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1. Rembrandt, *The Fall of Man*, 1638, etching,
London, British Museum

David R. Smith

Raphael's Creation, Rembrandt's Fall

To anyone accustomed to the traditionally idealized nudity of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the first encounter with Rembrandt's etching of *The Fall of Man* of 1638 (fig. 1, B. 28) must come as something of a shock. And so he must have meant it to be. Compared with virtually all their predecessors in the Renaissance tradition, his Adam and Eve are unusually old and uncommonly ugly, with sagging flesh and awkward, graceless

movements and gestures. Naturalism here is unmistakably a consciously antiheroic style. More than once, scholars have seen in this first man and woman a prehistoric, simian quality that by its very nature has seemed to entail a sweeping revision of the very concept of paradise¹. On the other

¹ Carl Neumann, *Rembrandt*, 3rd ed., Munich 1922, 1, 143; Werner Weisbach, *Rembrandt*, Berlin and Leipzig 1926, 246; Richard Hamann, *Rembrandt*, Berlin 1948,



2. Rembrandt, *Diana Bathing*, etching, London, British Museum

hand, these figures also resemble those in a number of Rembrandt's early mythological works, where he uses ugliness to undercut the content as well as the form of the classical vision. In her physical appearance his early *Diana Bathing* (fig. 2; B. 201), for example, might be a close relative of his Eve, though her personality is perhaps more appealing. The same might be said of the *Andromeda* (Br. 462) in the Mauritshuis. And *The Rape of Ganymede* of 1635 in Dresden (fig. 3; Br. 471) appears to be a still deeper undermining of classical ideals. Whether or not Rembrandt intended the picture to be a serious metaphor for the union of the soul with God, as the Ganymede story often is in Renaissance art, his parody of the beautiful

youth in the myth seems inescapable. To him pagan gods and heroes were not transcendent beings, but all-too-mortal flesh, subject to normal fears, weaknesses, and blemishes².

Despite such comparisons, however, Rembrandt's intentions in *The Fall of Man* remain elu-

145; Gerard Knuttel, *Rembrandt, de meester en zijn werk*, Amsterdam 1956, 111.

² Margarita Russell, »The iconography of Rembrandt's *The Rape of Ganymede*,« *Simiolus*, IX, 1977, 5-18, has argued that the artist did not intend this painting as a satire, as traditionally has been assumed, but as a neoplatonic allegory on the union of the soul with God after death. Her view is seconded by James M. Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society*, New Haven and London 1986, 185-91. It is certainly possible that Rembrandt's painting is in some



3. Rembrandt, *The Rape of Ganymede*, 1635, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen

sive. Is he attacking the classical ideal as such, or are the ugliness and wretchedness of Adam and Eve only incidentally unclassical, the direct result of his reading of the scriptural account? For a man of his religious convictions, the moral issues raised by the story of the Fall must inevitably have cut deeper than satire and parody, as the grimness of the scene attests. And what exactly would he have been parodying here? If scholars usually have found it easier to detect satire in mythological scenes such as the *Diana*, the *Andromeda*, and the *Ganymede*, this is largely because the images can be tied to more or less specific prototypes of a more idealizing character³. Such parallels have

been harder to find for *The Fall of Man*. Those that have been put forward, notably Raphael's *The Fall*

sense about salvation, but his unidealized vision of an infantilized Ganymede who is distinctly unenthusiastic about his journey to heaven suggests a Protestant sense of the gulf between the sacred and the profane that differs markedly from Renaissance versions of the Ganymede myth. The artist's irreverent attitude toward the classical models he must have known also suggests a criticism of classical ideals, both their forms and their heroic vision of humanity. For the more traditional, and in my view more correct, view that Rembrandt's painting is satirical, see Julius S. Held, »Rembrandt and the Classical World,« in *Rembrandt after Three Hundred Years: A Symposium – Rembrandt and his Followers*, ed. Deirdre C. Stam, Chicago 1973, 59–60.

³ On the relationship between Rembrandt's *Diana Ba-*

of *Man* in the Stanza della Segnatura, suggested by Valentiner, and an Altdorfer woodcut of the subject (B. 1), by Münz, have not been at all persuasive⁴. Yet we know that Rembrandt did turn to the earlier history of art in working out the image, for, as has long been recognized, the serpent is borrowed from Albrecht Dürer's *The Harrowing of Hell* (B. 16) from the *Engraved Passion*⁵. Moreover, the triadic, symmetrical structure of the composition places the print in the mainstream tradition of the representation of the Fall in medieval and Renaissance art. What sets it apart is that its axis rests on Eve rather than on the Tree of Knowledge, as is far more often the case. There is, however, a distinguished classical model for Rembrandt's etching, one that I believe casts a revealing light on his interpretation of the theme. That source is Raphael's fresco of *The Creation of Eve* in the Vatican Logge (fig. 4)⁶. Raphael's God has

thing and a print of *Susanna and the Elders* by Annibale Carracci, see J. Bruyn, »Rembrandt and the Italian Baroque,« *Simiolus*, IV, 1970, 28–29. I would reject, however, Bruyn's contention that Rembrandt would not have considered his etching unclassical. His suggestion that our understanding of what constitutes proper classical form is somehow »modern« and anachronistic or that Rembrandt was free, according to the standards of his time, to mix a classical pose with »naturalistic observation« seems to me to be unfounded. For a discussion of Renaissance models for the *Andromeda*, see A. B. de Vries et al., *Rembrandt in the Mauritshuis*, Alphen aan de Rijn 1978, 68–70. On *The Rape of Ganymede*, see n. 2.

