 'In the same place there is also a piece where Haman visits Esther and Ahasuerus, painted by Rembrandt, whose content the Poet Jan Vos, a shrewd art-lover, has perceived, and with the power of his exceptionally spirited writing expresses as follows' (for the poem that follows, see above).[23]

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

5. Copies

None.

6. Provenance

– Coll. Jan Jacobsz Hinloopen (1626-1666)), who probably bequeathed the painting to his daughter Sara Hinloopen. The

latter, a childless widow, left her possessions to the members of her husband's family (See *3. Documents and sources)*.
– Coll. Geelvinck, according to the records of a sale in The Hague in 1760.
– Sale G. Hoet, The Hague, 25-28 August 1760 (Lugt 1109), no. 45: 'Ahasueros, Esther, en Haman, aan Tafel: schoon van Ordinantie, en uitvoerig. Door den zelfden [Rembrant] Hoog 28 breed 37 Duim [= 73.08 x 96.57] [Alle de Schilderyen zyn gemeeten binnen's Lysts, met de Rynlandse Voetmaat.] Uit het Kabinet van den Heer'Geelvink' (185 guilders aan Yver).
– Collection J.E. Gotzkowski (1710-1775). Berlin.
– In 1764 acquired, with 224 other paintings belonging to Johann Gotzkowski, by Empress Catherine II (1729-1796; Czarina from 1762) as her first purchase. *Catalogue raisonné des Tableaux qui se trouvent dans les Galeries, Sallons et Cabinets du Palais Impérial de S. Petersbourg, commencé en 1773 et continué jusqu'en 1783 incl* (MS in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg) no. 82: 'Paul Rembrant. Esther parée en Reine à table avec le Roi Assuérus et haman. Ce morceau n'est pas des meilleurs de ce Maitre. Il est de peu d'éffet et a souffert pour n'avoir pas éte bien conservé. Sur toile. haut 1. ar[chine].¼ V.[erschokk] large 1. ar.[chine] 5½. V.[erschokk] [= 72.21 x 95.52 cm]'.

NOTES

1. S.S. Tchourakov, K.S. Egorova, in: Soobshchenya Gossudarstvennogo Moesea Izobrazitelnych Iskoesstw Imeni A.S. Poeschkina (Bulletin of the Pushkin museum, Moscow) 1980, pp. 104-110; résumé 221-222.
2. K. Yegorova, in: V. Loewinson-Lessing (ed.), *Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn. Paintings from Soviet Museums*, Leningrad, s.d. [1971], cat. no. 26; S.S. Tchourakov and K.S. Egorova, op. cit.[1].
3. *Alle de Gedichten van den Poëet Jan Vos*, Collected and published by J.L[escaille] 1662-1671, Vol. 1 1662, pp. 565-568, 654.
4. HdG *Urk.*, no. 247.
5. 350:-:- getaxeerd wordt; (HdG *Urk.*, no. 177, Strauss *Doc.* 1657/2.
6. S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, 'De Rembrandts in de verzamelingen "Hinloopen"', *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 56 (1969), pp. 233-237, esp. 234-235.
7. Gerson 1968, p. 416.
8. H. van de Waal, 'Rembrandt and the Feast of Purim', *O.H.* 84 (1969), pp. 199-223, esp. 222-223 note 68. Reprinted in: *Steps towards Rembrandt*, Amsterdam, London 1974, pp. 201-232.
9. Sumowski *Gemälde* IV, no. 1721.
10. In support of the relation between Hinloopen and Rembrandt's *Esther's feast*, beside the Vos poem Schwartz (1984, pp. 272-273) referred to another 17th-century text, the play by Joannes Serwouters (1623-1677) *Hester, oft verlossing der Jooden*, which had its première in the Amsterdam theatre in June 1659. Serwouters' play was dedicated to the wife of Jan Jacobsz Hinloopen. Schwartz quotes Serwouters' dialogue between Ahasuerus and Haman during the feast with Esther. On the basis of this dialogue and the fact that Serwouters' play was dedicated to the wife of Jan Jacobsz. Hinloopen, Leonore Huydecoper, Schwartz thought the conclusion unavoidable that Rembrandt must have made the painting for Hinlopen with reference to Serwouters' play, as it records the scene mentioned above from the play. The latter argument, however, is untenable. In the passage adduced by Schwartz, Serwouters has Ahasuerus say: 'Fy Haman, vloek nu vry te stout uw geboort.'['Fi Haman, curse the day you were born'] To which Haman responds with the words: 'Waar berg ik mij? Ik derf de Vorst niet weer aanschouwen …' ['Where shall I hide myself? I dare never again look upon the Sovereign…'] This scene takes place after Esther's revelation, whereas Rembrandt appears to have represented an earlier moment, viz. Esther's revelation before Ahasuerus breaks out in rage.
11. On this point in relation to Rembrandt see, for example: S. Slive, *Rembrandt and his critics. 1630-1730*, The Hague 1953, pp. 52-53: 'Rembrandt's contemporaries viewed his Biblical paintings as illustrations of passages from the Bible. When writing about them more attention was given to the Bible and its significance than to Rembrandt …. The sacred text was still more important than the picture.'
12. For the discussion of the difference between Jan Lievens' *The Raising of Lazarus* in Brighton and the *beeldgedicht* of Jan Vos, see: H. Luijten, [review of] G.J.M. Weber, *Der Lobtopos des 'lebenden' Bildes. Jan Vos und sein 'Zeege der Schilderkunst' von 1654*, Hildesheim/Zürich/New York 1991, in: *Simiolus* 22 (1993/94), pp. 326-331, esp. 328.
13. Pen drawing, 17 x 23.7 cm; Paris, Fondation Custodia, inv. no. 6746.
14. Exhib. cat. *Dessins Flamands et Hollandais du dix-septième siècle. Collections Musées de Belgique, Musée Boymans-van Beuningen Rotterdam, Institut Néerlandais*, Paris, Institut Néerlandais, 1974, cat. no. 30.
15. P. Schatborn, *Tekeningen van Rembrandt en zijn onbekende leerlingen en navolgers* [catalogue of the Dutch drawings in the Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam vol. IV], The Hague 1985, pp. 174-175, fig. 81a; forthcoming publ. Cat. *Rembrandt and his Circle. Drawings in the Frits Lugt Collection.*
16. Sumowski *Drawings* V, no. 1072[xx].
17. Sumowski *Gemälde* II, no. 731.
18. Valentiner 1908 p. 452 + fig., p. 563 and other references.
19. Sumowski *Gemälde* II, no. 785.
20. Schwartz 1984, p. 372, note 276.
21. A. Houbraken, *De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen* I, second printing 1753, pp. 260-261.
22. Moreover, prior to this painting Houbraken mentioned another painting as being in the same collection, viz. Rembrandt's *St. Pieters scheepje*, which in fact was never in this collection (see II A 68, *8. Provenance*). This report is probably based on a misunderstanding: Houbraken has probably confused Jan Jacobsz. Hinloopen with his nephew Jacob Jacobsz Hinloopen (1644-1705).
23. Houbraken op.cit.[21]: 'Ook is ter zelver plaats een stuk daar Haman Esther en Ahasver vergast, door Rembrant geschildert, waervan de Dichter Jan Vos, als een verstandig konstkenner, den inhoud deszelfs, nevens de kragt der byzondere gemoedschriften, daarin te bespeuren, dus aldus uitdrukt.'

WASHINGTON, D.C., THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WIDENER COLLECTION, 1942.9.60

HDG 82; BR. 596; BAUCH 93; GERSON 350; TÜMPEL A12

1. Introduction and description

Whether the Washington *Circumcision in the stable* can be attributed to Rembrandt, as was done almost unanimously in the older art historical literature up to and including Gerson,[1] or to an assistant in Rembrandt's workshop, as suggested by Schwartz[2] and Tümpel[3] partly depends on how one assesses its condition. Although Hofstede de Groot[4] noted as early as 1899 that the painting had been poorly preserved, for a long time its condition was not taken into account when considering the question of attribution. Recently, Wheelock remarked that the condition is so poor that an attribution cannot be based primarily on the execution of the work.[5] He believes that its appearance is determined not only by wear and flattened impasto but to a large extent by (old) overpaintings and drastic changes in size. Given that the state of preservation of the *Circumcision* is an important factor in deciding whether it is a work by Rembrandt, these alleged overpaintings will be discussed in detail below, as well as several features related to the genesis of the painting.

