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Concetto in Rembrandt's *Passion Series*

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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***Concetto in Rembrandt's
Passion Series***

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Volume One

Abstract

Rembrandt's *Passion Series* is the name given to five paintings of similar size and format executed over a six year time-frame, 1633-39. The works were commissioned by Frederick Hendrick, Prince of Orange and Stadholder of the United Provinces, and initially hung in his gallery in the Binnenhof complex at The Hague. Although each of the paintings depicts a traditional scene from the Passion of Christ, they do not form anything like a complete Passion Cycle. Seven years later Hendrick ordered a further two works of the same size and format of subjects from the Nativity of Christ. Unsurprisingly given their fragmented history, scholars have struggled to identify factors, save for subject matter and format, which would unify the *Passion Series* as a coherent series.

This thesis seeks to address this quandary by positing an identifiable, consistent and unifying *conchetto* for the works. The *conchetto* this thesis suggests is analogous with the spirit of seventeenth-century devotional poetry. Recently several scholars, ranging from Gary Schwartz in 1985 through to Mariët Westermann in 2000, have noted a similarity between the subjective persona of the poet/narrator in devotional poetry and the artist/participant/spectator role that Rembrandt adopts in the paintings. Louis Martz has shown how the form and imaginative strategy of such poetry was derived from religious meditation. Following Martz's lead, this thesis argues that the *conchetto* for the paintings, like the poetry, is initially derived from the method of meditation as detailed by Ignatius of Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*. During the meditational process, Ignatius invokes his famous 'composition of place', where one inserts oneself imaginatively into the event in one of three ways.

As Rembrandt was undoubtedly familiar with both the poetry and devotional literature of his age, this thesis argues that in his *conchetto* for the five *Passion Series* works he invokes a similar model. Additionally, I show how such a *conchetto* was both reflective of contemporary theological exegesis and embedded in theoretical artistic debates of the age. Although scholars have noted thematic similarities between contemporary poetry and Rembrandt's later graphic work, none have hitherto connected the *Passion Series* with the *Spiritual Exercises*, via the poetry of the Stadholder's secretary, Constantijn Huygens, and the Englishman John Donne, as this thesis does.

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John Donne commented that, ‘no man is an island, entire of itself’, and this sentiment could well be applied to a doctoral thesis. Therefore, I would like to thank the following people and institutions who have contributed and assisted me during the course of this project.

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Figure 246: Rembrandt workshop, *The Circumcision*, c.1645-46, lead pencil, 8.9 x 6.8 cm, Graphische Sammlung, Munich. Image source: Ernst van de Wetering, Josua Bruyn, Michiel Fraken, Karin Groen, Peter Klein, Jaap van der Veen, Marieke de Winkel, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings, vol. V: Small scale history paintings* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 433.

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Introduction

The *Passion Series*

The *Passion Series* is a group of five works produced by Rembrandt van Rijn over a six-year period (1633-1639) for the official residence of Prince Frederick Hendrick (1584-1647), Stadholder of the United Dutch Provinces, at The Hague.¹ In what is now regarded as the chronological order of execution, the five works are: the *Descent from the Cross*, the *Raising of the Cross*, the *Ascension*, the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection*.² All are now in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich (figures 1-5). The paintings, in arch-shaped frames, are approximately all the same size (c.90 x c.70 cm), and all depict traditional scenes in pictorial cycles of the Passion of Christ. In this way they have come to be called Rembrandt's *Passion Series* although they were not commissioned at the same time and do not form a complete Passion Cycle. The format and subject matter of the works would suggest a narrow devotional function for the *Passion Series*. However, they appear to have been initially displayed in the Stadholder's gallery and therefore viewed by a broad, inter-confessional audience. Paradoxes such as this are one of the reasons the *Passion Series* has in the past fascinated scholars and continues to do so.

In 1968 Ernst Brochhagen opened his seminal article on the *Passion Series* by remarking: 'The artistic criticism and evaluation of the five paintings of the Passion by Rembrandt in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich has always fluctuated'.³ To illustrate the breadth of response the works have attracted, Brochhagen contrasts comments made by Wilhelm Bode in the late

¹ For a socio-historical study of the Dutch Republic in the age of Rembrandt, see Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches* (London: Fontana, 1987). The period is covered historically by Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its rise, greatness and fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). For an overview of seventeenth-century Dutch art, see Mariët Westermann, *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic 1585-1718* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

² The numbered identifications which append the labels that accompany the illustrations refer to Joshua Bruyn, Bob Haak, Simon Levie, Pieter van Theil and Ernst van de Wetering, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. I: 1625-1631, vol. II: 1631-1634 and vol. III: 1635-1642 (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982, 1986, 1989). The 'A' designates a work authenticated by The Rembrandt Research Project authors of the *Corpus*. Also Abraham Bredius, *The Paintings of Rembrandt* (London: Phaidon, 1935) and Bredius revised by Horst Gerson, *The Paintings of Rembrandt* (London: Phaidon, 1969).

³ Ernst Brochhagen, 'Beobachtungen an den Passionbildern Rembrandts in München', *Munuscula Discipulorum...Hans Kaufmann zum 70. Geburtstag 1966* (1968): 37-44. Brochhagen, 'Passionbildern Rembrandts in München', 37. 'Die kunstlerische Beurteilung und Wertschätzung der funfumlaut Passionsbilder Rembrandts in der Alten Pinakothek in München ist immer schwankend gewesen'.

nineteenth century, who was quite dismissive of the paintings: ‘they give little pleasure to the student’; with Werner Weisbach’s evaluation a quarter of a century later, for whom they were: ‘evidence of the highest artistic aspirations... the genuine essence of the whole work by Rembrandt which today only partly awakes in us any real sympathy’.⁴ Brochhagen then comments that: ‘Art historians will certainly always be interested in this series of paintings because, for various reasons, they hold a special place in the *oeuvre* of the painter’.⁵ Indeed they do. Those ‘various reasons’ and that ‘special place’ in Rembrandt’s *oeuvre* that the *Passion Series* occupies are the focus of this thesis. In this thesis I position the works within the religious, social and intellectual seventeenth-century Dutch *milieu* in which they were produced.⁶

Concetto

The Italian noun *concetto* – ‘concept’ or ‘imaginative creation’ – is a term used by art historians to describe the mental process undertaken by an artist in preparation for the production of a work of art.⁷ Famously, the word was used by Michelangelo in his sonnet ‘*Non ha l’ottimo artista alcun concetto*’, where, in the first quatrain, we find one of his few art theoretical statements: ‘The best artist has not any concept (*concetto*)/ Which a single block of marble in itself does not circumscribe/ With its surplus, and to this only/The hand obeys the intellect’.⁸ Although the word *concetto* in this context still retains connotations with ‘thought’ and ‘idea’, Michelangelo is suggesting a conceptualization in terms of forms or images, rather than an idea arrived at by a critical or analytic process of logic or reason. Thus, it appears that he deliberately chooses the word ‘*concetto*’ instead of ‘idea’ to suggest

⁴ Brochhagen, ‘Passionbildern Rembrandts in München’, 37. Original publications: Wilhelm Bode and Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *The Complete Work of Rembrandt* (Paris: Charles Sedemeyer, 1897), 15; Werner Weisbach, *Rembrandt* (Berlin-Leipzig: Propyläen, 1926), 150.

⁵ Brochhagen, ‘Passionbildern Rembrandts in München’, 37. ‘Des kunsthistorischen Interesses konnte sich diese Bilderreihe jedoch immer sicher sein, nimmt sie doch in *Oeuvre* des Künstlers aus verschiedenen Gründen einen ganz besonderen Platz ein’.

⁶ For an overview of the seventeenth-century Dutch *milieu* see Arie van Deursen, *Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular culture, religion and society in seventeenth-century Holland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁷ This thesis follows Erwin Panofsky’s definition of the term *concetto* in, *Idea: A concept in Art History* [1924], translated by Joseph Peake (New York; Harper and Row, 1968). Panofsky traces the first use of the term to Petrarch’s Sonnet 78, ‘When Simon received the high idea’, see Panofsky, *Idea*. 66.

⁸ Michelangelo, ‘*Non ha l’ottimo artista alcun concetto*’ (sonnet 151):

‘Non ha l’ottimo artista alcun concetto
C’un marmo solo in se non circonscriva
Col suo superchio, e solo a quello arriva
La man che ubbidisce all’intelletto’.

As translated in, Alma Altizer, *Self and Symbolism in the Poetry of Michelangelo, John Donne and Agrippa d’Aubigne* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 19.

something more than an intellectual process. He seems less interested in the origin of the *conchetto* than in how its realization requires the bringing together of imagination and reality, subject and object, to indicate a uniquely artistic process. Unsurprisingly, the term has a long history in art historical literature, although theorists struggle to describe the term as eloquently as Michelangelo. The artist, biographer and art theorist Karel van Mander (1548-1606) in his didactic poem, *The Foundation of the Art of Painting (Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-const)* of 1604 (usually referred to as the *Grondt*), the theoretical section of his *Schilder-boeck*, speaks of the artist making a ‘concept in his mind’ (figs 6, 7 and 8).⁹ Ernst van de Wetering comments that ‘this idea about the conception of a work of art must have been a hot issue in the studios’.¹⁰ Pictorially, nowhere is this process of *conchetto* better illustrated than by Rembrandt himself in his 1629 image *The Artist in his Studio* (fig. 9) now in Boston. Van de Wetering has suggested that this work ‘should be perhaps considered as an art theoretical statement’, adding, ‘this is just a bare workplace with a painter who is not working, but looking – or thinking. But *thinking* may be the very key to the meaning of this work’.¹¹ In the painting, Rembrandt leaves a large unoccupied space between the figure of the artist and the easel. The artist fills this unoccupied space thematically with the process of *conchetto*. In this thesis I will endeavour to fill an identical space (metaphorically speaking) between Rembrandt the seventeenth-century Dutch artist and his five *Passion Series* works. In suggesting a plausible *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*, I will attempt to establish a series of unifying factors both stylistically and thematically for the works, a unity that has heretofore eluded scholars, such as Kurt Bauch, who in 1962 declared that they must be regarded as ‘*Einzelbilder*’ (‘single pictures’).¹²

⁹ Karel van Mander, *Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-const* [1604], reprint edited by Hessel Miedema (Utrecht: Davaco, 1973), *Foundations*, fol. 8b.

¹⁰ Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The painter at work* (Berkeley: University of California Press in association with The University of Amsterdam, 2000), 88. Van de Wetering illustrates his suggestion with reference to a contemporary ‘painting contest’, in which three artists each present a method of conception; the winner Porcellis is described as, making the painting in his mind before he put brush to canvas. See, van de Wetering, *The painter at work*, 81-87.

¹¹ Van de Wetering, *The painter at work*, 87.

¹² Kurt Bauch, ‘Rembrandt’s *Christus am Kreuz*’. *Pantheon* XX: 3 (1962):137-144. To be fair, Bauch’s article focuses on his ‘discovery’ of Rembrandt’s *Christ on the Cross* of 1631, now in the parish church of St. Vincent, Le Mas d’Agenais, France, not on the *Passion Series*. He refers to the *Passion Series* only towards the end of his article as he positions the *Christ on the Cross* stylistically within Rembrandt’s *oeuvre*.

The Commission

Certainly, Bauch's judgement is entirely in keeping with the fractured history of the commission. The first two works in the series, the *Descent* and the *Raising*, were commissioned around 1631/2, during Rembrandt's late Leiden period.¹³ They were apparently delivered in 1633 as they are not listed on a 1632 inventory of the Stadholder's residence.¹⁴ The inventory shows that the Stadholder already owned several works by Rembrandt. These included a prestigious court portrait commission early in his career, a profile portrait of Frederick Hendrick's wife, Amalia van Solms (1602-1675). The work was modelled after Gerard van Honthorst's (1590-1656) portrait of the Stadholder painted the year before (figs 10 and 11).¹⁵ The inventory also shows that by 1632 Frederick Hendrick and Amalia, as they sought to identify themselves with the royal courts of Europe, had amassed an art collection of considerable size and quality, including six works by the famous Flemish (and Catholic) artist Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640). However, Frederick Hendrick and Amalia were not royalty as such. Although uncontestedly the most important man in The Hague, Frederick Hendrick was not Count of Holland, the traditional meaning of the title – Stadholder.¹⁶ Rather his role as Stadholder was to oversee the administration of justice in all its forms, a primarily military role as the newly formed Republic was constantly engaged in conflicts with the Catholic south. Therefore, certainly for political if not private reasons, Frederick Hendrick was keen to be seen as a practicing member of the official state church, the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church.¹⁷ For guidance in improving his perceived image the Stadholder had to look no further than his secretary, Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687). Huygens, a polymath, was both a connoisseur of the arts and a renowned poet.¹⁸ The initial Rembrandt commission was in all likelihood arranged through his agency. Huygens had earlier praised the talents of both Rembrandt and his contemporary Jan Lievens (1607-1674)

¹³ The paintings are very similar stylistically to other works produced in Leiden dated to 1631. For a summary of those works see Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. 1, 280.

¹⁴ The full inventory, 'Inventaris van het Stadhouderlijk Kwartier en het Huis in het Noordeinde (Oude Hof)', is published in S. W. A. Drossaers and Th. H. Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de Inboedels in de Verblijuen de Oranges en Daarmede Gelijk te Stellen Stricken*, vol. I (The Hague: Rijks Geschiedkundige, 1974-78), 181-237.

¹⁵ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #s 186 and 219 at 189 and 191.

¹⁶ For the institution of the Stadholderate see Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 300-06.

¹⁷ The term 'Calvinism' refers to the writings and teachings of the French born, Geneva based, Reformed theologian John Calvin (1509-1564). For Calvin's seminal treatise see, *John Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* [several editions 1539-59] 1559 edition edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: SCM Press 1960). The Dutch Reformed Church became the official state church in the aftermath of the Synod of Dort, 1618-19.

¹⁸ See Paul Sellin, 'John Donne and the Huygens Family', *Dutch Quarterly Review* 12 (1982/3): 193-204.

in his youthful autobiography (in Latin) of c.1630. He noted particularly the portrayal, in Rembrandt's *The Repentant Judas Returning the Thirty Pieces of Silver* of 1629 (fig. 12), of the figure of Judas, whom he saw as both the embodiment of the penitent in general and a portrayal of the repentance of one man.¹⁹

After a three year gap, Rembrandt dispatched the *Ascension* to The Hague in 1636, followed a further three years later by the last two works, the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection*. The history of this second half of the commission, which seems to have been driven by the Stadholder himself, is partially documented in a series of letters written by Rembrandt to Huygens that have survived, though unfortunately Huygens' replies have been lost.²⁰ The letters are an extraordinary resource for scholars as they contain detailed and, in fact, the only comments by Rembrandt on his craft. As such they have become integral to any discussion of the *Passion Series* and are a key primary source for this thesis. In the 1640s, when the Stadholder ordered two further paintings of similar size and in similar frames from Rembrandt to hang alongside the Passion works, the subject matter was not from the Passion but from the Nativity. They can be seen as related subjects, as they refer to the dual nature of Christ on earth, the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 13) is now also in Munich, in which Christ is first recognised as divine and the *Circumcision*, in which by bleeding, His humanity is revealed. The *Circumcision* is now lost, but is known by way of a seemingly faithful copy in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig (fig. 14). In a section of this thesis, I will present an argument as to why these two latter paintings, of seemingly unrelated subjects, were added to the '*Passion Series*'. However, initially, I will focus on the five paintings that directly depict events from the Passion of Christ and are therefore generally referred to as the *Passion Series*.

¹⁹ Huygens' autobiography, a primary source for this thesis, was not published until the late nineteenth century, in Latin with a Dutch translation, by Johannes Worp as 'Constantyn Huygens over de Schilders van zijn tijd'. *Oud Holland* XI (1891): 106-136; and the complete text as 'Autobiographie van Constantijn Huygens', *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap XVIII* (1897): 1-122. It was translated into Dutch by A. H. Kan, *De Jeugd van Constantijn Huygens door Hemzelf Beschreven* (Rotterdam: Donker, 1946); for a good English translation of the section in which Huygens discusses Rembrandt and Lievens see Loekie and Gary Schwartz in, Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt: His life, his paintings* (New York: Viking, 1985), 73-4. See also the commentary by Seymour Slive, *Rembrandt and his Critics* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953), 8-26. Also, Walter Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York: Arabin, 1979), 1630/5, 68-72.

²⁰ The first scholarly discussion of the letters was by Jan van Rijckevorsel, 'Rembrandts Schilderijen voor Prins Frederik Hendrik', *Historia Maandschrift voor Geschiedenis en Kuntsgeschiedenis* 4 (1938): 221-226. The letters were edited by Horst Gerson and published in an English translation in 1961. Horst Gerson ed., *Seven Letters by Rembrandt*, transcribed by Isabella van Eeghen; translated by Yola Ovink (The Hague: Boucher, 1961). See also Strauss and van der Muelen, *Documents*, 1636/1 and 2 at 128-133; 1639/2-6 at 160-173.

The paintings in the *Passion Series* are first recorded in an inventory dated 20 March 1668 of Amalia van Solms, then widow of Frederick Hendrick. It records among ‘the paintings in the Court in the Noordeinde’: ‘[1240] Seven paintings made by Rembrandt, all with black frames, oval at the top with gilt leaves all round’.²¹ The paintings are not mentioned in the ‘Depositions Book’ of Amalia van Solms of 1673 or in the deed of the division her estate dated 1676.²² I venture to suggest that this indicates that they may have already been gifted to one of Amalia’s daughters, perhaps Maria (1642-88) who, in 1666 married a German prince Louis Henry (1640-74), later Count Palatine of Simmeron-Kaiserlautern. Three other daughters also married German princes. Although there is no documented evidence to support this supposition it would explain how and when they came to be in Düsseldorf in 1719, when all seven paintings appear again in the inventory of the collection of the Elector Palatine Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz (1658-1717).²³ Once in Düsseldorf the paintings were thrice removed from the city: in 1758 to Mannheim in the face of a bombardment by the Prussian army, in 1794 to Gluckstadt as French troops approached and in 1805 to Kircheimbolanden before the Duchy of Berg was ceded to France. Eventually, they arrived in Munich where they have been housed ever since.²⁴

Initially however, the paintings were not hung in the Noordeinde palace as the 1668 inventory states but, as scholars have now shown, they must have been removed there by Frederick Hendrick’s widow after his death in 1647.²⁵ The Noordeinde had been brought and renovated by the States of Holland in 1595 as a residence for Louise de Coligny (1555-1620), widow of William the Silent (1533-84).²⁶ After her death, it was not re-occupied until required for Amalia.²⁷ In a post-script to his Second Letter to Huygens, Rembrandt suggests

²¹ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, 238-292 at 285. [1240] ‘Seven stucken schilderije bij Rembrandt gemaect, alle met swarte lijsten, boven ovaelsgewijse ende rontom vergulde gesnede feuellages’.

²² Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, 317-322 and 325-377. A ‘Depositions Book’ is a record of possessions made when moving to different accommodation.

²³ Gerhard Joseph Karsch, *Grundliche specification derer vortrefflichen und unschatzbaren Gemhlen...*, *In der Gallerie der Churfurstl. Residentz zu Düsseldorf...*, [1719]: ‘Diese sieben folgende Stuck *repsentiren* die *passion* unseres HErrn *JEsu Christi*, seynd gemahlet von dem berühmten Mahler *Rembrandt*’. (‘The connected seven pictures *representing* the *passion* of Our Lord *Jesus Christ*, are painted by the famous Master painter *Rembrandt*’). Note that here seven paintings are mentioned. This catalogue was reprinted by Jan van Gool (1685-1763), *De Nieuwe Schouburg der Nederlantsche Kunstschilders en Schilderessen*, 2 vols (The Hague: 1750-51), vol. II, 531-67. Available on Google Books.

²⁴ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 287.

²⁵ Peter van der Ploeg and Carola Vermeeren, eds., *Princely Patrons: The collection of Frederick Henry of Orange and Amalia van Solms in The Hague* (The Hague and Zwolle; Mauritshuis and Waanders, 1997), 193.

²⁶ See Peter van der Ploeg and Carla Vermeeren, ‘From the ‘Sea Princes’ Monies’: The Stadholder’s art collection’, in *Princely Patrons*, edited by van der Ploeg and Vermeeren, 34-60.

²⁷ van der Ploeg and Vermeeren, ‘From the ‘Sea Princes’ Monies’, 38.

that ‘the best place to show it (the *Ascension*) is in the gallery of His Excellency’.²⁸ This strongly implies that during Fredrick Hendrick’s life-time the *Passion Series* hung in the Stadholder’s gallery in the Binnenhof at The Hague. The gallery was a long room north-facing with ample wall space ideal for hanging pictures, the content and organization of which are suggested in the 1632 inventory. The gallery functioned as both a public and private space, in that it acted as both a waiting room for official visitors and petitioners and also provided a pleasant salon for Fredrick Hendrick and his family to converse with friends. As a room in almost constant use by a large and diverse audience, Rembrandt’s paintings would have been viewed by people from a wide range of confessional identities. The visual impact the works would have had in the gallery at the time is considerably diminished today, due to the regrettable condition of the paint surfaces.

In their discussion of the works in the *Corpus*, the Rembrandt Research Project describes each of the *Passion Series* paintings as being ‘poorly preserved’.²⁹ It is thought that the works suffered quite severe damage in the mid-eighteenth century, the cause of which is unknown. Gary Schwartz has suggested that the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection* may have been dispatched to The Hague in haste with the top layer of paint applied over an existing layer that was insufficiently dry.³⁰ He states that in a few patches of the works where the original colour can be retrieved reveal unexpectedly bright pastel tones very different from the extreme light-and-dark colour contrasts that the paintings now exhibit.³¹ The only precise information on the condition of the works when they arrived in Germany is provided by Phillip Hieronymus Brinckmann (1709-1761), court painter to Carl Theodor, Elector Palatine in Mannheim. In a letter Brinckmann states that he undertook, what is now known to have been extensive, restoration work on all ‘six’ Rembrandts.³² Brinckmann therefore suggests that the *Circumcision* was lost some time between 1719 and 1756 or perhaps it was simply not worth saving. Brinckmann wrote boastingly about his achievements, even to the point of inscribing the back of the *Resurrection*, with the remark: ‘Rembrandt created me; P. H. Brinckmann brought me back to life’.³³ However, nowhere does Brinckmann mention

²⁸ Rembrandt, Second Letter, ‘op de galdeerij van S exc salt best te toonenen sijn’. In Gerson ed., *Letters*, 26 and 30 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1636/2 at 132-33.

²⁹ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 278, 361 and Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. III, 204, 271 and 281.

³⁰ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 117.

³¹ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 114.

³² Brinckmann, letter to Carl Hendrick von Heinechen, 30th March 1756, in Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 287.

³³ The inscription is in Latin: ‘Rembrand Creavit me/ PHBrinckmann ressuscutavit Te/1755’, in Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 287.

making major stylistic additions as was once first thought.³⁴ Due to their poor condition, the painterly aspects of the works have hitherto attracted only brief comment. Rather, scholars have approached the *Passion Series* along alternative avenues of inquiry.

One way in which Rembrandt's *Passion Series* has been discussed is in terms of thematic analogies between the paintings and contemporary devotional poetry, especially as Huygens who was involved in the commissioning process was a notable poet himself.³⁵ This thesis builds on such previously posited but never fully explored approaches to suggest an identifiable and consistent *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* works that is analogous to the spirit of contemporary devotional poetry. Further, I will argue that the *conchetto*, like the poetry, is initially derived in part from the method of religious meditation as detailed by St. Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491-1556) in his *Spiritual Exercises* of 1522-41 (figs 15 and 16).³⁶ This argument, which has hitherto been explored by literary scholars but has never been taken further and linked to painting in any specificity, is intended to illustrate how Rembrandt brings a unified approach to the works, which permits the *Passion Series*, finally, to be properly called a series. As this thesis therefore builds on the work of others, we must first review the literature before we can begin to consider the wider context for the works or argue for a *conchetto* derived from sources such as these.

Literature Review

This thesis was initially inspired by a comment made by Schwartz in a footnote to his discussion of the *Passion Series* in his 1985 monograph of Rembrandt.³⁷ In it, he comments on the relationship between Rembrandt's patron Huygens and the English poet and cleric John Donne (1573-1631/fig. 17).³⁸ Although indisputably Brochhagen's radiographic findings and Bauch's investigations laid the foundations for what is an ever growing corpus of literature relating to the *Passion Series*, scholars have begun increasingly to explore avenues of inquiry that like Schwartz place the works in a wider context. A context that, I argue in this thesis, prioritizes patronage and location, explores the broader artistic circles in

³⁴ Brochhagen, 'Passionbildern Rembrandts in München', 43.

³⁵ For a discussion of Huygens' poetry which situates his work in a broader European context specifically in relation to the work of English devotional poets see, Rosie Colie, *Some Thankfulness to Constantine: A study of English influence upon the works of Constantijn Huygens* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

³⁶ St. Ignatius, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and selected works [1522-41]*, edited by George Ganss (New York; Paulist Press, 1991). All references are to this edition.

³⁷ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 118.

³⁸ For an informative biography of John Donne see Paul Carey, *John Donne: Life, mind and art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

which Rembrandt moved and one that probes questions such as: why is there no crucifixion scene in the *Passion Series*, why are the self-images so prominent in the earliest works and how do the later two paintings from the 1640s relate to the earlier five? I will argue that our ability to answer these and other intriguing questions that the *Passion Series* poses is contingent on further attempts to unify the series as a coherent whole. I will argue that Rembrandt, encouraged by Huygens, who in turn was enthralled by the polemics of Donne, became familiar with contemporary devotional poetry and that each of the paintings in the *Passion Series* is conceived in a manner corresponding to their poetic expression. In his seminal 1954 work, *The Poetry of Meditation*, Louis Martz demonstrated how *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola* provided the initial structural basis for the work of English Metaphysical poets, particularly that of Donne.³⁹ Martz described how the form and imaginative strategy of contemporary devotional poetry often reflected the method of meditation as detailed by Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises*. In this thesis I will demonstrate how the *Spiritual Exercises* could have provided Rembrandt with a coherent, unified approach, a *conchetto*, similar to that employed by Huygens and Donne in their poetry, when conceiving each of the works in the *Passion Series*. The *conchetto* for Rembrandt's *Passion Series* that this thesis suggests provides a unity for the series that has hitherto eluded scholars in the literature.

Early Literature

The only book-length discussion of Rembrandt's *Passion Series* is a dissertation by Else Sass published in 1971 entitled, *Comments on Rembrandt's Passion Paintings and Constantijn Huygens' Iconography*.⁴⁰ Sass' dissertation, as the title suggests, is divided into two sections, though it is the first section that is of particular interest. Foremost, Sass' major contribution is that she argues for an earlier dating for the *Descent* than the *Raising*, thus reversing the biblical chronology, a dating which the Rembrandt Research Project now accepts as accurate.⁴¹ Sass, in her text and extensive endnotes, draws upon almost all the existing *Passion Series* literature up to the date of her publication. The literature was written largely by German scholars as they built on the work of the nineteenth-century German connoisseurs who had ready access to a large percentage of Rembrandt's painted *oeuvre* which is in

³⁹ Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954).

⁴⁰ Else Sass, *Comments on Rembrandt's Passion Paintings and Constantijn Huygens' Iconography* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1971).

⁴¹ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 283.

Germany. The earliest article, 1929, to which Sass refers is by Wolfgang von Stechow entitled, 'Rembrandts Darstellungen der Kreuzabnahme' ('Rembrandt's Portrayal of the Descent from the Cross'), in which he endeavours to identify possible pictorial sources, other than Rubens, for Rembrandt's painting.⁴² Sass also refers to more recent literature, such as Brochhagen's 1968 article. In her comments on the later three works in the *Passion Series* she states: 'Ernst Brochhagen has recently discussed these works very thoroughly'.⁴³ However, Brochhagen's article is only seven pages in length. The solitary page Sass devotes to her own comments on the *Ascension*, the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection*, and the relative brevity of Brochhagen's article are entirely symptomatic of much of the *Passion Series* literature, especially monographs on Rembrandt, which focus attention chiefly on the first two works, the *Descent* and the *Raising*. A further example of this is Mariët Westermann's 2000 monograph on Rembrandt, in which the first two works are afforded four and a half pages and two full-page colour illustrations, while the other three are discussed in half a page with no illustrations.⁴⁴ It is as if the later three works are the 'poor cousins' of the *Passion Series*; it is therefore perhaps little wonder that scholars have repeatedly failed to find any unity in the series, apart from subject matter.

Despite its brevity, Brochhagen's 1968 article does however mark something of a watershed in the Rembrandt literature regarding the *Passion Series* as he, in his capacity as curator at the Alte Pinakothek, was the first scholar to undertake radiographic analysis of the works.⁴⁵ The findings of the radiography revealed that Rembrandt had made numerous and significant changes in all five works in the *Passion Series*. For example, in the *Descent*, he removed the figure of the Virgin Mary from beside the Cross to a position in the left foreground.⁴⁶ Brochhagen does not make as much use of his access to these radiographic images as he might have, as he becomes entangled in a range of references to the work of other scholars; nevertheless, his short article has had a considerable influence on interpretations of the *Passion Series*. In their comments on each of the five Passion paintings in the *Corpus*, the Rembrandt Research Project repeatedly refer to Brochhagen's findings, to show how Rembrandt's alterations provide evidence of the artist wrestling at great length with

⁴² Wolfgang von Stechow, 'Rembrandts Darstellungen der Kreuzabnahme', *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 50 (1929): 217-232.

⁴³ Sass, *Comments*, 32.

⁴⁴ Mariët Westermann, *Rembrandt* (London: Phaidon, 2000), 101-08.

⁴⁵ Also, Ernst Brochhagen and Brigitte Knutteele, *Kat III: Hollandische Malerei des 17' (Jahhunderts: Munich, 1967)*, 58-72.

⁴⁶ Brochhagen, 'Passionbildern Rembrandts in München', 40.

theological and iconographic concerns. An example of which is the over-painting of a God the Father figure in the upper section of the *Ascension*.⁴⁷ This conception of Rembrandt's alterations suggests a predetermined *concetto* for the works, construed in part in consultation with the requirements of the patrons, yet one intended to appeal to a broad audience.

Episodic as the approach of the authors in the Rembrandt literature may be, every major monograph on his life and work does discuss the *Passion Series* to some extent, almost invariably by way of comparison with Rubens. The first in this long line was Jacob Rosenberg in *Rembrandt: Life and work* of 1948.⁴⁸ Rosenberg discusses just one *Passion Series* work, the *Descent*, which he compares with Rubens' monumental treatment of the same subject in the central panel of his altarpiece for Antwerp Cathedral of c.1612 (fig. 18). This image was widely disseminated by way of Lucas Vorsterman's (1595-1675) print after Rubens (fig. 19).⁴⁹ Rosenberg's work is also notable for raising the question of Rembrandt's personal faith and whether his confessional identity can be detected from a study of his iconography. Rosenberg, citing Carel Neumann's 1902 biography of Rembrandt, makes a case for an association between Rembrandt and the Mennonite sect: 'But what really counts is Rembrandt's spiritual affiliation to this sect, with which he shared many basic beliefs, far more than with Calvinism'.⁵⁰ There is little evidence to support this assertion, and moreover, it misses the point that seventeenth-century artists were particularly adept at matching their iconography to the specific tastes of individual patrons and that Rembrandt was a master of this practice.⁵¹ Rosenberg begins a long list of scholars who have tried in vain to find evidence in Rembrandt's *oeuvre* for an iconographic preference that would connect him to a

⁴⁷ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. III, 206; Brochhagen, 'Passionbildern Rembrandts in München', 40.

⁴⁸ Rosenberg, *Rembrandt: Life and work* (London: Phaidon, 1948).

⁴⁹ Rosenberg, *Rembrandt*, 80.

⁵⁰ Rosenberg, *Rembrandt*, 81. Carel Neumann [1902], *Aus der Werkstaff Rembrandts* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1922), vol. II, 626-692. Neumann refers to Filippo Baldinucci's, *Cominciamento, e progresso dell'Arte dell'Intagliare in Rame, colle Vite di molti de' piu eccellenti Maestri della stessa Professione* [1686]. Baldinucci in turn states got his information from Bernard Keil (1624-1687) a painter who studied with Rembrandt in Amsterdam 1648-1656. See Charles Ford ed., *Lives of Rembrandt – Sandrart, Baldinucci and Houbraken* (London: Pallas Athene, 2007).

⁵¹ Several scholars touch on this point throughout their work: Christian Tümpel, *Rembrandt: All the paintings in colour* (Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 1986); Simon Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes* (London: Penguin, 1999); H. Perry Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits: A study in seventeenth-century identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Shelly Perlove and Larry Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). However, the most instructive commentary is provided by Schwartz in a chapter that focuses specifically on the question of patronage in Gary Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book* (New York: Abrams, 2006), 143-229.

particular Reformed sect.⁵² The question remains a topic of considerable debate right up until a 2006 essay by Volker Manuth which seeks to convincingly bury once and for all the question of a particular Mennonite connection.⁵³ He does this first, by reference to the biographical documentation that links Rembrandt with the official Dutch Reformed Church and secondly, by demonstrating how Rembrandt's unorthodox handling of certain subjects makes it impossible to align him with any one denomination.

A further contribution to the monographic discussions of the *Passion Series* was provided in 1957 by Otto Benesch, *Rembrandt: A biographical and critical study*.⁵⁴ Benesch, by way of a discussion of the word 'beweechgelickheyt' in a sentence from the Third Letter by Rembrandt, endeavours to find some stylistic unity for the *Passion Series*.⁵⁵ Gerson's later translation of the context in which this important word occurs is: '...in these two pictures the greatest and most natural movement/emotion has been expressed'.⁵⁶ Further studies have broadened the word's definition to mean 'inner emotion expressed by outward movement', designed to immediately stir similar passions in the viewer.⁵⁷ Benesch believes that the expression of inner emotion through outward movement which Rembrandt prided himself on having achieved in the *Resurrection* was the great problem that engrossed the artist throughout the 1630s. He states that this 'dynamism, generated by cross-currents of emotional tension, dominates not only the religious paintings, *Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee* (1633, Boston), and the etching, the *Raising of Lazarus* (1634), but also the mythological pictures such as the *Rape of Proserpina* (1631, Berlin)'.⁵⁸ Benesch's comments in his discussion of the contemporary usage of the word *beweechgelickheyt* signal, albeit rather tentatively, the beginning of a much wider scholarly approach to Rembrandt studies. Scholars now began to examine thematic cross-currents between artistic practice and the

⁵² Schwartz, *Rembrandt*; Tümpel, *All the paintings*; Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits*; Volker Manuth, 'Denomination and Iconography: The Choice of Subject Matter in the Biblical Painting of the Rembrandt Circle', *Simiolus* 22 (1993/4): 235-252.

⁵³ Volker Manuth, 'Are you a Mennonite, Papist, Arminian, or Beggar? Art, Religion and Rembrandt', in *Rembrandt: Quest of a genius*, edited by Ernst van de Wetering (Zwolle: Waanders, 2006), 65-77.

⁵⁴ Otto Benesch, *Rembrandt: A biographical and critical study* (New York: Skira, 1957).

⁵⁵ Rembrandt, Third Letter, '...die meeste ende die naetuerelste beweechgelickheijt'. In Gerson ed., *Letters*, 34 and 38 and Strauss and van der Museulen, *Docuemnts*, 1639/2 at 160-62.

⁵⁶ Gerson ed., *Letters*, 38.

⁵⁷ The word 'beweechgelickheyt' has been variously interpreted and the subject of much debate. See Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1639/2, 160-62.

⁵⁸ Benesch, *Rembrandt*, 61. *Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee*, 1633, oil on canvas, 160 x 128 cm, formerly in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. *Corpus*, 68 A. Bredius, 547. *The Raising of Lazarus*, 1631, etching with burin, 36.6 x 25.8 cm, Amsterdam. *The Abduction of Proserpina*, 1631, oil on panel, 84.8 x 79.7 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. *Corpus*, 39 A. Bredius, 463.

literature of the age, in an attempt to place the work of Rembrandt and others in a broader social and intellectual Reformed framework.

Later Literature

The most important inter-disciplinary contribution to the literature that informs this thesis are three related publications by William Halewood. First, in *The Poetry of Grace* of 1970, Halewood links meditational treatises and techniques to the Protestant doctrine of grace and shows how this theology finds expression in seventeenth-century devotional poetry.⁵⁹ Secondly, Halewood discusses the implications of Protestant thought on Rembrandt's *oeuvre*, particularly his late graphic work, in *Six Subjects of Reformation Art: A Preface to Rembrandt* of 1982.⁶⁰ Finally, Halewood comments on Rembrandt's 'beggar' etchings in a 1993 article, 'Rembrandt's Low Diction'.⁶¹ In this article, Halewood positions Rembrandt in a historical framework that is 'emphatically' and 'universally' Protestant, 'which assured that he could not possibly be left on his own with the words of his Bible, that he would, unavoidably, read them in Protestant ways'.⁶² In the teachings of Protestantism the Word empowered the most humble; accordingly, Halewood sees the beggar role that Rembrandt adopts in several early self-portrait etchings as emblematic of the condition of man without grace. Rembrandt's representations of himself as a beggar are presented as consistent with the participatory self-representation in the *Raising* and the *Descent* from the *Passion Series*.⁶³ Halewood concludes that in his view in these self-images Rembrandt as an artist penetrated more deeply than any other 'by the defining the conceptions of primitive Protestantism'.⁶⁴ Thus he demonstrates how Protestant theology as expounded in meditational treatises and techniques found expression in contemporary poetry and its implications for Rembrandt's *oeuvre*.

Halewood is not alone in his fascination with Rembrandt's self-imagery in which he assumes biblical 'personas'. It has long held the attention of scholars. H. Perry Chapman in a chapter entitled 'Rembrandt's Biblical Roles', in *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits: A study in Seventeenth-Century identity* of 1990, discusses three such works, one of which is the *Passion Series*

⁵⁹ William Halewood, *The Poetry of Grace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

⁶⁰ William Halewood, *Six Subjects of Reformation Art: A Preface to Rembrandt* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 125-136.

⁶¹ William Halewood, 'Rembrandt's Low Diction', *Oud Holland* 107:3 (1993): 287-295.

⁶² Halewood, 'Rembrandt's Low Diction', 288.

⁶³ Halewood, 'Rembrandt's Low Diction', 292.

⁶⁴ Halewood, 'Rembrandt's Low Diction', 293.

Raising.⁶⁵ Chapman seems to concur with Halewood: ‘the roles in which he (Rembrandt) cast himself were formulated in the framework of seventeenth-century Protestant thought, especially the encouragement of self-scrutiny’.⁶⁶ Chapman describes the self-images as ‘brazen’ and ‘proprietary’, and suggests that they have, ‘significance beyond those in some of his other history paintings’.⁶⁷ To shed light on the complexity of this self-imagery, Chapman proceeds to examine both Rembrandt’s personal position when the *Raising* was produced and the theological framework from which it would have been viewed by a contemporary audience. Chapman shows how Rembrandt’s inclusion of a self-image in the painting shifts the customary compassion for Christ’s suffering to an evocation of mankind’s instinctive sinful nature, thereby imparting an extraordinary confessional character to the work. She comments that this is in keeping with a pictorial tradition (Albrecht Dürer’s, *Large Passion*, woodcuts, published in 1511, Nuremberg) and contemporary poetry (Jacobus Revius’ collection of poems, *Over-Ysselsche sangen en dichten*, published in Deventer in 1630).⁶⁸

Chapman’s approach of placing the work in the framework of seventeenth-century thought is similar to the exegesis of two major monographs dating from the mid-1980s. The first is Schwartz’s 1985, *Rembrandt: His life, his paintings*, the second, Christian Tümpel’s 1986, *Rembrandt: All the paintings in colour*. In the *Preface* to his work, Schwartz notes that a search for authenticity has dominated Rembrandt studies for almost a century and that positive attribution has likewise been the focus of the hugely ambitious Rembrandt Research Project initiated in 1968. Conversely, his aim is to place Rembrandt’s works within their seventeenth-century social context, by attempting to ‘close the rift between the documents and the works’.⁶⁹ Schwartz’s success in this endeavour could be gauged by his treatment of the *Passion Series*. In his discussion of the *Passion Series*, Schwartz concentrates on Rembrandt’s letters and in constructing Huygens’ fictional replies. This interpretative approach contrasts sharply to Tümpel’s carefully assembled array of documented facts, with the addition of copious and extensive endnotes. Despite the excellence of his research

⁶⁵ Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 105-114. The other two works discussed are, *Rembrandt and Saskia as the Prodigal Son in the Tavern*, c.1635, oil on canvas, 161 x 131 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden. *Corpus*, 111 A. Bredius, 30. And the late, *Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul*, 1661, oil on canvas, 91 x 77 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Bredius, 59.

⁶⁶ Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 105.

⁶⁷ Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 109.

⁶⁸ Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 112-113. The significance of the Dürer Passion Series of 1511 as a pictorial source for Rembrandt was first suggested by Ingvar Bergström, ‘Rembrandt’s Double-Portrait of Himself and Saskia at the Dresden Gallery’, *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 18 (1966): 143-169, esp. 164-66.

⁶⁹ Schwartz, *Rembrandt, Preface*.

Tümpel however does not offer any new startling insights. In his endnotes Tümpel often takes issue with the speculative aspects of Schwartz's text. Much of Schwartz's commentary is admittedly anecdotal; however, he should be credited with having the vision and courage to approach Rembrandt in a fresh and distinctive way, an approach that becomes more nuanced in his 2006, thematically arranged, *The Rembrandt Book*.

The greater subtlety that Schwartz demonstrates in this later publication is evidenced by his discussion of the *Passion Series*. In what begins as yet another commentary on the significance of the word *beweegelijkheid*, Schwartz engages with a recent 2005 article by Thijs Weststeijn, in which he interprets the word in relation to the teachings of rhetoric and oratory.⁷⁰ In his article, Weststeijn analyses Samuel van Hoogstraten's (1627-78) hand-book on the rules of painting and advice for artists of 1678, *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst* (figs 20 and 21). In it, van Hoogstraten, the former Rembrandt pupil employs rhetorical strategies based upon the writings of Cicero (106-43 B.C.) and Quintilian (35-100 A.D.).⁷¹ Weststeijn argues that what emerges from van Hoogstraten's text is a picture of Rembrandt as a 'rhetorical' painter, aware of and engaging with the Quintilian concepts of *affectus*, *ornatus* and *enargeia* – which as Quintilian himself states: 'Cicero calls 'illumination' and 'actuality''.⁷² Weststeijn further argues that there is every reason to think that the concept of *beweegelijkheid* to which Rembrandt was referring was equivalent to Quintilian's *enargeia*.⁷³ Schwartz believes that such lofty aims for art was the subject of discussion between Huygens and Rembrandt and that the inclusion of the self-portrait in the *Descent* must have been agreed upon as an extension of these ideas.⁷⁴ Schwartz concludes that: 'The concept has far-reaching implications for Rembrandt's art, personality and place in art history'.⁷⁵ Clearly therefore, he suggests that much more scholarship is required regarding the *Passion Series*. Schwartz's approach in *The Rembrandt Book* significantly expands and advances our understanding of the *Passion Series*. He does not dilute the authenticated *oeuvre*, a fear that he identified in his previous publication as being responsible for the

⁷⁰ Thijs Weststeijn, 'Rembrandt and Rhetoric: The concepts of *affectus*, *enargeia* and *ornatus* in Samuel van Hoogstraten's judgment of his master', in *The Learned Eye: Art, theory and the artist's reputation*, edited by Marieke van den Doel *et al.* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 111-130.

⁷¹ Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst, Anders de Zichtbaere Werelt* [1678]. Reprint (Utrecht: Davaco, 1969). See also Slive, *Critics*, 94-101.

⁷² Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 6, 2. In Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, translated by H. E. Butler (London: Heinemann, 1920-22).

⁷³ Weststeijn, 'Rembrandt and Rhetoric', 113.

⁷⁴ Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 152 and 157.

⁷⁵ Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 157.

timidity of earlier scholars to recognise the value of ‘identifying the exact *milieu* for which Rembrandt created his works’.⁷⁶

Schwartz is correct in stating that authenticating Rembrandt’s *oeuvre* has long been a scholarly preoccupation, from the great connoisseurs of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries through to the work of the Rembrandt Research Project in the last decades of the century.⁷⁷ Schwartz’s first work was published two years after the first volume of the *Corpus*, compiled by the Rembrandt Research Project, appeared.⁷⁸ For each of the works in the *Passion Series*, the *Corpus* provides a summarized opinion, a description of the subject, observations, technical information, comments, documents and sources, graphic reproductions and provenance. As such they are a valuable resource for this thesis. However, the comments section on each of the works seems to transcend the accent on authentication. In this section Bruyn *et al* engage with primary documents and the early scholarship to offer a response that borders on the subjective. The authors are however especially informative in summarizing and analysing the various pictorial sources for the works in the *Passion Series* that have been proposed by scholars in the literature.

Another basic resource for this thesis is *The Rembrandt Documents* published in 1979, a collection of primary source material containing facsimile and translated documentation that refers to Rembrandt’s life, for example the inventory made on July 25-26, 1656 with Rembrandt in voluntary bankruptcy (*cession bonorum*), which lists the artist’s possessions at that time.⁷⁹ All subsequent monographs on Rembrandt’s life and work have used Walter Strauss and Marion van der Meulen’s publication, *The Rembrandt Documents*, as their basic reference in following Schwartz’s lead and endeavour to bridge the gap between the documents and Rembrandt’s works.

It is symptomatic of the literature relating to the *Passion Series* that scholars often raise more questions than they answer, this is particularly the case with Simon Schama’s 1999 publication, *Rembrandt’s Eyes*. Schama’s text contains, in two different sections, an extended

⁷⁶ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, Preface.

⁷⁷ The *Passion Series* is recorded in Vosmaer (1868), Bode (1870), Bode and de Groot (1897) and de Groot (1906).

⁷⁸ The first three volumes of the *Corpus* were followed by: Ernst van de Wetering, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. IV: The Self-Portraits (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005) and Ernst van der Wetering, Josua Bruyn, Michiel Franken, Karin Groen, Peter Klein, Jaap van der Veen and Marieke de Winkel, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. V: The Small-Scale History Paintings (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011).

⁷⁹ Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 349-88. The 1656 inventory was first published by Nieuwenhuys in 1834. It was republished several times during the nineteenth century and first edited by C. Hofstede de Groot in 1906. For a commentary back-grounding Rembrandt’s financial crisis, see Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 281-91.

commentary on the *Passion Series* in which he endeavours to interpret the works in their broader *milieu*. He discusses the first two works in the *Passion Series* in relation to two contemporaneous works by Rembrandt, the *Christ on the Cross* of 1631 (fig. 22) now in the parish church of St. Vincent in Le Mas d'Agenais in the south of France and the aforementioned *Portrait of Amalia van Solms* (fig. 11) of 1632.⁸⁰ Schama provides an extensive commentary on both the issue of Rembrandt's perceived 'competition' with Rubens (and his Antwerp altarpiece) and a possible 'competition' with Leiden contemporary, Lievens, for the *Passion Series* commission. Schama shows on one hand how Rembrandt's *Christ on the Cross* surpassed Lievens' treatment of the same subject (fig. 23) and on the other how, in contrast to Rubens' Catholic representation, Rembrandt in his painting presents 'a Calvinist image of the body' of Christ.⁸¹ Schama discusses the first two works in the *Passion Series* as a Protestant response to Rubens, directing attention, as Chapman does, to the figures of the mounted centurion in the *Raising* and to the two self-images of the artist as thematically portraying the distinctly Calvinist concept of the weight of shared guilt.

Also insightful is Schama's discussion of the next three paintings in the *Passion Series*, which goes some way to addressing the imbalance between the two groups of works that previously existed in the literature.⁸² Schama begins his discussion of these works by claiming that Rembrandt's return to the commission 'evidently turned into a laborious, painful creative struggle, perhaps, at times, even a chore'.⁸³ Schama proposes that Rembrandt overcame conceptual difficulties by a return to the Rubens model which resulted in an arduous struggle to identify acceptable alternative Protestant motifs to Catholic iconography. He points to the palm tree on the left of the *Ascension* as an example of a symbol of the Resurrection drawn straight from Catholic iconography.⁸⁴ These conceptual struggles, he claims, are the reason for the procrastination by Rembrandt in completing the commission.⁸⁵ Schama's concluding comments on Rembrandt's *Passion Series* are: 'they betray signs of having being built rather than conceived' and: 'at this very point in his career...the genie, the *ingenium* of his originality, deserted him'.⁸⁶ In contrast, I will demonstrate a consistency of

⁸⁰ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 221-296.

⁸¹ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 290.

⁸² Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 434-447.

⁸³ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 440.

⁸⁴ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 435.

⁸⁵ On this point Schama has a major difference of opinion with Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 114. Schwartz, from a more practical perspective, sees the delay in completing the commission, followed by a sudden burst of activity, as a direct response to pressing financial needs on Rembrandt's part.

⁸⁶ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 444.

‘building’ by Rembrandt over the six years that the *Passion Series* commission took to complete that displays great *ingenium*.

The two most recent contributions to the literature are first, a 2010 article by Rebecca Tucker, in which she discusses the *Passion Series* within the context of the Stadholder’s collection.⁸⁷ I am indebted to Tucker and engage with her study at length in Chapter One. Second, a monograph that focuses on Rembrandt and issues of religion, Shelly Perlove and Larry Silver’s 2009 *Rembrandt’s Faith*. Quite simply and not unlike this thesis, they state in their ‘Introduction’: ‘*Rembrandt’s Faith* further defines Rembrandt’s distinctive methods of reading the Bible by examining its hermeneutical underpinnings’.⁸⁸ For them, Rembrandt’s faith becomes a pictorial representation of basic Pauline theology, which owes more to Calvin than to Luther, a theology which viewed the Gospels as the key to unlocking the mysteries of the Old Testament. It is from this hermeneutical standpoint that they approach the *Passion Series*, embedding their discussion of the five Passion scenes with references to the both the Old and New Testaments. I adopt this approach by evaluating Rembrandt’s works as literal interpretations of the relevant scriptural passages. In their commentary, Perlove and Silver also cite numerous pictorial and literary sources, thus situating the *Passion Series* within ‘a visual tradition embedded in a rich literary and theological framework’, also an approach I adopt.⁸⁹ Like Schama, theirs is a balanced approach to the series that affords as much attention to the later three works as to the first two. Their hermeneutic methodology proved particularly insightful when considering the way in which the *Ascension*, the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection* accord with the two earlier works theologically. Thus they begin to suggest unifying factors for the series, the absence of which had been so lamented by earlier scholars such as Bauch and Brochhagen.

Analogies with Poetry

Nonetheless Brochhagen does conclude his article by referring to an analogy drawn between the *Passion Series* paintings and contemporary devotional poetry by Hans Kauffmann. In an article from as early as 1920, Kauffmann identifies a connection between the *Ascension* and the description of the Ascension of Christ in Jacob Cats’ (1577-1660) ‘Geestelick Houwelick’

⁸⁷ Rebecca Tucker, ‘The Patronage of Rembrandt’s *Passion Series*: Art, politics, and princely display at the Court of Orange in the seventeenth century’, *The Seventeenth Century* 25:1 (2010), 75-116.

⁸⁸ Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt’s Faith*, 9.

⁸⁹ Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt’s Faith*, 96.

(‘Clergyman’s Marriage’) from *Trou-Ringh (Wedding-Ring)*.⁹⁰ Much more recently Tümpel, in his commentary on the *Raising*, drew attention to several lines of connected verse by Lutheran hymn writer Paul Gerhard (1607-1676), before citing in an endnote the poem by Jacobus Revius (1586-1658), ‘Hy droech onse Smerten’ (‘He bore our Sorrows’), in its entirety.⁹¹ This poem by Revius is also cited by Chapman in her discussion of the *Raising* and by Westermann in her aforementioned text; Westermann also cites a later poem, ‘Het Sterven van Christus’ (‘Christ Dying’) by Heiman Dullaert (1636-1684), who had studied painting with Rembrandt.⁹² The association with Dullaert alone makes it probable that Rembrandt was familiar with contemporary devotional poetry.⁹³ These scholars note a similarity between the subjective persona of the poet/narrator in contemporary poetry and the artist/participant role that Rembrandt adopts in the *Passion Series*. By writing and painting ‘in the first person’, the poet/artist examines his own relationship to Christ, which in turn invites a series of questions regarding the viewer’s relationship to Christ as they ponder their understanding of the event being described or depicted.

Schwartz has drawn a more specific connection citing both biographical information as well as thematic analogies between the works in the *Passion Series* and contemporary devotional poetry.⁹⁴ Schwartz comments that the polemics of Donne had probably first come to Huygens’ attention when the English cleric preached a sermon in The Hague on December 10, 1619.⁹⁵ Further, Schwartz notes that they could have met in London as early as 1622, when Huygens travelled to England for a year on a diplomatic mission.⁹⁶ In 1630 English friends sent Huygens 23 privately printed poems penned by Donne and by 1634 Huygens had

⁹⁰ Brochhagen, ‘Passionbildern Rembrandts in München’, 44. And, Hans Kauffmann, ‘Rembrandt und die Humanisten vom Muidekring’, *Jahrbuch der Preupischen Kunstsammlungen* 41 (1920): 46-81, 74. Kaufmann’s article discusses possible associations between Rembrandt and the *Muidekring* circle, a literary and intellectual group that gathered around the poet, playwright and historian Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft (1581-1647), *drost* of Muiden castle near Amsterdam. For many years, Hooft presided over a salon that included Huygens; it sought to guide Dutch culture out of the aridity of past literary debate.

⁹¹ Tümpel, *All the paintings*, 136, n.127.

⁹² Westermann, *Rembrandt*, 107, 280; Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 113.

⁹³ See Henrietta Ten Harmsel, ‘The Metaphysical Poets of Holland’s Golden Age’, *Review of National Literature* 8 (1977): 70-96.

⁹⁴ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 118. For a discussion of seventeenth-century European poetry, see Frank Warnke, *European Metaphysical Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

⁹⁵ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 118. See also Paul Sellin, *John Donne and ‘Calvinist’ Views of Grace* (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, 1983). And Paul Sellin, ‘John Donne: The poet as diplomat and divine’, *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 39 (1976): 267-275.

⁹⁶ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 118. On the relationship between Constantijn Huygens and John Donne see Sellin, ‘John Donne and the Huygens Family’. Sellin’s article is a clear summary of the ‘biographical fact’ surrounding the connection; his aim is to counter those who continue to deny any significant influence of Donne on Huygens’ work.

translated nineteen of them into Dutch.⁹⁷ One of these poems was ‘Good Friday, 1613: Riding Westward’, in which the narrator, on the day of the Crucifixion, ponders the significance of Christ’s sacrifice as he travels on horseback in the opposite direction to that in which Christ was facing on the Cross.⁹⁸ Schwartz asks if the mounted Centurion in Rembrandt’s *Raising* could be a visualization of Donne’s narrator horseman.⁹⁹

Schwartz’s suggestion of a connection between these pictorial and literary works was pursued by Perlove in a 1998 article, ‘Witnessing the Crucifixion: Rembrandt and John Donne’s “Good Friday, 1613: Riding Westward”’.¹⁰⁰ Perlove notes with some surprise that ‘this intriguing idea has not been pursued by him (Schwartz) or other scholars’.¹⁰¹ Perlove considers only the first two works in the *Passion Series*, the *Raising* and the *Descent*; this may be due to the chronological coincidence of their execution with Huygens’ translation of Donne’s poem. Taking as her basic premise that Rembrandt knew of the poem and was inspired by it, Perlove examines three major concepts that are developed by Donne in the poem and demonstrates how Rembrandt brings similar concerns to his paintings. The three themes she identifies are alienation from Christ’s sacrifice, an attempt to come to terms with the confounding nature of the event, and hope for reconciliation with Christ. Perlove however focuses mainly on the figure of the mounted Centurion in the *Raising* and it is only towards the end of her article that she acknowledges that the figure of Rembrandt himself is also among those seeking reconciliation with Christ. In concluding her article Perlove states that her comparison leaves us ‘much to ponder’ and that ‘it would be irresponsible to suggest that Donne’s poem entirely explains the profundity of Rembrandt’s paintings’.¹⁰² However, her article does suggest that there is a powerful connection between the thematic concerns of Donne, the poet/narrator and Rembrandt, the artist/participant.

While Perlove argues that there are strong thematic links between Donne’s poetry and Rembrandt’s paintings, in an earlier article, ‘Rembrandt as Meditational Printmaker’, Margaret Carroll attempts to establish a series of compositional connections between Dutch and English devotional poetry and two late Rembrandt dry-points: the *Christ Crucified*

⁹⁷ See Koos Daley, *The Triple Fool: A critical evaluation of Constantijn Huygens’ translations of John Donne* (Nieuwkoop: De Graff, 1990).

⁹⁸ Daley, *The Triple Fool*, 180-83.

⁹⁹ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 118.

¹⁰⁰ Shelley Perlove, ‘Witnessing the Crucifixion: Rembrandt and John Donne’s ‘Good Friday, 1613: Riding Westward’’, *John Donne Journal*, 17 (1998): 89-106.

¹⁰¹ Perlove, ‘Witnessing the Crucifixion’, 89.

¹⁰² Perlove, ‘Witnessing the Crucifixion’, 89.

Between two Thieves ('*The Three Crosses*') of 1653 (fig. 24) and the *Christ Presented to the People* ('*Ecce Homo*') of 1655 (fig. 25).¹⁰³ Carroll takes as her starting point a sonnet written in 1645 by Huygens, 'Paeschen' ('The Passover'), a poem she sees as providing a 'textual analogue' to Rembrandt's etchings, 'furnishing an iconological framework for understanding his narrative revisions in terms of contemporary literature and devotional practice'.¹⁰⁴ Carroll shows that Huygens' sonnet follows a similar pattern to Donne's poetry, that of a meditational sequence, and argues that an analogous meditational progression is discernible in the sequence of narrative revisions of Rembrandt's late prints. Carroll suggests that due to their production in several 'states', in the sequencing of narrative transformations, Rembrandt's revisions can be seen as developing an increasingly personal, direct, unmediated, and therefore Protestant, theological viewpoint. The obvious flaw in Carroll's argument, which she freely acknowledges, is that Rembrandt probably could not have meant the successive states to be purchased together, and hence meditated upon as a group. Therefore the application of the term 'meditational sequence' is limited to Rembrandt's working procedure, not to the reception of the series in successive revised states by a wider audience. However, her article is significant as it demonstrates how deeply ingrained devotional meditation practice was in contemporary seventeenth-century Dutch society.

In establishing these connections between seventeenth-century devotional poetry and meditational sequences, Carroll refers to Martz's aforementioned work in which he showed how Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* provided the initial structural basis for the work of contemporary devotional poets. Despite authorship by the Catholic founder of the Jesuits, Martz established clear and convincing links between Ignatius' text and a series of English Protestant devotional treatises. The *Spiritual Exercises* are a 'manual' containing a series of instructions for a devotee to follow during a religious retreat. Ignatius' instructions are three fold: select an episode from the life of Christ, compose a place for meditation, and draw a series of Christian truths from the meditation. Martz, by reference to the writings of other Jesuits, shows that the central component of Ignatius' method – the 'composition of place' – can be conceived in one of three ways: the first is to imagine oneself as a participant in the event; the second is to imagine the event occurring before your eyes (a spectator); the third is to imagine the event passing within your own heart. This 'composition of place', as Ignatius specifies, is created with elaborate and exact detail and he does not even preclude the use of

¹⁰³ Margaret Carroll, 'Rembrandt as Meditational Printmaker', *The Art Bulletin* 63:4 (1981): 585-610.

¹⁰⁴ Carroll, 'Rembrandt as Meditational Printmaker', 585.

visual imagery as an active stimulus when imagining the scene. During the meditational process as set out in the *Spiritual Exercises*, one is therefore inserting oneself into the event, usually either as participant or spectator. Human action and understanding are thereby brought into a responsive, intimate relationship with God, be it for an hour five times a day during Ignatius' month of devotions or for a more practical short morning or evening prayer. Daily prayer was an important practice for Calvinists and perhaps the Rembrandt *Passion Series* paintings in the gallery of Frederick Hendrick may even have provided the busy Stadholder, in a private moment, with a visual stimulus for prayer.

The crucial point, whether a Catholic meditational sequence can be seen as providing the structure for Protestant poetry, has been vigorously disputed by scholars. Barbara Lewalski in her study of seventeenth-century devotional poetry, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*, believes that Martz's assertion requires too great a 'leap of faith', and she argues for a separate Protestant meditative tradition in seventeenth-century English poetry.¹⁰⁵ She posits that two elements, analogous with sermons of the period, especially characterize Protestant mediation and differentiate it from Catholicism: a focus on the Bible as the Word; and a particular kind of application to the self.¹⁰⁶ Halewood, however, makes the useful distinction that: 'Martz's argument for the influence of Catholic meditation on English poetry does not turn on parallels of *doctrine* however, but on parallels of *form* and of *imaginative strategy*; the application of the senses to make vivid the subjects of pious reflection, introspective analysis, and dramatization'.¹⁰⁷ This distinction is crucial for this thesis, as I am not arguing that confessional identities are unimportant; rather, I argue that the method of a Catholic meditational sequence could be adapted imaginatively by seventeenth-century artists to bring a heightened sense of immediacy to their work. Ignatius' system of meditation involves an emphasis on individual religious experience, in that it evokes a sense of the distance that separates God from man, demonstrates that the deficiencies of man are responsible for the separation, and dramatizes the possibility for a healing of the breach. Seventeenth-century devotional poetry written in Protestant countries, as Martz and Halewood have shown, follows the same form and is structured accordingly. As Rembrandt was undoubtedly familiar with both the poetry and devotional literature of his age through the agency of Huygens, could he have invoked a similar model? Although as discussed some

¹⁰⁵ Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), esp. 148-178.

¹⁰⁶ Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 148.

¹⁰⁷ Halewood, *The Poetry of Grace*, 72-3. Emphasis mine.

scholars have noted thematic similarities between Donne's poetry and the artist's later graphic work, none in the Rembrandt literature have connected the *Passion Series* with the *Spiritual Exercises*, via Huygens and Donne as I will endeavour to do in this thesis.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into seven interpretative chapters followed by a conclusion and accompanied by seven catalogue entries for each of five *Passion Series* works (in chronological order of execution), the later *Adoration* and the copy of the now lost *Circumcision*. The key topics of patronage and the original location of the *Passion Series* are the focus of Chapter One. The chapter begins with a discussion of the Stadholder's residence, reconstructing, from documented evidence, his picture gallery and painting collection, thus gaining an impression of the nature and function of the space where the *Passion Series* hung. Once I have positioned the works in the gallery, I consider what the works would have initially suggested to contemporary audiences. This line of inquiry also considers the extent to which Rembrandt, in the earliest *Passion Series* works, was emulating Rubens in responding to the tastes of his patrons. Conversely, by examining the two paintings of *Christ on the Cross* that he and Lievens executed, perhaps at the bequest of the patrons, just before the *Passion Series*, I also consider the extent to which Rembrandt veered from the Rubens model.

Clearly the reception of the *Passion Series* works by both patrons and audience was contingent on the complex and often contradictory religious *milieu* in which the paintings were conceived and executed. Therefore in Chapter Two, I introduce the broad topic, 'the Passion of Christ', by presenting a discussion of a series of *Heads of Christ* by Rembrandt and his studio, the focus of the most recent, large-scale exhibition that examined the Rembrandt religious *oeuvre*. Further, the Passion is discussed as an historical event which gives rise to both pictorial and literary expression in the form of 'Passion Cycles'. The impact of the Reformation on this tradition of artistic expression is considered, which prompted the question: what pictorial sources, given the relative dearth of Passion imagery in Northern art that immediately preceded the *Passion Series*, does Rembrandt draw on compositionally in the works? This in turn leads to the question: do we see Reformed thought and specifically Calvinist theology reflected in Rembrandt's early *oeuvre* and, from the stand-point of this thesis, do they then inform the *Passion Series*?

In this thesis, the commanding figure of the Stadholder's secretary, Huygens, looms large, both by way of his involvement in the commissioning process and by way of his creative input as a poet. These are two the key factors that inform our understanding of the *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*. Additionally his seminal autobiography provides a series of fascinating insights into what he saw as special in Rembrandt's work and why. In Chapter Three, the autobiography and then the seven letters Rembrandt wrote to Huygens, two major pieces of primary documentation, are examined. I argue that the early letters contain a series of suggestions by Rembrandt himself that he always intended the five *Passion Series* paintings to be regarded as a coherent series. I also consider the significance of Rembrandt's use of the word *beweechgelickheyt* in the Third Letter and interpret the meaning of the word in conjunction with a, hitherto somewhat neglected, contemporary art theoretical treatise by Franciscus Junius (1591-1677), *De Pictura Veterum* (1637). Earlier, so much discussion has focused on the extrapolation of the word *beweechgelickheyt* that little attention has been accorded to Rembrandt's four additional letters. In these he involves the tax collector Johannes Wtenbogaert (1608-84) in the payment process, a point this chapter will seek to address. I will conclude by examining Rembrandt's etching of this pseudo-erudite character which reveals a further insight into the artist's creative process.

In Chapter Four, I consider key evidence to support the proposed *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* by discussing the strong connections, both personally and artistically, between Huygens and Donne. As evidence, I present a textual comparison of their poetry and comment on Huygens' translations of Donne's verse. Their poetry is examined for its hermeneutical underpinnings to demonstrate how their verse can be denoted as the 'poetry of meditation', thus identifying analogies with Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. The structure of the *Exercises* is described in detail and their dissemination and appropriation are traced, in particular the similarities they share with Reformed meditational treatises. I discuss a meditative turn in Rembrandt's art, influenced initially by his contact with a University of Leiden group of Humanist intellectuals and later by his association with contemporary Dutch poets. A discussion of their poetry and its analogies with religious contemplation and meditation – a series of important connections in the context of this thesis – sparked the articulation of a definite Ignatian-derived *conchetto* for Rembrandt's *Passion Series*.

In Chapter Five I suggest an identifiable *conchetto* for each of the works, based on the form and imaginative strategies of devotional meditation as detailed in the *Spiritual Exercises*. At each stage of the *Exercises*, Ignatius instructs the practicing retreatant to first consider the

‘history’ of the event to be contemplated. This is essential to the retreatant’s ability to construct a convincing ‘composition of place’. By ‘history’ Ignatius means Scripture. Similarly, Rembrandt’s primary source when conceiving of each scene is also to first consult Scripture. Thus, I will carefully examine therefore both the scriptural basis for the event depicted in each painting and Ignatius’ instructions for the ‘composition of place’ for the envisioned scene. I will also draw further analogies between Rembrandt’s paintings and contemporary devotional poetry, specifically verses by Rembrandt’s confidant, Huygens. This is not only additional evidence of the strong Rembrandt/Huygens connection but also is a further important avenue of inquiry.

The unity afforded the works by the shared *conchetto* constructed in Chapter Five, advances to inform an analysis of the significance of the unmistakable self-images Rembrandt incorporates into the action of the first two *Passion Series* works. In Chapter Six, I also consider the identification of possible further self-images, not only in the middle ground of the *Entombment* but in contemporaneous works of a related subject in the wider *oeuvre*. The significance of these self-images has hitherto never been convincingly explained. Schama’s suggestion that they represent a personification of the dramatic character ‘Everyman’ is the most persuasive theory. This idea will be discussed by drawing direct analogies between the images in the paintings and the character in the play itself. Further, I argue that these self-images adopt and adapt the Ignatian ‘participant’ role, as they implicate the artist within these scenes. This has the effect of creating a strong identification between viewer and the event depicted facilitating contemplation that encourages the viewer to draw distinct Christian truths from each scene – strength through prayer.