⁴ Wilhelm R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt und seine Umgebung*, Strassburg 1905, 72; Ludwig Münz, *Rembrandt's Etchings: A Critical Catalogue*, London 1952, II, 87, no. 177. Valentiner's hypothesis apparently rests on no more than the fact that Raphael's Segnatura Adam is seated and his Eve is standing. The only real correspondence between Altdorfer's composition and Rembrandt's is that the Tree of Knowledge and the serpent are placed on the left, an arrangement that Rembrandt would, of course, have reversed if he drew his predecessor's composition directly onto the etching plate; but there is no relationship between the figures of Adam and Eve in the two prints. Even less compelling is the suggestion of Margarete Barnass, *Die Bibelillustration Tobias Stimmers. Ein Beitrag zur Bibelillustration des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Heidelberg 1932, 43, that Rembrandt drew inspiration from a Bible-illustration by Tobias Stimmer. She rests her case on a shared sense of »spiritual conflict,« but concedes that formally the two works are not very close. Frits Lugt, »Rembrandt: Follower and Imitator,« *Art News*, LI, 1952, 40, cites a possible influence from a drawing by Maerten de Vos,

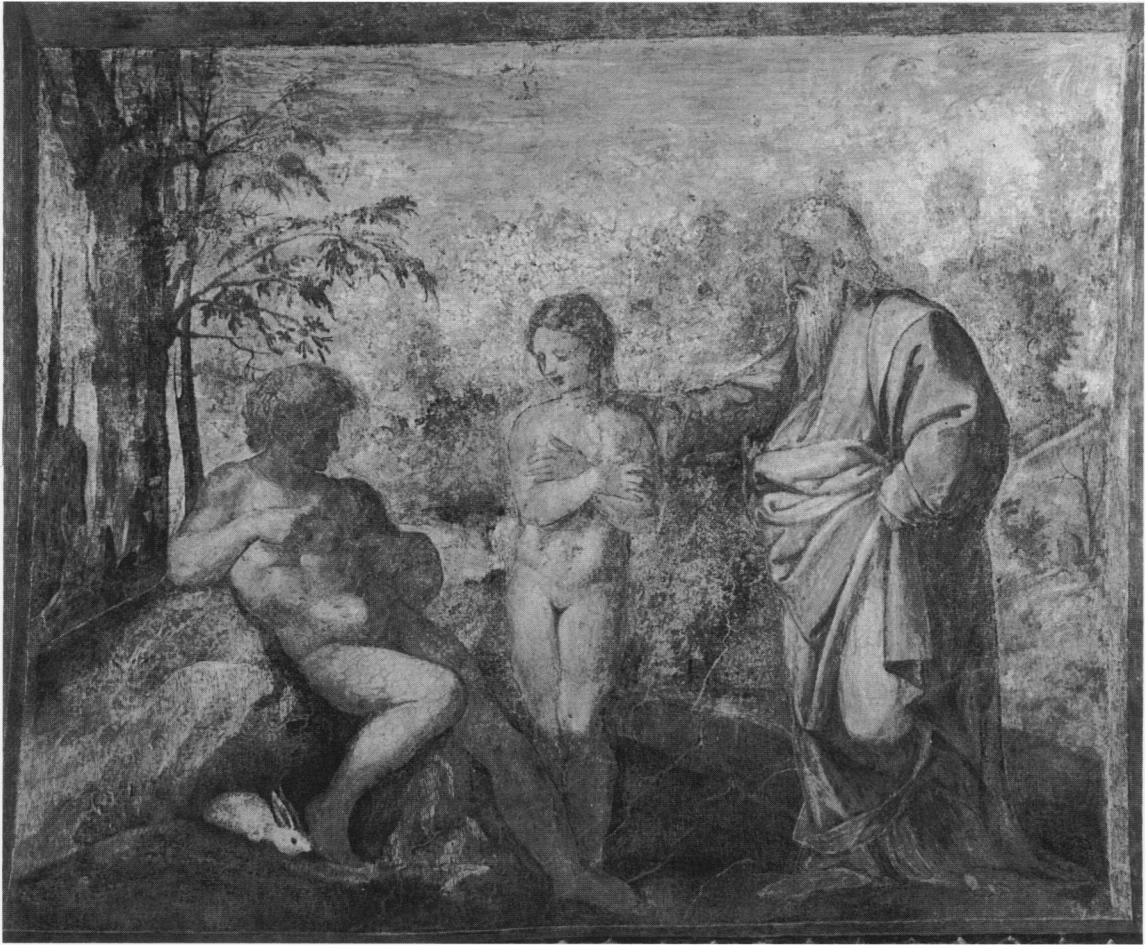
been exchanged for Dürer's serpent, and for the upper half of Adam's body, Rembrandt has relied on his own sketch of the figure in a preparatory drawing in Leiden (fig. 6). Inevitably, reaching for an apple requires a different gesture than pointing to a missing rib. But the legs of Rembrandt's Adam are unmistakably borrowed from his Italian counterpart, and both figures lean against a rock. In the case of the two Eves, on the other hand, the overall poses are remarkably alike, though they are virtually antithetical images of woman. Each stands frontally with her head inclined toward her husband and her hands meeting at her chest, the one modestly to shield her bosom, the other slyly to offer the apple. Finally, Raphael's influence doubtless accounts for what Christopher White sees as a newly classical sense of form and contour in Rembrandt's definition of the nude in this print⁷.