A link between the Washington *Circumcision* and the mention of a Circumcision by Rembrandt in a document of 1662[6] was posited long ago and has been used by Wheelock and others to support an attribution to Rembrandt. We too believe that a link between the Washington painting and this document – though problematic – is plausible.

The nature of the support emerges as an important factor in understanding this complicated painting. Cross sections of paint samples and the X-radiograph image reveal that a piece of a canvas that had previously been painted was used for the *Circumcision*. Given that this fact has affected all those aspects of the painting discussed below, it is perhaps necessary first to deal with it briefly here.

There are strong indications that the present painting was superimposed on a fragment cut from the right side of the *Denial of Peter* in Amsterdam (fig. 3), apparently after the latter painting had been wholly or partly finished. Because Arthur Wheelock and the Washington Conservation Laboratory were unaware of this possibility, many of their interpretations need to be treated with caution (for example, with regard to the painting's original format, the technique of the painting and the extent to which it has been overpainted).

The work is based on Luke 2:21, 'And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.'

Mary sits at the centre of the scene, sheltered beneath a makeshift canopy suspended at the entrance to a stable. A ladder, to which it is attached, extends upwards from behind this canopy. The head of an ox can just be discerned in the dark part of the stable at the right. Mary wears a white shift and over that a red bodice and a long dark skirt. A veil hangs from her head, which is covered by a light headdress. Mary holds the Christ Child, swaddled in white cloths, on her lap while the mohel performing the circumcision kneels before her. He wears a long, shiny yellow robe. Behind him and to one side is a chair with on the seat a cloth and a pot. A bearded man holds a large book in which he is writing. He is dressed in a turban and a long robe with a cloak hanging from the shoulders. At his belt hangs an object, probably a pen case. Beside and behind him there are bystanders, one of whom, the man on the far left, has Rembrandt's features. A boy enters the scene in the left foreground. Above the group of bystanders, two men can be seen at a balustrade and a little higher, directly above the writing man, a woman leans forward. She rests one hand on a wall that is part of a large structure in which the stable seems to have been built. The light falls from the left, principally on Mary and the child. The figures to the left of the writing man are also lit from the left, while much of the interior of the stable is shrouded in darkness. Here only one object catches the light, and judging by an old copy it may be a sheet in a manger (see *5. Copies*).

Working Conditions

Examined on 16 April 1970 (J.B., S.H.L.), in good day- and artificial light and out of the frame; an X-ray image of the main group was available. Prints of four X-radiographs and one infrared photograph covering the whole surface, were received later. Examined again on 8-10 November 1994 (M.F., E.v.d.W.) out of the frame during restoration with the aid of four X-ray films and a binocular microscope.

Support

Canvas, lined, 56.6 x 74.7 cm. Single piece.

The X-radiograph shows deformations of various kinds in the fabric but no clear cusping caused by stretching the canvas in its present size. The absence of cusping raises the question whether the canvas has been cut down. Wheelock assumed that originally the painting must have been considerably larger and that more had been removed from the right than from the left. He also suggested that this reduction was done by the painter himself (see note 5). However, there are no clear indications of such a reduction having been made. In this case, the absence of cusping points rather to the canvas having been cut off at some stage before the present *Circumcision* was painted on it. This question is given further consideration below, especially under *2. Comments*.

Thread count: 12.62 vertical threads/cm (11.5-14), 14.25 horizontal threads (13.5-14.5). A great many slubs can be seen particularly in the vertical threads. In view of the quality of the vertical threads and the fact that there is less variation in the number of threads per centimetre in the case of the horizontal threads, it may be concluded that the warp threads run horizontally.

The canvas of the *Circumcision* so closely resembles that of the *Denial of Peter* of 1660 in Amsterdam (Br. 594), both in the number of threads per centimetre and in the nature of the many slubs in the weft threads, that one may infer that both came from the same bolt.[7] Given that the painting of the *Circumcision* is a superimposed painting (see *Radiography*), one wonders whether it was executed on a piece of canvas cut from the *Denial of Peter*, which can be assumed to have been reduced considerably in size, specifically on the right-hand side (fig. 3, see also *Ground*).

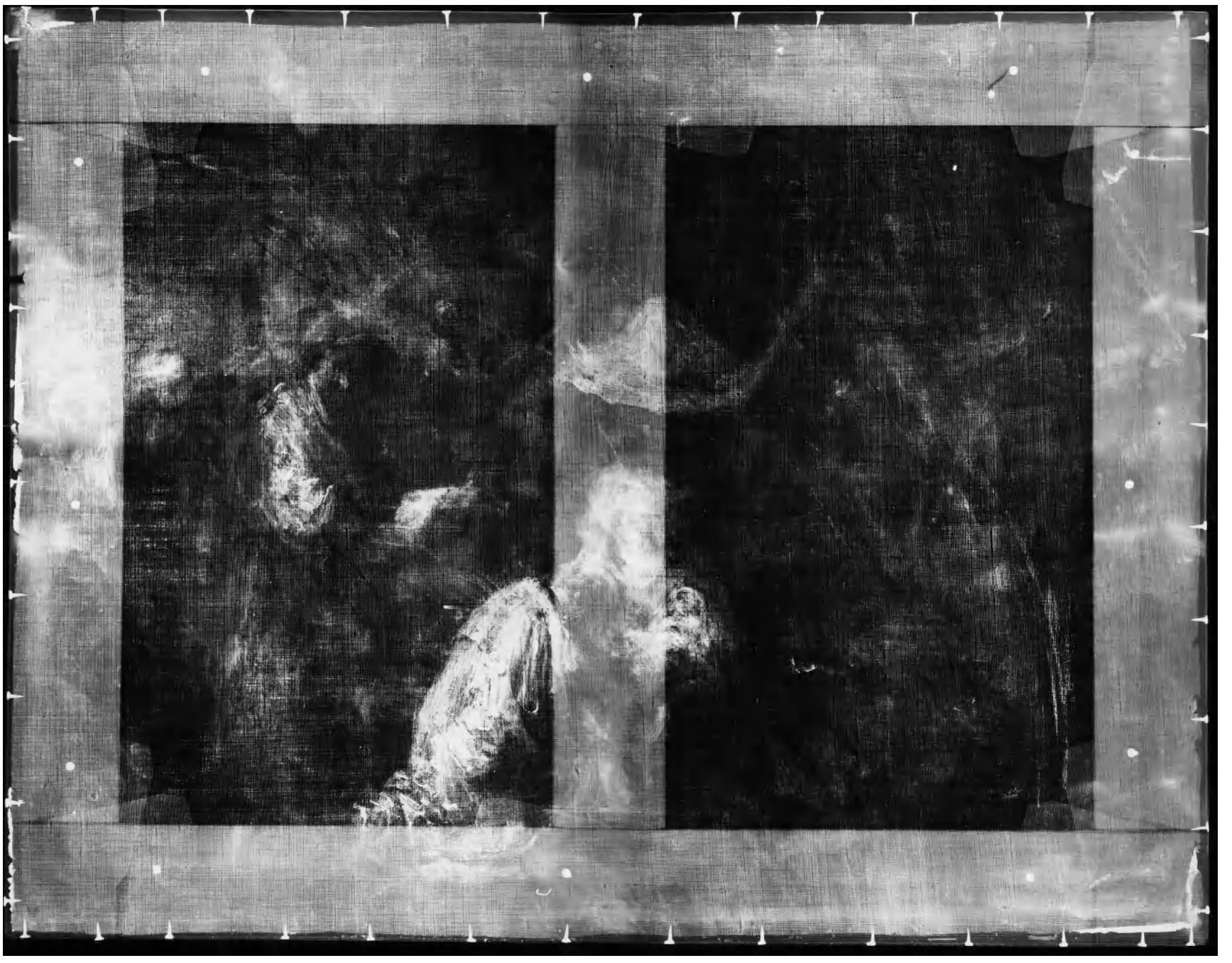
Fig. 1. Canvas 56.5 x 75 cm

Ground

A light brown ground tone shows through in many worn areas in the painting. Examination of cross-sections of paint samples by Michael Palmer at the National Gallery in Washington revealed that the ground lying directly on the canvas is a quartz ground, such as is found in many other paintings by Rembrandt and his workshop.[8] In some cross-sections, two ground layers – both of the quartz type – differing slightly in colour can be seen, a darker lower one and a lighter upper one. The darker layer contains a higher percentage of brown earth pigments than the upper layer, which is more transparent and has a higher percentage of quartz particles and of light-brown earth pigments. A similarly constituted ground can be found in cross-sections of the *Denial of Peter*.