In the final Chapter Seven, I discuss a three-fold ‘legacy’ of the *Passion Series*. Firstly, I attempt to incorporate into the series the two further paintings, the *Adoration of the Shepherds* and the *Circumcision*, seemingly unrelated works, which Rembrandt painted for the Stadholder in the 1640s. I ask: why these two subjects and why is there still no Crucifixion? Could the answer to the latter be the answer to the former? Secondly, I evaluate the two great dry-points, in their several states, of seminal Passion events that Rembrandt produces in the 1650s to evaluate if they genuinely correspond to a meditational series. Thirdly, I trace the influence of the *Passion Series* on the work Rembrandt’s pupils in the later seventeenth and even early eighteenth centuries. These three lines of inquiry will substantiate on one hand, how pronounced the influence of the *Passion Series* works was, a

factor rarely acknowledged in the literature, and on the other demonstrate by way of comparison, the coherence of the *conchetto* over-arching the *Passion Series* works.

In the conclusion, I will summarize the unifying aspects of Rembrandt's *Passion Series* identified in this investigation. It is a unity that, I argue, is derived from Rembrandt in the series of paintings invoking a consistent *conchetto*. It is a *conchetto* which, I argue, was suggested to Rembrandt by Huygens, a *conchetto* in keeping with contemporary devotional poetry, a *conchetto* initially based on the practice of religious mediation, a *conchetto* that transcends confessional boundaries by bringing artist, patron and viewer face to face with the Passion of Christ in the here and now of their own lives.

Chapter One: The Patronage of the *Passion Series*

The Patron

In this chapter I situate Rembrandt's five *Passion Series* paintings in the space for which they were commissioned: Stadholder Frederick Hendrick's gallery in the Binnenhof at The Hague. By the early 1630s, Frederick Hendrick and his consort Amalia van Solms were already well advanced in establishing a court at The Hague in the manner of the royal courts of Europe.¹ Hendrick had first-hand experience of the role that the building of palaces and the accumulation of an extensive art collection played in projecting dynastic sovereignty. The education of the future Stadholder had begun in 1591 under the guidance of Reformed clergyman Johannes Wtenbogaert (1557-1646) who was appointed by concerned authorities to counter-balance the influence of his French mother Louise de Coligny (1555-1620).² Louise had given her son a distinctly French upbringing from birth, culminating in 1598, at the age of fourteen, with a year in residence at the French court of his godfather King Henri IV. The extended visit to Paris made a lasting impression on the young man, as did two diplomatic visits to England in 1603 and 1613. During these visits, Frederick Hendrick became close friends with Henry, Prince of Wales, already a discerning patron and collector. As Stadholder, Frederick Hendrick occupied a challenging and often contradictory executive position in the United Provinces. By the time of his appointment in 1625 at age forty one, he had become a discerning patron well aware of the persuasive power of art to project the power of both the Orange-Nassau lineage and the newly formed Dutch Republic.

Just weeks before his appointment to succeed his dying half-brother Maurits (1567-1625) as Stadholder, Frederick Hendrick honoured his death-bed wish by marrying Amalia van Solms,

¹ This thesis is informed by two exhibition catalogues that revived interest in the court and collections of Frederick Hendrick and Amalia van Solms at The Hague: Marika Keblusek and Jori Zijlmans, eds., *Princely Display: The Court of Frederick Hendrick and Amalia van Solms* (The Hague and Zwolle: Historical Museum and Waanders, 1997) and Van der Ploeg and Vermeeren, eds., *Princely Patrons: The Collection of Frederick Henry of Orange and Amalia van Solms in The Hague*. See also Todd Magreta, 'The Development of Orange-Nassau Princely Artistic Activity, 1618-1632', Doctoral Thesis. New York: The City University of New York, 2008. The term 'court' when referring to the Binnenhof complex is used sparingly in this thesis, as although for all intents and purposes the rooms functioned in a manner similar to other European courts, as already noted, Frederick Hendrick and Amalia van Solms were not royalty.

² See Simon Groenveld, 'Frederick Hendrick: A brief political biography', in Ploeg and Vermeeren, eds., *Princely Patrons*, 18-33.

lady-in-waiting to the Winter Queen of Bohemia (1596-1662). In 1626 after a year of marriage the couple moved into apartments in the Stadholder's Quarters, which were part of the Binnenhof building complex in the centre of The Hague (fig. 26). The Binnenhof was the administrative hub of the United Provinces. Governing bodies such as the States of Holland and the Hof van Holland were based there, while the States General convened in the Binnenhof's Great Hall. Both Maurits and Frederick Hendrick used the Binnenhof as a visual signifier of the power and prestige of the Stadholder and therefore both renovated the medieval complex. The Stadholder's Quarters were in the northwest corner of the Binnenhof, located in the Mauritsstoren, which was built between 1592 and 1598, and in a wing of nine bays facing the Buitenhof dating from 1621. Frederick Hendrick's apartments were on the first floor, Amalia's on the second. The layout of the apartments has been plausibly reconstructed by Koen Ottenheim (fig. 27).³ The apartments each had two ante-rooms, a large audience chamber, a wardrobe, a cabinet, and on the side that borders the Binnenhof, each had a long rectangular north-facing gallery that housed a significant portion of the couple's burgeoning painting collection.

Although the layout of the Stadholder's Quarters was therefore broadly based on the Burgundian model, Rosalys Coope has shown that the gallery as a distinct space used for display was a concept that emerged in European palace architecture after Henry VIII's London model in the Whitehall Palace dating from c.1530.⁴ At Whitehall the gallery physically linked the Privy Chamber with the Privy Lodgings, creating an intermediary space between the public and private spheres. A remarkably clear sense of the furnishing and decorative layout of the Binnenhof apartments emerges from documented evidence. With an extension completed around 1632, the Stadholder's Quarters were enlarged with a three-storied addition to the Mauritsstoren. At this point an inventory of the contents of the Quarters was taken by the so-called *contrerolleur*, whose name is recorded as Jan 'sHerwouters.⁵ As this is the first extant Orange-Nassau inventory, there are no guidelines as to the exact arrangement of the rooms or the nature of the painting collection prior to this date. The inventory methodically and meticulously describes the contents of each room, this enables us

³ Koen Ottenheim, 'Possessed by such a Passion for Building: Frederick Hendrick and architecture', in Keblusek and Zijlmans, eds., *Princely Display*, 105-125.

⁴ Rosalys Coope, 'The Long Gallery: It's origins, development, use and decoration', *Architectural History*, 29 (1986): 43-84. See also Simon Thurley, *The Whitehall Palace: An architectural history of the royal apartments, 1240-1698* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

⁵ Inventaris van het Stadhoudelijk Kwartier en het Huis in het Noordeinde (Oude Hof), 1632. Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, 181-237.

to both reconstruct their decorative arrangement and to gain an impression of Frederick Hendrick and Amalia's collection of paintings, especially since the majority of the works are attributed to a particular artist. The collection has hitherto been afforded little scholarly attention. Peter van der Ploeg and Carla Vermeeren in an article in their 1997 exhibition catalogue began to address this deficiency.⁶ In her aforementioned article Tucker built on their work when discussing the *Passion Series* within the context of the collection.⁷

Frederick Hendrick's Gallery and Painting Collection

The 'sHerwouters inventory lists 134 paintings, the largest percentage of which were in the two galleries, with fifty-five in Frederick Hendrick's and forty-six in Amalia's. Building on Koen Ottenheyn's plausible reconstruction of the layout of the Stadholder's Quarters, we can envisage how Frederick Hendrick's gallery space functioned. The gallery, the central room in the Quarters, was thirty meters long with seven windows on the Binnenhof side, while the opposite side had two doors and a window at each end. The inventory indicates that the gallery contained only sparse furniture: a single table, a desk, a suite of six chairs and notably no sculpture; therefore painting was the focus in the space. With fifty-five paintings in 1632, supplemented shortly after by the *Passion Series*, the walls seemingly must have been crammed with pictures although we don't know the exact sizes of each work.

The function of the Stadholder's gallery varied from the English model, which simply served to connect the two sections of the Whitehall palace. First, entrance to the apartments was gained through a grand staircase in the northwest corner of the building that opened into a foyer. The foyer then provided access to either the gallery or to the official rooms. Visitors would later have exited directly through the gallery at the southern end. While allowing for practical egress and passage the gallery therefore also played a role in audience management. Although important visitors would have proceeded directly through the ante-chamber to the audience chamber, many others would have been ushered into the gallery for aesthetic diversion (fig. 28).⁸ The apartments were a busy place: Hendrick's nobles attended him at meal times which were served with careful attention to hierarchy, representatives from the States General were called there for meetings and ambassadors and visitors of status made a mandatory courtesy stop. All of these people mingled with the numerous members of the

⁶ Van der Ploeg and Vermeeren, 'The 'Sea Princes' Monies,' 34-60.

⁷ Tucker, 'Patronage'.

⁸ See Olaf Morke, 'The Orange Court as Centre of Political and Social Life during the Republic', in Keblusek and Zijlmans, eds., *Princely Display*, 58-104.

Dutch regent class who served as functionaries and bureaucrats in the service of the state.⁹ Additionally, as the largest room in the Binnenhof complex, the gallery would have been regularly utilized for official engagements. Thus it was the most public space in the Stadholder's Quarters at the Binnenhof.

Functioning therefore as not only a military base but also as thriving court, diplomatic and administrative centre, in addition to being a residence, the traffic through Frederick Hendrick's apartments was considerable. To oversee the crowds in the outer rooms, Hendrick in 1637 created a new post, *Edelman van de Camer*.¹⁰ Although the emissaries of foreign governments and their not inconsiderable entourages would have embraced a wide range of confessional identities, the majority of the Dutch audience in the gallery would have been Protestant, of both the Calvinist and Remonstrant persuasions. These were wealthy, educated, worldly personages, well attuned to the role that art played in projecting power and status on whom the political and religious implications of the paintings displayed would not have been lost.

The paintings in the Stadholder's collection seem to reflect, more than the conventional concerns of authority and lineage as expected in a royal collection, Frederick Hendrick's broader political agenda. Coupled with a natural ambition to be Stadholder of all seven of the Northern Provinces as his father had been, Frederick Hendrick's greater political aim was the reunification of the Southern and Northern Netherlands. As commander-in-chief of the combined Dutch forces in their conflict with the Spanish-ruled Catholic south, Hendrick actively pursued this aim. Herbert Rowan concurs with other historians in positing that Frederick Hendrick was the last of the Orange-Nassau rulers to realistically harbour this hope of reunification; his art collection reflects this aspiration.¹¹ The most remarkable aspect of the inventory, and a significant departure from the standard court model as exemplified by the great connoisseur kings, Charles I and Phillip IV, is the lack of diversity in the nationalities of the artists represented.¹² Frederick Hendrick does however seem to have shared an interest

⁹ See Jori Zijlmans, 'Life at the Court at The Hague', in Keblusek and Zijlmans, eds., *Princely Display*, 30-46, 32.

¹⁰ Marie-Ange Delen, 'The Genesis of the Court at The Hague', in Keblusek and Zijlmans, eds., *Princely Display*, 18-28, 24.

¹¹ Herbert Rowen, *The Princes of Orange: The Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 63-7.

¹² For an overview of princely modes of collecting see, Richard Lightbown, 'Charles I and the Tradition of European Princely Collecting', in *The Late King's Goods: Collections, possession and patronage of Charles I in light of the Commonwealth sale inventories*, edited by Arthur MacGregor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 53-72. For the painting collection of Charles I see, Francis Haskell, 'Charles I's Collection of Pictures', in MacGregor, *The Late King's Goods*, 203-31.

with these royal connoisseurs in mythological subject matter, as evidenced by the extraordinary number of depictions of Venus in the collection.¹³

An examination of the collection by nationality reveals that a series of anonymous portraits of twelve French Kings and their consorts were, along with an unidentified equestrian portrait of Henri IV, the only French paintings Frederick Hendrick and Amalia owned.¹⁴ These works are clearly linked to Frederick Hendrick's French lineage and his aforementioned year-long residence in the French court. The couple owned only one work by a German artist, Hans Rottenhammer (1564-1625), who lived and worked in Italy and only one by an Italian.¹⁵ In addition, the inventory lists only one Dutch work executed prior to 1600, a *Hoboken Fair* by Pieter Aertsen (1509-1575) or Joachim Beuckelaer (c.1530-1573).¹⁶ Thus the vast majority of the collection consisted of works by contemporary artists from the Northern and Southern Netherlands. Additionally it is possible to identify a further distinction based on civic identity; however this only illustrates that these identities are not an important factor. Among the large number of artists that we now know were northern painters (sixteen of the twenty-six who had more than one work in the collection) many hailed from Utrecht or Haarlem, as compared to other artistic centres such as Amsterdam, Delft or The Hague itself. The artist most heavily represented in the collection was indeed from Utrecht: van Honthorst who, in 1628, had spent several months in England at the court of Charles I absorbing court life and collecting a princely pictorial store. In 1631 and 1632 he produced both life-size and profile portraits of Frederick Hendrick (see fig. 11); although he moved to The Hague in 1637 he was never formerly appointed court painter.¹⁷ Two of the greatest court painters of the day, both from the Southern Netherlands, were well represented: Rubens with six history paintings and at least six diverse works by Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641).¹⁸ Although the latest work by Rubens in the collection, now destroyed, was apparently dated 1632, Huygens subsequently wrote to Rubens in 1639 stating that the Stadholder was interested in having a

¹³ The number of paintings in the Binnenhof collection with 'Venus' as the subject reaches well into double figures.

¹⁴ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 245 and 219 at 192 and 191.

¹⁵ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 73 and 120 at 184 and 186.

¹⁶ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, # 142 at 187.

¹⁷ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #186 at 189. And, Gerard Honthorst, *Portrait of Frederick Hendrick*, 1631, oil on canvas, 219 x 126 cm, Royal Collection, Windsor Castle. Not in the 1632 inventory.

¹⁸ Peter Paul Rubens in Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 94, 208, 218, 230, 516, 620 at 185, 191, 192, 203, 207. Anthony van Dyck in Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 11, 25, 95, 190, 191, 216 at 181, 182, 185, 190, 191.

painting by him, the subject of which he was free to choose.¹⁹ This implies that Rubens' name and fame were paramount and that Frederick Hendrick was interested in acquiring any work by him unconditionally.

Factors such as this continued interest in Rubens suggest that Frederick Hendrick and those around him saw a continuous cultural and ideological bond between the Northern and Southern Netherlands, despite the on-going military conflicts between the two countries. In patronizing established contemporary artists from this wider geographical area, Hendrick makes an overt political statement: this is historically, in the present and in the future, a nation with an identifiable identity reflected in an artistic style practiced by certain painters – one of whom was Rembrandt. The 1632 inventory lists five works, already in the Stadholder's collection which can now be definitively attributed to Rembrandt. Of the five, two early paintings have a religious subject: the *Simeon and Hannah in the Temple* (fig. 29) now in Hamburg and a *Samson Betrayed by Delilah* (fig. 30) now in Berlin, both executed around 1628.²⁰ Additionally, there were two slightly later paintings (1632) of mythological subjects: the *Minerva* (fig. 31) and *The Abduction of Proserpina* (fig. 32), both now in Berlin.²¹ However, the most significant Rembrandt already in the collection prior to the *Passion Series* is the aforementioned *Portrait of Amalia van Solms* (fig. 10). The work is recorded as hanging in Amalia's cabinet, as a pendant to Honthorst's portrait of Frederick Hendrick. That he was engaged to paint a portrait of Hendrick's consort is evidence of the high regard for Rembrandt's work at The Hague before the *Passion Series* commission. A further indication of the esteem in which Rembrandt was held is that a portrait of the artist by himself (fig. 33), now in Liverpool, was one of three works presented by Frederick Hendrick to Lord Ancrum, Sir Robert Kerr, in 1629 as a gift for Charles I.²² It would hang in his royal

¹⁹ Peter Paul Rubens, *Cloedia*, c.1632, oil on canvas, 236 x 343 cm, formerly Kaiser Frederich Museum, Berlin (destroyed). And Johannes Worp, ed., *Constantijn Huygens, De Breifwisseling: 1608-1687*, vol. II, no. 2149 (Nijhoff: The Hague, 1911-18).

²⁰ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 111 and 87 at 186 and 185.

²¹ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 248 and 82 at 193 and 184.

The *Simeon and Hannah in the Temple* is attributed in the inventory to either Rembrandt or Lievens, while the *Samson Betrayed by Delilah* and the *Proserpina* are attributed to Lievens. This is an example of how fluid attribution was between the two artists at the time. The total of authenticated paintings by Rembrandt thought to have been in the collection is the subject of debate. Schwartz compiles a much longer list than this, Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 69. His hypothesis is contested by Tümpel, *All the paintings*, 382, n. 175. Conversely, it now appears that there may have been as few as three authentic works by Lievens in the collection. See van der Ploeg and Vermeeren, 'The 'Sea Princes' Monies,' in *Princely Patrons*, 56.

²² The other Rembrandt is: *Portrait of an Old Woman (Rembrandt's Mother?)* c.1630, oil on panel, 61 x 47.4 cm, Royal Collection, England. *Corpus*, A 32. Bredius 70. The third work, which is now lost, although attributed to Rembrandt at the time, appears to have been by Lievens. See the section of the van der Doort inventory (c.1637-39) of Charles I's collection in, Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1639/11, 179.

collection of portraits of famous artists. This suggests that Rembrandt's style and more astonishingly Rembrandt himself was already considered a source of national pride before the end of the decade.

The sense of nationality in the Dutch Republic, which had been and was continuously being re-forged militarily, as reflected in Frederick Hendrick's wider painting collection, has been viewed by Tucker as in keeping with his policy of fostering religious tolerance.²³ Religion had long been a divisive topic in the Republic and central to Maurits' struggles over church, state and civic power. Frederick Hendrick, ever striving for unity, walked a careful and politically astute *via media* in matters of religion.²⁴ This is highlighted by the high proportion of works with religious subject matter in his gallery and by the recognition that it is difficult to ascribe any one confessional preference to this diverse body of religious work. Given that the works were displayed in a secular space and viewed by an audience from a range of confessional identities, Tucker suggests that they permitted a variety of religious interpretations wherein viewers could find imagery acceptable to their own faiths.²⁵

The inventory records nine New Testament scenes in the gallery, four of which are images of the Virgin, including one by Rubens (fig. 34) and two of which are representations of saints.²⁶ Over a six-year period Rembrandt's five *Passion Series* scenes and presumably seven years later the two further related paintings were added. Although in addition to these Frederick Hendrick owned three Old Testament scenes, as Tucker comments, the large body of New Testament work and the stand-alone images of saints here are unusual for any Protestant in the seventeenth century, particularly the military leader of the Protestant United Provinces.²⁷ As many Dutchmen identified with the struggles of the Israelites, Protestant households tended to prefer Old Testament images. Conversely, John Michael Montias' study

²³ Tucker, 'Patronage', 101-02.

²⁴ J. J. Poelhekke, *Frederick Hendrick, prins van Oranje: een biografisch drieluik* (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1978) 182-3. For a discussion of the complex question of confessional boundaries in early modern Europe see, Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious conflict and the practice of toleration in early modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

²⁵ Tucker, 'Patronage', 102.

²⁶ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, # 94 at 185. Other representations of the Virgin: Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 59, 61, 67 at 183 and 184. St. Martin and Mary Magdalene: Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 75 and 88 at 184.

²⁷ Tucker, 'Patronage', 101. And, Old Testament scenes: Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 53, 69, 87 at 183 and 184.

of domestic art in seventeenth-century Amsterdam has shown that Catholic households featured a high proportion of New Testament and more strictly devotional imagery.²⁸

An examination of the works in Frederick Hendrick's private cabinet, a study-like space used for personal reflection, confirms his preference for New Testament scenes while being somewhat at odds with Montias' findings for Protestant households. Five out of the six works in this room have religious subject matter, including Rembrandt's *Simeon and Hannah in the Temple* and two devotional Crucifixions. These two paintings of a strongly votive subject suggest both a level of personal piety hitherto not accorded to Frederick Hendrick and infer a marked difference in what he was prepared to display in a private as opposed to a public space. Interestingly, the presence of the two Crucifixions in the cabinet does raise the possibility that either Rembrandt's or Lievens' *Christ on the Cross* could have been at one time destined for the Stadholder's collection but for whatever reason this did not eventuate. Thus, Frederick Hendrick commissioned Rembrandt to paint the *Passion Series* for the diverse, complicated and contradictory collection of religious imagery in the Binnenhof Stadholder's Quarters. This picture of the collection is not made significantly clearer by an examination of other works of interest listed in the 1632 inventory.

Concurrently in the gallery on Amalia's floor more traditional concerns were reflected and, as would be expected in an aspiring court, it was dominated by portraiture. Most notable in her collection were the aforementioned twelve portraits of French nobles, the equestrian portrait of Henri IV and a life-sized portrait of Marie de Medici by Van Dyck.²⁹ Clearly Amalia's aims were dynastic which is reflected by a work in her cabinet, designated as a *schoorsteenmantel* (chimneypiece), Rubens' *Roxanne Crowned by Alexander*, c.1625.³⁰ Among the thirty-three paintings not displayed in the two galleries, the inventory lists six works on which the designation *schoorsteenmantel* was conferred. As well as the Rubens the others were by Van Dyck and Honthorst.

The lone exception was the *schoorsteenmantel* in Frederick Hendrick's large audience chamber. In his audience chamber Frederick Hendrick, like other European rulers, conducted

²⁸ John Michael Montias, 'Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam: An analysis of subjects and attributions', in *Art in History/History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch culture*, edited by David Freedberg and Jan de Vries (Santa Monica: Getty Centre, 1991), 331-376, 337-40 and tables 6 and 6a.

²⁹ Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Marie de Medici*, 1631, oil on canvas, 246 x 148 cm, Musee des Beaux Arts, Bordeaux. Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, # 191 at 190.

³⁰ Peter Paul Rubens, *Roxanne Crowned by Alexander*, c.1625, oil on canvas, 116.3 x 105.8 cm, Schloss Worlitz, Worlitz. Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, I, *Inventarissen*, # 208 at 191.

state business and received dignitaries. The room featured one of the two Italian works in the collection, *Four Nudes and a Cupid*, by the Florentine painter Franciabigio (1482-1525).³¹ Unfortunately the work is now lost; however, the work's prominence in the collection, origins and subject matter, all suggest that it must have been valued for reasons other than political. However, as there were no works in the collection as in other royal collections by the esteemed Italian masters such as Raphael or Titian, it seems unlikely that connoisseurship on Hendrick's part offers a solution. Did the erotic subject matter hold particular appeal for Hendrick? If so it was a daring display of personal taste in an important political space. Schwartz suggests, gleaned an idea from Hendrick's modern biographer J. J. Poelhekke, that this sort of overt display of sensual imagery may have been attracting some negative comment in The Hague at the time.³² In this conjecture Schwartz seems to imply that the *Passion Series* may have been conceived in part to counter erotic imagery such as Franciabigio's work. While interesting, this idea is highly speculative and does not even begin to explain the function of the *Passion Series*. It does however imply that Frederick Hendrick may have needed some informed guidance in selecting the style of imagery with which to portray more conservative concerns. To this end he turned to his astute secretary Constantijn Huygens. On this point there can be no speculation; the direct involvement of Huygens in the genesis of the *Passion Series* is documented in the seven extant letters written by Rembrandt to Huygens concerning the commission. The letters, which will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three, provide both some insight into the origins of the commission and moreover suggest that Rembrandt himself always intended that the *Passion* works would form a unified series, a central contention of this thesis.

As the letters were all addressed to Huygens, they provide clear evidence that he played a significant role in commissioning Rembrandt to paint the *Passion Series*. Nevertheless, in the First Letter Rembrandt implies that the commission for the later three works had come from Frederick Hendrick directly and therefore he did not, although very busy militarily, leave matters of art patronage solely to his connoisseur secretary.³³ The considerable extent of Huygens' involvement is however strongly indicated by a passage in the Third Letter in which Rembrandt requests delivery instructions for the final two works in the series. He

³¹ Franciabigio, *Four Nudes and a Cupid*, early 1500s, whereabouts unknown. Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, # 120 at 186.

³² Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 118.

³³ Rembrandt, First Letter, '...sijn excellensij mij selfs heft geodijneert', ('...His Excellency himself commissioned me to do'). In Gerson, ed., *Letters* 22 and 18 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1636/1, 128-29.

inquires whether the two pictures should first be delivered to Huygens' house as was 'done on the previous occasion'.³⁴ This clearly shows that one or more of the earlier *Passion Series* works were delivered to Huygens' residence before being moved to the Stadholder's gallery. It may also suggest that Huygens wished to review the works before forwarding them to Frederick Hendrick. Perhaps Huygens wished to gauge the extent to which the artist had complied with his instructions and how in his opinion the later works accorded with the earlier ones. Likewise, in the letters Rembrandt himself displays a concern with compatibility between the earlier and later *Passion Series* works.

In the Second Letter Rembrandt states that he will visit The Hague to gauge how the *Ascension* 'accords' with the earlier works in the series.³⁵ As mentioned earlier, in a post-script to this letter he suggests that the work would 'show to the best advantage in the gallery of His Excellency since there is a strong light there'.³⁶ Undoubtedly he was concerned with how the works appeared *in situ*. This suggests that Rembrandt had previously visited the court at the Binnenhof and was familiar with the layout of the Stadholder's Quarters and the north-facing aspect of the gallery. This in turn suggests that the Rembrandt himself, despite the delays between completing individual works, always intended that the works would form a unified series.

The *Passion Series* in the Stadholder's Gallery

The Binnenhof gallery space of which Rembrandt was seemingly aware appears to be an appropriate setting for such an important commission. Rembrandt's own words as recorded in this series of letters, together with Ottenheyn's reconstruction of the arrangement of the rooms, almost certainly place the *Passion Series* in Frederick Hendrick's gallery in the Stadholder's Quarters at the Binnenhof. The original location for the works has been the subject of much speculation. Schwartz was the first to place the series in the Stadholder's

³⁴ Rembrandt, Third Letter, '...ende oft mijn heer soude gelieven dat men die twee stuckens eerst tot uwent ten huijsen bestellen sal gelijk als voormaels is geschiet'. ('...and whether it would please my lord that the two pictures should first be delivered to your house as was done on the previous occasion'.) In Gerson, ed., *Letters* 38 and 34 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1639/2, 160-62.

³⁵ Rembrandt, Second Letter, '...soo ist dat ick goet vinden dat ick corts volgen sal om te besien hoe dat het stucken met de rest voucht'. ('I assure you that I agree that I shall follow anon to see how the picture accords with the rest'.) In Gerson, ed., *Letters*, 30 and 26 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1636/2, 132-33.

³⁶ Rembrandt, Second Letter, 'op de galdeerij van S exc/ salt best te toonenen sijn also der een starck licht is'. In Gerson, ed., *Letters*, 30 and 26 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1636/2, 132-33.

Quarters, suggesting Frederick Hendrick's cabinet as a possible location.³⁷ Slightly later Peter van der Ploeg and Carla Vermeeren, building on Ottenheym's reconstruction in their exhibition catalogue, were the first to definitively conclude that Frederick Hendrick's gallery was the correct location for the *Passion Series*.³⁸ Earlier scholars followed Horst Gerson's mistaken assumption that the works originally hung in the Noordeinde palace.³⁹ Understandably, Gerson based his conclusion on the first recorded inventory entry for the *Passion Series* in the 1668 inventory, which lists the paintings among the possessions of Amalia in the Olde Hof on the Noordeinde.⁴⁰

As he drew up the Binnenhof 1632 inventory, 'sHerwouters also compiled an inventory of the Noordeinde place, home to, up until her death in 1620 of Louise de Coligny. Van der Ploeg and Vermeeren remark that this inventory raises the suspicion that twelve years after her death few changes had been made at the Noordeinde and that the painting collection continued to reflect her tastes.⁴¹ The painting collections at other important residences such as at Honselaarsdijk and Ter Nieuburg were not inventoried until 1707, a significant gap that makes it difficult to gauge the situation some seventy years earlier. However these inventories were also methodically and meticulously compiled room by room. Hanging in the stairwell at Honselaarsdijk, Frederick Hendrick's country palace, for example, are several large paintings depicting scenes of the goddesses Diana and Venus, in keeping with the festive function of the building.⁴² This suggests that Frederick Hendrick, in keeping with the conventions of display at courts, appears to have been rather exact in giving specific commissions to decorate certain building and spaces. The fact that Frederick Hendrick appears to have waited with relative patience for Rembrandt to complete the initial commission, and was then so pleased with the results that several years later he ordered an additional two paintings, suggests that the *Passion Series* was also a specific commission for a specific space. Given the inventory evidence that Frederick Hendrick concentrated on collecting works for the Binnenhof by largely Netherlandish artists and Rembrandt's increasing profile in the Dutch Republic, it is not difficult to see why he chose Rembrandt as the artist to undertake the *Passion Series* commission. What is more difficult to understand is

³⁷ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 109.

³⁸ Van der Ploeg and Vermeeren, eds., *Princely Patrons*, 193.

³⁹ Gerson, *Letters*, 11.

⁴⁰ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen I*, 239-96, # 1240 at 285.

⁴¹ Van der Ploeg and Vermeeren, 'The 'Sea Prince's' Monies', 39.

⁴² Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen I*, # 170 at 529. The Honselaarsdijk residence was destroyed in 1815. See D. P. Snoep, 'Honselaarsdijk Restauraties op Papier', *Oud Holland* 84 (1969): 270-94.

how the *Passion Series* accorded with the existing collection in the gallery from a confessional standpoint.

On the basis of a consideration of the works' intended audience and by factoring in Frederick Hendrick's political agenda, Tucker has argued that the 'quirky iconography' of the *Passion Series* intentionally permitted a variety of religious interpretations.⁴³ Unquestionably, Tucker's analysis of the *Passion Series* via reception theory is an important contribution to the literature. However, she selectively disregards the most immediately startling aspect of the works, their small size and arch-shaped formats. Further, she makes only passing reference to the precedent set by the Le Mas d'Agenais *Christ on the Cross*. As the arch-shaped format has traditional altarpiece connotations it cannot be easily discounted. Alternatively, given that the works were almost certainly hung in Frederick Hendrick's gallery, a public space, they cannot be viewed as serving a primarily devotional purpose. Bearing in mind Schama's description of the figure of Christ in the *Descent* as a 'Calvinist image of the body' and the particularized format, questions therefore remain regarding the intended function of the *Passion Series*.⁴⁴

As the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church was the official state church in the Republic by the early seventeenth-century and given that Frederick Hendrick was the state and military representative of the United Provinces, he may have commissioned the series from a Calvinist perspective. Certainly, it appears that he was well accustomed to tailoring specific commissions to specific ends. Although he publically advanced his policy of religious tolerance by exhibiting works in the gallery that embraced a wide range of confessional identities, at home he may have deemed it both prudent and necessary to project the image of a practicing Calvinist. Indisputably, no practice was more important for Calvinists than daily prayer. The obvious and highly public gallery placement of imagery depicting the Passion of Christ in a devotional format and following an iconographic pattern that tended towards a Protestant (more than a Catholic) interpretation of the events may have served a dual purpose: a reminder for the busy Stadholder of the importance of regular devotion and a public acknowledgment that as head of state he was a practicing Calvinist. This impression of piety was reinforced by the presence of the devotional works in Frederick Hendrick's private cabinet. This interpretation positions the *Passion Series* not only within the collection but also within the broader political and social *milieu*. The complex challenge contained in the

⁴³ Rebecca Tucker, 'Patronage', 104 and 105.

⁴⁴ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 289.

commission to paint the *Passion Series* handed to Rembrandt by Frederick Hendrick and Huygens was to produce a series of images representing a traditional subject, the Passion of Christ, for a largely public space and broad audience in a private residence, the Orange-Nassau court at The Hague. For a legitimate court model, Rembrandt had to look no further than the most famous artist at the European courts, Rubens.

Rembrandt and Rubens

From the late 1620s and early 1630s we can trace clear pictorial evidence that Rembrandt consciously strove to emulate Rubens.⁴⁵ The abundant self-images produced by Rembrandt, painted and etched, between 1628 and 1631 show a remarkable change in his countenance, documenting the self-fashioning.⁴⁶ In a small, head and shoulders self-image dated 1629, executed in Leiden and now in Munich (fig. 35), Rembrandt presents himself as a bare headed youth, eager and curious. While in another self-image now in Boston, thought to be from around the same date, Rembrandt is already painting himself in a larger format, half-length and costumed in the trappings of affluence (fig. 36). In the graphic *oeuvre*, a self-image etched in 1631 closely resembles an engraving by Pontius after Rubens (figs 37 and 38). In the etching, worked on through eleven states, Rembrandt assumes courtly pose and dress, although his slouched hat is at an oblique angle and half his face is in shadow. On one hand, he presents a more assured, more confident self-image emulating Rubens: artist, courtier and occasional diplomat. While on the other, we can also detect Rembrandt's lively wit coming to the fore, as he seemingly mocks the idea of the artist presenting himself in what may suggest courtly paradigms.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, there is no denying the artistic fame of the great Flemish master.

The Pontius etching after Rubens that Rembrandt may have been emulating in his self-image is an example of how broad the dissemination of prints after the artist was in the early 1630s. Engravings and etchings by all the artists who worked for Rubens were widely available

⁴⁵ See Horst Gerson, 'Rembrandt and the Flemish Baroque: His dialogue with Rubens', *Delta* (1969): 7-23. Also Chapman, 'Rubens as Model', *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits*, 62-67 and Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 151-2.

⁴⁶ Rembrandt's prolific self-portraiture is discussed throughout the literature. See Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits*; Ernst Van de Wetering, 'The Multiple Functions of Rembrandt's Self-Portraits', in *Rembrandt by Himself* (exhibition catalogue), edited by Christopher White and Quentin Buvelot (London: National Gallery, 1999), 8-37; Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 57-66; Christopher White, *Rembrandt: Self-Portraits* (New York: Viking, 1982), 13-38.

⁴⁷ Ironically, Rubens' last diplomatic visit to The Hague in December 1631 ended in abject failure. See R. Magurn, ed. and trans., *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 360.

throughout the Dutch Republic.⁴⁸ Rembrandt, Huygens and Hendrick would all have been aware of Vorsterman's engraving of the *Descent from the Cross* after Rubens. As mentioned earlier, almost every scholar who has written about Rembrandt's *Passion Series* has begun by referring to Rubens' *Descent* and Rembrandt's attempt to emulate the artist.⁴⁹ Rather than an as emulation of Rubens, I prefer to view Rembrandt's first *Passion Series* work, the *Descent*, and to a lesser extent the second *Passion Series* work, the *Raising*, as a response to Rubens. Twenty years earlier in Antwerp, Rubens had produced two altarpieces with these *Passion* subjects in the central panel: the first for the Church of St. Walburg and the second for the Cathedral.⁵⁰ The former depicts the *Raising of the Cross* (fig. 39), the latter the *Descent from the Cross* (fig. 18). Although Ben Broos has identified two small woodcuts by Albrecht Altdorfer (c.1480-1538) of c.1513, thought at the time to be by Dürer, as convincing pictorial sources for Rembrandt's first two *Passion Series* works, he over-states the case that these 'romanticized' connections between Rembrandt's paintings and Rubens' compositions 'can no longer be maintained'.⁵¹ Rubens' altarpieces, particularly the *Descent*, may well have initially suggested these subjects to Frederick Hendrick and Huygens. The Rubens model would simply have been impossible for both patron and artist to ignore. Rembrandt was already well regarded in the Dutch Republic, therefore Hendrick and Huygens may have envisaged Rembrandt's paintings as a home-grown interpretation of Rubens' works.

There are broad compositional similarities between Rubens' and Rembrandt's *Descents*, some of which, given the subject, would be difficult for any artist to avoid. However, the two works initially differ not only in size (Rembrandt's painting is about one-twentieth the size of Rubens' work, fig. 40) but are separated theologically as dictated by function. In Rubens' painting, as an altarpiece in a Catholic church, all the figures are engaged in touching or trying to touch the body (and, presumably, the blood) of Christ, thus connecting the action to the sacrament of the Eucharist. The compositional concentration on figures in proximity to the body of Christ comes somewhat at the expense of a convincing rendering of the descent, or lowering process. The viewer relates to the work in more reverential rather than practical terms. Conversely, in Rembrandt's painting the viewer is encouraged to concentrate on each realistic detail, grounding the work in the practicality of everyday life. Rembrandt, inspired

⁴⁸ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 286.

⁴⁹ Broos compiles a list of eighteen up until 1977, in Ben Broos, *Index to the Formal Source of Rembrandt's Art* (Maarsse: Gary Schwartz, 1977), 59. To this we can now add Sass, *Comments*; Schwartz, *Rembrandt*; Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, esp. 242-306; Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith*.

⁵⁰ See John Martin, *Rubens: The Antwerp altarpieces* (New York: Norton, 1969).

⁵¹ Ben Broos, 'Rembrandt Borrows from Altdorfer', *Simiolus* 4 (1970), 100-08, 106.

by the Rubens model, reinterprets the subject, for a different audience in a different space, without radicalizing his composition. However as the *Passion Series* gained momentum what may have begun as project to emulate Rubens quickly departs from the model, as initially evidenced by the lack of compositional similarities between the two *Raisings*.

No less than eleven scholars in the Rembrandt literature, from Wilhelm Valentiner in 1905 to Tümpel as late as 1975, have seized upon the Rubens' *Raising* as the key pictorial source for Rembrandt's paintings, often incorrectly claiming that Rembrandt 'must have been aware', to quote Benesch, of both Rubens altarpieces though prints.⁵² However at the time there was no engraving of Rubens' *Raising* in circulation c.1630; the earliest known version is Hans (Jan) Witdoeck's (1615-42) print of 1638 of Rubens' *modello* now in the Louvre.⁵³ Although Rembrandt may have heard talk of Rubens' work and its subject matter (possibly from his patrons), it is unlikely that Rembrandt ever travelled to Antwerp to see the work *in situ*. Probably keen to have more 'Rembrandts', as the fame of their Dutch artist grew, his patrons may have challenged him to surpass the Flemish artist. This may have been all the inspiration Rembrandt needed as the strong connection between Rubens' *Raising* and Rembrandt's is primarily in the shared, unusual nature of the subject, one which hitherto had been rarely portrayed in the pictorial tradition.

This is however where the conceptual similarities between Rubens' and Rembrandt's paintings begin and end. Like the two *Descents*, the two *Raisings* bear no clear compositional resemblance spatially; moreover, they belong to two quite separate iconographic schools of thought. Rubens' Christ, with his classical, muscular body, victorious over death on the Cross, is far removed from Rembrandt's emaciated, tortured figure. As Reformed minister turned Rembrandt scholar Willem Visser 't Hooft has commented, Rembrandt's *Raising* is an unambiguous example of the distinction the instigator of the Reformation Martin Luther (1483-1546) makes between the theology of glory (Rubens) and the true theology of the Cross (Rembrandt), a distinction that certainly would not have been lost on the latter's patrons.⁵⁴ Or simply put, Rubens emphasizes Christ's divine nature, Rembrandt Christ's humanity. The emphasis on Christ's humanity, identified here by way of a comparison with

⁵² Broos, *Formal Sources*, 58; Benesch, *Rembrandt*, 55.

⁵³ Hans Witdoek after Rubens, *The Raising of the Cross*, 1638, engraving, 38 x 32 cm; Peter Paul Rubens, *The Raising of the Cross (modello)*, c.1610, oil on panel, 42 x 36 cm, Louvre, Paris. See Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 154 and 293. Also, Christopher Brown, Jan Kelch and Pieter van Thiel eds., *Rembrandt: The Master and Workshop*, exhibition catalogue (London: National Gallery, 1991), 158.

⁵⁴ Willem Visser 't Hooft, *Rembrandt and the Gospel* (London: SCM Press, 1957), 116.

Rubens, in the *Descent* and the *Raising*, is notably different to the thematic thrust of the later three *Passion Series* paintings. In view of this difference, if the works do not immediately accord thematically, how then, do they function as a *Passion Series* and moreover, why were these particular scenes from the Passion of Christ chosen?

The *Passion Series* as a *Passion Series*

Paradoxically, the emphasis on Christ's humanity in the first two works may well have influenced Rembrandt in his choice of the *Ascension* as the subject for the first of the three further *Passion Series* works when he returned to the commission three years later. With as much emphasis as he had earlier placed on the humanity of Christ, Rembrandt now depicts Christ with an equal lack of ambiguity as divine. Whether it was Rembrandt or his patrons who suggested the subject of the *Ascension*, will probably never be known. What is clear though is that the subject presented Rembrandt with a quite different set of challenges to the two earlier works. The first was pictorial: how to depict realistically and marry two entirely different realms (the celestial and the earthly) in the one pictorial space, a challenge that artists had traditionally faced in their pictorial representations of the subject. The second was as much thematic as it was compositional: how to unify the work with the earlier two paintings as part of a coherent series. In the work Christ ascends effortlessly to Heaven to the wonderment of the gathered disciples. The strong and powerful, yet apparently weightless, figure of Christ is the key to Rembrandt's solution. In his definitively divine depiction of Christ, Rembrandt establishes a clear and distinct contrast between His dual natures. Visually, viewers marvel as they pictorially alternate between the 'Word made flesh' in the first two paintings and the 'Word of the Lord' in this subsequent painting.⁵⁵

That contrast is tempered by the latter two *Passion Series* works. In the *Entombment* the viewer is given space to grieve, while in the *Resurrection* by catching a glimpse of Christ just beginning, to reveal His divine nature hope is offered. The sense of suffering and tragedy at Christ's death as evoked by the earlier two works, the promise and hope then suggested by the last two works, are balanced with joy in Christ resurrected in the central painting. The *Ascension* therefore is the key to the series, balancing the five works thematically in establishing a dichotomy between Christ's two natures and providing a pictorial highpoint to the series with the mandorla of light high-up in the pictorial space surrounding the figure of Christ. Regrettably, this is difficult to appreciate today given the order and the manner in

⁵⁵ John 1:14.

which the works are hung in the Alte Pinakothek. However it must have been quite striking in the Stadholder's Gallery in the Binnenhof and therefore not lost on contemporary viewers of all confessional identities. Rembrandt's five *Passion Series* works, accompanied by the later *Adoration of the Shepherds*, today hang on the far wall of Room IX in the Alte Pinakothek. The paintings are hung in chronological biblical order. Thus the *Adoration* introduces the series on the left of the room, beside which hangs the *Raising* and then the *Descent*. A central archway into the next room separates these three works from the three works on the right: the *Entombment*, the *Resurrection* and finally, the *Ascension*.

From Wolfgang Stechow's 1929 article, the first full-length discussion of the *Descent*, through to Brochhagen's 1968 article, the Rembrandt literature simply accepted that the first two works must have been executed in biblical chronological order.⁵⁶ This was disproved by Sass in 1971. She showed convincingly, by reference to Rembrandt's etching (fig. 41) of the same subject, that the execution of the *Descent* preceded the *Raising*.⁵⁷ Brochhagen had earlier concluded that the etching was a preliminary study for the *Descent*; however, Sass identifies a series of new features that not only appear in the etching but are repeated in a *Descent from the Cross* (fig. 42) of 1634 now in the State Hermitage, St. Petersburg.⁵⁸ Sass notes that both works feature a magnificent pall cloth laid out to swathe the dead Christ after His descent. Further, she comments on changes in the depiction of characters, such as the figure of the man who receives the body who, in a Rubens-like manner, is more powerfully built in the Hermitage version of the same subject.⁵⁹ The Rembrandt Research Project accepts that the *Descent* preceded the *Raising* and they date the *Passion Series Descent* to 'not long after 1631' by way of stylistic comparisons to the *Raising of Lazarus* (fig. 43) of c.1630 and the *Repentant Judas* (fig. 12).⁶⁰ The order of execution of the latter three works is clearer and confirmed by Rembrandt himself.

In his correspondence with Huygens Rembrandt states that the *Ascension* is the first of the later three *Passion Series* paintings to be completed, suggesting that the works were all

⁵⁶ Stechow, 'Rembrandt's Darstellungen der Kerzanbnahme', 220 and Brochhagen, 'Passionbildern Rembrandts in München'.

⁵⁷ Sass, *Comments*, 4-10.

⁵⁸ Brochhagen, 'Passionbildern Rembrandts in München', 40; Sass, *Comments*, 8. The Hermitage *Descent from the Cross* was widely regarded by earlier scholars as an authentic work by Rembrandt, then later rejected by the Rembrandt Research Project in 1986 as a studio product, subsequently it was readmitted to the authenticated oeuvre in volume V of the *Corpus* in 2011. Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 617-630; Van der Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 190-91.

⁵⁹ Sass, *Comments*, 10.

⁶⁰ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. II, 280.

commissioned at the same time.⁶¹ Additionally, Rembrandt makes it clear when he refers to the three new works as ‘companion pieces’ that he considers these to be part of the same series initiated by the two earlier works.⁶² This documentary evidence confirms the order of execution and places the *Ascension* in the middle of the series. When we consider the five *Passion Series* works in order of execution the sequence reads: the *Descent*, the *Raising*, the *Ascension*, the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection* (fig. 44).⁶³ This order of reading the series is confirmed by following Rembrandt’s treatment of light through the five paintings. Beginning at the point of the Rembrandt self-image in the *Descent*, we can follow the light on an oblique angle up the shroud by way of the body of Christ to the top of the Cross, there the shaft of light is continued up the body of Christ in the *Raising*, its reaches its apex in the golden glow of the ascending Christ in the *Ascension*. In the work, Christ in gesturing to both the left and the right challenges us to consider the two natures. A similar path can be traced down the other side of the works, from the mandorla of light in the *Ascension*; thence, it travels through the shroud of the *Entombment* to another oblique light radiating from the Angel of the Lord who lifts the lid of the tomb to reveal the divine Christ in the *Resurrection* (fig. 45). If the works were hung in the order suggested here, there would be no doubt that they would read much better as a series. The treatment of light unifies the five works stylistically as a series, balancing the works as a group and complementing the thematic thrust of contrasting the two natures.

In the preceding discussion, I have used pictorial evidence in the works themselves to suggest that in the *Passion Series* Rembrandt is contrasting the two natures of Christ. In doing so I am entering something of a theological mine-field in the Rembrandt literature. Rembrandt’s *The Holy Family with Angels* of 1645 (fig. 46) now in St. Petersburg illustrates how divided opinion can be. In the familial domesticity of works such as this Westermann insists on the complete humanity of Christ.⁶⁴ In complete contrast, Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann sees in ‘the action and detail’, an accent on the Christ child’s complete divinity.⁶⁵ Meanwhile Visser ‘t Hooft has Rembrandt’s Christ displaying both natures, but in sequence, not

⁶¹ Rembrandt, First Letter, in Gerson, ed., *Letters*, 18 and 22 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1636/1, 128-29.

⁶² Rembrandt, First Letter. ‘De selvige ackoordeeren met opdoening en afdoeningen vant Chruijs Christij’. In Gerson, ed., *Letters*, 18 and 22 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1636/1, 128-29.

⁶³ This order for reading the works pictorially is also suggested in a recent article, Thomas Ketelsen, ‘The Missing Link: Rembrandt’s ‘Bescheidung Christi’ von 1646 ihre Bedeutung innerhalb des Münchner Passionszyklus’, *Jarbuch der Berliner Museen 2009 Neue Folge* 51 (2009): 137-145.

⁶⁴ Westermann, *A Worldly Art*, 184.

⁶⁵ Haverkamp-Begemann, Egbert, *Rembrandt: The Holy Family, St. Petersburg* (Groningen: Gerson Foundation, 1995), 20.

simultaneously.⁶⁶ Schwartz's solution is to opt for the Chalcedonian view of the early church – that Christ is completely divine and completely human and therefore no separation between the two is possible.⁶⁷ However, to support my assertion that an interest in the two natures of Christ informed Rembrandt's patrons in the choice of subjects for such an abbreviated Passion Series, and that the distinction is used to unify the *Passion Series* as a series, I will illustrate how the topic is reflected in contemporary Reformed thought.

In his discussion of Calvinism in the seventeenth-century Dutch religious milieu David Steinmetz emphasises that the reformer John Calvin (1509-1564), believed in the conception of the divided self – nature and spirit – as manifested in doubt and assurance.⁶⁸ Calvin asserts unequivocally that as Christ has two natures, He also endured this sort of Christian conflict.⁶⁹ Further, Calvin states that it is only the Godly who suffer this self-division: 'they fight against their nature, and their nature fighteth against them', until 'distracted with divers desires [each] is in a manner divided (and of one made two men)'.⁷⁰ Calvin bases his assertion on his reading of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, 7:15 which reads: 'For that which I do I allow not: for that what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that I do'. In order to follow this train of Reformed thought, we must consider the *Passion Series* works in chronological biblical order.

In the *Raising* this dualism appears to be the precise paradox in which Christ's executioners are caught – although they touch the Cross and are thus touched by the grace of God, they are engaged in a sinful act. This is in keeping with contemporary Passion narratives which emphasize the human role as a participant in Christ's death. In a sermon on the Passion the English Protestant Bishop Joseph Hall (1574-1656/fig. 47), in his mediational treatise, *The Divine Arte of Mediation* (1606), is explicit as he explains the on-going human culpability in Christ's death:

Thou hatest the Jews, spittest at the name of Judas, railest on Pilate, condemnest the cruel butchers of Christ; yet thou canst blaspheme and swear quite over, curse, swagger, lie, oppress, boil with lust, scoff, riot...Cry Hosanna as long as thou wilt, thou art a Pilate, a Jew, a Judas, an

⁶⁶ Visser 't Hooft, *Rembrandt and the Gospel*, 31-41, esp. 33.

⁶⁷ Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 316-17.

⁶⁸ David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 110-121.

⁶⁹ For a biography of Calvin see Alister McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A study in the shaping of western culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990). For a discussion of his theological thought see Francois Wendel, *Calvin: The origins and development of his religious thought* (London: Collins, 1963).

⁷⁰ Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, translated by Christopher Rosdell [1583], edited by Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844), 181-90.

executioner of the Lord of life...Every of our sins is a thorn and nail and spear to him.'⁷¹

In this passage Hall acknowledges his own culpability in Christ's death, while in another passage he dwells with an almost gratuitous vividness on the tortured body of Christ, describing Him as: 'black and blue', 'eyes swoln', 'cheeks beslavered with spittle' and 'so woefully disfigured that the blessed mother that bore thee could not now have known thee.'⁷² However contemporary theological narratives betray a certain discomfort with this figure of abject vulnerability, in much the same way as the body of Christ being lowered from the Cross in Rembrandt's *Descent* is juxtaposed against the rich garment and close attentiveness of the figure beside the Cross. As Daniel Heinsius (1580-1655/fig. 48), poet and librarian of the University of Leiden, in an associated discourse of 1618, exclaimed:

Behold the man, behold the man of sorrow. Behold Him that was the fairest among men, being both white and ruddie...His cheeks as a bed of spices, as sweet as flowers... [He] lyeth now disfigured with wounds, weltering and panting.⁷³

Here Heinsius describes an immediately post-crucifixion Christ, contrasting the 'man of sorrow' with one that was once 'the fairest of men'. His use of similes such as 'spices' and 'flowers' to describe how His cheeks once appeared as he urges us to 'behold the man', strongly suggests the subject of the Entombment. In Rembrandt's painting of that event the Virgin turns her head away, vaguely reminiscent of Hall, although more in sorrow than in the horror that Hall's text implies. The *Entombment* and the *Resurrection* provide an antidote to this sort of imagery by evoking the promise of redemption begun by Christ's death on the Cross. The solution to grief at His death is, of course, Christ himself, who we glimpse when He lifts His head slowly out of the tomb in the *Resurrection*. The huge burst of celestial glory in the painting is the Angel of the Lord, who announces that we are witnessing a miracle. Prominent jurist and sometime theologian Hugo Grotius (1583-1645/fig. 49) believed that the age of miracles still existed, pointing to the continuity between Christ's miracles in the

⁷¹ Joseph Hall, *The Complete Works*, 10 vols, edited by Philip Winter (Oxford: Oxford University 1863), 5:41. For a discussion of the life and collected works of Joseph Hall see Tom Kinloch, *The Life and Works of Joseph Hall* (London: Staples Press, 1951). Also Frank Huntley, *Bishop Joseph Hall, 1574-1656: A biographical and critical study* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1976) and Richard McCabe, *Joseph Hall: A study in satire and mediation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

⁷² Hall, *Works*, 2:645 and 2:661.

⁷³ Daniel Heinsius, *The Mirrour of Humilitie: or two eloquent and acute Discourses upon the Nativitie and Passion of Christ*, translated by I. H. [London, 1618], 62, in Paul Sellin, *Daniel Heinsius and Stuart England: With a short-title checklist of all the works of Daniel Heinsius* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1968). See also Hall, *Works*, 2:662 and 5:35.

Gospels, such as the Raising of Lazarus and those in the Acts of the Apostles, such as Paul healing the crippled man at Lystra.⁷⁴ In his treatise *De Veritate Religionis Christiannae (On the Truth of the Christian Religion)* of 1627, Grotius argued that the force of miracles lies in providing witness (self-imagery) to the doctrine of Christ, an important connection between contemporary theological exegesis and Rembrandt's paintings, a theme which is explored further in Chapter Six of this thesis.⁷⁵

The humanity of Christ which was so vividly portrayed in the *Raising* and the *Descent* still lingers in the *Entombment* and *Resurrection*, as if in both the viewer is still trying, in vain obviously, to seek Him in human form. Calvin taught that this is incorrect, a point manifestly confirmed by Rembrandt's *Ascension*. Calvin emphasized that from the time of the Resurrection the body of Christ was 'contained in heaven' and 'that He is longer to be sought on earth'.⁷⁶ Unlike in the *Descent* and the *Raising*, in which Christ himself may well be the principle light source, in the *Ascension* it is the light of the Holy Spirit that falls upon the disciples, an allusion to their forthcoming Pentecostal ministry. Whether we view the *Ascension* as the centre point of the series, which it is pictorially, or as the culmination of the series, which it is chronologically, in it we see the world as seen by the faithful, regardless of confessional identity – a mirror of divine glory. By way of pictorial expression through the series we experience reason becoming illuminated by faith, a message with broad appeal that transcends confessional boundaries.⁷⁷ Interestingly, David Steinmetz has stated that this very concept is 'fundamental' to Calvinist theology and on this point Calvin is 'never ambivalent'.⁷⁸ Therefore theologically Rembrandt's *Passion Series* can be seen as broadly corresponding to Calvinist thought, in which Rembrandt's patrons were well versed; although, the paintings also have the thematic and pictorial weight, *gravitas*, as not to offend, if not directly appeal to, other confessional sensibilities.

However, are the unifying aspects of the five *Passion Series* works as identified here, paradoxically, one of the reasons for the absence of the Crucifixion in the *Passion Series*? The scene of His Crucifixion is the central episode of the Passion of Christ and as such seems

⁷⁴ John 11:37-44 and Acts 14:8-10.

⁷⁵ Hugo Grotius, *On the Truth of the Christian Religion* [1627], in *Hugo Grotius: His most choice discourses*, translated by C. L. Barksdale, 1669 (Ann Arbor: Early English Books Online, 1999), 99-103. See also Debora Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, sacrifice and subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 75-76.

⁷⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. IV, xviii, 26.

⁷⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. IV, xvii, 33-34.

⁷⁸ Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 32.

a glaring omission from any Passion series. Was the subject and format of a stand-alone Crucifixion simply too icon-like to be displayed to a broad audience in the public gallery space of a Stadholder well known for religious moderation? This is one possible explanation for the lack of a Crucifixion in the *Passion Series*. However this is a question for which there is no self-evident answer. Even given the protracted time-span of the commission and periodic execution of the works, one thing is certain, it cannot have been simply overlooked. Rather, I would boldly suggest that a crucifixion scene may have been deliberately omitted as it did not accord stylistically (light) or thematically (the two natures) with the other works in the manner I have described here. This suggestion is further corroborated by the iconography of the additional two works, as I will discuss in Chapter Seven, from the 1640s. This question becomes especially vexed as Rembrandt had produced just such a work, possibly for the same patrons, only two years earlier, a painting that is integral to any discussion of the *Passion Series*.

Christ on the Cross

In 1631 Rembrandt and Lievens produced two paintings on the same subject: Christ on the Cross (fig. 50).⁷⁹ Christ crucified is, of course, a traditional subject for artists. Rembrandt's teacher Pieter Lastman (1583-1633) had painted a small version in 1615 (fig. 51), which includes the figure of Mary Magdalene. There are at least two notable versions of considerably larger size in Rubens' *oeuvre* (Antwerp/Munich), in addition to a Paulus Pontius engraving after a lost work by Rubens (figs 52 and 53). Nevertheless, as noted earlier, there is no documented evidence to indicate that Rembrandt's or Lievens' *Christ on the Cross* was commissioned by Huygens or that either work was ever in the collection of Frederick Hendrick at The Hague. But their concurrent execution, their similar form in arch-shaped frames and shared subject matter cannot be dismissed as merely coincidental. The factors connect the two works implicitly to the *Passion Series*.

It was Bauch who first suggested that the two works must have been undertaken as 'trial pieces' for what is now the *Passion Series* and that the two artists were in competition for the

⁷⁹ Rembrandt's work was not universally known until the early 1960s, when Kurt Bauch discovered the painting and his subsequent article brought it to attention as a forerunner of the *Passion Series*. See, Bauch, 'Rembrandt's *Christus am Kruez*'. The provenance of Rembrandt's painting is obscure, see Bruyn et al, *Corpus*, vol. 1, 344. For an extended comparison of the two *Christ on the Cross* paintings, with reference to Rubens, see Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 286-89. For a full discussion of Lievens' painting see Arthur Wheelock Jr., *Jan Lievens: A Dutch master rediscovered* (exhibition catalogue) edited by Arthur Wheelock Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), #32.

commission; his theory has continued to gain momentum.⁸⁰ This suggestion of a competitive undercurrent between the two young artists gains further credibility by the existence of five versions of the 'Raising of Lazarus' executed by Rembrandt and Lievens between 1630 and 1632.⁸¹ The subject, Christ raising a person from the dead, strongly prefigures the Resurrection. Rembrandt's etching (fig. 54) also strongly prefigures the *Passion Series* compositionally, as it is the only etching in his *oeuvre* executed in an arch-shaped format and there are a series of affinities between figures in the etching and the paintings. So, if the two were trial pieces and only one artist could get the commission, how does Rembrandt's *Christ on the Cross* surpass Lievens' painting?

Rembrandt and Lievens both set their Crucifixions against dark thunderous backgrounds, with nothing to distract the viewer from the moment of redemptive pathos. They capture not only the day when darkness covered the earth but seem at first glance to depict the exact moment, as reported in the Gospel of Luke, when Christ looks heavenward and with His last breath utters: 'Father into thy hands I commend my spirit'.⁸² Schama is correct in indicating that it is in the treatment of the head of Christ that Rembrandt ultimately puts artistic distance between himself and Lievens (fig. 55). He states that in Lievens' work Christ's 'features are still finely chiselled', while Rembrandt, 'has opted decisively for raw pain'.⁸³ Schama does not however stress strongly enough that Rembrandt, utilized the entire body of Christ to express emotion. Rembrandt positions the right leg of Christ slightly over the left as emphasized by the taut calf muscle of the left leg that takes the strain; this initiates a twisting of the whole body towards the light source (God). This facilitates a curve in Christ's body, which leans forward, not only turning towards the light but also achieving a sense of straining towards the light (fig. 56). The effort required is indicated by a deep depression in the neck suggesting a parched throat. As the body turns Rembrandt's Christ achieves a sense of credible weight. Although dying from dehydration (amongst other factors), the stomach appears flat and not sunken or prematurely distended. Christ seems to sag realistically under

⁸⁰ For an earlier commentary see Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 88-89; then Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 286-89; and for a later commentary see, Westermann, *Rembrandt*, 101. Each of these scholars strongly and increasingly supports the suggestion that the two paintings of Christ on the Cross were executed as trial pieces for the *Passion Series*.

⁸¹ Rembrandt, *The Raising of Lazarus*, c.1630, red chalk drawing, 28 x 20.3 cm, British Museum, London. Rembrandt, *The Raising of Lazarus*, c.1630, oil on panel, 96.2 x 81.5, County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. Corpus, A 30. Bredius, 538. Jan Lievens, *The Raising of Lazarus*, 1631, oil on canvas, 103 x 112 cm, Art Gallery and Museum, Brighton. Jan Lievens, *The Raising of Lazarus*, c.1631, etching, 35.9 x 31.1 cm. Rembrandt, *The Raising of Lazarus*, c.1632, etching, 36.6 x 25.8 cm.

⁸² Luke, 23:46.

⁸³ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 289.

his own weight, in contrast to the somewhat elongated figure, forlorn and emaciated, in Lievens' work.

The naturalism of Rembrandt's work extends also to the treatment of the Cross itself and its relationship with the body of Christ. This is a striking feature of the work hitherto not commented on in the literature. As blood runs in a slow stream from the punctured feet of Christ, minute highlights appear on the drops; it gathers at the base of the Cross to emphasize where the bark has peeled away from the wood. This is a rough Cross, hastily hewn with an adze and held in place by a series of splayed wedges. Nailed to the top of the Latin Cross is Pilate's inscription, written in three languages as the Gospels document. It casts a small but noticeable shadow directing attention to the strongly lit head of Christ. He, with His brow wrinkled, taut eyelids and open mouth, tilts His head to the left and gazes upward. There seems to be more of an indication of doubt in death as opposed to a resignation to fate. This, as Schama has noted, suggests the Gospel of Mathew, 'My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?' Rather than that of Luke as quoted above.⁸⁴ Standing in front of Rembrandt's work questions arise such as: Lord, has it come to this? What have they done to you? Could I have intervened?

If questions such as these occur today they must surely have occurred to the devout Calvinist Huygens. It is the figure of Christ, Rembrandt's Christ, in the painting that prompts this response: an *affectus* in keeping with Huygens' praise of Rembrandt's ability to, as expressed in his autobiography of c.1630, 'penetrate to the heart of his subject matter and bring out its essence'.⁸⁵ Huygens, his autobiography and Rembrandt's ability to affect the viewer are all discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, but first we must turn our attention to the Passion of Christ to underscore the subject matter of Rembrandt's *Passion Series*. This will permit a consideration of the religious climate in which the works were conceived.

⁸⁴ Mathew, 27:46. And Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 289.

⁸⁵ Huygens, 'Rembrandtium iudicio et affectuum vivacitate Livio praestare'. In Worp, 'Autobiography', 77. Translation in Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 74 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1630/5, 68 and 71.

Chapter Two: Tradition, Theology and the *Passion Series*

Rembrandt's Christ

This chapter explores both the pictorial and literary traditions that influenced Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*. Additionally it situates the series, from a theological standpoint, within the early seventeenth-century contemporary exegesis. In this thesis I will show that a central concern for Rembrandt, as a history painter, in the *Passion Series* is historical accuracy. I use the term 'history', in the content of the works themselves and the context of the *milieu* in which they were produced, to refer to subject matter as faithfully derived from Scripture. Rembrandt's patrons would have unquestionably expected biblical accuracy and, for the argument of this thesis, such accuracy imbues the works with verisimilitude in keeping with an Ignatian 'composition of place' manner of meditation. As an historical act, the Passion has boundaries in time and space; it was lived by the real Christ in his flesh and spirit. Central to any pictorial Passion Series therefore is the figure of Christ himself. From a historical perspective, who was this man and what can we learn from ancient sources about His appearance? Further, to what extent does Rembrandt's Christ and, moreover, Rembrandt's *Passion Series* conform or otherwise to the pictorial tradition and how does this tradition inform his *conchetto* for the paintings? If so, what is the extent of that influence?

A recent exhibition brought together for the first time seven small oil panels depicting the head of Christ painted either by Rembrandt or by his studio in the late 1640s and early 1650s (figs 57-63).¹ Although the authenticity of all these works was at one stage rejected by the Rembrandt Research Project they have now readmitted the Berlin painting.² Irrespective of the question of authenticity, these paintings collectively pose a series of intriguing questions as previously explored by Seymour Slive.³ In an article on the Heads of Christ paintings Slive refers to the 1656 inventory of the artist's possessions, after Rembrandt's bankruptcy.⁴ The inventory lists three paintings as 'Heads of Christ', two in the artist's bedroom and one in a

¹ 'Rembrandt and the Face of Jesus', Philadelphia, Paris, Detroit (April 2011 - February 2012).

² Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. IV, 378-84. See also van de Wetering *et al*, *Quest of a genius*, 64.

³ Seymour Slive, 'An Unpublished *Head of Christ* by Rembrandt', *Art Bulletin* 47:4 (1965): 406-17.

⁴ Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1656/12, 348-388.

bin of assorted props in the artist's small studio.⁵ In the inventory the later painting is curiously described as, 'Cristus tronie nae 't leven' ('head of Christ, after life'). As Slive notes, the first publisher of the inventory in 1834 recorded a question mark next to this entry.⁶ He and later scholars have wondered how Rembrandt managed to paint an image of Christ 'after life'?

Lloyd DeWitt discusses the ample evidence that Rembrandt used a local, young Sephardic Jew as his model for the face of Christ.⁷ He argues that the use of a life model for this purpose demonstrates Rembrandt's concern with naturalism and historical veracity throughout his religious work. Further, DeWitt draws attention to two sketches by Rembrandt of Passion scenes (figs 64 and 65), executed well after the *Passion Series*, as pictorial evidence that they represent a decisive break by Rembrandt in the traditional iconography of the figure of Christ. The latter of these sketches portrays the face of Christ with apparent naturalism. DeWitt states that the face of Christ in almost all earlier Netherlandish painting, from Jan van Eyck (c.1390-1441) to Peter Bruegel the Elder (c.1525/30-1569), was not modelled from life but 'consciously derived from authoritative models and descriptions thought to have been passed down from antiquity'.⁸ However, I suggest that in his depiction of Christ and by extension throughout the *Passion Series*, Rembrandt demonstrated a keen ability to simultaneously work from life models and accommodate traditional models, as evidenced by the Heads of Christ paintings.

Michael Baxandall has drawn attention to a thirteen- or fourteenth-century translation into Latin of a Greek manuscript containing a description of Christ's features.⁹ Although undoubtedly idealized and fictional, it nevertheless was attributed to a certain Publius Lentulus governor of Judea shortly before Pontius Pilate. As this piece of text is also quoted approvingly by van Hoogstraten, Rembrandt was likely aware of its existence.¹⁰ A section of the text, referring to the physical aspects of Christ's appearance, reads:

⁵ Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, #'s 115 and 118, at 361; #326 at 383.

⁶ Slive, 'An Unpublished *Head of Christ*', 407.

⁷ Lloyd DeWitt, 'Testing Tradition Against Nature: Rembrandt's radical new image of Jesus', in *Rembrandt and the Face of Jesus* edited by Lloyd DeWitt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 109-146, 111.

⁸ DeWitt, 'Testing Tradition', 111.

⁹ Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A primer in the social history of pictorial style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹⁰ Van Hoogstraten, *Indeying*, 105. See Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 284; Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 303; DeWitt, 'Testing Tradition', 122.

His hair is the colour of ripe hazel-nut. It falls straight almost to the level of his ears; from there it curls thickly and is rather more luxuriant, and this hangs down to His shoulders. In front His head is parted into two, with the parting in the centre in the Nazarene manner. His forehead is wide, smooth and serene, and His face is without wrinkles or any marks. It is graced by a slight reddish tinge, a faint colour. His nose and mouth are faultless. His beard is thick and like a young man's first beard, of the same colour as His hair, it is not particularly long and is parted in the middle. His aspect is simple and mature. His eyes are brilliant, mobile, clear, splendid.¹¹

Despite DeWitt's argument and the clear evidence of Rembrandt's use of a life model for the Heads of Christ series, I suggest that a comparison between the faces of the figures in the series and the above quotation reveals that Rembrandt adhered closely to this description. This is particularly true of the Berlin painting (fig. 66, details of fig. 58).