which is, however, unknown to me. But I assume that the similarity is not very compelling, for he makes only the briefest mention of it. Werner Hofmann et al., *Luther und die Folgen für die Kunst*, exh. cat., Kunsthalle, Hamburg 1983, 322, no. 187, suggests that Rembrandt's print is indebted to Lucas van Leyden's engraving of *The Fall* of about 1506 (B. 7), but the only similarity is that Lucas's Adam is also a rather aged and unpleasant character. His Eve, on the other hand, is young and pretty, and the composition centers on the Tree of Knowledge. Finally, F. Schmidt-Degener, »Rijksmuseum te Amsterdam,« *Verslagen omtrent 's rijks verzamelingen van geschiedenis en kunst 1934*, LVII, 1935, 22, suggests that the elephant in the background of Rembrandt's print is based on a print by Philips Galle in his series *Venationes ferarum* after a drawing of an elephant hunt by Jan Stradanus. Regardless of its merits, this last connection is not germane to my argument.

⁵ J.L.A.A.M. Rijckevorsel, *Rembrandt en de traditie*, Rotterdam 1932, 35–37. Rembrandt acquired Dürer's *Engraved Passion* at an auction in 1638. See Walter L. Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents*, New York 1979, 150.

⁶ The extent of Raphael's participation in the direct execution of the Logge frescoes is the subject of considerable dispute. Most, if not all, of the painting was evidently done by his workshop. But the overall conception and probably many of the compositions are, in all likelihood, his. See Luitpold Dussler, *Raphael: A Critical Catalogue*, London and New York 1971, 90–91; Oskar Fischel, *Raphael*, Berlin 1962, 116–118; James Beck, *Raphael*, New York 1976, 172; and Bernice F. Davidson, *Raphael's Bible: A Study of the Vatican Logge*, University Park and London 1985, 30–31, 50–67.

⁷ Christopher White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, University Park and London 1969, 1, 178.



4. Rembrandt, *The Creation of Eve*, Rome, Musei Vaticani

Despite their manifest differences of style and outlook, it is not unusual for Rembrandt to draw inspiration from the art of Raphael. The inventory of his vast art collection, drawn up in connection with his bankruptcy in 1656, makes it clear that he was quite familiar with the Italian master's work. In addition to a »head« (no. 67) and a picture of the Virgin (no. 114), he owned five books of prints after Raphael's work (nos. 196, 205, 206, 214, and 232) and possibly a number of drawings as well⁸.

⁸ For the inventory of Rembrandt's collection, see Strauss and van der Meulen, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 349–87.

⁹ The series of engravings after the Logge frescoes that would have been available to him include those of Sisto Badalocchio and Giovanni Lanfranco of 1607; of Baldassare Aloisi Galanini; of Orazio Borgianni of 1615;

Among the prints was probably one of several series of engravings after the paintings in the Logge from early in the seventeenth century, for two other works in the cycle find echoes in his drawings⁹. One drawing (Ben. 475), which is approxi-

and of Francesco Villamena of 1626. Villamena's is an unlikely source because he does not include the scenes from the lives of Isaac and Moses that Rembrandt copied in other works (see below). Badalocchio and Lanfranco's prints reverse the original image, but it would not have been unusual for Rembrandt to reverse the composition of such a print so as to return to the original composition. See Grazia Bernini Pezzini, Stefania Massari, and Simonetta Prosperi Valenti Rodinò, *Raphael Invenit: Stampe da Raffaello nelle Collezioni dell'Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica*, Rome, 1985, 77–86.



5. Rembrandt, *The Fall of Man*, drawing, Philadelphia, Collection of David H. Felix.
 6. Rembrandt, *The Fall of Man*, drawing, Leiden, Prentenkabinet der Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden

mately contemporary with *The Fall of Man* and which variously has been attributed to Rembrandt or to his student Ferdinand Bol, shows a *Finding of Moses* that reflects the Vatican version¹⁰. In the mid-1650's Rembrandt also copied a print after the *Isaac and Rebecca Spied upon by Abimelech*; the drawing (Ben. 988) served as his model for *The Jewish Bride* (Br. 416) of about a decade later¹¹. Probably his most famous borrowing from

Raphael is his drawing of the *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione* (Ben. 451), made at an auction in Amsterdam in 1639¹². Castiglione's pose quickly became one of his most frequently used portrait types. The list of connections between the two masters is longer still and seems likely to expand¹³.