In almost all the cross-sections of paint samples, a dark layer can be seen above the ground. The thickness of this layer is very irregular because it fills up the unevenness of the ground. In some cross-sections this layer appears to consist of two layers, of which the upper contains slightly more white particles than the lower and often red particles. Furthermore, this layer varies in colour from almost pure black under the main figural groups of the *Circumcision* and more to the left of the design to greyish brown. Evidently this paint layer is part of the underlying painting. In the paint surface it can be seen that this paint layer, which is highly sensitive to solvents, is crackled and worn at many points. Its poor condition, due to either the choice of medium or to previous treatments, is one of the causes of the present painting's vulnerable state.

Fig. 2. X-Ray



Paint layer

Condition: Judging the exact state of the paint layer is most difficult. In the first place, the painting is badly worn. As a result, the forms in the thinly painted, dark interior of the stable on the right can only be partly distinguished. Similarly, the figure of the boy on the far left is hard to make out because of wear, as is the background to Mary and her skirt. The degree of wear most probably has to do with the nature of the paint of the underlying painting in this area, which – as mentioned under *Ground* – turns out to be highly sensitive to solvents. In the head of the writing man, moreover, it can be seen that the underlying dark paint has bulged through the craquelure and run over the flesh colour. This is probably the result of this paint softening, either through heating during lining, or through solvents. In addition, the impasto is badly flattened, probably as a result of lining. This can be clearly seen in the impastoed strokes in the mohel's yellow cloak.

According to Wheelock (see note 5), the work has been heavily overpainted in the course of time. As well as more recent alterations, he maintains that there are old overpaintings in the cloak of the mohel, in the cloth hanging above Mary, in the heads of the figures on the left behind the writing man and in the area immediately above them, in Mary's headdress and other worn parts. It is, however, difficult to firmly ascertain on the basis of an examination of the paint surface whether the work has been overpainted to the extent that Wheelock supposes. In various cross sections of paint samples a discontinuity can be observed in the structure of the layers, but this discontinuity cannot be explained as the dividing line between the

Fig. 3. The hypothetical position of the present painting in the missing strip from the *Denial of Peter*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (Br. 594)

work of the painter and that of a restorer. Its position points to a stage prior to the painting of the *Circumcision*. In several cross sections a layer of varnish can be seen under the top paint layers; it is evident as a transparent layer which contains no pigment particles and fluoresces light green in ultraviolet light. The cross-section of a paint sample taken from the mohel's yellow cloak shows that this layer of varnish lies above a thin layer of brown paint just above the ground and the dark paint of the underlying painting. On the layer of varnish are two layers of yellowish brown paint which relate to the earlier version of the mohel's cloak described above, and on top of them is a thick layer containing lead tin yellow, with which the final version of the yellow cloak was painted. Could that version be the 'repainting' by Rembrandt (see *3. Documents and sources*)? It would seem that the break described above is not, as one might expect, connected with the successive versions of the cloak but that it lies *underneath* the cloak. It is noticeable that this varnish layer is not present in all paint samples. An explanation for its absence in some of the samples can be found in a cross-section of a sample taken from the hair of the man seen frontally on the right of the writing figure. The varnish layer is missing from this sample, but there is another feature which can also be interpreted as a break in the structure of the paint layers. Directly above the dark layer(s) described under *Ground* an irregular, broken white layer can be seen, whose appearance indicates that it consists of the remains of a layer of white paint most of which has been removed. The most plausible explanation for this and for the presence of the varnish layer in several other samples is that the *Circumcision* covers (a fragment of) an earlier painting (see *Introduction*, *Support* and *Comments*). In view of the varnish layer, this canvas must have been finished, and impastoed areas scraped off, before work began on the *Circumcision*. This thesis is supported by aspects of the X-ray image that will be discussed below under *Radiography*.

There are only a few places where it can be unequivocally established that what Wheelock considers to be overpainting on the *Circumcision* must be old, because of the

coarse pigment grains. Such coarsely pigmented paint extends over damaged areas and craquelure patterns in Mary's headdress and shift, in the head of the man to the right of the writer and in a shapeless pink patch above the writer's shoulder. On the right there are also some very dark overpaintings in the background and in the dark shadows between the mohel's upper arm and cloak, where damaged areas are covered over. Because Wheelock did not take into account that this is a superimposed painting, he assumed that the traces of the underlying painting were pentimenti of the present painting.

The other overpaintings cited by Wheelock threaten to confuse our understanding further, as he also finds pentimenti in the same places. These are areas where the X-ray image differs from the surface image, which would imply that the paint surface of the underlying painting may interfere with the present painting. Thus the dark, brownish zone above the figures on the left behind the writing man shows up noticeably lighter in the X-radiograph. The area done in radioabsorbent paint does not correspond exactly to the dark zone, but continues locally under the heads of the figures, only a few of whom show up in the X-ray image. In the dark zone, marked shrinkage fissures can be seen in the paint surface which have been retouched. These fissures seem, however, to be related not to the dark brown paint, but – since they are also visible in the X-ray image – to radioabsorbent paint of the underlying painting. The relief of the cracks in the brownish paint with coarse pigment grains of the dark zone thus seems to have been transmitted to the upper layers. The fact that underlying light paint may have become visible was probably the reason for the inpainting, which was intended to make the shrinkage fissures less conspicuous. Such fissures are also found in other areas: in the background behind the head and shoulder of the boy at the far left and in the robe of the writing man. In the latter case they can also be seen in the X-radiograph. This cracking while the paint was drying was most likely caused by a quick-drying paint (probably containing white lead) being applied on top of slower drying paint, presumably the dark paint of the underlying painting described under *Ground*. Thus this feature would seem to be the combined result of the painter's choice of materials and the complex genesis of this 'palimpsest' rather than a restorer's intervention.

At other points too, particularly in the cloth above Mary, there are pentimenti in the *Circumcision* as well as old overpaintings. In the X-ray image the canopy above Mary's head done in radioabsorbent paint is smaller and more pointed and extends less far, especially to the left, than the yellowish canopy visible in the paint surface. Under the yellow brushstrokes in the paint surface along the lower edge of the cloth a whitish paint can be seen locally that corresponds with the cloth in radioabsorbent paint in the X-ray image. Since there is no sign that this yellow paint covers damaged areas or craquelure patterns, we can assume that we are dealing here not with overpainting but with a pentimento. The white paint which shows up in the X-radiograph could be part of an underpainting of the now visible painting done in rather coarse strokes. The painter may have altered the shape of this cloth in working up this passage. In addition, there are overpaintings in the yellow cloth which differ in colour and texture but do not essentially change the cloth's shape.

The presence of a light underpainting may be suspected in Mary's head and headdress, where the X-radiograph shows a rough indication of the head with clearly visible brushstrokes that are not seen in the paint surface.

A clear alteration which was made by the painter of the *Circumcision* is found in the bottom left of the mohel's yellow cloak, where a foot has been painted out. It became visible during restoration and has now been covered again by retouching. It is also evident locally that the yellow cloak covers a layer of beige paint in which an earlier version of the cloak was probably executed.

Examination of a paint sample taken in the mohel's cloak seems to provide an answer to the question of whether it was altered at some stage, a question whose significance lies in its relation to a document from 1662, in which there is mention of a *Circumcision* by Rembrandt, and which specifies that 'Van Rijn shall be obliged to repaint the circumciser'. As described above, the yellow top layer of the mohel's cloak, mainly containing lead-tin yellow, is applied on a double layer of beige paint which must have had a markedly more muted tone. The added sparkling layer of lead-tin yellow may well have provided the improvement Van Ludick demanded.

Radiography

The X-ray image deviates significantly from what one would expect from the paint surface. Only the impastoed strokes of the mohel's cloak, the white sheet and the long robe of the writing man correspond to areas that show up light in the X-ray image.