Interestingly, as the authors of the *Corpus* have noted, Rembrandt in this work has shifted the eye in the averted half of the face outward.¹² Rembrandt uses this feature to express abstracted contemplation, this characteristic is also apparent in other works of the period such as the Virgin in the St. Petersburg, *the Holy Family with Angels* (fig. 46) and Asenath in the Kassel, *Jacob Blessing the sons of Joseph* (fig. 67). The Heads of Christ series is evidence that late in his life Rembrandt, in the painted *oeuvre*, was focusing on contemplation of Christ – the Man – from the beginnings of Christ's life to the afterlife; these include the unfinished *Simeon with the Christ Child* in Stockholm (fig. 68) to the *Risen Christ* in Munich (fig. 69). Earlier in the *oeuvre*, Rembrandt's focus was more closely aligned with Christ's mission, in particular His message of redemption, as in his first *Christ at Emmaus* in the Jacquemart-André, Paris (fig. 70). Nowhere does Rembrandt explore this theme of salvation through Christ more consistently and explicitly than in the *Passion Series*. Thus Christ's Passion, I contend, can be seen as at the core of Rembrandt's self-defined mission as a history painter.

The Passion of Christ

'The Passion of Christ' is the Christian theological term used to describe the events and suffering (physical, spiritual and mental) of Christ in the hours before and including His trial and His subsequent execution by crucifixion on the Cross. The Crucifixion of Christ, in which He freely sacrificed His mortal being in order to redeem mankind, is one of the central tenets of Christian theology. The etymological origins of the word 'passion' lie in the Greek

¹¹ Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, 57. The version quoted by Baxandall was published at the end of the fifteenth century in the introduction to Ludolph the Carthusian's popular *Vita Christi* (Life of Christ).

¹² Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. IV, 381-82.

verb *pascho*, to suffer. In the Vulgate edition of the Bible the Latin word *passio* is used with reference to Christ's mortal suffering. The term first appears in second-century Christian texts to describe precisely the travails and suffering of Christ in relation to events during His last earthly hours.¹³ Those parts of the four biblical Gospels that describe these events become known as 'Passion Narratives'. Traditionally they refer to events from either the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane or the Last Supper through to the Entombment. Three of the Gospels, Matthew 26-27, Mark 14-16 and Luke 22-23 give very similar accounts, while John 18-20 records additional details. Interestingly in the *Passion Series*, Rembrandt largely follows the Gospel of Luke as his canonical source. Additionally, in the scenes he chooses for the *Passion Series* Rembrandt also quite closely follows a liturgical calendar.

In the liturgical calendar, the Passion is commemorated during Holy Week, beginning on Palm Sunday and ending on Easter Saturday. Strictly speaking theologically, the Passion does not refer to post-crucifixion events. However, in both popular thought and practice, particularly in the modern church, the Passion of Christ usually corresponds to the four days of Easter weekend. I propose that the five paintings that constitute Rembrandt's *Passion Series* represent a Passion Cycle abbreviated as it is during Easter weekend. Good Friday, the day of Christ's crucifixion, on which the sky turned black and therefore could be separated into two days, is portrayed by Rembrandt in the *Raising* and the *Descent*. Notably in these two scenes the viewer is in the West as part of the gathering gloom. Easter Saturday recognised in the *Entombment*; in Rembrandt's painting the viewer now stands in the East as the light fades. Easter Sunday is celebrated in the *Resurrection*, in which the viewer in Rembrandt's work now looks into a new light. Easter Monday then portends to the full spiritual illumination that is Rembrandt's *Ascension*. Thus in his choice of scenes for the *Passion Series* Rembrandt, to some extent, presents a Passion Cycle that corresponds to the most significant events of the liturgical Easter period. In the series, as the viewer is re-orientated from a westerly (a setting Sun/Son) to an easterly view point (a rising Sun/Son), which recapitulates and remembers Christ's death by crucifixion.

The earliest known pictorial representation of the crucified Christ and his adoration as divine is often considered, by Richard Viladesau for example, to be the so-called *Graffito of*

¹³ See Ewert Cousins, 'The Humanity and Passion of Christ', in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, edited by Jill Raitt, Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, vol. 17 of *World Spirituality: An encyclopedic history of religious quest* (New York: Crossroads, 1987): 375-391.

Alexamenos (fig. 71), now in the Palatine Antiquarian Museum, Rome.¹⁴ No clear date has been attributed to this sketch, although it probably dates from the third century after Christ's death.¹⁵ Roughly etched on a slab of marble, it shows an image of the body of a crucified man with the head of a donkey beside a smaller figure with an arm extended in the man's direction. Nearby are the crudely carved words in Greek: 'Alexamenos worships (his) God'.¹⁶ It may reflect a Roman belief that Jews and later Christians worshipped a God with the head of a donkey. To them the notion of a suffering God was clearly absurd, particularly as death by crucifixion was regarded as a terrible and ignominious death.¹⁷

Raymond Brown has investigated and discussed the history of Roman crucifixion.¹⁸ Around the time of Christ's death, crucifixion was widely used by the Roman rulers of Judea as a form of capital punishment. The Romans did not inflict it on their own citizens, reserving it as punishment for slaves, violent criminals and rebels. The actual hanging on the cross itself was only the last part of a degrading and cruel process of execution. It was preceded by torture, usually scourging with a whip. The cross-beam (*patibulum*) was then laid upon the victim's shoulders, fastened to his arms with rope and he was driven naked, again under the whip, to the place of execution, where he then would have been nailed to this piece. The upright beam of the cross (*stirpes*) would usually have been already standing in place to avoid unnecessary last-minute labour. The cross-beam was then lifted into place and finally the feet would have been nailed to the upright. The cross-beam was either set into a groove on the side creating a Latin Cross, as in Rembrandt's *Raising*, or set into a groove at the top of the upright creating a capital T (the Greek letter *Tau*), as in Rembrandt's *Descent*. The footrest (*suppedaneum*), clearly shown in the *Raising*, is rarely mentioned in the ancient sources.¹⁹ In contrast, Brown states that a peg driven into the upright to act as a seat (*sedile*), not shown by Rembrandt in either work, is often referred to in contemporary accounts, this device prevented the condemned from sagging under his own weight and suffocating

¹⁴ See Richard Viladesau, *The Beauty of the Cross: The Passion of Christ in theology and the arts, from the Catacombs to the eve of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 19.

¹⁵ Viladesau, *Beauty*, 19.

¹⁶ 'AAEEAMENOC CEBETE OEON', in Viladesau, *Beauty*, 19.

¹⁷ See Martin Hengel, *Christianity in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

¹⁸ Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1994). See also Gerard Sloyan, *The Crucifixion of Jesus: History, myth, faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

¹⁹ Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 945-953.

prematurely.²⁰ Crucifixion was intended to be a lengthy and painful death, as a result of blood loss, starvation, exposure and dehydration as well as eventual asphyxiation.

These historical details as provided by Brown are important as they inform our discussion of the ‘historical’ accuracy of Rembrandt’s painting, especially as to the physical aspects of the events: the raising of and the descent from the Cross, are not described in the Gospels. Each of the Evangelists refers to the events simply as ‘they crucified him’, as if the reader immediately fully appreciates the significance of these words.²¹ The burial of Christ (the Entombment) is narrated in some detail in all four Gospels.²² Christ’s actual rising from the tomb (the Resurrection) is not described in the Gospels; rather it is alluded to, again in some detail, when the Angel of the Lord informs the two Marys who arrive to find an empty tomb.²³ The Ascension of Christ is narrated only by Luke; although it is also recounted in the book of the Acts of the Apostles.²⁴ The lack of an extended Gospel account of the major Passion event the Crucifixion, so notably absent from Rembrandt’s *Passion Series*, is at odds with the centrality of the scene in Passion Cycles, where it unifies the narrative and directs the viewer’s attention towards His sacrifice. On the other hand, we find a remarkable variety of interpretations of what constitutes a Passion Cycle, especially with regard to subject, in the pictorial tradition.

Passion Cycles – Pictorial Expression

The Passion of Christ has a long pictorial tradition. When several episodes are presented in sequence they are designated as Passion Cycles. The number of episodes may vary considerably; often they begin with the Entry into Jerusalem and conclude, unlike the Gospel Passion narratives, with post-crucifixion events such as the Resurrection or Ascension. Surprisingly, there is no satisfactory complete book-length study of Passion Cycles in art. Richard Harries’ *The Passion in Art*, considers pictorial representations of the Passion ‘as portrayed in the whole sweep of Christian history’ by way of a series of representative examples.²⁵ Harries however, like others, appears to concentrate not on Passion Cycles but on the central scene of the Passion, the Crucifixion of Christ.

²⁰ Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 945-953.

²¹ Matthew 27:35, Mark 15:25, Luke 23:33, John 19:18.

²² Matthew 27:60-1, Mark 15:46-7, Luke 23:53-6, John 20:41-2.

²³ Matthew 28:1-6, Mark 16:1-6, Luke 24:1-7, John 20:1-13.

²⁴ Luke 24: 50-1, Acts 1:9.

²⁵ Richard Harries, *The Passion in Art* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), forward page, emphasis mine.

Similarly Richard Viladesau's two part history (with a third imminent) of the Passion in art concentrates primarily on representations of the Crucifixion.²⁶ However, Viladesau does make several fascinating connections that are informative for this thesis. Viladesau's two books, *The Beauty of the Cross* followed by *The Triumph of the Cross*, trace the history of pictorial representations of Christ's Passion through the theological literature of the corresponding period, from Augustine's (354-430) *The Trinity (Da Trinita)* to pseudo-Bonaventure's (1221-1274) *The Tree of Life (Lignum Vitae)*. In doing so Viladesau identifies in these theological writings an increasing focus on Christ's humanity. Artistically this begins to find expression in Renaissance naturalism, as the adoration of a purely symbolic image of Christ, such as that the *Graffito of Alexamenos* mocks, is supplanted by veneration of Christ in which His life is held up visually as series of moral exemplar. Thus the pictorial tradition depicting the Passion of Christ that precedes Rembrandt's *Passion Series* is one that is primarily concerned with examining the relationship between the image and the viewer and gradually evolves from an iconic image towards a representation of the actuality of suffering.

Pictorially there is no set convention for Passion Cycles. It could be argued that to some extent artists have traditionally responded to the Roman Catholic Stations of the Cross (*via crucis*), or more literally Way of the Cross, which developed from the fourteenth century onwards under Franciscan influence.²⁷ The Way of the Cross is a devotion practiced on Fridays throughout the year particularly on Good Friday. It involves contemplating in a church, various stations that depict episodes in Christ's Passion. The stations correspond to fourteen Passion events and have often been depicted, in totality or in part, by artists in the nave and private chapels of Catholic churches.

Such a Passion Cycle is a section of Giotto di Bondone's (c.1266-1337) well known fresco series (c.1300-05) in the Scrovegni, or Arena, Chapel in Padua (fig. 72).²⁸ The series consists of three tiers around three walls of thirty-six frescos that culminate in a *Last Judgement*, which covers the entire wall above the chapel's entrance. The topmost tier of the three shows the life of Mary. The second tier proceeds through the infancy narratives and ministry of

²⁶ Viladesau, *Beauty* and Richard Viladesau, *The Triumph of the Cross: The Passion of Christ in theology and the arts, from the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

²⁷ See William Addis and Thomas Arnold, *A Catholic Dictionary: Containing some account of doctrine, discipline, rites, ceremonies, councils and religious orders of the Catholic Church* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960).

²⁸ See Andrew Ladis, *Giotto's O: Narrative, figuration and pictorial ingenuity in the Arena Chapel* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008) and James Stubblebine, *Giotto: The Arena Chapel frescos* (New York: Norton, 1969).

Christ. While the lowest tier is devoted to events in the life of Christ from *The Last Supper*, through several Passion events to the *Ascension* and the *Pentecost*, they can be seen as comprising a Passion Cycle of eleven Passion scenes. The importance of denoting these works as a cycle cannot be over emphasized; Giotto's first and foremost intention was to tell a story – the redemption of humanity. This didactic purpose, which Rembrandt also emphasizes in the *Passion Series*, was, in this case, primarily in direct response to the demands of Giotto's patron, Enrico Scrovegni, whose banker father had been accused of usury. This function is clearly realised in the *Last Judgement* (fig. 73), which presents the culmination of the process of redemption. Amongst the Saved the kneeling figure of Scrovegni presents, in an act of contrition, a model of his chapel to the three Holy Women (fig. 74, detail of fig. 73). Thus Giotto's works are a visible record of Scrovegni's repentance in which the sinner responds to images of Christ's message of redemption as told through the Passion.

The relationship between images of Christ's Passion and the viewer are further explored by Fra Angelico (c.1387-1455) in his frescos for the monastery of San Marco, Florence.²⁹ Between c.1436 and c.1455, Fra Angelico and his assistants adorned the walls of the cloister, the chapter room, the refectory, the corridors and each of the forty-four monk's cells of the monastery with over fifty frescoes that depict episodes from the life and Passion of Christ. The works have both a decorative function, they conveyed the beauty of holiness that the Dominicans saw reflected in their everyday lives and moreover, they provided the monks with an aid to Christian meditation, acting as a visual stimulus to prayer. This meditative function is exemplified by the *Mocking of Christ* in Cell 7 (fig. 75). The figure of a seated, blindfolded Christ, holding a rod and stone symbols of derision, dominates the centre of the work. He is flanked by a series of hands, one wielding a stick and a bodiless head that spits at Christ, all belonging to His tormentors. In response, the Virgin and St. Dominic are portrayed in prayer below. The image does not tell a story, rather it encourages the monks to meditate upon and to follow the lead of the Virgin and Dominic by praying in response to Christ's suffering. Fra Angelico's works tasks viewers to directly examine their own relationship with Christ, in a manner similar to, as I will later argue, Rembrandt's *Passion Series*. However, Fra Angelico's works do not correspond to a Passion Cycle.

²⁹ See William Hood, *Fra Angelico: San Marco, Florence* (New York: George Brazillier, 1995).

Hans Memling's (c.1430-1494), *Scenes from the Passion of Christ* of c.1470 (fig. 76) now in Turin, can be seen as a Passion Cycle in that it presents the Passion narrative entirely within one cohesive, elegant pictorial space.³⁰ Although the painting is relatively small (56.7 x 92.2 cm), it contains a remarkable twenty-three vignettes, depicting twenty episodes from the Passion and three later appearances of the Risen Christ, without a central dominating scene. The scenes are distributed in and around an idealized medieval town that signifies Jerusalem. In addition, there are twin portraits of the donors in the lower corners, in close proximity to the two largest representations of the figure of Christ in the work. Memling allows the viewer's eye to wander across a unified pictorial space, exploring and pondering the significance of individual events from Christ's Passion in a roughly contemporary setting – episode by episode – thereby relating the events to the viewer's own current interpretative condition. Memling's work therefore creates a relationship, with contemporary relevance, between both the narrative and viewer and between the viewer and Christ himself.

These works, as discussed here, have documented a movement from the didactic purpose of Giotto towards a more personal contemplation of Christ's Passion as portrayed in scenes by Fra Angelico and later Memling. This artist's work demonstrates a particular concern with an expression of contemporary closeness and relevance of narrative in which the viewer begins to be present and to participate in the events. Although all three of these artistic considerations and the pictorial tradition they constitute can be seen to inform Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*, a stronger influence is a more recent and more immediate Northern European iconographic tradition.

The Passion in Northern Art

James Marrow's study of Passion iconography in Northern European art focuses largely on religious imagery in Germanic centres that predates the time period of this thesis.³¹ Usefully however, Marrow notes that during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the emergence of the *Devotio Moderna* movement: 'embraces a piety that is centred on devotion to Christ; Passion meditation becomes the prevalent form of devotion in the Lowlands, and the Passion tract reaches its greatest degree of narrative elaboration'.³² Slightly later these tendencies, identified here by Marrow, find pictorial expression in Rembrandt's Leiden in the graphic

³⁰ See Dirk de Vos, *Hans Memling* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994).

³¹ James Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (Kortrijk: Van Ghemmert, 1979).

³² James Marrow, *Passion Iconography*, 26.

oeuvre of Lucas van Leyden (1494-1533).³³ Arthur Wheelock Jr. has underscored the importance of the sixteenth-century Leidener to Rembrandt's career.³⁴ Rembrandt was certainly well aware of van Leyden's *oeuvre*; the 1656 inventory of the artist's possessions documents that Rembrandt possessed a book of woodcuts and a book of copper engravings by van Leyden.³⁵

Van Leyden produced two 'Passion Series', the first of which is referred to as the *Round Passion* (1509); it consists of nine engravings, beginning with *Christ in Gethsemane* and culminating in the *Crucifixion*.³⁶ Together the nine scenes all emphasize the mental and physical torture Christ endured. The scenes are theatrically set tableaux, a format which thrusts the figure of Christ into the foreground space. The scenes are particularly violent, as Christ is repeatedly dragged, beaten and whipped. These factors imbue the works with a strong, consistent sense of sorrow and grief. The later series, known simply as *The Passion* (1521), consists of fourteen engravings. It begins with the *Last Supper* and includes a *Crucifixion* scene; however unlike the earlier series, it notably contains four post-crucifixion events: a *Descent from the Cross*, an *Entombment*, *Christ in Limbo* and a *Resurrection*.³⁷ Executed in a conventional rectangular format and in an abbreviated pictorial space, the images contain far fewer figures and less narrative content than the earlier works and are notable for the repeated centrality of the dominant figure of Christ. Clearly this is His story and the viewer is brought into a more direct relationship with the figure of Christ, as a comparison between the two illustrated examples of the *Betrayal of Christ* from each series (figs 77 and 78), shows. The focus here is more on contemplation to invite empathy from the viewer. Thus van Leyden's graphic *oeuvre* evidences not only a meditative turn in Passion iconography, as identified by Marrow, but increasingly embraces a piety centred on the figure of Christ. Although these tendencies are more intrinsic to prints than paintings, I suggest that the spirit, rather than the format or style, of van Leyden informed Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*. Van Leyden's work is also notable for the amount detail in a virtuoso display of craftsmanship in the manner of the great German master Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), whose work also undoubtedly informed Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*.

³³ See Rik Vos, *Lucas van Leyden* (Maarsse: Gary Schwartz, 1978).

³⁴ Arthur Wheelock Jr., 'Rembrandt Inventing Himself', in *Rembrandt Creates Rembrandt: Art and Ambition in Leiden, 1629-31* (exhibition catalogue), edited by Allan Chong (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2000), 13-24.

³⁵ Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, #'s 193 and 198, at 367 and 368.

³⁶ Lucas van Leyden, *Round Passion*, 1509, nine engravings, 29.5 cm diameter (borderline of frame).

³⁷ Lucas van Leyden, *The Passion*, 1521, fourteen engravings, 11.5 x 7.5 cm.

Dürer met van Leyden in Antwerp in 1521, recording the meeting in his diary with the following note: ‘I have also traded eight guilders worth of my prints for Lucas’ complete graphic *oeuvre*’.³⁸ During his year-long stay in the Low Countries Dürer personally disseminated at least 108 of his ‘Large Books’ (the woodcut *Apocalypse*, *Life of the Virgin*, and *Great Passion*), 24 sets of his *Engraved Passion*, 22 sets of his *Small Passion* and dozens of single sheet engravings that were not part of sets.³⁹ Already well known before he visited the Low Countries, Dürer’s rather rapid dissemination of his own works is a further example of the way in which important sections of his *oeuvre* defies geographical constraints and as a result has a significant impact on later artists such as Rembrandt.⁴⁰ Although there is only one book, ‘the book on proportion with woodcuts by Albrecht Dürer’ listed in the 1656 Rembrandt inventory, documentation shows that he brought, and presumably resold, a large quantity of Dürer prints (nine sets of *The Life of the Virgin*) at the sale of the Gammer Spranger collection in 1638.⁴¹ Not only does Dürer redefine the enterprise of printmaking from an economic standpoint but he can be seen as initiating the process of fully realizing its visual potential, which Rembrandt’s graphic *oeuvre* exemplifies.

As with Rembrandt, artistic representation of the Passion of Christ seems to have been at the core of Dürer’s mission as an artist. Evidence of this is his famous self-image now in Munich, in which he presents an intense image of self-identification with Christ (fig. 79).⁴² The collapse of boundaries between artist and subject in this work is paralleled by the development through his graphic Passions of strategies to knit the viewer more tightly to the image. Dürer produced six graphic series of Passion imagery, three of which were published: the so-called *Albertina Passion* (c.1494), of which attribution is dubious; the *Large Passion* (1496-8 and 1510); the *Engraved Passion* (1507-13); the *Small Passion* (1508-11); the *Green Passion* (1504), executed largely by workshop assistants; and the *Oblong Passion* (1520-4).⁴³

³⁸ Albrecht Dürer, *The Literary Remains of Albrecht Dürer*, edited and translated by William Conway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889), 175.

³⁹ These figures are compiled from Conway ed., *Literary Remains*, 92-126.

⁴⁰ See Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955).

⁴¹ Although this is the only book associated with Dürer in the 1656 inventory it should be noted that this is presumably one of the four books Dürer wrote on the subject of human proportion suggesting a shared keen interest in the subject. For the sale of the Gammer Spranger collection see, Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, # 273, at 377 and 1638/2, 150.

⁴² See Joseph Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), esp. 76-9.

⁴³ Albrecht Dürer (attribution dubious), *Albertina Passion*, c.1494, twelve drawings, 29.2 x 38.2 cm; *Large Passion*, 1496-98 and 1510, twelve woodcuts, 39.6 x 28 cm; *Engraved Passion*, 1507-13, fifteen engravings,

The early *Large Passion* comprises twelve scenes, beginning with the *Last Supper*. It includes a *Crucifixion* and the same four post-crucifixion scenes that van Leyden represented in his 1521 series. Compositionally, Dürer's series is immediately notable for the large numbers of figures that crowd the pictorial space and create a densely packed narrative. These throngs of figures and narrative details are absent in the later *Engraved Passion*, as can be seen in the two illustrated *Crucifixion* scenes (figs 80 and 81). The *Engraved Passion* largely repeats the sequence of the earlier series, with the addition of a mix of both extra trial and post-crucifixion scenes. However, stylistically it represents an abrupt departure from the earlier compositions. In the *Crucifixion* the figure of Christ on the Cross completely dominates the pictorial space. He is flanked by only two large figures, the Virgin and St. John, and by three partially represented figures. As in other scenes from the *Engraved Passion* the viewer's unimpeded focus is directed largely towards the figure of the suffering Christ in direct contemplation of His suffering.

The direct engagement with Christ we experience in the *Engraved Passion* works is somewhat muted by the multiplicity of scenes in Dürer's *Small Passion*, which seems to fall stylistically between the earlier two series. The over thirty scenes do however include a representation of *Christ Nailed to the Cross* (fig. 82), a subject not portrayed in the earlier series. The subject is definitely unusual. Marrow has shown how traditional (medieval) Northern Passion Cycles, both pictorial and literary, described only a range of limited scenes in a simple and summary manner. These often moved directly from a representation of Christ on the road to Golgotha carrying the Cross to the scene of the Crucifixion with the Cross already raised.⁴⁴ By contrast Dürer's *Christ Nailed to the Cross* emphasises the practical aspects of death by crucifixion. It could not be a more business-like scene. In it one large, dominant figure drills a hole in the cross-beam while another hammers a nail through Christ's left hand. Meanwhile pincers additional nails and rope lie scattered in the foreground. The practicality of the task in turn suggests the physicality of the event as this is hard work, as is so strongly expressed Rembrandt's *Raising* in the *Passion Series*.

In drawing attention to similarities between a woodcut by Albrecht Altdorfer (1480-1538) from 1513 and a drawing in Vienna thought to be by Rembrandt but now re-attributed (figs

14.3 x 9.6 cm; *Small Passion*, 1508-11, thirty-seven woodcuts, 12.6 x 9.7 cm; *Oblong Passion*, 1520-4, seven drawings, 21 x 28.5 cm; Albrecht Dürer and workshop, *Green Passion*, 1504, twelve drawings, 30 x 19 cm. For the scattered history of the *Green Passion* and *Oblong Passion* see Panofsky, *Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 105-6 and 218-233 respectively.

⁴⁴ Marrow, *Passion Iconography*, 2, 27-28 and 168-69.

83 and 84), Ben Broos has suggested Altdorfer as the key pictorial source for the unusual subject of the *Raising of the Cross*.⁴⁵ Additionally, I suggest that Dürer's *Christ Nailed to the Cross* may have provided both a thematic and stylistic (the diagonal arrangement of the Cross) model for Rembrandt, a connection that has hitherto not been acknowledged. This work by Dürer is an example of a movement from van Leyden forward in Northern European Passions in print of an increasing focus on pictorial devices intended to contract the relationship between image and audience as the Passion of Christ is brought, theatrically, into the here and now of the viewer's life.

Passion Cycles - Literary Expression

Another strong artistic tradition that may well have informed Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* is theatrical re-enactments of the Passion of Christ. In a chapter appropriately entitled 'Theatrical Model', Svetlana Alpers discusses Rembrandt's love of the theatre and indeed, an examination of his drawings reveals a multitude of theatrical subjects.⁴⁶ Schama, as previously mentioned, has suggested that in his inclusion of a self-image in the *Raising*, Rembrandt casts himself in the role of the medieval figure of *Elk* – Everyman (fig. 85).⁴⁷ He states that 'cast as *Elk* the Painter, Rembrandt manages to equate the act of painting itself with the Crucifixion of the Saviour'.⁴⁸ Here Schama indicates the popularity and currency in the Low Countries of the Dutch Morality Play *Eleckerlijc* (c.1470), better known in English translation as *Everyman*.⁴⁹ Schama therefore identifies a literary tradition significant in popular culture of the early modern period that can be explored in connection with the *Passion Series* – the Morality Play.

Eleckerlijc (fig. 86) is one of the last genuine Morality Plays, a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century theatrical genre that flourished throughout Europe that developed from the earlier thirteenth and fourteenth century Mystery Play.⁵⁰ The first medieval plays undoubtedly came about as an extension of the liturgy, as Bible readings interspersed into the Mass. Given the inherent dramatic possibilities of the Mass, over time these readings became more and more

⁴⁵ Broos, 'Rembrandt Borrows from Altdorfer', 100. See also Otto Benesch, *The Drawings of Rembrandt*, vols I-VI (London: Phaidon, 1954-57), vol. I, # 83, 89. For Albrecht Altdorfer see, Reinhild Janzen, *Albrecht Altdorfer: Four centuries of criticism* (Ann Arbor: Epping, 1980).

⁴⁶ Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 34-58.

⁴⁷ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 294.

⁴⁸ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 294.

⁴⁹ See E. R. Tigg, 'Is *Eleckerlijc* Prior to *Everyman*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philosophy* (1939): 568-98.

⁵⁰ See Allan Knight, 'History and Fiction', in *Medieval Drama*, vol. IV, edited by John Coldewey (New York: Routledge, 2007), 13-32.

dramatized, which heightened the impact for a largely illiterate audience. As these interludes became excessively long within the liturgy, priests grew increasingly uneasy about their performance and their own role in them. The solution was to take the performances outside the church, place them in the hands of lay performers and attach them to religious feast days. Such performances involved a series of short theatrical re-enactments of Christ's Passion. The Mystery Play was therefore a literary and dramatic version of a Passion Cycle, which in turn over time began to assume a moral tone.⁵¹

The realistic Mystery Play evolved into the more complex, allegorical Morality Play of which *Eleckerlijc/Everyman* is one of the few extant examples.⁵² Despite a series of suggestions by scholars, the authors of these texts remain unknown.⁵³ Although many Mystery Plays had an allegorical meaning, it is generally covert whereas in the Morality Play it is overt. While the Mystery Play involved re-enacting biblical events in a concrete and historical manner, the Morality is more abstract, with the plot subservient to the theme and moral. The plot of *Eleckerlijc/Everyman* is relatively simple; it involves a straightforward fall-and-rise pattern that centres on the 'Last Four Things' (Death, Last Judgement, Heaven and Hell). The character of Everyman is summoned to appear before God and Death is tasked to fulfil His divine command. Death is presented as the universal visitor, coming to all alike, with no power to absolve or to redeem. In contrast, Christ is presented as revealing His mercy in the Crucifixion. Confronted with this reality, Everyman begins a long, slow and painful journey toward true Christian values.⁵⁴

Elsa Strietman has identified the play 'roughly speaking' as representing a shift in thought in the sixteenth-century Low Countries, from an emphasis on the salvation of the mankind towards the salvation of the individual, from the general to the particular and from the metaphysical to the actual.⁵⁵ The connections Schama makes between the character of Everyman and Rembrandt's self-images are in this light not surprising. They reveal not only a possible literary analogy for Rembrandt's *Passion Series* but also begin to suggest the influence of Reformed thought on his *conchetto* for the works. Formerly the theological exegesis of Christ's Passion had been based upon the traditional, Catholic interpretation of

⁵¹ See David Gilman ed., *Everyman and Company: Essays on the theme and structure of the European Moral Play* (New York: AMS Press, 1988).

⁵² The definitive English text is A. C. Cawley, *Everyman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960).

⁵³ See Knight, 'History and Fiction' and Cawley's 'Introduction'.

⁵⁴ See Geoffrey Cooper and Christopher Wortham, *The Summoning of Everyman* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1980), 9-41.

⁵⁵ Elsa Strietman, 'The Drama of the Rhetoricians in the Low Countries', *Dutch Crossing* 22 (1998): 85-100, 89.

events. However, Rembrandt was working in a *milieu* in which, since the 1618-19 Synod of Dort, the official state religion was the Calvinist, Dutch Reformed Church. How does Rembrandt's *Passion Series* reflect Reformed thought in order to accommodate an ever-broader confessional community?

Reformed Thought

In both the pictorial and literary expressions of Christ's Passion that have been traced here, Strietman's identification of a shift from an emphasis on the struggles of the many towards the struggles of the one clearly differentiates between pre- and post-Reformation thought. This gradual shift in artistic expression was theologically articulated initially in the ideas of the early sixteenth-century Humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) in his 1503 work (figs 87 and 88), *Enchiridion militis Christiani (Handbook of the Christian Soldier)*.⁵⁶ In the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus advocated a reform of the church based on a return to the writings of the early church fathers and a close reading of Scripture.⁵⁷ In his argument he developed two influential ideas: firstly that the vitality of Christian piety lay within the laity not the clergy and secondly that religion is a matter of the individual's heart and mind – an inward state.⁵⁸ At first glance Erasmus's ideas sound revolutionary; however Carlos Eire has identified the limitations of Erasmus's 'critique'.⁵⁹ The circulation of his reforming ideas was limited to the printed page; and furthermore by writing exclusively in Latin, his audience was a learned one. In practice, he did no actual reforming himself, leaving the task of change to others.⁶⁰

In 1517 when he nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, Luther, instigated the break-away of the Protestant churches from Roman Catholicism that became the Reformation (figs 89 and 90).⁶¹ For the reformers authority was grounded not in the office bearers of the church but in Scripture; in their view, the Bible either was or contained (depending on whom you followed) the Word of God.⁶² Fidelity to Scripture became the reformer's guiding principle – *Sola Scripture*. The writings of Erasmus and the

⁵⁶ Erasmus, *Collected Works*, 70 vols, edited by John O'Malley (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 1988-99). For a biography of Erasmus and a discussion of his ideas see Roland Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom* (New York: Scribner's, 1969).

⁵⁷ Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 54.

⁵⁸ McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 54.

⁵⁹ Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 45-53.

⁶⁰ Eire, *Idols*, 53.

⁶¹ For a succinct biography of Luther and a study of his thought see Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An introduction to his thought* (London: Collins, 1970).

⁶² McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 142-5.

rise of Humanist thought had, as Alister McGrath has identified, thrust a central question onto the church – what must I, as an individual, do to be saved?⁶³ Luther found his answer to this fundamental question in Scripture through a close reading of Romans. According to legend he experienced this pivotal insight, during his period of seclusion in the tower of the Augustine monastery in Wittenberg.

The significant verse for Luther was Romans 1:17: ‘For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith’. Luther had previously understood this verse to indicate an active, vengeful God; however he came to realise that in fact the reference here is, in Luther’s own words, ‘to a passive righteousness, by which a merciful God justifies us by faith’.⁶⁴ The key word here, which is deceptively simple, is ‘faith’. McGrath summarizes Luther’s understanding of the word in three key points, commenting that these encapsulate Luther’s ‘fundamental contribution to the development of Reformed thought’. For each he shows how each of these points were taken up by later reformers such as Calvin:

1. Faith has a personal, rather than a purely historical, reference.
2. Faith concerns trust in the promises of God.
3. Faith unites the believer to Christ.⁶⁵

Building on McGrath’s neat summary, we can see how these three crucial points are all expressed pictorially in the predella (‘Luther Preaching to the Wittenberg Congregation’) of Lucas Cranach the Elder’s (1472-1553), 1547 *the Last Supper* altarpiece for Luther’s own church, St. Mary’s in Wittenberg (fig. 91).⁶⁶ The work is divided into three distinct areas: on the right the figure of Luther preaches with an open Bible beside him, directing the attention of the congregation on the left that includes attentive children and the viewer’s attention, towards the central figure of the crucified Christ. The message is clear and unambiguous – the congregation/viewer are directed, as detailed above, on a ‘personal’ level to contemplate (‘unite’ in) the figure of Christ as visible proof that we all can ‘trust in the promises of God’. In the work Luther pointedly indicates that it is only in the intervention of Christ that we come to know God.

⁶³ McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 91.

⁶⁴ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 55 vols, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis/Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing, 1955-75), vol. 34, 336-8; also Alister McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s theological breakthrough* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 95-8.

⁶⁵ McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 97-101, 97.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of Cranach’s life and work see Mirela Proske, *Lucas Cranach the Elder* (Munich and New York: Prestel, 2007). For a discussion of this work as *the* definitive Reformed visual statement see, Joseph Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (London: Reaktion, 2004).

The work also represents and responds to Luther's own stated opinion on the function of images. Luther expressed a moderate, empathetic view of the vexed question of the function of religious images. Other reformers were not so kind.⁶⁷ As Erie succinctly comments, 'the problem of idolatry assumes a key position in the thought of Calvin'.⁶⁸ There is no escaping, in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, the importance of the strict thought of the towering figure of the founder of Calvinism. William Dyrness has stated that 'Calvin's views on the visual and images throughout his life were based consistently on his theological vision'.⁶⁹ The definitive structure of this vision, documented in the 1539 edition of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (figs 92 and 93), as identified by Edward Dowey, centred on two poles: the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves.⁷⁰ In Calvin's view religious imagery impairs this vision by displacing God's true glory as reflected in ourselves and our neighbours. Scripturally he based his opposition to religious images on his reading of Exodus 20:4-6 prohibiting image worship, which he considered the Second Commandment. He believed that these biblical passages forbade firstly, the erection of any image for the purpose of representing God and secondly, the worship of this or any other type of image.⁷¹ At first glance this would seem a blanket condemnation of all religious imagery. However, as Christopher Joby has traced, Calvin's evolving attitude softens over time as he does make allowances for works of art: 'as long as they conform to the parameters that Calvin set for them, namely they should not represent God and they should only represent what we can see'.⁷² Joby identifies within Calvin's *Institutes* two types of art that he believes fit within these parameters and were therefore acceptable to fundamental Calvinists – histories and landscapes.⁷³ As pictorial evidence to support his thesis Joby discusses a history painting that he believes would have been acceptable to Calvin, Rembrandt's *The Risen Christ at Emmaus* of 1648 (fig. 94) now in the Louvre.⁷⁴

The very fact that Joby identifies a work by Rembrandt to test his hypothesis is testament to the artist's ability to circumvent even the strictest boundaries and adapt his style and iconography to accommodate a widening confessional community. Indeed Rembrandt's

⁶⁷ See Carl Christensen, *Art and the Reformation in Germany* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979).

⁶⁸ Erie, *Idols*, 196.

⁶⁹ William Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 63.

⁷⁰ Edward Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 41-42.

⁷¹ Dyrness, *Reformed Theology*, 62-80.

⁷² Christopher Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts: A re-assessment* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 16 and Calvin, *Institutes*, I, xi, 12.

⁷³ Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts*, 16.

⁷⁴ Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts*, 143-170, at 145.

Passion Series works fall clearly within the boundaries of Calvin's acceptance of history and even, to a lesser extent, landscape painting. However more definitively, and contrary to Perlove and Silver's assertion that Rembrandt's faith is a pictorial realization of basic Pauline theology that owes more to Calvin than to Luther, I suggest it is as much the exegesis of the latter as that of the former that informs Rembrandt's *Passion Series*. In either case, as I will trace in a later chapter of this thesis, the paintings correspond with remarkable fidelity to the Reformers' rallying cry – *Sola Scripture*. Moreover, I will show how Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* brings the viewer to a specific historical moment and guides them towards an individual personal relationship with Christ. As the paintings portray the essential promises of God in the series, the viewer is invited to come progressively to know God and to become united in Christ. Although broadly the knowledge of God is the intention of all Christianity, Rembrandt's paintings specifically seem to embrace the message of salvation on an individual as opposed to a collective level, the essential thrust of Luther's Reformation.

Reformed Thought in Rembrandt's *Oeuvre*

An identifiable reference to Lutheran thought in Rembrandt's early *oeuvre* has been previously explored by Tümpel. In a remarkable piece of investigative scholarship, Tümpel discusses a series of analogies between Rembrandt's several representations of the subject Simeon's Hymn of Praise, and a published sermon by Luther.⁷⁵ Tümpel draws attention to a c.1639 etching (fig. 95), in which a woman accentuated by the lighting stands directly behind the figure of Simeon who holds the Christ child. This woman is not mentioned in the corresponding biblical passage.⁷⁶ However in his description of the scene Luther comments:

We also notice here the great distinction conferred upon this holy woman, who was favoured more than many great people when she recognised this poor child as the true Saviour. There were undoubtedly priests present who received the offerings of Joseph and Mary, but did not know the child and perhaps considered the words of Simeon and Anna as mere old wives' talk. She must have been specially illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and a saintly woman in the sight of God, who enlightened her more than the others.⁷⁷

As Tümpel states, 'Rembrandt must have been familiar with a text in this exegetic tradition', and that in his true quirky nature, 'may have wanted to express the metaphor of 'old wives'

⁷⁵ Christian Tümpel, 'Traditional and Groundbreaking: Rembrandt's iconography', in van de Wetering ed., *Quest of a genius*, 125-152.

⁷⁶ Luke 2:34-5.

⁷⁷ Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 10, 437; Tümpel, 'Rembrandt's iconography', 131-2.

talk' visually here'.⁷⁸ In this example Rembrandt's representation of the subject clearly closely follows Luther's description.

Luther's sermons also bear witness to the emphasis that he, like other Protestant reformers, placed on fully incorporating children into the religious community. In a sermon preached on the 'Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity' (1522), Luther comments in relation to the Third Commandment: 'you boys and girls should diligently learn to fear our Lord God from early youth, to learn to love His Word'.⁷⁹ This theme is reflected by Rembrandt's in the so-called *Hundred Guilder Print* (fig. 96), which specifically depicts *Christ Preaching: Bring thy Children unto Me*. In the work a small child in the lower left corner urges, by literally dragging, a nonplussed woman towards the figure of Christ who is preaching. While in an earlier sketch, *Christ Preaching* (fig. 97), a central figure of a seated child listens intently to Christ's Word. Other figures gaze downward at the child to suggest that he represents a model of humility. The scriptural source for these works is Mathew 19 and 18 respectively, in which Christ speaks the well-known adage: 'Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me'.⁸⁰ A notable later graphic work by Rembrandt, *Christ Preaching ('La Petite Tombe')*, shows a continued interest in incorporating children into the religious community (fig. 98), it also features the figure of a child in the foreground, albeit a disinterested one, as a member of the gathered audience. In this work the dominant, central figure of Christ raises both arms with palms open in a traditional priestly gesture of blessing. Perlove and Silver have noted the similarity between this gesture and that of both the prophetess Anna in the early, *Simeon and Hannah in the Temple* (fig. 29), and that of Christ himself in the *Ascension* (fig. 99) from the *Passion Series*.⁸¹ Perlove and Silver additionally comment that this gesture was also employed by Calvinist ministers to bless their congregants, an example of Rembrandt employing a gesture familiar to a contemporary Dutch audience.⁸²

⁷⁸ Tümpel, 'Rembrandt's iconography', 132.

⁷⁹ Luther, Sermon: 'Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity' [1522], part 15, in *Faith and Freedom: An invitation to the writings of Martin Luther*, edited by John Thornton and Susan Varenne (New York: Random House, 2002), 224-232, 230.

⁸⁰ Matt. 19:14. There is extant sermon by Luther published in English in 1548, in which he takes Mathew 18 as his text. 'A frutfull sermon of the moost euangelicall wryter M. Luther, made of the angelles vpo[n] the xviii chapi. of Mathew. Prynted at Londo[n]: In Paules church yerde, at the syngne of saynt Augustyne by [by J. Mychell for] Hugh Syngleton', [1548], (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press Online, 1999).

⁸¹ Shelley Perlove and Larry Silver, 'Rembrandt's Jesus', in *Rembrandt and the Face of Jesus* edited by Lloyd DeWitt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 75-108, 94.

⁸² Perlove and Silver, 'Rembrandt's Jesus', 94. See also Christopher White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher; A study of the artist at work* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1969), 65-7.

These works by Rembrandt and the aforementioned seminal Reformation image of Luther preaching by Cranach are both good pictorial examples of the emphasis the Reformed churches placed on the preached Word.⁸³ As we see in Cranach's painting, the congregation was placed in a position where they could decide individually what to accept and what to reject from the teaching. The Dutch took the lesson from the sermon into the home and applied it to themselves in their own daily lives. The rapid rise of imagery in the seventeenth-century depicting religiously inspired domestic scenes that project a profound sense of order, cleanliness and harmony are evidence of this. This trend was stimulated by a high level of prosperity in the newly formed Republic leading to a strong demand for individual ownership of paintings. Despite the strict guidelines laid down by the reformers for the use of images in churches and the subsequent decline in ecclesiastical patronage, art still had a role to play in the domestic setting where it functioned to drive home these spiritual and moral lessons.

First, this is evidenced as Tessa Watt has shown, by the widespread use of illustrative bibles.⁸⁴ Then, as Montias has demonstrated, the modest expansion of religious imagery in domestic settings.⁸⁵ In Montias' study he revealed that although just nineteen per cent of paintings in Calvinist households were religious in character, the subject matter they preferred clearly stood out. It comprised: Old Testament histories first, New Testament histories second and Nativities third. Of these three groups collectively subjects from the life of Christ total fifty-five per cent of these works. Catholic households, on the other hand, still preferred scenes of the Crucifixion, the Virgin and the saints.⁸⁶ Despite the relatively small percentage of religious works in Calvinist households, Montias' findings reveal a trend in these homes towards and acceptability of small, intimate biblical histories, as opposed to more traditional staples of religious art. These factors governing domestic imagery are roughly comparable to the size, subject matter and to a limited extent the function of Rembrandt's *Passion Series*. Although displayed in the Stadholder's gallery, the format and themes of the *Passion Series* may have produced for that audience a not unfamiliar encounter with religious iconography. However, in the *Passion Series* Rembrandt employs a *conchetto*

⁸³ For a discussion comparing devotional practice across a range of confessional identities in the seventeenth century Dutch Republic see, van Deursen, *Plain Lives*, 233-318, esp. 'Calvinists', 260-279.

⁸⁴ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 138 and 238-53

⁸⁵ Montias, 'Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam', 331-372, esp. 337-40.

⁸⁶ Montias, 'Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam', tables 6 and 6a, 356-7. See also, Charles Parker, *Faith by Margins: Catholics and Catholicism in the Dutch Golden Age* (London: Harvard University Press, 2008).

that takes this traditional and familiar subject and transforms it, although in a largely public space, into a personal encounter with the Christ.

Visser 't Hooft in his 1957 work, *Rembrandt and the Gospel*, famously remarked that Rembrandt 'lived' with the Bible.⁸⁷ He concludes that: 'Rembrandt's Christianity cannot be defined in terms of the Church but as the result of his personal encounter with the Bible'.⁸⁸ Among the mere twenty-two books listed in the 1656 inventory of Rembrandt's possessions there is an intriguing entry: 'An old Bible' (*Een oude bijbel*).⁸⁹ Interestingly, the only book found in Rembrandt's house after his death in 1669 and noted in the final posthumous inventory was also a copy of the Bible.⁹⁰ In a 1957 article Hans-Martin Rotermund argued that the 'old Bible' listed in 1656 was a reprint of the so-called *Deux-Aes* Bible, issued at Emden in 1561-2.⁹¹ Rotermund linked woodcut illustrations from this Bible to several drawings by Rembrandt.⁹² Additionally, Frits Broeyer has shown that the *Deux-Aes* Bible was in general use in the late sixteenth century, which seems to support Rotermund's observations.⁹³ An updated edition of the *Deux-Aes* Bible then appeared in 1581, edited by an obscure minister of Leiden Petrus Hackius, who supplemented it with extensive notes from the French Calvinist Bible. Broeyer notes that this Bible met with greater success than unsatisfactory earlier editions.⁹⁴ In addition to settling the divisive theological question of predestination the 1618-19 Synod of Dort addressed the question of the need for a new, official translation of the Bible into Dutch. Finally in 1637 the *Statenbijbel* (States Bible) was published.⁹⁵ Although this met with rapid and general acceptance, it is unclear if this was the 'old Bible' listed in the inventory. Moreover, given its publication date, the *Statenbijbel* could not have been the Bible Rembrandt was using as a biblical source for the *Passion Series*. However, due to the Leiden connection, it is quite possible Rembrandt used the updated *Deux-Aes* edition. As it is impossible to know exactly which Bible he used when painting the

⁸⁷ Visser 't Hooft, *Rembrandt and the Gospel*, 19.

⁸⁸ Visser 't Hooft, *Rembrandt and the Gospel*, 70.

⁸⁹ Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, #'s 254, 255, 273, 281-85 at 375, 377, 381. Amy Golahny, *Rembrandt's Reading: The artist's book shelf of ancient poetry and history* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), circumscribes the question of attempting to identify exactly which edition of the Bible is being referred to here.

⁹⁰ Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1669/2, #22 at 586.

⁹¹ Hans-Martin Rotermund, 'Rembrandt's Bibel', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 8 (1957): 123-150.

⁹² Rotermund, 'Rembrandt's Bibel', 141.

⁹³ Frits Broeyer, 'Bible for the Living Room', in *Lay Bibles in Europe 1450-1800* edited by Mathijs Lamberigts and Arie den Hollander (Leuven: Leuven University Press Peeters, 2006), 207- 221, 207.

⁹⁴ Broeyer, 'Bible for the Living Room', 210.

⁹⁵ Broeyer, 'Bible for the Living Room', 219.

Passion Series, I will refer to the English, King James Bible for purposes of consistency and clarity in this thesis.⁹⁶

In order to document the breadth of Rembrandt's 'personal encounter with the Bible', Visser 't Hooft lists the numbers of works with Biblical subject matter in Rembrandt's *oeuvre*: 145 paintings (out of 650), 70 etchings (out of about 300), and 575 drawings (out of 1,250 - 1,500).⁹⁷ Visser 't Hooft uses this considerable body of work to demonstrate the way in which, given the range of subject matter within this one theme, the question of Rembrandt's confessional identity pales into insignificance. He identifies three key traits in Rembrandt's religious works: the artist's identification with St. Paul and thus Pauline theology, his consistent choice of themes that concentrate on the struggles of individuals rather than of a people, and Rembrandt's distinctly (in his opinion) 'Protestant' representations of Christ.⁹⁸ Visser 't Hooft concludes that Rembrandt's *oeuvre* represents a sustained individual striving to know Christ in keeping with Luther's own instructions:

*To know Christ, that He has become man, and has abashed himself so deeply that He looked like the most despised and unworthy of men, afflicted and chastised by God (Isa. 53), and all that for our sake- this is the right golden art of Christians and their highest wisdom.*⁹⁹(my emphasis)

The challenge laid down here by the founder of the Reformation that 'to know Christ' is the highest goal of Christians was a challenge Rembrandt repeatedly embraced throughout his career. He led the reformers on a pictorial journey, from their earliest years of grappling with the dichotomy of faith and imagery to a deeper understanding of art as an expression of faith. The seed of the Reformation as sown by Erasmus grew under Luther to become a prodigiously fecund tree that bore artistic fruit when interpreted by Rembrandt. In Rembrandt's hand the primacy of the Word in Reformed thought becomes a pictorial expression of the 'Word made flesh'.¹⁰⁰ This concept is realised by Rembrandt in the *Passion Series*, in which he embraced a pictorial tradition and drew on contemporary theological thought to imbue his scenes with his own personal understanding of the Passion of Christ.

⁹⁶ In *Rembrandt's Faith* Perlove and Silver consistently refer to the *Statenbijbel*.

⁹⁷ Visser 't Hooft, *Rembrandt and the Gospel*, 19.

⁹⁸ Visser 't Hooft, *Rembrandt and the Gospel*, 24-32.

⁹⁹ Luther, *Table Talks in Helbig*, in Visser 't Hooft, *Rembrandt and the Gospel*, 34, emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁰ John 1:14.

Chapter Three: The Documentation for the *Passion Series*

Constantijn Huygens

In this chapter I first consider two key pieces of primary documentation – Rembrandt’s letters and Huygens autobiography – that inform discussion of the *Passion Series*, both of which concern the involvement in the commission of the Stadholder’s secretary, Constantijn Huygens. Additionally, I consider a related contemporary art theoretical treatise that highlights the currency of the *concetto* for the paintings as argued later in this thesis. As he is inextricably linked both to the commission and, as I argue, the *concetto* for the *Passion Series*, I will begin by drawing a portrait of Huygens – *Uomo Universale*.

The appointment of Huygens as secretary to Frederick Hendrick was confirmed in 1625. His father Christiaan (1551-1624) had been secretary to William of Orange (1554-1618), Prince Maurits and the Council of State. His brother Maurits Huygens (1595-1642) was then currently secretary of the Council of State. Thus, in accepting the appointment Constantijn joined in a lineage of service to the house of Orange-Nassau. Yet many thought he was underselling himself.¹ A polymath and complete gentlemen, Huygens projected, as detected in the tone of his aforementioned autobiography of c.1630, a confidence in his own taste and judgement that appears limitless. This confidence is conveyed in a contemporaneous portrait by Thomas de Keyser (1597-1667) of Huygens as an assured man of letters (fig. 100). In the painting Huygens, who amongst with his copious literary output wrote a manual on good secretaryship (*La Secretairie*), turns from his desk to receive in the authoritative right hand a missive. The gesture and the presiding pose suggest that he is calmly creating order.² The emphasis on appropriate pose and gesture in the portrait is entirely in keeping with the concept of *sprezzatura*, the easy grace a courtier is encouraged to display at all times as prescribed by Baldassarre Castiglione (1478-1529) in his manual of court etiquette *Il Cortegiano (The Courtier)* of 1528.³ Additionally, Castiglione urges the perfect courtier to be

¹ For a comprehensive biography of Constantijn Huygens see Hans Hoffman, *Constantijn Huygens, 1596-1687* (Utrecht: Hes Uitgevers, 1983).

² Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 147.

³ Castiglione Baldassarre, *Il Cortegiano* [1528]. See *The Book of the Courtier*, edited by David Javich (New York: Norton, 2002). By 1620 it was possible to read this highly influential Renaissance publication not only in the original Italian but also in Latin, Spanish (Antwerp), English, German and French, although there was no

well versed in a range of court activities and pastimes from the mastery of weaponry to athletic ability to artistic connoisseurship. Huygens, the embodiment of the Castiglione courtier tradition, as both secretary to Frederick Hendrick and connoisseur of the manual arts, was in an excellent position to act as artistic broker for the Stadholder. Rembrandt's letters to Huygens regarding the *Passion Series* are evidence that he dealt with artistic affairs decisively and without delay, the autobiography outlines Huygens' qualifications to do so. Although the seven letters Rembrandt wrote to Huygens between February 1636 and February 1639 are a key source for the *Passion Series*, Huygens' autobiography is a no less valuable document as in it he clearly identifies those aspects of Rembrandt's style and moreover Rembrandt's *ingenium* (creative talent) that appealed to the patrons.⁴

Huygens' autobiography, despite being penned by a man in his early thirties, is not, as one might expect, a straightforward chronicle of youthful musings and wanderings. Rather it contains a series of acute observations on art and scholarship of that age which, as Allan Chong suggests, forms part of his 'self-conception'.⁵ Huygens' approach is similar to the biographical compilations of Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) and van Mander, with which he was undoubtedly familiar. Huygens initially details his own artistic training before discussing artists with whom he had studied or met, culminating in his account of the young Rembrandt and Lievens.⁶ Huygens records that the Netherlands have produced many talented history and landscape painters, making no distinction between Northern and Southern Netherlands. Rubens is given the highest praise, with Huygens hailing him as 'one of our world wonders' and 'the modern Apelles'.⁷ He states that he has deliberately 'held in reserve a noble pair of youths from Leiden', describing initially how their humble origins did not hinder their emergence as great artists.⁸ Further he notes that their rapid development is all the more

translation into Dutch until the late seventeenth century. See Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European reception of Castiglione's The Courtier* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1996), 62.

⁴ Gerson ed., *Letters*. And Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1636/1 and 2, 128-29 and 132-33; 1639/2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, 160-173.

I have used the word 'ingenium' here to describe 'creative talent', in keeping with Huygens' use of the word in the passage praising Rembrandt and Lievens in his 'Autobiography'. See Chong, ed., *Rembrandt Creates Rembrandt*, 134-36.

⁵ Allan Chong, 'The Myth of Young Genius: Understanding Rembrandt's early career', in Chong ed., *Rembrandt Creates Rembrandt*, 65-82, 66.

⁶ Concerning the language of the passage on the works of the two painters see P. Tuyman's notes in Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. I, 193-4.

⁷ Huygens, 'omnium coryphaeum et Apellem Petrum Paulum Rubenium inter orbis nostril miracula colloco'. In Worp, 'Autobiography', 71 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1630/5, 68-69.

⁸ Huygens, 'In triariis consulto reservavi nobile par adolescentum Leidensium,' In Worp, 'Autobiography', 72 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1630/5, 68-69.

miraculous as they trained under inferior teachers. Huygens states that ‘in his opinion’ that ‘they alone’ are destined to surpass the list of ‘superior mortals’ (including Rubens) he has just named. He then proceeds to compare and contrast the relative merits of the two:

As to my opinion concerning the two, I dare say no more than this: Rembrandt surpasses Lievens in penetrating to the heart of his subject matter and bringing out its essence, and his works come across more vividly. Lievens, in turn, surpasses him in the proud self-assurance that radiates from his compositions and their powerful forms. Because Lievens’s spirit – and this is due in part to his youth – is charged with the great and glorious, he is inclined to depict the objects before him not life-sized but larger than life. Rembrandt, on the other hand, obsessed by the effort to translate into paint what he sees in the mind’s eye, prefers smaller formats, in which he nevertheless achieves effects that you will not find in the largest work by others.⁹

This extraordinary passage reveals a great deal about Huygens’ expertise as a connoisseur, as he differentiates between the strengths of the two artists. More importantly for the purposes of this thesis, it provides a clear indication of the three aspects of Rembrandt’s work that would make him the best candidate to paint the *Passion Series*. First, Huygens identifies Rembrandt’s ability to ‘penetrate to the heart of his subject and bringing out its essence’. Here he is referring to grand themes that would have appealed to the patrons. Secondly, Huygens claims that Rembrandt is ‘obsessed’ with ‘the effort to translate into paint what he sees in his mind’s eye’. Surely here Huygens is alluding to the *concetto* for works of art and Rembrandt’s focus on the process. Thirdly, Huygens states that Rembrandt ‘prefers smaller formats’. While history informs us that this was not always to be the case, at that early juncture Rembrandt’s *oeuvre* would have suggested such a preference. Huygens then proceeds to illustrate his comments by example.

Huygens singles out Rembrandt’s painting *The Repentant Judas* (fig. 12). The painting, a modest 79 x 102 cm, is a perfect pictorial echo of Huygens’ comments. In it Rembrandt penetrates to the ‘heart of the subject matter’, penance, by directing the viewer’s attention towards the figure of Judas in the right foreground as an exemplar of a truly penitent man (fig. 101).¹⁰ He realises the ‘essence’ of penance through the gesture of this figure, a gesture

⁹ Huygens, ‘Ego de singulis sic perfunctory pronounciare audebo, Rembrandtium iudicio et affectuum vivacitate Livio praestare, hunc alteri inventionis et quaedam audacium argumentorum formarumque superbia. Nam et animo iuvenilium 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’. In Worp, ‘Autobiography’, 77. Translation in Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 74 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1630/5, 68 and 71.

¹⁰ Mathew, 27:3-9.

that transcends that of just one repentant man and becomes the gesture of the universal penitent. It is ‘that single gesture’, which Huygens focuses on:

That single gesture of the desperate Judas - that single gesture, I say, of a raging, whining Judas grovelling for mercy he no longer hopes for or dares to show the smallest sign of expecting, his frightful visage, hair torn out of his head, his rent garment, his arms twisted, the hands clenched bloodlessly tight, fallen to his knees in a heedless outburst – that body, wholly contoured in pathetic despair, I place against all the tasteful art of time past, and recommend to the attention of all the ignoramuses – I have disputed them elsewhere – who hold that our age is incapable of doing or saying anything better than what has already been said or the ancients have achieved.¹¹

By seventeenth-century standards this is an outstandingly robust passage of visual analysis, particularly as it concentrates not only on one figure but also on the gesture of that figure. It raises two important considerations for our discussion of the *Passion Series* and Huygens’ role in its *conchetto*: first, Huygens’ conveys his own extensive knowledge of the visual vocabulary of gesture (partially derived from his reading of Castiglione) and the importance he places on body language, facial expression and gesture; secondly, it demonstrates the importance Huygens places on the importance of affording individual and appropriate gesture to separate figures that reflect their inner emotional state. Is this the seminal pictorial representation of the word ‘*beweechgelickheit*’ (‘a unity of motion and emotion’) as expressed in Rembrandt’s Third Letter to Huygens concerning the *Passion Series*? Counterparts of the figure of Judas are repeated more than once in the *Passion Series*, and it is possible to trace a movement towards an increasing concern with *beweeglijkheid* (modern spelling) as Rembrandt progresses through the series. Although Huygens does not use the word *beweechgelickheit* himself in his autobiography, the stress that he places on the importance of gesture to suggest a state of mind and Rembrandt’s later use of the word in his letter together indicate, I suggest, that the means by which art stirred the emotions was starting to become a topic of interest in artistic circles.

The correct rendition of specific emotions to elicit the desired response had long been the subject of classical handbooks of rhetoric. The arguments of the ancients provided guidelines

¹¹ Huygens, ‘Unius Judae desperati gestum, ut omittam tot in uno opera stupendas formas, unius, inquam, Judae furentis, eiulantis, deprecantis veniam, nec sperantis tamen, aut spem vultu servantis, faciem horridam, laniatos crines, scissam vestem, intorta brachia, manus ad sanguinem compressas, genu temero impetus prostratum, corpus omne miseranda atrocitate convolutum omni saeculorum elegantiae oppono et scire inscitissimos mortales cupio, qui, quod alibi insectati sumus, nihil effeci magis quam dici hodie autumant, quod non dictum prius et effectum vetustas viderit’. In Worp, ‘Autobiography’, 77-8. Translation in Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 74 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1630/5, 68 and 71.

for authors of seventeenth-century art theoretical treatises. Among the hundreds of titles listed in the auction catalogue of Huygens' library (fig. 102), compiled shortly after his death in 1688, are not only the names of ancients (often more than once) such as Cicero (106-43 B.C.), Quintilian (35-100 A.D.), Horace (65-8 B.C.) and Ovid (43 B.C.-c.18 A.D.), but also those of contemporary commentators on art theory such as Franciscus Junius (1591-1677) and van Mander (1548-1606).¹² The breadth of Huygens' knowledge evidenced here suggests certain expectations for the *Passion Series* in terms of art theoretical issues of the kind mentioned by Rembrandt himself in his correspondence with Huygens. Although they represent the key primary source of documentation for the *Passion Series*, I believe that hitherto the letters have been insufficiently interpreted, with the exception of Gerson's commentary and the resulting scholarly discussion of the word *beweechgelickheyt* as used by Rembrandt in the Third Letter.¹³ Considered collectively, the letters, as they span a period of three years, reveal a series of insights into Rembrandt's intentions, as he proceeds in the creation of the later paintings. I will show how the letters support the argument of this thesis, that Rembrandt always intended the five *Passion Series* paintings to form a distinct series.

The First Three Letters

The seven *Passion Series* letters are the major body of preserved correspondence by Rembrandt. In addition there are occasional short notes on selected drawings, verses in two *alba amicorum* and a few receipts.¹⁴ Although recent scholarship has increased the number of these to about forty, it does not (despite Schwartz's assertion otherwise) add up to a significant volume of written material.¹⁵ As mentioned earlier, there is no record of Huygens' replies to Rembrandt's letters. It is extraordinary therefore that the seven letters by the artist indicate that they carried on a corresponded that included discussion of a complex artistic concept. In Huygens, Rembrandt engaged collegially with an avid and knowledgeable connoisseur who it appears served as both art adviser to the Stadholder and sometimes acted as fiscal intermediary in patron-artist transactions. At the time the latter function was

¹² *The Auction Catalogue of the Library of Constantijn Huygens* [1688], copy 112 D 12, Museum van het Bock, The Hague. After his death Constantijn Huygens' library was immediately auctioned off by his two sons. Two copies of the sale catalogue have been preserved, one at The Hague, the other in Copenhagen. See Ad Leerintveld, "Magnificent Paper": The library of Constantijn Huygens', *Qua'rendo* 28:3 (1998): 165-184. Examples: Cicero #168, 30; Quintilian #410, 49; Horace #193, 46 Junius #520, 39; van Mander #541, 40.

¹³ For a brief history of this discussion c.1960, the sum of which is inconclusive, see Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 162.

¹⁴ See Hofstede de Groot, 'Die Urkunden über Rembrandt', *Quellenstudien zur Holländischen Kunstgeschichte* 3 (1906).

¹⁵ Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 19. See Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 591-615.

typically delegated to a notary acting as an intermediary.¹⁶ In the specific case of the commission for Rembrandt's *Passion Series*, Huygens definitely played a dual role: he was both a fiscal intermediary, as all but one letter asks him to intercede in regards to payment issues; and he was a de-facto patron, in that Rembrandt, in a show of extraordinary diffidence, repeatedly seeks his approval of the paintings as works of art.

The First Letter can be dated with accuracy to early 1636 (February or before), as it mentions that the first signed work in the *Passion Series* the *Ascension* is completed.¹⁷ The letter begins:

My Lord, my gracious Lord Huygens, I hope that your Lordship will please inform His Excellency that I am Very diligently engaged in completing as quickly as possible the three Passion pictures His Excellency commissioned me to do: an Entombment, and a Resurrection and an Ascension of Christ. These are companion pieces to Christ's Elevation and Descent from the Cross. Of these three aforementioned pictures, one has been completed namely Christ ascending to Heaven, and the other two are more than half done.¹⁸

In this passage Rembrandt, importantly for the argument of this thesis, makes it clear when he refers to the three new works as 'companion pieces' that he considers these to be part of the same series begun by the two earlier works. Further, a similar inference, that the artist himself viewed the works as a series is also implied by a passage in the short Second Letter, dated by another hand February 1636. In it, Rembrandt offers to travel to The Hague to view the now three works *in situ*. Rembrandt writes, 'I assure you that I agree that I shall follow anon to see how the picture accords with the rest'; here he seems to infer that this proposed visit to The Hague was at the urging of his patrons.¹⁹ This statement could be taken to imply, as Schwartz has suggested, that Frederick Hendrick and Huygens were displeased with the

¹⁶ Gerson cites examples of an instance of this in the both the careers of Rembrandt and Franz Hals. In Gerson, ed., *Letters*, 6.

¹⁷ Further dating can be established by Rembrandt's reference here and in the Second Letter to Frederick Hendrick as 'His Excellency'; Rembrandt uses the title 'Highness' ('*Altesse*') in the later five letters, a distinction which was conferred on the prince by the King of France at New Year, 1637. Gerson, ed., *Letters*, 23.

¹⁸ Rembrandt, First Letter, 'Mijn heer mijn goetgunstigen heer Huygens hooped at ul gaeren sijn Excellencij sal aenseggen dat ick seer naerstich doende ben metr die drie passij strucken voorts met bequaemheijt aftermaeken die sijn excellencij mij selfs heft geordijneert, een grafleggij ende een verrijsenis en een Heemelvaert Chrisstij. De selvijge ackoordeeren met opdoening en afdoeningen vant Chruijs Chrisstij. Van welken drie voornomden struckens een van opgemaect is dear Chrisstus ten Heemel opvaert ende die ander twee ruym half gedaen sijn'. In Gerson, ed., *Letters*, 22 and 18 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 128-29.

¹⁹ Rembrandt, Second Letter, '...sooist dat ick goet vinden dat ick corts volgen sal om te besien hoe dat het stucken met de rest voucht'. In Gerson ed., *Letters*, 26 and 30 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 132-33.

new painting, the *Ascension*.²⁰ However, it could also indicate that they were simply anxious that Rembrandt saw for himself and clearly understood how all the *Passion Series* works were to function as a group in the gallery. Noteworthy also is the aforementioned postscript to this letter in which Rembrandt states that the *Ascension* will show to the best advantage in the Stadholder's gallery due to the fall of light.²¹ This statement indicates that Rembrandt was both concerned with the role natural light would play when the works were hung in the Stadholder's gallery and that he was familiar with the gallery space. Undoubtedly he had travelled there earlier to paint the *Portrait of Amalia van Solms* in 1632 (fig.11).

Additionally, Christopher White has drawn attention to a group of Rembrandt's drawings of bands and drummers on horseback from the period (fig. 106).²² He notes that in February 1638 there was a tournament and other festivities organised by Huygens in The Hague to celebrate the marriage of the sister of Amalia van Solms.²³ Such drawings could date from these celebrations.

This set of drawings to some extent bridges the three-year gap between the second and third letters. They suggest that the lack of documentation does not necessarily indicate that there was no contact between Rembrandt and his patrons in The Hague. The Third Letter (fig. 104) is dated by Rembrandt 12 January 1639; he begins in an apologetic tone:

Because the great zeal and devotion which I have exercised in executing well the two pictures which His Highness commissioned me to make - the one being where Christ's body is being laid out in the tomb and the other where Christ arises from the dead to the great consternation of the guards - these same two pictures have now been finished through studious application, so that I am now also disposed to deliver the same and so to afford pleasure to His Highness, for in these two pictures the greatest and most natural movement (or: most innate emotion) has been expressed, which is the main reason why they have taken so long to execute.²⁴

²⁰ Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 155

²¹ Gerson, ed., *Letters*, 26 and 30 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 132-33.

²² Christopher White, *Rembrandt and his World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), 48.

²³ White, *Rembrandt and his World*, 48.

²⁴ Rembrandt, Third Letter. 'Door die grooten lust ende geneegenheit die ick gepleecht hebbe int wel wtvoeren van die twee stuckens die sijn Hoocheijt mijn heft doen macken weesende het een daer dat doode lichaem Christij in den graeve gelecht wert ende dat ander daer Christus van den doode opstaet dat met grooten verschrickinge des watchers. Dees selvij twee stuckens sijn door stuijdiose vlijt nu meede afgedaen sooddat ick nu oock geneegen ben om die selvijge te leeveren om sijn Hoocheijt daer meede te vermaken want deesen twee sijnt daer die meeste ende die noetuereelste beweeghelickeijt in geopserveert is dat oock de grooste oorsaek is dat die selvijge soo lang onder handen sij geweest'. In Gerson, ed., *Letters*, 34 and 38 and Straus and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 160-61.