Clearly, Rembrandt found Raphael's art a stimulating model. His fascination with it belongs,

¹⁰ Around 1650 Bol made this drawing the basis for his painting of *The Finding of Moses*, now in the Peace Palace in The Hague. C. Hofstede de Groot, »Rembrandts onderwijs aan zijne leerlingen,« in *Feestbundel Dr. Abraham Bredius*, Amsterdam 1915, 87, believed the drawing to be by Rembrandt himself, while Ludwig Münz, »Federzeichnungen von Rembrandt und F. Bol,« *Belvedere*, V, Heft 27, 1924, 111, first reattributed it to Bol. More recent attributions to Bol are to be found in Otto Benesch, *The Drawings of Rembrandt*, II, London 1954, 111, no. 475; E. Haverkamp Begemann and Anne-Marie Logan, *Rembrandt after 300 Years*, exh. cat., Art Institute, Chicago 1969, 182, no. 151; and Albert Blankert, *Ferdinand, Bol, Rembrandt's Pupil*, Doornspijk 1982, 93–94, no. 9. None of these scholars, however, expresses full assurance in this attribution. Recent supporters of the attribution to Rembrandt are Werner Sumowski, »Bemerkungen zu Otto Beneschs Corpus der Rembrandt-Zeichnungen I,« *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*, VI, 1956/57, 264; Jakob Rosenberg, »Review

of Otto Benesch, *The Drawings of Rembrandt*,« *Art Bulletin*, XXXVIII, 1956, 69; and Seymour Slive, *The Drawings of Rembrandt*, New York 1965, II, no. 373.

¹¹ Wilhelm R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt, des Meisters Handzeichnungen*, Stuttgart 1925, I, no. 243.

¹² Maurice Bloch, »Rembrandt and the Lopez Collection,« *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 6th ser., XXIX, 1946, 175–80.

¹³ Among Rembrandt's other borrowings from Raphael's paintings in the Vatican is his drawing in Amsterdam of *Homer Reciting his Verses* (Ben. 916), which is based on *The Parnassus* in the Stanza della Segnatura. On this drawing and its significance in Rembrandt's work, see Herbert von Einem, »Rembrandt und Homer,« *Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch*, XIV, 1952, 185–87. Similarly, a drawing in Dresden of *God Appearing to Abraham* (Ben. 1003) seems to be based on a print after Raphael's painting of his subject on the ceiling of the Stanza d'Eliodoro (see Benesch *op. cit.* [n. 10] V, 285–86). Other notable connections between the two artists are: the influence of a Marcantonio-Raimondi engraving of a Raphael *Holy Family* on the early *Presentation in the*

moreover, to a larger preoccupation with classical form and composition, particularly during the 1630's. In the opinion of Joseph Gantner, the high point of his engagement with the classical style occurs in three drawings he made after Leonardo's *Last Supper* (Ben. 443–45) in 1635¹⁴. In 1638, the same year in which he etched *The Fall of Man*, Rembrandt put Leonardo's composition to work in his painting of *Samson's Wedding Feast* in Dresden (Br. 507). Furthermore, *The Last Supper* continued to work upon his imagination throughout his career. The strongest echoes are found in his later renditions of *The Supper at Emmaus* (Br. 578, 579, 597, B. 87); but Leonardo's image also seems to have helped to shape other works, among them *The Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis* (Br. 482) and *The Syndics* (Br. 415)¹⁵. These later pictures in particular show the degree to which the artist absorbed his classical model into his own formal and thematic vocabulary. But Gantner stresses that his first encounters with this and other Italian masterpieces during the 1630's provided him with the means for creating this personal vocabulary, allowing him to transcend the »crude naturalism« of his earlier work. Works such as *The Last Supper* introduced qualities of rhythmic order, stability, and concentration into his style and hence a basis for the more structured and introspective character of his mature art¹⁶. And though he transformed his sources, they remained for him paradigms of a sort. Rembrandt's Christ at Emmaus and, for that matter, his Claudius Civilis are still indissolubly linked in both form and content to Leonardo's Christ at the Last Supper¹⁷. The same is true of his many variations on Raphael's *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione*. What drew him to this portrait type time and again was surely his recognition that it embodies the quintessentially classical ideal of the Renaissance gentleman¹⁸.

In many ways the relationship between Rembrandt's *The Fall of Man* (fig. 1) and Raphael's *The Creation of Eve* (fig. 4) seems to fit the pattern proposed by Gantner quite closely. Before turning to his classical model, the Dutch artist had pondered the subject in a series of uncertain starts. Two preliminary drawings survive, each of which

seems to represent a direct response to the biblical narrative, unmediated by visual models, classical or otherwise. Whether or not either of these studies shows »crude naturalism,« to use Gantner's phrase, they are more discursive in character than the etching, focusing on problems of plot, as it were, rather than on problems of compositional structure. Each image is also clearly unresolved. The earlier of the two, the drawing in Philadelphia (fig. 5; Ben. 163), amounts to a first idea, which the artist laid out quickly in a few rapidly sketched

Temple in Hamburg (Br. 535) (Kenneth Clark, *Rembrandt and The Italian Renaissance*, New York, 1966, 44–46); of *The Blinding of Elymas* on the etching of *The Blindness of Tobit* (B. 42) (*ibid.*, 51–52); and of the *Donna Velata* on the *Portrait of a Lady with a Heron's Plume in her Hair* (Br. 352), suggested by Joseph Gantner, *Rembrandt und die Verwandlung klassischer Formen*, Bern/Munich 1964, 61–66. A number of other connections between Raphael and Rembrandt are to be found in Colin Campbell, »Raphael door Rembrandts pen herschapen,« *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis*, XXVII, 1975, 200–32. Amy Golahny, »Rembrandt's Early Bathsheba: The Raphael Connection,« *Art Bulletin*, LXV, 1983, 671–75, has also discovered a Raphael source for the *Bathsheba* in the Metropolitan Museum (Br. 513).

¹⁴ Gantner, *op. cit.* (n. 13), 27–51.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 111–83.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 80–81.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 85–87.