Reading the X-ray image is complicated by the large strokes and long curved lines that are particularly evident in the right half of the painting. These have no connection with the present work. The radiograph also has light patches at the top left and dark lines above the head of the writing man which cannot be related to the painting. These curved lines and strokes closely resemble a feature encountered earlier with palimpsests or radically changed compositions.[9] In such cases, (parts of) earlier paintings were removed or scratched out before a new work was begun or an important change in the composition was carried out. In X-radiographs of those works, long curved sweeps and strokes could be seen which resembled those in the X-ray image of the present painting. As already suggested under *Paint layer*, in connection with the presence of a layer of varnish and a white paint locally scraped off, here too the most plausible explanation for these long, curved traces is that the artist used a canvas that had previously been painted on and from which the most impastoed areas were removed.

It is difficult to determine which of the parts that show up light in the X-ray image belong to the earlier painting. They probably include the light spots in and above the frontally viewed head of the man to the right of the writer (see *Paint layer*). The whole passage on the left which shows

Fig. 4. Rembrandt, *The circumcision in the stable*, 1654, etching 9.4 x 14.4 cm (B. 47[I]).

up light in the X-radiographic image, in and above the heads of the bystanders, should probably be seen not as an alteration to the *Circumcision* but as belonging to the underlying painting. This would explain why, in this radioabsorbent passage, no reserves have been left for the heads of the bystanders in the *Circumcision*. If we assume that this passage belongs to the underlying painting, we have to conclude that that painting must have been much larger than the *Circumcision* which is superimposed on it. It is implausible that at an earlier stage the *Circumcision* had such a fairly large, light patch that was cut off by the edge of the canvas. In the case of nocturnal scenes in particular by Rembrandt and his pupils (the dark interior of the stable to the right seems to indicate that the circumcision is not taking place by day) there is a distinct hierarchy in the illumination. Given this hierarchy in the *Circumcision*, with the strongly lit main figures – Mary with the Christ Child and the mohel – at the centre of the composition, it is hard to imagine that there could have been a passage as strongly lit as the light patch in the X-ray image seems to indicate at the left edge of the painting.

Apart from elements related to the support being taken from a previously painted canvas, there also seem to be aspects of the X-ray image that have to do with changes in the depiction of the *Circumcision*. In the head of Mary, in the hanging cloth, in the book and to a lesser extent in the Child the X-ray image is at variance with what the surface image shows, suggesting that these are pentimenti or changes introduced during the final execution in relation to the first lay-in of the composition (see also *Paint layer*).

Signature

Not seen by us. According to Wheelock <*Rembrandt f. 1661*> at the lower right.

2. Comments

Whereas in 1968 Gerson[10] still accepted the Washington *Circumcision in the stable* as the work of Rembrandt, Schwartz and Tümpel (see notes 2 and 3) regarded it as a product of Rembrandt's workshop. Schwartz suggested that it might be by Aert de Gelder, who could have painted it while an assistant in Rembrandt's workshop. A similarity to the work of Aert de Gelder had, in fact, been noted by Bode as early as 1883 on the basis of what he saw as the flaccid, cursory treatment, the light colour scheme, particularly of the mohel's cloak, and the lack of expressiveness in the scene.[11]

Wheelock persisted in seeing the Washington painting as the work of Rembrandt (see note 5). To support this attribution he cited the agreement of 28 August 1662, referred to above, between Rembrandt and Lodewijk van Ludick which mentions 'twee schilderyen 't eene Karsnacht ende 't ander De Besnydenis door van Rhijn aen van Ludick verkocht voor f. 600,–…' (two paintings, a

"Nativity" and a "Circumcision", which van Rhijn had sold to van Ludick for f. 600,-…) (see also *3. Documents and sources*).

Linking the Circumcision referred to in this document to the painting in Washington is not, however, without its problems. Concerning the *Circumcision* the document also states '… dat van Rijn gehouden sal wesen de besnyder in 't voorn. bortie te verschilderen ende verbeteren soo 't behoort' (… that van Rijn shall be obliged to repaint the circumciser in the aforementioned panel [*bortie*] and improve it as is proper).

In arguing that the work in Washington was Van Ludick's painting, Wheelock pointed out that there is a prominent pentimento visible in the X-radiographical image, namely an enlargement of the yellow cloak of the mohel. He suggested that this could be the alteration to the circumciser mentioned in the agreement between Van Ludick and Rembrandt, which would indeed make the identification of the Washington painting with the Circumcision named in the document extremely plausible. But this document cannot be as directly related to the Washington painting as Wheelock supposes. In the agreement with Van Ludick there is only his stipulation that Rembrandt should alter the circumciser: the document does not say whether Rembrandt actually made the alteration. Moreover, it is not possible to deduce from the X-ray image in the way that Wheelock does that the figure of the mohel was substantially enlarged during the painting of the work. There are, however, also other indications that the figure of the mohel was indeed altered. As discussed in *Paint layer*, it may be concluded from a paint sample taken from the cloak that there was a beige-coloured cloak under the present yellow cloak. Secondly, restoration revealed a foot at the bottom left of the present yellow cloak which has been painted over and which also belonged to this earlier version.

An at first sight serious problem in the identification of Van Ludick's Circumcision with the Washington painting is the support. The 1662 document concerns a *bortie*, a painting on panel, and not a painting on canvas, such as the work in Washington.[12] Wheelock suggested that the small format, comparable to that of a painting on panel, might have caused confusion about the nature of the support. He also remarked that the absence of cusping of the support might indicate that the painting had been considerably reduced, especially on the right side. The composition of the *Circumcision* shows no sign, however, of anything missing, and certainly not on the right. As indicated above, we believe that the absence of cusping can be better explained in another way. It can be assumed that a previously painted canvas was used for the *Circumcision*. If we accept that the canvas on which the *Circumcision* was painted came from a much larger work, this would explain the absence of cusping along the edges of the painting. Given the lack of not only primary cusping, which forms when the canvas is stretched before the ground is applied, but also secondary cusping, formed when the canvas is again stretched after priming, we must conclude that the piece of cut-off, previously painted canvas was not stretched on a frame. It must have been glued to a rigid support, such as a panel, as also happened for example with the Berlin *St John the Baptist preaching* (III A 106) and, we believe, the *Young woman in bed* in Edinburgh (Br. 110). If, on the grounds of the absence of cusping, we assume that the canvas of the *Circumcision* was glued to a panel, this would explain why the agreement with Van Ludick refers not to a painting on canvas but to a *bortie*, a panel.

Accepting the identification of the *Circumcision* mentioned in the document with the painting in Washington, it is hard not to agree to the attribution to Rembrandt. But even then one could argue against this attribution by advancing the possibility that the painting might have been executed by a pupil and only touched up by Rembrandt in the cloak of the mohel. When one compares the painting with the other small-scale history pieces attributed to Rembrandt from the same period, the *Tobit and Anna* and the *Esther and Ahasuerus* in this volume (V 28 and 29), the stylistic differences with V 29 are more conspicuous than the similarities. This applies in the first place to the essential differences in the proportions of the figures. But against this, we know that Rembrandt could deliberately vary the proportions of his figures (see Chapter I, pp. 35-48). There are, on the other hand, similarities with V 28 which suggest that the Rotterdam *Tobit and Anna* and the present painting may well be by the same Rembrandt's, hand. And if our surmise is justified that an oil study from the collection of Alfred and Isabel Bader in Milwaukee, which we consider to be an autograph work, was made in preparation for the present painting (fig. 5), then the balance tips even further in the direction of an attribution of the Washington *Circumcision* to Rembrandt. Given the uncertainty of such considerations, and in the light of the many obscurities regarding technical factors and the painting's condition, it would seem wisest to follow Wheelock's line provisionally and – partly on the grounds of the painting's genesis, and more especially that of the figure of the mohel – to assume that we are dealing here with the painting that Van Ludick acquired in 1662 as a work by Rembrandt.

The fact that, contrary to the iconographic tradition, the Circumcision was set in the stable instead of in the temple was already noted by Hofstede de Groot.[13] He devised an ingenious but inadequate explanation for this. He supposed that Rembrandt began work with the intention of painting an Adoration of the Magi. The subject was then changed to the Baptism of John and finally the Circumcision of Christ. There is no evidence in the painting itself, however, for such a sequence of events.

Tümpel[14] provides a more convincing explanation for the deviation from tradition. He pointed out that a careful reading of the biblical text makes it plausible that the Circumcision took place in the stable. In the Bible, the Circumcision of Christ is referred to only in Luke 2:21, which states that this rite took place eight days after the Birth, but does not say where. The reference to the Circumcision is followed in the Bible by the Presentation in the Temple and the Purification. However, this does not allow the conclusion that the Circumcision was performed in the tem-

Fig. 5. Rembrandt, *Lighting study of an old man in profile*, *c.* 1661,
panel 24.8 x 19.1 cm (1:1). Milwaukee, Isabel and Alfred Bader Collection

Fig. 6. Detail of fig. 1

ple. Mary, who is generally depicted in the Circumcision, could not have been present in the temple eight days after the Birth because according to the law of Moses she was not allowed to enter until after 40 days. Given that in the following verse describing the Presentation in the Temple and the Purification Luke refers to the law of Moses (Luke 2:22), we may conclude that he implies the passage of some time between the Circumcision and the Presentation, and thus did not assume that both events happened at the same location. Tümpel added that in the 17th century there was general agreement that the Circumcision of Christ took place in the stable in Bethlehem, not in the temple. He points out that in Counter-Reformation writings depictions of the Circumcision in the temple in the presence of Mary were explicitly condemned, though this does not seem to have directly affected the way in which artists portrayed this subject. Certainly, depictions of the Circumcision in the stable are most unusual in the 17th century.

When Tümpel discussed the iconography of the Washington painting in 1981, he still accepted it as a work by Rembrandt. At that time he viewed the iconographic solution chosen as an example of Rembrandt following the correct interpretation of the biblical text, as he had done earlier in an etching of the *Circumcision in the stable*, usually dated to 1654 (fig. 4, B. 47). In 1646, in a painting for Frederik Hendrik that has survived in the form of a copy (see V 10), Rembrandt still located the Circumcision in the temple. Between 1646 and 1654, the year in which he made the etching, Rembrandt must have learned about the new interpretation of the location of the Circumcision.

When, in 1986, Tümpel (see note 3) catalogued the present painting no longer as the work of Rembrandt but rather as a work originating in his workshop, he observed that it showed the type of composition developed by Rembrandt in the print, B. 47 (see fig. 4). On the right of the painting there are elements, such as the ladder and the ox, that we also find in the etching and in Rembrandt's other depictions of the stable, for example the Munich painting of *The Nativity* of 1646 (V 11). On the other hand, a balustrade with two figures, such as in the left half of the Washington painting, is not found in Rembrandt's other depictions of the stable. This element does, however, resemble a part of the temple as portrayed by Rembrandt in the lost painting of 1646. Similarly, the section of a large building above the writing man – from which the woman leans forward – is difficult to define more precisely but looks more like part of a temple than of a stable. Thus in the Washington painting the new type of the Circumcision in the stable is not followed as consistently as Tümpel and later Wheelock suggest.

The *Lighting study of an old man in profile* in the collection of Isabel and Alfred Bader (fig. 5) seems to be related to the present painting. It must have been painted in the same period. In the *Circumcision*, several old men – including the mohel who carries out the circumcision and a man who writes in a book – are depicted in roughly the same relation to the incident light as the man in the study (compare figs. 5 and 6). Although he was not aware of what painting it was a study for, Bredius had already designated the *Lighting study of an old man in profile* as a study of a head. Subsequently, the painting's authenticity was increasingly put in question, although Bauch and Gerson, neither of whom had seen it, still gave it the benefit of the doubt, if only on the basis of a reproduction.[15] After this, the painting disappeared from the Rembrandt literature.

Now that it has been freed of its thick layer of varnish, it can be seen as a small masterpiece, both as regards colour and peinture. It has been executed at a high tempo, wet in wet. With all its dynamism, it betrays such an astonishing control of the pictorial means available, and, as a result, such a supreme sense of form on the part of its author, that one can scarcely imagine it could have been painted by a pupil. Nor could it be a copy, executed by a pupil, after one of the figures in the Washington *Circumcision*: the visual information in the Circumcision is simply too scant for that.

In its execution and colour scheme, the *Lighting study of an old man in profile* shows a striking resemblance to Rembrandt's *Self-portrait as St. Paul* from 1661 in the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum (IV 24). When the two paintings were confronted in the Rijksmuseum we were convinced of the study's authenticity. On this basis alone, it may be assumed that the study originated around 1661, the year in which the Washington *Circumcision* originated. It seems likely, therefore, that the small painting was a preparatory study for the *Circumcision*.

In the case of a head lit obliquely from behind, the rendering of light and shade with correct and convincing boundaries and transitions between them constitutes a problem that Rembrandt tended to solve with the help of a posing model. The forms at the back of the head and body are lit in a way that is simply impossible to evoke unaided in the mind's eye. In the *Lighting study of an old man in profile*, the back, the shoulder, the neck and the back and top of the cap catch the full light. The locks of hair protruding from beneath the cap are fully lit too, but they screen part of the face (the ear, the cheek, the temple) from the directly incident light. The main beard remains in the shadow of the shoulder and trunk, while the side-whiskers again catch a strong light from behind. The forehead, the root of the nose and the moustache are dimly lit by reflected light that sustains the legibility of the forms in shadow.[16]

During the research investigation of the canvas used in Rembrandt's workshop (both by himself and his pupils) it emerged that the canvas of the present painting was almost certainly derived from the same bolt of linen as the canvas comprising two vertical strips on which the Amsterdam *Denial of Peter* (Br. 594) was painted (see fig. 3).

The composition and build up of the ground in the two paintings have also been found to show remarkable similarity. It was found, moreover, that there are traces of an earlier painting on the ground of the present painting. The *Circumcision* dealt with here is thus a superimposed painting. According to the X-radiograph, the underlying painting was done with such broad brushstrokes that no clear image can be recognized in it. It would therefore seem likely that this was a fragment of a larger painting.

On the basis of these indications, the hypothesis arose that the present painting could have been applied to a part

of a strip cut from the *Denial of Peter*. A strong suspicion had already arisen during restoration of the *Denial of Peter* that this latter painting had originally been considerably larger on the right side.

For further investigation it was necessary to confront the X-radiographs of the two paintings to see, firstly, whether one could discover any continuity of the linen between the two supports, either in the deformations of the canvas or perhaps in some irregularity in the structure of the weave; and secondly, whether perhaps connections could be found between the radio-absorbent areas of the two paintings. If a part of the *Denial of Peter* had been cut off, it would have been on the right side, since the left-hand strip of linen is much wider than the strip to the right of the seam.

For a valid confrontation of the two supports, one must take account of the fact that the direction of the warp in the canvas of the *Denial of Peter* runs vertically whereas in the present painting it runs horizontally (in relation to the visible image). The image of the *Circumcision* must therefore be turned through 90 degrees with respect to the *Denial of Peter*. In the weave of both strips of linen making up the support of the *Denial of Peter* a large continuous deformation was observed extending from top to bottom of the painting (as a large, weak curve). This deformation is also evident in the seam joining the two strips of linen. The fact that a similar deformation of the weave is observed in the canvas of the *Circumcision* would appear to corroborate the suspicion that the two canvases were once parts of a single whole. However, it proved impossible to demonstrate the conjectured original join between the two canvases. There was even reason to doubt whether the hypothesis, as stated above, could ever be proved, because the long deformation in the canvas of the *Circumcision* correlated insufficiently with that in the *Denial of Peter*. On the side where the two canvases would have had to be joined, according to the direction of the deformations, the direction of the warp in the *Circumcision* deviates further to the right than in the *Denial of Peter* and at the same time is more strongly curved on the outer side.

3. Documents and sources

1. In all probability the present *Circumcision* is the painting mentioned in an agreement between Rembrandt and Lodewijk van Ludick drawn up on 28 August 1662 (Strauss *Doc*., 1662/6): 'Ten anderen dat sylieden oock vereffent ende geliquideert syn, over de leveringe ende voldoeninge van de twee schilderyen 't eene De Karsnacht ende 't ander De Besnijdenis door van Rhijn aen van Ludick verkocht voor f 600.—… Behoudelyck dat van Rhijn daer af noch moet hebben hondert achttien gulden, die minder dan de voorn. f 600.— door hem syn genoten, des dat van Rijn gehouden sal wesen de besnyder in 't voorn. bortie te verschilderen ende verbeteren soo 't behoort.' (Furthermore, they also settled and cancelled the completion and delivery of two [other] paintings, a Nativity and a Circumcision, which van Rhijn had sold to van Ludick for 600 guilders… However, with the proviso that van Rhijn is to receive 118 guilders; this being the difference between 600 guilders and the sum of his purchase, but van Rijn shall be obliged to repaint the circumciser in the aforementioned panel [*bortie*] and improve it as is proper.)

Fig. 7. After Rembrandt, *The Circumcision in the stable*, canvas 54.6 x 72.4 cm. Present whereabouts unknown

2. The inventory of Ferdinand Bol's possessions drawn up on 8 October 1669 on the occasion of his marriage to Anna van Arckel includes several paintings by Rembrandt, among them: '14. a circumcision ditto [Rembrandt]'.[17] Wheelock saw this as a possible reference to the Washington painting. However, since 13. lists 'an entombment by Rembrandt', it seems more likely that the reference is to a copy of the lost *Circumcision* of 1646. Both in the collection of Isaak van der Blooken and in the inventory in Salzdahlum of 1710 mention is made of a Circumcision and an Entombment by Rembrandt which can be identified with the two copies after paintings from the Passion series which are now in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig (see also V 10).

4. Graphic reproductions

None.

5. Copies

1. Canvas 54.6 x 72.4 cm. Formerly coll. Sir Herbert Cook, Richmond, catalogue Doughty House, vol. II, 1914, no. 311; idem 1932, no. 311; Alfred Brod Gallery, cat. october 1964, no. 14, corresponds fairly exactly to the Washington painting; the cradle on the right is, however, more clearly identifiable, as is one foot of the kneeling mohel of which in the original only a vague remnant can be seen (fig. 7).

6. Provenance

* – Probably coll. Lodewijck van Ludick, Amsterdam 1662 (see *3. Documents and sources*).
– Probably not, as Wheelock suspects, coll. Ferdinand Bol, Amsterdam 1669 (see *3. Documents and sources*).
– Probably not, as HdG and Wheelock suspect, coll. Isaak van der Blooken, 1707 (see *3. Documents and sources*).
* – Coll. Duke of Ancaster, sale London March 1724, no. 18: 'The Circumcision'.[18]
– Coll. Andrew Hay, sale February 14, 1745, no. 47; 'The Circumcision, 1661', sold to Mr. Spencer for 53, 13s.
– Not as stated by HdG: sale Amsterdam 11 May ff. 1756 (Lugt 922), no. 7: 'Een Extra Fraay Kabinet Stuk, De Besnyding Christi, door Rembrand, hoog 2 v. 7 duim, breet 2 voet [De Schilderyen zyn gemeten binnen de Lysten, met de Amsterdamsche voetmaat, van elf Duimen iedere voet] [=74.61 x 56.62 cm]', [fl. 205 aan Van der Land] (A particularly fine cab-

inet piece, The Circumcision of Christ, by Rembrandt, 2 feet 7 inches high, 2 feet wide [The paintings were measured in the frames using the Amsterdam foot of eleven inches] [=74.61 x 56.62 cm]), [fl. 205 to Van der Land]. Given the presence of the *Circumcision* in the Hay collection from 1745, another painting must be involved here. It is, however, noteworthy that the work has the same dimensions as the Washington painting, though height and width have been confused. It is conceivable that this reference relates to a copy, such as copy 1.

– Coll. Earl Spencer, Althorp (painting at Wimbledon in inventory of Oct. 1746 # 399. See *Catalogue of the Pictures at Althorp and Wimbledon belonging to the late Honourable Mr. Spencer* by George Knapton, Oct. 25, 1746 *Walpole Society* 1974-1976, p. 105 and the *Catalogue of the Pictures at Althorp* made in Nov. 1802, *Walpole Society* 1974-1976, p. 124).

– Coll. P.A.B. Widener, 1912.

NOTES

1. Gerson 350.
2. Schwartz 1984, p. 324 no. 376 (ill.).
3. Tümpel 1986, A12.
4. C. Hofstede de Groot, 'Die Rembrandt-Ausstellungen zu Amsterdam (September-October 1898) und zu London (Januar-März 1899)', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* XXII (1899), pp. 159-166, esp. 163 no. 115.
5. A.K. Wheelock, *Dutch paintings of the seventeenth century*, National Gallery of Art Washington, 1995, pp. 270-276.
6. Strauss *Doc.*, 1662/6.
7. The canvas of the *Denial of Peter* consists of two strips sewn together along a vertical seam. Thread count Br. 594 left strip: 14.45 vertical threads/cm (14-15.5, 12.29 horizontal threads (11-13.5); right strip: 14.3 vertical threads (13.5-15), 12.55 horizontal threads/cm (11-14). From the spread of the threads and the vertical seam it can be concluded that the direction of the warp is not horizontal, as in *The Circumcision*, but vertical.
8. See *Corpus* Vol. IV, pp. 318-334 and p. 672 (Table IV).
9. See for example: *Self-portrait* in Boston (I A 20), *The Raising of Lazarus* in Los Angeles (I A 30), the Liverpool *Self-portrait* (I A 33), *Minerva in her study* in Berlin (I A 38) and *The Abduction of Proserpina* in Berlin (I A 39).
10. Br.-Gerson 596.
11. W. Bode, *Studien zur Geschichte der Holländischen Malerei*, Braunschweig 1883, p. 525.
12. Hofstede de Groot raised this point as early as 1906 in arguing against a link between Van Ludick's painting and the work in Washington. See HdG *Urk.*, p. 302.
13. HdG 82.
14. C. Tümpel, 'Rembrandt, Die Bildtradition und der Text', in: *Ars Auro Prior. Studia Ioanni Bialostocki Sexagenario Dicata*, Warsaw 1981, pp. 429-434.
15. Bauch 1966, no. 245; Gerson 1968, no. 395; Br.-Gerson 1969, no. 261.
16. See also E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's oil studies: new light on an old problem', in: exhib. cat. *Rembrandt. Quest of a genius*, Amsterdam/Berlin 2006, pp. 179-207.
17. A. Bredius, 'Bol's Kunstschatten', *O.H.* 28 (1910), pp. 233-238, esp. 234; A. Blankert, *Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680) Rembrandt's Pupil*, Doornspijk 1982, p. 77.
18. F. Simpson, 'Dutch Painting in England before 1760', *Burl. Mag.* 95 (1953), pp. 39-42, esp. 41; see also exhib. cat. *Rembrandt in 18th Century England*, London, Yale Center for British Art, 1983, p. 113, no. 111: Probably first Duke of Ancaster sale, March 1724 (18), 'The Circumcision, dated 1661'.

Corrigenda et Addenda

Corrigenda

The following small-scale history- and genre paintings disattributed in Vols. I-III have been reattributed in Chapter II of this Volume:

I C 5 / Br. 532A	The flight into Egypt, 1627. Tours, Musée des Beaux-Arts *154/55*
I C 11 / Br. 422	The foot operation, 1628. Switzerland, private collection *160/61*
II C 48 / Br. 545	The good Samaritan, 1630. London, The Wallace Collection *168/69*
II C 46/ad Br. 541	The Adoration of the Magi, *c.* 1633/34. St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum *180/81*
II C 49 / Br. 551	The Descent from the Cross, 1634. St Petersburg. The State Hermitage Museum *190/91*
II C 51 / Br. 431	An old man in an interior with winding staircase, 1632. Paris, Musée du Louvre *196/97*
III C 88 / Br. 558	Parable of the labourers in the vineyard, 1637. St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum *206/07*
III C 84 / Br. 511	David and Jonathan, 1642. St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum *220/21*

Addenda

Two early paintings, not catalogued in Vols. I-IV will be dealt with in the present Volume as in our opinion authentic works by Rembrandt:

Interior with figures, playing *'Handjeklap'*, *c.* 1628.
Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland *158*

Lit. E. van de Wetering, 'Delimiting Rembrandt's autograph oeuvre – an insoluable problem?', in: Exhib. cat. *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt*, Kassel/Amsterdam 2001/02, pp. 58-81, esp. 70-76, see in that catalogue also cat.no. 62.

Rembrandt laughing, *c.* 1628.
London, Hazzlitt Gooden and Fox *157*

Lit. E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt laughing, *c.* 1628 – a painting resurfaces', *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 2007, pp. 18-41.

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101	V 24	II A 85	III Corr. II A 94	II Corr. I A 23
102	V 26	II A 93	III A 113	II C 50
103	II A 68	III A 112	II A 92	II A 48
104	V 3	III C 95	III A 119	II A 57
105			III A 135	II A 56
106			V 27	II C 54
107	I A 30 copy 1			I C 24
107a	I A 30			
108		III A 142		II A 60
109	III A 125		I A 8	IV Corr. II C 53
110			I A 10	II A 52
111	II C 48		I A 11	II A 54
112			I A 18	II A 61
113			IV Corr. I B 6	II C 74
114			I C 29	IV Corr. II C 61
115			I C 31	II A 50
116	II C 88		I B 7	II C 59
117	I C 7		I C 28	II C 57
118			I C 18	II A 49
119			I C 14	II C 70
120			I A 26	II C 68
121			I A 17	II C 69
122	I A 36			II A 59
123	I A 15 copy 1		I C 20	II A 83
124			I A 29	II A 53
125			I C 16	II C 75
126	I C 8			II C 79
127			I A 28	II A 63
128	II A 89		I C 26	II A 55
129			I A 42	II A 71
130	II A 69		I B 4	II C 67
131			II A 40a	II C 63
132		I A 8	I C 32	II A 75
133	II C 49 copy 2	I C 21	I C 21	IV Corr. II C 56
134	II A 65	IV Corr. I B 6	I A 36	II A 76
135	II C 49	I C 32	I C 17	II C 52
136	III A 107	I C 27	II C 54	II A 74
137		I C 31 copy 2	II C 55	II A 80
138		I C 31 copy 1	II Corr. I A 41	II A 81
138A		I C 31		
139	III A 105		II A 46	II A 77
140	III A 126	I C 25	II C 50	II A 78
141	III A 127	I C 26	II A 48	II A 79
142	III A 124	II C 54	II Corr. I A 23	II A 72
143	V 18	II Corr. I A 41	I C 24	II C 60
144	V 15	II C 55		III B 11
145	V 14	II A 43		II C 62
146	V 16	II A 44	IV Corr. II C 53	II A 84
147	I A 16		II C 52	II C 77
148	II A 90	I C 24		II A 82
149	III A 118			II A 86
150			II C 62	II A 87
151			II C 63	IV Add. 4
152		IV Corr. II C 53		II A 73

	HdG	*Bredius Br.-Gerson*	*Bauch*	*Gerson*
153			II A 74	II A 45
154	V 17	II C 74		II C 80
155		II A 60	II A 73	II C 81
156		II Corr. I A 23	II C 51	II A 104
157		IV Add. 1 copy	II A 91	IV Corr. II A 97
158				II A 96
159		II C 70	II C 64	II C 72
160		II A 59		II C 73
161		II A 57		II C 64
162		II A 56	II A 95	II A 98
163		II A 45	IV Corr. III C 101	II A 99
164		II A 54	III A 128	II A 100
165		II C 75		II A 101
166		II A 52	III C 102	II C 78
167		II C 68	III C 100	II C 82
168				II A 102
169		II A 48		II A 103
170		II A 53	II B 8	IV Corr. III C 101
171	II C 50	II A 81	III A 120	IV Corr. III C 92
172		II A 78	III C 99	III C 102
173		II A 80		III C 100
174		II C 76	III A 122	III C 103
175		II C 77	III C 90	II A 85
176		IV Add. 4		II C 65
177	I A 26	II A 86	III C 91	II C 66
178		II A 73		III A 115
179	I A 11	III A 128		III C 111
180		II B 8		III C 104
181	II A 46	II C 52		III C 105
182				II B 8
183		II A 74		III C 108
184				III C 95
185				III C 112
186	I C 17	II C 63		III A 122
187	III C 90			III C 109
188				III C 99
189				III C 98
190		II C 62		III C 89
191		II C 64		III A 133
192	I C 16			III A 129
193				III A 132
194		II A 102		III A 131
195	I A 31			III C 116
196	II A 70	II C 78		III A 136
197	III A 119	II C 72		III C 118
198				III C 117
199		II A 100		III A 125
200	II A 92	II A 98		III A 137
201	II A 47	III C 104		III C 121
202		III A 115		III C 85
203		III C 108		III A 138
204				III C 83
205	III A 112	III C 100		III C 87
206	II A 93	IV Corr. III C 101		III A 135
207	III A 113	III C 102		III C 84
208				V 3
209	I A 38			V 7
210				V 8
211	I C 9	III A 122	V 20	V 4
212	V 27			
213	I A 39			V 2
214		III C 109		V 9
215				V 11
216		III A 129		V 12
217		III A 140		III A 105
218		III A 144		V 14

	HdG	*Bredius Br.-Gerson*	*Bauch*	*Gerson*
219				V 15
220				V 13
221				V 1
222		III C 110		III C 91
223	III Corr. II A 94			V 17
226				III A 142
227	III A 135			
228	I C 15			
229				IV Corr. III C 97
230	III C 91			III A 140
231				III A 141
232				III A 144
233	II C 51			III A 145
234				III A 143
235				III C 113
236	II A 95			III C 94
237				IV Corr. III C 96
238				III A 139
239				III A 146
240	I C 18			IV 2
246				III C 110
249			I C 42	III C 114
250			I A 27	
251		III C 106	II Corr. I A 32	III C 106
252			I A 37	III C 107
253			I A 38	IV 1
254			I A 31	
257			II A 70	
258			II A 93	
259			III A 114	
260			III C 115	
261			III A 112	
262			III C 89	IV 5
264			III A 142	
265				III C 120
266	I C 32			III C 119
268	V 20			
269				V 18
270	III A 120			III A 119
271	III A 122			
272				V 25
273				V 24
274				V 22
275				V 23
278			V 19	V 27
279		V 20		
282	I A 10			
283	III A 133			
287			I A 14	V 20
288			I A 14 copy 1	
289			IV Corr. I A 22	V 19
290			I A 19	III C 122
291			I C 35	V 21
292			I A 20	
293			I C 38	
294			I C 36	
295			IV Corr. I A 21	
296			I C 39	
297			IV Corr. I A 33	
298			I C 34	
299			IV Corr. I B 5	
300			I C 37	
301			II Corr. I A 40	IV 7

	HdG	*Bredius Br.-Gerson*	*Bauch*	*Gerson*
302			II A 58	
303			II A 71	
304			IV Corr. II C 56	
305			II A 72	
306	V 19		III B 11	
307			IV Corr. II A 97	
308			II A 96	IV 8
309			IV Corr. III C 92	
310			IV Corr. III B 10	IV 9
311	II A 64		III C 98	
312			III A 133	
313			IV Corr. III C 97	
314			III C 94	
315			IV Corr. III C 96	
316	I A 37		III A 139	
317			IV 2	
317A	III C 115			
318			IV 3	
319			IV 1	
320	I C 19		IV 5	IV 11
321			IV 6	
322			IV 8	
323			IV 10/3	
324			IV 9	IV 13
325			IV 11	
326			IV 13	
327			IV 15	
328		I C 44	IV 12	
329			IV 14	IV 15
330		II A 55	IV 18	
331		II C 69	IV 26	
332		II C 80	IV 20	
333	I C 10	II A 63	IV 19	
334	III A 111	II A 62	IV 22	
335		II A 83	IV 21	
336		II C 79	IV 16	
337		II C 81	IV 17	
338		II C 71	IV 24	
339		II A 82	IV 27	
340		II A 84	IV 28	
341		II A 79	IV 25	
342		II A 101	IV 29	
343	IV Corr. I C 13	II A 104	IV Corr. I C 22	IV 14
344		II A 87	I C 25 copy 1	III B 12
345	I C 21	II C 82	I C 27	
346	III A 128	II C 73		
347		II A 99	I C 30	
348	II A 73	III C 112	II A 43	V 28
349	II A 48	III C 111	II A 44	V 26
350	II Corr. I A 40	III C 105	II C 74	V 30
351	II B 8	III C 115	II A 54	V 29
352			II A 57	V 16
353	IV Corr. III C 101		II A 56	
354	II C 54	III A 103	II C 70	
355		III A 132	II A 60	
356		III A 131	II C 75	
357		III A 141	II A 59	
358		III C 113	II A 52	
359			II A 53	
360		III A 145	II C 68	
361			II A 80	
362			II C 76	
363			II A 81	

	HdG	*Bredius Br.-Gerson*	*Bauch*	*Gerson*
364			IV Add. 4	
365			II A 86	
366			II A 78	
367			II A 45	
368			II C 77	
369	II A 74	III C 114	II C 72	
370		III C 107		
371	I C 26		II C 78	
372	I C 24		II A 98	
373	IV Corr. II C 53		II A 100	
374			II A 102	
375			III C 104	
375A	II C 55			
376			III A 115	IV 18
377			III C 108	
379			III A 130	
380				IV 26
381			III C 109	IV 20
384			III A 129	
385			III A 140	
386			III A 144	
387	III C 102			
388	I C 27			
389				IV 19
390	I C 25		III C 110	
393	I A 17			
394			III C 106	
399			IV 7	IV 28
403		II A 51		IV 24
405	II C 52	II C 67		
406		II C 65		
407		II C 66		
408		II A 77		
409		III A 143		
410		III A 146		
415	III C 100			IV 27
419		I A 18		IV 25
420		I A 10		IV 29
421		IV Corr. I B 1		
421A		IV Corr. I B 2		
422		V Corr. I C 11		
423		I A 13		
424		IV Corr. I C 13		
425		I C 18		
426		I C 18 copy 1		
427		I C 14		
428		I A 17		
429		I C 15		
430		I C 17		
431		V Corr. II C 51		
432		II A 95		
433		III A 120		
435		III C 91		
437		V 19		
439		III C 116		
440	I C 6	III A 136		
441		III A 137		
442		III A 125		
443		III C 117		
444		III C 121		
445		III C 118		
446		III C 120		
451		III C 119	IV Corr. II C 61	
452			II A 50	

	HdG	*Bredius Br.-Gerson*	*Bauch*	*Gerson*
453			II C 59	
454		III B 12	II C 57	
455			II A 49	
456	I C 31 copy 2	III A 134	II A 61	
457		V 21		
458		III C 122	II A 62	
459			II C 69	
460		I A 6	II A 55	
461			II A 63	
462		I A 31	II A 83	
463		I A 39	II C 58	
464		II A 47		
465		I C 9		
466		I A 38	II A 82	
467		II A 70		
468		III Corr. II A 94	II C 60	
469		III A 114	II A 79	
470		II A 91	II C 80	
471		III A 113	II C 79	
472		II A 92	II C 81	
473			II A 75	
474		III A 119	II A 76	
475			II A 84	
476		III A 135	II A 104	
477			II A 99	
478			II A 101	
479			II C 82	
480			II A 87	
481		V 27		
482			II C 73	
485			III C 105	
486		I A 3	III C 111	
487		I A 2		
488		I A 9	III C 103	
489		I A 24	II A 85	
490	II C 62	I A 25	III C 95	
491		II A 67	III C 112	
492	II C 63	II C 45	II A 103	
494	II C 64	II A 64		
497		III A 110	III A 132	
498		III A 108	III A 131	
499	I C 44	III A 109	III A 141	
500			III C 113	
501		III A 116	III A 145	
502		III C 86		
503		III A 121		
504		II A 66		
505		III A 117		
506			III C 114	
507		III A 123		
508		III C 85		
509		III C 83	III C 107	
511	III C 89	V Corr. III C 84		
513		V 2		
514		V 7		
515		V 9		
516		V 1		
520		V 28		
522		III B 9		
523		V 23		
524	IV 16	V 22		
525	IV Corr. II C 56			
526	II A 96			
527	IV 29			
528	IV 11			
529	I A 20			
530	I C 37	V 29	II A 51	

	HdG	*Bredius Br.-Gerson*	*Bauch*	*Gerson*
531	I C 34		II C 67	
531A		I A 1		
532		I A 4	II A 77	
532A		V Corr. I C 5		
533	I A 14 copy 1	I C 10	II C 65	
534	IV Corr. II A 97	I C 8	II C 66	
535	III A 129	I A 12	III A 111	
536	IV 9	I C 7	III A 143	
537	IV 10/4	I A 30 copy 1	III A 146	
538	III B 11	I A 30		
539	IV 12	I A 16		
539A		I A 15		
540	IV 28	II Corr. I C 6		
541		II C 46 copy 1		
ad 541		V Corr. II C 46		
542	I A 19		III C 116	
543	IV Corr. I B 6	I A 34		
543A		I A 35	III A 136	
544	IV Corr. I A 21	II A 88	III C 118	
545	III C 98	V Corr. II C 48	III A 125	
546		II A 89	III C 117	
547	IV 5	II A 68	III A 137	
548	IV 4	II A 69	III C 121	
549	IV Corr. I A 22	III C 120		
550	III A 139	II A 65	III C 119	
551	IV 27	V Corr. II C 49		
552	I C 36	II A 90		
552A	IV Corr. I A 33	II C 47		
553	IV 15			
554	IV 18	III A 105	III B 12	
555	IV 1	III A 106		
556	IV 26	I C 12		
557	II Corr. I A 23	III A 118		
558		V Corr. III C 88	III A 134	
559	IV Corr. III C 96	III A 124		
560	IV 25	III A 126		
561		III A 127	III C 122	
562	IV 20	III A 138	V 21	
563	IV 14	III C 87		
564	I C 38			
565	IV 2	III A 107	II C 71	
566	II A 71	V 3		
567	II A 72			
568	IV Corr. III B 10	V 5		
569	IV 19	V 8		
570	IV Corr. I B 5	V 4		
572	I C 33	V 6		
573	II A 58			
574	IV 6	V 11		
575	IV 24	V 12		
576	IV Corr. III C 97	V 13		
577	II Corr. I A 41	V 17		
578	IV 3	V 14		
579	IV 21	V 15		
580	IV 8			

	HdG	*Bredius Br.-Gerson*	*Bauch*	*Gerson*
581	IV 13			
582	III C 99			
583		V 18		
584	IV Corr. III C 92	II C 49 copy 2		
585	III C 93			
588		V 25		
589		V 24		
591	I C 39			
592A		V 26		
593B	IV 7			
596		V 30		
597		V 16		
601		I A 11		
602		I A 26		
604		I A 28		
605		I C 16		
606	II A 75			
607	II A 85	I A 36		
608	II A 76	II C 50		
609	III A 142	II A 46		
610		III C 90		
612	II A 61			
613	III C 95			
615	III C 103			
619	III A 132			
620	III A 143			
624	II C 68			
625	II C 69			
629	II C 77			
630	II A 82			
631		I C 2		
632		I A 7		
633	II A 53	IV Corr. I C 22		
634	III C 108			
635	II A 54			
636		I C 23		
637	II A 100			
638	II A 101			
642	III A 140			
643	III A 141			
645	II A 98			
646	II A 99			
654	II A 57			
657	II A 81			

	HdG	*Bredius Br.-Gerson*	*Bauch*	*Gerson*
659	II A 52			
660	III A 115			
661	III C 111			
666	II C 65			
667	II C 66			
668	II C 75			
669	II C 79			
670	II A 43			
672	I C 20			
673	I B 4			
674	I C 30			
675	I A 42			
676	I B 7			
677	I A 29			
678	I C 29 copy 1			
679	II A 40a			
681	I C 28			
682	I C 29			
685	I C 42			
686	I C 41			
687	I A 27			
688	II Corr. I A 32			
691	II C 60			
694	II C 57			
695	II C 58			
696	II C 59			
697	IV Corr. II C 61			
698	II A 49			
699	II A 50			
726	II A 80			
728	III C 113			
730	III C 104			
732	II C 72			
733	II C 70			
734	III A 144			
736	II A 78			
739	II A 102			
744	III C 109			
745	II A 56			
747	III C 110			
749	III C 106			
751	III A 130			
760	II C 76			

	HdG	*Bredius Br.-Gerson*	*Bauch*	*Gerson*
761	II A 59			
762	II C 74			
769	II A 86			
773	IV Add. 1 copy			
775	II A 44			
777	II C 78			
783	II A 60			
785	II A 45			
845	III A 131			
846	III C 105			
848	II C 73			
849	II C 71			
856	III A 104			
859	II C 82			
860	III A 145			
861	III C 114			
865	III C 107			
867	II A 83			
868	III C 112			
873	II A 84			
874	II A 87			
875	II A 62			
877	II A 63			
881	II A 79			
882	III A 103			
883	II C 80			
884	II A 55			
920	II C 81			
926	III A 146			
930	II C 67			
932	II A 51			
933	II A 77			
939	III A 136			
941	III C 117			
942	III A 137			
944	III B 12			
946	III C 121			
948	III C 119			
949	III C 120			
951	III C 118			
968	III A 134			
971	III C 122			
972	V 21			