The excuse Rembrandt provides for the delay in completing the later *Passion Series* works, is that he claims the final two works in the series have been executed with: ‘*die meeste ende die noetuereelste beweeghelickeyt*’ (fig. 105).²⁵ In his 1961 commentary Gerson stated that: ‘up to now these words have been interpreted as “the greatest and most natural movement”’.²⁶ This is hardly surprising on the part of scholars, as the word was used in exactly this sense by the Leiden city historian Jan Orlers (1570-1646) in his biographical account (fig. 106) of the young Rembrandt. Orlers, describes the artist’s decision not to go to university, just two years after Rembrandt wrote the above letter: ‘He had no desire or inclination whatsoever in this direction because *by nature he was moved* (my emphasis) towards the art of painting and drawing’.²⁷ Gerson does however refer to the then just published work of H. E. van Gelder, who first suggested that in the seventeenth century the word *beweeglijkheid* referred to emotional expression and not, in the first instance, physical movement.²⁸ Building on van Gelder’s suggestion Gerson re-defines the phrase, stating that the words should therefore be interpreted as: ‘with the greatest and most innate emotion’.²⁹ Gerson believed that Rembrandt wished to convey that he had done his utmost to express the emotions of the figure in accordance with the figure’s character. When Dutch historical linguist Lydia Paauw de Veer proposed both a concrete and abstract element to the word, she concluded that Rembrandt sought to give expression to a unity of feeling and the expression given to them.³⁰ In this manner, the word would seem to describe something more akin to a unity of motion and emotion, in which the inward emotion stirred in each individual figure by the event, is outwardly expressed pictorially with exactitude and sincerity. This school of thought emphasises the painter’s role, although the audience would have to recognise the emotion conveyed by the artist.

Recent scholarship by Weststeijn, which positions van Hoogstraten’s *Inleyding* of 1678 within a seventeenth-century Dutch artistic *milieu*, has thrown new light on our

²⁵ Rembrandt, Third Letter, in Gerson ed., *Letters*, 34 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1639/2, 160 and 162.

²⁶ Gerson ed., *Letters*, 39.

²⁷ Orlers, ‘En heft daer toe gants geen lust ofte genegentheyt gehad dewijle zijne *natuyrlieke beweginghen* alleen streckten tot de Schilder ende Teycken Conste’, *Beschrijvinge der Stadt Leyden*, 2nd ed. [1641], 375. Emphasis mine. See also Slive, *Critics*, 36.

²⁸ H. E. Van Gelder, ‘Marginalia bij Rembrandt’, *Oud-Holland* 60 (1943): 148-51.

²⁹ Gerson ed., *Letters*, 39.

³⁰ Lydia Paauw de Veer, ‘On the Meaning of the word Beweeghelic in the Seventeenth Century’, *Oud-Holland* 74 (1959): 211-2.

understanding of the word *beweeglijkheid*.³¹ Van de Wetering has sternly criticized Weststeijn for distorting van Hoogstraten's pedagogical purpose by assuming that the value of the text lies not in the reading itself but that it serves as a means of constructing an ultra-textual, historical background. However, the connections Weststeijn suggests between classical sources, art theory and Rembrandt's *oeuvre* are informative in the context of this thesis, as they underscore aspects of the suggested *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*.³²

It is necessary therefore to briefly summarize Weststeijn's line of inquiry. He demonstrates that van Hoogstraten's treatise deploys several rhetorical strategies in adapting the Quintilian model for the education of the orator to the education of young painters.³³ Schwartz had noted that all such Latin schools in the early modern period taught the essential skills of rhetoric and oratory as a basic part of their curriculum, basing their teachings on the classical manuals of Cicero and Quintilian.³⁴ Weststeijn comments that when Quintilian advises the young orator to conjure up a vivid image, he writes: 'From such impressions arises *enargeia* which makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence.'³⁵ Similarly van Hoogstraten speaks of, '*oogenblikkige beweegling*' ('a certain ability to move'), which has the power to affect spectators.³⁶ Thus Weststeijn shows in van Hoogstraten's terminology the word *beweegling* is equivalent to Quintilian's *enargeia* and he argues that it was in this sense that Rembrandt used the word in his letter.³⁷ Additionally, when van Hoogstraten prefaces *beweegling* with the word *oogenblikkige* in relation to narrative painting he is suggesting an immediate understanding and appropriate emotional reaction to the event depicted. Van Hoogstraten also states that the action and passion should be simple and unambiguous so that the scene unequivocally involves the viewer 'as if he were one of the bystanders'.³⁸ This is a clear example of a seventeenth-century artist/theorist

³¹ Thijs Weststeijn, *The Visible World: Samuel van Hoogstraten's theory and the legitimation of painting in the Dutch Golden Age* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008).

³² Ernst van de Wetering, 'Confusions over the Meaning and Purpose of van Mander's and van Hoogstraten's Treatises', in van de Wetering, *et al, Corpus*, vol. V, 15-28, esp. 25.

³³ Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 17.

³⁴ Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 155-57.

³⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 3, 5. And Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 185.

³⁶ Van Hoogstraten, '...men moet toezien, datmen alleenlijk een oogenblikkige beweeging, welke voornamentijk de daed der Historie uitdrukt', *Inleyding*, 112.

³⁷ Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 185-88.

³⁸ Van Hoogstraten, 'Op dat het werk eenstemmich den toezieder, al seen anderen omstander verrukke', *Inleyding*, 112.

suggesting an Ignatian-like persona of ‘participant’ or ‘spectator’, in this instance with reference to the viewer.

This interpretation suggests that Rembrandt’s intention in using the word was two-fold: to explain not only how he had concentrated on depicting a unity of motion and emotion in the figures; but additionally to demonstrate how he had portrayed figures in such a way that their emotions be instantly recognizable and thus move the spectator accordingly. This line of inquiry emphasises the audience’s role as much as the painter’s in accurately conveying the passions. We can therefore now prescribe a dual meaning to the word *beweeglijkheid*. On one hand, we can say that, pictorially, Rembrandt was striving for a unity of motion and emotion. Thematically, on the other hand, we acknowledge that the purpose of this unity was ‘to move’ (affect) the viewer. To describe this affect Herman Roodenburg, in a recent article, coins the delightful phrase ‘kinaesthetic empathy’, which he states is ‘at its most gripping and spectacular in the *Passion Series*’.³⁹ Alternatively this unity can be described from the perspective of a ‘period eye’, as this resonates consistently with Huygens’ aforementioned praise of Rembrandt’s ability to ‘penetrate to the heart of his subject matter and bring out its essence’.⁴⁰ Huygens therefore may well have accepted the excuse and appreciated Rembrandt’s angst over completing the *Passion Series* paintings. He would have certainly understood the meaning of the word *beweeglijkheid* and the wider sense in which Rembrandt was using it. As an avid connoisseur, Huygens would undoubtedly have been at the forefront of artistic debate that at the time was being articulated by another native of Leiden, Franciscus Junius.

Junius’s *De Pictura Veterum*

In the Dutch Republic of the 1630s there was no more current art theoretical publication than Junius’ 1637 *De Pictura Veterum* (figs 107 and 108), which was first published in Amsterdam and subsequently translated into English as *The Painting of the Ancients* in 1638 and into Dutch in 1641.⁴¹ Junius’ *De Pictura Veterum* was only the second book on painting to appear in Dutch, preceded only by van Mander’s seminal *Schilder-boeck*. Although she does not discuss Junius’ text in relation to the *Passion Series* specifically, Chapman has

³⁹ Herman Roodenburg, ‘*Beweeglijkheid* Embodied: On the corporeal and sensory dimensions of a famous term’, *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 60 (2010): 306-19, at 311.

⁴⁰ The perspective of the ‘period eye’ was developed by Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, 56-7.

Worp, ‘Autobiographie’, 71; Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 74 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 68 and 71.

⁴¹ Franciscus Junius, *De Pictura Veterum Libri Tres* [1637], (Facsimile Reprint: Farnborough: Gregg Press, 1972).

noted: ‘The importance of Junius’ book as a reflection of views on painting held by learned Dutchmen, like Huygens, and ambitious artists, like Rembrandt, has been underestimated’.⁴² Even the briefest biographical information begins to address this situation. Although born in Heidelberg Junius was raised in Rembrandt’s Leiden where his father, also Franciscus (1545-1602), was Professor of Hebrew at the University. *De Pictura Veterum* however was written in England under the patronage of the connoisseur Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel (1585-1646), during a twenty year period in which Junius was engaged as his librarian.⁴³ Huygens visited the Arundel collection, which apparently included several works by Rembrandt, during one of his several diplomatic visits to England where it is more than likely that he would have met Junius.⁴⁴ Some twenty years later, when van Hoogstraten arrived in Rembrandt’s studio to begin his apprenticeship in 1642 he records that Junius was also in Amsterdam but that they never met.⁴⁵ Thus the topicality of the ideas Junius articulates in his treatise can be affirmed in the Leiden intellectual community which nurtured the young Rembrandt, by those who were to become admirers and patrons and it seems, in Rembrandt’s crowded Amsterdam studio.

In the manner of Alberti (1404-72) in Book II of *De Pictoria* (1435) before him, Junius begins his treatise with an appeal to the classical precedents that he repeatedly cites throughout the text. In this manner, he conflates the work of poets, orators and painters under the broad but rather appealing banner ‘Artificer’, a term he uses to describe the qualities a painter must possess:

An Artificer therefore must be well acquainted with the nature of all things, but principally with the nature of man. Whoever meaneth to doe any good with Painting...must understand the nature of man thoroughly, and know how to express the markes of every one...he must observe in all such things as doe helpe a mans judgement.⁴⁶

⁴² Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 18.

⁴³ Thijs Weststeijn, ‘Painting and Evoking Emotions in Rembrandt’s Studio’, in *Ad Fontes: Neiderlandische Kunst des 17. Jahrhunderts in Quellen*, edited by Claudia Fritzsche, Karin Leonhard and Gregor Weber (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2013), 305-330, 308 and n. 7.

⁴⁴ See A. G. H. Bachrach, *Constantijn Huygens and Britain, 1596-1687: A pattern of cultural exchange* (Leiden: University of Leiden Press, 1962). And Colie, *Some Thankfulness to Constantine*. For a discussion of the Arundel Collection and his coterie that gathered at Arundel House see David Howarth, *Lord Arundel and his Circle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). There is no definitive reconstruction of the Arundel collection and extant inventories are littered with inaccuracies. For the most complete inventory of the collection known to exist see Mary Hervey, *The Life Correspondence and Collections of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), appendix V, 473-500.

⁴⁵ Weststeijn, ‘Painting and Evoking Emotions in Rembrandt’s Studio’, 308 and n. 9.

⁴⁶ Junius, *De Pictura*, 234.

Chapman has astutely cited Junius' text as underpinning Rembrandt's pictorial experiments with varied expressions in his early self-image etchings.⁴⁷ Indeed Junius lists the facial features with which an aspiring artist should acquaint himself: 'the constitution of his cheeks, the temperature of his eyes, the crafting of his eye-browes'.⁴⁸ Although notably less empirical than van Mander who, when he prefaced the *Schilder-boeck* had devoted an entire chapter of the *Grondt* to the passions, 'the soul of the arts', the intention of Junius' advice is similar.⁴⁹ Junius claims such observation enables the painter to empathise with his subject, represent the figure authentically within a given situation and thus move the viewer. However Junius' appeal is more to an artist's metaphysical, rather than practical, psyche:

Painters in like manner doe fall to their worke invited and drawne on by the tickling pleasure of their nimble imaginations; for lighting upon some Poeticall or Historicall argument, sometimes also upon an invention wrought out by their own Phantisie, they do first of all passe over circumstance of the matter at hand, considering it seriously, *as if they were present at the doing, or saw it acted out before their eyes*: (my emphasis) whereupon feeling themselves filled with a quick and lively imagination of the whole worke, they must make haste to ease their overcharged braines by a speedie portraying of the conceit.⁵⁰

Junius' tour-de-force statement of artistic intent recommends a method of artistic *conchetto* in keeping with both the spirit and manner of an Ignatian 'composition of a place', a prelude to devotional meditation. He even suggests an adoption of an Ignatian-like 'participant' or 'spectator' role, when a painter is considering how to pictorially represent a subject: '*as if they were present at the doing, or saw it acted out before their eyes*'.⁵¹ In his 'Argument' that prefaces *De Pictura Veterum*, Book One, Junius states that he has observed that 'many Artificers seem to have drawne that same love of new-fangled conceits from Poets'.⁵² The word 'conceit' in this statement and in the quotation above should be read as 'idea' or in the context of this thesis *conchetto*. Junius' remark appears to underscore my argument that the imaginative strategy of Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* is in keeping with that of contemporary devotional poetry. Furthermore, Junius acknowledges that this approach to

⁴⁷ H. Perry Chapman, 'Reclaiming the Inner Rembrandt: Passion and the early self-portraits', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 60 (2010): 232-261, 250-51.

⁴⁸ Junius, *De Pictura*, 234

⁴⁹ Van Mander, *Grondt*, chapter VI is entitled: 'Wtbeeldinghe der Affecten, passion, begeerlijckheden, en lijdens der Menschen' ('The representation of the affects, passion, desires and sorrows of men'), VI. 55, f. 27r. See also, Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits*, 17-18.

⁵⁰ Junius, *De Pictura*, 61-62. Emphasis mine.

⁵¹ Junius, *De Pictura*, 62. Emphasis mine.

⁵² Junius, *De Pictura*, 2.

artistic expression is something ‘new-fangled’, to use Junius’ expression, evolving around 1630.

Repeatedly Junius cites the ancient poet Horace and his advice for tragic actors from *Ars Poetic* (10-8 B.C.), ‘*si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi*’ (‘if you want to make me cry, you must feel grief yourself’).⁵³ This was a text both Rembrandt (from the Latin school) and his learned patrons would have known.⁵⁴ Emotions here are linked to such rhetorical theories about the power of art to persuade.⁵⁵ As they are derived from and are reflective of real experience, emotions bring a heightened verisimilitude to narrative artistic expression, especially when the intention of the artist is to persuade by way of narrative.⁵⁶ In his ‘Argument’ that prefaces *De Pictura Veterum*, Book Three, Junius asserts that the ancients took great pains over the study of human passions and the correct ‘imitation’ of emotion in art, thereby suggesting the appropriateness of a similar contemporary concern with the depiction of the passions in art.⁵⁷ In the early seventeenth-century theorizing about the depiction of the passions was indeed new ground. This is evidenced in the way Junius’ ideas are developed later by van Hoogstraten, who even then only intersperses his guidelines for artists with occasional comments on the passions.⁵⁸ Interestingly both prefer to use, rather than van Mander’s Latin term, *affectum*, derivations of the common seventeenth-century verb *bewegen* (‘to move’), in concordance with its use in Rembrandt’s letters. Despite on-going rigorous attention to the word *beweeghelijkheid* in the Third Letter relatively less attention has been afforded to an evaluation of Rembrandt’s success via pictorial means to move – or to use van Mander’s Latin term *affectus* – the viewer in the *Passion Series*.

⁵³ Horace, *Ars Poetic* [10-8 B.C.], 102-3, in Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetic*, translated and edited by Henry Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 459. For a discussion of the passage these lines are taken from and its application to painting see, Rensselaer Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanist theory of painting* (New York: Norton, 1967), 23-32.

⁵⁴ For a transcription and translation of the Latin school syllabus see, Ernst Jan Kuiper, *De Hollandse ‘Schoolorde’ van 1625: Een studie over het onderwijs op de Latijnse scholen in Nederland in der 17de en 18de eeuw* (Groningen: 1958), esp. 21

⁵⁵ For ‘Emotions as process’, see Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and its role in literature, music and art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 61-70.

⁵⁶ For ‘Perceiving externalized and projective properties in art’, see Damien Freeman, *Art’s Emotions: Ethics, expression and aesthetic experience* (Durham: Acumen, 2012), 66-70.

⁵⁷ Junius, *De Pictura*, see ‘Argument’, Book Three, 221-2.

⁵⁸ See Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 171-72.

Affectus in the Passion Series

Rembrandt's exceptional ability to convey *affectus* in the *Passion Series* is initially illustrated by an examination of the varying reactions of the two groups of onlookers on the pictorial left of the *Descent* and the *Raising*.⁵⁹ In the *Descent* to the pictorial left of the Cross from which Christ is being lowered is the figure of a man (fig. 109), a follower of Christ, portrayed with the open palm of his right hand over his left. He does not wring his hands with fingers interlocked in anguish as the figure of Judas (fig. 101) does in *The Penitent Judas*. He tilts his head to the left as if to speak to another figure, that of a man beside him yet, judging by the reaction of this second figure, he appears to be lost for words. This second figure is depicted with open palms facing downwards and a questioning expression (fig. 110). The first figure seems mournfully to accept the situation as 'all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished'; the second figure appears to want to reverse events (or roles), born out of a love of Christ.⁶⁰ The two figures are caught in this understandable dilemma; they desperately want to alleviate Christ's suffering yet know it is God's will. This is in contrast to the figures on the pictorial left of the *Raising*, the 'chief scribes, elders and priests' who mocked Christ.⁶¹ At the forefront of this group is a well-dressed man (fig. 111), depicted with outstretched arm open palms facing upwards and slightly open mouth. While not exactly delighting in the situation, his gesture signifies a clear lack of concern for Christ's suffering. He appears to be speaking the words from Matthew's Gospel: 'And the rest said, Let be, Let us see whether Elias will come to save him'.⁶² The figures behind him scowl, frown and even laugh (fig. 112). Collectively they agitate the viewer, heightening anguish at witnessing the death of Christ, as paradoxically the richly costumed Rembrandt self-image figure reminds the viewer of their on-going culpability in His death. Rembrandt may not carry as explicitly the same paradox through the rest of the series; however, the other three works show no less of a concern with the accurate depiction of emotions.

The *Ascension* also represents an exercise in *beweglijkheid*. As Christ ascends effortlessly to Heaven, each of the remaining earth-bound disciples reacts differently to the event they are witnessing. Although it is difficult to appreciate fully given the poor condition of the work,

⁵⁹ Also for a discussion of 'The affective aspect of expressive perception', see Freeman, *Art's Emotions*, 114-16.

⁶⁰ Luke 18:31.

⁶¹ Matthew 27:41, Mark 15:31.

⁶² Matthew 27:49.

I suggest that the physiognomy, gesture and garments of each of the disciples provides the viewer with clues to their identity and also correlates to their relationship with Christ. In the foreground Matthew (fig. 113), the former tax-collector, is identifiable not only by the purse on his belt but also by his gesture which, with arms wide spread, mimics that of the ascending Christ; thus demonstrating his unquestioning obedience. In the group on the pictorial right is a figure, with his mouth open, gazes upward incredulously (fig. 114); this may well represent Thomas, as he would later doubt Christ's resurrection. Moreover, Rembrandt's figures exhibit emotional responses to the event. There is reassurance in the calming gesture of a youthful John (fig. 115) kneeling beside Matthew. While the sage-like reverence of the central figure of Peter (fig. 116) conveys hope and guidance. Rembrandt's painting seems to actually anticipate a multiplicity of corresponding emotional responses from potential viewers.

Possibly the most contemplative of the *Passion Series* paintings is the *Entombment*. Given its solemnity it does not tend to invite a wide range of responses. Rather the *tableau* of duly attentive central figures appears united in their grief and sorrow as they each gaze with reverence upon the dead Christ. Only the Virgin looks away (fig. 117). It was in regard to acceptable portrayals of the Virgin that van Hoogstraten uses the phrase '*de grootste beweegling*' ('the greatest ability to move').⁶³ Indeed it was the treatment of the Virgin, as evidenced by a sheet of sketches in Amsterdam of studies for this figure (fig. 118) – a rarity in the *oeuvre* – which most troubled Rembrandt throughout the *Passion Series* commission. With her head tilted slightly to one side, the Virgin sits demurely and contemplatively at the foot of the tomb; her right hand is gently placed inside her left, with the thumb overlapping. The figure exhibits no movement yet is profoundly moving. The viewer is irresistibly drawn to the figure. Through her example the viewer is able to begin to come to terms with events. Further, I suggest that Rembrandt's depiction of the Virgin can be interpreted within the framework of Aristotle's *De Anima* (mid-4th cen. B.C.) and his concept of the inner-self as divided in to three parts: generative, intellectual and sensitive.⁶⁴ This has been interpreted to mean that the sensitive soul houses both the passions and imagination, which is supported by memory.⁶⁵ Remarkably, Rembrandt's inscription at the top of the aforementioned sheet of

⁶³ Van Hoogstraten, '(W)y Schilders (zijn) gewoon...in het bitter lijden Chirsti, de moeder Marai, als den Zalichmaker aldernaest, met de grootste beweegling, die one mogelijk is, uit te beelden', *Inleyding*, 110.

⁶⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima* [mid-4th cen. B.C.], book II, chapter I. In *Aristotle's De Anima: Books II and III*, translated with notes by David Hamlyn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 8-10.

⁶⁵ See Hamlyn ed., *Aristotle's De Anima*, notes to pages 8-10.

sketches of the Virgin (fig. 119) echoes this concept: 'A devout treasure that is preserved in a sensitive heart as a comfort for her compassionate soul'. Conceptually, this is not dissimilar to the theme of hope as conveyed by the positioning of the two Marys in the foreground of the *Resurrection*. Despite the frantic movement in this painting, overt emotion is conveyed here more through glorious colour (fig. 120) than by form.

Affectus in the Wider Oeuvre

There is further pictorial evidence that Rembrandt was doing his utmost around this time, to express the gesture of his figures in accordance with their emotion, more overtly perhaps than at any other period in his career. Gerson has pointed to the *Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee* of 1633 (fig. 121), formerly in Boston, and elaborates on Houbraken's comments that indicate a concern with *beweeglijkheid*: 'this is particularly noticeable in the picture which is known under the name *St. Peter's Boat*...The attitudes of the figures and their features are expressed with as much conformity with the events as can be imagined'.⁶⁶ Perlove and Silver meanwhile cite the depiction of Thomas in the *Incredulity of Thomas* of 1634 (fig. 122), now in Moscow, as an example of a convincingly pictorial representation of an appropriate reaction to the appearance of the Risen Christ.⁶⁷ The painting affirms faith through the naturalistic depiction of all-too-human reactions to events that may be beyond human understanding.

Further, although he had never seen the original *in situ*, in 1635 Rembrandt produced three drawings from an engraving of Leonardo's *Last Supper* (fig. 123) of 1494-98 in the Refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. Weststeijn has discussed Rembrandt's studies of Leonardo's painting as an example of following Junius' instructions for painters to, imagine the scene 'as if we were present at the doing'; as it is a concept that van Hoogstraten develops.⁶⁸ Pictorially, traces of the influence of Leonardo's work are evident well into the later *oeuvre* in works such as *The Risen Christ at Emmaus* of 1648 (fig. 94) in the Louvre and the *Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis* of 1661-62 (fig. 124) now in Stockholm. These are

⁶⁶ Horst Gerson, *Rembrandt Paintings*, translated by Heinz Norden and edited by Gary Schwartz (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 48.

Houbraken, 'Onder verscheide bewys-stalen is dit inzonderheit aan dat stuk te zien dat by den naam van St. Pieters scheepje bekend is...Want de werking der beelden, en wezens trekken zyn daar zoo natuurlyk naar de gesteltheit van het geval uitgedrukt als te bedenken is, daar benevens veel uitvoeriger geschildert als men gewoon is van hem te zien.' *De Groote Schouburgh*, vol. I, 260, in Ford, ed., *Lives of Rembrandt*, 67-68. See also Slive, *Critics*, 180.

⁶⁷ Perlove and Silver, 'Rembrandt's Jesus', 104.

⁶⁸ Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 137-47.

paintings that also feature a variety of emotional responses to the actions of a central figure. I believe the importance of Rembrandt's Last Supper series of sketches should not be underestimated, as they relate not just to the thrust of Junius' text but in the context of this thesis, to the corresponding analogies with Ignatius. The drawings represent an emulation of the seminal pictorial example of matching expression and gesture to an individual emotional state. In his *Last Supper*, Leonardo chooses to portray the moment just after Christ announces that one of the disciples will betray Him, the artist imagines their confusion, agitation and self-doubt. Each disciple reacts differently, their outward expressions and gestures a reflection of their inner emotion; some pull away in shock, some press in out of concern and many display open palms to suggest they have nothing to hide. Vasari commented on Leonardo's pictorial matching of expression and gesture to emotions, listing the specific emotions he observed.⁶⁹ Leonardo's work is akin to the concept of *beweeglijkheid* and Rembrandt recognised it and admired it.

The first of the *Last Supper* studies made by Rembrandt (fig. 125) remains the most faithful to Leonardo's original concept, with all the figures in approximately the same positions and poses and the major changes are structural. The second sheet is regrettably a fragment. However in the third drawing (fig. 126), Rembrandt fully embraces the spirit of Leonardo's work by making significant compositional variations to the arrangement and attitudes of the figures.⁷⁰ Unlike the earlier drawing Rembrandt shows no interest in modifying the setting; his fascination lies purely with reinterpreting the reactions of the disciples to Christ's announcement. Rembrandt crowds the figures into a tight rectangular pictorial space, intensifying the sensation of the disciples boring in on or pulling away from the figure of Christ. They hang on His every word yet are fearful. Rembrandt, with a remarkable economy of line, sharp and occasionally bold, chisels the disciple's faces to suggest not only the obvious emotion – agitation (fig. 127) but a whole spectrum of hard-to-convey mental states such as: resignation, inquiry, disquiet, apprehension, disbelief and distrust (fig. 128). The sudden, almost violent, reactions of the disciples are in contrast to the profundity of the event. Christ's bowed head, tucked into His chest and open palms (fig. 129) suggest a calm resolve and sureness of purpose. In the drawing Rembrandt exploits brevity when conveying a unity

⁶⁹ Giorgio Vasari, 'The Life of Leonardo da Vinci' [1568], in *The Lives of the Artists*, edited and translated by Julia and Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 289-90.

⁷⁰ For a discussion of this drawing in relation to Leonardo's painting see David Brown, *Leonardo's Last Supper: Precedents and reflections* (exhibition catalogue), edited by David Brown (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1983), # 15.

of motion and emotion, which creates a palpable tension both compositionally and thematically. I could conclude this chapter with reference to this astonishing drawing from the middle of the 1630s. However the remaining letters lead down a path that does not end here.

The Remaining Letters

Thus far I have discussed the first three of the extant letters that Rembrandt sent to Huygens; however, four further letters have come down to us, a consideration of which concludes this chapter. These remaining letters, as they refer largely to financial dealings, have unsurprisingly attracted little attention in the literature, Schama aside, nonetheless they describe a web of intrigue.⁷¹ In the Fourth Letter, undated but presumably sent in early 1639, Rembrandt writes that he has now dispatched the remaining two *Passion Series* works and seeks payment of a thousand guilders for each painting.⁷² While two hundred guilders less than he requested in the Second Letter, it is still well above the six hundred he received for the earlier works. The Fifth Letter is dated 27 January. Anxious for funds as he was preparing to take possession of his new house on the fashionable St. Anthoniesbreestraat in Amsterdam (fig. 130), Rembrandt advocates the intervention of a third party, Johannes Wtenbogaert, to speed up the payment process.⁷³ As Wtenbogaert held the position of Receiver-General of taxes for the States General in the province of Holland, Rembrandt suggests that this official might remunerate him directly. Rembrandt may have known that Wtenbogaert fancied himself as a connoisseur as he states that Wtenbogaert had already inspected the quality of the works, implying that in his eagerness to receive payment the artist had been prepared to open the packing cases.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 445-47.

⁷² Rembrandt, Fourth Letter, 'Soo ist dan dit ick met lijcensij ue desen 2 strucken toesende die ick meen dat soodaenich sullen bevonden warden dat sijn Hoocheijt nu selfs mij niet min als dusent guldens voor ider toeleggen sal'. ('It is then with your permission that I send your lordship these 2 pieces which I think will be considered of such quality that His Highness will now even pay me not less than a thousand guilders each'.) In Gerson ed., *Letters*, 42 and 46 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 164-65.

⁷³ The St. Anthoniesbreestraat is now the Jordanenbreestraat and Rembrandt's former residence is now the Museum Het Rembrandthuis. Johannes Wtenbogaert was the nephew and godson of the Remonstrant preacher of the same name (1557-1646) who Rembrandt had painted a portrait of in 1633 (private collection, England) and produced a portrait etching of in 1635.

⁷⁴ Rembrandt, Fifth Letter, 'Mijn heer den ontfanger wttenboogaert is bij mij geweest soo als ick besich waer dees 2 stuckens te packen. Hij most die noch eerst eens sien'. ('The tax-collector, Wttenboogaert, paid me a visit when I was busy packing these 2 pieces. He wished to have a look at them first'.) In Gerson ed., *Letters*, 50 and 54 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 166-67.

By the Sixth Letter, dated 13 February 1639, the financial situation appears to have deteriorated for Rembrandt. It is now clear that he will receive no more than six hundred guilders for the new works in accord with the amount received for the earlier ones.⁷⁵ In the Seventh Letter, undated but clearly written very shortly after the Sixth, he is apparently still awaiting payment and moreover a note of bitterness may be detected in Rembrandt's tone: 'I am doing so (writing) because of what was told to me by the collector Wtenbogaert to whom I complained about the delay of my payment'.⁷⁶ Rembrandt has made some inquiries courtesy of Wtenbogaert and found out the secretary in the General Accounting Office at The Hague, Thyman van Volbergen (1602-52), was in a position to pay him.⁷⁷ Rembrandt's petulance was unnecessary, as records show that van Volbergen received instructions on 17th February, no more than four days later, that he should pay: 'to the painter Rembrandt the sum of twelve-hundred-forty-and-four carlous guilders, for two paintings, namely one the Entombment and the other the Resurrection of Christ Our Lord, painted by him and delivered to His Highness'.⁷⁸

Undoubtedly Wtenbogaert's involvement did not endear Rembrandt to his patrons in The Hague. Nevertheless he was apparently grateful to his former schoolmate. Almost immediately after he produced a large portrait etching of the Receiver General seated at his office desk as a token of his appreciation (fig. 131).⁷⁹ The portrait is however more than just a simple gesture of thanks. Schama, who discusses the work at length, sees it as reflecting more than one exchange.⁸⁰ The etching depicts, from a particularly low viewpoint, Wtenbogaert receiving funds from a servant kneeling before him. Wtenbogaert is dressed in a magnificent fur-trimmed coat wearing a fashionably raked cap, not unlike Rembrandt's cap (beret?), in the etched self-image of the same year (fig. 132). The dual identification, I suggest, begs the question: who has the greater virtue, the man who controls and dispenses

⁷⁵ Rembrandt, Sixth Letter. In Gerson ed., *Letters*, 58 and 62 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 170-71.

⁷⁶ Rembrandt, Seventh Letter, '...kom besouken ende dat doort seggen van den ontfangen wtenboogaert die ickt tardeeren van mijn betaeling...'. In Gerson, ed., *Letters*, 66 and 70 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 172-73.

⁷⁷ Rembrandt, Seventh Letter. In Gerson, ed., *Letters*, 66 and 70 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 172-73.

⁷⁸ ARA, The Hague, *Ordonnantieboek van Frederick Hendrick*, 1637-41, 242. In Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1639/7, 174-75. See Jhr. H. Six van Hillegom, *Het Instituut of Verslagen en Mededelighen* (Amsterdam, 1843), 146. Also Gerson ed., *Letters*, 71.

⁷⁹ See also Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 168.

⁸⁰ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 445-47.

the money or the man with more than one ‘talent’?⁸¹ Additionally, within the etching, on the wall behind Wtenbogaert, is a painting of an unusual subject, ‘Moses and the Brazen Serpent’ (fig. 133).⁸² The biblical story relates how God sent a plague of serpents to chastise the wandering Israelites for complaining about their lot in the land of Edom. The serpents bit many of the Israelites who died. In fear the remaining members of the tribe repented their sins, seeing this, God instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and place it on a pole. Thereafter it acted as an antidote to snake bites. I suggest that, on one hand, Wtenbogaert would have been pleased to have seen the portrayal in a manner that indicates he was the saviour of the artist; while on the other, the image conveys an implication of chastisement in the form of the sustaining power of art over transient worldly needs. A point possibly not lost on Frederick Hendrick and Huygens who undoubtedly, given the medium, would have seen the etching.

Although the subject ‘Moses and the Brazen Serpent’ is only an image within an otherwise ostensibly portrait etching, its fearful subject is remarkably in keeping with other strong emotional themes from the 1630s. This is in marked contrast to the later Rembrandt *oeuvre*. A recent article by Eric Jan Sluijter traces the development of Rembrandt’s portrayal of the passions. He suggests a series of analogies with seventeenth-century Dutch drama.⁸³ Sluijter argues that Rembrandt’s depictions of emotion evolved in keeping with playwright Joost van den Vondel’s (1587-1679) tragedies of the 1640s. In these texts the emotional reactions of the viewer are manipulated in an entirely different way to the Seneca (3 B.C.-65 A.D.) – Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609) model of the 1630s. Similarly, rather than the sudden and sometimes shocking passions of the earlier works, Rembrandt’s later *oeuvre* features figures caught in motionless, often mute situations in which a slow reversal of mood gradually takes place.⁸⁴ Striking examples include the *Bathsheba with King David’s Letter* of 1654 (fig. 134) now in the Louvre, the *Haman Resigned to his Fate*, of c.1660 (fig. 135) and of course *The Return of the Prodigal Son* of c.1662 (fig. 136), both these later paintings are now in St. Petersburg. This steady movement towards slow interior monologue as opposed to a pronounced outward manifestation of emotion can be seen not only as personal maturity and confidence on

⁸¹ The Parable of the Talents, Matt. 25:15-28.

⁸² Numbers 21:5-9.

⁸³ Eric Jan Sluijter, ‘Rembrandt’s Portrayal of the Passions and Vondel’s ‘staetvernaderinge’, *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 60 (2010): 284-305.

⁸⁴ See also Freeman’s fascinating discussion of ‘fear’ in Rembrandt’s *Belshazzar’s Feast* of c.1635 in the National Gallery, London, in *Art’s Emotions*, 13-16.

Rembrandt's part but also as a reflection of artistic freedom, of an artist unconstrained by the requirements of a particular patron and a specific audience as in the *Passion Series*.

The seven letters Rembrandt wrote to Huygens, with their focus largely on pecuniary and, to a lesser extent, logistical matters make it clear that Frederick Hendrick, although the titular patron for the *Passion Series* delegated most artistic affairs to his secretary. Huygens' praise of Rembrandt in his autobiography clearly describes those qualities the connoisseur most admired in the work of the young artist that marked him out as the favoured candidate to paint the *Passion Series*. The two pieces of documentation stress the primacy of Huygens in stimulating the Stadholder's patronage of Rembrandt in The Hague. Moreover, in relation to the argument of this thesis, Rembrandt's famous comment regarding the artistic concept of *beweechgelickheit*, a matching of motion to emotion to elicit the desired response, in the Third Letter, highlights the close relationship of contemporary theoretical debate to artistic practice; theoretical treatises, which in turn, conflate artistic expression in poetry with painting. This thesis argues that a similar conflation underscores Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*. It is a *conchetto* conceived by way of Rembrandt's close association with Huygens, a relationship this thesis will continue to explore.

Chapter Four: The Poetry of Meditation and the *Passion Series*

Huygens and Donne

Underpinning the arguments of this thesis is the generative relationship between Huygens, the Stadholder's secretary and English clergyman and poet John Donne. I argue that under the patronage and intellectual influence of Huygens Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* emerges. The earlier elaboration of Huygens as *Uomo Universale* is further illustrated by another section of his autobiography; there, in a manner similar to the praise he had showered on Lievens and Rembrandt, Huygens compares the preaching style of the Dutch cleric Johannes van Wtenbogaert (1557-1646) with that of English clergyman and poet John Donne:

Of their rhetoric I shall say this, that to my mind our time stands equal with Antiquity so long as these men belong to us. Should I be asked for a reason for this my bold assertion, then I say that they have been born with their talent for rhetoric, a rare gift from heaven...The delivery of these men... was either simple or passionate, but in each case it was natural; they played no role in the pulpit which they must have put off at home.¹

By the time of writing this in the early 1630s, Huygens would have had many opportunities to hear Donne preach. He had not only travelled to England three times in the early 1620s but also was present when Donne preached a sermon in The Hague in late 1619.² After the sermon, as discussed by Sellin, Donne received a medal from the Dutch Republic's States General struck to commemorate the Synod of Dort that had just concluded. The recognition by the States General suggests that the sermon reflected agreeable, sanctioned Protestant orthodoxy.³ Additionally Huygens was clearly enraptured by the poetry of the Englishman,

¹ Huygens, 'Ambos semper collatis animi et facundiae dotibus in palleis habui, qui nunc absolutissimae eloquentiae exempla penitus animo inscripsi. Eruditionem utrisque non attingam, quod huius loci non est; de facultate dicendi hoc dicam, non arbitrari me antiquitati quidquam debuisse aetatem nostram, quamdiu his viris potita est. Si quis fiduciae rationem exigat, unam sufficere puto, quod cum eloquentia nati videbantur, raro coeli dono...Horum hominum...sive humilis, sive in sublime affectibus elata, utique native diction erat; personam in suggestu nec induebant, nec deponebant domi. Utrobique sui similes perinde mirabilis errant et illapsi animis arcane suavitate trahebant'. In Worp, 'Autobiographie', 57-8. Translation in Daley, *The Triple Fool*, 85. As already noted, Johannes Wtenbogaert was the uncle of the tax-collector of the same name.

² See Bachrach, *Constantijn Huygens and Britain*; Colie, *Some Thankfulness to Constantine*; Sellin, 'John Donne: The Poet as Diplomat and Divine'.

³ See Paul Sellin, *John Donne and 'Calvinist' Views of Grace* (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, 1983) and Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 118.

although Donne's work was not published in the public domain until 1633, as reflected in a poem by Huygens from 1640:⁴

Thou, greatest Donne,
I place before all others, man divine, best Orator,
First of all poets: Oh to how many of your words,
Those golden words I have listened,
Uttered among friends or from the pulpit,
Oh great Herald, which have nourished me like nectar!⁵

Here Huygens sees in Donne a unity of mind and work, a man of equal eminence to the ancients, with 'a talent for rhetoric' and as 'first among poets'. Further, Huygens states that Donne's talent for rhetoric is no artifice; it is God-given and this natural ability is conveyed in golden words among friends or from the pulpit as welcome nourishment for all mankind. Again we detect echoes of those qualities he admired in Rembrandt. However, whereas Huygens had little hope of matching Rembrandt as a painter, he could utilize his not inconsiderable literary skill in an attempt to shine in a little of Donne's reflected glory. Here we can trace, albeit with a little license, the classical Aristotelian poetical methodology of *transiatio*, *imitatio* and *aemulatio*.

Around 1630 Huygens began translating Donne's verse into Dutch. He began with four poems and in 1633 added fifteen more, from the twenty-five he received, possibly from Lucy the Countess of Bedford, a well-known patron of poets.⁶ It was a literary labour of love, done largely in his 'spare time' while traveling in the field on campaign with Frederick Hendrick.⁷ The nineteen poems Huygens translated are the chief link between the literatures of the two

⁴ John Donne, *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose* edited by Charles Coffin (New York: Modern Library, 2001). All references to John Donne's poetry are from this edition.

⁵ Huygens, 'Te, maximi Donni,
Omnibus antefero, divine vir, optime Rhetor,
Prime Poetarum: O, quoties sermonibus illis
Aureolis, quod vel priuatos inter amicos
Vel de suggestu, Praeco Facunde, serebas,
Intereram, quo me visus sum nectare pasci',

Huygens, *Gedichten* edited by Johannes Worp (Groningen: Wolters, 1892-1898, 8 vols.), vol. VIII, 208.

⁶ The poems translated were: 'The Sunne Rising', 'The Flea', 'The Apparition', 'Witchcraft by a Picture', 'Twickenam Garden', 'Song: Goe, and catche a falling stare', 'The Triple Fool', 'A Valediction: of weeping', 'The Dreame', 'Elegie' II, 'Elegie VI' (part), 'The Extasie', 'The Blossome', 'Woman's Constancy', 'A Valediction: forbidding mourning', 'Breake of Day', 'Loves Deitie', 'The Legacie', 'Good Friday, 1613: Riding Westward'. In Huygens, *Gedichten* edited by Worp, vol. II, 214-19 and 255-72. For Donne's originals, see Coffin ed., *Complete Poetry*, 11, 31, 36, 135, 23, 8, 14, 30, 29, 57, 58, 39, 45, 9, 38, 19, 41, 17, 257. Donne penned a verse letter praising Lucy's virtue, 'To the Countesse of Bedford', in Coffin ed., *Complete Poetry*, 156-57.

⁷ Koss Daley, "'Good Friday': Donne, Huygens and the Protestant Paradigm of Salvation', in *The Great Emporium: The Low Countries as cultural crossroads in the Renaissance and eighteenth centuries*, edited by C. C. Barfoot and Richard Todd (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992), 43-55, 45.

countries in the early seventeenth century, thus this relationship has continued to be explored biographically by Rosie Colie, textually by Koss Daley and thematically by Sellin.⁸ Of the nineteen poems, the sole religious poem that Huygens translated into Dutch was ‘Good Friday, 1613: Riding Westward’ (fig. 137). It is this poem that provides the clearest thematic context for Rembrandt’s early *Passion Series* works. Perlove and Silver clearly seem to support this line of investigation as in *Rembrandt’s Faith* they comment that: ‘Huygens may have discussed ‘Good Friday’ with Rembrandt on various occasions... Huygens’ high esteem and great ambitions for Rembrandt would have motivated him to introduce the young painter to John Donne’s poetry’.⁹ Although this is speculative, textual analysis does provide a series of analogies. In her earlier article, Perlove pursued connections between Rembrandt’s first *Passion Series* works and Donne’s poem; in it, she refers to Daley’s excellent exegesis of Huygens’ text, which illuminates the differences between the two poems.¹⁰

Daley notes in her analysis of his translation that Huygens made subtle changes to Donne’s text. She suggests that the changes reflect the differing confessional identities of the two men, Calvinist and Anglican. Daley identifies two important theological shifts in Huygens’ translation: he tries to place greater emphasis on his own participation in Christ’s sacrifice and he tempers that honour Donne gives to Mary as the mother of Christ. The crucial lines are 29-32 and in Donne’s original they read:

If on these things I durst not looke, durst I
Upon this miserable mother cast mine eye,
Who was God’s partner here, and furnish’d thus
Halfe of that sacrifice, which ransom’d us?¹¹

Huygens translates line 29 to: ‘En schrik ick dat te sien, hoe dorst ik sien en weten’ (‘And since it terrifies me to see that, how do I dare to see and know’).¹² Huygens’ addition of ‘and know’ expresses a desire to understand as well as to view the Crucifixion, thus changing the persona of the narrator from distant spectator to active participant.¹³ Additionally in line 30, Donne’s, ‘Upon this miserable mother’, becomes in Huygens’ translation, ‘Hoe Sij te moede was’ (‘How sorrowful She was’), this shifts the emphasis on Mary as the mother of Christ by

⁸ Rosie Colie, *Some Thankfulness to Constantine*; Daley, *The Triple Fool*; Paul Sellin, ‘John Donne and the Huygens Family, 1619-1621: Some implications for Dutch literature’, *Dutch Quarterly Review* 12 (1982/3):193-204.

⁹ Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt’s Faith*, 293.

¹⁰ Perlove, ‘Witnessing the Crucifixion’, 93. See Daley, *The Triple Fool*, and Daley, ‘Good Friday’.

¹¹ Donne, ‘Good Friday’, in Coffin ed., *Complete Poems*, 257.

¹² Daley (translation), ‘Good Friday’, 49.

¹³ Daley, ‘Good Friday’, 49.

tempering and generalizing her grief.¹⁴ Perlove, in discussing the connections between the two poems and Rembrandt's *Descent* asserts that, 'Donne's description of the Virgin's sacrifice probably was the stimulus for Rembrandt's use of this element borrowed from Catholic art'.¹⁵ However, this belies both the subtlety of the changes in the translation and contradicts the pictorial evidence. Brochhagen's radiographic analysis revealed that in the *Descent* Rembrandt initially placed a figure, presumably Mary, beside the Cross; the figure was depicted clinging to Christ's dropping forearm with her right hand.¹⁶ In the final version of the painting, the figure has been removed and Mary is pictured swooning in the left foreground. Thus, rather than physically aligned with Christ as 'God's partner' as in Donne's poem, Mary while still present and important in the narrative is depicted more accurately as 'sorrowful', as per Huygens' translation. Thus the language he selected in his translation, suggests how Huygens direct influence on the artist may have exceeded that of the Donne via Huygens impact on Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the Passion Series.

The combined influence of the literary works of Huygens and Donne may also give us a clue to the *conchetto* for a complex early painting by Rembrandt. The iconography of that work, Rembrandt's *Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem*, of 1630 (fig. 138) in Amsterdam, has long puzzled scholars.¹⁷ The work however references an interesting and hitherto unmentioned connection with the literary works of Huygens and Donne. At some time in the early 1620s they mutually, but independently, translated part of the Jeremiah story from Scripture into verse: Donne's, 'The Lamentations of Jeremy: For the most part according to Tremelius'; and Huygens' *imitatio*, 'Proeve op't beghinn der Klachten Iermiae' ('A portion of the beginning of the Lamentations of Jeremy').¹⁸ Sellin has advanced the idea that their shared interest in this subject was generated as a sombre response to military disasters for Protestants in Bohemia and the Palatinate during 1621 and 1622.¹⁹ Other scholars have similarly struggled to identify an exact source of inspiration for Rembrandt's painting. Schwartz tentatively linked the painting to the publication in Dutch of an English commentary on the 'Lamentations' by the strict Haarlem Calvinist Samuel Ampzing (1590-1632), who in it urged Dutchmen to repent of their ways before their cities too were

¹⁴ Daley (translation), 'Good Friday', 49.

¹⁵ Perlove, 'Witnessing the Crucifixion', 97.

¹⁶ Brochhagen, 'Passionbildern Rembrandt's in München', 40. See also Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 280-82.

¹⁷ For the various interpretations of the subject see Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. I, 282

¹⁸ Donne, 'The Lamentations of Jeremy: For the most part according to Tremelius'. In Coffin ed., *Complete Poems*, 270.

Huygens, 'Proeve op 't beghinn der Klachten Iermiae'. Huygens, *Gedichten* edited by Worp, Vol. I, 262.

¹⁹ Sellin, 'John Donne and the Huygens Family', 201-2.

destroyed by the Spanish.²⁰ However, neither Schwartz nor Sellin moot a link between these translations (Huygens' and Donne's) and Rembrandt's painting such as I am proposing here.

In Rembrandt's *Jeremiah* the aged prophet is centrally placed seated beneath an immense pillar at the entrance to a cavernous, perhaps ruined, architectural space. He props his left elbow on a large, leather bound book and leans his head heavily against his hand to suggest the weightiness of his thoughts.²¹ On a stone ledge at his side, a group of ornate vessels and an oriental carpet are prominently displayed. Through the archway on the left is a distant view of a city ablaze from which a regally attired figure runs, shielding his eyes as tiny soldiers storm the gates and set fire to the temple.²² The events portrayed relate events recorded in both 'Jeremiah' and 'Lamentations'. However the painting departs significantly from the direct biblical narrative, which places Jeremiah inside the walls of Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian assault.²³ Rembrandt therefore breaks with a unity of time and place to portray in a single image the fullness of Jeremiah's tale of woe as he witnesses the fulfilment of his prophecies of God's wrath. I suggest that in this work Rembrandt employs an artistic strategy parallel to that in the poems of Donne and Huygens, as he endeavours to encapsulate within a clearly defined format the essential elements of a larger narrative. In Rembrandt's case the format is the pictorial space; in the case of Donne and Huygens it is verse. The coalescing of a larger narrative into a fixed point of experience is also what Rembrandt is endeavouring to achieve in the *Passion Series*. Similarly, in literature it is what poets are endeavouring to achieve in the sonnet format, a form in which Huygens' verse appears to emulate that of Donne.

Donne's best-known works are the *Holy Sonnets*, a group of nineteen poems written in three groups, as Helen Gardner has shown, around 1610.²⁴ Thematically the *Holy Sonnets* explore religious anxiety in much the same way Rembrandt does, albeit twenty years later, in the *Passion Series*. Although Huygens did not translate any of the *Holy Sonnets* it is highly likely given both his association with Donne and the popularity of the verses that he was conversant with this body of work. This hypothesis is borne out by a comparison between Donne's *Holy Sonnets* and Huygens' own later sonnet sequence published in 1645, *Heilighe Daghén (Holy*

²⁰ Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 349. Albert Blankert has daringly suggested that Rembrandt deliberately chose to create a pictorial puzzle. See, Albert Blankert, *Rembrandt: A genius and his impact*, edited by Albert Blankert (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1997), #5 at 99.

²¹ The lettering 'BiBeL' is by another later hand.

²² Identified by Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. I, 282.

²³ Jeremiah 32:2 and 33:1.

²⁴ Helen Gardner, ed., *John Donne: The divine poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), Introduction.

Days), a series of nine poems on the Protestant holy days.²⁵ An example of a sonnet by each poet, Donne's 'Holy Sonnet XI' and Huygens' "'s Herren Avondmael' ('On the Lord's Supper'), reveals a series of similarities:

Donne: 'Holy Sonnet XI'

Spit in my face you Jewes, and pierce my side,
 Buffet, and scoffe, source, and crucifie mee,
 For I have sinn'd, and sinn'd, and onely hee,
 Who could do no iniquitie, hath dyed:
 But by my death can not be satisfied
 My sinnes, which passé the Jewes impiety:
 They kill'd once an inglorious man, but I
 Crucifie him daily, being now glorified.
 Oh let me then, his strange love still admire:
 King's pardon, but he bore our punishment.
 And *Jacob* came cloth'd in vile harsh attire
 But to supplant, and with gainful intent:
 God couth'd himselfe in vile mans flesh, that so
 Hee might be weake enough to suffer woe.²⁶

Huygens: "'s Herren Avondmael'

It is again thy feast, and I again thy guest?
 But, Lord, the wedding suit in which I came before
 Is now almost in rags, and looks like one no more
 But I sit proudly by as if it were my best.
 How right thy vengeance, Lord, if you caught me at last
 And threw me out of doors into th'eternal groan!
 Yet thou still payst my debt, and on my Faith alone
 And bits of small remorse, and sav'st my soul its fast.
 Th'heart's ready for remorse. But readiness is short:
 It's work not yet begun. When will it show its sorrow
 Today, or yesterday, the day coming tomorrow,
 Once rueful for always; when dost thou want it, Lord?
 Rue I always again, always old sins renew?
 Let me at last repent my vain and hollow rue!²⁷

²⁵ Huygens, *Heilighe Daghén*, edited by L. Strengholt (Amsterdam: Buijten and Schipperheign/Repro-Holland, 1974). Also Koos Daley, *Holy Days: A verse translation of Constantijn Huygens' Heilighe Daghén* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 2001). For a further selection and commentary see, Peter Davison and Adriaan van der Weel, *A Selection of the Poems of Sir Constantijn Huygens* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996) and Maria Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, *Dutch Literature in the age of Rembrandt: Themes and ideas* (Amsterdam: John Benjamin's, 1991).

²⁶ Donne, 'Holy Sonnet XI', in Coffin ed., *Complete Poems*, 263.

²⁷ Huygens, "'s Herren Avondmael' ('On the Lord's Supper'), translation in Daley, *Holy Days*, 19.

'Is 't weer dijn' hooghe Feest, en ick weer van de gasten
 Maer, Heer, het Bruijloftskleed daer in ick lest verscheen

The sonnets are similar in form and imaginative strategy in that they both reflect an adoption and adaptation of the Ignatian meditative technique. In the octave of the sonnet, each poet brings to bear the ‘three powers of the soul’ – the memory, the understanding and the will – to arrive in the sestet at a series of Christian truths that the poet/narrator establishes from the poetic process. They each take as their subject an episode from the life of Christ: the Crucifixion and the Last Supper. Both ‘compose a place’ for the event and both envision themselves as a ‘participant’ in the scene: one is as the thief who was crucified alongside Christ and asked for pardon the other is as an apostle partaking in the meal. The presence of the narrator at the event is indicated by the accent on and the repetition of successive personal pronouns throughout both poems. The use of diction, imagery and syntax imbues this protagonist with substantial pictorial-like vividness and precision. Conversely, both poems subordinate the role of the audience; the listener does not so much hear the communication as overhear it, as the speaker directs his communication respectively to Christ and to an aspect of the speaker’s self. Both the poet/narrator and the reader arrive at the Christian truth: Christ died not for His sins but ours, and that in the liturgy we remember Christ always. Thus each poet follows a clear, prescribed form and imaginative strategy that progresses the poem in an identifiable three-part process. The three-part process identified here is analogous with the meditational sequence prescribed by Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises*. Further it is my contention that these similarities are not merely coincidental; rather that Huygens was emulating Donne’s *Holy Sonnets* and that in one aspect at least, by using Scripture as a even more direct source, Huygens actually surpasses Donne’s model.

A feature of Dutch devotional poetry that thematically aligns it with seventeenth-century Dutch painting and one that could be seen to distinguish the Dutch poets from their English counterparts, it is their selection and adaptation of highly specific pieces of Scripture, as they

Is over halver sleet, jae 't en gelijckt 'er geen,
 En ick sitt moedigh aen als of 't mij puntigh pasten.
 Hoe waer de wraeck besteedt, soo Ghij mij nu verrasten,
 En uijtter deure dreeft in 't eewighe geweent!
 Noch borght ghij mij 't gelagh, en op Geloof alleen
 En wat boetveerdicheids, en laet mijn' ziel niet veer:
 'T is geen begonnen wreck. Wanneer wil 't boetigh wesen
 Voor nu, voor gisteren, en voor den tijd near desen,
 Eens boetigh voor altos; en wanneer wilt Ghij 't, Heer?
 Is 't altijd weer wat nieuws, en altyd weer op 't ouwe?
 Oh dat mij 't holl berouw eens endtelick berouwe'.
 In Daley, *Holy Days*, 18.

sought to give forthright expression to their maxim – *Sola Scriptura*.²⁸ The above sonnet by Huygens is a good example of his use of a scriptural source as it references the parable of the King's wedding in the Gospel of Matthew:

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there was a man which had not on a wedding garment:
And he said to him, Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.
Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gashing of teeth.
For many are called, but few are chosen.²⁹

In the poem, Huygens trusts in the eternal mercy of God who, in spite of the man's ill-fitting garment, will save him a place at His table and not throw him out into eternal darkness, as the King has done with the wedding guest in this passage. Huygens' poem is written by a man who, while realizing and acknowledging his sinfulness, is able to enjoy life and celebrate it at a high artistic level because of his faith in the grace of God who has sacrificed Christ. His poetry thus celebrates his dedication to Christ, a bond made all the more steadfast by his devotion to family and country.

A further indication of the convergence between Huygens' public and private personas is evidenced by a letter from his old friend Caspar Barlaeus (1584-1648) upon the occasion of the 1645 publication of Huygens' *Heilighe Daghén*. In the letter, Barlaeus states that the poems have: 'been printed in the form in which you wrote them, so that the separate titles might be hung side by side, and each in its turn might be pegged to the wall and be read'.³⁰ This suggests that a further function of these poems was to act as a visual/literary stimulus for prayer. Huygens' poetry therefore indicates a concern with and an understanding of, contemporary meditational practice, characteristic of the English Metaphysicals' 'poetry of meditation'.

²⁸ See Martin Elsky, 'History, Liturgy, and Point of View in Protestant Meditative Poetry', *Studies in Philology* 77 (1980): 70-83.

²⁹ Matthew 22: 11-14.

³⁰ Casper Barlaeus, 'Letter to Constantijn Huygens', in *Avondmaals-gedichten en Heilighe Daghén*, edited by F. Zwaan (Zwolle: Waanders, 1968), 6.

The Poetry of Meditation and *The Spiritual Exercises*

Analogies between seventeenth-century devotional poetry in England and Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* were first articulated by Louis Martz in his 1954 work, *The Poetry of Meditation*.³¹ Martz argued persuasively that this poetry and specifically Donne's *Holy Sonnets*, followed the three-part meditational sequence of Ignatius as detailed in his *Spiritual Exercises*. He showed how the poet first selected an episode from the life of Christ and then 'composed a place' a setting; in one of three ways: as a 'participant' in the event, as a 'spectator' at the event or as if the event was taking place 'within one's own heart'. Finally, the poet draws a series of Christian truths from the event. This three-part sequence is the fundamental structural basis for devotional meditation as detailed by Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Further, it is this three-part method that these 'meditational' poets adopt. Finally, it is this imaginative strategy that I argue that Rembrandt adopts and adapts consistently in his *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*.

For over 450 years *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (see figs. 15 and 16) have had a profound impact not only on the lives of individuals but on the church and the wider world. Their rapid dissemination in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries will be discussed shortly, after a few remarks on their genesis and arrangement. They were begun by the thirty-year-old and relatively uneducated Ignatius in 1521. A soldier by profession, he was wounded at Pamplona in what is now Spain. While recovering, Ignatius converted to spiritual living at Loyola, and by the time he left Manresa where he went for further rehabilitation in 1523, he had sketched the first draft of a treatise that was to become the *Spiritual Exercises*.³² They are conceived around his beliefs about the chief truths of God's plan of salvation for those of mankind who use their memory, understanding and will wisely; unsurprisingly, he devoted particular attention both to man's creation by God and redemption by Christ. The *Spiritual Exercises* are not simply a devotional treatise or even a guide that was intended to be read through but a 'how to' manual. They are a practical, step-by-step textbook for a spiritual leader to guide an ideal retreatant through a four-week retreat of intense self-examination and devotion. They are written economically, containing concise, unambiguous instructions at each step of the process. I believe that the *Exercises* economical language

³¹ Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*. For a full anthology of seventeenth-century English poetry from this perspective see Louis Martz, ed., *The Meditative Poem: An anthology of Seventeenth-Century verse* (New York: New York University Press, 1963).

³² Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 12-13.

would have strongly appealed to poets. The fourteen-line sonnet is by definition an exercise in economy of language, an exercise in which each word (or Ignatian ‘Point’) must have maximum impact if effectiveness is to be achieved.

The Spiritual Exercises begin with twenty Introductory Explanations. These explanations address practical questions including: time, method and structure; and theological issues of temptation, desolation, consolation, orientation and disengagement. It is the second of these Introductory Explanations that is of particular relevance when considering their artistic adaptation. Here Ignatius advises the spiritual leader to consult accurately the ‘history’ (Scripture) and to present it to the retreatant for a personal understanding of the event. I contend that this is similar to the way in which seventeenth-century ‘history’ painters would consult literary sources in order to bring their own understanding to the subject of a painting.

The remainder and greater part of the text of the *Spiritual Exercises* is divided into four sections called ‘Weeks’. After completing characteristically confessional exercises, the retreatant begins the First Exercise of the First Week, which contains the famous Ignatian ‘composition of place’. The exercise consists of: a preparatory prayer, two preludes, three main points and a colloquy. The preparatory prayer is a simple request for grace in the proper performance of the exercise; however, the preludes are more complex. In the First Prelude Ignatius uses the word *composicion* thirteen times in the text, thereby placing a heavy stress on the creative process not unlike an artist’s *conchetto*. For Ignatius, the word meant the mental process of assemblage. He states:

The First Prelude is a composition made by imagining the place. Here we should take notice of the following. When a contemplation or meditation is about something that can be gazed on, for example, a contemplation of Christ our Lord, who is visible, the composition consists of seeing in imagination the physical place where that which I wish to contemplate is taking place. By physical place I mean, for instance, a temple or a mountain where Jesus Christ or Our Lady happens to be, in accordance with the topic I desire to contemplate.³³

Although Ignatius clearly states here that the composition consists of seeing the place in the imagination other sections of the text show that he is not averse to emphasizing the concrete nature of the setting. In the original Spanish, Ignatius writes ‘*composicion viendo el lugar*’ (‘a composition by seeing the place’). By asking the retreatant to see the place, he is tasking the

³³ Ignatius, 47, in Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 136.

retreatant to see oneself in the place.³⁴ For Ignatius this is not simply an act of imagination, but a vivid construction of an actuality. As Martz has illustrated, other Jesuit writers when expounding upon and adapting the *Exercises* appear to not rule out the use of visual imagery. Martz quotes an English Jesuit, probably Richard Gibbons (1549-1632):

...the places where the thinges we meditate on were wrought, by imagining our selves to be really present at those places; which we must endeavour to represent so lively, as though we saw them indeed, with our corporal eyes; which to prefomre well, it will help us much to behould before-hande some Image wherin the mistry is well represented, and to have read or heard what good Authors write of these places, and to have noted well the distance from one place to another, the height of the hills, and the situation of the townes and villages.³⁵

Additionally, St. Francois de Sales in an 'Introduction' to his interpretive translation of the *Exercises* in 1610 notes that: 'we may use some similitude or comparison, to help our consideration' in dealing with 'invisible mysteries'; although he warns that this may weary the mind with 'searching out curious inventions'.³⁶ The inference from these two passages is that when composing a place for meditation, it is acceptable to seek inspiration from a painting (an 'Image') in which the scene is well represented and that such a well-established form of similitude is preferable to some far-fetched curiosity. Martz does not comment further on this point by drawing analogies between the *Exercises* and pictorial artistic expression, focusing instead solely on poetical works and associated theological exegeses.

Martz extracts a series of quotations – from both Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* and the writings of de Sales and Luis de Granada – to demonstrate the three ways of performing this imaginary 'composition of place'. The first is to imagine oneself as a 'participant' in the scene. As Ignatius describes: 'Here it will be to see the arrangements of the Holy Sepulchre; also the place of the house where Our Lady was, including its various parts, such as a room, an oratory, and the like'.³⁷ The second is to imagine oneself present as a 'spectator' where the event occurred. Martz quotes de Sales: 'In the very same place where thou art'.³⁸ The third is, as explained by Fray Luis, for the retreatant to: 'imagin that everie one of these thinges

³⁴ See William Peters, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Exposition and interpretation* (New Jersey: The Program to Promote the Spiritual Exercises, 1967), 29-31.

³⁵ Richard Gibbons, 2:10. From Tomas de Villacastin, *A Manual of Devout Meditations and Exercises, Instructing how to pray mentally. Drawne for the most part, out of the Spiritual Exercises of B. F. Ignatius* [1610], translated by H. More, St. Omer, 1618, 36, in Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 27.

³⁶ St. Francois de Sales, *An Introduction to a Devoute Life*, translated by J. Yakesley, Rouen, 1614, 126-7, 129, in Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 30.

³⁷ Ignatius, 220, in Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 174.

³⁸ de Sales, *Introduction to a Devoute Life*, 126-9, in Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 30.

whereupon they meditate passeth within their owne harte'.³⁹ The resulting effect of this 'composition' is an immediate and intense focus on a particular event, firmly established, topographically accurate and vividly dramatized. This is the 'composition of place' traced earlier in Donne's 'participant' poem on the Crucifixion and Huygens' 'participant' poem on The Last Supper.

After this imaginative compositional First Prelude, the Second Prelude follows. It too is important when considering the adaptation of the *Exercises* as a basis for the conception of artistic works, as it establishes a relationship between the subject matter of and the intended purpose for works of art. Here Ignatius instructs the retreatant to consider what it is they are petitioning God for in their meditation:

The *Second Prelude* is to ask God our Lord for what I want and desire. What I ask for should be in accordance with the subject matter. For example, in a contemplation on the Resurrection, I will ask for joy with Christ in joy; in a contemplation on the Passion, I will ask for pain, tears, and suffering with Christ suffering.

In the present meditation it will be to ask for shame and confusion about myself, when I see how many people have been damned for committing a single mortal sin, and how many times I have deserved eternal damnation for my many sins.⁴⁰

From this pre-meditation, the meditation is then divided into three or more Points, specific aspects of the scene that need to be considered. In their contemplation of each Point Ignatius instructs the retreatant to bring the 'Three Powers of the Soul'— the memory, the understanding and the will – to the scene already constructed. The emphasis on the 'three powers' is typical of the Jesuits, who almost invariably divide subjects into three parts to correspond to the Holy Trinity.

Now that the trinity of powers brought to bear on the scene have been investigated and integrated through meditation, the climax of the particular exercise is reached when the reformed soul is lifted up to speak with God in colloquy and to hear God speak to man. These colloquies conclude every exercise in the *Spiritual Exercises* and Ignatius is as exact as ever in explaining their purpose:

Colloquy. Imagine Christ Our Lord suspended on the Cross before you, and converse with Him in a colloquy: How is that He, although He is the

³⁹ Luis de Granda, *Of Prayer, and Meditation* translated by R. Hopkins, Douay, 1612, 303-4, in Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 30.

⁴⁰ Ignatius, 48, in Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 136-7.

Creator, has come to make Himself a human being? How is it that He has passed from eternal life to death here in time, and to die in this way for my sins?

In a similar way, reflect on yourself and ask: What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?

In this way, too, gazing on Him in so pitiful a state as He hangs on the Cross, speak out whatever comes to your mind.

A colloquy is made, properly speaking, in the way one friend speaks to another, or a servant to one in authority – now begging a favour, now accusing oneself of some misdeed, now telling one's concerns and asking counsel about them.⁴¹

The questions Ignatius proposes here as the basis of a colloquy at the end of the exercise are similar to the type of questions I suggested earlier that the viewer is prompted to ask God when studying Rembrandt's *Le Mas d'Agénais, Christ on the Cross*. Indeed Ignatius cites the event of the Crucifixion as an exemplary episode to consider when framing the questions. Further questions like these could and will be asked in reference to each of the paintings in the *Passion Series*. Moreover, I argue that in all five *Passion Series* paintings, Rembrandt's conception of the subject or Ignatian event is as a 'participant' in or as a 'spectator' at the scene. True, the subject matter does tend to dictate such an approach and Rembrandt, as discussed earlier, was not the first artist to place great emphasis on contracting the relationship between image and viewer; however, the conceptual leap by the artist to a 'participant' or to a 'spectator' with a privileged viewpoint persona, is a big one and therefore invites close examination.

The Dissemination and Appropriation of the *Spiritual Exercises*

Ignatius wrote the *Spiritual Exercises* in Spanish. Of this original Spanish text there are two extant principle sixteenth-century Latin translations dated 1541 and 1546-7. The second of these was made by Father Andre des Freux in Rome under the direction of Ignatius himself. It is commonly called the Vulgate. This version is the text that has been employed by the Catholic Church since the approbation and subsequent first publication of the *Exercises* by Paul III in 1548.⁴² Donne, Huygens and Rembrandt were all versed in Latin and were therefore capable, if they so desired, of reading the Vulgate *Exercises*. More significantly it must be remembered that the *Exercises* were designed to be performed under the guidance of a spiritual leader, not read, and additionally that the Jesuits are a teaching order. It was

⁴¹ Ignatius, 53, in Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 138.

⁴² Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits, Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice: A historical study*, translated by William Young, edited by George Ganss (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1964), 112-13.

primarily in this way that the *Exercises* became so rapidly and widely disseminated throughout Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. This was especially the case in the Southern Netherlands where the Jesuits had a considerable presence.