¹⁸ E. de Jongh, »The Spur of Wit: Rembrandt's Response to an Italian Challenge,« *Delta*, XII, 49–67, has noted, as have others, that Rembrandt's initial source for his first version of this portrait type, his etched *Self Portrait* of 1639 (B. 21), came from Titian's so-called *Portrait of Ariosto* in London. But it is certain that Raphael's example nevertheless played a significant role in the subsequent development of the theme (see, most recently, Hans-Joachim Raupp, *Untersuchungen zu Künstlerbildnis und Künstlerdarstellung in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert*, Hildesheim, 1984, 174). I would also question de Jongh's attempt to narrow Rembrandt's concerns in this image to an interest in competing with Titian's and Ariosto's artistic fame by invoking the principle of *aemulatio*. The most obvious weakness of this view is that it does not explain why Rembrandt used this portrait type for sitters who were not artists, notably Nicolaes van Bambeeck in his portrait in Brussels of 1641 (Br. 218). For a discussion of this portrait type's place in Rembrandt's understanding of the Renaissance gentlemanly ideal and of its significance for his approach to characterization, see David R. Smith, »Rembrandt and the Portrait Tradition,« in *600 Years of Netherlandish Art: Selected Symposium Lectures*, Memphis, TN 1982, 52–54.

lines. When he made the second drawing, in Leiden (fig. 6; Ben. 164), Rembrandt had changed his conception of the figures and their interaction. Though much closer to the final etching, this drawing nevertheless proved more troublesome. The forms and gestures of Adam and Eve in the main sketch on the left have been reworked repeatedly, and in the process Adam's features have virtually disappeared. Rembrandt has tried to come to grips with the problem once again in the quick drawing in the lower right of the sheet. The fact that he was able to use this image of Adam in the etching shows a measure of success. But the gestures are still confused, and the figures' spatial relationship is at best uncertain. It was only at this point, apparently, that he turned to Raphael's *The Creation of Eve* for the solution to his problems. What he discovered there was a monumental balance and stability that enabled him to calm the rather frenzied immediacy of the interactions in the Leiden drawing. At the same time, the symmetry of Raphael's composition does not entail an abstraction of the relationship between Adam and Eve, as is most often the case in scenes of the Fall, where they usually flank the Tree of Knowledge. With Eve as the central figure, Rembrandt could focus on the conversational interchange that had been his primary interest from the beginning. Finally, the third figure in the triad not only stabilizes the action by balancing the two mortals; it lifts the narrative onto a more elemental and mythic plane of meaning. The substitution of Dürer's hovering dragon for Raphael's graceful and benignly paternal God adds a particularly grim note to the etching.

In its grimness and its ugliness, however, the print has a relationship to its classical prototype that differs markedly from those found in the examples cited by Gantner. He sees Rembrandt's borrowings from Italian-Renaissance art as a current that runs counter to the unclassical tendencies of much of the artist's early work¹⁹. But in *The Fall of Man*, his anticlassicism is especially prominent, and it radically transforms Raphael's image. It is hard to avoid seeing this transformation as a critical commentary on his predecessor's work, even if

it remained a commentary known only to himself. Rembrandt seems to have been quite self-conscious about his borrowings from earlier masters; more than once he uses them to make subtle allusions that bear directly on problems of meaning, as his variations on Leonardo's *Last Supper* attest. His use of Dürer's dragon in this print is another case in point. In the past this unusual image of the serpent has sometimes been seen as intentionally preposterous, a burlesque note of humor²⁰. But Christian Tümpel has suggested that in quoting from Dürer's engraving of Christ descending into Hell, Rembrandt meant to connect the Fall with mankind's eventual redemption²¹. The *Creation of Eve*, of course, does not have such a direct theological relationship to the meaning of the Fall. And, in any case, Raphael's painting was not his point of departure. As we have seen, Rembrandt only seems to have come upon it in the course of developing his image in terms of the meanings of the story itself. If his use of the Italian master's composition has a more than purely formal significance in the etching of *The Fall of Man*, it can only be because he felt that it had some bearing on his vision of the Fall. To uncover these associations requires that we probe more deeply into the complex development of Rembrandt's image.

The key to the nature of the difficulties and uncertainties evident in the reworkings and corrections in the drawings would seem to lie in his understanding of original sin itself. The Philadelphia drawing (fig. 5) shows that from the beginning he conceived of the Fall primarily in sexual terms. What most separates the innocent Adam from his already-fallen wife is that he spreads his legs in an utterly unself-conscious pose, while hers are crossed, betraying her dawning awareness of sexuality and guilt. Having ventured in this direction, Rembrandt's imagination quickly grew more vivid. Compared to the Leiden drawing (fig. 6), his first version of the theme seems rather sedate. In the

¹⁹ Gantner, *op. cit.* (n. 13), 80–82.

²⁰ Weisbach, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 246.

²¹ Christian Tümpel, *Rembrandt legt die Bibel aus*, exh. cat., Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin 1970, no. 1.

main study on the left side of the sheet, Eve's left hand reaches down to fondle Adam's genitals as she offers him the apple with her right²².

The idea that Adam and Eve's original sin was the discovery of sexuality had been, of course, a commonplace in Christian theology since patristic times²³. Calvin, to be sure, had vehemently rejected the sexual interpretation of the Fall, seeing marriage and sexuality as among the original gifts of God rather than a perversion of paradisaical innocence²⁴. But as a layman, Rembrandt may have been unaware of the orthodox Protestant position on this matter. And, in any case, he was heir to a rich pictorial tradition that envisioned the event in erotic terms. Especially in the works of Northern-Renaissance masters such as Lucas van Leyden, Hans Baldung Grien and Jan Gossaert, the scene often takes on distinctive qualities of carnality and lust²⁵. The Leiden drawing is not a variation on a traditional theme, however. Not only does it transgress even the meager standards of modesty in most of these earlier artists' works; it suggests a deep and highly personal ambivalence about this erotic train of thought. In the second drawing on the sheet, Rembrandt has focused only on the upper halves of the couple's bodies, evidently seeking to define the Fall in psychological or symbolic terms alone. It is hard to avoid seeing this shift of focus as a major rethinking of the theme and to connect it with the reworkings that have left the previous study in such a confused state.

Rembrandt's sexual attitudes have proven a provocative subject, conspicuously avoided by some scholars, much speculated upon by others. The evidence that he had a lively interest in erotic themes is inescapable. In the following decade he produced two unusually graphic scenes of copulation in *The Ledikant* (1646; B. 186) and *The Monk in the Cornfield* (B. 187)²⁶. And the etchings of *The Fluteplayer* (1642; B. 188) and *The Sleeping Herdsman* (B. 189) share a coarsely erotic view of the idyllic traditions of pastoral romance²⁷. Especially important for his view of the Fall, however, is his preoccupation with themes that mix sexuality with sin and guilt. Some of these pictures have a distinctly autobiographical flavor, as when he

shows himself and his wife as the prodigal son and the whore in his *Self Portrait with Saskia* (fig. 7; Br. 30) in Dresden²⁸. Saskia also appears as Delilah in *The Blinding of Samson* (1636; B. 501) in Frankfurt and as the treacherous Philistine wife in *The Blinding of Samson* (1636; B. 501) in Frankfurt and as the treacherous Philistine wife in *Samson's Wedding Feast*. Whether Madlyn Kahr is right in seeing these paintings as expressions of a

²² Though the nature of the gesture of Eve's left arm is unmistakable, it appears to represent only one of several solutions with which the artist experimented. It is possible, for example, that the hand just below Adam's chin is hers, though it might equally be one of several gestures by Adam himself. Her right arm has also been reworked at least twice.

²³ Larry Silver and Susan Smith, »Carnal Knowledge: the late engravings of Lucas van Leyden,« *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, XXIX, 1978, 250–51.

²⁴ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, trans. John King, Grand Rapids, MI, n.d., I, 128–31, 152.

²⁵ Silver and Smith, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 246–50; Charles W. Talbot, »Baldung and the Female Nude,« in *Hans Baldung Grien: Prints and Drawings*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 1981, 19–28; Larry Silver, »Figure nude, historie e poesie: Jan Gossaert and the Renaissance Nude in the Netherlands,« *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, XXXVII, 1986, 1–10. A particularly close parallel to Rembrandt's first Leiden drawing is Gossaert's drawing of *The Fall of Man* of about 1525 in the Museum of Art of the Rhode Island School of Design. Here too Eve reaches toward Adam's penis, while he in turn reaches for her breast. See Deborah J. Johnson, *Old Master Drawings from the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design*, Providence 1983, 202–06, no. 72.

²⁶ For the latest interpretation of *The Ledikant*, see Werner Busch, »Rembrandts Ledikant – der Verlorene Sohn im Bett,« *Oud Holland*, XCVII, 1983, 257–65.

²⁷ See Alison McNeil Kettering, »Rembrandt's Flute player: a unique treatment of pastoral,« *Simiolus*, IX, 1977, 19–44, and J. A. Emmens, *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst*, Utrecht 1968, 147–49.

²⁸ Ingvar Bergström, »Rembrandt's Double Portrait of Himself and Saskia at the Dresden Gallery: A Tradition Transformed,« *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, XVII, 1966, 150–69. See also Annaliese Mayer-Meintschel, »Rembrandt und Saskia im Gleichnis vom verlorenen Sohn,« *Jahrbuch Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden*, 1970–71, 44–54, and Madlyn Kahr, »Rembrandt and Delilah,« *Art Bulletin*, LV, 1973, 252–58. On possible connections between Rembrandt's identification with the prodigal son and Protestant meditative practices, see David R. Smith, »Towards a Protestant Aesthetics: Rembrandt's 1655 *Sacrifice of Isaac*,« *Art History*, VIII, 1985, 294.



7. Rembrandt, *Self Portrait with Saskia*, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen

subconscious fear of women remains uncertain²⁹. Such pictures are balanced, after all, by many warmly positive images of Saskia and other women; and, in any case, it is notoriously difficult to practice Freudian analysis upon the dead. But in his choice and treatment of subjects that raise clear problems of Christian morality, Rembrandt's ambivalent attitude toward sexual temptation becomes clear enough. In addition to the Dresden *Self Portrait with Saskia*, his recurrent interest in the figures of Susanna and Bathsheba, which are sometimes almost interchangeable in conception, indicates both how fascinating and perhaps how troubling he found this issue. These two women, the one innocent, the other guilty in her response

to temptation, would seem to have represented for him an explicit polarity between virtue and vice³⁰. Another subject of this kind that he returned to at different stages of his career is the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife³¹. Particularly revealing in the

²⁹ Kahr, *op. cit.* (n. 28), 239–59.