In addition to the *Exercises*, Ignatius himself commissioned his best known disciple, Jerome Nadal (1507-1580), to write and edit an illustrated book of Gospel meditational treatises, *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines, Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia*.⁴³ It was first published in Rubens' Antwerp in 1593 and 1594.⁴⁴ The form and content of the second part of Nadal's work derive, not unsurprisingly, from an amplification of the 'composition of place' that Ignatius recommends as a prelude to meditation in the *Exercises*. However, the first part of Nadal's book consists of 153 engravings by the three Wierix brothers, illustrating each of the Gospels as read at Mass, thereby making a clear link between the *Exercises* and visual interpretation.⁴⁵ The *Exercises* also gave rise to a not inconsiderable canon of related literature, such as Theophile Bernardin's *Disposition of One's Life* (Antwerp, 1625) and Joseph Diertins's *Explanation of the Exercises* (Ypres, 1687).

Additionally, Martz provides evidence for the popularity and influence of the *Exercises* in England by reference to a 'flood' of devotional treatises written by English Jesuits who adopted and adapted Ignatius' manual. Martz provides copious biographical as well as literary evidence to support his view that Englishmen took to heart the ideas of the Counter-Reformation, specifically in the realm of inward devotion. Although Donne became an Anglican minister, his Catholic upbringing and Jesuit education would have grounded him in Jesuit meditational works.⁴⁶ Martz shows how he seizes upon Ignatius' meditational sequence to structure his sonnets. Importantly, as already mentioned, Halewood notes that Martz's argument turns not on parallels of doctrine but on parallels of form and imaginative strategy, which calls into question the arguments of those scholars who have criticised Martz's thesis.⁴⁷

A number of scholars, championed by Lewalski, have expressed doubts on the extent of Ignatius's influence. These critics argue for a completely separate Protestant meditational

⁴³ See Walter Melion, *The Meditative Art: Studies in the northern devotional print, 1550-1625*, Early Modern Catholicism and the Visual Arts Series, vol. 1. (Philadelphia: St. Joseph's University Press, 2010). And Thomas Buser, 'Jerome Nadal and Early Jesuit Art in Rome', *Art Bulletin* 58:3 (1976): 424-33.

⁴⁴ See William Bangert, *Jerome Nadal: Tracking the first generation of Jesuits* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1992), 342. And John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge Harvard University Press, 1993), 127-33.

⁴⁵ Jan Wierix (1549-c.1618); Hieronymus Wierix (1553-1619); Anton II (c.1552-c.1604).

⁴⁶ Carey, *John Donne*, 1-22.

⁴⁷ Halewood, *The Poetry of Grace*, 74-5.

tradition as the imaginative base for English Metaphysical poetry. However, a close examination of Lewalski's argument reveals that it begins to blur around the edges. For Lewalski:

Two elements especially characterize Protestant meditation, whatever the subject or the formal structure: a focus upon the Bible, the Word, as guiding the interpretation of the subject and providing meditative models; and a particular kind of application to the self, analogous to the 'application' so prominent in Protestant sermons of the period.⁴⁸

R. V. Young comments that the obvious difficulty with this statement is that it is difficult to imagine any method of Christian meditation that would not use the Bible as a guide, and any meditative scheme that would not involve some degree of application to the spiritual life of the individual.⁴⁹ Surely Catholics meditated for the same reasons as Protestants: to increase their personal contact with God through Christ and to realise their own individual roles as members of a Christian community. Thus whatever differences in detail there might be between Catholic and Protestant meditational techniques, they share an overriding common aim in seeking divine guidance. Given this conformity of overall aims and essential interests it is difficult to agree with the view that: Protestant meditational techniques developed out of a separate tradition from Catholic treatises and that therefore English seventeenth-century devotional poetry, as Lewalski argues, owes its form and imaginative strategy to a separate entirely Protestant analogous relationship. Further, an examination of meditational treatises written by English Protestants reveals that they were not as far removed from their Catholic counterparts as one might initially suspect.

The first noteworthy meditational treatise written by an English Protestant is the aforementioned Bishop Joseph Hall's *The Divine Arte of Meditation*.⁵⁰ Hall wrote the work in 1606 upon his return from a trip to the Low Countries. His treatise proved highly influential in both England and on the continent, stimulating numerous seventeenth-century discussions of the topic. This is reflected in catalogue from the 1688 auction of Huygens' library reveals he owned at least eight different volumes of Hall's works.⁵¹ Although scholars have often stressed the differences found in the detail, Hall's meditational technique is similar to Ignatius' in its basic form: it is a carefully structured devotional exercise undertaken at a

⁴⁸ Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 148.

⁴⁹ R. V. Young, *Doctrine and Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Poetry: Studies in Donne, Herbert, Crashaw and Vaughan* (New York: Brewer, 2000), 88.

⁵⁰ See Kinloch, *Life and Works of Joseph Hall*, 80-118.

⁵¹ *The Auction Catalogue of the Library of Constantijn Huygens*, works by Hall: #49, 4, #88, 5, #103, 8, #107, 8, #4, 10, #91, 11, #109, 11, #126, 12.

specific time for a particular reason and in a pre-arranged manner. Similar to Ignatius' 'Preludes' and 'Points', Hall outlines his method for deliberate meditations by dividing his system into 'Steps'. Beginning in Chapter 13, these Steps involve: choosing a subject, considering its qualities, defining its contrary, drawing any similarities to clarify it and amplifying it by reference to Scripture.⁵² This process of imaginative application bears a resemblance to Ignatius' 'composition of place'. In a later work, Hall reflects:

...it was good counsell that *Bernard* gave to his novice, that he should put himselfe (for his meditations) into the place where the dead bodies were wont to be washt, and to settle himselfe upon the beare, whereon they were wont to be carried forth: so feeling and frequent remembrances could not but make death familiar; and who can startle at the sight of a familiar acquaintance.⁵³

The intended effect of Hall's devotional method is threefold. First, it involves the practice of self-analysis beginning with repentance, as opposed to Catholic penitence; secondly, in this way it appeals to a Reformed audience by rendering worship personally meaningful and finally, it provides a pathway (testified by Scripture) that attempts to bridge the gap between mankind and God. Hall's *Divine Arte of Meditation*, is therefore essentially as much a didactic tract as Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. In it, Hall very carefully attempts to introduce deeply suspicious English audiences to devotional techniques already well-established in Europe.

Richard McCabe has situated Hall's works in a broader theological tradition and shown how they fit into a wider European devotional movement that focused on meditative practice.⁵⁴ It is my assertion that given the popularity of such movements, Rembrandt must have been well aware of contemporary meditative practice and that he, like Donne and Huygens, regarded confessional identity as no bar to the artistic adoption and adaptation of meditational techniques. The popularity and influence of Hall's 'meditations' is evidenced by the fact that complete volumes of his works were published in 1617 and 1628 under the more appealing title *Meditations*.⁵⁵ Although naturally as an Anglican minister he was opposed to Rome, he would not dismiss or denounce an important component of Christian heritage simply because it happened to be in use among his opponents. Although Ignatius' method, with its accent on understanding and will differs in terms of doctrine from Protestant pedagogical practice, Hall

⁵² Huntley, *Bishop Joseph Hall*, 74-75.

⁵³ Joseph Hall, *Christian Moderation* [1640], Book I, 171, in McCabe, *Joseph Hall*, 179.

⁵⁴ McCabe, *Joseph Hall*, 172-73.

⁵⁵ Huntley, *Bishop Joseph Hall*, 89.

recognised the utility in meditation and in systemized meditational techniques. With their emphasis on individual religious experience, these techniques permitted an exploration of the possibilities to reduce the ever-present gulf between mankind and God.

In Christian heritage, that gulf is of course spanned by the figure of Christ. A way of bridging the gap is available in contemplation and meditation on His life, works and sacrifice. The poetry of Donne, Huygens and their contemporaries has been deemed ‘the poetry of meditation’ not only because it is analogous with the form and imaginative strategies of meditative techniques but just as importantly, because of its tone, which is often one of reflection. Contemporaneously, in seventeenth-century art, Rembrandt is the master of this focus of reflection on Christ’s mission realised pictorially. I am not trying to argue that the experience of reading a devotional poem corresponds precisely to the experience of viewing a group of paintings such as the *Passion Series*; rather I argue that there is a similarity of tone, to use the word broadly, that encourages reflection on Christ’s life and especially His Passion as a way of narrowing the separation between man and Him.

A Meditative Turn in Rembrandt’s Oeuvre

Recently George Keyes has identified a work that the artist executed in the middle of the *Passion Series* commission, *Christ as Gardener Appearing to the Magdalene* of 1638 (fig. 139), as ‘an early harbinger of (a) meditative turn in Rembrandt’s religious imagery’.⁵⁶ Although Keyes focuses primarily on Rembrandt’s *The Risen Christ at Emmaus* of 1648 (fig. 94), as representing a significant shift in Rembrandt’s approach to religious subject matter ‘toward a quieter, more meditative frame of mind’, he suggests that this theme had been conveyed earlier in the *Christ as Gardener*.⁵⁷ In works such as these, Keyes asserts that Rembrandt’s ‘Christ becomes an object of mediation not because of his suffering but through his very presence as an affirmation of goodness and a source of deep spiritual inspiration’.⁵⁸ Keyes does not, however, directly support my argument that Rembrandt was aware of contemporary meditative practice, or that he may have been appropriating for artistic purposes a well-known meditative sequence. Nevertheless, he does show how the *Christ as*

⁵⁶ George Keyes, ‘Perception and Belief: The image of Christ and a meditative turn in Rembrandt’s religious art’, in *Rembrandt and the Face of Jesus* (exhibition catalogue), edited by Lloyd DeWitt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 1-30, 8.

⁵⁷ Keyes, ‘Perception and Belief’, 3.

⁵⁸ Keyes, ‘Perception and Belief’, 1.

Gardener marks the beginning of Rembrandt's redefinition of the figure of Christ, one more reflective and less demonstrative.

The *Christ as Gardener* work closely follows the account of the story in the Gospel of John.⁵⁹ Mary Magdalene has been left alone at the tomb as indicated by the two figures that walk away towards the distant town. To her right, seated at the tomb portal, are two angels. She is portrayed as she turns from them, startled by the appearance of a gardener, trowel in hand, whom she does not recognise immediately. Only when He addresses her by name does she realise He is the risen Christ. The viewer witnesses the event as a not-too-distant spectator; Rembrandt invites the viewer into the work via the flight of steps leading from the foreground up towards the tomb in the middle ground. The work appears to glow as it is naturalistically lit by the setting afternoon sun enriched by Rembrandt's palette of warm reddish tones. This tonality imbues the work with a sense of reassurance and well-being, which in combination with the viewer's vantage point as spectator, reaffirms faith in the Resurrection.

Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Christ as Gardener* could be analysed as a three-part Ignatian meditational sequence: he takes an episode from the life of Christ, places the viewer as a 'spectator' at the event to allow the viewer to draw a series of Christian truths from the episode. Stylistically and thematically it appears to fill a gap midway through the *Passion Series* commission. Interestingly the painting was also the subject of a sonnet penned by Rembrandt's life-long friend the poet Jeremias de Decker (1609-1666). The sestet reads:

As art dictates, the tomb's a tall and rocky tower,
 Rich with shade, thus lending slightness and power
 To all the rest. Because, friend Rembrandt, I once saw
 This panel undergo your deft and expert touch.
 I wished to rhyme a verse on your most gifted brush,
 To add praise with my ink to the paints with which you draw.⁶⁰

The length of Rembrandt's friendship with de Decker is evidenced pictorially by the last identified portrait that Rembrandt, which was of his friend, painted in 1666 the year of the poet's death. It is now in St. Petersburg (fig. 140). Poems based on the portrait were written by de Decker himself and, after his death, by his brother David and by Jan van Peterson. All

⁵⁹ John 20:11-18.

⁶⁰ Jeremias de Decker, 'On the depiction of the risen Christ and Mary Magdalene painted by the outstanding master Rembrandt van Rijn for H. F. Waterloos', lines 9-14. In Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 182 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1660/25, 470-73.

three, as Schwartz has noted, along with Heiman Dullaert (1636-1684) and others, were members of a group of Calvinists who formed a cell in the 1650s for Christian meditation and poetry.⁶¹ Of the group, three of whom are known to have owned paintings by Rembrandt and nearly all wrote poetry about him or his work.⁶² This group published in 1658 a volume of meditations in verse entitled, *Gebedt onzes Heeren (The Lord's Prayer)*, which contained eight poems by each on one sentence of that prayer. Although these connections are at the end of Rembrandt's career and thus well outside our time frame, they seem to have been the result of life-long artistic associations between the artist and prominent poets. Such an association led Schwartz to state: 'If anything in Rembrandt's biography attests to a meeting with kindred souls, this is it'.⁶³

Kindred Souls

De Decker is best known for *Goede Vrydagh (Good Friday)*, a long Passion poem. Spanning over two hundred quatrains, divided into nine sections, the work begins with The Last Supper and moves through Gethsemane, the Crucifixion and all of the intervening and subsequent Passion events to the concluding poem, 'Christus Ontstaan' ('Christ Arisen'). Interestingly, de Decker's *Goede Vrydagh* was published in an anthology of poetry, along with Huygens' *Heilighe Daghén*, edited by a famous patron of Rembrandt's, Jan Six, in Amsterdam 1651.⁶⁴ The work can be seen as a Passion Cycle in verse that unifies the events of the Passion with the poet's personal reaction to them. In 'De Kruisining' ('The Crucifixion') in Part VII, for example, which opens with an anguished personal spectator observation of the scene on Golgotha, the painful realism is driven home, Donne-like, by the repeated imperatives:

I hear the iron nails, blow after blow;
Through wood and hands they pierce
With booming strong and fierce,
First the right hand, then through the left they go.
And now against the wood his feet are set-
First hammered through the right,
Then hammered through the left.
Ah, me, what blows that grate through bone and flesh.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 341.

⁶² Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 331.

⁶³ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 341.

⁶⁴ Carroll, 'Meditational Printmaker', 586, n. 9.

⁶⁵ Jeremias de Decker, *Goede Vrydagh (Good Friday)*, Part VII, 'De Kruisining' ('The Crucifixion'), lines 609-614.

Translated by Ten Harmsel, 'The Metaphysical Poets of Holland's Golden Age', 87-88.

'Ik hoor de spijckeren met ysselijcke slagen

The sobriety and simplicity of de Decker's style, as he measures and controls the emotion of the scene, is more analogous with Rembrandt's late graphic work than with the early painted *oeuvre*.⁶⁶ However, the poem does refer to the same subject matter as the *Passion Series*. Moreover, the two artists can be viewed as kindred souls in their devotion of large portions of their lives to artistic interpretations of these biblical events.

Other such kindred souls are the Dutch devotional poets Jacobus Revius (1586-1658), and Heiman Dullaert who, as noted, actually studied painting with Rembrandt.⁶⁷ Quite possibly the most accomplished Calvinist devotional poet was Revius.⁶⁸ He was neither a Huygens-like *Uomo Universale* nor a member of the literary *Muiderkring*, the salon hosted by playwright Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft that claimed Huygens and two woman poets as members. Rather, he was a militantly Reformed preacher from Deventer who was educated at the University of Leiden. His two volumes of poetry, *Over-Ysselsche Sangen en Dichten* (*Overijssel Songs and Poems*), were first published in Deventer in 1630, making them contemporaneous with Rembrandt's *Christ on the Cross* and the subsequent beginning of the *Passion Series*. The poems in volume I present Old Testament history and doctrine; those in volume II celebrate the life of Christ and the history of the church from its beginnings to the seventeenth century. His works therefore consistently adhere to scriptural subjects and themes, and, naturally, to Calvinist theology. Revius' poems are often written in a highly personal conversational tone, dramatizing his own spiritual struggles through a narration of scriptural scenes. The sonnet, 'Hy dorech onse Smerten' ('He bore our Sorrows') has been previously cited by Tümpel and Westermann as a literary analogy to Rembrandt's *Passion Series* and by Chapman in her discussion of the *Raising*.⁶⁹ The poem clearly reflects in its

Door hout en handed jagen;
't Geklop gaet overhand;
De wreedheyd treft by beurt dan d'een dan d'ander' hand
Nu salse gaen aen 't hout de teere voeten
Hechten :
Daer smijtse door den rechten'
Daer door den slincken heen:
Amy! Wat slaen is Ddat! Dat knerst door vleesch en been'.

In De Decker, *Goede Vrydag ofte Het Lyden Onses Heeren Jesu Christi*, edited by W. J. C. Buitendijk (Zwolle: Waanders, 1958), 203.

⁶⁶ The latter graphic work is discussed by Carroll in, 'Meditational Printmaker', although she does not make the connection with the poetry of de Decker.

⁶⁷ Westermann, *Rembrandt*, 280.

⁶⁸ Henrietta Ten Harmsel, 'Jacobus Revius: Dutch Baroque Poet', *Comparative Literature* 15 (1963): 203-215, Ten Harmsel positions Revius as the most important poet of his generation.

⁶⁹ Tümpel, *All the paintings*, n.127 at 381; Westermann, *Rembrandt*, 107; Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits*, 113.

vivid imagery and confessional tone, a conversational immediacy that is remarkably similar in tone to Donne's *Holy Sonnets*:

'Tis not the Jews who crucified,
 Nor who betrayed you in the judgement place,
 Nor who, Lord Jesus, spat into your face,
 Nor who with buffets struck you as you died.
 'Tis not the soldiers who with brutal fists
 Raised the hammer and raised the nail
 Or the cursed wood on Calvary's hill,
 Or drew lots, tossed the dice to win your cloak.
 I am the one, oh Lord, who brought you there,
 I am the heavy tree, too stout to bear,
 I am the rope that reined you in.
 The scourge that flayed you, nail and spear,
 The blood-soaked crown they made you wear,
 'Twas all for me, alas, 'twas for my sin.⁷⁰

The similarities between the poem and Donne's 'Holy Sonnet XI', quoted earlier, are clear. Revius' sonnet is an imaginative application of the three-part method of meditation as detailed by Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*: the subject is an episode from the life of Christ, the place is composed as Calvary, and a series of Christian truths are drawn from the event by the employment of memory, understanding and will. The sonnet also repeats Donne's 'spit in my face' image. In the poem Revius brings a past event into the present to affirm its on-going relevance, as Rembrandt does in the *Passion Series*. He dramatically identifies with the scene as a 'spectator' at the event, by vividly recalling the physical attributes of the Crucifixion: the rope, the nails, and the hammer. The poem evokes a strong sense of the hard work of crucifixion in a manner similar to Rembrandt's *Raising*. In Rembrandt's painting we see a prominent spade, various on-lookers, several executioners and

⁷⁰ Jacobus Revius, 'Hy dorech onse Smerten' ('He Bore our Sorrows'),
 'T'en zijn de Joden niet, Heer Jesu, die u cruysten.
 Noch die verraderlijck u togen voort gesicht.
 Noch die versmadelick u spogen int gesicht
 Noch die knevelden, en stieten u vol puysten.
 T'en sijn de krijchs-luy niet die met haer felle vuysten
 Den rietstock hebben of den hmaer obgelicht,
 Of het vervloecte hout op Golgotha gestticht,
 Of over uwen rock tsaem dobbelden en tuyschten:
 Ick bent, o Heer, ick bent die u dit heb gedaen,
 Ick ben den swaren boom die u dit had overlain
 Ick ben de taeye streng daermee ghy ginct gebonden,
 De nagel, en de speer, de geessel die u sloech,
 De bloet-bedropen croon die uwen schedel droech:
 Want dit is al geschiet, eylaes! Om mijne sonden'.
 In Tümpel, *All the paintings*, with translation, n. 127 at 381.

the no less guilty artist right in the middle of the action helping to raise the Cross. Revius' admission of guilt in this poem is further amplified by Dullaert, who admits not only guilt but also an on-going culpability in Christ's death, which Rembrandt also suggests in the *Passion Series*.

Dullaert, although a member of the 'Lord's Prayer group', was a poet of a later generation and his poetry was not published until 1719. However he is perhaps the poet who was closest to Rembrandt having been apprenticed to him for three to four years in the mid-1650s.⁷¹

Today he is regarded more as a poet than a painter.⁷² His most notable verse is a series of Passion sonnets; these are beset with deep anguish, symbolizing not only his brief life, but also his end-of-a-generation position. They reach their emotional zenith in a poem entitled: 'Op de speer die zyne side doorstak' ('On the Spear Which Pierced His Side'):

Stop it, demented spear! Stop piercing his pure breast,
For my ungratefulness, alas, has done it, too,
And by its worldly lust anticipated you
And in that anguished heart has pierced the heart of God.⁷³

This poem, with conversational immediacy, combines the vivid reality of the pain and suffering of Christ's sacrifice with the poignant awareness of every Christian's participation and culpability His death. Thus it can be aligned stylistically with the poetry of Huygens, Revius and de Decker; moreover, it reflects a thematic analogy with Rembrandt's *Raising*, albeit twenty years later.

Huygens, Revius, de Decker and Dullaert, the leading Dutch seventeenth-century devotional poets of the generation, all had biographical and artistic ties with Rembrandt. Clearly he was acutely aware of their work, its structure and thematic concerns. Their poetry displays many of the characteristics of that of Donne, aligning them both structurally and thematically with his work and the work of other English devotional poets. Additionally, the Dutch poets discussed here are notable for their strong emphasis on scriptural analogy. Theirs is a God-

⁷¹ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 331.

⁷² Ten Harmsel, 'Metaphysical Poets', 89.

⁷³ Heimann Dullaert, 'Op de speer die zyne zyde doorstak' ('On the Spear Which Pierced His Side'), translation in Ten Harmsel, 'Metaphysical Poets', 91.

'Hou op, verwoede Speer, d'oonoozle borst te breken:
Want myne ondankbaarheid heft reeds, wee my! Te wreet
Door al te laffe weelde uw vinnich ampt bekleedt,
En in dat quynend hart God zelf naar't hart gesteken'.

In *Harte naar boven: religieuze poezie uit de zeventiende eeuw*, edited by Ton van Strien and Els Stronks (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 289.

centred universe where the struggles of the many are intellectually comprehended and then articulated through the personally felt anguish of the one, the poet alone. This is conveyed in a pervasive vision that creates and recreates an interpretation of Christ's life and message, in which the truly penitent man expresses an ardent desire to be reconciled with Christ, paradoxically juxtaposed with an acknowledgment of the hopelessness of the task. This is a thematic concern that Rembrandt also consistently explores, first in the *Repentant Judas* and later in the *Passion Series*. In European Metaphysical poetry, clearly identifiable analogies with Rembrandt's paintings can be traced. The continuing potent influence of Huygens, secretary to the Stadholder, connoisseur of the arts, and most importantly poet himself, casts a powerful shadow over the *Passion Series*, enabling the poetic ingenuity of Donne to serve Rembrandt's *conchetto*.

Chapter Five: An Ignatian *Concetto* for the *Passion Series*

Rembrandt's *Concetto* and the *Spiritual Exercises*

In the previous chapter, I identified how the form and imaginative strategy of devotional poetry written first by Donne and subsequently by Huygens has been viewed as derived from an adopted and adapted method of meditation as detailed by Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises*. Although there are analogies between the text and the paintings, there is no evidence that Rembrandt ever actually read the *Spiritual Exercises*. Rather, I suggest that he must have been familiar with the basic outline of Ignatian meditation that, as the previous chapter also showed, was well known at the time. Further, I am not suggesting that in the *Passion Series* Rembrandt embraces Ignatian (Catholic) doctrine rather that his *concetto* for the works follows an imaginative strategy in consonance with Ignatian meditative technique, a *concetto* that unifies, lends coherence to the series. Without question, Rembrandt's understanding of the events depicted in the *Passion Series* was initially informed by the Gospel accounts as I discuss. Additionally, in this chapter I shall proceed to describe individually and collectively the *concetto*, a conceptual framework derived from the method of meditation in Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, identifiable in Rembrandt's *Passion Series*. I suggest that Rembrandt broadly follows Ignatius' three-part sequence, in that he takes an episode from the life of Christ, imagines himself in one of three ways at the event, and then proceeds to pictorially describe the event so that the viewer can derive a series of Christian truths from the scene portrayed.

Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* are founded on the mystery of God's self-communication and self-revelation as it is revealed through the Bible, specifically the Life and Passion of Christ as recorded in the New Testament. The *Exercises*, as explained in the previous chapter, are divided into four Weeks. The First Week contemplates the nature of sin, the Second the Life of Christ up to Palm Sunday, the Third the Passion of Christ and the Fourth the Resurrection and Ascension. Although the Passion of Christ, which is the supreme act of salvation, can be seen as having a trans-historical aspect, theologically it can be argued that this is where all of human history culminates. The historic dimension (Scripture) is inseparable from these mysteries from the Life of Christ. As an historical act the Passion has boundaries in space and

time; it was lived by the real Christ in his flesh and spirit. In the First Prelude to the contemplations of Weeks Two-Four, Ignatius instructs the retreatant to consult the ‘history’ of the subject: ‘This will consist of calling of mind the history of the subject I have to contemplate’.¹ By ‘history’ Ignatius is of course referring to the Bible. Rembrandt’s paintings of the Passion are equally inseparable from the historic dimension. Undoubtedly, both Frederick Hendrick and Rembrandt’s de-facto patron Huygens – whose library catalogue listed 546 theological texts – would have demanded biblical accuracy.² In constructing a *conchetto* for each of the five *Passion Series* paintings, I will also first consult the ‘history’ of each of the events. I shall track the extent to which Rembrandt adheres to the Gospel narrative which in turn reveals those elements of the *conchetto* that are particular to his interpretation of events.

An Ignatian *Conchetto* for the *Descent from the Cross*

The immediate post-crucifixion event – the Descent from the Cross – is not described at length in the New Testament. Nevertheless, the few details that Scripture does provide indeed do inform Rembrandt’s painting of the subject and do correspond to an Ignatian ‘historical’ viewpoint. In three of the four Gospels it is recorded that Christ was crucified at Golgotha (the place of the skull) outside Jerusalem’s city walls.³ It is here that Rembrandt clearly sets his scene, which is entirely in keeping with traditional Passion iconography. In a manner similar to the simple, ‘they crucified Him’, the Gospels all describe Christ’s dying moments as, ‘He yielded (or ‘gave’) up the ghost’.⁴ Matthew’s Gospel then proceeds to describe a terrible and violent earthquake, while Luke speaks of onlookers beating their breasts. However, Rembrandt situates his narrative a short but significant time after the death of Christ and imbues the painting with a quiet solemnity. Thus, the artist avoids the overt theatricality that he appears to embrace in the later Passion dry-points prints of the 1650s.⁵

In the Gospels all four Evangelists emphasize the post-Crucifixion role of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, the largest figure in Rembrandt’s *Descent from the Cross*. They record how he sought out Pilate and begged that the body of Christ be released into his care.⁶ However, only

¹ Ignatius, 102. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 148.

² Leerintveld, ‘The library of Constantijn Huygens’, 166.

³ Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, John 19:17, Luke 23:33, Luke names the place as ‘Calvary’.

⁴ Matthew 27:50, Mark 16:37, Luke 23:46, John 19:30.

⁵ The *Christ Crucified Between two Thieves* (*‘The Three Crosses’*), 1653 and the *Christ Presented to the People* (*‘Ecce Homo’*), 1655.

⁶ Matthew 27:58, Mark 16:43, Luke 23:52, John 19:38.

Luke states categorically, ‘he took it down’. This is the precise moment in the narrative that Rembrandt depicts.⁷ Each of the Evangelists comments on the fine, clean linen Joseph wrapped the body of Christ in for removal to the Sepulchre.⁸ Both the triangular central sheet and foreground pall cloth in the painting correspond to this description. Matthew and Mark place three Marys – the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene and Mary (wife of Cleophas and mother of James) – at the scene.⁹ Again Rembrandt is biblically accurate; the left foreground grouping contains three female figures, although this arrangement is common in the pictorial tradition. Only John in his Gospel explicitly mentions the presence of a disciple: the one ‘whom He loved’, who Christ asks to care for his mother.¹⁰ The figure in the painting most likely to represent this disciple is the figure immediately below the Cross cradling the body of Christ – the self-image of Rembrandt. Both Sass and Schama suggest that Rembrandt intended this figure to represent the disciple John.¹¹ As in theological exegesis John is often viewed as a representative of ‘Everyman’, this would fit very nicely with Schama’s own artist as ‘Everyman’ argument. Although there is no precise scriptural basis for the central group of five figures shown lowering the body of Christ from the Cross, it is likely one of these figures represents Nicodemus, mentioned in John’s Gospel as an assistant to Joseph of Arimathea.¹² This is the extent of the ‘historical’ figures identifiable in the painting, which does not have a large cast.

By contrast, all four Evangelists repeatedly use the generic term ‘they’ to create a sense of a large event; Luke even speaks of a ‘great company of people’, filled with bewailing and lamenting women.¹³ Historically it is unlikely that Christ’s crucifixion drew much of a crowd, as such events were frequent in Roman Judea. In this regard, Rembrandt’s painting may be more faithful to this historical point than to the Gospel accounts. Rembrandt depicts a moment in the narrative when these so-called crowds have long since departed from the spectacle; in making that choice, the artist concentrates on the actions and emotional reactions of individual figures, one of the qualities Huygens so admired in his work. Rembrandt ‘penetrates to the heart of the subject and brings out its essence’, as each figure is captured somewhere between the pathos of the Crucifixion and the solemnity of the

⁷ Luke 23:53.

⁸ Matthew 27:59, Mark 16:46, Luke 23:53, John 19:40.

⁹ Matthew 27:56, Mark 16:40, Luke 23:49.

¹⁰ John 19:27.

¹¹ Sass, *Comments*, 10; Schama, *Rembrandt’s Eyes*, 712 n. 59.

¹² John 19:39.

¹³ Luke 23:27.

Entombment.¹⁴ This is certainly true of the self-image figure of the artist (as defined and discussed in the following chapter) beneath the Cross cradling the lifeless body of Christ. Huygens had viewed Rembrandt as, so ‘obsessed by the effort to translate into paint what he sees in the mind’s eye’; I suggest that in his endeavour to do precisely this, the artist adopts an Ignatian meditative technique by envisaging himself as a ‘participant’ in the biblical scene.¹⁵ So is there a correlation between Rembrandt’s imaginative act and Ignatius’ text?

In the *Spiritual Exercises* the event of the Descent from the Cross occurs during Ignatius’ Third Week of devotions, which is given over to events from the Last Supper to the Entombment. On the Sixth Day of the Third Week Ignatius directs that the retreatant should meditate thus: ‘At midnight, from the taking down from the Cross to the burial in the Sepulchre, exclusively’. The first stage of this event is the subject of Rembrandt’s painting. Although Ignatius only gives specific instructions relating to the first contemplation of this week, the Last Supper, they are particularly revealing and can be considered in regard to the further contemplations. The Second Prelude for the meditation begins with: ‘A Composition, by imagining the place’.¹⁶ Here because the subject is the Last Supper, Ignatius states: ‘Here it will be to see in the imagination the road from Bethany to Jerusalem, whether it is broad, or narrow, or level, or so on’.¹⁷ Initially this may be read like a purely imaginative act, but as I have shown, Jesuit scholars insist that additionally a concrete element such as an image could be employed and that this reflects the verisimilitude of Ignatius’ intentions.¹⁸

Again I am not suggesting that in the *Passion Series* Rembrandt is progressing sequentially through the *Spiritual Exercises*. Rather, I suggest that in a manner similar to Donne, Huygens and other contemporary devotional poets, he embraces the spirit of Ignatius’ instructions. In the *Descent*, Rembrandt has portrayed himself as an Ignatian ‘participant’ in the event; one of the three ways Ignatius instructs a retreatant to ‘compose a place’. No figure in the painting is closer in proximity to Christ than that depicting the self-image of the artist. Christ’s distended stomach rests against the artist’s left cheek, as if the anguish and sorrow conveyed by the upward gaze and open mouth of this figure are insufficient evidence of suffering. By positioning a self-image in the centre of the painting, Rembrandt suffers not for Christ but

¹⁴ See Worp, ‘Autobiography’, 77; Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 74; Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1630/5, 68 and 71.

¹⁵ See Worp, ‘Autobiography’, 77; Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 74; Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1630/5, 68 and 71.

¹⁶ Ignatius, 192. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 167.

¹⁷ Ignatius, 192. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 167.

¹⁸ Peters, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 29-31.

suffers with Christ. It is one thing to be sad because of the shameful way Christ has been treated by His enemies but quite another to be continually reminded of the fact that He suffered for your sins and died for you. This self-projection corresponds to Ignatius' intentions for the Sixth Day of the Third Week. In the Third Prelude of the exercise he states: 'In the Passion it is proper to ask for sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the great affliction Christ endures for me'.¹⁹ The self-immersion into the scene in the Preludes is re-enforced in Ignatius' Points. In the Fourth Point, Ignatius instructs the retreatant to 'consider what Christ our Lord suffers in His human nature'.²⁰ Ignatius' insistence here on how He suffers as a man is analogous with the suffering portrayed in Rembrandt's painting. The artist's *conchetto* for the *Descent* is both 'historical', that is dictated by Scripture, and additionally I suggest that it can be seen as an adoption and adaptation of Ignatian meditation methods. Additionally, Perlove and Silver have shown how thematically the *Descent* can be seen as continuing an exegetic theological tradition in keeping with contemporary Reformed thought.²¹

First, Perlove and Silver cite such works as Thomas a Kempis' (c.1380-1471) *Imitation of Christ* (c.1418-27) and Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Handbook of the Christian Soldier* (1503) as texts that advocated their readers to 'take up the Cross' (figs 141 and 142; 87 and 88).²² In reference to the emphasis on blood in both the *Descent* and the *Raising*, they comment that the shedding of blood played a major role in contemporary Protestant theology, as evidence of Christ's 'satisfaction' in atoning for sin.²³ Further, they note that this approach conforms to the ideas of mainstream seventeenth-century Calvinist thinkers, including the aforementioned Joseph Hall, theologians who viewed the Crucifixion as a site of violence where the Christian assumes the role of both the crucified and crucifier.²⁴ This, I suggest, is precisely the thrust of Huygens' poem 'Goede Vrijdag' ('Good Friday') of 1645; it both imparts meaning to Christ's ransom ('satisfaction') in atoning for sin and conveys the speaker's desire to earn the gift of crucifixion:

Your ransom ransoms not, unless you kill
And tear me from myself, the sinews break
Of my insensate soul, that it fulfil

¹⁹ Ignatius, 203. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 169.

²⁰ Ignatius, 194-197. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 167-8.

²¹ Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith*, 294-96.

²² Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith*, 295.

²³ Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith*, 295.

²⁴ Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith*, 295.

Its duty. May I learn my goods, my house
My body and my time, to hang upon your Cross.²⁵

This poem by Huygens is taken from the collection *Heilighe Dagen (Holy Days)*; in its brief fourteen lines, the poet endeavours to encapsulate the events on the day of the Crucifixion. In the opening line the narrator asks the question: ‘What clouds the midday Sun?’²⁶ Not only does Huygens immediately invoke a narrator as present at the site of the Crucifixion, fixing the event in time and place, but his narrator faithfully reports the event as described in the Gospel accounts. Three of the four Evangelists record that during the course of the Crucifixion there was ‘darkness over all the land’ from the sixth to the ninth hour.²⁷ Rembrandt’s painting of the immediate pre-crucifixion event, the *Raising of the Cross*, displays a thunderously dark background indicating that in his *conchetto* he has firstly considered the ‘history’. Initially this would not seem exceptional; however, aside from Rubens’ St. Walburg altarpiece in Antwerp which Rembrandt had in all probability not seen, the subject has almost no painted precedent.²⁸

An Ignatian *Conchetto* for the *Raising of the Cross*

Beyond the darkness of the hour only scant details are recorded in the Gospel accounts of the event – the procedure by which Christ was nailed to the Cross before or after its elevation. However, Rembrandt still gleans what he can from Scripture in order to heighten the verisimilitude of the event, enabling him to achieve in the small format, to quote Huygens: ‘effects that you will not find in the largest work by others’. The viewer is thereby tasked to concentrate on the details, bringing an Ignatian-like ‘three powers of the soul’ – memory,

²⁵ Huygens, ‘Goede Vrijdag’ (‘Good Friday’), lines 10-14:

‘Tvoldaen voldoet mij niet, ten zig ghij mij vermoort
En van mijn selven scheurt, en brieselt de gewrichten
Van mijn’ verstockte Ziel, soo dats’ haer weder-plichten
Gedwee en morruw doe: soo dat ick haev en huijs,
En lijf en lust en tijd leer’ hangen aen dit Curijs’.

Translation in Davidson and van der Weel, *A Selection of the Poems of Sir Constantijn Huygens*, 118-19.

The full connotations of ‘voldoen’ (‘satisfy, make satisfaction for’) in line 10 are not entirely adequately conveyed in translation as ‘ransom’. Nonetheless, I prefer Davidson and van der Weel’s translation over Daley’s who translates the word as ‘fullness’, in Daley, *Holy Days*, 9.

²⁶ Huygens, ‘Goede Vrijdag’ (‘Good Friday’), line 1:

‘Wat let de Middagh-soon?’

Translation in Davison and van der Weel, *Poems of Sir Constantijn Huygens*, 118-19.

²⁷ Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44.

²⁸ Perhaps we could point to the elevation of the repentant thief on the left of Jacopo Tintoretto’s (1518-1594) monumental *Crucifixion* of 1565 in the La Sala dell’Albergo of Scuola di San Rocco in Venice, but again Rembrandt could not have seen this work either. For a discussion of this work from a compositional perspective see Frederick Ilchamn, ‘Tintoretto as a Painter of Religious Narrative’, in *Tintoretto* (exhibition catalogue), edited by Miguel Falomir (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2007), 63-94, esp. 63-64.

understanding and will – to bear on the event. Rembrandt focuses on three points, two for historical accuracy and one for theological reasons. Regarding memory, all four Gospels emphasise, in many editions by the use of capital letters, Pilate’s scornful title that is nailed to the top of the Cross.²⁹ Luke and John record that it was written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek and Latin. John offers the longest translation – JESUS OF NAZAREH THE KING OF THE JEWS.³⁰ In the painting, Rembrandt indicates, although the wording is now unclear, three scripts.³¹ Secondly, to further the viewer’s understanding, Rembrandt responds to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark by including on the left of the work the group of chief priests, scribes and elders who mocked Christ.³² Luke speaks of ‘rulers’ who derided Christ, while John records that the same chief priests requested that Pilate change the wording of the title atop the Cross.³³

In addition to these ‘historical’ aspects of the subject that he can derive from Scripture, Rembrandt teases out pictorially a subtle theological differentiation representative of will. In the *Raising* Rembrandt depicts Christ raising His eyes to heaven as if to speak. In the Gospels of both Matthew and Mark, it is reported that Christ called out from the Cross: ‘My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me’.³⁴ This however was at the ninth hour that He had been on the Cross. Only in Luke it is recorded that as He is being crucified, Christ asks His father to forgive his executioners. Schama suggests that Christ in the Le Mas d’Agenais *Christ on the Cross* (fig. 22) seems to be uttering the above quoted words from Matthew and Mark; however in this painting Rembrandt has pre-empted that moment by suggesting, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’, uttered at the third hour as in Luke’s Gospel.³⁵ From the brief details provided by Scripture, Rembrandt is able to establish an exact moment in the narrative, firmly setting his work accurately in time and place – albeit with some dramatic license – as he depicts a complete Cross being elevated.

Brown has shown that this is historically inaccurate as for economy and efficiency the upright beam of the Cross conventionally would have been erected earlier.³⁶ Although we can see

²⁹ Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38, John 19:19-20.

³⁰ Luke 23:38, John 19:19-20. Many Renaissance artist give the Latin only, ‘Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum’, often abbreviated to ‘INRI’.

³¹ Although the wording, also in three scripts, is easily discernible in the Le Mas d’Agenais, *Christ on the Cross*.

³² Matthew 27:41-3, Mark 15:31.

³³ Luke 23:35, John 19:21-22.

³⁴ Matthew 27:46, Mark 16:34.

³⁵ Schama, *Rembrandt Eyes*, 289; Luke 23:34.

³⁶ Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 945-953.

that the cross-beam of Rembrandt's Cross has been slotted into the grove in the upright beam, clearly Christ has already been nailed to both sections of the Cross which is now being elevated. Nevertheless, Rembrandt places great emphasis on both the physical and practical aspects of the Crucifixion. Initially this is suggested by the way in which a spade is thrust aggressively into the immediate foreground of the painting to indicate the hard work of crucifixion. Further, it is reflected by the lack of viewer engagement with the executioner figures as they go about their business. Although the shining armour of the anonymous soldier heaving on the Cross draws attention to his part in proceedings, it is the blue beret and doublet of another self-image of the artist (as discussed in the following chapter), which distinguishes him from the other executioners, that commands immediate consideration. I suggest that by including himself again as a 'participant' in the event, Rembrandt is adopting a further use of Ignatian meditative methods.

In support of my argument that Rembrandt embraces the spirit of Ignatius' technique, rather than that he followed the sequential program of the *Exercises*, I now back-track a day in the text. The event of the Raising of the Cross is considered during Ignatius' Third Week of devotions on the Fifth Day. Ignatius instructs the retreatant to meditate thus: 'in the morning, from the raising of the Cross until Christ expired'.³⁷ The Preludes for this contemplation are the same as they are throughout the Weeks' other contemplations. After initially considering the 'history' in the First Prelude, the Second Prelude requires the retreatant to 'compose a place'. Rembrandt again utilizes this imaginative strategy to conceive of himself as a 'participant' in the event. Again, no figure in the painting is closer to Christ than Rembrandt. Although paradoxically no figure, in practical terms, does less to assist in the evaluation of the Cross; moreover, his attention seems to wander as he gazes off to the right. Seemingly, the figure asks the question: why?

The answer is two-fold and can be seen as corresponding to the stress Ignatius places, in his Fourth Point, on a consideration of how Christ suffers or desires to suffer in His human nature.³⁸ First, the disinterest of the executioners and the mocking by the priests demonstrate that Christ's sufferings in His humanity are not restricted to bodily inflictions. For Him just as painful are the inner sufferings: the contempt, the derision, the betrayal, the disappointment and the failure. Secondly, in the Fifth Point, Ignatius asks us to consider why

³⁷ Ignatius, 208. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 170.

³⁸ Ignatius, 195. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 168.

Christ, being God, does not destroy His enemies and continues to allow His holy body to suffer so cruelly.³⁹ Such suffering is the only means by which the executioner/artist, and by extension the viewer – as implicated by the accusatory stare of the centurion – can be saved. Ignatius reaches this conclusion in the Sixth Point when he asks the retreatant to consider how ‘he suffers all this for my sins’.⁴⁰

The sins for which Christ is seen to suffer in the painting are no greater than those of the figure of Rembrandt himself as emphasized by his concentration on the task at hand. By contrast, the figure of Christ, knowingly and acceptingly, lifts His head towards the heavenly light. As foretold in the Psalms, His ‘eyes are ever toward the Lord’.⁴¹ Christ is bathed in light from the West; as the Sun sets so does the Son. Thus the viewer is positioned in the West, as is the narrator of Donne’s poem ‘Good Friday 1613: Riding Westward’. Donne’s narrator initially engages directly with Christ: ‘Though these things, as I ride, be from mine eye / They’re present yet unto my memory / For that looks towards them: and thou look’st towards mee / O Saviour, as thou hang’st upon the tree’.⁴² As noted earlier, this poem was first cited by Schwartz and later interpreted by Perlove as a poetical analogy to Rembrandt’s painting.⁴³ However as our narrator, Rembrandt does not turn his head and ride away from the site of sacrifice; his active role is in fact more like that of the narrator of another Donne poem, ‘Holy Sonnet XI’: ‘They kill’d once a inglorious man, but / I Crucifie him daily, being now glorified. / Oh let mee then, his strange love still admire: / Kings pardon, but he bore our punishment’.⁴⁴ The analogies between the first poem and Rembrandt’s painting can be seen as largely subject-based. However, the sonnet clearly corresponds to the three-part Ignatian meditative method which Donne utilizes to evoke a sense of shared guilt – all are culpable on an on-going basis in the death of Christ, which is precisely the thematic thrust of Rembrandt’s painting. Without apparent confessional contradictions both artists, Rembrandt and Donne, employ Ignatian meditative techniques in their works to convey this theme: each composes a place and then imagines himself as ‘spectator/participant’ in the event. In tracing Christ’s gaze heavenward, the artist suggests a series of heart-wrenching questions in the manner of an Ignatian Colloquy: Who did crucify Christ? Was it the Jews, the Romans, or was it you and I? The viewer searches the canvas of Rembrandt’s painting for answers to

³⁹ Ignatius, 196. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 168.

⁴⁰ Ignatius, 197. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 168.

⁴¹ Psalm 25:15.

⁴² Donne, ‘Good Friday, 1613: Riding Westward’, lines 33-36. In Coffin, ed., *Complete Poems*, 257.

⁴³ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 118; Perlove, ‘Witnessing the Crucifixion’.

⁴⁴ Donne, ‘Holy Sonnet XI’, lines 7-10. In Coffin, ed., *Complete Poems*, 263.

questions such as these. In this way, Rembrandt's painting suggests a series of Christian truths in the manner of Ignatian meditation.

An Ignatian *Concetto* for the *Ascension*

The Christian and historical truths reflected in the *Descent* and the *Raising* are due to the pictorial realism with which Rembrandt imbues the scenes through the emphasis he places on the un-idealized humanity of Christ, the differing emotions of the associated figures and his concern with depicting the practical aspects of the task at hand. Although Rembrandt could draw upon the van der Leyden/Dürer graphic tradition, and despite the events being central to the Passion, the Gospels provided the artist with only the merest of descriptive detail. This is similar to descriptions of the final event of the extended narrative of the Passion of Christ – the *Ascension*. As chroniclers of Christ's life, it is somewhat surprising that the Evangelists Matthew and John do not mention the event at all and the penultimate verse of Mark's Gospel states simply: 'So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God'.⁴⁵ Only in the last chapter of Luke's Gospel, which is continued in the first chapter of the 'Acts of the Apostles', is a full description given.⁴⁶ The reconstructed biblical account reads:

And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, when He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.⁴⁷

And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward Heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey.⁴⁸

Although the phrase, 'He was taken up', can be seen as the New Testament fulfilment of Old Testament forerunners such as Enoch, Elijah and Moses, it is important not to conflate Christ's Ascension with an Assumption, like that of the Virgin being received into Heaven.

⁴⁵ Mark 16:19.

⁴⁶ From the second century the tradition of the Church had ascribed authorship of 'Acts' to Luke. Moreover, the first verse of 'Acts' refers to 'my earlier work'. It is unsurprising therefore that the event reads as a continuous narrative.

⁴⁷ Luke 24:50-51.

⁴⁸ Acts 1:9-12.

Although as Mark tells us, Christ would now sit at the right hand of God, the divine Christ is able to ascend unaided by the Father, His elevation obscured from the disciples only by a cloud.⁴⁹

The miraculous nature of the event, as Christ transcends the limits of time and space, is initially conveyed by Rembrandt in the remarkable viewpoint he affords the viewer. Although the viewer looks up from an elevated position at the foreshortened figure of the ascending Christ and at the same time down on the astounded disciples, the orientation of all of humanity is towards the light. Rembrandt now assumes the role of an Ignatian ‘spectator’, as opposed to the ‘participant’ persona, as conveyed by the self-images of the artist, which he utilized in the first two paintings. This change in the ‘composition of place’ is not solely due to a change from an emphasis on Christ’s humanity to an emphasis on Christ’s divine nature, but also it remains true to the ‘history’. The biblical account clearly states that the event took place in the presence of the disciples only. This is more evidence of Rembrandt’s sustained adherence to Scripture. Furthermore, Rembrandt’s disciples now number only eleven, indicating that Judas has departed. Additionally, the artist makes no reference to the presence of the Virgin. This is in contrast to a tradition of representing the Virgin and sometimes twelve disciples as present at the Ascension. For example the Virgin is depicted in Giotto’s *Ascension* (fig. 143) fresco in the Scrovegni Chapel of c.1303-05 and both the Virgin and twelve male figures are included in Andrea Mantegna’s *Ascension* (fig.144) of 1463-64 now in the Uffizi, Florence.⁵⁰

In Rembrandt’s painting, the light which emanates from the Holy Ghost and floods over the figure of Christ is reflected on the faces of the disciples as they witness the miracle. Perlove and Silver comment that this is a hermeneutical interpretation of Acts 1:8: ‘But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth’.⁵¹ In this way, the fervent piety conveyed by the pronounced gestures of the disciples can be seen to underscore the Pentecostal goals of the early church.⁵² Likewise, in the concluding chapter of Luke’s Gospel, the Passion events are summarised in abbreviated form to record

⁴⁹ Mark 16:19.

⁵⁰ For Giotto see, Ladis, *Giotto’s O*, 31 and 50; also, Stubblebine, *Giotto: The Arena Chapel frescos*, 88. And Jane Martineau ed., *Andrea Mantegna*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 165.

⁵¹ Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt’s Faith*, 323.

⁵² Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt’s Faith*, 324.

that the disciples have been ‘witnesses of these things’.⁵³ By casting himself (and the viewer) in the role of ‘spectator’ in the central painting of the series, Rembrandt (and his audience) is able to survey the abbreviated *Passion Series* as much ‘witnesses of these things’ as the disciples are.

The event of Christ’s Ascension corresponds to subjects for meditation during Ignatius’ Fourth Week of devotions, which is given over to events from the Resurrection to the Ascension.⁵⁴ With regard to sequence this does not create any sort of synergy with the artist’s progression through his series; rather, I suggest that ‘historically’ and thematically Rembrandt’s painting is largely consonant with the spirit of Ignatius’ intentions. Included in the subjects suitable for meditation are ‘Thirteen Apparitions’ of the Risen Life.⁵⁵ The last of the thirteen Apparitions he details is ‘The Ascension of Christ Our Lord’. As is his practice Ignatius first consults the ‘history’ of the event, taking his text from Acts 1:1-12. In the Second Point of his instructions, Ignatius is quite exact: ‘he led them out to Mt. Olivet, and in their presence was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight’.⁵⁶ Ignatius continues, paraphrasing Scripture, to the Third Point: ‘While they are looking up to Heaven the angels say to them, ‘Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking up at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into Heaven will return in the same way as you have seen Him going into Heaven’’.⁵⁷ This last Point, the final instruction for the retreatant, implies the promise of the risen life – joy in Christ. It is a joy realised not as the result of what He did and achieved earlier in the Passion but from what He is now.

In Rembrandt’s *Ascension*, the sense of loss, suffering and tragedy at Christ’s death as evoked by the earlier works has been replaced with feelings of joy and elation as He ascends to Heaven. Portraying emotional reactions to an event such as these is nothing new in the pictorial tradition; however, Rembrandt perhaps better than anyone before him, establishes a clear narrative, unified by the treatment of light, between the figures of the disciples and the ascending Christ. This point is evidenced by a comparison between Rembrandt’s painting and Mantegna’s work referred to earlier. The viewer, from the Ignatian ‘spectator’ stand-point Rembrandt brings to his *conchetto*, is thereby assured that He and His message will live on in the form of the Christian Church. The message is universal rather than specific to a

⁵³ Luke 24:48.

⁵⁴ Ignatius, 4. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 122.

⁵⁵ Ignatius 299-312. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 197-200.

⁵⁶ Ignatius, 312. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 200.

⁵⁷ Ignatius, 312. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 200. Ignatius quotes Acts 1:11.

confessional identity therefore it is entirely appropriately for the broad audience in the Stadholder's gallery. Nevertheless, some scholars have heretofore seen the painting as reflective of a particular confessional identity. Schama has stated that the prominent palm tree, a symbol of the Resurrection, on the left of the painting is derived 'directly from Catholic devotional iconography'.⁵⁸ The palm, a classical symbol of triumph, was adopted by early Christians to symbolize Christ's victory over death. Alternatively Perlove and Sliver posit that the clear differentiation between the celestial and earthly realms in the painting reflect Calvin's interpretation of the Ascension as an event that demonstrates Christ's infinite distance both spatially and spiritually from the believer on earth.⁵⁹ Neither is in any way incorrect; however, moreover the glory and triumph of Christ are first and foremost in harmony with Scripture and the overall message of the Passion, as in expressed by Paul in his epistle to the Philippians:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.
Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:
That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth.⁶⁰

When considered as conceived in the spirit and method of Ignatian meditation, the work suggests direct analogies with the poetry of Huygens, which is structured along similar lines. Although the artist invites the viewer to share in the emotions of the disciples who bow as He ascends, pictorially the focus remains centrally on the figure of Christ as one who is 'above every name'. Thus the painting prompts questions (an Ignatian Colloquy) like that posed by the narrator in the opening lines of Huygens' poem 'Hemelvaert' ('Ascension') also from the collection *Heilighe Dagen (Holy Days)*: 'Oh, Israel's Chariot with thy horsemen of light/Where dost thou take our King'.⁶¹ The poem's narrator appears to observe from much the same privileged viewpoint the 'spectator'/viewer is afforded in Rembrandt's painting. By creating a special viewpoint and by staying as true as he can to Scripture, Rembrandt anchors his work in as much reality as can be manifested in a miraculous event. A comparison with

⁵⁸ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 440.

⁵⁹ Perlove and Sliver, *Rembrandt's Faith*, 323-24.

⁶⁰ Philippians 2:8-10.

⁶¹ Huygens, 'Hemelvaert' ('Ascension'), lines 1-2:

'O wagen Israels met uwe Ruijternechten,
Waer voert ghij o nsen Vorst.'

In Daley, *Holy Days*, 12 and translation in Daley, *Holy Days*, 13.

another *Ascension* (fig. 145), one by Perugino from c.1515, serves to illustrate the difficulties artists traditionally had encountered in attempting to portray the event convincingly.⁶² While the *Ascension* marks the end of His earthly mission, pictorially it is the centre-point of the *Passion Series*. In the series Rembrandt leads the viewer via his treatment of light, downwards and onwards, although chronologically back to the day of the Crucifixion and the burial of Christ.

An Ignatian *Concetto* for the *Entombment*

The Entombment from the Passion of Christ is related in all of the four Gospels.⁶³ In each it is recorded that Joseph of Arimathea – in the evening of the same day as the Crucifixion – went to Pilate, as earlier related, and asked for the body of Christ to be released into his care for burial. There are pictorial representations of other related episodes between the Crucifixion and the Entombment such as the Bearing of the Body, the Stone of Unction and the Lamentation over the Dead Christ.⁶⁴ The first two scenes are rare in the pictorial tradition but the latter was developed during the Counter-Reformation into the iconic Pieta, in which the mourning Virgin is depicted cradling the lifeless body of Christ.⁶⁵ Other than the sorrow of the gathered women, none of these additional scenes are mentioned in the Gospel narratives, which move in one verse from Christ's death to His burial. However, Ignatius overcomes this brevity by tasking the retreatant to consider not only the location of the event but also the emotional reactions of those present as vividly as possible.

In addition to the roles played by Joseph of Arimathea, and in John's Gospel Nicomedes, the Gospel texts mention a total of four women as present at the entombment: the Virgin, the Magdalene, 'the other Mary' (the mother of James) and, in Mark's Gospel only, Salome.⁶⁶ The clearest account of events is provided by Matthew: 'And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth. And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the Sepulchre and departed'.⁶⁷

⁶² See Pietro Scarpellini, *Perugino* (Milan: Electa, 1984), 94.

⁶³ Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-55, John 19:38-42.

⁶⁴ Rembrandt produced an etching of the first subject: *Christ carried to the Tomb*, c.1645, etching with dry-point, 11.2 x 13.4 cm, Teylers Museum, Haarlem; and an oil sketch of the third: *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, c.1637-43, oil on paper and canvas stuck on panel, 31.9 x 26.7 cm, National Gallery, London. *Corpus*, A 107. Bredius, 565.

⁶⁵ James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 113-14.

⁶⁶ John 20:39; Mark 15:40.

⁶⁷ Matthew 27:59-60.

John adds that the Sepulchre was in a garden near the place of the Crucifixion.⁶⁸ To be faithful to the Gospel accounts, the setting of the scene presents a problem for artists – a night scene in a garden in front of a cavernous new tomb that belonged to Joseph.

In the *Entombment*, Rembrandt's innovative placement of the viewer within the Sepulchre looking out into the gathering dusk along with the figure of Joseph centrally placed with what appears to be a tomb ownership motif suspended above, represents the artist's intention to remain faithful to the biblical account. This is in contrast to most conceptions of the event in the pictorial tradition. For example, Raphael in his famous *Entombment* of 1507 (fig. 146) now in Borghese Gallery, places the event takes place out in the open air in, what could best be described as, late afternoon.⁶⁹ In Rembrandt's painting, the viewer is placed further within the Sepulchre than the figures depicted in the action. Unlike the first two *Passion Series* works where the viewer is positioned in the West, the viewer is positioned in the East facing the setting Sun/Son. As the Sun sets in the background it casts a strong yet decidedly eerie light over the site of the sacrifice; the stark illumination of this area with symbols of punishment and execution clearly visible is a harrowing reminder of His suffering. It contrasts vividly with the contemplative nature of the main action. Although this compositional relationship is not uncommon in the pictorial tradition, as in Raphael's *Entombment*, Rembrandt's viewpoint into the setting Sun heightens the drama of the contrast. That viewpoint into the setting Sun/Son imbues the work with a pervading aura of solemnity that leads the viewer Ignatian-like from an empathy with Christ's suffering evoked by the early series works to a contemplation in this work of the enormity of His sacrifice and the effect His death has on those gathered around the tomb.

In his *conchetto* for the *Entombment*, Rembrandt invokes the spirit of Ignatius' 'composition of place' to an even greater degree than he had in his *conchetto* for the earlier *Passion Series* works. In this work, Rembrandt could be seen to employ all three Ignatian methods as suggested for the 'composition of place' in the *Spiritual Exercises*. First, by creating a viewpoint within the Sepulchre, Rembrandt imagines himself as a 'spectator' at the event. Secondly, via a possible self-image of the artist in the middle ground (as discussed in the following chapter) the artist identifies as a 'participant' in the event. Thirdly, albeit to a much lesser extent, by clearly depicting the sorrow of the Virgin, the viewer senses that Rembrandt

⁶⁸ John 20:41.

⁶⁹ See Pierluigi De Vecchi, *Raphael* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2002), 109-120.

too feels the event ‘in his own heart’. The most significant of these three imaginative acts is the contemplation of the scene as a ‘spectator’.

Ignatius’ instructions for a ‘composition of place’ in his Second Prelude during the Fourth Week of his *Spiritual Exercises*, requires the retreatant to meditate upon the event of the Entombment of Christ. Ignatius writes: ‘The Second Prelude: A composition, by imagining the place. Here it will be to see the arrangement of the Holy Sepulchre; also, the place or house where Our Lady was, including its various parts, such as a room, an oratory, and the like’.⁷⁰ When considered in conjunction with Ignatius’ Third Week direction to consider the Passion as a whole, these instructions emphasise two major points. First, they stress the centrality of the episode in the larger Passion narrative and thereby the importance of specificity in representing exactly where and by what means He was buried. Secondly, it highlights the importance of considering the emotional effect the event has on the Virgin, as both a mother who has lost a son and as mother of Christ, ‘the place’ where she was and how she felt. Earlier Ignatius had tasked the retreatant, quite poignantly, to consider carefully ‘her loneliness along with her deep grief and fatigue’.⁷¹ Although adoration of the Virgin was a Catholic practice, frowned upon by Protestants, as reflected in Huygens’ poetry, it appears that these two factors, the arrangement of the Sepulchre and the emotional state of the Virgin, dominate Rembrandt’s thoughts in his conception of the *Entombment*. Although consideration of the Virgin’s emotional state was nothing new in the pictorial, largely Catholic tradition, Rembrandt by ‘composing a place’, arguably more accurate than others in the pictorial tradition (Raphael, for example), brings not just *affectus* to the scene but *affectus* underscored with, what we sense is, complete veracity.

The questions that the *Entombment* suggest in the form of an Ignatian Colloquy are perhaps more subtle than in the earlier series works. They are suggested by the contrast between the group of figures engrossed in burying Christ and the example of the Virgin. Both considerations Ignatius instructs the retreatant to envisage and evaluate, ‘the arrangement of the Holy Sepulchre’ and also ‘the place where Our Lady was’, need to be carefully attended to and weighed up.⁷² Rembrandt’s pictorial realization of the subject allows the viewer to bring Ignatius’ three powers of the soul to bear. From the vantage point within the Sepulchre the ‘spectator’ is able to embrace conceptually the complete burial scene (memory) and is

⁷⁰ Ignatius, 220. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 174.

⁷¹ Ignatius, 208. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 171.

⁷² Ignatius, 220. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 174.

concurrently in a privileged position to fully consider the Virgin's emotional state (understanding). In turn this positioning dictates the viewer's response (will), which is not unlike the thrust of the concluding couplet of Donne's 'Holy Sonnet VIII': '(The turne)/O pensive soul, to God, for he knows best/Thy true grieffe, for he put it in my breast'.⁷³

Although the figure of the Virgin mellows the solemnity of the burial tableau with compassion, her clasped hands, slightly titled head and averted gaze all suggest, albeit restrained, a physical reaction to the scene as well as a profoundly sorrowful emotional state. Additionally, she is placed in a seated position in the foreground just to one side of the central action. Rembrandt therefore produces a figure that convinces Protestants with its realism yet retains sufficient dignity so as to not offend Catholics. Earlier, especially in the Northern pictorial tradition, the Virgin had been depicted as either resigned to Christ's death, as in Dieric Bouts' *Entombment* of c.1450 in London (fig. 147), or relegated to the background, as in Pieter Lastman's *Entombment* of 1612 in Lille (fig. 148).⁷⁴ Interestingly, Lastman's viewpoint is from within the Sepulchre looking out into the gloom of evening, which is not dissimilar to Rembrandt's. However, with the motif of the grieving Virgin, Rembrandt brings an almost unprecedented contemporary centrality in tandem with emotional weight to the figure, a solution that transcends confessional boundaries.

Rembrandt's concern to employ an artistically and theologically acceptable mode of representing the Virgin is evidenced by the addition of an inscription in the artist's hand at the top of the aforementioned sheet of preliminary sketches for the figure of the Virgin of c.1637 (figs 118 and 119): 'A devout treasure that is preserved in a sensitive heart as a comfort for her compassionate soul'.⁷⁵ The exact meaning of this enigmatic phrase has never been properly explained and hitherto only Schwartz has attempted to do so.⁷⁶ Mary Barker has suggested to me that these words are a paraphrase of the Gospel of Luke's description of the Virgin's repose during the visit of the shepherds to the stable: 'As for Mary, she treasured

⁷³ Donne, 'Holy Sonnet VIII', in Coffin ed., *Complete Poems*, 260.

⁷⁴ See Catherine Périer-d'Ieteren, *Dieric Bouts: The Complete Works* (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2006), 169-171. And, Astrid Tümpel, 'Pieter Lastman and the Other Pre-Rembrandtists', in *Pieter Lastman: The man who taught Rembrandt* (exhibition catalogue), edited by Astrid Tümpel and Peter Schatborn (Zwolle: Waanders, 1991), 16-53.

⁷⁵ Rembrandt, 'een dyvoot thresoor dat in een fijn harte bewaert wert tot troost naere beleevende siel'. For a discussion of Rembrandt's portrayals of the Virgin see, Mary Barker, 'A Disquieting Presence: The Virgin Mary in Rembrandt's 'Protestant' Art', Doctoral Thesis. Auckland: University of Auckland, 2010.

⁷⁶ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 118. Schwartz suggests that the phrase may be an impromptu translation of a phrase from a contemporary book on the Virgin written by Frederick Hendrick's court chaplain André Rivet.

these things and pondered them in her heart'.⁷⁷ Barker's connection seems entirely credible. The passage from Luke strongly implies that the memory of Christ as both divine and human is now and forever embedded in the Virgin's heart. The inscription could therefore be seen as thematically consistent with an interest in contrasting both natures of Christ, one unifying element linking the *Passion Series* works. Further this special insight that only the Virgin is afforded is conveyed compositionally.

In the painting the Virgin is the only figure that looks away from the dead body; as the sole person whose journey through life needed no purification from sin, she immediately understands and accepts the events. She recognises that although dead, Christ, as He is inherently divine, is already the Risen Christ. This meaning is implied by Ignatius in his First Prelude to the First Contemplation of the Fourth Week when he asks the retreatant to consider: 'Here it is, after Christ died on the Cross, His body remained separated from his soul but always united with His divinity'.⁷⁸ It is also consistent with Paul's remarks on justification by faith in his letter to the Galatians: 'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me'.⁷⁹ There is pictorial evidence that Rembrandt intensely pondered the nature of the dead but divine Christ, when he changed a drawing (fig. 149), clearly dated 1630, of the Raising of Lazarus back into an Entombment of Christ. This drawing has hitherto been largely overlooked by scholars who have failed to connect similar compositional elements such as the crowd pushing into the tomb from the left to the *Passion Series* work. Only Slive has pointed to a less than successful quick sketch of an *Entombment of Christ* of c.1633 (fig. 150) in Berlin as a possible study for the *Passion Series Entombment*.⁸⁰ The London drawing may have initiated a series of works from the early 1630s in which Rembrandt displays a sustained interest in the subject of the deceased Lazarus returning to life. The interest was shared by his colleague, Lievens. The five images of Lazarus the pair produced document the struggle some artists have in finding a suitable artistic solution, a *conchetto*, for problematic subject matter. Not only is Rembrandt's *Passion Series Resurrection* initially modelled on his own *Raising of Lazarus* (fig. 43) painting but moreover, the saga of the Lazarus', emphasises just how distinct Rembrandt is in employing,

⁷⁷ Luke 2:19.

⁷⁸ Ignatius, 219. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 174.

⁷⁹ Galatians 2:20.

⁸⁰ Seymour Slive, *Drawings of Rembrandt*, 2 vols (New York: Dover, 1965), vol. I, 285.

as suggested here, an Ignatian derived imaginative strategy in his *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*.

An Ignatian *Conchetto* for the Resurrection

It is perhaps surprising then that the *Passion Series Resurrection* is the only representation of the subject in Rembrandt's *oeuvre*. This, however, becomes less surprising when we consider that the event was relatively slow to emerge as a stand-alone subject in the pictorial tradition. The earliest representations of the subject, such as a 6th century mosaic in Ravenna (fig. 151), do not show the figure of Christ at all. When it does emerge from the Italian Renaissance onward, works contemporaneous with Rembrandt's painting, such as the central panel of Rubens' *Resurrection* altarpiece of 1611-12 (fig. 152) in Antwerp Cathedral, show a restored Christ whose victory over death is emphasized by the prominent banner with a red cross, which become an indispensable motif in the pictorial tradition.⁸¹ To the contrary Rembrandt omitted the motif in his conception of the subject. Nowhere in the pictorial tradition is there a precedent for showing the figure of Christ still cloaked in the veil of death and in his text Ignatius does not suggest a conception of Christ as such either. However, I argue that we can nevertheless see Rembrandt in his *conchetto* for the subject embracing the spirit, as opposed to a literal interpretation, of Ignatius' meditative method. He does so first, as Ignatius instructs, and as he does consistently throughout the *Passion Series*, by turning to and gleaning what he can from Scripture.

The Resurrection is not directly described in any of the four Gospels, three of which clearly state 'He is risen'; rather, theologically it is 'evidenced' by a series of later consequential apparitions.⁸² Matthew's account provides the greatest narrative detail and this has been the main source for the visual tradition. He alone among the Evangelists mentions the guard of soldiers Pilate had placed around the tomb.⁸³ Later in Matthew's Gospel, it becomes clear that the passage has been introduced to refute the charge made by the Jews in his day that the disciples secretly removed the body.⁸⁴ Matthew also provides the clearest Gospel account of the appearance of the Angel of the Lord who descends from Heaven, rolls away the stone and

⁸¹ See David Freedberg, *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*, vol. VII (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), 31-34.

⁸² Matthew 28:7, Mark 16:6, Luke 24:6.

⁸³ Matthew 27:66.

⁸⁴ Matthew 28:13-15.

addresses the two Marys (the Magdalene and the mother of James) who have come grieve at the Sepulchre.⁸⁵ He writes:

... for the Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake.⁸⁶

Rembrandt's magnificent angel in the painting is entirely reflective of this description, although not untypical of the pictorial tradition, as the light the angel radiates bathes the scene in rays of God's righteousness. Aside from this one important passage in Matthew's Gospel, Rembrandt found only meagre guidance in Scripture. Further on in Matthew's account, the angel informs the Marys that Christ has risen from the dead and shows them the empty tomb. In a mixture of 'fear and joy' the Marys depart the scene to bring word to the disciples. In John's account, upon finding the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb, the Magdalene rushes off to find Simon-Peter and 'the other disciple who Jesus loved'; they enter the Sepulchre to find it empty.⁸⁷ The distraught Magdalene then enters the tomb and is confronted and comforted by the angel. Upon leaving the scene she encounters Christ whom she mistakes for a gardener.⁸⁸ It is this event '*Noli me Tangere*' or the 'Holy Women at the Sepulchre', which in the early pictorial tradition acted as a substitute subject for the Resurrection by providing concrete 'evidence' of the Christian truth that Christ did physically rise from the grave despite the lack of exact scriptural description. Rembrandt's conception of the event, with the figure of Christ cloaked in Death's mask, is without precedent and its innovation owes more than a passing debt to Ignatian meditative imaginative strategies.

The Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* focuses on events from the Resurrection to the Ascension. Here in his instructions Ignatius states poignantly in his Fourth Point that the retreatant should now: 'Consider how the divinity, which seemed hidden during the Passion, now appears and manifests itself so miraculously in this holy Resurrection, through its true and most holy effects'.⁸⁹ Here, Ignatius realises that although the Kingdom is realised on this day, the world merely becomes capable of accepting that realisation and of communicating with God. Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Resurrection* reflects the tenor of Ignatius by envisioning the scene as a process of revelation, in which the artist portrays Christ's divinity

⁸⁵ The number of Holy women varies according to the Gospel: Mark adds Salome, Luke adds Joanna and 'other women', only John says the Magdalene came alone.

⁸⁶ Matthew 28:2-4.

⁸⁷ John 20:2.

⁸⁸ John 20:15.

⁸⁹ Ignatius, 223. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 174.

as it unfolds pictorially, quite unlike anything in the preceding pictorial tradition. There are two Resurrections by Lastman (figs 153 and 154) – one in Los Angeles dated 1612 and the other now in Budapest is dated 1610 – that are the closest pictorial source for Rembrandt's painting and they both show a fully restored Christ floating above the tomb.⁹⁰

This precise moment when Christ rises from the dead has also always been problematical for theologians. The Resurrection is not a restoration of the *status quo ante*; it does not erase the cruel memories of the Passion and Christ's death. In his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius expects that those who have received, in some measure by progressing to this stage in the *Exercises*, the grace of compassion for Christ and His sufferings, will now begin to experience joy in His Resurrection. Early in the *Exercises* he states: 'For example, in contemplation on the Resurrection, I will ask for joy with Christ in joy'.⁹¹ This is challenging as humans naturally resist the permission to experience this joy, accompanied as it is by an acknowledgment of His death. The reality of Christ's death is underscored by the fact that in the earlier works in the *Passion Series* the wounds are repeatedly shown that indicate His dying. Although this is typical of Passion imagery, the fact that Rembrandt's paintings have always been hung together provides in this case an insistent reminder. In the earlier Passion scenes, the viewer is challenged to accept the necessity of His death. So how does Rembrandt's *Passion Series Resurrection* function to permit both acknowledgment of the necessity of His death and simultaneously to experience joy in Christ resurrected?

Again, I suggest that Rembrandt does so by utilizing the Ignatian method of meditation in his *conchetto* for this work. The artist imagines himself as a 'spectator' at the event, placed again within the Sepulchre; however, in this painting he is looking into the darkened interior in the opposite direction to the viewpoint in the *Entombment*. Again this is unusual in the pictorial tradition as illustrated by the two Lastman paintings. In these, although the viewer is placed within the Sepulchre, clearly in the painting in Los Angeles, they still look out into the evening gloom. In Rembrandt's *Resurrection* the viewer initially identifies the location by the placement of the framing curtain on the far right of the pictorial space; this is opposite to the placement of the framing curtain on the left side of the *Entombment*. Rembrandt uses the open curtain as a device to further reflect the process of revelation. Therefore, the viewer is not in the East, looking out into the setting Sun/Son, but in the West, looking (theoretically)

⁹⁰ See Christian Tümpel, 'Pieter Lastman and Rembrandt,' in Schatborn and Tümpel, eds, *Pieter Lastman: The man who taught Rembrandt*, 54-84.

⁹¹ Ignatius, 48. In Ganss, ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 136.

towards the promise of the brilliant dawn of a new day. Just as the Sun rises, the new day, in the form of the Son resurrected, emerges slowly from the darkness of the tomb. As ‘spectator’, Rembrandt provides the viewer and only the viewer with this privileged viewpoint, this glimpse of Christ that immediately inspires hope. Neither the grouping of the two Marys in the bottom right foreground nor the tumultuously tumbling guards that fill the left of the pictorial space are as yet able to see the Risen Christ. Thus in his *conchetto* for the subject Rembrandt is able, through pictorial means, to cleverly circumvent the lack of scriptural authority. The artist recognises that the viewer has a predisposed understanding of the event, an understanding that those present at the event do not yet grasp. This is the exact point Ignatius makes in his explanation of the ‘First Apparition of Christ our Lord’:

He appeared to the Virgin Mary. Though this is not mentioned explicitly in the Scripture it must be considered as stated when Scripture says that He appeared to many others. For Scripture supposes that we have an understanding, as it is written: ‘Are you also without understanding?’⁹²

Ignatius is taking a minor liberty with Scripture, as this passage appears verbatim earlier in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark when Christ is explaining the parable concerning his reproof of the Pharisees; it could also possibly refer to a verse in Luke during Christ’s first appearance to the disciples.⁹³ Nevertheless, Ignatius endeavours to provide a means by which the retreatant can overcome the lack of strict scriptural authority, which is in keeping with the *conchetto* of Rembrandt’s painting.

The pictorial means, as opposed to the conceptual, by which Rembrandt presupposes and ensures understanding of the event is expressed in his treatment of the angel. Its overpowering beauty permits escape from the paradox that the subject presents – joy from death. To appreciate how the artist ascribes to the angel contemporary notions of beauty, the treatment of the hair and facial features can be compared with Rembrandt’s portrayal of the great Amsterdam beauty Maria Trip painted in the same year (fig. 155). Once recovered from the initial visual impact created by the angel, the viewer may be challenged to speculate as to what Ignatian Colloquy questions the subject might suggest. However, if questions arise from prayer, then surely it is in meditation that answers are received. If in the *Resurrection* Rembrandt does not give us the answers, he certainly provides a visual pathway indicating where to begin the search, in the portrayal of a Christian truth – He rose from the dead. In his Colloquy, Ignatius suggests that the retreatant asks ‘for joy with Christ in joy’. In a parallel

⁹² Ignatius, 299. In Ganss ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 197.

⁹³ Matthew 15:16, Mark 7:18, Luke 24:45.

manner Rembrandt offers the ‘spectator’ viewer a visually and metaphorically uplifting scene that is in marked contrast to the total confusion of the guards. Therein, the artist implores the viewer to believe in the scarcely credible.

Here Perlove and Silver contribute to our understanding of the *conchetto* by analysing analogies with contemporary theological literature; these are contained in a treatise by the aforementioned politician and theologian Grotius that reveals ideas akin to Rembrandt’s.⁹⁴ Although it is highly unlikely that Rembrandt ever met Grotius, who was exiled in 1621, he certainly received during the *Passion Series* years several portrait commissions from Grotius’ Remonstrant circle; therefore, the artist was, in all probability, aware of his exegeses. The author of the Remonstrant was the preacher Johannes van Wtenbogaert, whose rhetoric Huygens had admired, and who Rembrandt painted in 1633 (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) and subsequently etched in 1635 with accompanying verses penned by Grotius. Perlove and Silver comment that in his revised text of *On the Truth of the Christian Religion* of 1640 Grotius rejects the contention that the age of miracles no longer exists, arguing that the main force of miracles lies in providing witness to the doctrine of Christ while facilitating proselytizing.⁹⁵ Rembrandt’s painting reflects both of Grotius’ arguments by conveying the reality of the miracle of the Resurrection. Through an application of an Ignatian imaginative strategy Rembrandt positions the viewer as witness to an inescapable and powerful truth.

A *Conchetto* for the *Passion Series*

In all realistic pictorial representations of historical subjects the viewer is, to a greater or lesser extent, envisaged as a witness to the event. However in the *Passion Series* Rembrandt brings a specificity and subjectivity, unprecedented in the visual tradition, to the means by which the viewer engages with the image. I suggest that he does so by utilising an adaptation of Ignatius’ ‘composition of place’, through the inclusion of a self-image in three of the works and through the employment of a special viewpoint in the other two. The first of these techniques enables the viewer to in turn envisage a self-image inserted as ‘participant’ in the event and the latter to feel as if they are a ‘spectator’ at the event. The Ignatian ‘participant/spectator’ role with which the viewer identifies with encourages a contemplative function for the works, as suggested by their devotional format, either for a long period of solace or for a short daily prayer. While this would normally imply a purely private audience,

⁹⁴ Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt’s Faith*, 278.

⁹⁵ Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt’s Faith*, 278.

I have shown earlier how the Stadholder's gallery was primarily a public space in which viewers from a range of confessional identities would have seen the paintings. As Rembrandt does not impose a strong confessional identity on the works, rather as I have suggested they tend to imbue universal Christian truths, the *Passion Series* has broad appeal. As iterated earlier, Frederick Hendrick, ever striving for unity in sectarian times, walked a careful and politically astute *via media* in matters of religion. The *Passion Series* permits a variety of religious interpretations while eschewing the exclusion of any one reading. Perhaps the works even present an opportunity for reconciliation among confessional identities, a chance to unite in Christ. Rembrandt's paintings share a similarity of imaginative strategy – a *conchetto* – consonant with, as I have shown, with contemporary devotional poetry, specifically that of Huygens. That in turn draws on a method of religious meditation as specified by Ignatius, but which is still in keeping with wider contemporary confessional practice. While this argument presents the key link that unifies the *Passion Series* as a series it goes only part way to fully examining the profundity of the self-images that so strongly facilitate these functions; that is the topic of the following chapter.

Chapter Six: The Self-Images in the *Passion Series*

A Terminus Post Quem

The 1719 catalogue of the collection of the Elector Palatine Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz, compiled by court painter Gerhard Joseph Karsch (1680-1755) reveals that among the several artist self-images owned by the connoisseur prince was a painting recorded as being by Rembrandt.¹ Although there is no further provenance for this work, which could have been a copy after Rembrandt, Karsch records that it hung in the same room as the artist's seven *Passion Series* paintings and was of similar size.² Not only does this testify to a growing interest in Rembrandt as a person whose individuality is inseparable from his artistic creations but may also have facilitated identification of the self-images in the *Passion Series* paintings.³ The deliberate nature of the Elector Palatine's arrangement underscores the contemporary significance of the self-images in the *Passion Series* works and is also evidence of a keen appreciation of the unusual nature of Rembrandt's inclusion of a self-image as a subject in the paintings.⁴

The *terminus post quem* in the literature for recognizing the features of a figure in a *Passion Series* painting as a self-image of Rembrandt can be traced to a comment made by Emile

¹ Karsch, *In der Gallerie der Churfurstl. Residentz zu Dusseldorff...*, [1719]. In van Gool *De Nieuwe Schouburg der Nederlantsche Kunstschilders*, vol. II, 531-67.

Although I refer to 'self-images' and have avoided using the modern term 'self-portrait', this is not intended to deny the contemporary concept of or to diminish the esteem in which self-portrayal was held in the early seventeenth-century. For example van Mander's enthusiastic account of holding a Dürer self-image in Nuremberg. See van Mander, *Lives*, 'Dürer', fol. 209r-v, 93-7. Rather it reflects that the term, 'self-portrait', did not emerge until the nineteenth century. For a discussion of the terminology regarding self-imagery see Erin Griffey, 'The Artist's Roles: Searching for self-portraiture in the seventeenth-century Netherlands', Doctoral Thesis. London: Courtauld Institute, 2001, 27-37; and Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraits: The visual construction of identity and the social status of the artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 13-17. Also Lyckle de Vries, 'Tronies and Other Single Figured Netherlandish Paintings', *Nederlandse Portretten, Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 8 (1990): 185-202; and van de Wetering, 'The Multiple Functions of Rembrandt's Self-Portraits', esp. 17-19; these two articles discuss the question of the type of image that constitutes a 'self-portrait'. The complexity of self-portraiture is discussed at length by Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*.

² See van Gool, vol. II, 538-39.

³ For a further discussion of the multiple functions of Rembrandt's self-portraiture see van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. IV; Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits*; Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 57-66; White, *Rembrandt: Self-Portraits*, 13-38.

⁴ See Volker Manuth, 'Rembrandt and the Artist's Self-Portrait: Tradition and reception', in White and Buvelot eds., *Rembrandt by Himself*, 38-57.

Michel in 1893.⁵ Michel suggested that the central figure – wearing a blue cap and tunic – of an executioner elevating the Cross in the *Raising* is ‘vaguely reminiscent’ of the painter himself.⁶ Although more than two centuries elapsed before this identification was recorded, recognition of the artist by contemporary viewers would have certainly been almost immediate. The insertion of one’s face into a history scene was not without precedence in European art, most notably Michelangelo (fig. 156) and Dürer (fig. 157), here the gesture underscored contemporary relevance and was a sign of authorship.⁷ However, as indicated by Michel’s comment, in the *Raising* and in the *Entombment* (as I will suggest) Rembrandt depicts himself unambiguously as an artist by wearing a beret. He thus portrays himself as both a maker in that he participates in history by being present and a maker in that he records the event artistically. As both conduit and individual, Rembrandt assumes the role of a man and Everyman. In this dual capacity Rembrandt’s self-portrayal bridges the gap between scene and viewer; this not only heightens the veracity of the event but places Rembrandt as an artist (or in poetry a narrator) present as a ‘participant’ in the event in keeping with Ignatian meditative practice.

Consistent with the tradition of an artist creating a visual signature by giving his own likeness to a figure in a painting and possibly also reflective of an Ignatian influence is what has been viewed as a Rubens self-image in his *Raising* altarpiece in Antwerp. The *terminus post quem* for the suggestion is a comment made by Max Rooses in 1886 that he recognised as Rubens ‘a knight in a cuirass’ assisting in elevating the Cross on the left of the painting (fig. 158).⁸ The beard and wavy moustache of this figure, although a little darker, are not unlike Rubens’ own facial hair in the contemporaneous *Self-Portrait with Isabella Brant* of c.1609 (fig. 159) now in Munich. Interestingly, the corresponding figure in the *modello* for the *Raising* is clean shaven (fig. 160) suggesting the deliberate nature of the gesture. However, subsequent to Rooses’ initial remarks the connection has attracted little further comment in the Rubens

⁵ Emile Michel, *Rembrandt: Sa vie, son oeuvre son temps* (Paris: Hachette, 1893).

⁶ Michel, *Rembrandt*, ‘contre le crois un home coiffe d’une barrette bleue et don’t les traits rappellent vaguement ceux du peintre lui-même’, 158. (‘against the Cross a man dressed in a blue cap and tunic is vaguely reminiscent of the painter himself’.)

⁷ See Martin Kemp, ‘“Ogni dipintore dipinge se’: A Neoplatonic echo in Leonardo’s art theory’, in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, edited by C. H. Clough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), 311-23. For Michelangelo as St. Bartholomew in *The Last Judgement*, 1537-41, fresco, 14.6 x 13.41 m, Sistine Chapel, Rome, see Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 15 and 111. For the Dürer self-image in *The Feast of the Rosary*, 1506, oil on panel, 162 x 194.5 cm, National Gallery, Prague, see Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image*, 14.

⁸ Max Rooses, *Rubens*, 5 vols [Antwerp: Anvers, 1886-92], translated by Harold Childs (London: Duckworth, 1904), 130.

literature. Although as mentioned, it is unlikely Rembrandt saw a print of Rubens' *Raising* before he executed the *Passion Series* work, the possibility that Rubens had included a self-image in his painting of the same subject not only sets a contemporary precedent; additionally, it also lends weight to the argument of this thesis, that the Ignatian 'participant/spectator' roles had artistic currency. In Rubens' case, this is hardly surprising as he was not only Catholic but also had been educated by the Jesuits in Cologne; further, he enjoyed extensive patronage from the order, especially early in his career as thoroughly discussed by White.⁹ Certainly as Rudolf Wittkower has stated, a man such as Rubens, 'endowed with a rare *joie de vivre*', could not have been responsive to contemplative mysticism and 'thus, by instinct, one might say, he was attracted to the Jesuits'.¹⁰ Undoubtedly, Ignatius' 'composition of place', the vivid reconstruction in the imagination of a 'historical' scene, would have held great appeal for such a fertile and productive artistic mind as Rubens. Nevertheless, the idea that Rubens depicts himself as a 'participant' in the event in the *Raising* does raise the possibility that he was likewise invoking an Ignatian inspired *conchetto*; however, I argue that due to the function of the work as an altarpiece, the self-image would not have been immediately and consistently recognised as the artist, unlike the intention in Rembrandt's paintings.

The recognition of the figures in the *Passion Series* paintings as self-images is crucial to the arguments of this thesis. In this chapter I will trace the pictorial evidence for the claim that three out of the five *Passion Series* works – the *Descent*, the *Raising* and the *Entombment* – contain self-images of the artist. This should not be interpreted as a distraction from my larger argument that all five paintings are unified by a *conchetto* that evokes the form and imaginative strategy of Ignatian meditation. As I suggested in the previous chapter, Rembrandt in the other two works – the *Resurrection* and the *Ascension* – assumes the Ignatian role of privileged 'spectator'. Since Michel's 1893 remark, the self-images Rembrandt includes in the *Passion Series* works have attracted an ever-increasing volume of discourse. Benesch commented in 1957, when discussing the self-image in the *Raising*, that the artist was 'projecting his own thoughts and feelings into the Bible story'.¹¹ In 1966, Ingvar Bergström first viewed the self-image as corresponding to an iconographic tradition,

⁹ Christopher White, *Peter Paul Rubens: Man and art* (New Haven: Yale University Press), esp. 148.

¹⁰ Rudolf Wittkower, 'Problems of the Theme', in *Baroque Art: The Jesuit contribution*, edited by Irma Jaffe and Rudolf Wittkower (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972), 1-15, 10.

¹¹ Benesch, *Rembrandt*, 58.

specifically the frontispiece of Dürer's *Large Passion*.¹² In doing so Bergström refers to the medieval figure of Everyman, an analogy that Schama recognises in his work of 1999 and in turn links to the Dutch play *Eleckerlijc*.¹³ In this chapter I explore further this literary connection. Schama also lends his support to an otherwise neglected suggestion put forward by Georg Lengl in 1967 that the *Entombment* too contains a self-image of the artist.¹⁴ The most thorough earlier interpretation of the self-images, although largely in reference to the *Raising*, has been by Chapman in 1990.¹⁵ In a recent article Chapman revisits her discussion of Rembrandt's self-portrayal; in this chapter I engage with Chapman's re-evaluation of the function of such imagery.¹⁶ In addition, I also discuss the inclusion of another possible self-image that hitherto has not attracted comment – the 1634 grisaille and subsequent etching *Christ before Pilate and the People*.¹⁷ I argue that these connections are consonant with Schwartz's assertion that Rembrandt must have consulted with his patrons in regard to his *conchetto* for the works; which suggests a certain private element, albeit limited, in addition to the intended public audience for, the *Passion Series* paintings.¹⁸

Self-Imagery

The dichotomy between private involvement and public function in the *Passion Series* is reflected in the self-images within the paintings, which can be viewed as both public statement and private gesture. Erin Griffey has commented, 'if the artist himself and his immediate circle recognised the image as a self-portrait, then in itself that makes the self-portrayal meaningful'.¹⁹ Clearly in this manner, the self-images in the *Passion Series* works were intended to be recognised as self-portrayals by the artist, as an abundance of Rembrandt self-imagery was in circulation in the form of etchings. The extent of Rembrandt's fame and therefore recognisability can be gauged by documentation associated with the self-image of the artist (fig. 33) Sir Robert Kerr presented to King Charles I of England in 1633.

¹² Bergström, 'Rembrandt's Double-Portrait', 164-66.

¹³ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 294.

¹⁴ Georg Lengl, 'Beiträge zu den Bildern Rembrandt's in der Alten Pinakothek in München', *Das Munster* 20 (1967):52-58. And Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 442.

¹⁵ Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits*.

¹⁶ Chapman, 'Reclaiming the Inner Rembrandt'.

¹⁷ *Christ before Pilate and the People*, 1634, oil on paper on canvas, 54.5 x 44.5 cm, National Gallery, London. *Corpus*, A 89. Bredius, 546. There was also a further grisaille of this subject recorded in the 1656 inventory, see Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1656/12 #121 at 316. And *Christ before Pilate and the People*, 1635-36, etching, 54.9 x 44.7 cm.

¹⁸ Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 152.

¹⁹ Griffey, 'The Artist's Roles', 29-30.

Subsequently that painting was identified as a self-portrayal by Rembrandt in a catalogue of c.1639 compiled by Abraham van der Doort (1575/80-1640).²⁰ This sort of evidence has led scholars such as Alpers and the Rembrandt Research Project in the fourth volume of the *Corpus*, to conclude that Rembrandt's lifelong engagement with self-portrayal was fundamentally market driven.²¹

Chapman takes issue with such an emphasis on the commercial aspect of Rembrandt's self-imagery, which she sees as denying the 'mystery and complexity as a highly personal process of self-presentation that involves at once (and to varying degrees), inner-directed self-scrutiny and outer-directed self-construction'.²² Chapman comments on the emergence of literary autobiography and cites Michel de Montaigne's (1533-1592) quest to understand the human condition through self-examination in his *Essais* of 1580, as epitomising the period's new attitude of self-discovery and self-conscious individuality.²³ She notes that one who shared Montaigne's self-awareness was Rembrandt's confidant and de-facto patron Huygens, with his autobiography of c.1630.²⁴ The 'inner directed self-scrutiny' and 'outer directed self-construction' Chapman claims for Rembrandt's self-portrayal is evidenced pictorially nowhere better than by the self-images in the *Passion Series* works, although the portrayals are not, what are now deemed, stand-alone 'self-portraits'. I argue that it is even more remarkable that the self-images in the *Passion Series* paintings appear not just as a bold statement of individuality and artistic autonomy but in congruence with patron requirements. This contention corresponds to both Chapman's argument of self-portrayal as a personal process of self-reflection and also supports the arguments of those scholars who would see such images as commodities produced for a specific audience. To understand how the *Passion Series* self-images functioned in this dual capacity we must first take a step backward to examine the pictorial evidence of the self-images that Rembrandt had incorporated into earlier works.

²⁰ For the van der Doort catalogue see Oliver Millar, ed., 'Abraham van der Doort's Catalogue of the Collections of Charles I', *The Warpole Society* 37 (1958-60): 1-243, 57 # 84.

²¹ Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise*; Bruyn et al, *Corpus*, vol. IV, 132-44.

²² Chapman, 'Reclaiming the Inner Rembrandt', 238.

²³ Chapman, 'Reclaiming the Inner Rembrandt', 238. For the impact of Montaigne in the Netherlands see, Paul Smith and Karl Enekel, *Montaigne and the Low Countries, 1580-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), esp. 11-13. For a comparison of Rembrandt and Montaigne's self-portrayal see, Andrew Small, *Essays in Self-Portraiture: A comparison of technique in the self-portraits of Montaigne and Rembrandt* (New York: P. Lang, 1996).

²⁴ Chapman, 'Reclaiming the Inner Rembrandt', 238.

Self-Imagery in Rembrandt's Early History Paintings

Aspects of the *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* may well have been fostered by Rembrandt's association with the group of Humanists associated with the University of Leiden. The University had been founded in 1575 by William of Orange; its aim was to educate the regents and nobility, train office holders and professionals to staff the new Republic and to provide preachers for the state church.²⁵ Pre-eminent among its graduates was Petrus Scriverius (1576-1650) who published several works on Dutch history, had a passionate interest in contemporary poetry written in the vernacular and who composed the first of the twenty-eight eulogies that prefaced van Mander's *Schilder-boeck*. Maarten Wurfain has suggested Scriverius as the patron of two early works by Rembrandt, the *Stoning of St. Stephen* of 1625 and the *Palamedes before Agamemnon* ('*History Painting*') of 1626 (figs 161 and 162).²⁶ The auction of Scriverius' library in 1633 included 'two large, bold pieces by Rembrandt'; because Rembrandt's early *oeuvre* contains few paintings that can be described as both 'bold' and large', the works are almost certainly these two paintings.²⁷

These works both feature a number of recognisable figures, most notably several possible self-images of Rembrandt. Art historians have classified works such as these, in which the artist plays a character from the Bible or another literary source, as a *portrait historié*.²⁸ As Griffey suggests, art historians have often tended to minimise the portrait aspect of such works on the grounds that contemporary audiences would not have recognised the self-portrayal.²⁹ As I have argued, I believe that this is not true of the *Passion Series* works, although it could be true of these earlier *portrait historié* by Rembrandt; however again, the currency and dissemination of the self-image etchings may suggest otherwise. The distinctive motif of the artist's tousled hair would appear to link the self-portrayals in the early painted and etched self-images, the early history paintings and in the *Passion Series*.

²⁵ See Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 569-576.

²⁶ Maarten Wurfain, *Geschildert tot Lieden anon 1626* (exhibition catalogue) edited by Maarten Wurfain (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 1976/7), # S26.

²⁷ S. A.C. Dudok van Heel, 'De Rembrandts in de Verzamelingen 'Hinloopen''. *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 56 (1969), 233-37.

²⁸ See Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, 43-62. Woods-Marsden discusses 'The Florentine Artist in Religious Narrative'.

²⁹ Griffey, 'The Artist's Roles', 29. See also Joseph Koerner, 'Self-Portraiture Direct and Oblique', in *Renaissance Self-Portraits* (exhibition catalogue) edited by Joanna Woodall and Anthony Bond (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2005), 67-81, esp. 67. Koerner comments on the tendency of art historians to demystify self-portraiture.

In the foreground action of the *St. Stephen* a figure standing *in assistenza* (fig. 163) immediately behind the proto-martyr bears the features, ‘broadly-speaking’ as Chapman points out, of the young Rembrandt.³⁰ Gerson, who discovered the painting in the storeroom of the museum in Lyon in 1962, was the first to suggest this connection.³¹ He compared the facial features of this figure to two contemporaneous self-image etchings (figs 164 and 165). The martyrdom of Stephen may seem an unusual subject for a painter in a Reformed *milieu*, as the Reformation had firmly rejected the cult of saints as mediators of salvation, and especially in view of the likely patron, Scriverius. However, it had been only a year since Rembrandt studied in the Catholic Lastman’s studio; moreover, a Reformed audience may have viewed Stephen’s sainthood, verified in Scripture, as *bona fide*, as opposed to medieval ‘saints’ of dubious sanctity.³² The stoning event also records the first appearance in Scripture of the man who was to later become the apostle Paul. In the painting he is the unconverted zealot Saul who sits centrally high in the middle ground giving his approval to proceedings. Only a few years after the *St. Stephen* Rembrandt painted a representation of Paul with his traditional iconography of the sword and a book (fig. 166). The modelling and pose of the figure in this work, which is now in Nuremberg, indicate that Rembrandt wished to convey the weight of thought and scholarship behind the man. Judging from this pictorial evidence, Rembrandt may have been, even at this early stage of his career embracing the Pauline theological portrayal of artist as servant; this concept was expressed by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians: ‘For though I be free from all men, yet I have made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.’³³ In both the *St. Stephen* and the *Palamedes* works, Rembrandt realised Paul’s intention to faithfully record the event as if he had been present. Although Rembrandt’s self-image serves to bridge the gap between past and present by documenting the Ignatian-like ‘historical’ accuracy of the event and by creating through recognition a meaningful link between painting and viewer, it does not act in the same manner as the *Passion Series* self-images. Despite Chapman’s emphatic assertion otherwise, I suggest that Rembrandt does not assume an active Ignatian-like ‘participant’ role, in that his

³⁰ Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 15.

For the history of the term *in assistenza* to describe a figure in a religious in a non-active role, see Aby Warburg, *The Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie* [1902], available online at the Getty Centre site. And L. M. Sleptzoff, *Men or Supermen? The Italian portrait in the fifteenth century* (Jerusalem: Magnus, 1978), 111-36.

³¹ Horst Gerson, ‘A Rembrandt Discovery’, *Apollo* 77 (1963): 371-72.

³² Broos has even suggested that the *St. Stephen* was one of a group of paintings Rembrandt painted between 1625-26, not in Leiden but in Amsterdam while still under Lastman’s tutelage. See Ben Broos, ‘Rembrandts Eerste Amsterdam Periode’, *Oud Holland* 114 (2000): 1-6.

Acts 6:5-7:6.

³³ 1 Cor. 9:19.

actions do not contribute to the narrative.³⁴ He is not holding or throwing a stone. Rather, his tilted head suggests he is moving through the pictorial space, a fleeting presence, his face framed by the arms (actions) of others. In my opinion, his gaze and moreover his expression, do not tend to involve or implicate the viewer; rather it simply contributes to the veracity of the scene depicted.

This lack of engagement in the central narrative by the figure depicted with the features of the artist is even more evident in the slightly later *Palamedes*. Shortly after the discovery of the painting in the 1930s, Bauch stated that he regarded the figure who stands impassively in the middle ground, slightly obscured by the ruler's sceptre, as a self-portrayal by Rembrandt (fig. 167).³⁵ This figure bears a strong resemblance to what is now acknowledged as the artist's first independent painted self-image of c.1628, now in Amsterdam (fig. 168).³⁶ Again the self-image of the artist stands as a historical witness proclaiming the veracity of the scene depicted; he is not a 'participant' in the action. The non-committal nature of the decision to include a self-image is underscored by Westermann's comment that radiographic analysis of the painting has revealed the absence of a reserve for the figure, which suggests that it was an afterthought.³⁷ Thus while it is an act of deliberation it was not part, unlike the *Passion Series* self-images, of the original *conchetto*. This is in contrast to a figure in the very centre of the *Palamedes* (fig. 169) who, it has been suggested may be a portrait of the patron Scriverius.³⁸ This figure, in seventeenth-century dress, looks straight out to engage the viewer and gestures towards the space between the protagonists as if to invite conversation. Despite this possible innovation, the *in assistenza* self-images Rembrandt includes in the *Stoning of St. Stephen* and the *Palamedes before Agamemnon* are incorporated into the scene with a certain naiveté that heightens the paintings' verisimilitude; they do not possess the *affectum* of the later *Passion Series* works. In addition to eschewing the 'participant' role in both works,

³⁴ Chapman, 'Reclaiming the Inner Rembrandt', 245.

³⁵ Kurt Bauch, *Die Kunst des Jungen Rembrandt* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1933), 10.

³⁶ Although this connection is now universally accepted, the *Corpus* points to two other figures in the *Palamedes* whose features are similar to those of this man. One of these is on the left, a man with a feather in his cap; the other, more centrally located, is interesting as the hair of this figure, like the major self-image, is executed with not the bristles of the brush but with the tip. Additionally, both the facial features and moreover the shirt of the major self-image in the *Palamedes* closely resemble those in the slightly later tiny self-image in Munich.

³⁷ Mariët Westermann, 'Making a Mark in Rembrandt's Leiden', in Chong ed., *Rembrandt Creates Rembrandt*, 25-50, 41.

³⁸ Edwin Buijsen, Peter Schatborn, Ben Broos and Ariane van Suchtelen, in *Rembrandt by Himself* (exhibition catalogue), entry #1, 88.

Rembrandt makes no attempt to afford himself or the viewer a privileged, distinctive viewpoint, as an Ignatian ‘spectator’ as he does in the later *Passion Series* works.

Between the execution of these two early Leiden paintings and that of the *Passion Series Descent*, there was a significant shift in the *ingenium* that Rembrandt brings to grand subject matter that features self-portrayal. That seemingly remarkable leap, I suggest, may have been facilitated by the initiation of an association with Huygens. As earlier iterated, Huygens may well have introduced the artist to contemporary devotional poetry, a pathway that ultimately leads to a *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* works. Some six years intervened between the two early history paintings and the beginnings of the *Passion Series*. That interval is, of course, punctuated by the Le Mas *Christ on the Cross* of 1631. Is the face of the figure of Christ in this work, which is so closely linked to the *Passion Series*, a further self-image as some scholars have argued? Moreover, does the self-portrayal issue provide any clue as to why the Crucifixion scene, central to any *Passion Series*, is so notably missing from the commissioned works for the Stadholder’s residence in The Hague?

Recently, Schwartz and DeWitt have both commented that the facial features of Christ in the *Christ on the Cross* (fig. 170) bear a close resemblance to Rembrandt’s own features in an etching executed only a year earlier, *Self-Portrait, open-mouthed, as if shouting* (fig. 171).³⁹ This connection appears to have been advanced first by Chapman in her 1990 study of Rembrandt’s self-portraits.⁴⁰ Admittedly, Schwartz makes this suggestion in relation to Rembrandt’s concurrent ‘beggar’ etchings to show that, not unlike Paul who sought to make himself ‘all things to all men’, Rembrandt could self-visualize from one extreme of the human condition to the other.⁴¹ DeWitt on the other hand, as I discussed in Chapter Two, uses the example to argue how Rembrandt’s conception of Christ was radically different from earlier pictorial representations that had followed authoritative models thought to have been handed down from antiquity. First, purely at a pictorial level, I cannot support such a connection. Apart from the figures in both works being depicted with open mouths and furrowed foreheads that suggest discomfort, there seems little further similarity. The figure of Christ in the Le Mas painting has a large aquiline nose, as opposed to Rembrandt’s own broad nose as seen in his self-images; further, the figure displays less pronounced cheek

³⁹ Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 288-9 and 372; DeWitt, ‘Testing Nature Against Tradition: Rembrandt’s radical new image of Jesus’, 111-112.

⁴⁰ Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 19.

⁴¹ 1 Cor. 9:22.

bones, a more prominent jaw line and much straighter hair. I would suggest that there is actually a closer resemblance between the features of Christ in the *Christ on the Cross* and those depicted in Rembrandt's *Raising of Lazarus* painted a year earlier (fig. 172). Secondly, although the use of his own features in the early self-image etchings established an identifiable visual repository of expression, if the connection is evaluated from a perspective such as Baxandall's 'period eye', would Rembrandt have been as bold as to lend his own recognizable features to a representation of our Lord?⁴²

In the circumspect Reformed *milieu* of the early seventeenth-century Dutch Republic it seems highly unlikely. In such a *milieu*, for a twenty-five year old painter seeking to make a name for himself, it would surely have been seen as supremely arrogant, if not blasphemous. On no occasion in their body of poetry does Donne, Huygens or any of their contemporaries assume the role of Christ himself. As argued, much of their work was based on the pattern of meditation as described by Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises*. At no point in the *Exercises* does Ignatius suggest that the retreatant imagine himself as Christ. The *conchetto* for the Le Mas *Christ on the Cross* is not consonant with Ignatian meditation. I suggest that Rembrandt: makes little attempt to 'compose a place', that is a wide 'historical' view of the scene, he does not imagine himself as a 'participant' in the event or create any real sense of a privileged view-point for a 'spectator'; further, the painting does not tend to invite a series of questions and answers (an Ignatian Colloquy), prayer and meditation, in quite the same way as the *Passion Series* works do. Although undeniably linked to the *Passion Series* by subject and format, I suggest that the Le Mas *Christ on the Cross* remains a pictorial trial piece, perhaps emulating Rubens. I believe it is not a work that was intended to function in the same manner as the later *Passion Series* paintings. Although iconographically a Crucifixion traditionally should have been a part of any *Passion Series*, in this case I suggest it was conceptually not what Rembrandt's patrons in The Hague had in mind. As patrons were well accustomed to commissioning works of art, why else did they not order a Crucifixion? Similarly, they were well accustomed to commissioning works of art for specific spaces; therefore, the work may have simply been too icon-like (Catholic) to have been hung in the Stadholder's gallery. The largely devotional aspect clearly separates it from the more narrative *Passion Series* works. Between the paintings *Christ on the Cross* and the *Descent from the Cross* a change occurred. I suggest that in the interim Huygens consulted with Rembrandt regarding the *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* paintings. Schwartz has similarly

⁴² Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, 56-7.

stated categorically that he believes Rembrandt would not have inserted his own self-image into the *Descent* and later the *Raising* without discussion with and agreement from Huygens.⁴³

The Self-Image in the *Descent from the Cross*

In the *Descent*, Rembrandt emphasises, through colour contrast, the group of figures attentively participating in lowering the body of Christ. In particular the viewer's attention is drawn to, against the grey sky, the blue tunic of the figure halfway up the ladder on the pictorial left (fig. 173) and the golden garment of the figure with outstretched arms at the foot of the Cross, receiving the body of Christ (fig. 174). F. Grossmann in 1950 remarked that the features of the man on the ladder bore a resemblance to earlier Rembrandt self-images, 'painted four or five years earlier and preserved in his studio'.⁴⁴ Although there is some resemblance between the features of the two figures in the early history paintings and the figure on the ladder in the *Descent*, the connection is tentative at best. As Grossmann further suggests, a closer identification and a more significant one can be made between the figure supporting Christ at the base of the Cross and concurrent self-images of the artist.⁴⁵ The features of the artist in the two aforementioned self-images, one in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 168) and especially another in the Alte Pinakothek (fig. 35), closely resemble those of this figure. The tousled hair, broad nose and open mouth in the Munich painting all identify the figure beside the Cross in the *Descent* as Rembrandt himself. The figure makes a significant contribution to the narrative. As Perlove and Silver have noted Rembrandt does not so much 'fuse his identity' (in the manner of a *portrait historié*) with any of his historical figures, but rather assumes an empathetic, personal role.⁴⁶ In the action of the scene this is the figure that is literally cast in the role of the medieval 'Christ-bearer'.⁴⁷ Not only does he physically, with knees bent, take the full weight of the body but metaphorically imbibes Christ's message as his mouth is positioned close to the body of Christ.⁴⁸ The proximity of the figure to the body and blood of Christ, especially given that his mouth is open as if to receive, clearly

⁴³ Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 152.

⁴⁴ F. Grossmann, 'The Rembrandt Exhibition at Schaffhausen', *The Burlington Magazine* 92:562 (1950): 8-12, 8 and n. 1.

⁴⁵ Grossmann, 'The Rembrandt Exhibition at Schaffhausen', 8.

⁴⁶ Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith*, 292-3.

⁴⁷ See Larry Silver, 'Christ Bearer: Dürer, Luther and Saint Christopher', in *Essays in Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann*, edited by Anne-Marie Logan (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1983), 239-44.

⁴⁸ See Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, 238-40. In this section of her book Woods-Marsden discusses 'The Pious Self'.

implies Eucharist associations. Surely this interpretation could have not gone unnoticed by Rembrandt's patrons, who for whatever reason did not object. Perhaps because the role of 'Christ-bearer' had meaningful associations for a Reformed audience, St. Christopher was synonymous with the role. This has been explained by Luther:

So in Christopher we have an example and a picture that can strengthen us in our suffering and teach us that fear and trembling is not as great as the comfort and promise, and that we should therefore know that in this life we shall have no rest if we are bearing Christ, but rather that in affliction we should turn our eyes way from the present suffering to the consolation and the promise...⁴⁹

For those in the audience who might make the connection, there are political implications in Luther's message for the newly independent Dutch Republic. Furthermore, I suggest that when the crowds had exited the Stadholder's gallery, the rich, princely garment that the lower 'Rembrandt' figure is wearing may have aided Frederick Hendrick in identifying with this figure during a short morning prayer.

In this sense the self-images of Rembrandt in the *Passion Series* works could be seen as an extension of the portrait figures of donors, common in devotional imagery from the fifteenth century, participants as pious witnesses to Christ's suffering.⁵⁰ However, there is a complexity that Rembrandt creates in this new form of self-identification that goes far beyond mere witness. As Schama comments, Rembrandt's imposition of his self-image into the scriptural scene was neither novel nor, more importantly, blasphemous but: 'Instead of intruding himself onto the sacred spectacle, Rembrandt was attempting to immerse himself as completely within it as all those who wrote about history painting advised'.⁵¹ It is the totality of this 'immersion' that differentiates the self-image in the *Descent* from that in the *Raising*.

The Self-Image in the *Raising of the Cross*

While the self-image in the *Descent* promotes relatively straight-forward feelings of sympathy and compassion as the artist, and by implication the viewer, suffers with Christ; the self-image in the *Raising* intensifies extraordinarily the emotional impact of traditional Passion imagery. In the very centre of the painting the most prominent of Christ's

⁴⁹ Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 51, 201-03.

⁵⁰ For a discussion of donor portraits see Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European portrait-painting in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), esp. 81 and 220.

⁵¹ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 294. Schama does not mention who 'all those who wrote about history painting' are, however he can only be referring to van Mander.

executioners (fig. 175) bears an unmistakable resemblance to concurrent self-portrayals by Rembrandt. The figure's facial features correspond to yet another small etching (fig. 176); and an even closer association can be made with two related self-portraits, one of 1633 in the Louvre and the other of 1634 in Berlin (figs 177 and 178). Further, the significance of the self-image is far greater than a simple likeness, as Schama has commented: 'it's Rembrandt himself who is literally the dramatic fulcrum of the entire work'.⁵² This contrasts notably to the possible artist self-image figure in Rubens' *Raising* who is not compositionally or narratively crucial. The compositional centrality of Rembrandt's self-image in the painting is accentuated by lighting which particularises his facial features, silhouetted against the grey of the centurion's horse, and also accentuates the artist's elegant blue chemise and jerkin.

Further, Rembrandt is identified as a painter by wearing a colour-match beret, unlike in the earlier self-portrayals in which he had included a self-image within an historical scene. Griffey comments that it was Rembrandt and his circle that revived a sixteenth-century style of dress that included the beret as a professional symbol of painters.⁵³ Interestingly, Rembrandt had also depicted himself wearing the painter's beret in the aforementioned self-portrait now in Liverpool, one of only two (authenticated) self-portraits in which Rembrandt had represented himself with the attribute of a liberal artist prior to the *Passion Series*.⁵⁴ As Chapman has noted the inclusion of a self-image in the *Raising* can have no promotional purpose, as his 'behaviour' as one of Christ's executioners directly contradicts any advertisement of virtue.⁵⁵ Additionally, she comments that the role Rembrandt assumes for himself in this painting 'induces the beholder to experience the work (as opposed to other self-portrayals) at a higher level of moral and emotional involvement'.⁵⁶ This would seem to be in keeping with, as this thesis suggests, a sustained concern by Rembrandt in creating a affective relationship between image and viewer in the *Passion Series* works.

⁵² Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 294.

⁵³ Griffey, 'The Artist's Roles', 91. Griffey also notes that she found no berets listed in artist's inventories she studied, which she suggests may indicate that instead of actually owning them they copied them from sixteenth-century portraits of artists, which would denote them as more of an affectation than practical dress.

⁵⁴ The other two are: *Self-Portrait*, c.1629, oil on panel, 49.7 x 37.3 cm, Museum of Art, Atami, Japan. *Corpus*, A 22. Not in Bredius. There are at least six copies of this particular self-portrait. One, in the Indianapolis Museum, is so close to the original that it is almost certain to have been produced in Rembrandt's studio. Another possible early self-image wearing a beret may be: *Self-Portrait*, 1630, oil on copper, 15 x 12.2 cm, National Museum, Stockholm. *Corpus*, B 5. Bredius, 11. The *Corpus* is undecided over authenticity, vol. 1, 424.

⁵⁵ Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits*, 111.

⁵⁶ Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits*, 111.

The Etched *Descent from the Cross* and the Self-Images as Everyman

As I have shown, the *Passion Series* would have been viewed in the Stadholder's gallery by a broad audience from a wide range of confessional identities. Rembrandt's iconography reflects this universal appeal. In the *Descent*, although the self-image figure is wearing an elegant garment he is depicted with no footwear, a paradox hitherto unaddressed by scholars. The bare feet however correspond to traditional iconography for St. Christopher who, as I have already noted, was traditionally portrayed as the 'Christ-bearer'. This iconography is seen in depictions of the saint in the central panel of Memling's *Moreel Triptych* of 1484 in Bruges (fig. 179), works by the likes of Giovanni Bellini and Perugino in Italy and, of course, the outer left wing of Rubens' *Descent* altarpiece in Antwerp (fig. 180).⁵⁷ In the etching (fig. 41) Rembrandt produced of the *Descent*, undoubtedly for an even wider audience, the self-image of the artist corresponds not so closely to the figure beside the Cross holding Christ's body but to the figure half-way up the ladder on the pictorial right (fig. 181). However, it is not a strong likeness. In the etching this figure has a somewhat less empathic role than the self-image in the painting. Rather than concentrating on receiving the body, which suggests a personal connection with Christ, this figure stares out of the pictorial space, with a disapproving frown, accusingly at the viewer. He seems to ask Ignatian-style questions such as: what are you doing for Christ? His function, in accordance with his imprecise, indeterminate 'self-image' appearance appears more general, which is consistent with the wider audience for the etching, when compared with the parallel figure in the *Descent* painting. The latter self-image figure plays a more particular identification-based role. Although now wearing sandals, the figure, with rough, coarse features, is depicted in a garment with a large rear patch, clearly indicating that he is of humble origin. Although the figure does denote humility, appropriate to the broader market for the print, the change between the two works is significant; again, highlighting the special nature of the self-images in the paintings. However, both the bare feet of the painting's self-image and the patched tunic of the etching's possible self-image suggest that these self-portrayals represent a duality – the artist who both the patrons and some viewers would recognise but also the artist as Everyman. This may correspond to a desire by Rembrandt (and possibly by his patrons too, in regard to the painting) to include an identifiable Everyman figure in the *Passion Series*

⁵⁷Giovanni Bellini, *San Giovanni Crisostomo Altarpiece*, 1513, oil on canvas, 200 x 156 cm, San Giovanni Crisostomo, Venice. Perugino, *Christ Crucified between St. Jerome Penitent and St. Christopher*, c.1473, oil on panel, 59 x 40 cm, Galleria Borghese, Rome.

paintings – the *Descent*, the *Raising*, and as I will argue, the *Entombment*. The theory that these self-images may be a personification of the medieval figure (theatrical character) of Everyman was first suggested by Bergström; however, it was solely in relation to the *Raising*.⁵⁸

In his article Bergström discusses a work by Rembrandt executed shortly after the first two *Passion Series* works, *Rembrandt and Saskia* (fig.182) of c.1635-36 now in Dresden. He comments that in this work Rembrandt portrays himself in the role of the Prodigal Son in the tavern as related in the biblical parable from Luke's Gospel.⁵⁹ In demonstrating that such self-depiction was not without precedent in Rembrandt's *oeuvre*, Bergström cites the self-image in the *Raising*. He views it as corresponding to the medieval idea of Man, who by his incessant sinning makes the wounds of Christ bleed again and again.⁶⁰ As mentioned earlier, he refers to an iconographic tradition, the frontispiece of Dürer's *Large Passion* (fig. 183) of 1511, which shows the seated Christ sitting as the Man of Sorrows with His wounds bleeding. From a position higher in the pictorial space than that of Christ, Everyman mocks Him. To elaborate the context Bergström cites Chelidonium's accompanying verse:

These cruel wounds I bear for thee, O man, / And cure they mortal sickness
with my blood. / I take away thy sores with myne, thy death / With mine – a
God who changed to man for thee, / But thou, ingrate, still stabb'st my
wounds with sins; / I still take floggings for thy guilty acts.⁶¹

The thrust of these sentiments seems entirely in keeping with the assertion in Rembrandt's *Raising*. As one of Christ's executioners, Rembrandt literally 'flogs' Christ as he inflicts pain; on behalf of an inherently sinful and 'ingrate' audience, the artist as Everyman takes on the role. Interestingly, especially given that Alpers has shown Rembrandt's fondness for the theatre, Bergström also shows how this guise is analogous with the character 'Juliaen' in Willem Dircksz Hooft's (1594-1658) drama, *Heden-daeghsche ver looren soon*, published and performed in Amsterdam in 1630.⁶² Bergström's suggestion that the self-image in the *Raising* corresponds to the artist in the theatrical role of an Everyman figure finds support from Schama. As cited earlier, for Schama, 'cast as *Elk* the Painter, Rembrandt manages to

⁵⁸ Bergström, 'Rembrandt's Double-Portrait', 164-66.

⁵⁹ Luke 11:15-32.

⁶⁰ Bergström, 'Rembrandt's Double-Portrait', 164-6.

⁶¹ As translated from the Latin by Panofsky, *Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 138-9.

⁶² Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise*, chapter II, 'The Theatrical Model', 34-57; Bergström, 'Rembrandt's Double-Portrait', 162-3.

equate the act of painting with the Crucifixion of the Saviour'.⁶³ Both scholars therefore introduce the idea of the artist's self-image as a personification of a theatrical character and allude to the source – *Everyman* (or the Dutch original *Elckerlyc*), without further elaboration. I have therefore attempted to correlate the two corresponding roles.

Towards the end of the play *Elckerlyc*, the character of Everyman is in turn abandoned by Beauty ('Schoonheit'), Strength ('Cracht') and Intellect ('Vroetscap'); he goes to meet his God accompanied only by Virtue ('Duecht'), to whom he has been earlier introduced by her sister Contrition ('Kennisse'). Possibly in the *Raising* the artist, through the figure bearing his own features, can be viewed as acting out a similar role. He has eschewed Beauty in the slightly earlier 'beggar' etchings (fig. 184) in which his appearance is similar to the self-image in the painting. His lack of Strength is suggested by the fact that he contributes little physically to the actual raising of the Cross. Further, his expression and lack of engagement with the viewer may suggest a lack of Intellect. On a positive note, the figure conveys Virtue tempered with Contrition; through the act of painting, Rembrandt displays his Virtue as an act of Contrition. I suggest therefore that in the *Raising*, Rembrandt not only casts himself in the guise of Everyman, but also may be playing out the role as per the theatrical text; in a manner not dissimilar to the Dresden double-portrait. Through an implied theatricality, Rembrandt displays in the *Raising* the artist's struggle to seek salvation by employing the three powers of the soul wisely – memory, understanding and will – in keeping with meditative practice as prescribed by Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises*.

The Self-Image in the *Entombment*

In this thesis I argue that in his *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* Rembrandt utilizes the form and imaginative strategy of Ignatian meditation to unify the series. In doing so I have suggested that the third *Passion Series* work, the *Entombment*, features a third self-image of the artist. In the *Entombment* the features of the figures in the middle ground are easier to distinguish in the reliable copies of the work than in Rembrandt's original painting. The *Corpus* records five note-worthy copies: one in a private collection, two in the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden, one in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig and one in the Boijmans-van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam; the latter is the largest of the five

⁶³ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 294.

copies and the self-image in it is the clearest (fig. 185).⁶⁴ In the centre of the group depicted in the middle ground, between the backs of two figures leaning in different directions, is the face of a man wearing a beret (fig. 186). The motif of the beret not only identifies this figure as an artist but links him to the similarly beret-wearing figure in the *Raising*. Since Lengl's aforementioned article the suggestion that this is a further self-image of Rembrandt had found little traction in the literature, although the *Corpus* does mention it in passing, until Schama reintroduces the idea by suggesting that this is another conflation of the Everyman/artist persona.⁶⁵

In my view Schama is right. Close inspection of the copies available leaves one in no doubt that this is another self-image of the artist in a *Passion Series* work. Although clean shaven, the rounded cheeks of the face and serious intent in the gaze of the figure are reminiscent of the beret-wearing self-image in Berlin (fig. 178) of 1634. By way of identification with this figure as both artist and Everyman, Rembrandt implicates the viewer in the scene, in a manner similar to the accusatory stare of the centurion in the *Raising*. The gaze of this figure, seems to implore the viewer to ask themselves, yet again: What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ? In painting himself both as an Ignatian 'participant' and imagining himself as an Ignatian 'spectator' at the event in his *conchetto* for the *Entombment*, Rembrandt not only establishes creative unity with the earlier works but immerses himself in the artist/narrator role.

Further Self-Imagery in the Wider Oeuvre

This complete self-immersion differs when compared to the self-images in the earlier history paintings and, remarkably, it also differs when compared to a contemporary oil sketch, *Christ before Pilate and the People* of 1634 (fig. 187) now in London, which I believe contains a further self-image. This grisaille, executed between the *Passion Series Raising* and *Ascension*, was a preparatory sketch for a large etching (fig. 188) executed in five states, during the same 1633-1636 interval. Stylistically the work is similar to the *Passion* paintings. With regard to the subject, it depicts an event from earlier in the *Passion*, as related in all four Gospels – the chief priests and elders persuading a reluctant Pilate to spare Barabbas, thereby condemning

⁶⁴ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. III, 278-79.

⁶⁵ Lengl, 'Beiträge zu den Bildern Rembrandt's', 53; Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. III, 276; Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 442.

Christ.⁶⁶ Rembrandt sets the confused scene in a classical Roman setting, framed on one side by a column featuring a bust of an emperor. In view of the setting, somewhat incongruously the figures are dressed in a wide variety of costume: classical, oriental and contemporary. The facial features of the individual figures are more clearly discernible in the highly detailed etching than in the painting. All are engaged in varying degrees responding to the action; some are highly animated. One central figure is of another beret-wearing man, almost certainly identifying him as an artist; he leans over a stone ledge to see and hear the action more clearly. Although the figure also appears in the grisaille, he is more clearly delineated in the etching (fig. 189), the only figure to stare straight-out of the pictorial space and engage the viewer. If this is indeed another self-image of Rembrandt in a work of a related subject executed in the middle of the *Passion Series*, how does this self-portrayal function when compared to the self-images in those paintings?

The self-image figure in both the grisaille and etching, *Christ before Pilate and the People*, is not involved in the action as an Ignatian ‘participant’, as I have argued for the corresponding figures in the first two *Passion Series* works. The fanciful nature of the setting and incongruity of dress preclude ‘historical’ accuracy and these make it difficult to view the scene as a ‘composed place’ consonant with the method of Ignatian meditation. Rather than part of an Ignatian-like imaginative strategy, the self-image seems most likely to have been incorporated as a self-promotional device, a function underscored by the highly detailed virtuosity of the etching. The etched *Christ before Pilate and the People* appears to have been executed as a sort of pendant to the etched *Descent* (as based on the *Passion Series* painting); they are the only two (or possibly three) etchings Rembrandt ever sought to have copyrighted.⁶⁷ Schwartz has shown that the widespread dissemination of the two etchings certainly helped Rembrandt establish an international reputation.⁶⁸ Additionally, Schwartz was the first to suggest that these works may have been part of a larger project for a commercially driven etched *Passion Series*.⁶⁹ The Rembrandt Research Project expands on this idea in an essay in volume V of the *Corpus* by suggesting that eight other grisailles of *Passion* subjects from the 1630s were preparatory sketches for this other proposed *Passion*

⁶⁶ Matt 27:11-26, Mark 15:1-15, Luke 23:13-24, John 18:33-40.

⁶⁷ The *Descent* is signed ‘Rembrandt f. cum pryvl’; The *Christ before Pilate* is signed ‘Rembrandt f. 1636 cum privile’. Additionally, *The Good Samaritan*, 1633, etching with burin, 25.3 x 20.3 cm, is signed ‘Rembrandt inventor et Feecit’. Exactly to what body Rembrandt was claiming copyright privilege from is unclear as there was no corresponding authority in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. See Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 286; and Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 112.

⁶⁸ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 112.

⁶⁹ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 112.

Series project.⁷⁰ Notably, none of the other grisailles, with the tentative exception of the *St. John the Baptist Preaching* in Berlin (figs 190 and 191), seems to include self-images of the artist. This fascinating idea of a further Passion Series aimed at a wider market as suggested in the *Corpus* further highlights the complex, if not unique, nature of the self-images in the paintings in Munich.

Previous scholars have endeavoured to explain the significance of the self-images in Rembrandt's *Passion Series* largely by way of analogy with literary expression. In his 1986 monograph Tümpel was one of the first to discuss the self-images in the works as consistent with both contemporary theology and artistic thought, a connection I endeavour to confirm in this thesis.⁷¹ Tümpel viewed the self-images as an adoption by Rembrandt of a first-person persona in the manner of contemporary devotional poetry, an idea for which I indebted and have developed herein.⁷² His ideas were advanced by virtually all other major scholars who have written about the *Passion Series*: Schwartz, Chapman, Schama, Westermann, Perlove and Silver. While this thesis builds on these approaches, I also follow Chapman's assertions in her recent article as she contests claims that Rembrandt's self-imagery was largely commercially driven. In suggesting further layers of complexity I have attempted to deepen rather than simplify. Similarly Chapman, in seeking to re-mystify Rembrandt's self-portrayal, as the title of her article indicates, hopes to 'reclaim the passion of the inner Rembrandt'. More than anywhere else earlier or later in the *oeuvre*, the artist's inner passion blazes forth, more brazen and yet paradoxically more profound, in the *Passion Series* self-images. It is an inner passion others attempt to emulate but never really capture. This will be demonstrated in the subsequent legacy, as constructed in the following chapter, of the *Passion Series*. The special nature of Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the series lends it that elusive, unique quality that resists emulation.

⁷⁰ Van de Wetering, *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 176-184.

⁷¹ Tümpel, *All the paintings*, 136.

⁷² Tümpel, *All the paintings*, 136.

Chapter Seven: The Legacy of the *Passion Series*

The *Passion Series* Perpetuated

Erwin Panofsky described Dürer's depiction of Christ, on the aforementioned frontispiece for the *Large Passion*, as evoking the idea of a 'perpetual Passion'.¹ Dürer portrays Christ as a figure who has completed His Passion and yet continues to be tormented by the sins of mankind. Panofsky comments that this image of Christ as 'Man of Sorrows' had wide-spread contemporary currency.² This idea can be seen as analogous to a theme Rembrandt explores in the *Passion Series*, discussed in the previous chapter, of the artist as Everyman who takes onto himself the sins of mankind. Although the last of the five paintings of Christ's Passion initially commissioned by Frederick Hendrick was delivered in 1639, the influence of the works, nurtured by Rembrandt's life-long interest in the life of Christ, would resonate with the artist and his studio for many years in a sort of perpetual Passion. This interest was realised first in two additional paintings for The Hague. Secondly, it was explored in a series of graphic works of Passion subjects. Finally, the *Passion* works proved keenly influential in the work of Rembrandt's pupils and followers. In a discussion of these topics, I construct a narrative pictorial legacy for the *Passion Series*.

Why Two More Works?

The history of the *Passion Series* commission does not end with the five paintings delivered to the Stadholder's residence in The Hague between 1633 and 1639. In 1646, just a year before he died, Frederick Hendrick commissioned two further paintings from Rembrandt. They are the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 13) now also in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich and a since lost *Circumcision* (fig. 14). The appearance of the latter is now known through an apparently faithful copy in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig.³ Outwardly, these two works bear no thematic or narrative relationship to the earlier scenes, other than also being episodes from the life of Christ. Given the arguably separate subject matter of

¹ Panofsky, *Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 138-39.

² Panofsky, *Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 139.

³ The evidence for the reliability of the copy in Braunschweig is discussed in my catalogue entry for the *Circumcision*.

these two new works, it is difficult to see how the seven works when displayed together constitute a coherent ‘series’. The 1668 inventory of the collection of Amalia van Solms, which lists ‘seven paintings made by Rembrandt’, does suggest such a possibility.⁴ The explanation that the inventory simply records collectively all of the artist’s works can be discounted, as there are several other Rembrandts listed separately from these paintings.⁵ The two new works were executed in a similar arch-shaped format and were of a similar size to the earlier five; thus it seems unlikely that they were commissioned to add to the collection solely because of the artist’s fame, although this aspect cannot be fully discounted. In an analysis of the seven ‘*Passion Series*’ paintings collectively, two questions arise: why two further works after a gap of seven years and why these two subjects? Few clues are found in the Rembrandt literature. Schwartz’s comment that the commission appeared ‘out of a clear blue sky’ is characteristic of the way in which the challenges presented by the two new works present have tended to be glossed over.⁶

Like the earlier five works, the commission for the latter two paintings is well documented. A passage in Frederick Hendrick’s *Ordinantieboek* (Warrant Book) of 1641-1647, dated 29 November 1646, records an order to pay: ‘N. Rembrandt, painter in Amsterdam, the sum of two thousand four hundred carolus guilders in the matter of two paintings made and delivered in the service of His Highness, the one ‘The Birth of Christ,’ and the other ‘Christ’s Circumcision’.⁷ Ironically and startlingly, a point apparently hitherto unnoticed, is that this is the same amount that Rembrandt, in his correspondence with Huygens, had requested unsuccessfully as payment for the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection*. Further, it is twice as much as the patrons had paid for the earlier five works. Clearly, despite frequent suggestions otherwise, Rembrandt post-*Night Watch*, now commanded higher prices.⁸ The accumulation

⁴ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, vol. I, #1240 at 285.

⁵ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, vol. I, 239-292.

⁶ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 239.

⁷ ‘N. Rembrant, schilder tot Amsterdam, de somme van twee duysent vier hondert Carolusgulden, ter saecke da thy ten dienste van Syne Hoochheyt heft gemaect ende geleverd twee schilderijen, d’eeme van de geboorte Christi, en d’ander van de besnijdinge Christi’. *Ordinantie-boek van Frederick Hendrick 1641-1647*, Koninklijk Archief, The Hague, 442. In Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1646, #6 at 249 and *Corpus*, vol. V, 441. The ‘N.’ before ‘Rembrandt’ is an abbreviation of ‘Naam’ (‘name’), its function is to designate the person being paid.

⁸ A popular misconception, originating in nineteenth-century Romantic notions of the misunderstood artist and perpetuated through the first half of the twentieth century, was that due to the (supposedly, yet unproven) poor reception of the so-called *Night Watch* of 1642, Rembrandt’s fame and fortune took a down turn culminating in his bankruptcy of 1656. *The Company of Frans Banning Cock Preparing to March Out* (‘*The Night Watch*’), 1642, oil on canvas, 363 x 437 cm (cut down from approx. 440 x 500 cm), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

of documented evidence, here and earlier, tends to suggest both Hendrick and Huygens considered that these two subjects had a special relationship with the earlier Passion scenes.

In a recent, aforementioned article entitled 'The Missing Link', Thomas Ketelsen partially resolves the riddle. In his article Ketelsen discusses the Braunschweig copy of the *Circumcision*, which he contends holds the key to thematically unifying the entire series. Throughout the article, Ketelsen places great store in the number seven as there are now seven paintings in the series. He comments that the subject of the *Circumcision* has a logical place in Christian theology as part of a pictorial series that portrays 'The Life of Christ' and 'The Life of Mary'; it is recognised as one of the 'Seven Blood Offerings of Christ' and is related to 'The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin'.⁹ In arguing for a thematic unity across the entire seven-painting series, Ketelsen sees the *Ascension* as its logical centre-piece. He then groups the *Circumcision* with the earliest series paintings, the *Descent* and the *Raising*, as they each reference Blood Offerings. In support of his argument, Ketelsen notes that the *Circumcision* was seen by some Christians as a pre-figuration of the Crucifixion.¹⁰ Further, he argues that advocates of Pauline theology viewed the *Circumcision* as the link between the Old and New Testaments, an interval demarcated by Christ's Life and Passion.¹¹ While Ketelsen convincingly links the *Circumcision* to the other five *Passion Series* works; he makes little effort to incorporate the *Adoration* into the series in a similar way, as his grouping of the works would by extension place the *Adoration* with the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection*. While the latter two neatly fit into his thesis as 'Sorrows', the *Adoration* does not.

Ketelsen's does however note, as I do, the emphasis Rembrandt places on depicting the dual nature of Christ as both human and divine.¹² I suggest that the *Circumcision* and the *Adoration* complement the earlier five works by depicting the first moments, as recorded in Scripture, that Christ is recognised respectively as human and divine. The subject of the *Circumcision* provides a clear point of departure (blood, pain) for contemplation of Passion events. Similarly, the subject of the *Adoration* references an appropriate emotional response, reverence and humility, although chronologically incongruous after the Passion. Both subjects also reflect the Passion themes of life, death and rebirth: the *Adoration* is a birthing

⁹ Ketelsen, 'The Missing Link', 139.

¹⁰ Ketelsen, 'The Missing Link', 140.

¹¹ Ketelsen, 'The Missing Link', 141.

¹² Ketelsen, 'The Missing Link', 144.

scene, while the Circumcision represents a little death that signals a rebirth in the new Covenant. Additionally, both these subjects reflect Reformed theology.

Theologically, the subject of the Adoration of the Shepherds is much more acceptable to a Reformed audience than the related subject, the Adoration of the Magi.¹³ In Scripture, the Shepherds were not only the first to recognise the divinity of the Christ child but also, due to their humble nature; instinctively (faith alone) knew where to find Him. Conversely, the lordly Magi have to seek Him; they are sent by Herod and guided by a star (works) to Bethlehem. The adoration of Christ by the Magi suggests the saviour as resplendent in human glory; while the simple Shepherds reflect a love of a God so great that He has debased himself in human form to act as their servant. Likewise, when Christ submits to circumcision at the hands of others, it is a debasement of His divine self in which Christ's true nature is veiled by the human act of blood-letting. In the *Circumcision*, the honour due to God is present despite outward appearances.

This understanding of the event is implied by Calvin in his commentary on 1 Timothy: 'the honour due to the Son of God did not dwell in outward splendour and magnificence, nor in the glory of this world, but that it was of an almost spiritual nature'.¹⁴ Here, Calvin instructs the Reformers that Christ's coming into this world is not a demonstration of God's power and glory but a descent of God, intelligible only through faith, in which the lowliness of the flesh hides the divine majesty. In Reformed theology, the ability to understand the Nativity as a mixture of humility and debasement determines the response to the events of the Passion. This is the meaning that Calvin ascribes to Paul's letter to the Philippians:

But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death on the Cross.¹⁵

These verses clearly link the humility of the Nativity with the events of the Passion. The subjects of the Adoration of the Shepherds and the Circumcision are ideal vehicles for conveying this message; thus from these two further paintings, the viewer can obtain an understanding of the Nativity that underscores the ability to respond to the tensions that the

¹³ For example in the *oeuvre* of the great Catholic artist Rubens there are only two representations of the Adoration of the Shepherds and eight of the Adoration of the Magi.

¹⁴ Calvin, 'Commentary on 1 Timothy', 3, 16. In *Calvin: Commentaries* translated and edited by Joseph Haroutunian and Louise Smith (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1999), 98.

¹⁵ Philippians 2:7-8.

Gospel Passion narratives present. Just as Bethlehem is the site for the infancy struggle between life and death, Golgotha is the scene of ultimate debasement. Although Ignatius sees the events of the Nativity in similar terms of humility, he introduces a subjective element into the conversation; it does not necessarily contradict the Reformers, but enhances understanding of the event. Ignatius, in his commentary emphasizes the ongoing fascination with God's decision to redeem mankind by sending His only Son. This message is facilitated by both the authenticated Rembrandt painting, the *Adoration*, and the copy of the *Circumcision*, which feature key *repoussoir* figures that mediate between the viewer and the scene.

Ignatius Contemplates the Infancy of Christ

The Nativity is the subject of the Second Contemplation of the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*. In the First Point, Ignatius instructs the retreatant to envisage himself thus: 'I will make myself a poor little unworthy slave, and as though present, look upon them, contemplate them, and serve them in their needs with all possible homage and reverence'.¹⁶ In his Third Point of the same exercise Ignatius implicitly links the hardships of the Nativity with the trials of the Passion. He instructs the retreatant to consider the participants 'making the journey and labouring that our Lord might be born in extreme poverty, and that after many labours...he might die on the Cross, and all this for me'.¹⁷ While Ignatius' first entreaty here to 'look, contemplate and serve' can be seen as analogous with the poses of all the kneeling shepherds in Rembrandt's *Adoration*, it is the gesture (after Rembrandt made alterations to the painting) of the foremost shepherd that most clearly reflects Ignatius' instruction to do so with 'all possible homage and reverence'. That shepherd's outstretched arms and open palms provide a clear cue to an appropriate response to the event. Further, I argue that the figure fuses the Ignatian 'spectator/participant' identity by acting as a de-facto viewer. The more reserved attitude of the corresponding figure in a contemporaneous workshop interpretation of the *Adoration* (fig. 192) now in London, provides pictorial evidence of the deliberate nature of the changes Rembrandt made to this *repoussoir* shepherd in the Munich painting (fig. 193). Does the modified figure create a link to the earlier *Passion Series* works? The answer, I argue, is no and yes. The earlier works do not feature clear *repoussoir* figures, but Rembrandt's use of the device in the later paintings is evidence of a

¹⁶ Ignatius, 114. In Ganss ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 150.

¹⁷ Ignatius, 116. In Ganss ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 151.

continued concern with *affectus*. He uses the *repoussoir* figures to create a meaningful bridge between scene and viewer. Additionally a similar figure is employed in the same fashion in the copy of the *Circumcision*.

The only mention of the Circumcision by Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* is as a suggested subject for ‘further mysteries’ recommended at the end of the Second Week for those wishing to engage further in contemplation of episodes from the Nativity of Christ.¹⁸ While this brief mention of the event does not provide any insights into Rembrandt’s conception of the scene, the placement and pose of the foreground female figure on the pictorial right in the Braunschweig *Circumcision* (fig. 194) can be related to Ignatius’ method of religious meditation. In turning towards the viewer and pointing the figure directs our attention to the central scene, which may suggest a further fusing of the Ignatian ‘spectator/participant’ role.

These relationships between the viewer and the scene created by the *repoussoir* figures in both the *Adoration* and the *Circumcision* broadly correspond to an evocation of an Ignatian persona. Clearly, this is not as direct, as powerful as the self-images of the artist in the earlier works. The *repoussoir* figures provide both examples and reminders of appropriate responses to the events depicted, which could facilitate further devotional contemplation or even a spontaneous simple prayer. Although it is difficult to see the works having this function in the public space that was the Stadholder’s gallery, they do present to the audience the suggestion of an on-going active piety at work in the executive residence. Although the seven works were inventoried together in 1668, whether they were hung together in the Stadholder’s gallery is not known. However, if the *Adoration* and *Circumcision* were hung one on each side of the first five paintings, the *repoussoir* figures would have functioned to attract the viewer’s gaze into the series. Once invited into one work, the viewer naturally, due to similarities of size and shape, progresses to the next. Alternatively, the *repoussoir* figures also, albeit to a lesser extent, provide a point of reference that gives the viewer’s eye permission to leave the series. Given the changes to the *Adoration* and the pictorial evidence provided by a 1645 drawing of the *Circumcision* (fig. 195) in Berlin, which features two foreground figures positioned in a similar manner, there may well have been some collaboration between artist and patrons in the *conchetto* for these works. Alternatively, just as easily, Rembrandt may have created these figures solely of his own accord. In any case, a study of the figures suggest a further unifying factor between these two paintings and the

¹⁸ Ignatius, 162. In Ganss ed., *Ignatius of Loyola*, 159.

earlier five *Passion Series* works: they not only suggest analogies with the imaginative strategies of Ignatian meditative practice, a *conchetto* that I argue Rembrandt employed in the earlier *Passion Series* works, but they also create pathways into, through and out of the series. Regardless of the approach, scholars will continue to be challenged – given the separate subject matter – to incorporate the later two works properly into the *Passion Series*. This task is made no easier by not only the abbreviated nature of the series but also by the way in which a wide range of diverse subjects can be and were included in any given pictorial *Passion Series*, a point illustrated by Rembrandt himself.

Two Other ‘Passion Series’

Collectively, Rembrandt’s core five-painting *Passion Series* is an abbreviated pictorial *Passion Cycle*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Rembrandt Research Project has suggested that the 1633 etching of the *Descent from the Cross*, based on the *Passion Series* painting, forms the first work for a graphic *Passion Series* that never came to full fruition.¹⁹ The *Corpus* postulates that Rembrandt envisaged that the etcher J.G. van Vliet (c.1610-1635) would execute the series and subsequently it would be published by Rembrandt’s then uncle-in-law, the art dealer Hendrick van Uylenburgh (c.1587-1661).²⁰ The other works identified as belonging to the series are all grisailles; the only one ever realised in an etching was the aforementioned 1636 *Christ before Pilate and the People* (fig. 188) that is based on the 1634 work of the same title now in London (fig. 187). The authors of the *Corpus* link an additional six grisailles to the proposed series.²¹ Interestingly, the associated works include such seemingly diverse ‘Passion’ subjects as the *Joseph Telling his Dreams*, c.1634, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (fig. 196), *John the Baptist Preaching*, 1634-35, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (fig. 190) and *The Adoration of the Magi*, 1633-35, State Hermitage, St. Petersburg (fig. 197). This last work was only recognised as a possible Rembrandt in 1969 and was initially rejected by the Rembrandt Research Project in volume II of the *Corpus* in 1986.²² In the essay in volume V of the *Corpus*, the Rembrandt Research Project argue that the above seemingly unrelated scenes fit within a *Passion Series* as they are consonant with the beliefs of the Mennonite Brotherhood to which Uylenburgh belonged.²³

¹⁹ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 176-184.

²⁰ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 177.

²¹ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 184.

²² Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 180. And Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, C 46, 595-602.

²³ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 179.

The assignment of distinct confessional identities to works or groups of works within Rembrandt's *oeuvre* is problematical, in part because of the wide range of biblical subjects Rembrandt depicted. The *Corpus* essay is interesting however as it illustrates an attempt to incorporate works into a Passion Series that have subjects that appear to bear no immediate relationship to the Passion of Christ. This suggests that the selection of subjects for inclusion in a 'Passion Series' is highly fluid and one in which the composition thereof may be tailored for a certain audience. As previously mentioned, Marrow has discussed medieval Northern Passion Cycles, both pictorial and literary, that describe only a limited range of scenes. I have also discussed van Leyden's two engraved Passions of nine and fourteen scenes respectively, and Dürer's *Large Passion* featuring twelve scenes and *Small Passion* of a remarkable thirty-seven scenes. This tradition seems to progressively increase the number of scenes, admittedly in a graphic format. Notably, when both these artists increase the number of scenes they concentrate on the more dramatic events of the Passion: Christ's 'trial' and post-Crucifixion subjects. Thus, the additional scenes therefore concentrate on how He suffers in his human nature, only to reveal His divine nature. While in the *Passion Series*, Rembrandt depicts only a limited number of scenes in keeping with a medieval tradition, his choice of scenes is comparable to those of his two great Northern predecessors in one major aspect: the series opens by showing Christ's physical and mental suffering. In my opinion, Rembrandt's series is distinctive in that he places a greater emphasis on eliciting a viewer response to the events. This also dictates a triumphant climax to the series – the *Ascension* – not a solemn one, like a Crucifixion. In my view the arguments advanced in the *Corpus* lend weight to two possible interpretations: that of a closer artist/patron relationship in the execution of Rembrandt's Passion Series commission than had previously been acknowledged; and that the focus on *affectus* in Rembrandt's *Passion Series* paintings is a manifest conclusion.

Rembrandt's response to the Passion of Christ is again explored in the mid-1650s in a series of graphic works that can also be viewed as part of a Passion Series, the two large dry-points of, *Christ Crucified Between Two Thieves* ('*The Three Crosses*') of 1653 (fig. 24) and *Christ Presented to the People* ('*Ecce Homo*') of 1655 (fig. 25). A number of other plates were polished in preparation for additional scenes in the series, but these were never executed.²⁴ They remained in the hands of the Amsterdam wine merchant and connoisseur Dirck van Cattenburgh (1616-1704), who may well have financed the series.²⁵ However the existence of

²⁴ White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, vol. I, 227.

²⁵ White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, vol. I, 228. And van de Wetering, *Corpus*, vol. IV, 311.

additional plates lends authority to include these two graphic works as part of a Passion Series. Each work can also be individually regarded as part of a ‘series’, as both were issued in a number of states, in which Rembrandt made changes, sometimes significant, to the image between each printing. It is this aspect of the works, a series within a series that interested Carroll in her 1981 article.²⁶ I am specifically indebted to Carroll’s scholarship and have endeavoured to build on the analogies she explores.

Carroll comments that Rembrandt’s re-workings of the two scenes were so extensive that by the final state the narrative itself was transformed.²⁷ She presents such narrative transformation as analogous to a meditational progression such as that found in seventeenth-century Reformed devotional poetry.²⁸ She describes the poetic process as exhibiting ‘a progression from vivid physical description to intense spiritual abstraction, whereby the artist and audience are brought progressively into a new, internalized understanding of the event and a greater immediacy of relationship to the Lord’.²⁹ Her investigation focuses on identifying a similarly analogous meditational progression in the sequence of narrative revisions of Rembrandt’s two prints; in her opinion, the viewer metaphorically replaces the crowds in the two scenes and is thus brought into an increasingly personal encounter with the figure of Christ. In turn Carroll acknowledges her debt, as I do in this thesis, to Martz’s *Poetry of Meditation* and the connections he explores between seventeenth-century devotional poetry and Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises*. But, in claiming that the changes between successive states correspond to a meditational progression does Carroll identify the same three-part Ignatian meditative method as I have for the *Passion Series* works? In order to gauge this we must first track, as Carroll does, the changes Rembrandt makes between successive states in the two works. This will allow us to evaluate whether Rembrandt continues in these works to conceive events from the Passion of Christ along Ignatian lines or whether the *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* is unique to that commission?

The ‘*Three Crosses*’ illustrates the scene from Christ’s Passion so notably missing from the painted *Passion Series*, the Crucifixion. More complex narratively than the relatively succinct episodes of the *Passion Series*, the work depicts Christ at the moment of His death on the Cross and the various responses from onlookers to that event; overwhelming grief is

²⁶ Carroll, ‘Rembrandt as Meditational Printmaker’. In addition to Carroll, Schwartz discusses these works as a ‘series’, *The Rembrandt Book*, 329-334.

²⁷ Carroll, ‘Rembrandt as Meditational Printmaker’, 585.

²⁸ Carroll, ‘Rembrandt as Meditational Printmaker’, 585.

²⁹ Carroll, ‘Rembrandt as Meditational Printmaker’, 585.

contrasted with sudden spiritual revelation and they are commingled in a tide of confusion as the heavens are torn asunder. In the fourth state (fig. 198 with the first state reproduced above for comparison), Rembrandt radically alters his response to the event and little effort is made to hide the marks of change. Great bands of strong vertical darkness now descend on both sides of the scene. The severe lighting brings both immediacy and a certain savagery to the event. Additionally, Rembrandt flattens the foreground, which allows for the figure of the crucified Christ, His body now modelled in more prominent relief, to move forward in the pictorial space. In this state there is no escape from the confrontation with the actuality of His death and suffering, which are presented as undeniable Christian truths. The theme of viewer confrontation with an uncomfortable Christian truth: that we, the viewers are as culpable in the condemnation and death of Christ as His persecutors were is also at the forefront of the *'Ecce Homo'*.

In the *'Ecce Homo'*, Christ, Pilate and his subordinates stand on a podium in front of an impressive civic building. The turbaned figure of Pilate, rod of office in hand, gestures to a barefoot shackled Christ as he presents Him to the crowd gathered below. Major compositional changes occur in the sixth state (fig. 199 with the first state reproduced above for comparison) onwards, up to the eighth state, as Rembrandt burnishes away the crowd in front of the podium, leaving marks in the form of shadowy smudges on the bare, now slightly dilapidated, wall. Two vaguely sketched arches are indicated at the base of the podium; the narrow strip of ground that the crowd once occupied has been stripped away. The weight of responsibility for the judgement regarding Christ's fate has now shifted from the crowd of onlookers to the viewer; moreover, the work now suggests the consequences of our actions. There is no escaping His gaze, direct and confrontational; the viewer, although cast as jury, paradoxically knows what His fate will be. By contrasting the forsaken yet steadfast Light of the World standing above the darkness of eternal damnation below, viewers are presented with choices also in the here and now of their own lives. It is without question a profoundly redemptive exchange. Therefore, from a pictorial standpoint Carroll is correct in claiming that in the works: 'time and space are condensed to heighten the viewer's sense of an instantaneous moment and of a direct encounter with Christ'.³⁰ However, do these compositional changes in the *'Ecce Homo'* and the *'Three Crosses'* represent a mediational sequence as Carroll has argued?

³⁰ Carroll, 'Rembrandt as Meditational Printmaker', 608-09.

That argument is based largely on thematic analogy. As Carroll demonstrates in her analysis of Huygens's 'Paeschen' ('The Passover') from *Heilighe Dagen (Holy Days)*, the revisions of successive states of the works correspond neatly with the thematic progression of seventeenth-century devotional poetry.³¹ Additionally, in their discussions of these two later series' of prints of Passion subjects, Tümpel, Westermann, Schwartz and Perlove and Silver all cite analogies with contemporary poetry.³² However, Carroll does not take her analysis further by asking if the works are in keeping with an identifiable meditational program. At no point does she identify an Ignatian 'spectator/ participant' role in a comparable manner to my argument regarding the *Passion Series* paintings. As Carroll argues, Rembrandt is progressively isolating the viewer in reliving the moment; in that isolation, the viewer is forced to confront personal culpability for the suffering and death of Christ. For her, the graphic works make a point, one crucial point; all humanity has on-going culpability for the death of Christ. The series of prints does not invite a sustained colloquy as I have argued the *Passion Series* paintings inspire. Therefore, while the later dry-points are thematically in congruence with contemporary devotional poetry, they do not seem to correspond to an identifiable mediational method or imaginative strategy. This series of prints do however allow us to draw further analogies with the work of contemporary poets in Rembrandt's circle. Such analogies prompt the question: if poetry and art share similar concerns, what thematic and stylistic similarities with the *Passion Series* do we find in the *oeuvres* of those most affected by Rembrandt's artistic practice – his numerous pupils?

Rembrandt's Pupils

In an illuminating article Broos has compiled a list of fifty-five painters, who from documented and stylistic evidence can be assumed to have trained with Rembrandt.³³ The names of twenty-five apprentices have been identified from seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century sources alone.³⁴ Some are names already familiar to us, Ferdinand Bol, Govaert Flinck, Samuel van Hoogstraten; others such as Johannes Gladbeck (1634-87) and

³¹ Carroll, 'Rembrandt as Meditational Printmaker', 586-87.

³² Westermann, *Rembrandt*, 280-81; Tümpel, *All the paintings*, n.127 at 381; Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith*, 286-87; Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, 331.

³³ Ben Broos, 'Fame Shared is Famed Doubled', in *The Impact of a Genius* (exhibition catalogue), edited by Guido Jansen (Amsterdam: Waterman, 1983), 35-58.

Among the large volume of literature referring to work by Rembrandt's pupils, this section of the thesis, in addition to the exhibition catalogue cited above (n.30) and the other cited below (n.33), is informed by two other exhibition catalogues: Blankert *et al*, *Rembrandt: A genius and his impact* and van de Wetering *et al*, *Rembrandt: Quest of a genius*.

³⁴ Broos, 'Fame Shared', 44-45.

Jacobs Levees (1634-75), whose claim to fame is that their names appear as witnesses to a document Rembrandt signed in 1653, are less familiar.³⁵ Bruyn has shown that Rembrandt's apprentices were slightly older than the usual age of twelve; therefore, many were not beginners but 'advanced' students or journeymen.³⁶ As Broos notes, that Rembrandt traded the marketable paintings of his pupils, often under his own name, is one of the few established facts we know about his studio practice.³⁷ Another fact is that copying the compositions of other artists, especially the master himself, was a common studio exercise. The considerable weight of Rembrandt's impact on his pupils and other artists in his circle is evidenced pictorially by the corrections he made to a studio drawing of the *Annunciation* (fig. 200) by Constantijn Daniel van Renesse (1626-1680) of c.1650-52 now in Berlin. Although chronologically much later than the *Passion Series*, Van Renesse is documented as working in Rembrandt's studio between 1649 and 1652; the sketch can be interpreted as representative of the impact of Rembrandt's pedagogical manner on the work of his pupil.³⁸ In the sketch, van Renesse has assiduously drawn a life-like angel in profile against a wall; Rembrandt 'corrects' the composition by turning the staid angel into a masterly play of light against the surface and a dominating figure of great power. On one hand, van Renesse may have been devastated by such a swift and sure transformation of his work; on the other hand, the changes to the sketch represent Rembrandt's ability to impart to his pupils the secrets of form filled with meaning.

A large-scale *Descent from the Cross* (fig. 201) from 1650-52 now in Washington has been attributed to van Renesse.³⁹ The painting represents a free variant of the *Passion Series Descent* and more specifically of the Hermitage *Descent* of 1634. The Hermitage *Descent* is thought to be one of two *Descents* listed in Rembrandt's 1656 inventory.⁴⁰ Could van Renesse's painting be the other *Descent* listed in that inventory? Schwartz believes that the Hermitage *Descent* was retained in Rembrandt's studio over the intervening years to serve as a model for pupils to copy; as was the etching after the *Passion Series* painting.⁴¹ Schwartz's suggestion has attracted support from the Rembrandt Research Project in the latest volume of

³⁵ Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1653 #16 at 305.

³⁶ Josua Bruyn, 'Rembrandt's Workshop: Function and production', in Brown, Kelch and van Thiel eds., *The Master and his Workshop*, 68-89, 69.

³⁷ Broos, 'Fame Shared', 40.

³⁸ Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1649 #5 at 270.

³⁹ Arthur Wheelock Jr., *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1995), #657, 300-09.

⁴⁰ Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, #'s 37 and 293 at 353 and 379.

⁴¹ Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 111.

the *Corpus*.⁴² Radiographic examination of the painting in Washington has revealed an original composition very similar to the Hermitage *Descent*, which suggests that the work may have initially been painted in the 1630s and that van Renesse has reworked a copy of that painting.⁴³ In the Washington *Descent* the multiple light sources of the Hermitage work have been reduced, the Cross has been brought forward and the figures given greater prominence, imbuing the work with a more reverential tone. The rethinking of the Hermitage composition and the repainting suggest that Rembrandt himself may have at least instigated the changes. If this scenario is reasonably correct, it demonstrates that the compositional ideas for depicting events from the Passion of Christ that were developed in the early 1630s continued to resonate through the studio some twenty years later. If these ideas did persist and the influence of the master was as strong as the aforementioned drawing suggests, then surely these impacts can be seen in the work of those artists who actually were in the studio over the time-frame in which Rembrandt executed the *Passion Series*.

From that period, Ferdinand Bol and Govaert Flinck were two of Rembrandt's most notable pupils; they both went on to become well established in Amsterdam. Bol entered Rembrandt's studio around 1636 when there is evidence that Rembrandt was already on-selling his works. He worked there until around 1642, when he established himself as an independent master.⁴⁴ In *The Holy Women at the Sepulchre* (fig. 202) of 1644, Bol presents a conception of the Resurrection from within the Sepulchre looking out, a view-point similar to Rembrandt's *Entombment*. Bol's strong, forthright, commanding angel is undoubtedly inspired by Rembrandt's treatment of this motif in the *Resurrection*. This point is reinforced by the figures of the kneeling woman and of the woman standing directly behind her, both directly derived from Rembrandt's *The Angel Leaving Tobias and his Family* of 1637 (fig. 203) in the Louvre. Likewise, in his early independent works, Govaert Flinck, who Houbraken informs us studied with Rembrandt from 1633 to 1636, closely follows in his master's footsteps.⁴⁵ His *Lamentation* (fig. 204) of 1637 takes Rembrandt's *Passion Series* works, as a whole, as a point of departure. Flinck depicts a moment just after Christ's Descent from the Cross with a ladder still in place; the lowering is supervised by a towering turbaned figure, as in Rembrandt's *Descent*, in the middle ground. He attempts to emulate Rembrandt's *Entombment* by showing a variety in degrees of mourning by outward pose and

⁴² Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 191.

⁴³ Wheelock, *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, 304-06.

⁴⁴ Blankert, *Bol*, 17.

⁴⁵ Houbraken, *Nederlandsche Konstschilders*, vol. II, 18-21.

gesture, including a focus on both the placement and emotional reaction of the Virgin. However, he fails to capture the empathy Rembrandt brings to the event; Flink's individual figures appear to be studies from disparate models giving the scene a choreographic-like feeling. Therefore, in the early works of these two artists in the 1630s a reworking and borrowing of Rembrandt's compositional ideas from the first five *Passion Series* paintings are evident.

Later pupils appear to have been similarly influenced by the additional two *Passion Series* works. Samuel van Hoogstraten's second apprenticeship to Rembrandt was probably around 1642-44; his *Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 205) of 1647 was executed a year after the Rembrandt's *Adoration*, now in Munich. Although modifying Rembrandt's upright design into a horizontal format, the style, brushwork and palette all reference Rembrandt's painting. Also in the mid-1640s, the copy of the *Circumcision* was produced, probably by an (unidentified) pupil. In their discussion of this work the Rembrandt Research Project has drawn attention to the practice of pupils and associates borrowing individual motifs created by Rembrandt and then working them up into full-scale compositions.⁴⁶ An example of this practice is a *Mother and Child* (fig. 206) attributed to Barent Fabritius (1624-1673) of c.1646 now in Rotterdam. In the *Corpus*, the authors show how Barent's intimate couple are borrowed directly from the similar grouping in the lower left corner of the lost *Circumcision*.⁴⁷ Barent however was never a pupil of Rembrandt, although his brother Carel (1622-54) was; it was assumed that it was Carel who aroused his brother's interest in the master's work when he returned to Delft.⁴⁸ This is a good example of the scope of Rembrandt's contemporary influence.

The impact of the *Passion Series* paintings can also be seen in the work of artists who, as they were slightly older than Rembrandt, were not pupils and in most cases never even lived in the same city as he did.⁴⁹ An example is the extensive *oeuvre* of the Haarlem painter Jacob Willemsz de Wet (1610-1675). His *Entombment* of c.1637 (fig. 207) appears to be directly derived from Rembrandt's *Passion Series* work. Although conceived in reverse, De Wet, as Rembrandt had, places the viewer in the novel position within the Sepulchre. In the scene, Nicomedus holds and displays the body of the dead Christ, while the Magdalene cradles the

⁴⁶ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 430.

⁴⁷ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 430.

⁴⁸ Blankert, 'Rembrandt's Pupils and Followers in the Seventeenth Century', in Jansen ed., *The Impact of a Genius*, 13-34, 28.

⁴⁹ Broos, 'Fame Shared', 18-20.

feet. Additional figures behind the body of Christ look not at Him but gaze out towards the viewer, which paradoxically seems to reduce their emotional investment in the scene. De Wet even uses vegetation to create an arch in a rectangular pictorial space. The painting therefore represents a straightforward borrowing, albeit in a more elaborate style and with less viewer empathy, of Rembrandt's conception of the event. Additionally, this is not the only subject in which De Wet directly quotes Rembrandt; there are several depictions of *St. John the Baptist Preaching* in his *oeuvre* dated to c.1635-40 that are compositionally similar to Rembrandt's 1634 grisaille in Berlin.⁵⁰

What is difficult to establish is when and where De Wet would have had access to these works by Rembrandt especially given that they seem to have appeared in the marketplace reasonably quickly after the Rembrandt model. I can only speculate that the *Passion Series* paintings at all stages of their execution, like other paintings by Rembrandt, were constantly being copied by pupils and then rapidly sold off; it was from these copies that other artists, like De Wet, reinterpreted the subjects depicted. This was certainly the case in a *Resurrection* by Bol of c.1636-37 (fig. 208) now in the Bavarian National Museum in Munich; it appears to be a straight forward copy of Rembrandt's *Passion Series* painting but omits the figure of Christ rising from the grave. Thus it represents an intermediate stage of that work. This painting has given rise to speculation, which is incorrect, that Rembrandt himself did not paint the figure of Christ in the *Resurrection*.⁵¹ More importantly in the context of this chapter, this work by Bol is a good illustration of the rapidity and breadth of the dissemination of compositional elements from the *Passion Series* works and especially, of course, from the concurrent etching of the *Descent*.

The etching of the *Descent* and the painted original were clearly the inspiration for Gijsbert Jansz Sibilla's (c.1597-c.1660), *Descent from the Cross* (fig. 209) of 1645. Sibilla's work at first appears to be a free replication of Rembrandt's painting; however, closer inspection reveals that the positioning of Christ's body and the placement of Joseph of Arimathea on the left indicate that he copied these elements from the etching of the subject. Similarly elements from another *Passion Series* work, the *Resurrection*, appear in a work by Benjamin Cuyp (1612-1652), *The Angel at the Tomb of Christ* (fig. 210) of 1640 now in Stockholm. This is one of two Resurrections by Cuyp and is slightly more effective than the example in

⁵⁰ Jansen ed., *The Impact of a Genius*, #68, 228-229.

⁵¹ For a summary of these discussions, see Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 284-86.

Dordrecht.⁵² Central in the Stockholm work is the figure of the Angel of the Lord lifting the lid of the tomb (with some effort, unlike Rembrandt's angel) thereupon scattering the guards, one of whom tumbles backwards with feet flying in the air. The obvious borrowing of motifs is accompanied stylistically by Cuyp's Rembrandt-like employment of strong chiaroscuro wherein his brilliantly lit central area is set in vivid contrast to figures rendered almost in silhouette by the darkness of the foreground. Broos was one of the first to take issue with a long-standing tradition, that is now beginning to be corrected, in which curators eagerly labelled historically documented works by reputable artists such as Sibilla and Cuyp as 'Rembrandt School', 'Rembrandt Followers' or 'Rembrandt Pupils'.⁵³ He notes that artists such as these were mature, well-established masters in their own right and therefore in all likelihood would have had, in his opinion, access to the original *Passion Series* works *in situ* in The Hague from which they took direct inspiration. He argues that this should not be allowed to dissipate the value of their work in its own right.⁵⁴

The short-sightedness Broos identifies here is somewhat in contrast to the legacy of one of Rembrandt's last pupils, Arent de Gelder (1645-1727), whose style and manner are more intimately linked with that of his master than any other, a point the artist himself seems to have encouraged.⁵⁵ De Gelder, according to Houbraken, studied with van Hoogstraten before travelling to Amsterdam for a two-year period of instruction with Rembrandt around 1660.⁵⁶ His hero-like admiration of Rembrandt is clearly reflected in a self-portrait now in St. Petersburg (fig. 211), in which he depicts himself holding a copy of his master's *Hundred Guilder Print*. He seems also to have imitated Rembrandt's manner of artistic living as he amassed, again according to Houbraken, a collection of 'all sorts of clothing, shooting and stabbing instruments, suits of armour and so on'.⁵⁷ Stylistically, he imitated Rembrandt, running counter to contemporary classicising principles, by employing a technique in which he applied paint thickly, often with a palette knife, in keeping with the master's late 'rough manner', as it was called in the seventeenth century.⁵⁸ Additionally, an extant copy of de

⁵² For a discussion of these works and the Cuyp family see, Bob Haak, *The Golden Age*, 340-342.

⁵³ Broos, 'Fame Shared', 42. As examples Broos cites exhibitions in: Leiden (1956); Raleigh (1956); Chicago (1969); Montreal and Toronto (1969).

⁵⁴ Broos, 'Fame Shared', 42-43.

⁵⁵ For the major monograph on Arent de Gelder see, J. W. Von Moltke, *Arent de Gelder: Dordrecht 1645-1727* (Davaco: Doornspijk, 1994). Also Jansen ed., *The Impact of a Genius*, 76. Blankert ed., *Rembrandt: A genius and his impact*, 312.

⁵⁶ Houbraken, *Nederlandsche Konstschilders*, vol. III, 206-09, at 206.

⁵⁷ Houbraken, *Nederlandsche Konstschilders*, vol. III, 206-09, at 207.

⁵⁸ See van de Wetering, *The painter at work*, 160-69.

Gelder's posthumous inventory reveals that he retained a large number of his own works in his possession. This suggests that he seems not to have exclusively painted for patrons or the open market, a factor undoubtedly facilitated by a large inheritance.⁵⁹ This financial stability enabled him to work well into the eighteenth century, not only in a manner that was outdated but also one that permitted the exploration of subjects and themes that were of particular relevance to him. Several of his early works directly reflect Rembrandt's compositions such as the *Christ Presented to the People* (fig. 212) of 1671 now in Dresden, which is a straightforward rendering in paint of an early state of Rembrandt's 'Ecce Homo' etching (fig. 18) however it is a series of works in a highly personal vein that are of interest to us here.⁶⁰

Arent de Gelder's Passion Series

Late in life, after a sustained preoccupation with colourful narratives of Old Testament subjects, de Gelder produced in a number of canvases a moving account of events leading up to Christ's death and later Resurrection including a Crucifixion. They constitute an extended Passion Series. That they were intended as a series is evidenced not only by their related subject matter but also by their identical size. Although the arched frames of Rembrandt's *Passion Series* are absent, all the works are only slightly smaller in size compared to the master's paintings. According to Houbraken, who visited de Gelder in 1715, the artist had by then executed twenty out of an intended twenty-two works for the cycle.⁶¹ Although only twelve of the paintings are extant today and indeed by as early as 1770 only twelve appeared in a sale in Amsterdam, there is no reason to doubt Houbraken's accuracy regarding the number of works; this point was confirmed in the inventory of de Gelder's estate which lists all twenty-two.⁶² Ten of the twelve works now hang in the Filialgalerie in Aschaffenburg and two in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.⁶³ The inventory also shows that the works were hung in a room adjacent to the artist's studio, which suggests that they were not commissioned.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Blankert ed., *Rembrandt: A genius and his impact*, 312

⁶⁰ There is also a later, smaller painting of this subject: Arent de Gelder, *Christ Presented to the People*, 1715, oil on canvas, 84 x 102 cm, Suermondt Museum, Aix-la-Chapelle.

⁶¹ Houbraken, *Nederlantsche Konstschilders*, vol. III, 208.

⁶² Inventory of Arent de Gelder's Estate, 29 August 1727 (fol.282). In von Moltke, *Arent de Gelder*, 45.

⁶³ The paintings in the Filialgalerie in Aschaffenburg are: *The Last Supper*, *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, *Christ Taken Prisoner*, *The Flagellation of Christ*, *The Way to Golgotha*, *The Crucifixion*, *The Descent from the Cross*, *The Entombment*, *Christ Appears before the two Mary's* and *The Ascension of Christ*. All c.1715, all oil on canvas and all approximately 60 x 70 cm.

The paintings in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam are: *Christ Brought to the House of the High-Priest* and *Christ before Caiphas*. Both c.1715, both oil on canvas and both 73 x 59 cm.

⁶⁴ Inventory of Arent de Gelder's Estate, 29 August 1727 (fol.282). In von Moltke, *Arent de Gelder*, 45.

As far as I can ascertain, de Gelder's only previous treatment of a subject from Christ's Passion had been the two aforementioned paintings of *Christ Presented to the People*. What prompted such a long, sustained series and why late in life? Although it is unlikely de Gelder had ever seen Rembrandt's *Passion Series* paintings in The Hague, the fame of the commission, not to mention the several copies in the Amsterdam studio and numerous copies of related etchings may have inspired him to produce his series as a response to his former master's paintings. Further, de Gelder may have produced the works as a personal meditation on his own life and imminent death.

De Gelder's conception of the events of Christ's last days is broad, not only in terms of the number and biblical time span of the scenes he depicts but also because of the vast stages he envisages for the action. In this series of paintings, De Gelder abruptly abandons his standard compositional format of the preceding decades, which usually consisted of a limited number of figures placed close to the picture plane against a neutral background (fig. 213). In these later works, the principal scene is often quite small in relation to the overall composition and is placed in the middle- or background, where we see the protagonist surrounded by an often crescent-shaped crowd of observers. Further figures of onlookers, disciples and/or enemies of Christ occupy the shadowy foreground. Many of the figures, rather oddly, appear out of proportion, with elongated bodies and small heads. These *repoussoir*-like figures, in a manner not entirely dissimilar to Rembrandt's *Passion* works, draw us in, directing the viewer's attention towards the action. In his choices, de Gelder displays a contrarian predilection for portraying episodes just before or just after the moment in the *Passion* event usually depicted in the pictorial tradition.

The *Last Supper* (fig. 214) is one such work; it depicts Christ and the disciples seated and/or reclining on large cushions around a circular table. Although two disciples record Christ's words, there is no bread or wine on the table and Judas is shown leaving the scene in the foreground. The viewer assumes therefore that the moment captured, in what I believe is highly unusual if not iconographically unprecedented in depictions of the *Last Supper*, is well after Christ has made his fateful announcement. Interestingly in this work, de Gelder employs the *Passion Series* device of a partially withdrawn framing curtain. Additionally, and indeed throughout all the works, he follows Rembrandt's prescription for biblical figures as many of the protagonists are depicted in Rembrandt-like 'oriental' attire. Compositionally this painting is somewhat indebted to an early Rembrandt work, *Samson Posing the Riddle to the*

Wedding Guests of c.1638 (fig. 215) in Dresden. With this exception, the iconographies of the other works in de Gelder's series have less precedent in Rembrandt's *oeuvre*.

Certainly a work for which there is no Rembrandt model for and which is probably the most impressive painting in the series is de Gelder's *Way to Golgotha* (fig. 216). In the work de Gelder emphasises the concept of the 'hard road' that the Christian must follow. He sets the scene in a barren, foreboding landscape, in which a crowd of figures stream down a valley from a fortress-like Jerusalem perched on a mountain cliff. In the middle ground, in a hollow at the foot of Golgotha, Christ has collapsed under the weight of the Cross. Seemingly without pity, two *repoussoir* figures in the left foreground turn to observe the fallen Christ; meanwhile, a figure on the right at the head of the crowd and carrying the unusual motif of Pilate's charge on a banner, pauses, to wait for Christ to regain His feet. Likewise, de Gelder places his *Entombment* scene (fig. 217) in an uninviting, mountainous landscape, with the entrance to the underground tomb in the foremost hill. Other than this obvious variation, the painting evokes, somewhat eerily, the contemplative mood of Rembrandt's *Passion Series Entombment*. Again two *repoussoir* figures in the left foreground direct our attention towards the obscured body of Christ in a shroud as it is placed into the tomb. The figures of the grieving women kneel at the entrance while all the other assembled, scattered figures keep an observer's distance. Although the attention of all the figures is on the body of Christ, as in most pictorial representations of this event, and although evoking a similar mood, the painting lacks the emotional intensity Rembrandt created by engagement with the viewer in his *Passion Series* work. Moreover in the painting, the major subject, the body of Christ, is positioned well towards the left edge of the pictorial space. Indeed throughout de Gelder's series, the figure of Christ is rarely central. This is true of both the *Descent from the Cross* (fig. 218), although de Gelder's depiction of the lowering of the body of Christ is compositionally similar to Rembrandt's corresponding *Passion Series* work, and the *Ascension* (fig. 219), where divine revelation, to a remarkably an even greater extent than in Rembrandt's painting, is suggested primarily by the treatment of light.

However, de Gelder does not use light to convey the symbolic connotations of the Sun/Son setting and rising as Rembrandt does in *Passion Series*; nor does the light stylistically unify the series as I have suggested it does in Rembrandt's works. De Gelder's works were, as noted, most probably executed as a personal reflection on Christ's Passion, not as a group of works for public display, tailored to the requirements of patrons with forthright opinions. De

Gelder's *Passion Series* of 1715, is however a fascinating legacy in that it does represent, albeit in the work of one particularly devoted disciple, the continued and sustained influence of Rembrandt's *Passion Series* of the 1630s into the eighteenth century. It is also the only series of works in which an artist attempts anything like an out-and-out emulation of Rembrandt's *Passion Series*, indeed any sort of comparable *Passion Series*, in a field bereft of further examples of groups of related religious works. This emphasises, once again, not just the unusual nature of Rembrandt's *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*, but moreover the unusual nature of the *Passion Series* itself in the contemporary *milieu*.

In this chapter, I have suggested theological links, building on Ketelsen's article, between the latter two '*Passion Series*' works – the *Adoration of the Shepherds* and the now lost *Circumcision* – and the earlier commissioned five paintings. In highlighting Rembrandt's concern with the placement and function of *repoussoir* figures in these later works, I argue that their *conchetto* may well be in keeping with the earlier works as seen in a shared Ignatian derived 'spectator/participant' persona. This is in contrast to the iconographic revisions Rembrandt made to the 'series' of the two late graphic works. Nevertheless, I support Carroll's arguments that the successive states of the prints are in keeping with the thematic progression of seventeenth-century devotional poetry; and that the evolving states emphasised Rembrandt's concerted and abiding artistic concern with developing the theological implications of the Passion of Christ. This demonstrates both Rembrandt's sustained interest in the Passion as a subject and further his close ties to and knowledge of contemporary poetic practice. Works by Rembrandt's pupils and contemporaries while clearly deriving much compositionally from his *Passion Series* do not display correspondences with contemporary poetry. Further, in their borrowings these artists demonstrate no attempt at similarly creating a persona in keeping with Ignatian meditation methods. That Arent de Gelder flies a lone flag well into the eighteenth century, although on a perhaps personal quest, is tribute to the sustaining power of Rembrandt's *Passion Series* as great painting. Collectively, the topics addressed in this chapter constitute, an idea hitherto not traced in the literature, an identifiable pictorial legacy for Rembrandt's *Passion Series*.

Conclusion

There is a little-known drawing in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, variously attributed to either Rembrandt or Jan Lievens, of *An Artist in his Studio* (fig. 220).¹ Executed in pen and bistre, the work has been dated by Benesch to around 1632-33, making it contemporaneous with the first two *Passion Series* works.² The drawing depicts an artist poised to begin work. He is dressed in a smock and soft hat, and in his right hand he holds a palette, brushes and mahl stick; he leans over the back of a chair and stares at a presumably blank panel on his easel. The space in the sketch is constructed through the use of linear perspective drawn from the easel to a point on the right margin, thus providing a reference point for the size of the panel.³ The size and arch-shaped format of the panel correspond to the supports for the *Passion Series* works. The artist stands back to view and at the same time leans intently forward to examine the panel. He is all concentration, with set jaw and steadfast expression. The artist is captured in thought, the moment of creation, the dawning of the *conchetto*. The drawing is, in this sense, a pictorial realization of the subject of this thesis – Rembrandt’s *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*.

Shortly before either Rembrandt or Lievens penned this slight sketch, both were engaged in producing, on identically sized arch-shaped panels, their respective versions of *Christ on the Cross*. There are clear similarities between these two works and the *Passion Series* paintings that are more than coincidental. Most scholars regard these two works as ‘trial’ pieces for the initial *Passion Series* commission, although there is no documentary evidence to support this contention.⁴ The work of the two young Leiden artists had come to the attention of Constantijn Huygens, the connoisseur, poet and secretary to the Stadholder, Frederick Hendrick, in The Hague. In his autobiography of c.1630, Huygens had praised the talents and promise of both artists claiming that they were destined to surpass the greatest of ‘superior mortals’, that is, the most famous painter of the day, the Flemish Peter Paul Rubens.⁵

¹ See van de Wetering, ‘Rembrandt’s Beginnings’, 24-25.

² Benesch, *Drawings*, vol. II, #390, 442. Hind dates the drawing to 1637-40, which is nevertheless still contemporaneous with the *Passion Series*. Arthur Hind ed., *Old Master Drawings*, vol. 1 (London: Batsford, 1926), #9 at 15.

³ Hind, *Old Master Drawings*, 15, estimates the size of the panel to be around 90 x 60 cm.

⁴ As discussed at length by Schama, *Rembrandt’s Eyes*, 286-89.

⁵ Huygens, ‘...in tot magnis mortalibus...’, in Worp, ‘Autobiography’, 75. As translated by Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 73. Also Strass and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1630/5, 68-69.

Rubens had also painted several versions of Christ on the Cross. This subject was among those of his works that had been reproduced in graphic form and widely disseminated throughout the Low Countries.⁶ Frederick Hendrick was an admirer; he owned six paintings by Rubens.⁷ The two images of *Christ on the Cross*, which in all probability Huygens commissioned from his two young protégés on behalf of the Stadholder, were intended not only as ‘trial’ pieces for the *Passion Series* commission but the subject could also have been deliberately chosen to emulate Rubens. Similarly, the idea and moreover the subject for Rembrandt’s first *Passion Series* work, the *Descent from the Cross*, was conceived by Frederick Hendrick and Huygens as an emulation of a famous altarpiece by Rubens in Antwerp. The painting was destined for the Stadholder’s gallery in the Binnenhof complex at The Hague, as was the case for all five *Passion Series* works and in all probability the latter two paintings added to the ‘series’ in the mid-1640s.

The Stadholder’s gallery was an important and multi-functioning space within the Binnenhof. Fully understanding the power of art as a signifier of princely prestige, Frederick Hendrick and his consort Amalia van Solms, by the early 1630s, were already well advanced in amassing a sizeable painting collection. Their collection departed somewhat from other ‘court’ models: their focus was largely on works by contemporary artists from both the Southern and Northern Netherlands.⁸ This is suggestive of a strong political undercurrent. An inventory of 1632 shows that Rembrandt was already well represented with five works in the collection.⁹ Additionally Frederick Hendrick had in 1629 gifted a self-image by Rembrandt to the English ambassador Sir Robert Kerr.¹⁰ This suggests that Rembrandt’s work and name were already becoming a source of national pride.

⁶ See Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 88 and Schama, *Rembrandt’s Eyes*, 286.

⁷ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 94, 208, 218, 230, 516, 620 at 185, 191, 192, 203, 207.

⁸ For the ‘court’ model of collecting see, Lightbown, ‘The Tradition of European Princely Collecting’, in *The Late King’s Goods*, edited by MacGregor, 53-72.

⁹ The full inventory, ‘Invantaris van het Stadhouderlijk Kwartier en het Huis in het Noordeinde (Oude Hof)’, is published in Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, 181-237.

¹⁰ For documentation regarding the *Self-Portrait* now in Liverpool, see Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1639/11, 179.

Two of the five Rembrandt paintings were hung in the Stadholder's gallery, the *Samson Betrayed by Delilah* (fig. 30) and *The Abduction of Proserpina* (fig. 32).¹¹ It was a busy public thoroughfare used primarily as a waiting room and occasionally as a reception area. The gallery was thirty meters long and had large windows down one side. The inventory shows that in 1632 it contained very little furniture and a total of fifty-five paintings; those would be complemented over the next six years with the addition of the five *Passion Series* paintings and presumably ten years later the other two related works. The gallery audience was threefold: first and foremost, the paintings would have been viewed by a large Dutch audience, of Calvinist and other Protestant confessional persuasions, engaged with the government; secondly, and not infrequently, emissaries of foreign governments embracing a wide range of confessional identities would have passed through; and finally, in quiet interludes, the Stadholder and his family may have enjoyed the *Passion Series* and other works. Thus, as one of, if not the, busiest room in the Binnenhof complex, Rembrandt's interpretation of the Passion of Christ in the *Passion Series* would have been viewed by a broad audience; therefore, the politically astute patrons would have commissioned works certain not to offend anyone's confessional sensibilities in a diverse and complex religious *milieu*.

In situating the *Passion Series* in a seventeenth-century Dutch religious and cultural *milieu*, some scholars have interpreted the works by way of analogies with Reformed thought and, by extension, with contemporary devotional poetry. This avenue of inquiry has been dictated in a large part by the poor condition of the paintings, which severely limits discussion of painterly aspects of the works. This interdisciplinary approach dates back to Kauffman in 1920; however, my inspiration for this thesis is the result of a connection made by Schwartz in a footnote in his 1986 monograph.¹² In it, Schwartz suggested that the mounted centurion in Rembrandt's *Raising* could be a visualization of the narrator of a poem by Englishman John Donne, 'Good Friday, 1613: Riding Westward', translated into Dutch by Huygens.

¹¹ Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 87, 185. Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 82, 184. The other three Rembrandt's listed in the 1632 inventory are: *Portrait of Amalia van Solms* (fig. 11), 1632, oil on canvas, 69.5 x 54.5 cm, Musée Jacquemart André, Paris. *Corpus*, A 16. Bredius, 99. Recorded in Amalia van Solms' private cabinet. See Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 219, 191. *Simeon and Hannah in the Temple* (fig. 29), c.1627-28, oil on panel, 55.4 x 43.7 cm, Kunsthalle, Hamburg. *Corpus*, A 16. Bredius, 535. Recorded in Frederick Hendrick's private cabinet. See Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 111, 186. *Minerva* (fig. 31), 1632, oil on panel, 60.5 x 49 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. *Corpus*, A 38. Bredius, 466. Recorded in Amalia van Solms' gallery. See Drossaers and Lunsingh-Scheurleer, *Inventarissen*, I, #'s 248, 193.

¹² Kauffman, 'Rembrandt und die Humanisten vom Muidekring', 74; Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 118.

In pursuing this intriguing idea, Perlove refers to an earlier article by Carroll who had sought to identify a meditational sequence in a series of two late graphic works by Rembrandt.¹³ As a basis for her argument, Carroll cites a poem by Huygens as an analogy to Rembrandt's interpretation of the Passion events depicted. To further her argument, Carroll refers to the work of the literary scholar Martz who, in a 1954 ground-breaking investigation, first identified the sequence of religious meditation prescribed by Ignatius of Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*, as providing the form and imaginative strategy of much seventeenth-century devotional poetry.¹⁴ In this thesis I have developed and built on the work of these scholars.

Further, I have also endeavoured to place the *Passion Series* in both a seventeenth-century Dutch religious and cultural *milieu*. In that effort I have discussed other artistic figures known to Rembrandt in the late 1620s and early 1630s. The value of Rembrandt's education, in terms of seventeenth-century norms, I believe has hitherto been underestimated. In addition I believe that consideration of the extent to which Rembrandt's fertile young mind was moulded by contact with the lively Leiden intellectual community has been insufficiently interpreted. That community was centred on the new university and included the early patron Petrus Scriverius and the Junius family. When the younger Junius speaks of an 'affinitie between the arts', he quotes Horace's dictum from *Ars Poetica*, '*ut pictura poesis*' ('as is painting, so is poetry', or vice versa).¹⁵ Rembrandt, with his classical education and interest in elevating the status of the artist, demonstrably took this concept to heart. Throughout his *oeuvre* the artist repeatedly depicts both literary subjects and the motif of the book. In the period prior to the *Passion Series* he executed a series, as did Lievens, of representations of elderly, scholarly figures – including at least three of the apostle Paul, a great biblical author – reading or deeply contemplative. Such works could be an indication of the artist's own thoughtful, creative state of mind at the time. Into this rich, fertile environment strides the imposing figure of Huygens, who was to become the artist's mentor and de facto patron for the *Passion Series*.

¹³ Perlove, 'Witnessing the Crucifixion'; Carroll, 'Rembrandt as Meditational Printmaker'.

¹⁴ Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*; Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises* [1522-41].

¹⁵ Junius, *De Pictura*, 46.

The significance of Huygens' praise in his autobiography of Rembrandt's ability to 'penetrate to the heart of his subject matter and bring out its essence', should not be undervalued.¹⁶ In all related fields – literature, history and comparative studies – Huygens is a towering figure. He was a major seventeenth-century Dutch poet, as was Jeremias de Decker. De Decker's poem of c.1660 'On the Depiction of the Risen Christ and Mary Magdalene...', praises Rembrandt's painting of 1638, now in the Royal Collection. The poet lauds it for its lifelikeness, its use of light and shadow, for capturing the confused emotion of the Magdalene and, above all, for following and interpreting the biblical text so thoughtfully and effectively.¹⁷ Again, this is no faint praise. Together these two pieces of text combine to capture the very qualities Rembrandt strove to achieve through his life-time and describe the very qualities for which he is still famous today. Coincidentally, these are the only two people to have left written statements documenting that they were 'friends' of Rembrandt.¹⁸ In this thesis I have discussed part of this evidence in the form of the seven letters Rembrandt wrote to Huygens.¹⁹ Although the letters paint an incomplete picture, I have demonstrated that they prove beyond reasonable doubt that Rembrandt discussed the composition and style of the *Passion Series* paintings with Huygens. In the absence of Huygens' responses, the exact extent of these discussions remains uncertain. However, Rembrandt's letters provide clues. For example, they must have discussed the renowned Rubens model, and further, it is highly unlikely that Rembrandt would have inserted his own self-image into the early paintings without the endorsement of Huygens; these two unequivocal points alone indicate that they conferred, to some extent, regarding the *conchetto* for the *Passion Series*.

¹⁶ Huygens, 'Rembrandtium iudicio et affectuum vivacitate Livio praestare, hunc alteri inventionis et quadem audacium argumentorum formarumque superbia.' In Worp, 'Autobiography', 77. As translated by Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 74. Also Strass and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1630/5 at 68 and 71.

¹⁷ 'When I read St. John's description of this scene

And turn to see it in this splendid painting, then

I ask myself if brush has ever followed pen

As aptly, or dead paint so near to life has been'.

De Decker, 'On the depiction of the risen Christ and Mary Magdalene, painted by the outstanding master Rembrandt van Rijn, for F. H. Waterloos', lines 1-4. In Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 182.

¹⁸ In Huygens' autobiography he states plainly: 'Truly, my *friend* Rembrandt, all honour to you'. See Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 74 and Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1630/5, 68 and 71. In de Decker's case, in the last stanza of the poem cited above he writes: '*Friend* Rembrandt, I first detected in this panel...', line 13. See Strauss and van der Meulen, *Documents*, 1660/25 at 471 and 473. Both emphases are mine.

¹⁹ Gerson, ed., *Seven Letters by Rembrandt*.

Did they discuss their shared love of poetry? Again, this seems highly likely and is supported by comparative evidence. Huygens' translations of Donne's poetry, dated between 1630 and 1633, contain a poem that has the Passion of Christ as a subject: 'Good Friday, 1613'.²⁰ This poem is not only a decidedly Reformed response to the event of the Crucifixion but is conceived artistically, as Schwartz noted and Perlove discussed, in a mode similar to Rembrandt's two early *Passion Series* works.²¹ Both Huygens and Donne were devout Protestants and both wrote devotional poetry in the sonnet format. Donne's most famous collection of poetry in this manner are his *Holy Sonnets* of c.1610, while Huygens later wrote a similar collection, *Heilighe Dagen (Holy Days)* in c.1645.²² The Donne model, rather like the Rembrandt/Rubens connection, would have been impossible for Huygens to ignore and in all probability he would have been aware of the *Holy Sonnets* well before embarking on his own series.

Martz has shown how the form and imaginative strategies of seventeenth-century English devotional poetry, in particular that of Donne and especially the *Holy Sonnets*, were broadly based upon the method of meditation detailed by Ignatius of Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*. The wide dissemination, sheer popularity and the proliferation of similar meditational works preclude any argument that a Catholic treatise could not and would not be adopted and adapted for a Protestant audience. Ignatius' instructions for Christian meditation are three-fold: take an episode from the life of Christ, compose a place for meditation and draw a series of Christian truths from the meditation. The central component of Ignatius' method is the 'composition of place', which can be conceived in one of three ways: first is as a 'participant' in the event; the second is as a 'spectator' at the event; the third is to incorporate the event into the heart. This 'composition of place', as Ignatius specifies, is constructed with elaborate and exact detail derived initially from a close reading of Scripture. Notably, it is not purely abstract, as Ignatius does not rule out the use of concrete visual stimulus. During the meditational process as set out in the *Spiritual Exercises*, human action and understanding are brought into a responsive, intimate relationship with God. This precisely corresponds to the intention of both seventeenth-century devotional poetry and contemporary religious pictorial imagery.

²⁰ See Daley, *The Triple Fool*, 180-83; Daley, 'Good Friday', 49.

²¹ Schwartz, Perlove.

²² See Gardner, ed., *John Donne: The Divine Poems*; Strengholt, ed., *Heilighe Dagen*.

In this thesis I have argued that in his *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* paintings Rembrandt can be seen to utilize Ignatius' three-part meditational technique in a manner similar to that framing Donne and Huygens' poetry. I am not suggesting that Rembrandt whole-heartedly embraced Ignatian meditation or that his works suddenly reverted to traditional (Catholic) iconography; like Martz, my argument turns not on points of doctrine, but on analogies with form and imaginative strategy. In the *Passion Series*, Rembrandt first follows Ignatius' instructions to consult the 'history' of the event – Scripture – which as I have shown he does to the letter. Rembrandt then adopts Ignatius' three-part approach. For each of the paintings, he takes an episode from the life of Christ, 'composes a place' for the event to unfold and finally leads the viewer to perceive Christian truths from the scene depicted. Following the Ignatian direction to 'compose a place', Rembrandt conceives the scenes in the series in three ways: with the artist himself as a 'participant' in the event, with the artist as a 'spectator' at the event or by conveying a suggestion for incorporating the event into the heart.

In this argument I present an original explanation of the significance of the self-images in the first two, and probably third, *Passion Series* works, hitherto not suggested in the literature. Although they can be seen to correspond to the medieval theatrical figure of Everyman on both a literal and theological level, the bold and proprietorial natures of the self-images in the *Passion Series* works have no parallel in not only Rembrandt's *oeuvre* but also within the visual tradition as well. Given their unique nature, we can assume that the self-images embody a greater significance than a straightforward visual signature. Equally forceful, albeit in a different manner, are the privileged viewpoints Rembrandt constructs as a 'spectator' in the works that don't include 'participant' self-images. Additionally, I have suggested how – through the use of *repoussoir* figures – the *conchetto* for the two later related paintings, the *Adoration* and the *Circumcision*, can be viewed as corresponding in some measure to an Ignatian meditational sequence. By contrast, I have suggested that there is no pictorial evidence of Rembrandt adopting an Ignatian-like 'participant/spectator' persona in his *conchetto* for the two later dry-point series, the '*Three Crosses*' and the '*Ecce Homo*'. Further, despite the lingering powerful influence of the *Passion Series* paintings compositionally in the work of Rembrandt's pupils and followers, an Ignatian meditational method cannot be readily detected in their work either. I acknowledge, but discount, the potential for the influence of a passing reference to the possible self-image of Rubens in his *Raising*; although Rembrandt may have heard it discussed, he is highly unlikely to have seen it. Thus, I argue that the singular nature of the *conchetto* for the *Passion Series* works, is

sustainably and directly the result of Rembrandt's relationship with Huygens and to a lesser extent other poets.

I have sought to identify unifying factors that would allow the *Passion Series* to be viewed more effectively and more clearly as a coherent series. The principle argument of the thesis, as detailed above, is that in his *conchetto* for the paintings, Rembrandt consistently follows Ignatius's three-part meditational sequence, in that in each work he evokes a 'participant' or 'spectator' persona in keeping with the poet/narrator role adopted by contemporary devotional poets. Additionally, I suggest that there are other factors which further unify the series, such as the treatment of light which unifies the first five *Passion Series* paintings pictorially. In this thesis I have suggested that if the works were hung in the order they were executed, then the *Ascension* would be the middle painting in the series, with the *Descent* and the *Raising* to the left, and the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection* to the right (figs 44 and 45). This arrangement would create a pictorial unity by allowing the viewer to trace the light upward through the first two works to the highpoint of the *Ascension* and then downward through the latter two paintings.

I further suggest that the placement of the *Ascension* in the middle of the five works also emphasises the predominant theological theme of the series, the contrast between the two natures of Christ. In the *Descent* and in the *Raising*, Christ is portrayed with graphic realism as suffering in His human nature. The *Entombment* and the *Resurrection*, which provide the viewer space to grieve and a glimmer of hope respectively, suggest His divine nature. Rembrandt displays a divinity in all His full glory in the *Ascension*. This reading of the works, as I have shown, also connects the later two paintings, the *Adoration* and the *Circumcision*, to the series. The *Adoration* depicts the first recorded moment in Scripture that Christ is recognised as divine; the *Circumcision* depicts the first acknowledgement of Him as human. Therefore, the *Circumcision* can be grouped with the *Descent* and the *Raising* and the *Adoration* with the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection*, unifying all seven '*Passion Series*' works.

The broad confessional appeal of Rembrandt's *Passion Series* lies in its power to convey a vision of Christ's message in which He is created and recreated for an audience with a desire to be reconciled with Him yet who paradoxically acknowledge the hopelessness of the task. The Ignatian-derived *conchetto* facilitates Rembrandt's articulation of the personal anguish felt by the one as a microcosm of the struggles of the many. In a God-centred universe, the

paintings repeatedly challenge the viewer, in a manner not unlike that in the *Heads of Christ* series and in keeping with the teachings the Reformation, to contemplate the face of God made Man in order to better know the self and one's God. Further, as a result of the *conchetto* in the *Passion Series* paintings, the viewer comes to not only know Christ but to experience Christ. However, as Donne explains, this knowledge is worthless unless we are able to personally apply this experience of Christ '...for, I know nothing, if I know not Christ crucified. And I know not that, if I know not how to apply him to my selfe'.²³ In the *Passion Series* this is precisely what Rembrandt's Ignatian-based *conchetto* encourages. It is integral to the continued fascination the paintings hold. When studying the works, the viewer comes to know Christ. On turning away, the viewer experiences a powerful process of reflection and self-examination created by the works.

²³ Donne, 'Sermon 14', in *Sermons of John Donne* edited by George Potter and Evelyn Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953-63), vol. V, 276.

Catalogue Entries

In chronological order of execution

The Descent from the Cross

The Descent from the Cross,
c.1633, oil on panel, 89.4 x 65.2 cm,
Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Corpus, A 65. Bredius, 550.

Signature: No signature.

Provenance: 1633-47, Collection of Prince Fredrick Hendrick of Orange-Nassau, The Hague; 1647-75, Collection of his widow Amalia of Solms, The Hague; 1675-1716, whereabouts unknown; 1716-1806, Collection of Johann Wilhelm, Elector Palatine, Düsseldorf; 1758-64, 1794-1804, 1805, removed under the threat of war; 1806-1836, Collection of the Wittelsbach family, Munich; 1836-present, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

Major Literature: Six (1921); Stechow (1929); Rosenberg (1948); Bruyn (1959); Bauch (1962); Brochhagen and Knüttel (1967); Brochhagen (1968); Gerson (1968); Haak (1968); Broos (1970); Sass (1971); Broos (1972); Schwartz (1985); Tümpel (1986); Bruyn *et al* (1986); Schama (1999); Schwartz (2006); Perlove and Silver (2009); Tucker (2009).

In his painting the *Descent from the Cross*, Rembrandt depicts a moment when the crowds have long since departed from the spectacle of the Crucifixion. On the Golgotha hill, the limp, lifeless, tortured body of Christ is being gently lowered from the Cross. In the centre of the work three men, mounted on two ladders, use a sheet as a sling to convey Him into the tender care of two men beneath the Cross. They are supervised on the pictorial right by an old man in oriental attire, probably Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy follower of Christ. On the left the Virgin swoons, overcome by grief and supported by the other Marys. Behind this group, two elderly men, presumably disciples, appear wonder-struck. In the middle ground on the left, a tree-covered hillock recedes into the darkness of the onset of night. On the right, a background is created of the still visible walls, tower and archway of the adjacent walled city of Jerusalem, from which some light radiates into the night sky that cloaks the arch-shaped panel.

The *Descent* is the only *Passion Series* work executed on a wooden panel. The Rembrandt Research Project noted the unusual type of wood, Spanish Cedar, which is the same support as for the *Portrait of Nicolas Ruts* of 1631 now in New York.¹ Examination of the back of the panel support by the *Corpus* team revealed a 35.5 cm vertical crack on the left-hand edge, at the bottom of which a 5 x 8 cm rectangular piece has been chiselled and removed.

¹ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 283. *Portrait of Nicholas Ruts*, 1631, oil on panel, 116.8 x 87.3 cm, Frick Collection, New York. *Corpus*, A 43. Bredius, 145.

Additionally, they note the presence of a number of deep holes in the back, which have been filled with an unidentified material.² The worn condition of the paint layer is such that traces of a yellowish ground can be readily observed along the back of the figure of Joseph of Arimathea and around the men on the ladders. Extensive retouching is clearly visible in the darker passages of the painting, while the lighter area around the central group of figures – where the paint layer is thickest – remains remarkably well preserved.

A shaft of light falling from the left of the panel onto the otherwise murky surroundings illuminates the main group of figures and the Cross, indicating it is late in the day and the sun low in the sky. However, it appears as if Christ himself is another source of the light, as His brilliance is reflected upon the faces of the surrounding figures. The viewer, as the source of the natural light comes from behind the viewpoint, is situated in the West. Compositionally therefore and also thematically, while the figure of the dying Son faces the fading light, the Sun/Son is setting. Additionally, the figure of Christ is the key structural element, as the central scene is constructed of two intersecting opposing triangles. One triangle is created by the sheet that extends down from the grasp of a man who bends his left arm over the Cross; the other is formed by three of the four lower figures. The body of Christ intersects both triangles. The dominant Tau Cross is positioned obliquely to the picture plane; it thrusts upward into the upper portion of the picture frame on the right to arrest the viewer's attention. The Cross is silhouetted against the evening sky, from which Christ is lowered awkwardly but with care, by the close-knit group of attentive figures.

In this group of figures, our attention is drawn to two in particular by the rich hues of their attire. One is the figure halfway up the ladder on the left (fig. 173). The other with outstretched arms is receiving the body of Christ (fig. 174). In 1950, Grossman first noted the resemblance between the facial features of these figures and concurrent self-images by Rembrandt.³ The identification of the first as a self-image is dubious at best, although in the etched version of the painting the resemblance is stronger (fig. 181). The appearance of the man supporting Christ at the base of the Cross is however similar to other painted self-images, such as one in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 168) and another in the Alte Pinakothek (fig. 35). The light brown tousled hair and broad nose identify the figure as the artist; it is this figure that not only physically takes the weight of the dead Christ but also suggests later remembrance of Christ's message of sacrifice as his mouth is positioned close to His body.

² Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 278.

³ Grossmann, 'The Rembrandt Exhibition at Schaffhausen', 8-12, 8 and n. 1.

This is an older, greyer Christ than the figure depicted in the *Raising*. Christ's slack stomach sags heavily, a result of time spent hanging by His hands on the Cross. His individual ribs are clearly discernible. Both the feet and hands are slightly elongated. All exhibit the wounds inflicted by the piercing of the nails; nails which are depicted realistically as having been placed in the structurally strongest parts of these limbs. Christ's eyes are closed; behind the eyelids, the pupils bulge. Although He is clearly dead, He is still warm; rigor mortis has not yet set in.

None of the figures of the women looks at the disfigured body of Christ. As the Virgin faints, one Mary places her right arm underneath her back to support her as she falls, while the other raises her left hand in a mixture of shock and anguish. The Virgin appears to stare heavenward, up and over the scene, as if to find solace in the Father; her left hand covers her heart, with the right hanging taut, yet hopelessly ineffectual at her side. Here Rembrandt may have struggled to find a powerful yet dignified manner with which to appropriately depict the grief of the Virgin, one that would not offend differing confessional sensibilities. In the sheet of sketches in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 118), although they refer more to the *Entombment* than to this work, Rembrandt tests compositional solutions by drawing the Virgin both standing and sitting on the ground. In the *Descent from the Cross* of 1634 in St. Petersburg (fig. 42), Rembrandt opts for a *via medium* as the Virgin is literally held somewhere between the figure in Rubens' *Descent* of 1610-12 – widely disseminated in graphic form – and the figure here. Further, the artist's struggles to find a satisfactory solution for this motif in the painting have been revealed by radiographic analysis.

When Brochhagen in 1968 published the first findings derived from radiographic analysis of the painting, he found that Rembrandt had at an early stage of the composition placed a female figure between Christ and Joseph of Arimathea on the right side of the Cross.⁴ The figure was depicted grasping the sheet used for lowering the body with her left hand and endeavouring with an outstretched right arm to receive the body of Christ. While Brochhagen does not directly suggest that this figure was intended to be the Virgin, the figure would have functioned in a manner similar to the figure of the Virgin in Rubens' painting. Rembrandt eschews such mannerisms, preferring to leave the heavy work to the young men, while creating a distinct space for the grief of the Virgin and those supporting her.

⁴ Brochhagen, 'Passionbildern Rembrandts in München', 40.

Similar to the despair exhibited by the group containing the Marys, there is a sense of bewildered incomprehension shown by the two dimly lit men behind them. One wrings his hands in anguish while the other outstretches his arms in disbelief. The mix of emotions that Rembrandt achieves in the two groups on the left contrasts sharply with the deep concentration exhibited by the central group engaged in the physical task of lowering the body of Christ from a height. This invests an otherwise relatively stable narrative with an increased level of animation thus aligning it with a naturalistic northern pictorial tradition.

The obliquely-placed Cross in Rembrandt's *Descent* had become a common motif in northern depictions of the subject after Dürer's 1508 engraving of the *Crucifixion* (fig. 81).

Surprisingly, Broos identifies only one scholar who cites Dürer as a possible pictorial source for Rembrandt's *Descent*: a publication by Jan Six from 1921.⁵ A further and closely related compositional source, Albrecht Altdorfer, has been suggested by Broos. He identified two Altdorfer works (numbers 31 and 29) from a series of 40 small woodcuts, the *Fall and Salvation of Mankind* of c.1513, as possible sources for both Rembrandt's *Descent* and *Raising*.⁶ In his *Descent* (fig. 221), Altdorfer has positioned the Cross on a strong diagonal axis. It thrusts aggressively across the picture plane from left to right in exactly the same manner as Rembrandt's Cross in his *Descent*. As Broos concludes, stark analogies such as this are compelling evidence that Rembrandt's composition was influenced by Altdorfer's woodcuts.⁷

The motif of the swooning Virgin attended by the other Marys in Rembrandt's *Descent* also references a Pre-Reformation pictorial tradition. It occurs not only in Rembrandt's Deposition scenes but in Crucifixions and Entombments as well. Broos has suggested Altdorfer's woodcut of the *Crucifixion* (fig. 222), from the aforementioned series, as a source for this motif.⁸ Additionally, Bruyn has examined similarities in van Leyden's *Crucifixion* (fig. 223) from the *Round Passion*.⁹ The reference by Stechow to an *Entombment* of 1574 (fig. 224) by Jacopo Bassano (c.1518-1592), in Padua, in which the motif is very similar in form and

⁵ Broos, *Index to the Formal Sources of Rembrandt's Art*, 59; Jan Six, *Rembrandt's Etswerk* (Utrecht: Davaco, 1921).

⁶ Broos, 'Rembrandt Borrows from Altdorfer', 100 and 106. Also, Thomas Noll, *Albrecht Altdorfer in seiner Zeit: Religiöse und profane Themen in der Kunst um 1500* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2004), 111-82, esp. 113-29.

⁷ Broos, 'Rembrandt Borrows from Altdorfer', 106.

⁸ Broos, 'Rembrandt Borrows from Altdorfer', 104.

⁹ Josua Bruyn, *Rembrandt's keuze van bijbelse onderwerpen*, (Utrecht, lecture, 1959), 8, in *Corpus* vol. II, edited by Bruyn et al, 288.

function to the group in Rembrandt's *Descent*, at first seems appropriate.¹⁰ However, a copy of the work only came into the Amsterdam Reynst collection in the middle of the seventeenth century, too late to be a factor.¹¹ Nonetheless, the suggestion of Bassano's work as a source for Rembrandt's *Descent* found traction in the literature right up until Brochhagen's and Knüttel's 1967 entry for the work in the Alte Pinakothek exhibition catalogue of that year. Their work and moreover Brochhagen's subsequent article attempts to position Rembrandt's etching of the *Descent* in the evolution of the *Passion Series*.

Rembrandt produced two etchings of the *Descent*, both of which are clearly dated 1633.¹² The first, although printed from a rectangular plate reproduced the picture in reverse with its arched top. However, the plate failed in the biting and it is now only partially legible.¹³ The second etching (fig. 41) was executed on a new plate.¹⁴ Huge in size for a print, the second etched *Descent* is fascinating as Rembrandt removes the figure of the Virgin. As there were concurrent inter-confessional disputes over appropriate depictions of the Virgin, Rembrandt was probably mindful of a different, wider audience for the etching than the *Passion Series* painting. It is assumed that the etching would provide an accurate dating of the unsigned painting.

However, although the Rembrandt Research Project agrees with Sass' major thesis – that the *Passion Series Descent* was painted before the *Raising* – they also agree, albeit for different reasons, with Brochhagen, that the etching represents an earlier stage of the completed painting in its present state.¹⁵ However, they also present convincing evidence, such as their analysis of the support, which would date the *Descent* to 'not long after 1631'.¹⁶ On one hand, if the etching does represent an earlier stage of the final painting, the execution of the *Descent* would therefore have evolved over a considerable, perhaps unrealistically long, period of time. On the other hand, a connection to an earlier dating would establish that the beginning of the *Descent* may have followed closely on the heels of the Le Mas d'Agenais *Christ on the Cross*. The *Descent from the Cross* could then be viewed not just as a departure

¹⁰ Stechow, 'Rembrandt's Darstellungen der Keruzanbnahme', 220.

¹¹ A.-M. S. Logan, *The 'Cabinet' of the Brothers Gerard and Jan Reynst* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 112-4, #5.

¹² See Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 286-87.

¹³ Münz, *Rembrandt's Etchings*, vol. II, 94.

¹⁴ Münz, *Rembrandt's Etchings*, vol. II, 94.

¹⁵ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 286.

¹⁶ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 280.

point for the series, but also as a compositional and thematic development of the earlier Crucifixion, a stronger link between that work and the *Passion Series* than hitherto believed.

The Raising of the Cross

The Raising of the Cross,
c.1633, oil on canvas, 95.7 x 72.2 cm,
Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Corpus, A 69. Bredius, 548.

Signature: No signature.

Provenance: See entry for *The Descent from the Cross*.

Major Literature: Weisbach (1926); Benesch (1957); Bauch (1962); Brochhagen and Knüttel (1967); Brochhagen (1968); Gerson (1968); Bross (1970); Sass (1971); Broos (1972); Schwartz (1985); Tümpel (1986); Bruyn *et al* (1986); Schama (1999); Schwartz (2006); Perlove and Silver (2009); Tucker (2009).

In Rembrandt's *Raising of the Cross* the forlorn figure of Christ on the Cross is elevated upwards by a group of five executioners who heave, lean and strain against the upright beam. The foot of the Cross rests in a hole dug for it; to the right a spade is thrust into the ground. A soldier in cuirass and helmet, pictured from the back, pulls on a length of rope wrapped around the Cross, while a beret-wearing figure in the centre of the work assists rather feebly and three further figures push from behind. A turbaned oriental on horseback is positioned horizontally behind the diagonal Cross. On the left of the pictorial space, a squad of soldiers prepares the two thieves for execution and on the right a group of elderly men gesture towards Christ dismissively. Uncompromisingly realistic, this is the first Passion scene in the biblical chronology; in it, Rembrandt does not shy away from emphasizing the inherent cruelty of death by crucifixion in accentuating the physicality of the task depicted.

The support for the *Raising*, unlike the earlier *Descent* but similar to all later *Passion Series* works, is canvas. Radiographic analysis by the Rembrandt Research Project has revealed that the work was painted on one piece of canvas with a semi-circular arched top, lined and then glued to a rectangular canvas. It has a 2.2 cm section at the top that is wrapped over the present stretcher.¹ Further, they comment that the thread density and weave structure of the canvas is similar to that used by Rembrandt in the *Portrait of Johannes Wtenbogaert* of 1633, thus providing a reliable dating for the work.² The paint layer of the *Raising* appears flattened and worn, with visible signs of craquelure, although it can be observed that some of this has been over-painted during restoration. Around the face of the beret-wearing executioner and

¹ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 311 and 313.

² Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. II, 311. *Portrait of Johannes Wtenbogaert*, 1633, oil on canvas, 132 x 102 cm, Private Collection, England. *Corpus*, A 11. Bredius, 173.

the hands of the soldier executioner, traces of a yellow-brown (therefore slightly darker than the earlier *Descent*) ground layer can be detected. The more thickly painted and therefore among the best persevered sections of the painting are the lighter passages of Christ's body and the top half of the figure of the soldier at the base of the Cross. By contrast, one of the most poorly preserved passages of the painting is to the left of the figure of the horseman, where the rump of his horse is reduced to only a vague outline.

Rembrandt structures the *Raising* along a dramatic, aggressive diagonal that demands the viewer's attention. The diagonal begins in the lower left of the painting where the highlighted armour of the soldier provides a strong spatial accent that continues in a line along his arms and up the brilliantly lit body of Christ to the top of the Cross. It is interrupted by the cross-beam of the Latin Cross that thrusts three-dimensionally outwards into the extreme right of the picture plane. This dominant diagonal is only slightly offset by the static figure of the horseman on the left of the painting. As in the *Descent* the light falls from the left spotlighting the body of Christ thus emphasizing His physicality and vulnerability. However, unlike the *Descent*, there is little sense that it is really Christ himself that is the source of the illumination. Rather, He is bathed in natural light from the West, the aspect in which the viewer is positioned; as the Sun sets so does the light of the Son.

This is a lean, sinewy Christ. Rembrandt's rendering of musculature vividly captures a moment of crisis. Christ's abdomen sinks slightly beneath His rib cage. Shading on the right emphasises traces of the ribs and strained muscles up that side of the body, while veins bulge down both legs. Christ is securely held on the Cross by four large black nails with faint highlights; one pierces through the palm of each hand and one through each of his feet, which rest conspicuously on the *suppedaneum*. For leverage as he pulls, the soldier in the foreground has both feet on the Cross. The three men behind the Cross, plainly-garbed with their sleeves rolled up and one with bare feet, push with all their might. All three have their rough hands firmly around the Cross. It is possible to observe the opened-mouthed expression, a mixture of awe and exertion, on the face of one but not on the other two. The foremost of these figures puts his shoulder to the Cross. The lack of personalization in these figures emphasises their anonymity, leaving the actions of their hands to communicate. The elegantly clad beret-wearing figure, first identified as a self-image of Rembrandt by Emile Michel in

1893, wraps an arm around each side of the Cross more as a gesture of intent rather than making a practical contribution.³

Although the self-image figure does not actually assist in elevating the Cross – the instrument of punishment – it is clearly the focus of his attention, as betrayed by the set jaw and concentrated expression. Rembrandt positions the self-image figure extremely close to the body of Christ. The gaze of the figure is focused on the wounds to the feet and the blood running from them. While this can be seen as close proximity to the actual body and blood of Christ and thus related to the Eucharist, it also suggests the direct, unmediated relationship and understanding of Christ's sacrifice as required by Protestants. The paradox implicit in the Rembrandt figure is offset by the soldier at the foot of the Cross who can be seen as simply following orders.

Similarly straightforward is the gaze of the horseman. With a marteau in hand and thus identified as a commander, or centurion, he stares accusingly out at the viewer. The dialogue created by the animation of the Jewish priests on the left is more complex. The figure of the man with arms outstretched is captured in three-quarter pose, half-turned to face both the viewer and Christ; for him, it is not enough to simply mock Christ but he must also boast of it to an audience. This group of figures is smaller than those in the central group, while on the right the figures of the two thieves are smaller again. The variation in scale indicates how the figures are positioned in the pictorial space more emphatically than those in the *Descent*.

The importance of the group on the left is underpinned by the radiographic analysis of the *Raising* as undertaken by the Rembrandt Research Project.⁴ Their findings reveal that Rembrandt made significant compositional changes when executing the work. He omitted the figure of an old man behind the soldier in the foreground.⁵ He was similar in pose and may have been assisting in hauling up the Cross. The *Corpus* team note that this figure would have had the effect of creating depth, an effect similar to the omitted figure of a woman (the Virgin?) behind Joseph of Arimathea in the *Descent*.⁶ They suggest that Rembrandt's repeated abandonment of this motif may represent a shift in the way the artist represents

³ Michel, *Rembrandt: Sa vie, son oeuvre son temps*, 158.

⁴ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. II, 311-316.

⁵ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. II, 315.

⁶ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. II, 316.

spatial relationships, indicating an increasing preference for a dark void as opposed to a plastic form.⁷

The researchers in the *Corpus* state that compared to the above alteration, ‘the changes to the head of Christ are of minor importance.’⁸ They consider that the changes to His head and left arm are more likely related to rough under-painting than to a significant reworking of these passages. Earlier, Brochhagen had noted that Christ’s eyes, which now look diagonally upward, had initially been turned more towards the viewer.⁹ Therefore in the initial composition, Christ may have been observing the actions of the executioners rather than conversing with the Father as is the final version of the painting. The earlier composition would represent a major thematic shift; as such the view expressed in the *Corpus* is problematic. The *Corpus* team also downplay another piece of important radiographic evidence; which reveals that various light areas in the face of the self-image figure overlap each other and that the line of the shoulders does not match the upper layer of paint.¹⁰ This finding indicates that initially the facial features of this figure were different and therefore do not necessarily correspond to those in the final version of the painting. These changes raise the intriguing possibility that initially this figure may not have been a self-image. At the very least, the changes betray an evolving *conchetto* for the painting as there was very little pictorial precedent for the subject.

Broos has identified a woodcut by Albrecht Altdorfer (c.1480-1538) as a possible source for Rembrandt’s *Raising – the Elevation of the Cross* (fig. 83), number 29 from the series of 40 small woodcuts, the *Fall and Salvation of Mankind* of c.1513.¹¹ Broos illustrates Altdorfer’s woodcut in reverse (fig. 225), thus aligning it compositionally with Rembrandt’s painting. This earlier artist positioned the Cross in an aggressive diagonal across the picture plane, a compositional solution Rembrandt also adopts. In Altdorfer’s work, four men push and heave, straining as they assist in elevating the Cross, which is propelled upwards by two poles. At the base of the Cross, one of these figures with large, bulging arms is viewed primarily from the back. This figure is positioned very much like the armour-clad soldier in Rembrandt’s painting and provides the proximate connection between the two works. Additionally, both works feature prominent motifs that serve to emphasise the practicalities of crucifixion. There

⁷ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. II, 316.

⁸ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. II, 316.

⁹ Brochhagen, ‘Passionsbildern in München’, 39-40.

¹⁰ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. II, 315.

¹¹ Broos, ‘Rembrandt Borrows from Altdorfer’, 100.

is a basket containing a hammer and a pair of pincers in Altdorfer's woodcut. A spade dominates the foreground of Rembrandt's painting. Both artists therefore imbue the event not with a primarily devotional aspect, but seem to respond to an active faith that acknowledges the Passion as an historical event experienced by real people. In Rembrandt's case, this train of thought can be traced as it evolves through a series of related drawings, although one appears not to be by Rembrandt.

In his article, Broos also draws attention to similarities between Altdorfer's woodcut and a drawing of the Raising of the Cross, now in the Albertina Museum in Vienna (fig. 84). Broos believes that the drawing is an autograph preliminary study by Rembrandt for the *Passion Series Raising*. He dismisses previous claims that have appraised the drawing on 'wispy' stylistic grounds as the work of a student.¹² More recently the *Corpus* researchers state that the Vienna drawing has now been 'convincingly attributed' to Claes Moeyaert (1592-1655).¹³ However, the Albertina curators still attribute the drawing to Rembrandt's pupil Govaert Flinck (1615-1650). It is not hard to see why others are less enthusiastic about the attribution than Broos. The work is executed in a busy, flowing line that lacks the deftness and sureness of touch that one usually associates with Rembrandt's draughtsmanship.

Although the Rembrandt Research Project team are dismissive of the Albertina drawing, they do stress the importance of two other related drawings that can be linked with the *Passion Series Raising*.¹⁴ One is in Rotterdam (fig. 226), dated somewhere around 1627-28, and the other is now in Boston (fig. 227), dated shortly thereafter. Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann has disputed the direct attribution of the Boston drawing to Rembrandt; however, the command of line in the work makes his doubts difficult to accept.¹⁵ The authors of the *Corpus* comment that as composition sketches they are something of a rarity in the combined *oeuvre*; as such, they provide an 'exceptional opportunity of following Rembrandt's train of thought'.¹⁶ The diagonal and foreshortened Cross is one of several motifs the two drawings share with the *Passion Series* painting. All three compositions display a range of similar figures engaged in the mechanical process of lifting the Cross: a man seen from the rear hauling at the foot of the Cross, a man lifting the Cross from the side and other figures pushing from behind. The two

¹² Broos, 'Rembrandt Borrows from Altdorfer', 102.

¹³ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. II, 317.

¹⁴ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. II, 317.

¹⁵ Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, 'Rembrandt's Drawing the *Raising of the Cross* in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston', in *The Learned Eye: Regarding art, theory, and the artists reputation*, edited by Marieke van den Doel *et al* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 39-47.

¹⁶ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. II, 317.

drawings are evidence that Rembrandt had been thinking about the subject as early as 1628. A lengthy period ruminating culminated in the 1633 *Passion Series Raising*. The drawings demonstrate how painstakingly Rembrandt searched for pictorial solutions with which to imbue the subject with ever-greater realism to highlight Everyman's on-going culpability in the death of Christ.

The Ascension

The Ascension,
1636, oil on canvas, 92.7 x 68.3 cm,
Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Corpus, A 118. Bredius, 557.

Signature: At the bottom edge, right of centre and interrupted by a few gaps in the paint layer:
Remb(...)dt f (>)636.

Provenance: See entry for *The Descent from the Cross*.

Major Literature: Valentiner (1905); Weisbach (1926); Rosenberg (1948); Benesch (1958); Brochhagen and Knüttel (1967); Brochhagen (1968); Gerson (1968); Sass (1971); Broos (1972); Schwartz (1985); Tümpel (1986); Bruyn *et al* (1989); Schama (1999); Schwartz (2006); Perlove and Silver (2009); Tucker (2009).

Rembrandt's *Ascension* depicts the dramatic culmination of the Gospel account of Christ's life and the completion of His earthly mission. The Ascension takes place forty days after His resurrection atop the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem. In the painting Christ is shown surrounded by a mandorla of light and standing weightlessly on a cloud; escorted by a swirling group of cherubs, He rises heavenward. His arms are outstretched in a gesture of welcome and acceptance. He holds his palms open to reveal, with honour, the wounds suffered in the Crucifixion. His head is raised as He gazes directly upwards into the light. In the centre of the golden glow, the Holy Ghost, in the form of a Dove surrounded by three stars, greets Him. Below His celestial glory, in the earthly zone, the eleven remaining disciples stare upwards in reverence, amazement and awe. The disciples, who lived on a daily basis with the human Christ, appear staggered, each in his own way, by this revelation of His fully divine nature.

The *Ascension* is executed on a canvas support, trimmed at the top corners and glued to a further rectangular canvas.¹ The original canvas together with the support canvas is folded around the stretcher on all sides with the exception of the trimmed area at the top.²

Investigation by the Rembrandt Research Project suggests that a grey ground has been placed over a very thin brown-red layer, although they cannot confirm this.³ Signs of wear in the paint layer can be readily observed; this is especially apparent in the area of sky above and to both sides of the figure of Christ where, despite in-painting, there is extensive craquelure. It is

¹ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. III, 204.

² Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. III, 204.

³ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. III, 204.

also possible to clearly observe that the best-preserved passages are the garment of the figure of Christ and the cherubs immediately below Him; by contrast, some of the additional cherubs on either side of Christ appear to be no more than shadows as their forms dissipate into the darkness.

Rembrandt sets his scene on what appears to be an uneven rocky mountain-top with a darkened sky around the periphery of the central event indicating a night scene. On the right of the pictorial space, at quite some distance, the vague outlines of several buildings are barely discernible. On the left, a prominent palm tree completely dominates that side of the painting, reaching from a dark, earthly foreground in which the roots are ruggedly exposed, up into the sky where its outermost fronds are touched by the heavenly light. The palm tree also partially unifies the two areas of action, the earthly and the celestial. The painting is structured by two distinct circles that form these earthly and celestial zones: one, on high, formed by the dove and the cherubs surrounding Christ, and the other by the group of disciples in the foreground. Rembrandt primarily uses light to marry the two zones, as it is reflected off the figure of Christ, down onto the lower group of the disciples.

The painting is lit by this brilliant formative light shining from the top of the picture plane. In the centre of this area is the white dove, outlined in grey and enclosed in a semi-circular arc of yellowish light; beyond this semicircle there is a somewhat artificial band of golden stars. From this area, light beams down in rays on each side of the figure of Christ. These shafts of light are quite distinct, almost like the rain in Rembrandt's *The Three Trees* etching of 1643 (fig. 228). There are substantial amounts of blue and some grey in this section of the work; possibly these rays of light would have previously been merged into the sky in finer graduations. The lighting highlights the figure of Christ, falling both behind Him to create the impression that He radiates light, and in front of Him to clearly highlight the cherubs below Him. The light reflects off the bodies and faces of the group of disciples in the foreground incorporating them into the action.

All eleven disciples are present and the form of each figure is reasonably distinct, although the facial features of those towards the rear are difficult to distinguish. The *Corpus* researchers comment that colour and tone along with the modelling and detail of all the figures of the disciples, have suffered due to over-painting, almost certainly by the hand of Brinckmann in the eighteenth century.⁴ The central group of three captures the most light and

⁴ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. III, 204.

is visibly in a much better state of preservation than those behind. Foremost in this central group is a man in a faded orange-red tunic kneeling with arms outstretched; to his right, also kneeling, is a youthful-looking man with curly brown hair. His white-grey tunic, I suggest, would have originally provided a sharp colour contrast to the garment of the foremost figure creating a distinct foreground colour accent. A third figure of a man, with a white beard and clasped hands, is shown in profile behind these two figures and he reflects the strongest light. Rembrandt has obviously taken great care in depicting the quite different reactions of each disciple to the event as they engage individually with Christ's majesty.

Christ is pictured standing firmly and securely, with sturdy calves and feet, on a cloud supported by the cherubs. His hair is lighter than in previous *Passion Series* representations, His beard trimmed. There is a pink blush to His cheeks, His lips are red and His teeth are accentuated by white highlights. Curiously, He prominently displays a clearly visible bracelet around His left wrist. He wears two garments, a three-quarter-length tunic and a capacious cloak that billows lightly in a gentle breeze behind the cloud and cherubs. Both are painted in a heavy luminous white with gradations of grey. The heavy garments lend solidity to the figure of Christ; He ascends to Heaven with a firmness of form and a sureness of purpose.

Rembrandt's handling of the cherubs around the cloud on which Christ ascends contribute to the scene's believability. Intently, the cherubs busy themselves with the task at hand. The cloud rests on the back of one, while others physically lift; however, they appear to bear the weight of the cloud rather than that of Christ. Additional cherubs are equally pro-active, as they fly in from both sides to not only glorify but also, the viewer suspects, to assist those shouldering the weight of the cloud. The bright colouring on the wings of these cherubs is among the best preserved passages of the painting. The colouring is not dissimilar to the garments of the two central figures of Europa's attendants in Rembrandt's *Abduction of Europa* (fig. 229) of 1632 now in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Further, the excellent condition of this painting from the same time period may offer a glimpse of how the *Passion Series* works may have originally looked; however, this is speculative given Rembrandt's penchant for stylistic variety. Another colour accent is created on the wings of the cherubs; this further facilitates the pictorial unification of the two spheres. This unification was the principle challenge that artists had traditionally faced when representing the subject of the Ascension, a challenge often conflated with that in the comparable subject, the Assumption of the Virgin. A famous depiction of the Assumption is often cited as a pictorial source for Rembrandt's painting.

Valentiner in 1905 was the first to comment that Titian's great altarpiece, *The Assumption of the Virgin* (fig. 230) of 1515-18 in the Frari in Venice, appears to be the principle pictorial source for Rembrandt's *Ascension*.⁵ The Rembrandt Research Project posit that Rembrandt would have been familiar with the work through a print, most probably Theodore Matham's (1589-1663) large folio engraving.⁶ Conversely, Schama believes that Titian's painting could not have been Rembrandt's prototype, as the work was not engraved until well after he had delivered the picture to the Stadholder in February 1636.⁷ Rather, he points to 'a great number of *Assumptions of the Virgin* and an *Ascension of Christ* available for him (Rembrandt) to study in the form of engravings by Schelte à Bolswert (1586-1659), after paintings by Rubens'.⁸ Although there may have been a wealth of graphic reproductions available, there are in fact only two notable extant *Assumptions* by Rubens, one in Antwerp Cathedral, the other now in Vienna; there was also an oblong ceiling painting of the *Ascension* formerly in the Jesuit Church in Antwerp, but that has been destroyed.⁹ Additionally, the *Corpus* authors comment that models belonging to earlier artworks play a role that is inadequately defined by pointing simply to Titian's *Assumption* alone.¹⁰ They discuss radiographic evidence that Rembrandt initially situated a figure representing God the Father above Christ's head.¹¹ This evidence was first cited by Brochhagen, who commented that this figure and the angels who carry Christ upwards on a cloud both belong to an extensive iconographic tradition associated with the Assumption of the Virgin.¹² Theologically, if retained, this motif would have flown in the face of Reformed prohibitions on pictorial representation of God the Father.¹³ Logically, if he was emulating the Titian model, the artist would have originally employed the motif. In the end, Rembrandt abandoned the motif, possibly at the urging of his patrons, in order not to give offence to any of the

⁵ Wilhelm Valentiner, *Rembrandt und Seine Umgebung* (Strasbourg: 1905), 81; Broos, *Index to the Formal Sources of Rembrandt's Art*, 60. See Paul Joannides, *Titian to 1518: The Assumption of Genius* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 285-297.

⁶ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. III, 207. See F. W. H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Engravings*, vol. XI (Amsterdam: Hertzberger, 1949), 252, #8.

⁷ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 438.

⁸ Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 438.

⁹ Peter Paul Rubens, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1626, oil on panel, 490 x 325 cm, Antwerp Cathedral, Antwerp; *The Assumption of the Virgin*, c.1620, oil on canvas, 458 x 297 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. The later work is now known by way of a modello: *The Ascension of Christ* (modello), c.1620, oil on panel, 33 x 32 cm, Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Vienna.

¹⁰ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. III, 207.

¹¹ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. III, 207.

¹² Brochhagen, 'Passionbildern Rembrandts in München', 40.

¹³ Calvin for example commented that: 'Since there is no sense in portraying God in physical likeness much less should it be permitted to worship an image of God or idolize God. Thus it follows, that one does not paint or represent anything except that seen by one's own eye.' Calvin, *Institutes*, I, ix, 12.

various confessional sensibilities among the Stadholder's gallery audience. Gerson, in commenting on this very change to the *Ascension* and its derivation from Titian's work, argued that the painting denotes Rembrandt's progression from dramatic narrative to poetic spectacle, as the cluster of agitated disciples 'form but a muted echo of the dramatic gesture of Christ'.¹⁴ 'Dramatic' is a subjective term; while the figure of Christ unequivocally dominates the work, the disciples can alternatively be seen to form a perhaps more modest 'dramatic' narrative complement to Him. Gerson's comments reflect the dilemma confronting Rembrandt: how to remain 'true to nature' when presented with a miraculous subject.

The painting of the *Ascension* in the *Passion Series* represents Rembrandt's only depiction of the subject in his entire *oeuvre*. The subject in fact is so rare in the Northern pictorial tradition that it was not even one of the four post-crucifixion events van Leyden chose to add to his second engraved *Passion Series*. Creating a credible narrative relationship between the two spheres of action while continuing to acknowledge the separateness of that which is worldly and that which is heavenly, was undoubtedly the most difficult task Rembrandt faced in his conception of the subject. Rembrandt overcomes this difficulty through a graduated use of light, colour accents and animated expression and gesture. From a distance, the viewer of the *Ascension* experiences visual convergence as the eyes and seemingly the body are lifted up to ascend with Christ.

¹⁴ Gerson, *Rembrandt Paintings*, 46.

The Entombment

The Entombment,
1639, oil on canvas, 92.5 x 68.9 cm,
Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Corpus, A 126. Bredius, 560.

Signature: No visible signature.¹

Provenance: See entry for *The Descent from the Cross*.

Major Literature: Stechow (1929); Rijckevorsel (1932); Benesch (1958); Brochhagen and Knüttel (1967); Brochhagen (1968); Gerson (1968); Sass (1971); Schwartz (1985); Tümpel (1986); Bruyn *et al* (1989); Schama (1999); Schwartz (2006); Perlove and Silver (2009); Tucker (2009).

Each of the four Evangelists record in their Gospel that in the evening of the Crucifixion day – as was Jewish custom – Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable man, approached Pilate and asked for the body of Christ to be released into his care for burial.² Rembrandt sets his painting of the subject, the *Entombment*, within the darkened space of the Holy Sepulchre, where two men are lowering the body of the dead Christ into the tomb. On the pictorial left, standing inside the tomb, one attendant supports Christ under His arms while resting the weight on his knees. In the centre another figure, with knees bent, stands over the tomb gripping the shroud firmly in both hands in order to retain balance, he leans backward counteracting the weight as he lowers the body. This figure could possibly be Nicodemus, who John names in his Gospel as assisting Joseph.³ Eight further figures gather around contributing in varying degrees: one holds a light, one a scroll and another attends to His feet. Looming above all is the now weary figure of Joseph overseeing the proceedings. In the lower right foreground, the Marys huddle together; one turns to catch a last despairing glance of Him while the Virgin turns her head away and is consoled by the Magdalene. Also interested in the proceedings is an indistinct crowd of onlookers in the middle-ground who pour through the plant-edged entrance to the Sepulchre. In the distance, the Sun sets over the hill of Golgotha, silhouetting a series of crosses and several small departing figures.

¹ Carel Vosmaer, *Rembrandt Harmens van Rijn* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1886), 453 and Wilhelm Bode, *Studien zur Geschichte der holländischen Malerie* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1883), 572, # 108, both report the presence of a signature, described by the later as 'Rembrandt f'.

² Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-55, John 19:38-42.

³ John 19:39.

The work was executed on an originally rectangular, fairly coarse canvas that was cut to a semicircle at the top.⁴ The over-lapping from these incisions extend 10-12 cm into the paint surface and the entire canvas is wrapped over the stretcher at a width of 1 cm.⁵ In the *Corpus* the Rembrandt Research Project raise the possibility that, like the *Ascension*, there is a double-layer ground of a similar composition.⁶ They also note that the entire paint surface is badly worn and damaged, with substantial paint loss and over-painting; some of the latter has been removed at some point, further affecting the paint layer.⁷ Nevertheless, in the section of the painting comprising the figure of Christ and the figures gathered at the head of the tomb, it is still discernable that the figures were originally worked-up in great detail with thick paint and a varied palette. The greatest paint loss and severe over-painting of craquelure, which is clearly visible, is in the indistinct foreground and right middle ground, behind the figures at the base of the tomb. Originally, they would have provided a link with the multitude of figures at the entrance to the Sepulchre, rendering the latter group less isolated.

Rembrandt again creates a distinct space for the action through clear spatial differentiation. The dark, cavernous space of the Sepulchre is framed rather unusually by a large curtain on the left of the pictorial space and traces of another curtain can be seen in the middle ground. These curtains create a stately canopy for the action, invoking the spectral feeling, as if an entrance to another realm, that of the grave. The vegetation on the right of the pictorial space suggests a movement across the work from the living to the dead. Similar curtains hang from the top of the similarly arched space in Rembrandt's etching of the *Raising of Lazarus* of c.1632 (fig. 54). It is challenging to speculate on where Rembrandt derives this feature for a Jewish tomb. Possibly it could refer to the need of early Christians to keep their services and rituals secret from the Roman authorities. Above the curtain and reasonably well preserved, is a large ornament, a cloth embroidered with gold thread, which is hung high up on the wall. This motif is too large and too unusual not to have a specific meaning. There is a similar motif in the *Lazarus*. It could be associated with the owner of the tomb, the family of Joseph of Arimathea.

The contemplative nature of the scene is conveyed by the lighting. The scene is lit from each side: a torch on the left held by an elderly man who leans over the head of the tomb and from the other side a lantern held by the obscure figure of a woman on the right slightly in front of

⁴ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. III, 271.

⁵ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. III, 271.

⁶ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. III, 271.

⁷ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* vol. III, 271.

the tomb. The stronger of these two lights comes from the left, illuminating the figure holding the torch and the two men lowering Christ's body into the tomb. Additionally, it throws a strong light over the right side of the body of Christ and emphasizes the 'fine linen' of the shroud on which He is being laid to rest. The more subdued light to the right serves to imbue the features of the Virgin with a contemplative visage, in contrast to the mix of concentration, hard work, fatigue and sorrow of the other mourners. This differentiation in the fall of light is the major linking element in the work, providing a convincing relationship between the two groups of figures while also suggesting the separate and special sorrow of the Virgin.

Rembrandt structures the work by grouping the major figures together in two well-defined largely separate triangular arrangements. The first is created at the apex by the head of Joseph of Arimathea: it leads downward on the left towards the light source there it turns below the body of Christ in a strong horizontal shaft of light across the edge of the tomb, towards the uppermost of the Marys at the foot of the tomb. At that point, it turns back up towards Joseph to connect at the apex. The three Marys form part of a sharp, pointed second triangle of five figures that partially intersects with the major central arrangement. This structure and the subtle manipulation of the lighting emphasize the body of Christ.

This is a ghastly, apparitional Christ. The worn, flattened dull white of His body is outlined in dark browns; He is drawn both literally and metaphorically. His eyes are closed in death and His face is expressionless, although He still displays both a brown, trimmed beard and abundant, flowing dark locks. The wounds from the nails of the Crucifixion can be seen on the back of one hand and both feet, one of which has been slightly elevated to ensure this visibility. A trace of the wound from the lance is also clearly evident. His limbs are thin, sinewy and worn out from the death struggle. Clearly this is a figure of a man who has suffered the long, slow, agonizing death that was death by crucifixion in which joints are gradually torn asunder. There is rigidity in the body of Christ giving the figure a strong sense of weightiness.

Although realistically depicted as straining to bear the weight, the two figures lowering His body all display care, due reverence and attention to the task at hand. Concentration is also evident in other attendant figures: the man in the foreground leaning over the tomb who rests his chin on a scroll (which could be Pilate's inscription from the top of the Cross) and two further male figures at the base of the tomb who observe intently. Conversely, the figures of the three Marys are less overtly attentive. The Virgin is the only one of the foreground figures

whose gaze is not directed towards Christ. While she is depicted frontally, her head is turned away from the scene and she stares downward in a look of profound grief. Dressed in a dark garment with hood, she is pictured with her hands modestly clasped in front of her, as if to suggest this grief is qualified with a sense of quiet acceptance. The sheet of drawings in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 118) that are considered preliminary sketches for the figure of the Virgin in this painting, show how Rembrandt modified the stance, pose and gaze of the figure. Something of a rarity in the *oeuvre*, they are indicative of Rembrandt's on-going concern with finding an appropriate mode for depicting the Virgin in Passion scenes.

There appears to be a dearth of direct pictorial sources for the work, however Rembrandt's composition does owe some debt to Renaissance precedents. One possible Italian model, Bassano's *Entombment* of 1574 (fig. 224), as suggested by Stechow, has now been dismissed, as it has been shown that Rembrandt could not have seen a copy of the work.⁸ The poses and attitudes of the figures in Rembrandt's painting are not dissimilar to those in Raphael's *Entombment* of 1507 (fig. 146) now in the Borghese Gallery, which it is likely Rembrandt was familiar with through a graphic reproduction.⁹ Rembrandt's teacher Pieter Lastman had painted an *Entombment of Christ* in 1612 (fig. 148). In Lastman's painting, the major figures usually associated with the event are placed in traditional roles and in the foreground there is a collection of still-life objects associated with the Passion: the crown of thorns, nails and pincers. Although these correspond to some of the instruments of the Passion, they also suggest, as Rembrandt emphasizes so strongly throughout the *Passion Series*, the practical aspects of crucifixion. In fact, a group of similar objects can be seen in the foreground of copies of Rembrandt's painting, such as the one in Rotterdam (fig. 185). Astrid Tümpel has also drawn attention to a work from 1607 (fig. 231) by another 'Pre-Rembrandtist', Jan Tegnagel (1584/85-1635).¹⁰ Although it is unclear the extent to which these earlier works influenced Rembrandt, it is interesting that both these scenes place the viewer within the Sepulchre, a departure from the pictorial tradition.

There is evidence that Rembrandt may have been considering the *Entombment* as a subject as early as 1630. A 1630 drawing by the artist, which was originally a *Raising of Lazarus*, was modified into an *Entombment of Christ* (fig. 149). Slive has also suggested that a quick

⁸ Stechow, 'Rembrandt's Darstellungen der Keruzanbnahme', 220; Logan, *The 'Cabinet' of the Brothers Reynst*, 112-4, #5.

⁹ The similarity was noted also by Rijckevorsel, *Rembrandt en de Traditie* (Rotterdam: W. L. and J. Brusse, 1932), 152-3.

¹⁰ Astrid Tümpel, 'Pieter Lastman and the Other Pre-Rembrandtists', 45-47.

sketch (fig. 150) now in Berlin, is a study for the painting.¹¹ However, it is difficult to see any significant compositional similarities between these sketches and the *Passion Series* painting. The positioning of a Rembrandt oil sketch (fig. 232), now in Glasgow, of the same subject, is more problematic in terms of the *Passion Series* painting's evolution.¹² As early as 1893, C. Hofstede de Groote regarded the oil sketch as a preliminary study for the painting.¹³ This interpretation attracts support right throughout the literature including Brochhagen.¹⁴ In this light, Benesch discusses the work at length, while Valentiner sees a maturity in the economy of line that dates the oil sketch to a decade later.¹⁵ Recently, this later dating found support from both Clifford Ackley and other curators who examined the work as part of the Boston exhibition, *Rembrandt's Journey* and the researchers at the Hunterian Art Gallery in Glasgow who conducted an comprehensive study as part of their own recent exhibition that focused specifically on this work.¹⁶ Bauch and Gerson viewed the Glasgow oil sketch as a design, due to the size and scale as much as stylistic factors, for an etching that never materialized.¹⁷ This suggestion would align the work with other grisailles of the 1630s; although the work is considerably sketchier than the well-worked and detailed designs of other Rembrandt grisailles, the similar dimensions of the works would support this idea.

In the *Entombment*, by placing the viewer within the Sepulchre, Rembrandt is able to fully illustrate the extended accounts in the Gospels. Concurrently, as the viewer looks out over and into the setting Sun, as the *lumen Christi* fades, space is afforded to consider the individual poses and gestures of the gathered participants and their differing emotional responses to the event. The *Entombment*, possibly to a greater extent than any other *Passion Series* work, encourages both contemplation and meditation by providing a tableau of action in an enlarged space that allows the viewer to concentrate on the roles and reactions of individual figures.

¹¹ Slive, *Drawings*, vol. I, 285.

¹² This work has been the focus of a recent exhibition at the Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow, September-December, 2012. See Peter Black with Erma Hermens, *Rembrandt and the Passion*, exhibition catalogue (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2012).

¹³ C. Hofstede de Groote, 'Hollandsche Kunst de Schotland', *Oud Holland* 2 (1893): 129-148, 146.

¹⁴ Brochhagen and Knüttel, *Kat* III, 66.

¹⁵ Benesch, *Rembrandt*, 61; Wilhelm Valentiner, 'The Rembrandt Exhibitions in Holland, 1956', *Art Quarterly* 19 (1956): 390-404, 404 and n.14.

¹⁶ Clifford Ackley, *Rembrandt's Journey: painter, draughtsman, etcher* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2003), 33-34, and #46 at 112-13; Black and Hermens, *Rembrandt and the Passion*, 19-28.

¹⁷ Kurt Bauch, *Rembrandt's Gemälde* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1966), 72; Gerson, *Rembrandt Paintings*, #217 at 322-23.

The Resurrection

The Resurrection,

1639, oil on canvas (later transferred to panel), 91.9 x 67 cm,

Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

Corpus, A 127. Bredius, 561.

Signature: A reliable impression, low down and left of centre: *Rembr.(.)t 163(.).*

Provenance: See entry for *The Descent from the Cross*.

Major Literature: *Major Literature:* Rosenberg (1948); Benesch (1958); Brochhagen and Knüttel (1967); Brochhagen (1968); Gerson (1968); Sass (1971); Broos (1972); Schwartz (1985); Tümpel (1986); Bruyn *et al* (1989); Schama (1999); Weststeijn (2005); Schwartz (2006); Perlove and Silver (2009); Tucker (2009).

The Resurrection of Christ is attested to, as opposed to directly described, in all four Gospels.¹ As there are no witnesses to the event recorded in Scripture, it is in His subsequent appearances to His disciples that the Christian finds theological confirmation that the event occurred. In his Gospel Mathew provides the clearest narrative: as he describes events shortly after the actual Resurrection, such as the appearance of the Angel of The Lord. Central to Rembrandt's *Resurrection* is the figure of the angel who bursts upon the darkened space of the Sepulchre in a blaze of celestial glory. The angel, floating weightlessly in a flowing white robe and with wings outspread, effortlessly lifts the lid of the burial tomb. The radiance of the angel falls on the figure of Christ, who on the pictorial right, is depicted emerging in a cloud of dust into the murky surroundings. He is still covered in a shroud, the veil of death still hanging over Him. On the left, a group of guards at the top of a flight of stairs are woken violently from their sleep by the action of the angel and are scattered chaotically in several directions. One guard tumbles backwards off the lid of the tomb, while another raises his shield to protect his eyes from the blinding light. In the centre, a soldier clad in red attire stumbles over a still sleeping colleague, he drops his sword in flight. Captured in mid-air, the sword draws attention to the figures of two women in the right foreground – the other Mary and the Magdalene. The former raises her clasped hands for protection, while the latter drops a container, perhaps of ointment. This narrative suggests action and action implies change. Truly, the painting depicts a miraculous event.

¹ Matthew 28:1-8, Mark 16:2-7, Luke 24:2-9, John 20:11-13.

Rembrandt executed the painting on canvas; it was transferred to panel in 1755 by the restorer Brinckmann.² The inscription boasting of his achievements covers the full width of the back of the panel. Over-lapping incisions, where the canvas was cut to create a semi-circle, along the top of the support extend some 9 cm into the canvas.³ In the *Corpus* the Rembrandt Research Project again raise the possibility of a double-layered ground, as earlier a bright red ground containing some white lead and ochre was detected.⁴ The paint layer has suffered badly – virtually every centimetre of the darker areas have been in-painted, while the lighter areas are severely flattened.⁵ The over-painting has filled-in the craquelure that typically would be expected in a work of this age. Much of the blame for the poor state of the surface has been attributed to Brinckmann. Despite the condition of the work, Rembrandt's conception of the event can still be fully appreciated.

Again, the artist positions the viewer within the Sepulchre: however the viewer now looks into the darkened interior in the opposite direction to the viewpoint in the *Entombment*. This is indicated by the placement of the framing curtains on the far right of the pictorial space, as opposed to the left side as in the *Entombment*; the inference is that both paintings depict the same location. The viewer is not in the East, looking out into the setting Sun/Son, but in the West. Just as the Sun will rise signalling a new day, the Son will rise resurrected. Rembrandt creates a viewpoint from below so that the viewer looks upwards into the evolving narrative. From this position, little of the rest of the space within the Sepulchre is visible, although there is a vague indication of clouds behind the angel.

The radiance of light around the descending angel is the sole source of illumination in the painting. Lightning-like, this angel throws light to the right onto the rising figure of Christ, onto the wall of the Sepulchre behind, onto the framing curtains and onto the grey clouds that emanate smoke-like from the tomb as the lid is raised. On the pictorial left, the light reflects off the weaponry and armour of the soldiers grouped there. Further, the light falls obliquely on the right foreground figures of the two Marys. This central triangle of light around the angel is sufficient to structure the work. The aura of light is executed in thickly applied luminous white, that can be readily observed, which gives it body and substance around the edges, this white is mixed with ochre to produce a golden effect and then with grey to provide

² Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* Vol. III, 282.

³ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* Vol. III, 282.

⁴ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* Vol. III, 282. And Herbert Kühn, 'Untersuchungen zu den Malgründen Rembrandts', *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Berlin-Württemberg* 2 (1965): 189-210, 202.

⁵ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus* Vol. III, 282.

a transition into the dark grey of the background. From this triangular light a shower of golden sparks erupts investing the scene with a sense of urgency and some violence. On the paint surface, the sparks appear exceptionally well preserved. This suggests that the artist painted them with real purpose, applying thick dots of now faded white. The triangular light begins above the head of the angel and reaches behind its dark grey wings downwards towards the foreground figures to its base that is once again a horizontal line across the edge of the tomb. It is both accentuated and complemented by the strong diagonal of the wide stone slab that is the lid of Christ's tomb.

The figure of Christ is realistically wrapped in a dingy, dirty white shroud. Gone is the 'fine linen' of the *Entombment*, as death has left its mark. Although still cloaked in death, Christ is beginning to show signs of life. His shallow, pale grey countenance is stroked with, barely detectable, faint touches of pink to suggest returning warmth. He rests his left arm on the edge of the tomb revealing the wound on the back of His hand. Christ's expression suggests that He is surprisingly (to the viewer) at peace and at ease with events. His eyes are still closed and He frowns slightly to reflect an inner solemnity, an inner calm.

The relative calm, solemn tone in this section of the painting is contrasted on the left by the group of agitated guards. Rembrandt highly animates these figures, with each displaying a different and highly individual reaction to the scene erupting before their eyes. Rembrandt has painted the guards with great thought and care, as evidenced by the profusion of catch-lights scattered amongst their armour and weapons; these catch-lights accentuate their gesticulations and expressions. The treatment of this group is reminiscent of the explosive action in *The Capture and Blinding of Samson* (fig. 233).

As in the *Samson* painting, a weapon creates one of the links between the two sections of the painting. Here, it is the flying sword of the central soldier, although this particular motif is taken directly from the earlier *Abraham's Sacrifice* (fig. 234). The sword directs attention towards the two Marys, balancing the composition and completing the narrative. The Magdalene responds to the action by reaching out and upwards, as if embracing the scene. Her hands are clearly visible, however her profiled face disappears into a faded dark section of the painting. Above her, the other Mary, although much clearer, is less knowing. As she raises her hands as protection against the light, she appears simply astonished. The poor condition of the work in this area restricts the narrative impact of the group. In fact, it is difficult to ascertain whether they even occupy the space successfully.

Towering above all is the Angel of the Lord and Rembrandt creates an angel that is simply astonishing. The angel is painted in flesh tones with long brown hair that fades into golden hues and is dressed in a heavenly garment, a robe tied with a cord. Large, ample wings support the figure that is portrayed in shades of grey that show signs of several paint layers which give them body and substance. These wings anchor the angel believably in the space. The angel displays a serene expression and a subdued facial countenance. This entirely convincing angel is in keeping with other powerful, purposeful angels in the *oeuvre*, such as *The Angel Leaving Tobias and his Family* in the Louvre (fig. 203), also executed during the *Passion Series* years.⁶

While there are analogies such as these within Rembrandt's *oeuvre*, direct pictorial sources for the painting are less identifiable. Broos has cited only one artist as a source for Rembrandt's painting: Lastman, who painted the subject twice.⁷ One painting (fig. 153), dated 1612, is in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. The other (fig. 154), formerly on loan to the Rijksmuseum but now in Budapest, is dated 1610. The centre of both of Lastman's *Resurrections* is dominated by the figure of the Angel of the Lord lifting, seemingly effortlessly, the large stone slab of the tomb lid. The emphasis on this central motif most likely provided Rembrandt with a prototype for his painting. From this relatively straightforward point of departure the development towards the final version of the painting becomes complicated.

Building on Hans Kaufmann's observations in which he detected distinct *pentimenti* on the paint surface, Brochhagen's research revealed at least three distinct stages of the work.⁸ The first two sets of changes were minor. However, at what appears to be a late stage, Rembrandt added two additional figures, the foremost soldier and, most significantly, the figure of Christ himself rising from the tomb. Earlier, Leo van Puyvelde had advanced a theory that the figure of Christ was an eighteenth-century addition by the restorer Brinckmann, a theory with which Bauch among others agreed.⁹ They based their theory on a drawing signed by Lambert Doomer (1624-1700) at Windsor Castle (fig. 235). It was executed after any one of a number of copies of, what was thought to be Rembrandt's final version of the painting. One such

⁶ Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, when discussing this work note the stylistic similarities with the later *Passion Series* paintings, vol. III, 237.

⁷ Broos, *Index to the Formal Sources of Rembrandt's Art*, 60.

⁸ Brochhagen, 'Passionbildern Rembrandts in München', 42-3; Hans Kaufmann, 'Sitzungsberichte der Kunstgeschichtlichen Gesellschaft,' 10:10 (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1919), 110.

⁹ Leo van Puyvelde, *The Dutch Drawings at Windsor Castle – a catalogue* (London: Oxford University Press and New York: Allen and Unwin, 1944), 28-9, # 117; Bauch, *Rembrandt: Gemälde*, 67.

copy, now in the Bavarian National Museum (fig. 208), depicts the Resurrection without the figure of Christ rising from the grave. When cleaned it revealed the signature: 'F. bol'.¹⁰ Brochhagen was the first to question this long-held theory, remarking that Brinckmann's enthusiastic correspondence makes no mention of compositional changes he may have made to Rembrandt's paintings.¹¹ As further evidence, he cites the 1719 catalogue of the Elector Palatine Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz's collection. In it, the number of figures in each *Passion* painting is recorded. Brochhagen notes that the number of figures in the *Resurrection* agrees with the present day number. Thus, he concludes that the copies, such as the one by Bol, depicted an earlier stage of Rembrandt's final composition and therefore shows that the figure of Christ is by the artist's own hand. Rembrandt's interest in depicting a man rising from the dead can be traced to his earlier painted and etched versions of the *Raising of Lazarus* (figs. 43 and 54). The artist's struggles to create a convincing type for this figure are evidenced by radiographic impressions of the painted *Raising of Lazarus*, which show that Rembrandt re-worked the figure of Lazarus twice.¹² Seemingly still not content, the artist persisted; the c. 1632 etching went through ten states.

In this quandary Rembrandt is not alone. Theologically this precise moment as Christ rises from the dead has always been problematic. The Resurrection is not a restoration of the *status quo ante*, as it does not erase the cruel memories of the Passion and Christ's death. Rembrandt's solution in the *Resurrection*, by including the figure of Christ, reflects the overall *Passion Series* theme – the contrast between His two natures.

¹⁰ See for an extended discussion of this issue, Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. III, 284-86.

¹¹ Brochhagen, 'Passionbildern in München', 42.

¹² Bruyn *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. 1, 295, 296 and 300; Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 84.

The Adoration of the Shepherds

The Adoration of the Shepherds,
1646, oil on canvas, 97 x 71.3 cm,
Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Corpus, V 11. Bredius, 574.

Signature: At the lower left, a legible date and traces of a signature: (...)*dt f 1646*.

Provenance: See entry for *The Descent from the Cross*.

Major Literature: Valentiner (1925); Weisbach (1926); Rotermund (1952); Gerson (1968); Brochhagen (1968); Schwartz (1985); Tümpel (1986); Perlove and Sliver (2009); Ketelsen (2009); van de Wetering *et al* (2011).

The event of the Adoration of the Shepherds is described exclusively in the Gospel of Luke, while the event of the Adoration of the Magi is described only in the Gospel of Matthew.¹ Together, they comprise the story of the Nativity of Christ, the inherent charm of which has long resonated with Christian audiences. Rembrandt's painting with its straightforward narrative in which the Christ Child is brilliantly illuminated among otherwise earthy, shady tones reflects this simple, humble charm. In a stable with an open truss roof, Christ lies wrapped in swaddling clothes nestled on a bed of straw. Above Him, the Virgin Mary bends slightly forward and extends her arms lovingly over her new-born child. Beside the Virgin, Joseph holds an oil lamp above the infant; proudly he presents Him to three shepherds who kneel before and just to the pictorial left of the Christ Child. That completes the cast of this central group. Further to the left a young boy looks on, while two additional shepherds stand above the kneeling group, all contemplating the infant. Behind this grouping two women, one holding a child, seem to push into the pictorial space from the left. This creates a sense of crowding, a sense of urgency coupled with astonishment. Amazement is also subtly conveyed in the exact centre of the painting there, careful examination reveals two eyes peering in through a partition in the crude building. No matter where they are situated in the scene, the gaze of all the figures is directed in profound adoration at Christ.

The painting is not well preserved; the paint layer has suffered not only at the hands of early restorers, like the *Passion Series* works, but also from a transfer. Radiographic analysis by the Rembrandt Research Project reveals a particularly fine weave running through the canvas which indicates that it is not the original but a new one to which the picture has been

¹ Luke 2:8-20. Matthew 2:7-12.

transferred.² In the *Corpus* they also comment that the single piece of canvas is rounded at the top and fixed to a support of block-board comprising many thin strips of wood glued together as a composite whole.³ An unusual feature of the work is a series of clearly visible 1-2 mm indentations, some of which are quite long, in the paint-layer around the well-lit central area. They do not seem to correlate to the irregular craquelure, which is consistent with a seventeenth-century painting on canvas. Rather, they appear to have been caused by variations in the thickness of the impasto. The pronounced use of impasto, which can be seen in the central area of the painting, denotes the painting as unique stylistically in the *oeuvre* of the 1640s. The work is a complete contrast to the elaborately detailed *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* (fig. 236) of 1644 in London; it also contrasts dramatically to its companion painting also destined for The Hague, the *Circumcision*, now known from a copy. The only attempt to explain this stylistic anomaly has been advanced by the *Corpus* researchers; they suggest that Rembrandt may have been ‘experimenting’ with the ‘rough manner’, as a show of virtuosity in keeping with art historical tradition.⁴ Further, that such a sure display of *sprezzatura* in the handling of paint would have been recognised at the court of Frederick Hendrick. Rembrandt may also have been experimenting with a style to match the subject matter. The improvised nature of the location and the gathering are reflected in a ‘rough and ready’ painterly technique.

What is clearly recognisable is that the handling of paint is closely related to the organisation of light – the more intense the light, the more pronounced the impasto. The heads, hands and clothing of the central group are executed in relatively broad, thick strokes; these passages catch the strongest light. The viewer is immediately drawn by the light to the figure of the Christ Child. Metaphorically, the Virgin appears to embrace the light that He appears to emanate; however, the oil lamp that Joseph holds provides the natural light source. This lamp is slightly obscured by the foremost shepherd who, with arms outstretched and dramatically captured *contre-jour*, conveys wonderment. The light highlights the faces of the two shepherds beside him. One holds his cap between his clasped hands in a gesture of adoration, while the other ponders the scene in a curious mixture of awe and disbelief. A lantern held by the foremost of the two standing shepherds provides a secondary natural light source. Although it illuminates the additional figures entering the scene, it is only partially effective given the strong light radiating around Christ. Multiple light sources are not unusual in the

² Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 435.

³ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 435.

⁴ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 441.

oeuvre of the 1640s. Three light sources are suggested in the painting of a similar subject, the *Holy Family with Angels* (fig. 46) in St. Petersburg of 1645. The organisation of light in the Munich *Adoration* is, however, notably in contrast to a workshop drawing (fig. 237) in the British Museum. In the *Corpus*, the author's comment that otherwise, compositionally, the drawing resembles the final painting in Munich and therefore must have been produced close to the latter's completion.⁵ In the drawing, the major light source is provided by the lantern of the standing shepherd, while Joseph's lamp remains largely concealed, thus illuminating to a far greater extent the additional figures entering the space from the left. In the painting Rembrandt mellows this light source and reveals the oil lamp. While this change emphasises the Christ Child as the focus of all the figures in the painting and the viewer, it also serves to distance the work somewhat from the pictorial tradition that often featured a distinctly supernatural light emanating from Christ.⁶

The arrangement of light is complemented by the remarkably varied colour scheme afforded to the central group. The lamb held by Joseph provides a golden glow to the straw on which Christ lies, in contrast to the Virgin's red robe and blue tunic; they in turn are echoed in the cap of the central kneeling shepherd and outer garment of the furthest shepherd. This handling of both technique and colour is in keeping with a small work of a closely related subject, *Joseph's Dream in the Stable at Bethlehem* (fig. 238) of 1645, now in Berlin. Although the Rembrandt Research Project researchers have cast doubt over the authenticity of this work, they concede that it does appear to display limited passages by Rembrandt's hand.⁷ In particular, they have identified his work in the seated figure of the Virgin, who is portrayed not only tonally similar to the corresponding figure in the Munich painting, but also is depicted with a gesture that suggests she is embracing the child.⁸ In both these works there is a sense of a very human, mother's love, showing genuine care and concern for her newborn child.

In the *Adoration*, these emotions are conveyed by the positioning of the foremost shepherd, whose outstretched arms echo the gesture of the Virgin. Radiographic analysis by the Rembrandt Research Project team reveals distinct and extensive *pentimenti* around the group

⁵ See van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 440-43.

⁶ The motif of a hidden, often supernatural, light source illuminating a night scene occurs in countless Nativities in the Northern pictorial tradition from Geertgen tot Sint Jans (1455/65-1485/95), c.1490, National Gallery, London through to the Utrecht Caravaggists such as Gerrit van Honthorst (1590-1656), 1622, Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne.

⁷ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 411-17.

⁸ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 414.

of kneeling shepherds indicating radical changes to their pose and gesture.⁹ Their evidence shows that the foremost shepherd was initially depicted with raised, clasped hands before the Christ Child, not unlike the shepherd to his left who originally held a staff. The changes to the foremost *contre-jour* shepherd increase his effectiveness as a *repoussoir* figure. He functions in a way not dissimilar to the figure placed in front of the tomb in the earlier *Entombment*, a painting that also featured dual and somewhat ambiguous light sources. However, the deliberate nature of the changes to this figure suggests that the alterations can be related to this work's intended function. The figure may be seen as acting as a substitute, a stand-in, for a meditating viewer, providing a cue as to an appropriate response to the event. The importance of this figure in relation to function in the Munich *Adoration* is underscored by a comparison with a similar *Adoration* in the National Gallery London (fig. 192), signed and dated, 'Rembrandt.f.1646'.

The London *Adoration* was long regarded as authentic; however it is now recognised that it is most likely a copy in reverse by a pupil of some stage of Rembrandt's painting.¹⁰ The painting represents, as we saw with Bol's *Resurrection* (fig. 208), the complex relationship between authenticated works and those by pupils that may or may not reflect a stage of Rembrandt's final composition. The most striking difference between the two *Adorations* is the differing gesture of the *repoussoir* figure. Smaller and set further back in a deepened pictorial space, this figure, with head bowed, reverts to the original gesture of the corresponding figure in the Munich painting. Additional figures in conversation are depicted in small groups across the picture plane. Their frieze-like arrangement is not interrupted by the features seen in the Munich *Adoration*; for example, the delicately painted open basket in the lower right corner or the strong structural motif of the stable loft.

The loft in the Munich *Adoration* is partially supported by a rough column just behind Joseph; it protrudes well out into the pictorial space to play an important role in the suggestion of depth. Perched on top of the loft are a chicken and rooster and significantly, from the far right, a ladder is partially seen resting against the structure. This motif could be seen as a pre-figuration of the Passion, which creates a link with the subjects of the earlier paintings and a compositional link, via the horizontal accent, with the *Descent*. The loft is executed in a particularly sketchy technique, in keeping with the dark greys and browns of the stable

⁹ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 440.

¹⁰ Weisbach, *Rembrandt*, 384-85 and Gerson, *Rembrandt Paintings*, 92, both regarded the work as authentic; Schwartz, *Rembrandt*, 239 and Tümpel, *All the paintings*, 246, consider the work a copy by a pupil.

interior, which merges into shadow. In contrast to the central group of figures the paint surface of the stable interior and of the secondary figures appears deliberately smooth, subordinate to the light effect and with little tonal variation. It is in these passages that Rembrandt appears to be painting in a deliberately casual style, thus suggesting his own humility through improvisation; however, it also emphatically focuses viewer attention on the figure of the Christ Child.

Although merely an infant in the Munich *Adoration*, Christ demands attention and devotion in equal measure to that which He commands in the earlier *Passion Series* paintings. At this first moment in His young life that Christ is recognised as divine, the artist portrays Him in a humble setting and with real humanity. Rembrandt brings bold, new stylistic innovation to the scene of the *lumen Christi*, with the Light of Christ emanating out into the evening gloom. Although stylistically at odds with not only the earlier works but also the rest of the *oeuvre* of the 1640s, the *Adoration* in this way can be seen to sit thematically with the other *Passion Series* works.

The Circumcision

Copy after Rembrandt,
The Circumcision,
 c.1646, oil on canvas, 97 x 71.3 cm,
 Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig.
Corpus, V 10.

Signature: None.

Provenance: A copy of Rembrandt's *Circumcision* is listed in the 1656 inventory of the artist's possessions.¹ It may or may not be this work. Alternatively, on 8 October 1669 a 'Grafleggingh' (Entombment) and a 'Besnidenis' (Circumcision) are mentioned together in an inventory drawn up on the occasion of Ferdinand Bol's marriage.² This could also be this painting. Additionally, and perhaps most likely, a 'Graflegging' and a 'Besnydenis' were auctioned together as 'Rembrandts' in Amsterdam on 11 May 1707; they may be identical to the two 'Rembrandt' paintings of the same name that appear in a Braunschweig catalogue of 1710.³ From this date both a '*Circumcision* by Rembrandt' and an '*Entombment* by Rembrandt' have been in the Ducal collection (now the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum) Braunschweig. Karsch's Düsseldorf catalogue of 1719 mentions seven *Passion Series* paintings, while Brinckmann's letter of 1756 mentions only the remaining six works that are now in Munich.⁴ These references, nine years apart, eliminate the possibility that the painting, the *Circumcision* in Braunschweig, could be the original, which was apparently lost or destroyed during these years.

Major Literature: Valentiner (1921); Bauch (1968); Gerson (1968); Schwartz (1985); Tumpel (1986); Sumowski (1992); Ketelsen (2009); van de Wetering *et al* (2011).

The event, the Circumcision of Christ, is reported only in Luke's Gospel; it is described between the episodes of the Adoration of the Shepherds and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.⁵ In the Epistles of Paul, the apostle stresses Christ's adherence to Mosaic Law in submitting to the rite of circumcision.⁶ Paul's message also contains the statement that the circumcision confirmed that the promises of Abraham were carried forward into the new covenant of the Gospels.⁷ For Calvin, the rite of Baptism in the New Dispensation now replaced the old ritual; he focused on Christ's role in putting an end to circumcision through his sacrifice, thus linking the Circumcision with the Passion.⁸ The Circumcision, despite

¹ Strauss and van der Mulen, *Documents*, #92, 356 and 357.

² See Blankert, *Bol*, 77.

³ See van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 433-34, n. 4, 7 and 16; T. Querfert, *Kurtze Beschreibung des Fuerstl. Lust-Schosses Saltzdahlum...*, Braunschweig n.d. [1710] n.p.

⁴ See both 'Introduction' and entry for *The Descent from the Cross*.

⁵ Luke 2:21-22.

⁶ Galatians 4:4-5.

⁷ Romans 15:8.

⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, xvi, 4.

being a relatively unusual subject in the pictorial tradition, is one that appears in the various formats in the combined *oeuvre* throughout Rembrandt's career. In addition to the Braunschweig painting, there are three etchings of this subject: 1626, then 1630 (fig. 239) and later in 1654 (fig. 240). Between these is a drawing dated 1645, a compositional sketch for the painting under discussion. Finally, there is a painting from 1661, now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, although the authenticity of this last work is highly questionable.⁹

Although there is no possibility that the Braunschweig painting could be the original, it is widely accepted as a reliable copy. The same arch-shaped format and almost exactly the same dimensions as the Munich *Adoration* lend credible evidence. Interestingly, it is the only copy of a history painting from the *oeuvre* of the 1640s; all other copies in this genre date from the 1630s such as the aforementioned copy of the *Entombment* in Rotterdam.¹⁰ An additional argument for its reliability as a copy is that the work contains nineteen figures, the same number given in the description of the original in the 1719 Düsseldorf catalogue.¹¹ Arguing against the faithfulness of the copy is the comparatively minor point that the figures are considerably smaller than those in the Munich *Adoration*. However, the size of figures varies slightly throughout the entire *Passion Series*. Stylistically, the *Circumcision* in Braunschweig is much closer to other Rembrandts of the 1640s than to its partner work, the Munich *Adoration*. The closest work to the Braunschweig *Circumcision* is the highly detailed *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* of 1644 (fig. 236) now in London. Both works are set in an elaborate Jewish Temple, suggesting connections in the life of Christ between circumcision (baptism) and church ministry.

In the Braunschweig *Circumcision*, an elaborately costumed bearded priest seated on a throne, dwarfed by solid, highly embellished architecture, is depicted holding the impassive Christ Child over a basin. A lay priest seated on a low chair to the left performs the circumcision. A third priest, again in full ceremonial dress, towers above them. A figure of authority, he stands with one arm akimbo holding a staff of rank in his free hand. On the right, a group of

⁹ The non-illustrated works are: *The Circumcision*, c.1626, etching, 21.5 x 16.2 cm, Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam. *The Circumcision of Christ*, 1645, pen and bistre heightened with white, 20.3 x 28.7 cm, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin. *The Circumcision of Christ*, c.1646, pen and brush in brown ink with brown and grey washes, 23.3 x 20.3 cm, Graphische Sammlung, Munich. *The Circumcision of Christ*, 1661, oil on canvas, 56.5 x 75 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington. *Corpus*, V 30. Bredius, 596.

¹⁰ See Michiel Franken, 'Learning by Imitation: Copying paintings in Rembrandt's workshop', in *Quest of a genius*, edited by Ernst van de Wetering, 153-178, 168-69.

¹¹ Karsch, *In der Galerie der Churfürstl. Residentz zu Düsseldorf...*, [1719].

five women kneel before the scene, with four seen from the back and one with her head turned towards the viewer. Directly to the left of the elevation and directly beneath the priestly group, a barefoot, simply-dressed figure kneels, bows his head and clasps his hands in prayer. As this figure is undoubtedly intended to be Joseph then, as noted in the *Corpus*, the woman who kneels beside him must be the Virgin Mary.¹² In keeping with the treatment of the subject in the 1630 etching and unlike the later representations of the subject, neither takes an active part in the event. Several other figures also occupy space on the left, but they are placed slightly lower than the figures of Joseph and the Virgin; one woman prays while the other holds an infant.¹³ A raised balustrade closes off the space behind this group, while a decorative niche closes off the elevation on the right .

The creation of space and the frieze-like quality of the figures is similar to the aforementioned *Christ and the Woman taken in Adultery*. Additionally, the style and the subject hark back to works of the early 1630s, such as the *Simeon in the Temple with the Christ Child* of 1631 (fig. 241), now in the Mauritshuis. The handling of colour in these works is similar to that in the Braunschweig *Circumcision*. In the Braunschweig painting, a mixture of bright blue, deep red and even some green is scattered among the figures on and around the podium and those kneeling on the left. The colour juxtaposition highlights the red dress of the woman in the left corner forefront who turns to engage the viewer. This foreground colour accent invests the figure with a *repoussoir* function. The effect is not dissimilar to the red garment of the foremost disciple in the *Ascension* or the red coat of the central guard in the *Resurrection*, although neither of these figures acts as a *repoussoir* motif. Interestingly, this figure is absent from a work depicting a similar subject (fig. 242) by a pupil of Rembrandt, Heinrich Jansen, which was probably based on Rembrandt's original composition. The figure therefore, I suggest, was either inserted in full by Rembrandt or her pose was altered by the artist to deliberately face the viewer, at some stage of the creative process

Rembrandt's interest in introducing a *repoussoir* figure into the scene can perhaps be traced to the 1645 Berlin drawing (fig. 243); it features two figures quite separate from the main action, seemingly conversing, in the lower right foreground. Slive notes that this image was engraved in the early nineteenth century by Thomas Naudet (1778-1810); the engraver stated

¹² Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 427.

¹³ This figure acted as a model for a painting now attributed to a pupil of Rembrandt, Barent Fabritius (1622-52), *Woman with a Child in Swaddling Clothes*, 1640's, oil on panel, 25 x 21.5 cm, Museum Boijmans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam. See Brown *et al*, *Master and his Workshop*, 376-79.

that his print was made after a Rembrandt painting of 1639, of which there is now no trace.¹⁴ In the drawing, Joseph holds Christ while the priest performs the rite. Behind the table on which the action takes place, a group of affluently-attired figures bear witness. Set apart, one of the two foreground figures appears to turn towards the viewer while pointing towards the central scene, seemingly to direct attention there. Although this arrangement roughly corresponds to the painting in Braunschweig, another drawing (fig. 244) of c. 1646, now in Munich, was considered by Benesch to be the autograph compositional sketch for the painting.¹⁵ The drawing is compositionally similar to the painting. In an arch-shaped format the action takes place in a monumental space with a large standing central figure and two kneeling figures seen from the back in the right foreground; neither of the latter engage the viewer's attention. In addition there are two related small cursory graphite sketches (figs. 245 and 246) of the subject in Munich. Although the Rembrandt Research Project team claim that, on stylistic grounds, they cannot be considered as autograph; as workshop exercises they suggest that the lost *Circumcision* evolved through various production stages, as each shows different figure groupings in the left foreground.¹⁶ They posit that the two sketches document, in part, Rembrandt's struggles through the 1640s to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of grouping auxiliary figures in a foreground space.¹⁷ They note that, at some stage, Rembrandt painted out a group of repoussoir figures in the left foreground of the *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*.¹⁸ There is a reasonable body of pictorial evidence to suggest that the original *Circumcision* may have remained in the studio as a model to be studied for an extended period; these include: the two workshop sketches, the *Circumcision* listed in the 1656 inventory and works by pupils such as Jansen and Gerbrand van de Eeckhout (1621-74), who produced a drawing (fig. 247) that closely corresponds with the Braunschweig painting. During this process there may well have been some collaboration between artist and patrons. The placement and pose of the foreground female figure in the Braunschweig *Circumcision* strongly suggest that she was intended to engage the viewer's attention, inviting the viewer to metaphorically participate in scene's the action. This figure can be seen to function in a manner similar to the *repoussoir* figure in the authenticated Munich *Adoration*. Additionally, the gaze of the female figure invites a colloquy, in which the viewer is coaxed, or even

¹⁴ Slive, *Drawings*, vol. I, 19.

¹⁵ Benesch, *Drawings*, vol. III, #581, 712.

¹⁶ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 431.

¹⁷ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 431.

¹⁸ Van de Wetering *et al*, *Corpus*, vol. V, 431.

goaded (the slight smile), into a closer relationship with the event, as she mediates between the image and the viewer/patron.

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