³⁰ See Colin Eisler, »Rembrandt and Bathsheba,« in *Essays in Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp Begemann on his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Anne-Marie Logan, Doornspijk 1983, 84–88. Eisler believes that Rembrandt also thought of the figure of Esther as a member of this thematic grouping of biblical heroines.

³¹ Two decades after the etching of this subject from 1634 (fig. 8), Rembrandt produced two closely related paintings of the later moment when the wife accuses Joseph before her husband (Br. 523; 1655; Washington, and Br. 524; 1655; Berlin). He also created three drawings that



8. Rembrandt, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*, 1634, etching, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet

present context is his first version of the scene, the etching of 1634 (fig. 8; B. 39). Based on a print by Tempesta (B. 54), it gives an unusually carnal image of Potiphar's wife, who seems to bear a close spiritual kinship to the Eve in the first Leiden drawing (fig. 6), even as she physically resembles the Eve in the etching (fig. 1)³². The rather melodramatically chaste figure of Joseph may also shed some light on the personal concerns he brought to the story of the Fall. For in both the etching and the drawings, it is Adam, the man, who seems to be the pivotal character in the drama of temptation. With the exception of the second Leiden drawing, all show his face in shadow, and in the first Leiden drawing, the artist has taken care to show the sun behind Adam's back, apparently to stress that he has turned away from the light. If Rembrandt found the dilemma of the tempted male a vexing theme, and possibly one with personal implications for himself, this might account for his difficulties with Adam's face in this drawing. The repeated reworkings that have blotted out his features suggest an uncertainty about the nature of his response to Eve's overtures.

Adam's face is also darkened in Raphael's *The Creation of Eve* (fig. 4). There the shadow proba-

bly alludes to the deep sleep from which he has just awakened. All the same, Raphael was keenly aware of the erotic possibilities of this first encounter between the sexes, for the rabbit at Adam's feet is one of the most familiar symbols of sexuality in Western art. Eve's demure pose, which seems to be based on an antique *Venus pudica* is obviously suggestive as well³³. We may be sure that Rembrandt recognized this erotic mood and that in choosing this model he was at least partly motivated by the sexual interpretation of the Fall that is so evident in his preliminary drawings. Though the unattractiveness of the figures in the etching largely cancels the charms of their prototypes, Eve's frontal pose forces her nakedness on the viewer in a way that is unmistakably, if unappealingly, provocative. Leonard Slatkes has suggested, moreover, that the elephant in the background symbolically refers to the sexual nature of Adam's temptation. He points to an old legend that the male of the species is naturally pious and

deal with this quieter, but psychologically no less turbulent, moment in the story (Ben. 494; 623; 958).

³² Tümpel, *op. cit.* (n. 21), no. 18; J. P. Filedt Kok, *Rembrandt Etchings and Drawings in the Rembrandt House*, Maarssen, 1972, 48.

³³ Nicole Dacos, *Le Logge di Raffaello*, Rome, 1977, 155.

so instinctively chaste that he must be seduced by this mate. Male elephants supposedly also hate snakes³⁴.

Whether or not Slatkes's interpretation is correct, however, it is striking how little overt eroticism there is in the etching. Compared to the *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (fig. 8) or the figures in the first two drawings, this Adam and Eve seem sexually rather tame. However much Rembrandt may have been drawn to the libidinous undertones of Raphael's image, he has used its stable composition and its separation of the figures to cool whatever fires of passion he may have associated with the theme. Indeed, given his earlier approach to the subject, the etching appears to represent a sublimation of sorts. Certainly, this seems to be the direction he was taking in the second Leiden drawing (fig. 6), which immediately precedes the final work. In both the couple's attention focuses only on the apple, and where the drawing deletes their lower bodies altogether, the print casts this part of their anatomy in deep shadow. More than anything else, it is the ugliness of the figures in the final version that indicates that these changes reflect not just a shift in interpretation, but a sublimation of the artist's own erotic impulses. For the Adam and Eve in the etching are not only uglier than Raphael's classical nudes; they are also uglier than the figures in the first two drawings. There his sexual interpretation of the Fall arises naturally out of a genuine, if not altogether classical, comeliness of face and body. Whatever the Adam in the first Leiden drawing may have looked like before he was »defaced«, the Eve is a true beauty, as she also seems to be in the more rudimentary sketch in Philadelphia (fig. 5). Rembrandt may not have felt especially guilty about his sexual feelings in general; certainly, he continued to indulge them in other works. But the profound consequences of this particular temptation may have sharpened the counterpoint between morality and sexuality that was apparently never far from his mind. His urge to clarify his moral stance already reveals itself in the noticeable hardening of Eve's features in the second Leiden drawing. Ironically, having chosen to focus on the purely psychological aspects of the

Fall, he has produced a simpler, more reductive pair of characterizations than in the previous sketch.

Faced with a much more attractive and articulate image of beauty in Raphael's *The Creation of Eve*, Rembrandt probably felt a need to create an equally articulate counter-image in the etching of *The Fall of Man*. The hard, coarse features and the flat-footed poses of this Adam and Eve are not merely a reflection of naturalism in the customary sense. They differ so markedly their models as to amount to caricatures. It is not surprising that some scholars have seen them as Neanderthals³⁵. A more likely analogy, however, can be found in Rembrandt's own etchings of beggars from the early 1630's (fig. 9; B. 165), most of which are based, either directly or indirectly, on Jacques Callot's savagely satirical series of etchings *Les Gueux* of 1622–23³⁶. Following the common opinion of his time, Callot pictures the beggar as a fraud and a social outcast, whose unseemly manners and appearance mirror his inner corruption³⁷. Though some have argued that Rembrandt took a sympathetic view of these vagabonds, prints like the one illustrated here show little evidence that his view of them differed significantly from Callot's³⁸. That the coarseness and mean-spiritedness of Adam and Eve have some kinship with similar qualities in many of the artist's early beggars is all the more probable in that the same comparison had been made by others. In his *Zede-Printen* of 1623–24, C. Huygens, one of his early patrons, specifically likens the degeneracy and depravity of

³⁴ Leonard Slatkes, »Rembrandt's elephant,« *Simiolus*, XI, 1980, 7–13.

³⁵ See n. 1.

³⁶ On Rembrandt's debt to Callot in this respect, see Kurt Bauch, *Der frühe Rembrandt und seine Zeit*, Berlin 1960, 153–66.

³⁷ On Callot's antagonism toward beggars, see *Jacques Callot 1592–1635*, exh. cat., Brown University, Providence 1970, no. 25. On the negative attitude toward the beggar class in this period, see Paul Zumthor, *Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland*, New York 1963, 248–50, and Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, 2nd ed., New York 1967, 271–89.

³⁸ The most comprehensive presentation of the case for the sympathetic view of the beggar is Eva Sudeck, *Bettlerdarstellungen vom Ende des XV Jahrhunderts bis zu*



9. Rembrandt, *Beggar Man and Woman Behind a Bank*, etching, Amsterdam Rijksprentenkabinet

these social outcasts to that of the fallen Adam: »Mensch, menschelijxst van allen,/Mensch totte menschlickheit van d'eerste Mensch hervallen«³⁹.

In a curiously perverse way, then, Raphael's *The Creation of Eve* shaped the content as well as the form of Rembrandt's *The Fall of Man*. However much he may have been attracted to the Italian master's classical vocabulary for compositional reasons, he evidently found its idealism morally unsuitable for a subject so fraught with sin and human folly as the Fall. The flawed nature of humanity is, of course, one of Rembrandt's deepest and most abiding concerns, and it underlies his tone of anticlassical parody in works such as the *Diana Bathing* (fig. 2) and *The Rape of Ganymede* (fig. 3). In the case of *The Fall of Man*, however, his anticlassicism seems to stem from a consciousness, on some level, of weaknesses quite personal to himself. In its contrast not just to Raphael's scene,

but to Rembrandt's own earlier conceptions of the Fall, the etching indicates sharp conflicts in his attitude toward sexuality and temptation. Furthermore, the very lengths to which he has gone to neutralize the sexual attractiveness of Adam and Eve suggest that these conflicts remained unresolved. Without question his final version of the story presents a gripping and coherent vision of man's original nature. The depths to which this first couple have fallen make a fitting background for the moral struggles and weaknesses of Rembrandt's other characters, biblical and non-biblical alike. Nevertheless, Adam and Eve remain something of an anomaly among his narrative scenes. Few of his works show little sympathy for human failings. In a sense, they are less »human« than others of Rembrandt's great sinners, figures such as Haman, for example, or perhaps even Potiphar's wife (fig. 8)⁴⁰. If his view of Adam and Eve is harder and less forgiving than usual, it may be because in portraying them he was striving to turn away from the inner resources of his own feelings.

Rembrandt, Strasbourg 1931, 81–90. The two most recent arguments for this point of view are Julius S. Held, »A Rembrandt Theme«, *Artibus et Historiae*, no. 10, 1984, 21–34, and Robert W. Baldwin, »On earth we are beggars, as Christ himself was.« The Protestant Background of Rembrandt's Imagery of Poverty, Disability, and Begging,« *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*, LIV, 1985, 122–35. Though Rembrandt's later beggar studies, notably his *Beggars at a Doorway* of 1648 (B. 176), certainly show a sympathetic view of their plight, I do not see any evidence that those from the 1620's and early 1630's differ significantly from Callot's more cynical view of vagrancy. While not all of these early prints were necessarily made with polemical intent, Rembrandt's vision of the beggar appears to have been filtered through social conventions as much as through pictorial ones. I am joined in this view by Suzanne Stratton, »Rembrandt's Beggars: Satire and Sympathy,« *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, XVII, 1986, 77–82.

³⁹ Constantijn Huygens, *Zede-Printen*, in *Profijteliijk Vermaak: Moraliteit en Satire uit de 16e en 17e Eeuw*, ed. M.C.A. van der Heijden, Utrecht and Antwerp, 1968, 211: Man, manliest of all,/ Man to the manliness if Adam once more fallen... (lines 3 and 4).

⁴⁰ See Jan Bialostocki, »Der Sünder als tragischer Held bei Rembrandt,« in *Neue Beiträge zur Rembrandt-Forschung*, ed. Otto von Simson and Jan Kelch, Berlin 1973, 137–50.

Fotos: 1, 2 British Museum, London. – 3, 7 Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. – 4 Musei Vaticani, Rome. – 5 Collection of David H. Felix, Philadelphia. – 6 Prentenkabinet der Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden. – 8, 9 Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam.