REMBRANDT’S 1654 LIFE OF CHRIST PRINTS:
GRAPHIC CHIAROSCURO, THE NORTHERN PRINT TRADITION, AND THE
QUESTION OF SERIES

by

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*We also certify that written approval has been obtained for any proprietary material contained therein.
This dissertation is dedicated with love to my children, Peter and Beatrice.
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Rembrandt’s 1654 Life of Christ Prints:  
Graphic Chiaroscuro, the Northern Print Tradition, and the Question of Series

Abstract

by

CATHERINE BAILEY WATKINS

This dissertation examines four New Testament prints by Dutch artist Rembrandt van Rijn from about 1654: the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus. These prints have occasionally been discussed as a stylistically and thematically related group because of their similar size, vertical format, expressive use of light, and narrative subject matter. This dissertation explores how Rembrandt’s use of dramatic chiaroscuro and technical experimentation with printmaking inform our understanding of these four prints. Further, this dissertation investigates the relationship of these four prints to Rembrandt’s oeuvre, the Northern print tradition, and one another, exploring the question of whether these images constitute a series.
Introduction

Sometime around the year 1654, Rembrandt conceived a printed narrative sequence from the Life of Christ represented in a distinctive manner through the use of dramatic chiaroscuro in four prints of almost exactly the same size. The Presentation in the Temple (B. 50, fig. 1) is an episode from Jesus’ infancy, while the other three prints, the Descent from the Cross by Torchlight (B. 83, fig. 2), Entombment (B. 86, fig. 3), and Christ at Emmaus (B. 87, fig. 4), are images from the Passion. In the Presentation in the Temple, Simeon holds the Christ child as he kneels before the high priest seated on a podium. A sumptuously robed figure, possibly a temple authority, towers over this central group of figures. Mary and Joseph kneel in the shadows behind Simeon, and Anna witnesses the scene from a balcony above. Rembrandt evoked the atmosphere of a dark, quiet corner of the temple through the use of restricted light and focused attention on Simeon, the priest, and the temple authority by Reserving the brightest highlights for these three figures; everything else is suffused with a broad range of shadows, leaving the highlights on these figures as the only areas of the plate left untouched. Although it exists in only one state, there are many highly differentiated impressions of this print, from cleanly wiped ones, revealing the dense network of etched and drypoint lines, to those heavy with surface tone, submerging the descriptive elements of the image into darkness.

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1Two of the four prints are dated 1654 on the plate: The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight and Christ at Emmaus. The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner and The Entombment are undated. All four prints have almost exactly the same size plate marks: The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner is 20.9 x 16.2 cm (8 ¼ x 6 3/8 in.), The Entombment is 21 x 15.9 cm (8 ¼ x 6 3/8 in.), The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight is 21.2 x 16.5 cm (8 3/8 x 6 ½ in.), and The Christ at Emmaus is 21.3 x 16.3 cm (8 3/8 x 6 7/16 in.).
Rembrandt’s use of dramatic chiaroscuro is also found in the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*. In this nocturne, several figures carefully lower Christ from the cross, while a man with a torch stands behind a cloth draped from the cross to help support the lifeless body. The subdued lighting leaves details of the setting in shadow, focusing the viewer’s attention on the figures around Christ and their emotions in performing their solemn task. Christ’s face and body are veiled in shadow, appropriately evoking the “shadow of death.” As with the *Presentation*, the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* exists in only one state; however, plate tone and selective wiping again greatly differentiate the various impressions.

Like the cleanly wiped impressions of the *Presentation*, the first state of the *Entombment* (fig. 5) reveals details of the composition most clearly. Against the background of a high cavernous space, the body of Christ is being lowered into the grave by several figures, while the Virgin and her companions weep nearby. An old man, probably Joseph of Arimathea, leans on a stick behind the female figures to the left. In the background there are two skulls on a ledge below an arch. The body of Christ is flooded with light that reflects onto the faces of the figures surrounding him, revealing their emotions as they perform the task of lowering his corpse into the grave. In addition to three state changes, Rembrandt created a broad range of tones through selective wiping and variations in inking to the extent that virtually none of the impressions of states two through four of this print are alike. For example, some impressions submerge the figures almost completely into darkness through the use of surface tone, while for others

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Rembrandt chose to highlight the body of Christ and the figures bearing him by wiping the plate in this area.

An examination of *Christ at Emmaus*, apparently produced at the same time as these three dark-toned prints, serves as an important corollary to the study of them. In contrast to the darkness of the *Descent* and the *Entombment*, which describe Christ’s death, the form of the resurrected Christ in *Christ at Emmaus* seems to dissolve in radiant light. Rembrandt probably believed that bright light and clarity served an important expressive function in a narrative about the revelation of the resurrected Christ to two of his disciples. In the first state (fig. 6), the head and halo of Christ are lightly etched and seemingly ethereal, giving the viewer an image of Christ as a spiritual being about to vanish from the sight of his disciples. Rembrandt added significant work in drypoint in the second state, imparting a more material than ethereal quality in the image. Because this print was created in conjunction with three prints in the dark manner, an investigation into the formal and symbolic function of radiant light in *Christ at Emmaus* will illuminate the role of chiaroscuro in Rembrandt’s etchings from the 1650s.

By experimenting with etching technique, drypoint, papers, and inking, Rembrandt created a highly expressive set of prints of the Life of Christ. Through an examination of individual states and impressions of the *Presentation in the Temple*, *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, *Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus*, a cross-media exploration of Rembrandt’s interest in tone, and comparison with the printed work of contemporary and earlier Northern artists, this dissertation seeks to determine the relationship of these four prints to one another, their place in Rembrandt’s oeuvre, and their art-historical context. A major goal is to highlight the relationship of the
Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus to contemporary and earlier Northern printmakers whose work exhibits similar stylistic and narrative qualities as well as experimentation with printmaking techniques. This dissertation demonstrates that although he was highly innovative, Rembrandt was still working within an established tradition of printmaking. In addition, a comparison of these four prints with earlier ones, such as those by Albrecht Dürer, reveals the extent to which these four images can be classified as a series. Finally, an examination of the role of the print collector as part of the print culture in which Rembrandt created these four prints contributes to the understanding of these images as a group.

As demonstrated by the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus, the expressive use of chiaroscuro is one of the key stylistic elements of Rembrandt’s prints; however, it is equally important in his paintings and drawings. Rembrandt’s painted chiaroscuro has been the focus of several recent studies, most notably by Ernst van de Wetering, who has approached light and shade in Rembrandt’s paintings from a technical standpoint as in his 1997 publication Rembrandt: The Painter at Work. Van de Wetering examined Rembrandt’s working process in the creation of his paintings and argued that the use of light and shade by Rembrandt and other seventeenth-century Dutch artists was integral to the creation of a plausible spatial illusion; however, precisely how Rembrandt’s technique for the creation of chiaroscuro generates meaning in the paintings remained unexplored.

Although the technical creation of chiaroscuro has been discussed for Rembrandt’s paintings, there has been comparatively little attention to cross-media connections of Rembrandt’s interest in the creation of tone. Discussion of similarities between Rembrandt’s paintings and graphic work have been relatively few, creating an artificial distinction in the artist’s approach to media; therefore, the *Presentation in the Temple*, *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, *Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus* provide an opportunity to evaluate Rembrandt’s cross-media interest in and creation of dramatic chiaroscuro. One of the goals of the present study is to locate the graphic chiaroscuro of these four prints as part of a broader interest that spanned Rembrandt’s entire artistic oeuvre, which thus necessitates an examination of the use of light and shade in Rembrandt’s paintings and drawings as well as prints. Furthermore, this investigation of the *Presentation in the Temple*, *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, *Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus* examines of the role of chiaroscuro in the creation of meaning, a subject which has been largely overlooked in Rembrandt scholarship. In addition to cross-media connections, the relationship of Rembrandt’s dark-toned prints and dramatic chiaroscuro to the Northern print tradition also needs to be further considered in order to contextualize these four prints.4

Although Rembrandt experimented with technique to create highly differentiated impressions, the artist was clearly inspired by the example of earlier artists and was

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4 In his index of the formal sources for Rembrandt’s art, B.P.J. Broos identified primarily Italian precedents for these prints in the literature prior to 1977. Of the four prints in question, scholars seemed to acknowledge the influence of Northern printmaking only on *The Christ at Emmaus*, with the mention of Albrecht Dürer as a possible source, although Leonardo is mentioned more frequently. For more information, see B.P.J. Broos, *Index to the Formal Sources of Rembrandt’s Art*, Maarsen, 1977, 82-83. For a discussion of why Rembrandt’s relationship to Northern Renaissance prints has not been adequately addressed, see Catherine B. Scallen, “Rembrandt, Emulation, and the Northern Print Tradition,” in Laurinda S. Dixon, ed. *In Detail: New Studies of Northern Renaissance Art in Honor of Walter S. Gibson*, Turnhout, 1998, 135.
working within an established tradition of dark-toned and nocturne prints. The dramatic chiaroscuro of the *Presentation in the Temple*, *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, *Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus* should be examined within the framework of a print tradition that included images created by Rembrandt’s near contemporaries as well as sixteenth-century artists. Prints are small, relatively inexpensive, and created in multiple impressions, providing Rembrandt with the opportunity to own and study images from a broad range of sources. The constantly expanding volume of printed images gave artists a large body of work to draw upon and simultaneously created sophisticated viewers and print collectors who would recognize these visual references. Because Rembrandt’s prints operated within the framework of this visual culture, the contextualization of the *Presentation in the Temple*, *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, *Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus* involves an investigation of earlier, particularly Northern, artists both in and outside the Netherlands who pursued dramatic chiaroscuro in graphic media.

An interest in graphic chiaroscuro and tone extends further back into history than the seventeenth century. Rembrandt was unusual among his Dutch contemporaries because he looked back to the previous century for sources and inspiration. As Christopher White pointed out in *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, Rembrandt’s comprehensive collection of prints makes clear that he was well acquainted with the example of earlier artists, such as Albrecht Dürer and Lucas van Leyden, among others.5

5 Christopher White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, London, 1999, 19. The assertion of tone over line in printmaking is also evident in the work of other sixteenth-century northern artists, such as Hans Burgkmair and Lucas Cranach, who sought to replicate the feel of chiaroscuro drawings in print. The usual method for the chiaroscuro woodcut involved the creation of a key-block with the design in outline and one or more tone blocks. The inks were shades of the same color, and the blocks were cut so as to leave areas of the white paper exposed, producing the effect of the white highlights added to the drawings. See David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print: 1470-1550*, New Haven, 1994, 179-202.
Albrecht Dürer’s work serves as a seminal point of comparison to Rembrandt’s *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus*. In intaglio prints, tone was occasionally explored through the use of drypoint, and Dürer was among the earliest to experiment with the drypoint technique. By dragging the needle directly across the copper plate, producing a recessed line with burr, artists were able to produce rich, velvety areas in print. Using this technique, Dürer created three drypoint etchings, one of which is his *St. Jerome Seated Near a Pollard Willow*, 1512 (fig. 7). Rembrandt expanded his use of drypoint after a period in the 1630s when he was active purchasing prints by both Dürer and Lucas. Rembrandt used drypoint extensively in the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus*. For example, the first state of the *Entombment* was almost entirely etched, apart from a few touches of drypoint. However, over the course of three additional states, Rembrandt reworked the plate with drypoint

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6 In some instances, Rembrandt seems to have made specific references to Dürer’s prints. Such is the case with Rembrandt’s *Saint Jerome in a Dark Chamber*, 1641, which references Dürer’s *Saint Jerome in his Study*, 1514, through the use of similar interior details, use of perspective, and iconography. However, the two prints are tonal opposites, with Dürer’s sunlit study transformed into a chamber filled with shadows. As Catherine Scallen has argued, Rembrandt seems to have risen to the challenge of Dürer’s mastery in creating a brightly lit scene by reversing the tonality, a feat which required an equal amount of skill and which responded to the seventeenth-century taste for dark-toned images. See Scallen, “Rembrandt, Emulation, and the Northern Print Tradition,” 139.

7 In his experimentation with this graphic technique, Dürer occasionally made use of the velvety line and areas of tone that drypoint can produce, particularly in the depiction of the willow in this print. As with Dürer’s *Saint Jerome in his Study*, Rembrandt was clearly responding to this image in the creation of one of his own etchings from 1648. Again, Rembrandt seems to have risen to the challenge of Dürer’s virtuosity and produced an image that used the sixteenth-century print as a stimulus for experimentation with technique and tonal qualities. See discussions by Susan Donahue Kuretsky, “Rembrandt’s Tree Stump: An Iconographic Attribute of Saint Jerome,” *Art Bulletin* 56 (1974): 571-580; and Catherine B. Scallen, “Rembrandt and Saint Jerome,” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1990): 238-248.
and engraving to create a fine mesh of shading that, as Christopher White so aptly described, “literally depicts rather than suggests the nocturnal setting.”

An examination of Dürer’s prints also serves an important role in determining the relationship of these four Rembrandt prints to Northern print series. In order to ascertain the extent to which this group can be classified as a series in the strict sense, this dissertation examines the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment,* and *Christ at Emmaus* in the context of Dürer’s print series, such as the *Engraved Passion,* and the woodcut series of the *Large and Small Passions,* focusing particularly on iconographic and narrative similarities between Rembrandt’s four prints and their counterparts in Dürer’s series.

The quiet restraint in prints by Dürer and Lucas van Leyden appealed to Rembrandt when he was moving away from the drama and theatricality of his earlier works. Instead of dramatic action, Rembrandt later focused on psychological interactions, a quality that he adapted from images such as Lucas’s engraving *David*

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8 White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher,* 90.

9 In addition to a comparison with Dürer’s series, this dissertation examines the relationship of Rembrandt’s four prints to the work of other Northern printmakers who created serial imagery, such as Albrecht Altdorfer’s *Fall and Redemption of Man* from about 1513, which was produced in response to Dürer’s series yet is highly individual in its interpretation of biblical events. See Landau and Parshall, 202-206.

10 A good example of this shift in emphasis in Rembrandt’s print can be seen in a comparison of the *Annunciation of the Shepherds* (1634), with its dramatic lighting and frenzied action, to the quiet mood of the 1654 dark-toned prints; Rembrandt’s interest in the art of Lucas van Leyden may have been spurred by the fact that Lucas was the earliest Leiden master to achieve an international recognition as a printmaker. For more information on the narrative influence of Lucas van Leyden on Rembrandt’s prints, see Arthur K. Wheelock, “The Influence of Lucas van Leyden on Rembrandt’s Narrative Etchings,” in Anne-Marie Logan, ed. *Essays in Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on his Sixtieth Birthday,* Doornspijk, 1983, 294-295.
Playing the Harp Before Saul from about 1508 (fig. 8). Renowned for its depiction of psychological interaction, this print illustrates the moment just before the dramatic action when Saul attacks David with his spear. Although Lucas’s print is filled with a variety of figures and details, the shallow space and dark background focus the viewer’s attention on the figures themselves. Such is also the case in Rembrandt’s Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus in which the viewer is drawn to the varying emotions of the figures around Christ through the use of chiaroscuro and the placement of the figures in space.

In addition to his interest in Lucas’s focus on psychological interactions, Rembrandt also looked to Lucas’s work for formal and technical inspiration. Lucas sought more contrast in his engravings after meeting Dürer in Antwerp in 1521, and most of his narratives after this encounter are cast in dark tones out of which the figures are illuminated by intense and very selective lighting. Yet even Lucas’s early works illustrate the artist’s preoccupation with creating dramatic tonal effects, as in the nocturne scene The Man with the Torch and a Woman Followed by a Fool from about 1508 (fig. 9). Furthermore, Lucas’s engraving technique was unusual in the sixteenth century and involved the innovative use of surface tone, achieved by leaving a thin film of ink on the

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11 Rembrandt was inspired by Lucas’s print in the creation of his painting David Playing the Harp Before Saul, from about 1629-30; however, Rembrandt reduced the composition to the two main figures, concentrating on their gestures and psychological interaction.

12 Rembrandt would have had ample opportunity to study Lucas van Leyden’s prints since he owned several of them. In 1637 Rembrandt bought a book of Lucas’s engravings at auction for 637 guilders and 10 stuivers, and in 1638 Rembrandt acquired Lucas and Dürer prints at the Gommer Spranger sale. See Walter L. Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, The Rembrandt Documents, New York, 1979, 140-141; 150.

13 For example, the depiction of the nocturnal setting and the use of high contrast in Lucas’s The Passion: Agony in the Garden, 1521, were influenced by Dürer’s Engraved Passion and Small Woodcut Passion series. See Ellen S. Jacobowitz and Stephanie Loeb Stepanek, The Prints of Lucas van Leyden and his Contemporaries, Washington, DC, 1983, 210.
Lucas’s manipulation of plate tone, along with other technical aspects of Lucas’s engraving style, resulted in highly individual impressions of Lucas’s prints, a quality that can easily be compared to the Rembrandt prints that form the focus of this study.

Although Rembrandt’s use of dramatic chiaroscuro and emulation of earlier Northern artists was certainly motivated by personal artistic interest, it is vital to consider the role of the market for the creation of these prints. To date, there has been little discussion of the market for prints in the Rembrandt literature. This is primarily due to the fact that there is little surviving documentation on how Rembrandt produced or published his prints; however, it is still worthwhile to propose some cautious speculation as to what segments of the market Rembrandt may have been interested in targeting with his Life of Christ prints.

In general, Rembrandt’s prints were not commissioned; however, the artist probably had particular groups in mind as potential buyers when producing an image. In the seventeenth century, dark-toned prints were considered a specialty of Dutch artists, and contemporary collectors often grouped these works into a separate category of

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imagery. A good example of seventeenth-century collectors’ interest in dark-toned prints can be found in the case of Florent le Comte who recommended as part of an “ideal cabinet” that collectors organize works by Rembrandt, Goudt, Van Vliet, Van de Velde, and others into a separate category of “Nuits et pièces noires.” That the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus exist in such varied states and individual impressions may suggest that print collectors were one of Rembrandt’s target audiences for these works, as collectors often wanted to purchase printed images in their multiple “versions” in order to own a complete set. Furthermore, Rembrandt’s use of sixteenth-century sources of inspiration would have been of interest to print collectors, who would have recognized and appreciated Rembrandt’s emulation of these earlier artists.

Finally, in addition to the art historical context for these four prints, this dissertation also addresses their relationship to each other. This entails an examination of how these prints function as a group, not only through a comparison of the different narrative moments or states, but also through an investigation of shifts in meaning in different impressions. Through experimentation with etching technique, drypoint, papers, and inking, Rembrandt created a group of prints in which each impression is unique. For example, The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight occurs in only one state; however, through plate tone, selective wiping, and paper choice, Rembrandt created a variety of differentiated impressions that are highly expressive in nature. The striking

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16 See Clifford Ackley, Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt, Exh. Cat. Boston, 1981, xxxvi-xxxix. One collector in particular can be linked with Rembrandt. The artist etched a portrait of Johannes Wtenbogaert, receiver general of the Dutch Republic, dressed as a sixteenth-century tax collector in 1639. In the etching, Rembrandt’s adoption of the tone of works by Lucas van Leyden was probably motivated in part by the fact the Wtenbogaert was a collector of Lucas’s prints.

17 Another example is the category of “Various Nocturnes” in the collection of Abbé de Marolles’ 1666 album number LXIII. Ibid, xxxix.
chiaroscuro effects and attention to individual impressions through the use of varied inkings and papers shared by these prints reveals that Rembrandt may have been thinking of these four images in a manner akin to a series.

In conclusion, this dissertation examines the formal, narrative, and expressive qualities of the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus* in the context of contemporary and earlier northern printmakers in order to ascertain the nature of the relationship of these four prints to tradition and to one another. Furthermore, this study explores how Rembrandt’s use of dramatic chiaroscuro and his technical experimentation with printmaking inform our understanding of the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus* and the extent to which expression is a function of technical choices as witnessed by different states as well as individual impressions of these prints. In order to best understand this group of etchings, this dissertation investigates Rembrandt’s formal innovations in the creation of graphic chiaroscuro, the expressive qualities of light and darkness, and the serial nature of these four images within the context of the Northern print tradition.
Chapter 1: Historiography

Introduction

Chapter one begins with a discussion of the current state of scholarship on Rembrandt’s prints, focusing particularly on authors who have written about the relationship of style and meaning, on graphic chiaroscuro, or the relationship of the artist’s prints to the Northern print tradition. This chapter also charts the discussions of Rembrandt’s printed chiaroscuro in early print literature in order to more fully understand the reception of these prints over time. Finally, chapter one concludes with an examination of the writings that discuss the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus, noting where and how these prints have appeared in the literature.

Current State of Rembrandt Print Scholarship: The Relationship of Technique and Meaning, Rembrandt’s Graphic Chiaroscuro, and the Role of the Northern Print Tradition

In her historiographic study of Netherlandish art, Mariët Westermann called attention to the methodological attacks of the 1970s and 1980s that were raised against a connoisseurship narrowly focused on establishing catalogues raisonnés for individual artists and an iconography that located the meaning of a work of art underneath or beyond the surface of the work.1 In the mid-1980s, scholars who investigated the context

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1 Mariët Westermann, “After Iconography and Iconoclasm: Current Research in Netherlandish Art, 1566-1700,” Art Bulletin 84:2 (June, 2002): 351-372. These attacks were levied as a result of the debate surrounding two enterprises: the Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings by the Rembrandt Research Project and the interpretation of schijnrealism in genre and still-life paintings by Eddy de Jongh and other scholars. See Westermann, 351. Although the title would seem to indicate that Westermann intended to discuss a variety of media, she focused solely on Netherlandish painting with no discussion of printmaking or drawing.
for Rembrandt’s work attempted to reverse the “airless image” of the artist that was evoked by the Rembrandt Research Project’s *Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*. The 1980s also witnessed the beginning of a sharp debate over iconography, with Eddy de Jongh and Svetlana Alpers at the forefront. By the late 1980s, there was a growing dissatisfaction with De Jongh’s iconographic model and with Alpers’s attempt to replace it with a view of realist picturing. Meaning began to emerge in a wide range of studies as “a more active process of cultural production, reception, and transformation than traditional iconography allowed.” In the field of Rembrandt research, scholars of the 1990s such as Ernst van de Wetering began to articulate an image of the artist as an experimental painter working within historical workshop constraints, a figure “scrupulously committed to the material, studio-bound aspects of his art,” perhaps in an effort to counter the influence of some of the iconographic studies of the 1980s that insisted on looking beyond the surface of a painting for its interpretive significance.

Although some scholars of Rembrandt painting in the 1990s responded to the methodological debates by turning instead to context and artistic process, they were by no means the first to do so. Context and artistic process had long been a focus of Rembrandt print scholarship. More than twenty years earlier, Christopher White had looked closely at individual impressions, sequences of states, and groups of images, tracing the artist’s working method in order to understand some of his artistic goals. First published in 1969

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2 Ibid., 352.
3 Ibid., 356.
4 Ibid., 359.
5 Ibid., 362.
and republished with additions thirty years later in 1999, Christopher White’s *Rembrandt as an Etcher: A Study of the Artist at Work* is perhaps the best comprehensive publication on the subject of Rembrandt’s prints. He described Rembrandt’s process in detail, giving in depth descriptions of Rembrandt’s manner of etching, his approaches to biting a plate, various means of printing such as using surface tone, and the many supports upon which the artist printed his plates. Indeed, White was the first to fully discuss Rembrandt’s range of supports and personal approach to inking and wiping a plate. However, White did not limit his discussions of individual prints to Rembrandt’s technical procedures. In some cases, he attempted to link Rembrandt’s techniques with the meaning or expression that the artist may have intended to convey.

Margaret Carroll’s 1981 essay “Rembrandt as a Meditational Printmaker” drew upon White’s example in looking closely at Rembrandt’s printmaking process. It marks an important evolution in the understanding of Rembrandt’s printmaking as the author argued that the employment of technical processes transformed both narrative and meaning of the prints under examination. In order to contextualize the radical transformations of *Christ Presented to the People* (dated 1655, fig. 10) and *The Three Crosses* (dated 1653, completed about 1660, fig. 11), both of which were extensively reworked by Rembrandt over a number of states, Carroll drew upon a type of meditational process found in contemporary Protestant literature to explain Rembrandt’s progression from material description to narrative and spatial abstraction. Carroll provided a close reading of individual states and further charted the sequence of the

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numerous state changes in both prints. It is important to note that, as Carroll asserted, these changes to the plate were made for technical, formal, and expressive reasons alike.7

Similarly, Stephanie Dickey’s 1986 essay “‘Judicious Negligence’: Rembrandt Transforms an Emblematic Convention,” linked technique and meaning in Rembrandt’s prints.8 Dickey examined a group of etchings with shared formal qualities, even though they differed significantly in subject matter. These images have what she terms “divided compositions,” contrasting linear economy with tonal richness. For example, in Saint Jerome Beside a Pollard Willow, 1648 (B. 103, fig. 12), Rembrandt juxtaposed the richly detailed willow with a lightly etched image of the saint. Dickey argued that the degree of finish in these prints functions as an active, expressive component of the composition. In these prints, Rembrandt juxtaposed graphic opposites in order to call attention to the distinction between tangible reality and intangible ideas. According to Dickey, Rembrandt often manipulated line and tone in order to accomplish the expressive ends he sought.

Also discussing the range of finish found in some of Rembrandt’s etchings, Catherine B. Scallen’s “Rembrandt’s Etching Saint Jerome reading in an Italian Landscape. The Question of Finish reconsidered” charted this print’s reception,

7 For example, Carroll’s discussion of the fourth state of The Three Crosses describes the technical changes to the plate, which include the obliteration of the composition through scraping down and scoring over old forms. Rembrandt then seems to have incised a new version of this subject over the old one, flattening the foreground and bringing the figure of Christ forward in space. Along with the change in the use of light from previous states where the scattered light divided the viewer’s attention, these technical and compositional changes suggest to Carroll the transitory instant of Christ’s dying, making this moment in time directly accessible to the viewer while simultaneously drawing awareness to Rembrandt’s presence.

particularly with respect to the question of finish. Changes in the concept of a finished print over the course of time affected the reception of *Saint Jerome reading in an Italian Landscape* (fig. 13). In a method related to Dickey’s, Scallen investigated the concerns that Rembrandt may have addressed through the incorporation of varying degrees of finish on a single plate, including the possible translation of his painted rough style into graphic medium and the audience to which this may have appealed.  

A few scholars also made important contributions to the investigation of graphic chiaroscuro. Clifford Ackley’s *Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt*, the catalogue to a 1981 exhibition, played a significant role in developing the current understanding of the dark-toned print in the Netherlands. Ackley brought together the work of a group of contemporary northern printmakers to examine the origins of the “painterly approach” to printmaking, pinpointing artists such as Hendrick Goudt and Hercules Seghers as key figures in the creation of dark-toned prints. Furthermore, Ackley linked the emergence of dark-toned imagery to the market, investigating contemporary taste for dramatic chiaroscuro and the role of the print collector.

Scallen has also examined Rembrandt’s dark-toned prints, particularly his nocturne imagery. Rembrandt was interested in creating works with strong contrasts of tone, and while his manipulation of light and shade in paintings, prints, and drawings was

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10 Ibid., 6.


12 Dutch prints with a painterly style and chiaroscuro were sometimes organized by collectors, such as Florent le Comte or Abbé de Marolles, into distinct albums.

extremely personal, his choice of subjects was highly conventional. In her essay, “Rembrandt’s Nocturne Prints,” Scallen connected Rembrandt’s engagement with this type of imagery to established tradition as well as the seventeenth century’s fascination for nocturnes. In her examination of individual prints such as the The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds of 1634 (fig. 14) or The Flight into Egypt: A Night Piece of 1651 (fig. 15), Scallen not only examined the formal relationship of Rembrandt’s technique to the composition, but also investigated the link between light and darkness with meaning. This discussion focused on Rembrandt’s transformation of the nocturne over the course of his printmaking career from an approach that emphasized narrative and visual drama to one that was expressive of interior emotional states.

Both Ackley and Scallen attempted to link Rembrandt’s interests in dark-toned prints to an established tradition. In another essay, Scallen investigated the relationship between Rembrandt’s graphic oeuvre and the Northern Renaissance, focusing particularly on the influence of Albrecht Dürer and Lucas van Leyden. Scallen began by exploring the historiography of connections between Rembrandt and the Northern print tradition, tracing these discussions back to the first catalogue of Rembrandt’s etchings by Edmé-François Gersaint in 1751. Many scholars since then have expanded our knowledge of

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14 The nocturne was well established before the sixteenth century, especially in the Netherlands and artists often depicted scenes from Christ’s infancy, such as the nativity or the adoration, and from his Passion. Rembrandt’s nocturne images often have precedents in earlier Netherlandish works.

15 Scallen pointed out that nocturne imagery was not limited to prints; artists such as Caravaggio or Rubens painted nocturnal scenes, and Adam Elsheimer and Gerard van Honthorst were known primarily for their nocturnes. She also made note of the fact that the transference of the nocturne theme from painting to print was accomplished by an artist well-known to Rembrandt, Lucas van Leyden. See Scallen, “Rembrandt’s Nocturnes,” 13.

16 Catherine B. Scallen, “Rembrandt, Emulation, and the Northern Print Tradition,” 135-149.

17 Edmé-François Gersaint, Catalogue raisonné de toutes les pieces qui forment l’oeuvre de Rembrandt, Paris, 1751, 91.
individual links between Rembrandt and the Northern Renaissance. In the earlier
twentieth century, these have included Wilhelm Valentiner, Otto Benesch, J.L.A.A.M.
Rijkevorsel, and Christian Tümpel; however, there is as yet no investigation that
synthesizes Rembrandt’s relationship to the Northern Renaissance comparable to
Kenneth Clark’s *Rembrandt and the Italian Renaissance.*

Scallen also pointed out that few authors have written on the subject in English and suggested that this neglect on the part of scholars was possibly due to the hierarchies of value in traditional art history; for example, in the English language tradition, the Italian Renaissance has typically been preferred over the Northern Renaissance. This is significant for our understanding of Rembrandt, for although Italian Renaissance imagery occasionally served as inspiration for Rembrandt’s compositions, the Northern Renaissance provided the artist not only with compositional ideas but also with unusual subjects, varying approaches to narrative, and sophisticated printmaking techniques.

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In 1645, at the age of sixteen, Constantin Huygens’ son Christiaen wrote to his brother Lodewijk that he made a copy of a head of an old man by Rembrandt “which is so close to the original that it is hardly possible to distinguish it from the original.” He also added that he and his brother Constantijn II were working with pastels. The letter indicates that there were some Dutch amateurs and collectors who were pleased with the tonal and painterly effects found in Rembrandt’s work in the middle of the seventeenth century.

During Rembrandt’s lifetime, no critic articulated any overtly negative criticism of the artist. Three months after Rembrandt’s death, however, Abraham Bruegel, a Flemish painter working in Italy, accused the Dutch artist of using shadows because he could not draw well. In a letter to Don Antonio Ruffo dated January 24, 1670, Bruegel attempted to explain why the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt’s bust-length figures in Ruffo’s collection seemed to be superior to those he had commissioned from Italian artists:

By your letter of December 29, I see that you have made various half-length figures by the best painters in Italy, and that none of them approach those of Rembrandt. It is true I agree with this but one must consider that great painters, like those by whom you have had your half-figures made, are not usually willing to lower themselves for a trifling draped half figure in which the light shows only the tip of the nose, and in which one does not know where the light comes from, since all the rest is dark. The great painters try to show a beautiful nude body, in which one can see their knowledge of drawing. But an incompetent person, on the contrary, tries to cover his figures with dark clumsy garments, and this kind of painter does the contours so that one does not know what to make out of it…what I merely want to say is, this is no business of great men, to occupy themselves

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with such trifles, which almost anyone can do. But I beg you to forgive me for speaking so freely. My love of painting leads me to do so…  

This criticism of Rembrandt as an “incompetent person” lacking knowledge of drawing, unlike his Italian counterparts, was not for publication. However, the same sentiments expressed by Bruegel would first be published five years later by Joachim von Sandrart in his Teutsche Academie der Edelen Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey Künst.

By the time he wrote the Teutsche Academie, which was published in 1675, Joachim von Sandrart was well-traveled and familiar with ancient, Renaissance, and Baroque texts on art. In 1627 he went to London with Gerrit van Honthorst, then Venice, Bologna, Rome, Naples, and Malta. From 1637 until about 1645, Sandrart was in Amsterdam. His biography on Rembrandt in the Teutsche Academie contains almost no factual information and was probably based on what he remembered from the eight years he spent in Amsterdam, rather than on other written accounts such as Jan Jansz. Orlers’s 1641 Beschrijvinge der stad Leyden. In his biography of Rembrandt, as well as the biographies of other artists, Sandrart acted more as a judge than reporter. He cited Rembrandt’s natural talent and hard work, but censured him for missing true greatness because he never traveled to Italy and contradicted the rules of art, which were something very concrete to Sandrart who devoted fifteen chapters to the subject. Sandrart focuses entirely on Rembrandt’s paintings, only mentioning his etchings as an example of Rembrandt’s industriousness, indicated by the many interpretations of various subjects.

Sandrart was keenly aware of Rembrandt’s use of chiaroscuro and wrote that:

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22 Slive, 81.

23 J.J. Orlers, Beschrijvinge der stad Leyden, Leiden, 1641.
Rembrandt approved of using light and shadow and the outlines of objects in his paintings even if they were in contradiction with the horizon [rules of perspective], if he felt that this practice helped the picture. Rembrandt had difficulty with drawing…and since clean outlines must be in their true place he filled the outlines in with pitch-black (finterschwartz) in order to circumvent this weakness; he asked that his outlines and dark backgrounds do nothing but keep together the universal harmony of the picture.\textsuperscript{24}

Echoing the sentiments of Bruegel five years earlier, Sandrart implied that Rembrandt used dark backgrounds to hide his lack of skill as a draughtsman. Yet, as a former pupil of Honthorst, once a follower of Caravaggio, Sandrart did not go so far as to indicate that the use of darkness itself was deplorable. Furthermore, he complimented Rembrandt for his use of reflections and concluded that Rembrandt used light and shade around his central figures artistically. In the end, Sandrart thought of Rembrandt as a master of chiaroscuro but also as a painter who broke all of the important rules of art.

Although Samuel van Hoogstraten also demonstrated Rembrandt’s lack of knowledge of certain rules of art, he was able to find more to praise in Rembrandt’s work. In his \textit{Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilder-Konst anders Zichtbaere Werelt}, published in 1678, Hoogstraten recommended Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro for special study in the chapter “Schikking van schaduwen en lichten.” He concluded that Rembrandt found perfect unity of light and shadow and called particular attention to Rembrandt’s etchings (Bruine printjes) where he used candlelight to create chiaroscuro effects.

The assertion that Rembrandt’s style fell out of favor toward the end of his life has long been a commonplace of Rembrandt literature. However, there is evidence that suggests that there were those who continued to appreciate Rembrandt’s style even after tastes had changed. During the fifties and sixties, light tonalities were the vogue in

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 88.
Amsterdam; however, not everyone ascribed to this trend. In a poem first published in *De Hollantsche Parnas*, an anthology of poetry compiled in 1660, Jeremias de Decker singled out Rembrandt’s *Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalene* for praise (fig. 16).  

He repeated what earlier writers had found laudatory in Rembrandt’s work, such as “his ability to translate a Biblical text into paint and his ability to make dead paint seem alive.” Moreover, De Decker added that Rembrandt “painted the rocks of the tomb high and full of shadows and this gives an air of majesty to the scene…” In his praise of Rembrandt’s shadows, De Decker clearly showed that not everyone had rejected Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro in response to the new taste for light tones.

Rembrandt’s fame was not limited to the Netherlands during his lifetime and had spread across Europe by way of his prints. As early as the 1630s, Rembrandt’s etchings were known and used by Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione in Genoa. By the 1650s, his prints were known in Sicily, the southernmost tip of Europe. In 1686 in Florence, Abbot Filippopo Baldinucci published his *Cominciamento e progresso dell’arte dell’intagliare in rame, colle vite de molti de’più eccelesti Maestri della stessa Professione*, which constituted the first extensive historical treatise on engraving and etching.  

The type of writing that Baldinucci used was based on Vasari’s *Vite*; however, unlike Vasari, Baldinucci did not limit himself to Italy. In addition to Italian artists such as Marcantonio Raimondi and Stephano della Bella, Baldinucci explored the graphic work of northern artists including Albrecht Dürer, Jacques Callot, Lucas van Leyden, Hendrick Goltzius,

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25 Ibid., 46-47.

26 Not only did Baldinucci write extensively about art, but he was also a trusted connoisseur who bought works of art for Cosimo III and classified the Medici collection of drawings for Cardinal Leopold de’Medici.
and Rembrandt. It is especially significant that the Abbot singled out Rembrandt as the only graphic artist worthy of mention among his contemporaries in the Netherlands. And although most of his biography of Rembrandt was devoted to his painted work and the fame it brought him, Baldinucci believed that etching was Rembrandt’s real strength.

According to Slive,

[Baldinucci] stated with his bizarre style of etching which he invented, and which employed irregular scratches and hatchings, Rembrandt achieved deep chiaroscuro and great power in a completely pittoresco taste. He covered parts of his plate with intense blacks and in other places he permitted the white of the paper to play; and according to the amount of color which he wanted to give to the costumes of the figures in the fore- or background, he was satisfied with using a light shadow or even a single stroke and nothing more.27

In addition to being the first Italian biographer of Rembrandt, Baldinucci was the first Italian to try to characterize the qualities of Rembrandt’s etchings in print. It is important to note that the quality of Rembrandt’s prints that Baldinucci drew particular attention to was the artist’s inventive use of chiaroscuro.

French collectors and dealers knew Rembrandt’s paintings early in his career, and his etchings were particularly popular. When Michel de Marolles, Abbé de Villeloin, catalogued his collection of 123,400 prints and drawings in 1666, including works by more than six thousand artists, he not only published the first catalogue of a print collection but also made one of the earliest recorded references to Rembrandt’s prints. Prepared before Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Conseiller du Roi, purchased the collection for Louis XIV, the catalogue included a section on “Rhinbrand” stating that “the [graphic] oeuvre of this Dutch painter and engraver consists of 224 pieces, including portraits and

27 Ibid., 106.
curious caprices.”

Unfortunately Marolles did not list the 224 prints that he attributed to Rembrandt; however, he probably owned about three-quarters of Rembrandt’s etchings and may have believed that he owned a nearly complete set. At the time when Michel de Marolles was collecting prints, he was one of a very small number of serious print collectors in France. Yet less than forty years later, the number of collectors increased dramatically, allowing Florent le Comte to declare that “this passion for Prints, which is one of the hallmarks of the finest minds, could not be held in greater esteem.”

André Félibien’s *Entretiens sur la vie et les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres*, published in Paris in 1684, contained information on the lives of painters and was meant to serve as a tool for students. One of the leading theoreticians of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture established in Paris in 1648, Félibien was much more interested in the didactic value to be gained from artists’ biographies than in factual information. Nevertheless, his *Entretiens* provides insight into the estimation of Rembrandt in French academic circles less than two decades after the artist’s death.

28 Ibid., 56. Taken from Michel de Marolles, Abbé de Villeloin, *Catalogue de livres, d’estampes et de figures en taille-douce. Avec un dénombrement des pieces qui y sont continues*, Paris: 1666, 54, No. LXIV. Marolles’ vast collection was appraised by André Félibien and Pierre Mignard and was purchased in 1667 for 28,000 livres.

29 Slive, 56-57. The sale of his collection to the French crown did not deter Marolles from collecting—by 1672, just five years later, he had gathered together another 111,424 prints and drawings in two hundred and thirty seven volumes.

30 Robinson, xxxvi.

31 Ibid., xxvii. Le Comte’s three-volume *Cabinet des Singularitez d’architecture, peinture, sculpture et graveur ou introduction à la connoissance des plus beaux arts figurés sur les tableaux, les statues & les estampes* was intended as a complete history of art but relies heavily on the publications of others, especially André Félibien and Roger de Piles. This is most likely the case with Le Comte’s estimation of Rembrandt’s printed oeuvre at about 280 etchings, a number first arrived at by De Piles. De Piles’ calculation is the earliest extant of Rembrandt’s printed oeuvre. See Slive, 134-135.

32 Seymour Slive boldly stated that “His discussion of Rembrandt in the *Entretiens*, published in Paris, in 1648, is, in fact, worthless as a source of factual information.” Ibid., 168.
Félibien was familiar with Rembrandt’s etchings—he had been one of the two connoisseurs who appraised the Abbé de Villeloin’s collection of prints in 1667—and yet he was not particularly interested in discussing Rembrandt’s printed oeuvre. The only mention of them in the *Entretiens* is that they are “singular” and that he had seen many which are “très-curieuses” especially some beautiful portraits. The language of this statement directly echoes that of Michel de Marolles in his 1666 catalogue.

The next French writer to mention Rembrandt was Roger de Piles in his *Abrège de la Vie des Peintres, Avec des reflexions sur leurs Oeuvrages*, published in 1699. Much like Rubens, De Piles was a painter and engraver who was trusted with diplomatic missions, usually under the pretense of working as an artist or art expert. Louis XIV entrusted De Piles with an important mission to the Netherlands in 1693 while France was at war with the Netherlands, the Holy Roman Empire, Spain, and England. With a forged passport, De Piles traveled under the pretense of visiting the King of Poland about some paintings. During this visit, he probably acquired Rembrandt paintings, drawings, and etchings. On July 31, 1693 De Piles was arrested as an agent of an enemy country and imprisoned in the Castle of Lovenstein where he may have used his time to write the *Abrège*, which contains his biography of Rembrandt. De Piles was freed after the Treaty of Rijswick was signed in 1697, and the *Abrège* was published two years later.

Elected to the Académie on April 25, 1699 as an honorary member, De Piles charged Rembrandt with breaking every teaching in the academic rulebook. In the *Abrège*, De Piles agreed with Sandrart that correct drawing and antique taste are not found in Rembrandt’s paintings; however, De Piles did not subject Rembrandt’s etchings to the academy’s criteria. Instead, he praised Rembrandt’s printed oeuvre, writing that
Rembrandt’s etchings, particularly the portraits, were expressive and spiritual with a rare chiaroscuro. De Piles also recognized the different states of Rembrandt’s etchings, acknowledging that the artist retouched his prints several times in order to change the chiaroscuro and obtain the desired effect. Furthermore, De Piles stated that some of Rembrandt’s prints were similar in appearance to mezzotints, but noted erroneously that mezzotints were not invented during Rembrandt’s lifetime.

Similarly, Florent le Comte considered Rembrandt as an etcher of primarily night and dark scenes, noting in his biography of the artist that Rembrandt’s prints had much in common with mezzotints. Le Comte’s Cabinet des Singularitez d’architecture, peinture, sculpture et graveure presents a conception of the ideal universal print collection. His “Idea of a Fine Library of Prints” consists of 121 albums, divided into four sections. The biography of Rembrandt is found in the twenty-second volume of the fourth section, which demonstrates the progress of painting, sculpture and the graphic arts. This twenty-second volume is devoted to “representations de nuis et pièces noires de differens Maîtres de toutes nations comme de L. Gouth [Hendrik Goudt], J. Velde, Uyttenbrouck, Renbrant, Van Vliet et autres.” Moreover, according to Le Comte, the contemporary taste for mezzotints led amateurs to discover new qualities in Rembrandt’s dark prints.

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33 The 1715 edition of the Abrège had an expanded discussion of Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro, noting the artist’s preference for “spotlight” effects in his paintings.

34 “Il y a dans sa graveure une façon de faire qui n’a point encore été connue que je sache. Elle a quelque chose de la manière noir; mais cell-cy n’est venue qu’après.” Cf. Slive, Appendix G.


36 “Il fut fort curieux de desseins et d’Estampes; et la belle maniere qu’il s’est donné, lui a dans la suite attiré la même recherche pour ce qu’il fait. Sa maniere de graver à l’eau forte, a grandement d’expression et d’esprit; elle tient beaucoup de la maniere noire; mais c’est une maniere qui lui est toute particuliére…On voit de lui quantité d’Estampes curieuse, entr’autres dix païsages qu’il a gravé en 1645,
By 1700 Rembrandt’s reputation had been well established in continental Europe through various treatises, biographies, and poems. Yet by this date, England had not produced much critical literature on the artist. Rembrandt was better known in seventeenth-century England as a printmaker than as a painter because there were few Rembrandt paintings in England. In his *Sculptura*... published in 1662, John Evelyn had mentioned the “incomparable Reimbrand, whose etchings and gravings are of a particular spirit.”

The first English writer to comment at length on Rembrandt was Jonathan Richardson the elder. Richardson published two important works, the *Theory of Painting* and *An Account of some of the Statues, Bas-reliefs, Drawings and Pictures in Italy, etc. with Remarks*, a book that greatly influenced connoisseurship in England. The latter was based on the copious notes taken by Jonathon Richardson the younger on his Grand Tour and was published by his father in 1722. The text is largely devoted to classical and Italian art but describes four paintings by Rembrandt. In his discussion of a Rembrandt painting in the collection of the Regent, Duke of Orleans, he wrote:

All the good properties of a Picture (of this subject) are here in a very high Degree, and some as high as one can conceive ‘tis possible to raise them. They are plain People, and in a Cottage; and Nature, and Humour must be instead of Grace, and Greatness; the Expression is exquisite; the Colouring warm, and transparent; a vast number of Parts put together with the utmost harmony; and for the Clair-Obscure it may stand in Competition with the *Notte* of Coreggio, or any other picture.³⁷

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In general, Richardson praised Rembrandt’s composition and chiaroscuro, much as continental European critics had.

Discussion of Rembrandt’s work continued unabated through the eighteenth century, although the generally positive tone of most of the criticism shifted. Gérard de Lairesse arrived in Amsterdam in 1665 and stayed until his death in 1711. Despite having sat for Rembrandt for a portrait in 1665 (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, fig. 17), Lairesse later discussed Rembrandt in order to point out to young painters what not to do. For example, Lairesse strongly believed that a painting should be light:

> Just as bright light causes all colored objects to appear beautiful and clean to our eyes, so it is uncontradictable that the more is daubed and broken with shadow, the darker and less beautiful the objects appear. Unfortunately many famous masters have misunderstood this: among the Brabanters, Rubens; in Holland, Rembrandt, Lievens and many others who worked in their manner; the former, who wanted to show life much too beautiful, arrived at raw gaudy colors; the latter two, who sought a mellowness, decayed into the ripe and rotten.\(^{38}\)

Lairesse addressed Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro further in Book V, where he asserted that ordinary light is best for painting and that a balance should be sought between dark and light, with shadows softened. Shadows must:

> …not be black like Ribera’s; nor grey, yellow, or ruddy as in Rembrandt, Jan Lievens and many others amongst the Italians, Dutch, Brabanters have done, merely for the sake of force, without making a differentiation in the glow, as they call it, in the shadows, as if there was a fire in the picture. I advise everybody to think this over well, so that the color of natural and complete life will not be neglected.\(^{39}\)

Lairesse objected to Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro primarily because it was not natural, and although he found little to praise in the artist’s work, he admitted that there were some

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\(^{38}\) Gerard de Lairesse, *Groot Schilderboek*, Amsterdam, 1707, Book I, Chapter 12, 41-42.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., Book V, Chapter 22, 323-324.
who “still assert that everything that art and the brush can achieve was possible for Rembrandt and that he was the greatest of his time and is still unsurpassed.”\textsuperscript{40} That such a group existed who valued Rembrandt’s art so highly at the beginning of the eighteenth century attests to the fact that the judgments pronounced by academic critics like Lairesse were not universally accepted in the Netherlands; however, these admirers remained anonymous and did not publish on the subject.

Perhaps Lairesse would have included someone like Valerius Röver, a famous Dutch amateur artist and collector, in his group of anonymous Rembrandt supporters. Röver kept an inventory of his collection and owned eight Rembrandt paintings when he died in 1739. In addition, he had what he considered to be a complete set of the etchings, numbering 308, which he increased to 435 when he added the different states. Around 1731, Röver prepared the earliest known unpublished systematic register of Rembrandt’s etchings, which was more comprehensive than the partial lists previously compiled yet not as complete as the oeuvre catalogue of Gersaint.\textsuperscript{41} That Röver amassed such a large collection of Rembrandt’s etchings, including various states of individual prints, and prepared a systematic register of them provides evidence that collectors in the first half of the eighteenth century continued to value Rembrandt’s graphic oeuvre very highly.

Although collectors continued to prize Rembrandt’s etchings, criticism of Rembrandt, and particularly his painted chiaroscuro, continued to be published. Arnold Houbraken’s \textit{Groote Schouburgh der Nederlandtscbe Kinstschilders en Shilderessen} was the first extensive study of the lives and works of seventeenth-century Netherlandish

\textsuperscript{40} Slive, 165.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 175. The manuscript was published by J.G. van Gelder and N.F. van Gelder-Schrijver, “De ‘Memorie’ van Rembrandt’s prenten in het bezit van Valerius Röver,” \textit{Oud Holland}, 55 (1938), 1-16.
painters. The lengthy biography of Rembrandt is found in the first volume, published in 1718, and provided the basis for much of Rembrandt criticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Unlike Lairesse, Houbraken was generous with his praise of Rembrandt, particularly his portraits; however after the commendation follows the “but” that figures into much of Rembrandt criticism to follow. For example, Houbraken found merit in Rembrandt’s unsurpassed use of expression, attitude, and costumes, but believed that the artist, unfortunately, did not finish many paintings and etchings. Furthermore, like Lairesse and the academics, Houbraken believed that darkness was not an admirable quality of art. He reprinted Vondel’s poem praising Koninck’s *Sleeping Venus* and complained about art’s “sons of darkness who liked to live in shadow like an owl.”

Houbraken did not strictly adhere to his criticism of the darkness of Rembrandt’s paintings in his discussion of Rembrandt’s etchings. Using the *Portrait of Sylvius* (fig. 18) to describe Rembrandt’s etching method, Houbraken noted that the artist first etched roughly, creating shadows and strong touches later. Furthermore, he favorably compared Rembrandt’s dark prints to mezzotints, an idea which had been mentioned earlier by De Piles and Le Comte. Although Houbraken found merit in Rembrandt’s etchings, Rembrandt the etcher was not without fault. Houbraken highly praised Rembrandt’s etchings, stating that they would have been enough to preserve his fame, but accused the artist of making small and unimportant changes to the prints so that they

42 The *Groote Schouburgh* provides biographies of more than six hundred predominantly seventeenth-century Dutch artists and can be considered the first comprehensive survey of Dutch painting of the Golden Age.

43 Ibid., 184; Houbraken II, 53.

44 Slive, 190.

could be sold as new ones. Thus, Houbraken concluded that state changes existed primarily as a means of exploiting the print market. He wrote that “during Rembrandt’s lifetime nobody could call himself a true amateur if he did not possess the Juno with and without the Crown, and the Joseph with the Light and Dark Head, and so on.”

Houbraken’s familiarity with the differences in the states, however, indicates how closely the etchings were studied at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

**Historography of Rembrandt’s Chiaroscuro and Printmaking Techniques after the Rise of the Catalogue Raisonné, 1740-1900**

In France in the 1740s, printed catalogues began to appear for auctions, with the majority of these auctions run by Parisian art dealer and *marchand-mercier* Edmé-François Gersaint. Best known today as a friend of Antoine Watteau, Gersaint also made a significant contribution to Rembrandt connoisseurship through his various publications. Eighteenth-century Paris was a major center of art trade, and as a dealer Gersaint was able to study firsthand the many Rembrandt paintings and prints that passed through the French art market. In addition to numerous sales catalogues, Gersaint was also the author of the first true catalogue raisonné, which was devoted to Rembrandt’s etchings. Published posthumously in 1751, Gersaint’s *Catalogue raisonné de toutes les*

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46 Ibid., 190.

47 Ibid., 190.

48 Gersaint was the first French dealer to recognize the potential of public auctions, which were already popular in the Netherlands and England. Intended as permanent reference works, the sales catalogues that Gersaint produced to accompany his auctions were one of his most important contributions to art dealing. See Andrew McClellan, “Edmé Gersaint and the Marketing of Art in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 29:2 (1995-96): 219.

pièces qui forment l’oeuvre de Rembrandt became the model for all modern catalogues.\textsuperscript{50}

Based on oral information from Houbraken, sale catalogues, and examples in Dutch and French collections, the appearance of Gersaint’s \textit{Catalogue raisonné} owed its existence to Gersaint’s sale catalogues as well as the emergence of comprehensive print collections.\textsuperscript{51} Indeed, Gersaint dedicated his catalogue “to Amateurs of the Fine Arts,” and intended this publication to educate collectors about the prints they sought. The \textit{Catalogue raisonné} includes 341 etchings attributed to Rembrandt and is marked by a high degree of accuracy in the descriptions of the states.\textsuperscript{52}

For his biography of Rembrandt, Gersaint relied on De Piles but also on Houbraken, which had not yet been translated from Dutch. Although he criticized Rembrandt’s depiction of nudes, Gersaint found much to praise in Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro:

His Graver is distinguished by the same Peculiarity as his Pencil; for there is not that Smoothness and Regularity in the Strokes that appear in the Works of other Artists; he seems to have indulged his Genius with a kind of wanton Negligence, and his Hatching, tho’ it appears like Scratches produced by Chance, does yet exhibit such an Opposition of Light and Shade as is most suitable to the objects

\textsuperscript{50} Gersaint’s \textit{Catalogue raisonné} was founded on a collection then in the hands of Jacob Houbraken, which was believed to have descended from Jan Six. It is possible that Arnold Houbraken was the purchaser from the Six sale in 1702 with the collection then passing to his son Jacob. Alternately, the lot may have been purchased from the sale of Willem Six in 1734. Gersaint died before the catalogue was published; however, Pierre Charles Alexandre Helle and Jean-Baptiste Glomy obtained the manuscript from his widow. The pair added some works found in other collections, particularly English private collections and the collection of the king of France as compiled by Marolles and Beringhen. In addition to publishing Gersaint’s catalogue, Helle and Glomy produced the catalogue for the sale of Gersaint’s property after his death. See Francois Marandet, “Pierre Remy: The Parisian Art Market in the Eighteenth Century,” \textit{Apollo} 152 (August, 2003): 6.

\textsuperscript{51} Preston, 214.

\textsuperscript{52} Gersaint included a further twenty-seven prints as doubtful and fifty reproductive prints. Gersaint, like Roger de Piles, felt that the connoisseur’s main task was to judge quality, with attribution as only a secondary goal. However, as an art dealer, Gersaint was more aware of attribution issues than De Piles had been. See Preston, 202, 214-16.
which he intended to represent; by this Means his Prints become lively and striking...they are indeed an inexhaustible Source of Instruction in the Claire Obscure, which is so difficult, that of the many Painters who have attempted it, there are but few who have succeeded...53

Like the classicist critics before him, Gersaint continued the passage by lamenting the fact that Rembrandt had not emulated the ancient or Italian masters, the study of whose works would have brought his art to higher levels of beauty and elegance. Even so, Gersaint continually praised Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro, both in his paintings as well as his prints:

Rembrandt’s predominant Taste was to introduce an accidental Light*, which he generally drew from above, and which produced the deepest Shadows and the strongest Heightening; nor were his Lights and Shades however strong, divided abruptly as it were by a Line, like those of Caravage, le Valentine, and some other Painters; but the half Tint that united them took off the Edges and sweetened them in such a manner as produced the most astonishing Effects.54

In a note, Gersaint explains his use of the term “accidental light”:

*In Painting, that is called an accidental Light which is produced by a Torch, or by a portion of the Sun’s Rays breaking through a Cloud, or passing by some opake Body, which intercepts the rest.55

“Accidental light” corresponds to dramatic chiaroscuro, and thus Gersaint was the first to describe Rembrandt’s use of this device in an extended discussion. Gersaint continued to explore the use of darkness in Rembrandt’s prints more fully:

The Manner of Rembrandt’s working on Copper in some Degree resembles that of Benedict; but its Peculiarity consists in the joining the dry Point with the Aqua fortis, and in the dark Manner, of which he ought to be regarded as the Inventor,

53 Gersaint, 1751, 2-3.
54 Ibid., 4.
55 Ibid., 4.
because it is not known to have been practiced before his Time. The great Part of
the first Impression of Rembrandt’s Prints have been taken on China Paper, and it
is in these Impressions chiefly that many Parts are found wrought in the dark
Manner. It appears that when the Plates began to wear, Rembrandt made those
Parts lighter, and retouched them with a dry Point, which has produced the
Difference that is remarkable in many Impressions of his Works; the best
Criterion therefore of a good Impression of his principal Pieces, as the Hundred
Florin Piece, the Resurrection of Lazarus, and some others, is the Appearance of
much of this dark Manner.56

Although Gersaint described Rembrandt’s use of dramatic chiaroscuro and his dark
manner, in general he did not prefer the darkest impressions of the prints. For example,
in his discussion of catalogue no. 45, Another Adoration, in the dark Manner, Gersaint
described three different states and then determined their chronology based on his
preference for a somewhat lighter image:

Of this print there are three different Impressions. The First and most common, is
that in which there appears above the Head of Joseph a kind of Stable or Stall
formed with Planks placed horizontally and fastened to Stakes, the Ends of which
appear above the Planks. In the Second, which is more scarce, the Stable does not
appear, but the background is perfectly uniform and dark. The Third, which was
prior to the other Two, is more dark and obscure than either, and the Figures are
less distinct, so that tho’ it be the first Impression the Second is generally
preferred, because in this scarce any of the Shepherds are to be discovered, nor
any of the Objects seen distinctly except the Lantern and the Figure behind him
that holds it; nor is the Effect upon the whole so natural as in the other
Impression.57

In Gersaint’s estimation, Rembrandt’s process consisted of the sequential lightening of an
image. Perhaps because Gersaint found the darkest image the least acceptable, he placed
it first in the development of the print.

Gersaint’s discussion of Rembrandt’s etching process and the sequential
development of an image through different states is continued in the text of catalogue no.

56 Ibid., 6.
57 Ibid., 27-28.
Another Flight into Egypt, in the Taste of Adam Elsheimer. He began his lengthy discussion of this print by describing the desire among collectors to possess all of the various states of a print, including the one under discussion:

There is another Impression of this Piece extant, but it is scarce ever seen; the Dutch Virtuosi, who in that country are called Lifhebers, make more Account of this Piece than of any other for the Sake of the Differences which gratify their peculiar Taste and are therefore sought with all the Eagerness of Curiosity; the Vanity of a Virtuoso is generally flattered by the Possession of a Piece, which is almost the only one of its Kind; an altho’ the scarce Impression of a Print is often inferior to that which is most common, yet he is not satisfied till he can procure it; and tho’ the Merit of the Masterpiece is acknowledged, yet the Possession of the Rarity only is desired.58

Following Houbraken’s lead, Gersaint attributed rarity alone as the sole factor to explain why collectors sought various states; however, he acknowledged that the collecting of multiple states had merit in that the study of these prints could illuminate Rembrandt’s working method and the development of “the various Gradations of his Pieces to Perfection.”59 Yet Gersaint considered the rare states that were so highly prized by collectors as nothing more than proof impressions:

Nor is it strange that such different Impressions of the Works of Rembrandt should be found, for he finished his Work at many Sittings, sometimes after long Intervals between; and these different Impressions are only Proofs, which he pulled from time to time as his Work advanced, and consequently discover different degrees of Perfection, the first being always the worst; and for this Reason all but the finished Impression are scarce, because there was originally but few which were intended to have been destroyed and must have been preserved by Accident.60

58 Ibid., 33.
59 Ibid., 34.
60 Ibid., 33-34.
Gersaint concluded that because there were few impressions of the first states of many of the prints, these impressions must have been proofs and that Rembrandt intended to destroy them.

In 1752, Gersaint’s catalogue was translated into English, and its publication coincided with the craze for collecting Rembrandt’s etchings, which reached a peak in England during this period.\(^{61}\) The popularity of Rembrandt’s prints in England is attested to by the increased numbers of Rembrandt’s works that were reproduced in mezzotint during the second half of the eighteenth century, which could justly be called the “great age of the English mezzotint.”\(^{62}\) Rembrandt was a popular choice among mezzotinters, not only because he was one of the most famous Dutch painters, but also because his chiaroscuro was well-suited to mezzotint.\(^{63}\) In 1786, James Chelsum published the History of the Art of Engraving in Mezzotinto, which included an appendix of mezzotints by the best contemporary engravers.\(^{64}\) Eleven of these mezzotints reproduce the work of Rembrandt, the most after any old master painter.

The velvety blacks and pictorial richness that attracted mezzotinters to Rembrandt’s prints were the same qualities that were especially praised by critics.\(^{65}\) In fact, some writers believed that Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro was based on his awareness of mezzotint. William Gilpin, in his An Essay on Prints, published in London in 1792,

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63 The first English mezzotint after Rembrandt was by Pieter van Bleeck in 1747. See Alexander, 49.

64 James Chelsum, History of the Art of Engraving in Mezzotint, Winchester, 1786.

erroneously stated that “[Rembrandt] had probably seen some of the first mezzotintos; and admiring the effect, endeavored to produce it in etching, by a variety of intersecting scratches.”66

By the end of the century, a large number of prints after Rembrandt were available, with Daniel Daulby’s *Descriptive Catalogue of the Works of Rembrandt and of His Scholars, Bol, Lievens, and Van Vliet* of 1796 listing almost two hundred fifty reproductive prints, both foreign and English.67 Like other writers on Rembrandt’s prints, Daulby praised the artist’s chiaroscuro:

> The mellow brilliancy of his lights, the breadth and harmony of his middle tints, and the rich depth of his shadows, give to his pictures an effect which seems to be the work of enchantment…He delighted in the great opposition of light and shadow, and carried his knowledge of the chiaroscuro to the utmost extent.68

Daulby recounted the oft-repeated story of how Rembrandt’s studio contributed to his use of light, and although others had attributed Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro primarily to his surroundings, Daulby sought to refute this notion:

> It is said that the room in which he usually painted, was so disposed as to admit only a strong light, and that he caused a vivid ray to strike upon that part only which he was desirous of bringing out with the greatest effect; that on the contrary, when he would have his grounds light, he spread behind his model a cloth of the colour ground he chose, and which partook of the same ray that enlightened the head; but he had resources in his genius beyond the limited effect of a light admitted into a dark chamber, and beyond any idea which such light could suggest to him.69

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68 Daulby, iii-v.

69 Ibid., v.
Instead of relying solely on the conditions of Rembrandt’s studio as an explanation for the artist’s unusual light effects, Daulby attributed Rembrandt’s understanding of chiaroscuro to “a deeper knowledge of the principles of his art.”

In the introduction to his catalogue, Daulby also discussed the popularity of Rembrandt prints among collectors. Like others before him, Daulby commented on the variety of impressions and states of Rembrandt’s prints and the interest among collectors to own the rarer ones:

Thus the Juno without the crown, the Coppenol with the white background, the Joseph with the face unshaded, and the good Samaritan with the horse’s tail white, were regarded as inestimable; whilst the same subjects, without these distinctions, were considered as of little comparative value. The facility with which he could change the effects of his etchings, by altering, obliterating, or working on them again, enabled him to provide sufficient amusement for his admirers; and hence varieties frequently occur which are not easily explicable.

Unlike Gersaint, Daulby did not attribute the variety of impressions and states of Rembrandt’s prints solely to the artist’s working method. Thus, these were not proof prints that were meant to be destroyed yet survived by accident; instead, Daulby felt that Rembrandt was responding to the market and created rare states and impressions to meet the desires of collectors.

Following Houbraken, Austrian museum administrator and writer Adam von Bartsch lamented Rembrandt’s poor drawing style in his 1797 publication *Catalogue raisonné de toutes les estampes qui forment l’œuvre de Rembrandt et ceux de ses...*
principaux imitateurs; yet found much to praise in his coloring and chiaroscuro. Yet unlike earlier chroniclers of Rembrandt’s prints, such as Houbraken, Bartsch believed that Rembrandt’s techniques were not mysterious and attempted to explain the artist’s techniques for creating graphic chiaroscuro. For example, he explained how Rembrandt obtained a variety of tones in etching:

He often reworked his plates with etching. He proceeded first with the work that requires the greatest delicacy. He then put a second coat of varnish on his plate, he strengthened the work by adding new hatchings, and used the acid a second time. By this method he obtained soft tones in the lighter parts, the delicacy of fine detail, and strength in the shadows, without which the shading is confused.73

He further explained that Rembrandt achieved different tones through the use of etching needles of various thickness as well as inks of varying degrees of darkness.74

Bartsch also sought to dispel the myth that Rembrandt had invented the mezzotint process or the manière noire. He acknowledged seven prints that had been identified in the past with this technique, and through close examination, determined that they had been created through the etching process.75

These are probably the prints that made some people believe that Rembrandt had been the inventor of mezzotint ... and it is completely beyond doubt that Rembrandt never engraved in mezzotint. The seven pieces just mentioned, are... simply etched in the ordinary way, and the wash and velvety areas as seen in the prints, is the result of a particular means, which was used by printing, which is that Rembrandt himself spread the ink, which he wiped in the place he wanted to

72 Adam von Bartsch, Catalogue raisonné de toutes les estampes qui forment l'œuvre de Rembrandt et ceux de ses principaux imitateurs, Vienna, 1797.
73 Ibid., xxxi.
74 Ibid., xxxii.
75 The seven prints are: Adoration of the Shepherds (B. 46), Flight Into Egypt (B. 53), The Entombment (B. 86), Saint Jerome (B. 105), A Meditating Man (B. 148), The Descent from the Cross (B. 83) and Portrait of the Young Haaring, (B. 275).
appear clear. The degree of darkness depended on how much ink he left on the plate, and that is why these prints differ, and almost none is exactly equal to another.\(^\text{76}\)

Rather than attributing the mysterious darkness of some of Rembrandt’s prints to the mezzotint process, Bartsch explained Rembrandt’s technique as a result of his “particular style” in which he selectively wiped the copper plates leaving various degrees of plate tone before printing. As a result, the different impressions of the prints can vary greatly in their use of chiaroscuro.

In addition, Bartsch tried to determine how Rembrandt’s interest in creating dark-toned prints developed:

> If it was not the first productions of the inventors of the mezzotint, who inspired Rembrandt to make these kinds of prints, the idea was probably suggested by the dark tone of the burr that was produced along the trenches created by the drypoint needle on his plates ... With a goal less to etch, than to paint on the plates, he did not follow any of the ordinary rules of printmakers, but employed, as we have just shown all ways and all the processes that his genius dictated, to obtain the desired effect.\(^\text{77}\)

Other critics had attributed Rembrandt’s use of graphic chiaroscuro to inspiration drawn from early mezzotints; however Bartsch noted that Rembrandt’s use of drypoint likely led him to the etching process described above, resulting in the rich darkness akin to that left by drypoint burr.

Like Gersaint before him, Bartsch’s *Catalogue raisonné* exerted considerable influence upon both scholars and amateurs well into the nineteenth century. Thomas Wilson’s *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Prints of Rembrandt by an Amateur*, published in 1836, made some insightful observations amidst his reliance on scholarship from the

\(^{76}\) Bartsch, xxxvii-xxxix.

\(^{77}\) Ibid., xxxvii-xxxix.
past.  

Like many eighteenth-century scholars had done, Wilson praised Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro despite his “defective” draftsmanship and attempted to explain the artist’s dramatic chiaroscuro as a result of his surroundings:

Whatever were the defects of his drawing, he has redeemed them all by his color, his touch, and the charms of his chiaro’scuro; qualities infinitely precious; and which have placed him on a level with the greatest masters…He was fond of strong contrasts of light and shade, and his understanding of these was extraordinary…His study, dark at all times, was so contrived as to receive its chief light only from a hole, in the manner of a camera-obscura, and this body of light was conveyed by the artist upon whatever object he wished to illuminate…

Wilson extended his praise of Rembrandt’s use of light and shade also to the artist’s etchings, stating that, like the paintings, they contained “a most singular intelligence in chiaro’scuro.”

In his discussion of Rembrandt’s graphic chiaroscuro, Wilson followed Bartsch in his comparison of the dark-toned prints to mezzotints yet explained the similarity as a result of Rembrandt’s printing process and inspiration drawn from his use of drypoint:

Many capricious impressions, and other varieties, in Rembrandt’s prints, are the result of a peculiar method of spreading ink on the plate, and then wiping away those portions only where light was designed to appear. Two perfectly similar impressions of this sort, from the same plate, are rarely found. They were doubtless printed by the artist himself, in his own house. If he did not derive any hint from the then recently discovered invention of mezzotinto, his dark plates were possibly suggested to him by the blots which the printing-ink left on the copper, in those parts were strong touches had ploughed it up, and which plates he frequently printed off without burnishing…

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79 Ibid., 14-15. It should be noted that Wilson’s comparison of Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro to the effects produced by a camera-obscura were made during the development of modern photographic processes, with the first successful permanent photograph created by Nicéphore Niépce in 1826, the development of the daguerreotype in 1837, and the invention of the calotype by 1839.

80 Ibid., 16.

81 Ibid., 20-21.
The variety of impressions and the dramatic chiaroscuro of Rembrandt’s etchings continued to be of interest to nineteenth-century critics. Although Bartsch and other critics had explained Rembrandt’s use of graphic chiaroscuro as a result of his interest in drypoint, it was still commonly believed in nineteenth-century France that Rembrandt had invented mezzotint, misinformation that stemmed largely from Gersaint who wrote that the originality of Rembrandt’s prints was his combination of drypoint, etching, and mezzotint.  

In 1877, English etcher Francis Seymour Haden published The Etched Work of Rembrandt, A Monograph following an exhibition of the artist’s etchings, largely organized by Haden, in the Burlington Fine Arts Club. Haden was the first to exhibit Rembrandt’s etchings chronologically, a method he believed would assist with attributions. Although there is little discussion of Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro in the catalogue, Haden described two competing notions of the states of prints: the popular meaning, which held that the finished state must be better than the unfinished, and the collector’s understanding, in which the first state is the most desirable because it reveals “the freshness of his first impression.” Haden’s publication and the exhibition that prompted it marked a turning point in the study of Rembrandt’s etchings because he had attempted to understand the development of Rembrandt’s etched work through chronology and its relation to the artist’s biography rather than focusing on differences of state and rarity which had previously been at the center of investigation.

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84 Ibid., 8.
Charles Henry Middleton’s 1878 catalogue followed the new approach taken by Haden and the exhibition of Rembrandt’s etchings in the Burlington Fine Arts Club. In his brief discussion of states in the introduction to his catalogue, Middleton asserted that, contrary to popular opinion which held that Rembrandt continually altered his plates,

*Rembrandt very rarely altered his plates:* when he did so, it was solely for an artistic or other such intent; he corrected an obvious error, supplied an unintentional omission, or added that which he knew was an almost necessary improvement; alteration for the mere sake of alteration, still more, alteration through greed or profit, was entirely foreign to his habit; and whenever a change is effected which does not recommend itself to us, and is unworthy of his genius, I do not hesitate to affirm that an inferior hand has wrought upon the plate.

As such, Middleton rejected many later states of Rembrandt’s prints as authentic. For example, he was unwilling to believe that in the case of the dramatic alterations made in the fourth state of the “*Three Crosses*” (fig. 11) Rembrandt could, “in reworking the worn-out plate, be so little conscious of its original merit as to obliterate, conceal, or mar every excellence it had possessed.” The later states were, therefore, in Middleton’s opinion, the “handiwork of others who could neither imitate his technic nor appreciate his powers.”

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85 Charles Henry Middleton, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Rembrandt van Rhyn*, London, 1878. Middleton admitted that a chronological arrangement was not a new idea: Carel Vosmaer led the way in 1867, providing a table at the end of his book that includes the etchings, paintings, and drawings in chronological order. Middleton, however, did not follow Vosmaer’s table. Middleton also participated in the arrangement of the etchings in the Exhibition of Rembrandt’s Etchings at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1877. The prints in Middleton’s catalogue are arranged chronologically under subject headings. Middleton believed that this was the best arrangement since Rembrandt’s style varied based on the subject matter.

86 Ibid., xx.

87 Ibid., xxi.

88 Ibid., xxi.
Middleton’s discussion of Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro focused particularly on Rembrandt’s use of drypoint to create “transparent shadows.”\(^89\) He recognized that Rembrandt’s use of drypoint increased in his middle and later periods when Rembrandt increasingly relied upon the burr produced by the drypoint tool to add to the chiaroscuro of an image. Middleton was among the first to discuss the history of the use of drypoint in Northern Europe, linking it particularly with the work of Albrecht Dürer and Albrecht Altdorfer.\(^90\)

In eighteenth-century France, Rembrandt had been judged by the standards of the French academy and generally regarded as an inferior artist. However, in the nineteenth-century, Rembrandt was considered the leading past master of etching and became an emblem of the etching revival in France. Painter-printmakers, especially the landscape artists of the Barbizon school in the 1830s and 1840s, called upon Rembrandt’s techniques and achievements to justify their own goals.\(^91\) Furthermore, artists and critics refashioned Rembrandt’s identity as an alternative to standard models in order to create a figure they could use to validate their own aesthetic principles and political agenda of changing academic practice.\(^92\)

The nineteenth century created a persona for Rembrandt as an Old Master artist outside the boundaries of institutionalized artistic instruction. Yet some critics sought to reconfigure contemporary concepts of the goals of art to accommodate Rembrandt rather

\(^89\) Ibid., xxiv.

\(^90\) Ibid., xxv.

\(^91\) Artists of the Barbizon school also praised Rembrandt’s use of clair-obscur, particularly his use of light and shadow to create strong contrasts. See Alison McQueen, *The Rise of the Cult of Rembrandt: Reinventing an Old Master in Nineteenth-Century France*, Amsterdam, 2003, 165.

\(^92\) McQueen, 83.
than shift their perception of what constituted valid forms of art. Charles Blanc, Director of Fine Arts from 1848-1870 and founder and chief editor of the Gazette des Beaux-Arts, placed Rembrandt at the head of the Dutch school in the first edition of his Histoire des peintres de toutes les écoles: École Hollandaise (1849). He sought to retain Rembrandt’s position as a leading past master who did not entirely conform to the standards set by the French Academy by explaining that “he introduced a new ideal, not the ideal of forms, but the ideal of clair obscur, not the ideal of beauty, but the ideal of expression.”

Blanc felt the need to work within the boundaries of a previously defined tradition without seeking to change the structure or institutionalization of French art. And it is worth note that once again, it is Rembrandt’s expressive use of dramatic chiaroscuro that set him apart for critics.

In addition to their fascination with Rembrandt’s expressive chiaroscuro, nineteenth-century French critics generally characterized Rembrandt as an independent artist, maintaining that he copied no one. The potential significance of Rembrandt’s own print collection was ignored in order to maintain the idea that Rembrandt made paintings, drawings, and prints unlike those of any other artist. Instead, critics preferred to explain his collection as “evidence of his ability to appreciate other art and still remain true to his own goals, an ability which was, in their minds, part of his genius.”

Rembrandt’s independence as an etcher from the influence of other artists was important to contemporary French printmakers and critics who sought to liberate printmaking from its role as a reproductive process.

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93 See McQueen, 36, n. 71.
94 Ibid., 51.
From the 1860s to the 1880s, critics and members of print societies such as the Société des Aquafortistes, founded in the 1860s, further positioned Rembrandt as an iconic figure for French printmakers. Maxime Lalanne, a key figure of the Société, published his important text *Traité de la graveur à l’eau-forte*, in 1866. In this text, Lalanne placed Rembrandt as a key figure in the author’s list of “the principal painter-printmakers from diverse schools who have illustrated the art of etching.” Lalanne emphasized for contemporary printmakers the importance of revarnishing and reworking a plate, stating that:

Rembrandt often proceeded in this way; looking at the successive states of his plates we realize how he went back to his work; we see that he worked extensively on one part of his subject without touching the others; he took a proof; then he came back to the same part with the finest work, and moved to other areas he worked according to the effect that preoccupied him.

Lalanne’s explanation of the existence of different states for the prints is a far cry from Houbraken’s idea that Rembrandt intentionally printed his plates when they were only half-finished in order to resell them.

Lalanne’s treatise had a great impact upon the French art world because of the author’s position within the Société des Aquafortistes. In the critical writings of their second set of publications, *L’eau forte en...,* an annual publication between 1874 and 1881, the Société des Aquafortistes gave Rembrandt preeminent status. In the

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95 The Société des Aquafortistes characterized Rembrandt as an individualist as well as an original, self-taught etcher who used exotic papers, printed his own plates, and treated the copper plate with the freedom of a canvas. French printmakers aligned themselves with the Old Master artist in order to increase the value of the original print in France, and particularly their own work. McQueen, 234-247.

96 Ibid., 219.

97 Ibid., 219-20, n. 396.

98 For example, Rembrandt was the only artist whose portrait was published in the seven volumes of *L’Eau-forte en...*
introduction to the first issue, critic Philippe Burty lauded Rembrandt and called for a revival of etchings in order to help liberate artists from the academy. Burty was one of the leading exponents of etching in France and focused on Rembrandt as a model for his contemporaries. In his important article “La Belle épreuve” in *L’Eau-forte en 1875*, Burty outlined many of the same traits of Rembrandt’s prints that had been previously identified by French printmakers, such as the use of exotic and old papers:

Singular in everything, Rembrandt, the only one, or nearly, among the Dutch, who used Japanese paper, which is thick like velvet, shimmering like satin, of the amber tone of a fragment of ancient Paros, and which makes the print look like it is perpetually caressed and warmed by a ray of sun. Rembrandt acquired these sheets from some captain or Dutch merchant who had come back from Desima or Kyoto. He was miserly. He kept them for portraits of friends, for his large works that required heightened and nuanced blacks, in opposition to the cast light and clear-cut details.99

Burty was among the earliest to articulate the aesthetic effect produced by printing on Japanese paper.100 Preferring independent artists, Burty was attracted to the idea of Rembrandt’s sole control over every stage of production and emphasized that Rembrandt printed his own plates in his home. Many of the printmakers associated with the Société des Aquafortistes printed their own plates or controlled the biting process, looking to Rembrandt as a model.

During the twentieth century, scholars devoted increasing attention to Rembrandt’s techniques and use of chiaroscuro in individual prints rather than across his graphic oeuvre. This shift was followed by a greater focus on states as well as individual impressions, particularly in the work of Christopher White and Karel Boon. As a result,

99 McQueen 237, n 452.

100 Burty remarked that some of his contemporaries, such as Méryon, Daubigny, Millet, Jacquemart, Haden, and Bracquemond, were following Rembrandt in their use of exotic paper choices. Like the practice of producing multiple states, unusual papers lent a sense of value and uniqueness to their work. Ibid., 237.
twentieth-century historiography of Rembrandt’s graphic chiaroscuro will be discussed at the end of the following section as it pertains directly to the *Presentation in the Temple*, the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, the *Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus*.

**The Presentation in the Temple, The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, The Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus in Print Literature**

It appears that Gersaint was the first to comment on all four prints. Although Gersaint catalogued all four prints that form the focus of the present investigation, there is much less discussion of the *Presentation in the Temple* (fig. 1), the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* (fig. 2), and *Christ at Emmaus* (fig. 4) than the *Entombment* (fig. 3). For instance, there is no mention of the dark tone in his catalogue no. 50, *Another Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*. Gersaint’s brief discussion of this print is limited to the fact that it is rare and that Rembrandt treated the subject in a very uncommon manner, without explanation of what was unusual about it. Similarly, Gersaint provided little description of catalogue no. 86, *Descent from the Cross*, other than its measurements. There is no mention of the torch, even though the chiaroscuro of this print would seem to belong to those with “accidental light” that Gersaint described in his life of Rembrandt.

Even though he believed that many of the impressions of these or others of the artist’s etchings should be considered as proofs that Rembrandt did not intend to survive, Gersaint noted that catalogue no. 87, the *Entombment* “is more remarkable than any other for the Variety of its Impressions.”\(^{101}\) He then described two states, the first of which is most scarce and only lightly shaded and the second more shadowed with only Christ in

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\(^{101}\) Gersaint, 1751, 51.
the light. He acknowledged others which were “more or less laboured, and consequently more or less dark; but tho’ they are said to be five or six in Number, yet they differ from each other in such trifling Circumstances, that the Variation, if any, is not always to be distinguished.”

Other than mentioning that Rembrandt created states of this print with differing degrees of darkness, Gersaint did not discuss the dramatic chiaroscuro found in some impressions of this print.

Finally, Gersaint found little value in catalogue no. 90, *Christ at Emmaus*, which he described as “hatched in a harsh rude Manner with a coarse Tool.” He identified two states, but misread the date as 1634. Gersaint did not discuss all four prints as a group but did conclude that Rembrandt created the *Descent from the Cross* and the *Entombment* as companions, further noting that their dimensions are identical.

Daniel Daulby’s catalogue was based on his study of original etchings as well as the catalogues of De Burgy, Gersaint, Helle and Glomy, Marcus, and Yver. He adopted Gersaint’s catalogue numbers and often drew directly from the text of his catalogue. For example, Daulby’s description of the *Presentation, in Rembrandt’s Dark Manner* repeated almost verbatim Gersaint’s assertion that this print was “treated in a very uncommon manner, and the piece executed in a singular stile, the effect of which is very striking.” Although Gersaint provided little other description of this print, Daulby went a bit further in describing “two impressions”:

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102 Ibid., 51.
103 Ibid., 52.
104 Daulby, 31.
In the first, which is extremely rare, the left part of the print is totally in shade, the
virgin and Joseph but confusedly seen, and the whole of the print is much darker
than in the impression which has been described.\textsuperscript{105}

The second impression is the one Daulby used for his general description of the print and
is much lighter in tone, probably pulled from a cleanly wiped plate.

It is important to note that Daulby seems to have been the first to include a
reference to Rembrandt’s “dark manner” in the title of the \textit{Presentation in the Temple}.
Similarly, he also seems to have been among the first to acknowledge the presence of the
torch in the print he catalogued as the \textit{Descent from the Cross, a Night Piece}.\textsuperscript{106} He listed
two impressions, with the second darker and more finished, thus reversing Gersaint’s
preferred order from dark to light.

The same is true of Daulby’s description of the \textit{Entombment}. He followed
Gersaint’s lead by acknowledging the rarity of the print and the remarkable number of
variations; however Daulby listed the states from light to dark. The first state, according
to Daulby, is one in which everything is readily distinguishable; the second is more
finished and darker, with figures illuminated by reflections from a torch; the third even
darker except the arch behind the skulls; and the fourth is almost entirely subsumed in
darkness. Daulby also described the \textit{Entombment} as a companion to the \textit{Descent from the
Cross}, noting that their dimensions are identical.

Daulby’s description of \textit{Christ at Emmaus} again followed Gersaint almost to the
letter. Like Gersaint, Daulby found little of value in this print, stating that “This piece is

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 31.

\textsuperscript{106} Daulby misread the date of this print, stating that “On the sheet is written \textit{Rembrandt f. 1655.”} Ibid., 63.
etched in a harsh manner with a coarse tool.\textsuperscript{107} Furthermore, Daulby listed the same
erroneous date of 1634 that Gersaint had used for this print, thus perpetuating a
misunderstanding about the place of \textit{Christ at Emmaus} in Rembrandt’s printed oeuvre
that would continue for a century.\textsuperscript{108}

Adam von Bartsch also accepted much of Gersaint’s conclusions without
question. For example, in his brief entry for \textit{Christ at Emmaus} (B. 87) in his 1797
\textit{Catalogue raisonné}, Bartsch also listed the date of this print as 1634. In the text of the
catalogue, Bartsch described all four prints; however, he did not characterize them as a
series. His discussion of the \textit{Presentation in the Temple} is brief, noting only that it is
extremely rare and treated in a “singular” way. A footnote to the entry states that the first
impressions of the print are extremely dark, but there are few of these black impressions
extant since the burr wore down quickly. His discussion of the two states of \textit{Christ at
Emmaus} is equally brief, and it is apparent that he relied on Gersaint for the description
of this image as “gravé d’un ton dur et à grosses tailles.”\textsuperscript{109}

Like Gersaint and Daulby, Bartsch discussed only the \textit{Descent from the Cross} and
the \textit{Entombment} as companions. His entry on the \textit{Descent from the Cross} consisted
mainly of descriptive elements and made no mention of the torch. On the other hand,
Bartsch discussed the \textit{Entombment} at some length, focusing particularly on the great
variety of impressions. Bartsch identified only two states, attributing the many
differences in chiaroscuro discussed by other cataloguers to variations in the manner in

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 65.

\textsuperscript{108} J.J. de Claussin seems to have been the first to record the correct date. See J.J. de Claussin, \textit{Catalogue
raisonné de toutes les estampes qui forment l’oeuvre de Rembrandt et des principales pièces de ses

\textsuperscript{109} Von Bartsch, 91.
which the impressions were printed. He described the first state as consisting of etching only, but printed in two ways: either the “ordinary manner” of printing or with a film of ink left on the plate. Although current scholarship acknowledges only one state of the Descent from the Cross, Bartsch identified a second state in which he believed that Rembrandt covered almost the entire plate with hatching. Bartsch also emphasized that Rembrandt pulled a variety of impressions from the plate, some strongly shaded with only the figure of Christ illuminated and others with the entire scene completely shrouded in darkness.

In the catalogue of his text, Thomas Wilson discussed each of the four prints; however, unlike Daulby, Bartsch, or Gersaint, he did not link any of them as companions. Wilson followed his countryman Daulby in his description of The Presentation in the Temple as “in Rembrandt’s Dark Manner.” He further noted that impressions of this print with burr on India paper were the most highly esteemed. Wilson’s reliance upon Daulby is also evident in his description of The Descent from the Cross where he too mentions the use of torchlight. His entry for The Entombment recognized two states, with “all the other variations of this print…merely produced by the different manner of printing.” Finally, Wilson’s brief discussion of Christ at Emmaus repeated earlier descriptions by stating that “this piece is etched in a harsh manner with a coarse tool” and dating the print to the year 1634.

In France, the Presentation in the Temple, the Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, the Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus were discussed early in the

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110 Wilson, 88.
111 Ibid., 92.
nineteenth century in J.J. de Claussin’s edition of Gersaint’s catalogue. Although Claussin adopted much of Gersaint’s text without alteration, his entry for the Presentation is notable in that, unlike other nineteenth-century critics, it acknowledged the importance of drypoint in the creation of graphic chiaroscuro, rather than the use of mezzotint: “It happens, but rarely, that prints ascribed to mezzotint were instead created as much in etching as with the burr of the drypoint needle.”

Even though Claussin did not discuss any of the prints as companions, it is also important to note that Claussin dated Christ at Emmaus to 1654 unlike his predecessors who followed Gersaint’s incorrect date of 1634. Claussin also adopted the negative description of the print, calling it “harshly engraved.”

Like Wilson before him, Charles Henry Middleton did not discuss any of the four prints as companions. He dated The Entombment to 1652 and the remainder to 1654, following Claussin’s lead and correcting the misreading of the date of Christ at Emmaus. Further, Middleton seems to have been the first to drop the negative tone in his description of Christ at Emmaus, and following Middleton’s lead, subsequent descriptions of this print remain neutral on Rembrandt’s technique.

In his discussion of catalogue no. 243, The Presentation; in Rembrandt’s ‘Dark Manner,’ Middleton called attention to impressions in which Rembrandt used plate tone, such as an early one in the British Museum. He qualified this discussion by stating that

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112 De Claussin., 36.
113 Ibid., 62.
114 Ibid., 91.
115 Middleton, cat. 237, p. 233-234.
“such an impression is not, however, to be preferred.”116 Middleton then described the source of light in the print as coming from the upper left, probably signifying “an illumination from Heaven,” rather than coming from the Christ Child as previously believed.117 He further criticized Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro in *The Presentation* by stating that the use of light “is imperfectly carried out.”118

In his discussion of *The Descent from the Cross, a Night Piece* (cat. 242), Middleton curiously described the figure generally assumed to be Joseph of Arimathea as “a woman with a headdress like that of a nun.”119 As with his discussion of the use of tone in *The Presentation*, Middleton warned amateurs against purchasing impressions of *The Descent* “in which an artificial tone has been produced by tinting, they are generally inferior impressions.”120 Likewise, in his discussion of catalogue no. 233, *Jesus Christ Entombed*, Middleton cautioned amateurs against purchasing impressions with plate tone of the later states of this print. He did not believe that “these fanciful impressions” were printed by Rembrandt.121

At the end of the nineteenth century, Woldemar von Seidlitz published his *Kritisches Verzeichnis der Radierungen Rembrandts* in which he asserted that the four etchings formed a group of Passion prints.122 Von Seidlitz noted Rembrandt’s use of

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116 Ibid., 237.
117 Ibid., 237.
118 Ibid., 238.
119 Ibid., 236.
120 Ibid., 236.
121 Ibid., 227.
Japanese paper in later impressions of *The Presentation in the Temple*, mostly with heavy surface tone. In his discussion of *The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, Von Seidlitz recognized the use of the burin and of plate tone and rectified Middleton’s description of Joseph of Arimathea as an old woman arranging the shroud on a bier. Seidlitz further corrected Middleton by dating *The Entombment* to around 1654 rather than 1652.

Following Von Seidlitz, Arthur M. Hind in his 1912 publication, *Rembrandt Etchings, An Essay and a Catalogue with some Notes on the Drawings*, discussed the *Presentation in the Temple*, the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, the *Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus* as a group of Passion images based on their shared dimensions and character.\(^\text{123}\) However, his discussion of the four prints was primarily directed toward *The Entombment* and the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*. Hind described the open etching of the first state of the *Entombment* and the considerable linear shading in later states as groundwork rather than the main element of chiaroscuro, which in his estimation was surface tone.\(^\text{124}\) A second state of *Christ at Emmaus* (fig. 4), in which the rays of light emanating from Christ’s head were lengthened and made continuous, the hat defined, and other parts strengthened with drypoint, was first described in Hind’s catalogue.\(^\text{125}\) Hind distinguished this state from a third, in which close parallel and horizontal lines of shading were added beneath the tablecloth.


\(^{124}\) Ibid., 39.

\(^{125}\) Ibid., cat. 282.
A few decades later, Ludwig Münz determined to correct the notion that the four plates form any sort of series.¹²⁶ Unlike Von Seidlitz and Hind who believed that all four plates were created in or around 1654, Münz dated *The Presentation in the Temple; in the Dark Manner* to about 1657-8 and the *Entombment* to about 1658-9. In his discussion of *The Entombment* (catalogue no. 241), Münz adopted Hind’s emphasis on the use of tone, stating that impressions of hardly any other print by Rembrandt differ so much in tone through variations in inking. In his catalogue no. 232, *Christ at Emmaus; the larger plate*, Münz stated that Rembrandt was not only looking to an Italian source, Leonardo’s *Last Supper* (fig. 19) for Christ’s gesture, but also to a Northern European source, namely Dürer’s woodcut of the same subject from the *Small Passion* (fig. 20), for the lighting and some details, such as the table.

In the seventeenth catalogue of Rembrandt’s etchings since 1751, Christopher White and Karel G. Boon pioneered a new approach to Rembrandt’s etchings, paying significant attention to individual impressions of Rembrandt’s prints. White’s and Boon’s 1969 *Rembrandt’s Etchings, an Illustrated Critical Catalogue* compiled information about states and impressions of the prints based on the authors’ first-hand observations of prints in numerous collections.¹²⁷ White and Boon emphasized the variety of impressions due to the ways in which Rembrandt inked and wiped his plates. Further, they made special mention in the catalogue entries of the different kinds of supports that Rembrandt used for certain prints, paying close attention to Oriental papers,


¹²⁷ Christopher White and Karel G. Boon, *Rembrandt’s Etchings*, Amsterdam, 1969. The authors attempted to rectify mistakes made by other cataloguers following Rovinski, whose 1000 collotype reproductions were not entirely accurate. Instead, White and Boon built upon Middleton’s example of first-hand examination of impressions in a number of collections. See White and Boon, v-vi.
distinguishing between Japanese, Chinese, and Indian papers, as well as to specially colored supports such as oatmeal paper.

For *The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner*, White and Boon cited several heavily inked impressions printed with surface tone, all of which are on Japanese paper.\(^{128}\) The authors also examined several impressions of *The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* on Japanese paper, and two with surface tone.\(^{129}\) For *The Entombment*, White and Boon named several examples of the first three states printed on Japanese and Chinese papers, as well as a few on vellum.\(^{130}\) The authors also noted that impressions of the second, third, and fourth states vary enormously due to the inking of the plate. According to the impressions examined by White and Boon, Rembrandt seemed to have varied his supports only for the first state of *Christ at Emmaus*, using Japanese and Chinese papers for a number of impressions.\(^{131}\) White and Boon cited one example of the second state printed with surface tone.\(^{132}\)

In the same year that White and Boon’s catalogue appeared, Christopher White also published the first edition of his influential *Rembrandt as an Etcher*.\(^{133}\) White asserted that the four vertical images of the Life of Christ, together with the six horizontal ones on the infancy of Christ, form a series in effect, if not in intention, probably as a

\(^{128}\) Ibid., 25, for the locations of these impressions.

\(^{129}\) Ibid., 46, for the locations of these impressions.

\(^{130}\) Ibid., 47-48, for the locations of these impressions.

\(^{131}\) Ibid., 48, for the locations of these impressions.

\(^{132}\) This impression was in a private collection in London. Ibid., 49.

\(^{133}\) A second edition, published under the same title in New Haven, 1999, is the one referenced for this dissertation.
result of Rembrandt’s engagement with Dürer’s *Engraved Passion* during this time.\(^{134}\)

White made note of the fact that the *Presentation in the Temple* seems to stand apart iconographically from the other three prints, while *Christ at Emmaus* is the only scene not depicted at night or in darkness. White indicated, however, that technically the four prints are closely related in that they were all primarily etched then completed with drypoint or burin.\(^{135}\)

White’s discussion was predominantly limited to *The Entombment* and *The Presentation in the Temple*. Following his work with Boon, White described the enormous variety of impressions of *The Entombment* through the use of surface tone, in which Rembrandt printed light and dark impressions of each state. Although Rembrandt used a number of supports for each of the first three states, White pointed out that the artist seemed to limit himself to white European paper for the fourth state. White went beyond the catalogue he prepared with Boon by connecting the surface tone and effects produced by the use of a variety of supports with the expressive qualities of particular impressions. For example, White argued that an impression in the British Museum of the third state printed with surface tone (fig. 21) “conveys the effect of the light of a shaded guttering candle in the darkest night.”\(^{136}\)

White continued his connection of technique and expression in his discussion of *The Presentation in the Temple*, where he described impressions printed on Japanese paper, which give softer tones and blurring of forms. White discussed a few examples on

\(^{134}\) See White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, 88.

\(^{135}\) Ibid., 90.

\(^{136}\) Ibid., 92.
Japanese paper, which were printed with surface tone, such as one in the British Museum (see fig. 96) where “the full force of the highlights is concentrated on the two priests. It is a scene devoid of all bodily substance and represents the entirely spiritual vision, which must have presented itself to the aged Simeon so longing for the physical oblivion of death.”

There have been relatively few recent discussions of any kind concerning all four prints. When cited, recent scholars have doubted whether the artist created these images as a series, yet the prints are generally mentioned as a stylistically and thematically related group. In 1981, Clifford Ackley noted the similarities of format and dimension among these four prints and suggested the possibility that Rembrandt was contemplating a more extended series on the Life of Christ. Ackley continued to discuss these images as a coherent group in the 2003 exhibition catalogue accompanying the exhibition Rembrandt’s Journey: Painter Draftsman Etcher. Similarly, Catherine Scallen also linked these images through their common size and date of creation but found that their narrative differences precluded identifying them as a formal series.

Some studies, particularly Michael Zell’s essay on the Presentation in the Dark Manner, have focused on individual prints among the group. Although Zell acknowledged a relationship among the four prints, his essay was mainly concerned with placing the Presentation within the historical and religious milieu, linking it with the

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137 Ibid., 97.
138 Ackley, Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt, 242-243.
140 Scallen, “Rembrandt’s Nocturne Prints,” 16 n. 9.
circle of ecumenical Protestants known as “philosemites” or “philojudaists” associated with Amsterdam Sephardi Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel.\footnote{141} Zell’s argument rests upon an examination of Rembrandt’s transformation of the narrative of the Presentation into a confrontation between the Jewish law and the Christian Gospel. The role of light and darkness in this dark-toned print is mentioned only very briefly as a means to heighten both the drama of the scene and the theme of spiritual illumination. Zell did acknowledge that, although the print exists in only one state, each impression of the image is virtually unique because of the varied papers and inkings of the plate; however, the role of tone in the creation of meaning in the individual impressions of The Presentation in the Temple remains to be explored.\footnote{142}

Shelley Perlove’s and Larry Silver’s 2009 publication Rembrandt’s Faith discussed all four of the Life of Christ prints.\footnote{143} Although they recognize a connection between the prints, each is dealt with separately. Following Zell’s approach linking Rembrandt’s Passion imagery to its religious context, Perlove’s and Silver’s main goal was to make clear Rembrandt’s continued interest in establishing connections between Christianity and Judaism.\footnote{144}


\footnote{142} Ibid., 516.

\footnote{143} Shelley Perlove and Larry Silver, Rembrandt’s Faith, Church and Temple in the Dutch Golden Age, University Park, PA, 2009. The authors note that, beginning around 1654, Rembrandt began to issue prints with similar dimensions and formats: horizontal for infancy scenes, vertical for Life of Christ.

\footnote{144} Perlove and Silver related the Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner to the other three Life of Christ prints through an emphasis on the offering of the Christ Child as foreshadowing Christ’s future sacrifice and through the use of darkness, unifying this scenes with the Passion narrative. In the remaining three prints, Perlove’s and Silver’s discussion focused on the figures of Jews within the scenes. In their discussions of the Descent from the Cross by Torchlight and The Entombment, Perlove and Silver focused on the figures of two converted Jews, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus within the ingathering of the larger community of Christ’s original disciples and followers in the group of mourners.
Conclusion

The methodological debates in the 1970s and 1980s on the connoisseurship of Rembrandt’s paintings and prints were largely aimed at shifting focus from the production of catalogues raisonnés and traditional iconography, instead locating meaning beyond the surface of the work. In the 1990s, scholars of Rembrandt painting, perhaps in an effort to counter some of the iconographic studies of the 1980s, began to locate meaning in context and artistic process; however, this approach was not new to Rembrandt print scholarship, as demonstrated by Christopher White’s 1969 publication, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*. Following White’s lead, a number of Rembrandt print scholars have made important contributions to the understanding of the Rembrandt’s graphic chiaroscuro, the links between technique and meaning, and the artist’s relationship to the Northern print tradition.

Through an in depth examination of the historiography of Rembrandt’s printed chiaroscuro and printmaking techniques, this chapter charted the reception of Rembrandt’s dark toned prints. While it has long been a commonly accepted notion that Rembrandt’s style fell out of favor after his death, this chapter has demonstrated that discussions of the graphic chiaroscuro of Rembrandt’s prints from the seventeenth

They conclude that in all the scenes of the Descent, Lamentation, and Entombment, Rembrandt consistently gave prominence to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, Jews who were taught and ultimately converted by Christ, as opposed to those who rejected him. In their discussion of the *Christ at Emmaus*, Perlove and Silver describe Rembrandt’s interpretation as unusual within the visual tradition because they believe that Christ offers bread to the unbelieving waiter, who resembles an Ashkenazic tradesman about to descend the stairs. Thus, in their estimation, the Jewish servant is poised on the brink of embracing or rejecting Christ, especially meaningful to Christian millenarians who anticipated the Second Coming around 1655. In their examination of Rembrandt’s Passion imagery, Perlove and Silver continually called attention to the way in which they believe the artist contrasted Jews with pious characters, allowing for a special subgroup of ideal Jewish converts: Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.
through the nineteenth centuries often differed from that of his paintings and had a
generally positive tone. Collectors had long been interested in purchasing and
documenting the various states and impressions of Rembrandt’s prints; however, it was
with the publication of catalogues raisonnés, beginning with Gersaint in 1751, that this
became a codified activity.

Beginning with Gersaint, authors of catalogues raisonnés often mentioned the
various states and impressions of the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross
by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus*. However, the four prints were not
discussed as a group until the end of the nineteenth century, when Woldemar von Seidlitz
published his *Kritisches Verzeichnis der Radierungen Rembrandts* in which he
determined that the four etchings form a group of Passion prints. Gersaint had misread
the date for *Christ at Emmaus*, perhaps preventing the connection of the four prints;
however, he did link the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* and the *Entombment* as
companions, and cataloguers following him generally accepted this notion.

Although generally discussed as a stylistically and technically similar group,
scholarly opinion as to whether the four prints form a series has varied over the course of
the twentieth century, perhaps because of issues of dating and the seeming incongruence
of the *Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner* among a sequence of Christ’s
Passion. In the twentieth century, increased attention was paid to Rembrandt’s
printmaking techniques, particularly his choice of support and creation of graphic tone.
The various impressions of the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by
Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus* have been examined in a number of
studies following White’s and Boon’s 1969 catalogue.
Scholarly attention to Rembrandt’s individual impressions, choice of support, and variations in inking have led to the description of the artist as an experimental printmaker. Although many of his printmaking techniques can be classified as experimental, the following chapter will link Rembrandt’s graphic techniques to the Northern print tradition, demonstrating that the artist was interested in aligning himself with internationally acclaimed Northern masters.
Chapter 2:

**Rembrandt’s Graphic Chiaroscuro and the Northern Print Tradition**

**Introduction**

Rembrandt’s graphic oeuvre was marked by a high degree of experimentation with technique to create greatly differentiated impressions; however, for *The Presentation in the Temple* (fig. 1), *The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* (fig. 2), *The Entombment* (fig. 3), and *Christ at Emmaus* (fig. 4), the artist was also clearly inspired by the example of other artists and was working within an established tradition of dark-toned and nocturne prints. Although he continually explored dramatic chiaroscuro throughout his graphic oeuvre, Rembrandt was by no means the first artist to grapple with this type of portrayal in intaglio. In particular, the printed work of Albrecht Dürer and Lucas van Leyden, whose art was to be found in Rembrandt’s own print collection, provided models for Rembrandt in the use of techniques, such as the creation of plate tone and the use of drypoint.¹ Rembrandt’s dark-toned prints also grew out of a broader, cross-media interest in tone that coalesced in the late sixteenth century with the graphic work of the Dutch Mannerists. Hence, this chapter focuses on Rembrandt’s engagement with the northern print tradition, predominantly of the sixteenth century, in his creation of the 1654 Life of Christ prints.

¹ Rembrandt was unusual among his contemporaries because he looked back to the previous century for sources and inspiration. As Christopher White pointed out in *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, Rembrandt’s comprehensive collection of prints makes clear that he was well acquainted with the example of earlier artists, such as Albrecht Dürer and Lucas van Leyden, among others. White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, 19.
Albrecht Dürer and the History of Northern Printmaking Techniques for Creating Tone

Albrecht Dürer’s work serves as an important point of comparison to Rembrandt’s Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus. In the shift in emphasis from line to tone, the work of Dürer far exceeded what had been achieved by his predecessors. In retrospect, Dürer’s engravings provided a transition between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and greatly influenced the functions and techniques of printmaking.

The third child of a goldsmith, Albrecht Dürer was trained to handle the goldsmith’s tools at an early age. Although he was expected to enter his father’s shop at the age of fifteen, Dürer persuaded his father to allow him to be a painter. On November 30, 1486, he began his apprenticeship with Michael Wolgemut. In April of 1490, Dürer left Nuremberg and possibly visited the Housebook Master, whose influence can be seen in Dürer’s graphic oeuvre both stylistically and technically. In 1492, Dürer went to

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2 The assertion of tone over line in printmaking is also evident in the work of other sixteenth-century northern artists, such as Hans Burgkmair and Lucas Cranach, who sought to replicate the feel of chiaroscuro drawings in print. The usual method for the chiaroscuro woodcut involved the creation of a key-block with the design in outline and one or more tone blocks. The inks were shades of the same color, and the blocks were cut so as to leave areas of the white paper exposed, producing the effect of the white highlights added to the drawings. See Landau and Parshall, 179-202.

3 In addition, Dürer provided much needed stimulus to the printmaking profession by deciding to make a living primarily from prints rather than paintings, and he set out to raise the artistic level of both woodcuts and engravings.

4 Michel Wolgemut (1434-1519), the first important painter and designer of woodcuts and glass-painting in Nuremberg during last third of the fifteenth century, is primarily remembered for his connection to Dürer, who studied in his workshop from 1486-89. Wolgemut’s interests were broader than painting; he also published books with woodcuts designed by professional painters, not by craftsmen, as was common practice. Wolgemut’s woodcut technique was typical of the day with its crudely cut lines that provide minimal modulation of form, shading and cross-hatching kept to a uniform minimum, and no attempt to introduce varying degrees of depth or tone. This is evident in the frontispiece for the Regensburg Breviary, St. Peter and St. Paul Enthroned, with St. Wolfgang and Bishop Rupert von Simmern, 1495, attributed to Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff.
Colmar to learn from the painter and engraver Martin Schongauer, but arrived after the master had died.

A group of eighty-nine drypoints is attributed to the Housebook Master, whose name derives from the so-called Medieval Housebook, an illustrated manuscript with forty pen-and-ink drawings of secular themes.\(^5\) Altogether only 122 impressions of the drypoints are known.\(^6\) That the Housebook Master’s drypoint engravings seem to have been printed in small editions made them all the more exclusive, targeting from the outset a specific group of connoisseurs who participated in an early and specialized collector’s market for prints at the end of the fifteenth century.\(^7\)

The free manner of drawing and the spontaneous character of the Housebook Master’s prints, along with the limited number of impressions, can be partly explained by the technique of drypoint. For this technique the artist employs a sharp needle to create lines directly onto the metal plate, leaving a ridge of metal, or burr that initially retains the ink but quickly wears away. Thus drypoint allows the artist to create lines in a more spontaneous manner than engraving yet yields a smaller number of impressions due to the fragility of the burr. The Housebook Master applied this technique, which was not

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\(^5\) The majority of these drypoints are housed in the print room of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, supplying the master’s alternate name, the Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet. The eighty-nine drypoints, the attribution of which has never been seriously doubted, represent traditional religious themes as well as worldly subjects such as amorous couples, hunting scenes, noblemen, and peasants—images that reflect a late medieval courtly culture of which little has been preserved. See J.P. Filedt-Kok, ed. The Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet, or, The Housebook Master. Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, 1985. See also Jane C. Hutchison, The Master of the Housebook. New York, 1972.

\(^6\) The Amsterdam group of eighty prints, sixty-one of which are unique impressions, comes from the 18th-century collection of Pieter Cornelis, Baron van Leyden (1717–88); their earlier provenance is unknown.

otherwise used in the fifteenth century, with such precision and subtlety that the result differs little from the few silverpoint drawings also attributed to him.

Although not the earliest to experiment with the drypoint technique, Dürer was possibly the first artist to grasp the potential of burr to produce rich, velvety areas of tone.\(^8\) In the same year that he completed the *Small Passion* series, Dürer took up drypoint in his *Man of Sorrows with Hands Bound* (B. 21, fig. 22). This print is technically similar to the Housebook Master’s drypoints. The Housebook Master did not appear to force his drypoint tool to raise extra burr on the plate; however, within a year, Dürer grasped the potential of burr in intaglio prints. Dürer created three drypoint etchings, one of which is his *St. Jerome Seated Near a Pollard Willow*, 1512.\(^9\) In this print, Dürer used the burr to describe the textures of the pollarded tree and the shadowed mane of the lion. In the Boston impression of the *Saint Jerome* (fig. 7), Dürer also made use of selective wiping, which serves to unify the softly lit sky and the flesh of the saint.

Although comparison is often drawn to the Housebook Master’s work in Dürer’s first generally accepted engraving, *The Ravisher, or a Young Woman Attacked by Death*, about 1495 (fig. 23), Dürer was also certainly aware of Martin Schongauer’s engraving technique at this early point in his graphic career.\(^10\) The small scale of the print and the freedom of cross-hatching are reminiscent of the Housebook Master’s informal style; however, the plate is incised more deeply and inked more heavily, techniques Dürer

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\(^8\) See Landau and Parshall, 179-202.

\(^9\) Dürer occasionally made use of the velvety line and areas of tone that drypoint can produce, particularly in the depiction of the willow in this print. See Introduction, note 7.

\(^10\) Dürer’s earliest engravings, such as the *Oriental Family* (about 1496), fall within the fifteenth-century northern European tradition and show the influence of Schongauer in their use of line and of the Housebook Master in the intimate informality of their subjects.
could have learned from Schongauer’s prints. Dürer’s early prints owe much to
Schongauer, particularly in their breadth of subject matter, originality of design, and
ordered draftsmanship.

Martin Schongauer (c. 1450-1491) was the first painter to produce a substantial
number of engravings, as the technique had been previously confined to the field of
goldsmiths’ work.11 Produced mainly during the 1470s and early 1480s, Schongauer’s
engravings number about 115. Because some of the first engravings were for use by
goldsmiths, the decorative appearance of a design had been the aim of earlier engravers,
such as the Master of the Banderoles (active around 1450-75). Schongauer instead
approached the medium like the painter he was, incorporating drama, varied forms and
textures, and space clearly defined with light and shade.12 Such is the case with
Schongauer’s *Death of the Virgin*, about 1480-81 (fig. 24), where the form of the
engraving is related to Netherlandish paintings of the same subject by Dirck Bouts and
Hugo van der Goes. Schongauer heightened the drama of the scene through both the
emotive gestures and the agitated movement of figures and drapery. Many of
Schongauer’s engravings are characterized by an impression of constant movement as the
viewer’s eyes are led by gesturing figures and dynamic contour lines. He also unified the
composition with the painter’s device of suggesting a single light source.

Unlike the woodcut, engraving allows for numerous fine strokes and cross-
hatching, which gave new potential for shading and modeling form to printmaking.

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11 His adoption of engraving was clearly due to his association with goldsmith work through his father’s
shop. For more information on Schongauer, see Ulrike Heinrichs-Schreiber, *Martin Schongauer, Maler

12 General developments in northern European engraving after 1450 included increased interest in light and
shade, construction of pictorial space, and use of the expanded narrative series as a focus for human
drama.
Schongauer’s skill as an engraver is shown in the way he used strokes of varying length, width, and depth to simulate light flickering on the surface of various forms.\textsuperscript{13}

Schongauer developed a systematic method and denser network of parallel and cross-hatching that respond to form and extended engraving’s range of tonalities.\textsuperscript{14}

Schongauer’s prints have survived in unusually high numbers, indicating both his improved technique, which yielded a higher number of impressions, and the fact that his prints were apparently sought-after collectors’ items from an early date. Speaking to this reception, an inscription survives beneath an impression of Schongauer’s \textit{Death of the Virgin}:

This image was judged in my youth to be the finest work of art to have come out of Germany, therefore I pasted it into my Bible, not because of the story which may or may not be true [properly portrayed]. However, since the unsurpassed engraver Dürer of Nuremberg began to make his art, this [estimation of quality] no longer holds. The engraver was called \textit{Hübsch Martin} [‘fine Martin’] on account of his art.\textsuperscript{15}

Written by embroiderer Hans Plock of Halle in around 1550, the inscription indicates that even by the early part of the sixteenth century, Schongauer was considered to be the founder of a school of German engraving, superseded only by Dürer, and that his prints, unlike those of earlier graphic artists, were collected for their display of his artistic skill, not just for their subject matter.

\textsuperscript{13} Schongauer’s engraved line was highly inventive. For example, in \textit{The Two Turks}, he did not use lines of equal width. Instead, he used the burin to create lines that taper and swell in order to model form through the use of light and shade. These engraved lines convincingly suggest the swelling and narrowing of muscled legs, while simultaneously depicting shadows.

\textsuperscript{14} Schongauer’s early graphic technique stressed black line against the white ground of the paper, with form articulated by hundreds of tiny strokes and dots. He gradually incorporated some of the Master ES’s (active 1450-67) innovations, developing a graphic vocabulary capable of expressing form, tone, space, and surface.

Schongauer’s engraving style had a significant impact on Dürer. Like Schongauer, Dürer’s early prints are mostly Northern in technical approach in that they were printed with vibrant black ink to form a dramatic contrast with the white of the paper. By the early sixteenth century, Dürer moved toward more subtle surface variations, as in *Saint Eustace* from about 1501 (fig. 25). Here, the muted tonality of the engraving is no longer conceived in fifteenth-century terms of stark contrasts. However, Dürer continued throughout his career to use Schongauer’s graphic vocabulary of ordered hatching and cross-hatching to generate tone.

Dürer also took inspiration from Schongauer’s engravings in his three major Passion cycles. In the *Large* and *Small Passions*, Dürer borrowed individual motifs and compositional arrangements, attempting to transfer Schongauer’s engraving style to woodcut. The fifteenth-century master’s impact, however, is most clear in Dürer’s *Engraved Passion* series (1507-12). Taking Schongauer’s Passion prints as a point of departure, Dürer entered into a visual dialogue with the master whose defining qualities were technical refinement and originality of composition. The *Carrying of the Cross* (fig. 26), for example, is heavily based on Schongauer’s composition (fig. 27). In this print, Dürer dropped the motif he had used in his woodcut Passions of the collapse of Christ under the weight of the cross, replacing it with an upright depiction of Christ that is a direct analogy to Schongauer’s depiction.

More than in Schongauer’s prints, light and shadow often played active roles in Dürer’s prints. In the *Engraved Passion*, there is a marked darkening of the entire image. Figures are accented by a restrained yet expressive light that contributes to the somber
mood of the events.  In the Deposition of Christ (Entombment) (fig. 28) from the Engraved Passion, Dürer focused the viewer’s attention on the dead body of Christ and the reactions of those around him. By placing these figures in the foreground, Dürer heightened the psychological dimension of the print. Through the use of dark tones, Dürer focused on the emotion of the figures and the quietness of the scene. He even left a light film of ink on the plate, darkening the sky and the rock above the grave. Made a century and a half later, Rembrandt’s Entombment shares many of the same qualities. With the figures placed in the foreground of a darkened space, the viewer is drawn into the psychological aspects of the scene as a silent witness to the emotions of those laying Christ’s lifeless body into the tomb. Although the figures are almost entirely in shadow in some impressions of the later states of the Entombment, the quiet emotion of these scenes is heightened by the enveloping darkness.

Dürer’s mastery of the drypoint technique to create rich, velvety areas of tone was also significant for Rembrandt’s technical development. Rembrandt expanded his use of drypoint after the period in the 1630s when he was purchasing prints by Dürer. Rembrandt used drypoint extensively in the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus. For example, the first state of the Entombment was almost entirely etched, apart from a few touches of drypoint. However, over the course of three additional states, Rembrandt reworked the plate with drypoint and engraving to create a fine mesh of shading.

16 When compared to Dürer’s woodcut versions of the Passion series, this engraved set is more solemn and restrained with the fineness of the engraved line allowing the artist to suggest an almost spiritual light. Engraving also made possible a closer examination of facial features and expressions, lending expanded psychological dimensions to the series.
By 1512, Dürer had begun to experiment with leaving a light film of ink on small areas of the plate for expressive reasons. This is apparent in the Boston impression of the *Ecce Homo* (fig. 29) where translucent tones of ink emphasize the suffering figure of Christ. Dürer left plate tone on the platform with his monogram and on the legs of Christ. These areas of tone heighten the effect of the adjacent brilliant white areas where excess ink had been completely wiped away, drawing the viewer’s focus to Christ’s tense shoulders and bound hands as well as to the cloak of the exotically garbed man to the right. Following Dürer’s lead, Rembrandt increasingly used drypoint and experimented with plate tone for both compositional and expressive reasons. Rembrandt evoked the sense of a dark, quiet corner of the temple in an impression of the *Presentation in the Temple* in the Rijksprentenkabinet (fig. 30) through extensive working of the plate with the additions of plate tone, focusing attention on Simeon, the priest, and the temple authority by wiping only these areas; everything else is suffused with a broad range of shadows. While the *Presentation in the Temple*, like the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, exists in only one state, Rembrandt used plate tone and selective wiping to create highly differentiated impressions. Although there are three state changes to *The Entombment*, Rembrandt again created a broad range of tones through selective wiping and variations in inking.

17 Dürer also experimented with plate tone in his etching the *Agony in the Garden*, where light plays its customary important role; however, Dürer also made use of tonal inking to darken the shadows behind the figure of Christ. The film of ink heightens the brilliance of Christ’s cruciform halo and intensifies his isolation. Dürer began to experiment with etching in 1515, and as with drypoint, he almost immediately grasped the unique qualities of the medium. Unlike other early German etchers, he never tried to imitate engraving. Instead, Dürer gave unusual breadth and calligraphic vigor to his etched lines.

18 Although it exists in only one state, there are many highly differentiated impressions of this print, from cleanly wiped ones, revealing the dense network of etched and drypoint lines, to those heavy with surface tone, submerging the descriptive elements of the image into darkness. See Zell, 505.
It is important to note that Rembrandt’s techniques for creating graphic tone did not include Dürer’s regular hatching and cross-hatching, which were first developed by Schongauer. Rembrandt’s irregular mesh of lines was possible in etching because of the development of a soft etching ground, which gave freedom of movement to the etching needle. As Dürer had done with drypoint, Rembrandt explored the inherent possibilities of the medium of etching without imitating the techniques of engraving.

The Graphic Chiaroscuro of Albrecht Altdorfer and the Danube School

Rembrandt’s technique for creating areas of darkness through the use of an irregular net of etched lines can, however, be compared to the shading techniques of Albrecht Altdorfer. Like other artists of the Danube School, Altdorfer sought to reflect in his art an integral relationship between man and nature, with organic forms governing his compositions and straight lines almost completely absent. Altdorfer’s use of irregular lines to define form and generate tone is akin to Rembrandt’s irregular net of hatching to create areas of tone.

In the early sixteenth century, an interest in tone was central to the creation of the prints and drawings of German artists of the Danube school. Dürer’s graphic work provided them with an important stimulus. Thus, the first-hand observation of nature

19 Charles Talbot and Alan Shestack, eds. *Prints and Drawings of the Danube School: an exhibition of South German and Austrian graphic art of 1500-1560*. exh. cat. New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery, 1969, 11. Altdorfer’s printed oeuvre consists of designs for ninety-three woodcuts, seventy-eight small engravings, and thirty-six etchings, which include his highly innovative landscapes.

20 Drawing in silverpoint, pen, or brush and heightening with white on a colored ground, the chiaroscuro technique allowed the artist to model form by working outward from a middle tone, much like the customary practice of painters who applied a middle tone ground to their support. A good example is Cranach’s *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak*, 1504, drawn in pen and ink with grey-brown wash heightened with white on blue paper. See Landau and Parshall, 179-202.
among artists of the Danube School was preceded by Dürer’s work of the late 1490s. While Dürer formulated graphic equivalents for the surfaces and textures of nature, Danube School artists went further in developing a graphic vocabulary capable of conveying the organic, living qualities of nature. In particular, Altdorfer employed a fluidity of line in his landscape etchings that lend the impression of nature recorded with ease and spontaneity. From 1500 to 1505, but especially after 1507, Dürer had employed a grey middle tone in his woodcuts and engravings. He also used even, parallel hatched planes in relation to which his figures are defined. These innovations were also quickly assimilated by artists of the Danube School; however, where Dürer’s hatching was always orderly, Altdorfer’s was not. For example, in his woodcut of the *Resurrection*, 1512 (fig. 31), Altdorfer conveyed the transitory conditions of light through the use of fragmented planes of irregular shading.

Altdorfer’s *Fall and Redemption of Man* series (figs. 32-34) provides, in some ways, the best comparison to Rembrandt’s 1654 Life of Christ prints. These forty woodcuts depict events from the course of Christian redemption, from original sin to the Last Judgment.\(^{21}\) Altdorfer was probably inspired to create his innovative series in response to Dürer’s woodcuts of the *Small Passion* and the *Large Passion*, as well as the *Engraved Passion*. The sophisticated technique and highly inventive narrative take up the challenge of Dürer’s achievements; however, Altdorfer’s blocks were only about one quarter the size of the blocks for Dürer’s *Small Passion*.\(^{22}\) It is very likely that

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\(^{21}\) Before 1513, Altdorfer had already executed a number of small, minutely detailed engravings and transferred similarly minute designs to the woodblock.

\(^{22}\) Innovations in relief printing during the second decade of the sixteenth century, such as the development of chiaroscuro woodcuts and experimentation with size, indicate that woodcuts were beginning to attract a more discriminating audience.
Altdorfer’s choice of scale was a direct response to the diminutive sizes of Dürer’s prints for the *Engraved Passion*, which are barely larger than a playing card, and the *Small Passion*. The small format required simpler or more direct arrangements of traditional forms and figures as well as the omission of superfluous detail, while it simultaneously draws the viewer in closer to examine the tiny prints. Altdorfer’s *Fall and Redemption* series is a *tour de force* of the miniature and also a virtuoso demonstration of the artist’s ability to push the boundaries of relief printing; it must have been intended to be marketed to collectors.

Although Rembrandt did not choose a diminutive size for his 1654 Life of Christ prints, he was likely influenced by Altdorfer’s use of expressive tone. Altdorfer’s series draws the viewer farther into the scene through the use of chiaroscuro as a means to isolate figures and events from extraneous details, with facial expressions often shrouded with shadow and landscapes and backgrounds cloaked in darkness. As a result, his narratives are often difficult to discern without close inspection. Thus darkness, like the minute scale of his prints, draws the viewer in for close examination. This compares well with Rembrandt’s expressive use of chiaroscuro as found in the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, where the subdued lighting leaves details of the setting in shadow, focusing the viewer’s attention on the group around Christ and their emotions in

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23 The prints for the *Engraved Passion* measure about 11.9cm by 7.5cm, while those for the *Small Passion* are slightly larger at about 12.5cm by 9.8cm.

24 In addition, Altdorfer employed a close-up view within a frame, suggesting that the scene extends beyond the limits of the margins, amplifying the scale of the principle figures, and lending a sense of the viewer’s closeness to the events.

performing the task at hand. Christ’s body and face are veiled in darkness, appropriately evoking the “shadow of death.”26 In some impressions of the Entombment, Rembrandt also submerged the figures almost completely into darkness through the use of surface tone. In these impressions, darkness draws the viewer closer to the scene in order to discern the narrative.

Lucas van Leyden and the Painterly Approach to Printmaking

Lucas van Leyden was the most important and influential graphic artist working in the Netherlands in the early sixteenth century, and he achieved similar admiration from his Netherlandish contemporaries as had Dürer in Germany. Lucas’s graphic oeuvre was built upon a rich tradition of Netherlandish painting and an active history of publishing and woodcut making in the Netherlands. The first internationally known peintre-graveur from the Netherlands, Lucas began making his engravings at the same time that Dürer’s accomplishments as a printmaker were becoming internationally known.27

From his very first dated prints around 1505, Lucas’s art displayed a preference for intimate narratives, wit, and subtle irony not found in Durer’s work. He consistently sought unusual subjects and eccentrically altered the conventional choice of moment in

26 Ackley, Rembrandt’s Journey, 238.

27 Giorgio Vasari stages his account of Lucas’s career as a competition between the two northern masters. Although there is probably credibility to the idea that Lucas specialized in engraving so early in his career because of the possibilities made evident by Durer’s prints and the reputation they brought him, Vasari did a disservice to our understanding of Lucas by placing him in Durer’s shadow. The common tendency has been to measure Lucas’s qualities as an engraver against those of his supposed rival, obscuring some of the more important differences in their employment of the medium. Rather than a one-sided admiration, it is more likely that Dürer and Lucas shared mutual respect for each other’s work as it was Dürer who sought out Lucas in Antwerp in 1521. See Landau and Parshall, 316.
his way of telling a story, often taking an understated approach to the dramatic. Instead of dramatic gestures or movement, Lucas often emphasized psychological description.

The quiet restraint in prints by Lucas appealed to Rembrandt at a point in his career when he was moving away from the drama and theatricality of his earlier works.\textsuperscript{28} A good example of this shift in emphasis in Rembrandt’s prints can be seen in a comparison of the *Angel Appearing to the Shepherds* from 1634 (fig. 14), with its dramatic lighting and frenzied action, to the quiet mood of the 1654 dark-toned prints. Instead of dramatic action, Rembrandt now focused on psychological interactions, a quality that he adapted from images such as Lucas’s engraving *David Playing the Harp Before Saul* from about 1508 (fig. 8). Renowned for its depiction of psychological interaction, Lucas’s print illustrates the moment just before the dramatic action when Saul attacks David with his spear.\textsuperscript{29} Saul’s emotional state is made clear through gesture and facial expression. Saul’s right hand is clenched in a fist in his lap, while his left hand grasps the spear, which points directly toward David’s chest. His gaze is not directed toward the object of his jealousy, instead he leers out at the viewer, capturing our attention and drawing us into the scene. Although Lucas’s print is filled with a variety of figures and details, the shallow space and dark background focus the viewer’s attention on the figures themselves. Rembrandt was inspired by Lucas’s print in the creation of his painting *Saul*, from about 1629-30 (fig. 35); however, Rembrandt reduced the

\textsuperscript{28} Rembrandt’s interest in the art of Lucas van Leyden may have been spurred by the fact that Lucas was the earliest Leiden master to achieve an international recognition as a printmaker. For more information on the narrative influence of Lucas van Leyden on Rembrandt’s prints, see Wheelock, “The Influence of Lucas van Leyden on Rembrandt’s Narrative Etchings,” 294-295.

\textsuperscript{29} Van Mander commented on this print that it exemplifies “how precisely he [Lucas] can depict life…Saul appears completely beside himself with madness. See Peter Parshall, “Lucas van Leyden’s narrative style,” *NKJ* 29 (1978): n. 38.
composition to the two main figures, providing even further concentration on their
gestures and psychological interaction. Such is also the case in Rembrandt’s Presentation
in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus
in which the viewer is drawn to the varying emotions of the figures around Christ through
the use of chiaroscuro and the placement of the figures in space.

Lucas and Dürer approached engraving from two different vantage points, which
affected their perception of the aesthetic and representational power of the engraved
print. Many of Dürer’s prints reveal his German inheritance from Schongauer with their
crisp linearity, formal elegance, and glossy black design. In the Netherlands, on the other
hand, artists adopted engraving somewhat as an extension of pencil drawing or
metalpoint; the tendency of engraving to emphasize sharpness of line was seen as
something to be overcome rather than celebrated.\(^{30}\) The value of engraving was to be
found in the degree to which its tonal range could be lightened and made more suggestive
in order to accommodate delicate atmospheric effects. Thus engraving was used in the
Netherlands primarily as a means of representation while the specific characteristics of
the medium remained secondary. Whereas Dürer consistently engraved the plate very
deply, Lucas incised the plate with a shallower stroke, a technique that required less
time and effort and produced a more delicate line when printed.\(^{31}\) Lucas’s technique also
led to the greater rarity of his prints because shallow strokes wear more quickly under the

\(^{30}\) Landau and Parshall, 319.

\(^{31}\) Lucas made over 175 recorded engravings and etchings in an active career of about twenty-five years.
This compares to Dürer’s 105 engravings in about thirty years. The disparity in production between the
two artists can be partly explained by differences in technique. In addition, Lucas consistently used dry,
non-oily inks, lending his images a matte finish, not shiny or glowing like Dürer’s.
pressure of the press, yielding a high quality edition of a smaller size since worn lines hold less ink.\textsuperscript{32}

One of Lucas’s major objectives was the production of a graphic equivalent to painterly colors. This remained a constant goal throughout his career, although his “palette” and techniques for generating tone changed several times.\textsuperscript{33} Before 1510, Lucas strove for a broad tonal scale and dramatic contrasts. Lucas’s preoccupation with creating dramatic tonal effects can be seen in early works such as the nocturne scene \textit{The Man with the Torch and a Woman Followed by a Fool} from about 1508 (fig. 9). Engravings like this where Lucas consciously set up pictorial problems for himself—here an examination of the effects of torchlight in a dark setting—reveal Lucas’s desire to move away from pictorial models through direct observation and experimentation.\textsuperscript{34} To achieve passages of rich black, fine cross-hatching often overlaps in three or four directions with lines placed so closely together that the white interstices are rarely visible. This system for creating the darkest tones was extremely fragile and the plates tended to wear quickly, which is evident in comparisons of early and late impressions of works such as \textit{The Raising of Lazarus}, by 1508 (fig. 36), in which later impressions show a reduction of the contrasts of black and white.\textsuperscript{35} Without the velvety areas of tone, as found in early impressions in the cave, hill, and trees, the figures lose some of their

\textsuperscript{32} Under magnification, individual lines are intermittent and granular, not fluid, and evenly printed impressions are not common. It is more common to find patches of broken or interrupted line work, where the ink was not discharged from the plate, or blotchy areas caused by incomplete wiping. For more information, see Bartrum, \textit{Albrecht Dürer and his Legacy}, 235-6.

\textsuperscript{33} Before 1510, Lucas’s engravings utilize dense black and high contrast; after 1512, grey tones and chiaroscuro effects predominate. From 1517-20, the grey tones become silvery, and after 1529, shadows become saturated with light and grey tones appear transparent.

\textsuperscript{34} Parshall, “Lucas van Leyden’s narrative style,” 202.

\textsuperscript{35} See Jacobowitz and Stepanek, cat. entries 8 and 9.
sculptural solidity and spatial relationships are altered. In addition, the contorted features of the mourners lose their expressive impact.

No prints dated after 1510 show such broad black passages. The dark, velvety areas disappear from his engravings, and there are no sharp contrasts. From this point, Lucas’s engravings consist predominantly of middle tones that are close in value. Following Dürer’s example, Lucas sought to imitate the effects of chiaroscuro drawings, and devised a system with a pattern of parallel hatching or crosshatching of medium density to establish a middle value between the paper color and the network of crosshatching with the greatest density. In other words, the paper was “toned” with a middle value, and the image was then developed using two tonal scales, one from middle grey to white highlights and the other from middle grey to black shadows. Thus the effect of black lines on white paper was replaced by one of black and white on grey. The use of this chiaroscuro technique is most apparent in his engravings with interior settings, such as the *Adoration of the Magi*, 1513 (fig. 37), or *Esther before Ahasuerus*, 1518 (fig. 38).

After meeting and exchanging prints with Dürer in Antwerp in 1521, Lucas again sought more contrast in his engravings, and most of his narratives after this encounter are cast in dark tones out of which the figures are illuminated by intense and very selective lighting.36 For example, the depiction of the nocturnal setting and the use of high contrast in Lucas’s *The Passion: Agony in the Garden*, 1521 (fig. 39), were influenced by Dürer’s *Engraved Passion* and *Small Woodcut Passion* series. In addition to Dürer’s influence, this period is also remarkable for the changes in Lucas’s technical ability. His

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36 Ibid., 210.
graphic vocabulary was extended, ranging from small dots to long lines. Further, lines are grouped in new patterns; seldom do they overlap in four directions and the spacing is much broader. Lines are used not only to create tones, but also serve a more descriptive function, such as curving around muscular thighs.

Lucas also briefly experimented with etching. In 1520, he executed six etchings and is known for being the first Northern artist to etch on copper rather than iron. He was also the first to combine etching and engraving techniques in a single composition. Lucas’s etchings often appear quite light, as if the ink were diluted, and they would appear almost monochromatic without the addition of burin work to help model forms. His *Portrait of Maximilian*, 1520 (fig. 40), a milestone in the history of mixed intaglio techniques, has the most burin work and appears the most satisfactory in terms of contrast and quality of printing.

In the drawing for the print, areas to be engraved were rendered in brush and ink, while those to be etched consist of a fine network of pen lines. Thus Lucas did not attempt to lay out the engraved areas with a linear technique; rather, he seems to have translated his designs onto the plate freehand. Unlike Dürer, who carefully planned his compositions, Lucas began his engravings by drawing freehand directly on the plate with a fine drypoint stylus. Lucas’s initial approach to the plate is characteristic of his relatively free and intuitive way of developing an image overall. Further, the *pentimenti* found on many of his engravings reveal that his working method allowed for trial and error. This attitude toward experimentation is typical of Lucas’s work in general.

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37 Etching allowed for more spontaneity and was seemingly less time-consuming; however, the lack of control and precision must have caused Lucas to abandon the technique entirely after 1520.

38 The drawing is in the Fondation Custodia (coll. F. Lugt), Paris.
Lucas’s engraving technique was well suited to the development of painterly and atmospheric qualities in his prints. Several connections can be drawn between Lucas’s and Rembrandt’s printmaking techniques. Lucas’s engraving techniques, which included the innovative use of surface tone, were unusual in the sixteenth century. In addition, he often left scratches or other evidence of compositional changes visible on the plate. Together with his relatively spontaneous engraving style that incorporated a variety of burin strokes, these techniques made impressions of Lucas’s prints highly individual, a quality that can easily be compared to Rembrandt’s 1654 Life of Christ prints.

Rembrandt certainly looked to Lucas’s work for formal and technical inspiration, and would have had ample opportunity to study Lucas’s prints since he owned several of them. Rembrandt was fascinated with Lucas’s graphic oeuvre from a very early point in his career, no doubt reflecting the young artist’s artistic identification with the earliest Leiden master to gain an international reputation as a painter and printmaker.

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40 In general, Lucas’s engravings exist in very few states. Some were executed in two states, including Abigail and David, Golgotha, Venus and Cupid, Fortitude, and Pallas Athena. Only Abigail and David shows substantial changes in second state; the second state of the others only provides correction of an error or the addition of a date. Various states of other engravings recorded by Hollstein, Volbehr, and Filedt Kok appeared posthumously. See Bartrum, 236.

41 In 1637 Rembrandt bought a book of Lucas’s engravings at auction for six hundred thirty-seven guilders and ten stuivers, and in 1638 Rembrandt acquired Lucas and Dürer prints at the Gommer Spranger sale. See Strauss and Van der Meulen, 140-141; 150.

42 It is significant that from the very outset of his career, Rembrandt was inspired by Lucas’s graphic works and likely turned to his predecessor’s engraving of the Rest on the Flight for what could possibly be his first etching (B. 59). See White, Rembrandt as an Etcher, 20-21.
**Hendrick Goltzius and the Dutch Mannerist Interest in Graphic Tone**

Although Rembrandt explored dramatic chiaroscuro throughout his graphic oeuvre, there were precedents for this type of portrayal in intaglio. For example, late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Dutch Mannerist artists, particularly Hendrick Goltzius, sought to suggest tone and color in their graphic works. Works by these and other artists were brought together in the 1981 exhibition *Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, demonstrating a broad Netherlandish interest in graphic chiaroscuro in this era. In the catalogue of the exhibition, Clifford Ackley’s influential study “Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt: The Quest for Printed Tone” associated Rembrandt’s formal interest in graphic tone and chiaroscuro with the “painterly” approach to printmaking and the Northern print tradition.43

Ackley identified two directions in Mannerist engraving: sculptural and tonal. The tonal or coloristic approach involved the painterly suggestion of color, texture, and the play of light. Hendrick Goltzius’s 1587 engraving of the *Standard Bearer* (fig. 41), with its virtuoso suggestion of textural variety in the costume and banner, is a good example of the beginnings of this interest among Northern Mannerist artists.44 In this engraving, Goltzius employed a variety of techniques to suggest texture, using a different vocabulary

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43 Clifford Ackley, “Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt: The Quest for Printed Tone” in *Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt*, xix-xxvi.

44 Ackley identified Mannerist printed colorism as a revival of Dürer’s coloristic suggestion as found in works such as the “master engravings,” which will be discussed in the next chapter. Intriguingly, the depiction of standard bearers was part of a tradition among Dutch and German engravers dating back to the early sixteenth century in the works of Dürer (B. 87) and Lucas van Leyden (B. 140). See Ackley, “Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt,” 3-4.
of strokes for each material, such as the rippling, parallel strokes of the banner or the stippled texture of the standard bearer’s hose.\textsuperscript{45}

Goltzius’s interest in graphic tone occurred after he met Dutch artist and theoretician Carel van Mander in 1583. It was Van Mander who introduced Goltzius to the work of Prague court artist Bartholomeus Spranger.\textsuperscript{46} In response to Spranger’s drawings, Goltzius reduced his emphasis on line in favor of tone. Goltzius’s change in drawing style roughly paralleled that of his engravings. He gradually replaced his early manner with a more flamboyant one of strongly swelling and tapering lines that created a broad range of tonal values, translating the energetic line and light in Spranger’s drawings and paintings into engraving.\textsuperscript{47} Goltzius shifted from simply evoking tones with engraved lines, as in \textit{Venus and Mars Surprised by Vulcan}, 1585 (fig. 42), to expressing volume through tone. To achieve this, thin parallel striations were replaced with bold, swelling flows of cross-hatching that followed undulating surfaces of figures and objects, as in \textit{Cupid and Psyche}, 1587 (fig. 43). The swelling of the lines and the complex addition of dots to the hatching strengthened the light and dark effects.

Although Rembrandt’s techniques for generating tone were far from the systematic approach developed by Goltzius, these techniques for creating graphic tone would have

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{46} Spranger’s drawn figures were built up in bold strokes of wash with white heightening. In his \textit{Schilderboeck}, Van Mander recounted that the young Spranger had practiced the “heights and depths” by copying prints after Italian artist Parmigianino and Flemish artist Frans Floris. In his chapter on drawing, Van Mander specifically mentioned prints by “parmens” and was probably referring to chiaroscuro woodcuts after Parmigianino, which would have been ideal for learning to render light and dark (“heights and depths”). Goltzius was familiar with Italian prints of this kind, probably thanks to Adriaen De Weert, who Van Mander identified as one of Goltzius’s first influences. See Karel van Mander, \textit{Het Schilder-boeck (facsimile van de eerste uitgave, Haarlem, 1664)} Utrecht, 1969, fol. 269r.

significant impact on other seventeenth-century printmakers such as Hendrick Goudt, as
will be discussed in the following chapter.

After he returned from Italy in August 1591, Goltzius embarked on a new
direction artistically. He turned to an earlier generation of artists for inspiration,
including Titian, Parmigianino, Bruegel, and Dürer. Goltzius’s *Meisterstiche (master
engravings)* date from this period and indicate Goltzius’s interest in earlier, particularly
Northern, printmakers. Although the history of printmaking was still largely unrecorded,
Goltzius was certainly aware of the history of his craft. He often acted as a spokesman in
the *Schilderboeck*, advising Van Mander particularly in passages about prints. Because
of Van Mander’s view of art, in which color played an essential role, the *Schilderboeck*
focused almost exclusively on painting. In writing the *Schilderboeck*, Van Mander
followed Vasari closely, but did not discuss Italian printmakers. Instead, he focused on
three northern printmakers: Albrecht Dürer, Lucas van Leyden, and Goltzius. In Van
Mander’s estimation, Dürer was a master of *disegno* whereas Lucas excelled at *colorito*,
even in graphic media. Lucas’s prints were praised by both Vasari and Van Mander for
their tonality and *sfumato*, the rendition of blurred, transparent shadows along the edges
or contours of objects, giving the appearance of a veil of smoke. Van Mander

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48 Van Mander took a position somewhere between the Venetian *colorito* and the Florentine-Roman
*disegno* with the belief that painting should unite the two; however, his “position on the fence” does not
conceal his preference for painting. Huigen Leeflang and Ger Luijten, *Hendrick Goltzius: Drawings,
Prints, and Paintings*. Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and

49 Leonardo da Vinci is the artist perhaps most closely associated with *sfumato*, and he developed ideas
about how to represent a dark scene. Leonardo was not, however, the first artist in Italy to grapple with
the portrayal of darkness in painting. Gentile da Fabriano’s *Nativity* predella for the Strozzi altarpiece of
1423 is an early Italian Renaissance example of nocturne imagery. Gentile depicted the Holy Family
beneath a star strewn sky with a crescent moon; however, it is significant that he chose to relegate this
experiment to the lower left of a much larger altarpiece. Renaissance artists became more adventurous in
their nocturne depictions, as in Piero della Francesca’s *Dream of Constantine*, one of the Arezzo frescos
completed between 1452 and 1466.
additionally praised Lucas for the ability to achieve in black and white the effects of a painting. For this reason, Van Mander valued the graphic work of Lucas van Leyden over that of Albrecht Dürer.

It was probably Goltzius who informed the commentary about the value of Lucas van Leyden’s prints in the _Schilderboeck_, as is evident in his later graphic works in which Goltzius attempted to combine the characteristics of Italian and Northern artists in order to equal the tonality of the early masters. For example, in the unfinished _Adoration of the Shepherds_ (fig. 44), Goltzius sought to achieve the tone and _sfumato_ of both Titian and Lucas. The _Adoration of the Shepherds_ fused an invention by Titian (fig. 45) with the engraving technique of Lucas van Leyden, both of whom were considered masters of _sfumato_. By bringing together the “best” of Italian and Northern art, Goltzius strove for perfection through the combination of stylistic attributes from the two masters.

In emulating Dürer and Lucas, Goltzius was aligning himself with internationally acclaimed northern masters who both sought to generate tone and colorism in print and elevate the reputation of graphic media. Rembrandt was certainly aware of Goltzius’s emulative practice and seems to have taken up his challenge, thus emulating the works of Goltzius, Dürer, and Lucas, the only three graphic artists discussed by Van Mander. Rembrandt’s choice to emulate Dürer, Lucas, and Goltzius, did not however, preclude

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50 The _Adoration of the Shepherds_ as a night piece was an extraordinarily popular subject with printmakers. In Goltzius’s engraving, Joseph lights the scene with a candle that seems to emerge from the picture plane, creating a _tour de force_ of chiaroscuro.

innovation. Although there are rarely direct correspondences, Rembrandt took elements of the three and fused them in his own manner. For example, Rembrandt’s *Christ Presented to the People*, 1655, has its counterpart in Lucas’s *Ecce Homo*, 1510. Yet Rembrandt’s print looks far different from its sixteenth-century forebear. Rembrandt concentrated on the figural group around Christ and brought the viewer closer to the event. The longer Rembrandt worked on the plate in successive states, the further the image departed from Lucas’s *Ecce Homo*. Thus, beginning with an initial inspiration drawn from Lucas’s print, Rembrandt continued to work the plate in the spirit of emulation.

In his choice to emulate Dürer, Lucas, and Goltzius, Rembrandt was placing himself in the history of art as the successor to these northern masters. Rembrandt’s self-consciousness about his place within the history of printmaking is one way in which he differs from his contemporaries. In addition, Rembrandt’s emulation of Dürer, Lucas, and Goltzius may also have been motivated by his awareness that contemporary print collectors would probably have had prints by all three artists in their collections.

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52 In “Rembrandt, Emulation, and the Northern Print Tradition,” Catherine B. Scallen established that Rembrandt drew primarily on the printmaking tradition of the Northern Renaissance, with connections found primarily in his prints. The artist engaged in a thoughtful dialogue with earlier works, emulating aspects of Northern Renaissance art, rather than copying directly. Arthur Wheelock has also addressed Rembrandt’s interest in the prints of Lucas van Leyden.


54 William Robinson described Goltzius as one of the most well-known of the Dutch engravers during his lifetime, his prints achieving international acclaim already in the early seventeenth century. By the first quarter of the seventeenth century, connoisseurs were beginning to arrange their print albums by artist, and, considering Goltzius’s renown, it is likely that his prints were featured in many of these albums. See Robinson, xxix and xxxiii. Dürer’s and Lucas’s prints were featured in several documented seventeenth-century collectors’ albums, such as those of Johann Aegidius, Jan Basse the Elder, and the Abbé de Marolles. Ibid, xxxiv-xxxv and xxxvii.
Thus, collectors would have been likely to recognize the elements of Rembrandt’s prints that corresponded with those of Dürer, Lucas, and Goltzius.

Conclusion

While Clifford Ackley addressed Rembrandt’s printed chiaroscuro in the context of his close contemporaries working in graphic media, an interest in graphic chiaroscuro and tone extends farther back into history than the artists examined in Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt. Rembrandt was unusual among his contemporaries because he looked back to the previous century for sources and inspiration. As Christopher White has pointed out in Rembrandt as an Etcher, Rembrandt’s comprehensive collection of prints makes clear that he was well acquainted with the example of earlier artists, such as Albrecht Dürer and Lucas van Leyden, among others.55

Dürer’s work serves as an important point of comparison to Rembrandt’s Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus. In intaglio, tone was occasionally explored through the use of drypoint, and Dürer was among the earliest to experiment with the drypoint technique. Rembrandt expanded his use of drypoint after a period in the 1630s when he was increasingly purchasing prints by both Dürer and Lucas, and he used drypoint extensively in the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus.

55 White, Rembrandt as an Etcher, 19.
The quiet restraint in prints by Dürer and Lucas appealed to Rembrandt when he was moving away from the drama and theatricality of his earlier works. Instead of dramatic action, Rembrandt focused on psychological interactions, a quality he adapted from images such as Lucas’s engraving *David Playing the Harp Before Saul*, from about 1508. Furthermore, Lucas’s engraving technique was unusual in the sixteenth century and involved the innovative use of surface tone, achieved by leaving a thin film of ink on the plate. Lucas’s use of plate tone, along with other technical aspects of Lucas’s engraving style, resulted in highly individual impressions of Lucas’s prints, a quality that can easily be compared to the Rembrandt prints that form the focus of this study.

Although Rembrandt’s use of dramatic chiaroscuro and emulation of earlier Northern artists was certainly motivated by personal artistic interest, it is vital to consider the market on the creation of these prints. In general, Rembrandt’s prints were not commissioned; however, the artist probably had particular groups in mind as potential buyers when producing an image. In the seventeenth century, dark-toned prints were considered a specialty of Dutch artists, and contemporary collectors often grouped these works into a separate category of imagery. That the *Presentation in the Temple*, *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, *Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus* exist in such varied states and individual impressions may suggest that print collectors were one of Rembrandt’s target audiences for these works, as collectors often wanted to purchase

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56 A good example of this shift in emphasis in Rembrandt’s print can be seen in a comparison of the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* (1634), with its dramatic lighting and frenzied action, to the quiet mood of the 1654 dark-toned prints; Rembrandt’s interest in the art of Lucas van Leyden may have been spurred by the fact that Lucas was the earliest Leiden master to achieve international recognition as a printmaker.


58 See Ackley, *Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt*, xxxvi-xxxix.
printed images in their multiple “versions” in order to own a complete set. Furthermore, Rembrandt’s use of sixteenth-century sources of inspiration would have been of interest to print collectors, who would have recognized and appreciated Rembrandt’s emulation of these earlier artists. In this way, Rembrandt was placing himself in the history of printmaking as the successor to the three Northern European printmakers discussed by Van Mander: Dürer, Lucas, and Goltzius.
Chapter 3:

Rembrandt’s Graphic Chiaroscuro and
Seventeenth-Century Dutch Interest in Tone

Introduction

Rembrandt’s innovations in graphic chiaroscuro were already recognized in the seventeenth century. In 1686, Baldinucci described Rembrandt’s “manner” as the process by which Rembrandt created “a deep chiaroscuro of great vigour” through the use of “certain scrawls and scribbles and irregular strokes and without outline.”1 Baldinucci further described “the most bizarre manner which he invented for engraving on copper with acid,” which was “all his own, neither used again by others, nor seen again.”2 As Baldinucci made clear, it was acknowledged at an early date that Rembrandt’s technique for creating graphic chiaroscuro was unusual; however, as we will see, Rembrandt was participating in a visual context that not only included the dark-toned and nocturne prints of his Netherlandish near-contemporaries but also was part of a widespread seventeenth-century Dutch cross-media interest in tone.3 This chapter builds

1 White, Rembrandt as an Etcher, 5.
2 Ibid., 5.
3 Over the course of the seventeenth century, the term “houding” was developed to describe the uses and effects of tone in painting. In his essay on the meaning of houding, Paul Taylor explores the use of the term in the seventeenth century and finds that it probably had different meanings at different times, depending upon the context in which it was used. Its meaning varied from describing to the transitions of chiaroscuro to the painting’s composition or to the harmony of colors. On the whole, Taylor determined that houding often blended ideas about relief, aerial perspective, and pictorial harmony into a single concept that indicated the ordered arrangement of chiaroscuro, which was used to create a sense of depth in painting. Taylor looks to contemporary Italian and French art theory and finds that neither put as much emphasis on the necessity of creating a plausible illusion of space as did the Dutch. Taylor addressed the subject in part because there is no consensus among scholars today as to what the meaning of the term “houding” was in the seventeenth century. Slive felt it could be equated with “conception,” Emmens posited it as a gradual softening of colors, and Van de Wetering described it as being linked to the tonal and spatial organization of the picture as a whole. Paul Taylor, “The Concept of Houding in Dutch Art Theory,” Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 55 (1992): 210-32.
on chapter two by exploring the interest in dramatic chiaroscuro as part of this cross-
media focus on tone in painting as well as printmaking. Chapter three will also
investigate precedents for and Rembrandt’s engagement with nocturne prints of his near-
contemporaries as well as Rembrandt’s relationship to his century’s techniques for
creating graphic tone.

**Painted Nocturnes: Early History, The Utrecht Caravaggists, and Flemish and Dutch
Nightscapes**

The term chiaroscuro is derived from the compound of the Italian *chiaro*,
meaning “light,” and *scuro*, meaning “dark” and refers to the way in which painters and
graphic artists distribute tones in order to model form and create light and shadow. The
concept of chiaroscuro originated in Italian art theory in the fifteenth century; however, in
practice, the use of chiaroscuro as gradations of light and dark tones in order to model
form was developed in the Middle Ages and was a standard practice by the early fifteenth
century in painting and manuscript illumination in both Italy and the Low Countries.4 In
the later sixteenth century, chiaroscuro also came to be used to refer to works in
monochrome and to prints or drawings in three colors. In the seventeenth century, the

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4 During the Renaissance, the concept of chiaroscuro broadened to include the imitation of light and
shadow in the setting of a picture. The words first appeared in print in Baldassare Castiglione’s *Il libro
del cortegiano* (1528), in which he wrote that the painter imitates light and shadow with light and dark:
“col chiaro, & scuro.” B. Castiglione: *Il libro del cortegiano* (Venice, 1528); Eng. trans. by G. Bull
(Harmondsworth, 1967, rev. 1976). In his notebooks, Leonardo da Vinci frequently equated *chiaro* and
*scuro* with light and shadow. A few passages by Leonardo also indicate that he was using the terms
together as a single entity, rather than a dichotomy: “the *chiaro scuro* of the shadows” and “the *chiaro
[facs. and trans.]
concept of chiaroscuro expanded again to include the organization and distribution of light and dark areas in the overall composition.\(^5\)

Renaissance writers studying chiaroscuro began to distinguish between shadow (ombra) and total darkness (tenebra), developing the concept of tenebrism.\(^6\) However, tenebrism as a term is of modern origin, deriving from the Italian or Spanish tenebroso, meaning “dark.” It is used to describe a style of seventeenth-century painting characterized by the use of dark shadows with few light areas. Tenebrist painting was developed around 1600 in Rome, and Caravaggio’s paintings for the lateral walls of the Contarelli Chapel in S Luigi dei Francesi are among the earliest examples.

Tenebrist paintings with nighttime subjects in which darkness dominates the composition are known as nocturnes. Before the seventeenth century, nocturnes were painted only when an artist chose to render a night scene from the Bible, often choosing a subject such as the Angel Appearing to the Shepherds, the Flight into Egypt, or the Arrest of Christ. These themes remained popular choices for nocturnes throughout the seventeenth century, and indeed the majority of nocturnes of the first few decades had a religious basis. However, the emergence of more naturalistic landscape in the 1610s and 1620s led to the appearance of secular nightscapes, which reached a peak of production between 1645 and 1660 in the Dutch Republic.

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\(^5\) Charles-Alphonse Du Fresnoy recommended that a painter achieve unity by creating principal areas of light and shadow, with all other lights and shadows subordinate to them in size and intensity. Roger de Piles also advocated the massing of light and shadow as the principal precept of chiaroscuro but extended the concept to include the arrangement of light and dark colors, whether or not they represented light and shadow.

The first of these nocturnes were found among the Dutch Caravaggists, with the majority of their nocturne paintings having a religious subject. Caravaggio’s style greatly influenced many Dutch artists in the second half of the 1610s and the 1620s. Numerous northern artists visited Rome and experimented with tenebrism, including Hendrick ter Brugghen, Dirck van Baburen, and Gerrit van Honthorst. Because Rembrandt never traveled to Italy, the opportunity for him to view Caravaggio’s work was limited. Instead, he would have been familiar with the principal characteristics of Caravaggio’s painting through the works of the Dutch Caravaggists.

Caravaggio’s northern followers typically adopted and exaggerated the hallmarks of his style, producing heavy contrasts of light and shade. Unlike Caravaggio, however, the Dutch Caravaggists often used artificial light sources within the pictorial space. Whereas Caravaggio only occasionally depicted a night-time scene and included a visible source of light in just two of his paintings, Gerard van Honthorst was well-known for the use of candles, torches, and lanterns in his nocturne scenes, such as Christ Crowned with Thorns, c. 1622 (fig. 46), where the only illumination in the scene is provided by a concealed torch. Nicknamed “Gherardo delle Notti” in Italy, Honthorst adopted...
Caravaggio’s strong chiaroscuro but often utilized an artificial and concealed light source, which became one of his favorite motifs in the 1620s.10

Caravaggio and his followers were not the only source for Dutch artists of knowledge of paintings with dramatic chiaroscuro. As early as the fifteenth century, northern manuscript illuminators and panel painters experimented with nocturne imagery, depicting religious night-time scenes such as the Nativity or the Adoration of the Shepherds.11 In the North, the development of dramatic chiaroscuro was aided by the description of Saint Bridget of Sweden’s vision of the Nativity of Jesus, which described light emanating from the infant Jesus himself.12 Consequently, depictions of the Nativity increasingly reduced other light sources in the scene to emphasize this effect. Hugo van der Goes and his followers painted many scenes lit only by candle or the divine light from the infant Christ.13 Geertgen tot Sint Jans’ late fifteenth-century Nativity at Night

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10 Rembrandt was certainly influenced by works of this nature, as is apparent in his use of a masked light source in paintings such as The Rich Man from the Parable, 1627 (Berlin, Gemäldegalerie) or The Entombment of Christ, c. 1639 (Munich, Alte Pinakothek). In his prints, however, Rembrandt did not always conceal the light source, leaving areas of the plate untouched so that the light source would be represented by the color of the paper. Rembrandt’s pupil, Samuel van Hoogstraten, described the advantages of a concealed light source in painting. If the light source is visible, it has to be the lightest tone in a painting; however, if a painter conceals the source of light, the lightest tone can be used for another part of the composition to create depth within and between figures or to emphasize the narrative. Taco Dibbits, “Prologue: Caravaggio, the Utrecht Caravaggisti, and the young Rembrandt,” Rembrandt-Caravaggio: 39-41. In Honthorst’s Christ Crowned with Thorns, for example, the lightest tones were reserved for Christ’s body and the mocking faces of his tormentors, drawing attention to man’s cruelty.

11 Catherine B. Scallen, “Rembrandt’s Nocturne Prints,” On Paper 1 (Jan-Feb 1997): 13. Religious subjects such as the Nativity, the Angel Appearing to the Shepherds, the Flight into Egypt, or the Arrest of Christ remained popular throughout the seventeenth century, and the majority of nocturnes in the first few decades retained a religious basis. Much like these earlier nocturnes, Rembrandt’s choice of subject matter for his nocturne prints was highly traditional, often retaining a religious basis even in his dark-toned prints of the 1650s.

12 For more on Saint Bridget of Sweden, see Bridget Morris, ed. The revelations of Saint Birgitta of Sweden: liber caelestis (Oxford, 2008).

13 See, for example, Hugo van der Goes’ The Nativity, at Night, a copy of a lost original from about 1460-80, in The National Gallery, London.
(National Gallery, London, fig. 47) is one of the earliest surviving treatments of the Nativity as a night scene.\textsuperscript{14}

Over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, artists became increasingly interested in accurately depicting natural and artificial light. A small group of Northern landscape artists chose to depict nocturnes in order to demonstrate their proficiency with lighting effects.\textsuperscript{15} With the emergence of more naturalistic landscapes in the 1610s and 20s, secular nightscapes began to appear, reaching their apex of production between 1645 and 1660.\textsuperscript{16}

In the latter part of the 1630s, Antwerp artists including Rubens, Adriaen Brouwer, and Jan Lievens experimented with new ways of representing landscapes at

\textsuperscript{14} There are three sources of light within the panel. The Christ Child is the source of the brilliant light in the foreground, the angel announcing the birth to the shepherds in the distance provides another source of illumination, and the shepherds' fire functions as a third source of light.

\textsuperscript{15} Little scholarly attention had been devoted to nocturnes as a collective phenomenon until the 2005 exhibition *Northern Nocturnes* brought together a group of Northern paintings and graphic works, charting the genre’s development from the fifteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century. The lack of modern scholarship is partly due to the fact that nocturnes were produced in smaller quantities than other types of landscapes, with only several hundred extant today, and by artists who were not always considered first-rate. Additionally, nocturnes seem to form a problematic category with most art historians categorizing nocturnes as a subgenre of landscape; however, unlike other subgenres of landscape, such as winter scenes, many nocturnal landscapes merge with history by providing the backdrop for biblical or mythological events. Finally, the lack of coherence as a subgenre also results from the fact that these works were mostly painted by artists who specialized in other genres. The work of the only two real specialists in this type, Aert van der Neer (1603/04-77) and Egbert Lievensz van der Poel (1621-?), forms only a small part of the total output of nightscapes in the seventeenth century. Even though nocturnes are a problematic category, they can nonetheless be regarded as a group because they generally derive from the same pictorial traditions. See Adriaen Waiboer, *Northern Nocturnes; Nightscapes in the Age of Rembrandt*, exh. cat. Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland, 2005.

\textsuperscript{16} In the 1560s, Pieter Bruegel the Elder began to paint landscapes without a literary pretext; however it was several decades before the first secular nocturnes appeared. It is perhaps impossible to determine which secular nocturne was the first because so many works of this period are undated. Matthijs Bril’s *Landscape by Moonlight* is the earliest known secular nocturne landscape. Some of the drawings may have been by Matthijs’ younger brother Paul; however, the Mannerist style suggests a date around 1580 regardless of which Bril created the design. Bril’s design was etched by Simon Frisius for his series of 28 prints published in 1614, but the drawings must date from before 1583 when Bril died.
night. These Flemish artists, who were concerned with evoking mood, adopted a much lighter tone and used looser brushwork, as can be seen in Rubens’ Landscape with Gallows, c. 1637-39 (fig. 48). Although depictions of gallows were not new, the nocturnal landscape and oblique area of twilight on the right add a sense of foreboding. In this painting, Rubens used loose but deliberate brushwork that is reminiscent of Adriaen Brouwer’s work. In fact, Brouwer may have been responsible for importing this type of imagery to Antwerp. He lived in Haarlem in the mid-1620s where he saw the rise of nocturne imagery in the Northern Netherlands. After 1640, Flemish artists’ interest in nocturnes was on the wane, with the exception of David Teniers the Younger, whose nightscapes date from first half of 1650s.

As Flemish experiments with nightscapes were dwindling, artists in the North had a renewed interest. Following the initial popularity of the nocturne in the 1620s, Dutch artists had created few nocturnes between 1630 and the mid-1640s. The rise of the Dutch nocturne began anew in the mid-1640s and lasted until 1660. Perhaps Rubens’ and Brouwer’s fame triggered this upsurge. At about this time, Dutch artists had the opportunity to study reproductive prints of some of Rubens’ nocturnes in Schelte Adamsz Bolswert’s Small Landscapes from about 1638 to 1645, a print series after Rubens’ greatest landscapes, including his nocturnes (fig. 49). Between 1643 and 1645, Jan van Goyen and Albert Cuyp painted a handful of moonlit river scenes, and nightscapes became so popular that Aert van der Neer and Egbert Lievensz van der Poel were able to

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17 Rubens and Brouwer seem to have influenced Lievens. Samuel van Hoogstraten mentioned that he had seen “a moonlit landscape” by Lievens and was probably referring to an unidentified painting owned by Rembrandt. Van Hoogstraten could have seen the painting in the early 1650s when he was apprenticed to Rembrandt. The painting was listed in 1656 bankruptcy inventory. See Strauss and Van der Meulen, 349.

18 Northern Nocturnes, cat. 23.
specialize in night scenes. Van Goyen and Cuyp were followed by Nicolaes Berchem, Jan Asselijn, Jacob van Ruisdael, and Anthonie Waterloo, who occasionally took up nightscapes to show their proficiency with virtuoso lighting effects.

The dramatic chiaroscuro of Dutch and Flemish nightscape paintings was part of a widespread interest in chiaroscuro and dark tone in the seventeenth century and was often featured in other genres of Dutch painting, from still life to landscape. For example, Esaias van de Velde, Jan van Goyen, and other Haarlem artists began focus on transient effects of light and weather, conveyed through subtle modulations of tone. This trend, known as the tonal phase of Dutch landscape, lasted from about 1625 to the 1640s. These local factors, including the presence of Brouwer (discussed previously) and the creation of nocturne paintings in Haarlem, together with the Antwerp tradition of landscape represented by Flemish immigrants in Amsterdam, combined to produce a

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19 For example, Jan Davidsz. de Heem often kept the backgrounds of his flower paintings dark and veiled the flowers at the back in shadow to enhance the suggestion of depth, as in *Fruit Beside a Vase of Flowers* (Dresden). Around mid-century Willem Kalf focused on a few objects that he organized against a dark background, for example, his *Still Life with a Nautilus Cup* (1662, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid). Kalf was a master at capturing the effects of light, whether reflected through a glass or on the edge of a silver platter.

20 Early paintings of the tonal phase are generally characterized by a dramatic play of light and dark, at times using a spotlight effect to establish the focus of the picture. Pieter Molijn, Salomon van Ruysdael and Pieter Dircksz. van Santvoort were the other principal exponents of this new development in Haarlem, which used native subject-matter and more natural colors. Jan van Goyen trained for a year (1617–18) in Haarlem with Esaias van de Velde, and his early landscapes, produced between 1620 and 1626, clearly show Van de Velde’s influence. Around 1626 Van Goyen’s art changed, going well beyond Van de Velde’s example. The change is closely linked to contemporary Haarlem artists’ creation of a specifically Dutch style of landscape painting that emphasized tonality and realism. From 1629 and through the 1630s, Van Goyen produced simple landscapes showing dunes and rivers in brown and green tones, which achieve an impression of depth with the help of diagonals. The distinctive monochromatic style of the 1630s and 1640s can be seen in works such as *Two Fishermen* (1638; London, National Gallery). Pieter Molijn’s ‘Sandy Road’ (*Dune Landscape with Trees and a Wagon*) (1626; Brunswick, Herzog Anton-Ulrich Museum), represents an early stage of the style, in which simple vistas of the countryside are characterized by a broad painterly manner and a restricted palette of greys, greens, browns, dull yellows and blues. Jan Porcellis (known to Van Goyen in Leiden), also experimented with tonality in his marine pictures.
new, naturalistic landscape art in Haarlem that increasingly placed a greater emphasis on
the effects of light and shadow.

**Bruegel’s Legacy: A Vocabulary for Creating Graphic Tone and Atmosphere**

Developments in naturalism in Haarlem landscape paintings coincided with an
increasing emphasis on tone in Haarlem landscape prints. At the beginning of the
seventeenth century in Haarlem, painter-etchers were using line in a tonal way to suggest
the fleeting effects of light and atmosphere in their prints. These graphic innovations in
landscape can be traced to the rise of etching in the early seventeenth-century, which
brought with it a new inventiveness in the tonal use of line. Developments in graphic
tone also followed the influx of a number of the most important Flemish landscape artists
who settled in Amsterdam at the end of the sixteenth century. 21 Flemish-born painter-
etchers, such as Jacob Saverij and David Vinckboons, were responsible for bringing the
graphic stipple-and-dash vocabulary of Pieter Bruegel to the Northern Netherlands.

In his *Introduction to the Noble School of Painting* of 1678, Samuel van
Hoogstraten described etching as more draftsmanlike than engraving. Indeed, painter-
etchers introduced a new vocabulary to intaglio printing, using stipples, flicks, and short,
broken hatching instead of the systematic vocabulary of contemporary engraving. This
unsystematic tonal vocabulary has its roots in works from Pieter Bruegel’s graphic

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21 Gillis van Coninxloo, who specialized in dense forest landscapes, was in Amsterdam by 1595 and David
Vinckboons arrived by 1598. After Coninxloo’s death in 1607, naturalistic landscape painting flourished
in Haarlem; however, artists in Haarlem had already begun to experiment with naturalistic landscape
depictions in prints and drawings. Hendrick Goltzius produced a group of panoramic drawings of the
dunes near Haarlem in 1603 (Rotterdam, Boymans van Beuningen Museum) and Claes Jansz. Visscher
issued prints of unassuming familiar motifs in his series of *Pleasant Places*, generally dated to about
1611-12. For more on Visscher’s prints, see Walter S. Gibson, *Pleasant Places, The Rustic Landscape
oeuvre and etchings reproduced after his design, as is evident in the single etching
executed by his hand, the *Rabbit Hunt* from 1560 (fig. 50).

David Vinckboons was a prolific draughtsman, and many of his designs were
reproduced by other engravers.22 Vinckboons’s interest in tone is evident in his drawings
as well as his prints. Nearly all of his drawings were executed in pen and brown ink with
a wash of grey, brown, yellow, green, or blue. Reproductions after Vinckboons’s
drawings marked a new openness and freedom of execution that accords with the
atmospheric qualities of Vinckboons’s pen and wash drawings.

He also executed a few etchings and engravings from his own designs; however,
only three are known today.23 The *Bagpiper and Child under a Tree*, 1606 (fig. 51), is
the only print unanimously accepted as executed by Vinckboons himself.24 The sketch-
like freedom of execution is comparable to Bruegel’s painterly freedom and unsystematic
use of etching in the *Rabbit Hunt*.25 In the *Annunciation to the Shepherds*, 1604 (fig. 52),
Vinckboons combined etching, engraving, and drypoint in a freely drawn composition
and utilized a loose linear vocabulary comparable to that of the *Bagpiper*. Here, too,
Vinckboons applied an etching vocabulary of short hatchings, flicks, and stipples, and
seems to have influenced Rembrandt’s 1634 etching of the same subject with its strong
emphasis on the shepherds and their herds.

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22 Ackley notes that in this respect, Vinckboons followed the Bruegel tradition, as many of Bruegel’s
designs were engraved by other printmakers at the Antwerp publishing house of Hieronymus Cock.

23 The three prints are the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* (drawing, 1604; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum), a
*Beggar Woman with Two Children* (1604), and the *Bagpiper and Child under a Tree* (1606).

24 This attribution is supported by the abbreviated “fecit” inscription but also by the style. See Ackley,
*Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt*, 39.

25 Later landscape etchers made use of masses of etched lines to create tone, as in Claes van Beresteyn’s
*Landscape with a Clump of Oaks*, from about 1650, which followed the example of Jacob van Ruisdael’s
early paintings and etchings, such as *The Wheatfield*, 1648.
Jacob Saverij was another artist who brought Bruegel’s graphic vocabulary to the Northern Netherlands. Born in Courtrai about 1565-1570, Saverij was a pupil of Hans Bol and a follower of Bruegel. Like a number of other artists working in the Bruegel tradition, Saverij fled the disruptions caused by the war in the Southern Netherlands and settled in the north. He was recorded as a citizen of Amsterdam in 1591.

There are eight known etchings by Saverij, all of which were begun as pure etchings, which were then reworked with the burin and republished by Hendrik Hondius. In *Path Between Swamp and Wooded Bank*, about 1595-1600 (fig. 53), one of six small etched landscapes, Saverij used the short hatches, dots and flicks he had learned from Bruegel to create an atmospheric, marshy woodland. His graphic vocabulary suggests painterly indistinctness, where landscape and forms blend with the surrounding atmosphere.

Saverij’s use of broken strokes and stipples to suggest the dissolution of forms had a significant impact on Dutch etchers of the second decade of the seventeenth-century, especially in Haarlem, such as with Willem Buytewech. Buytewech’s “Various Landscapes” is a series of small-scale landscape etchings from the second decade of the seventeenth century. Known in his time as “Geestige [inventive] Willem,” Buytewech produced about thirty-five etchings, although a number of prints were produced after his designs by Haarlem printmakers such as Jan van de Velde. In the *Ruins of the Huis te Kleef* (fig. 54), from the “Various Landscapes,” Buytewech used a low horizon line, set on the assumed viewer’s eye level and a continuously flowing landscape space. The ruins are dramatically silhouetted against the sky, an effect amplified by the low horizon line. Buytewech was highly original in his graphic vocabulary, seldom using continuous
contours, delineating forms with short hatches, and employing dots and stippling. For example, Buytewech used stippling to suggest the light effects of sunset behind the ruins. The ruins themselves are largely composed of dots and stipples, simultaneously suggesting courses of brickwork and providing affinity with the ephemeral sky, thus heightening the sense of impermanence of man’s works.26

**A system for generating dark tone: Hendrick Goudt and his impact on graphic chiaroscuro**

While the Haarlem landscape etchers, such as Willem Buytewech, were certainly innovative in their development of a naturalistic rendering of light and atmosphere in daylit scenes, Hendrick Goudt, according to Clifford Ackley, was a key figure in the development of dark tonalities in northern printmaking in the first half of the seventeenth century through his translation of Adam Elsheimer’s paintings, most of them nocturnes, into engravings. After a possible sojourn in Venice that probably lasted about two years, Elsheimer traveled to Rome, where he settled until his death in 1610.27 Perhaps most famous for his nocturne imagery, Elsheimer’s paintings, though small in size and few in number, greatly influenced graphic artists through the spread of his designs in the

26 Ackley, *Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt*, 65. From an early date Buytewech’s drawings, etchings, and the prints made after his work were regarded as collectors’ items. They are mentioned in Rembrandt’s estate inventory of 1656 (‘A ditto [book] full of prints by Frans Floris, Buytewech, Goltseus, and Abraham Bloemer’).

27 Shortly after completing his apprenticeship in his native Frankfurt under local painter Philip Uffenbach, Elsheimer was likely in Venice in 1598, where he would certainly have become acquainted with the works of Titian and Tintoretto. No archival records have been found documenting Elsheimer in Venice; however, the influence of both Venetian art and Munich-born Hans Rottenhammer, who resided in Venice from 1595/6-1606, are apparent in his work of the late 1590s. Elsheimer probably worked intermittently as an assistant in Rottenhammer’s studio. For more on Elsheimer, see Rudiger Klessmann, *Adam Elsheimer 1578-1610*, Edinburgh, 2006.
reproductive engravings of Goudt.\textsuperscript{28} It is significant that Goudt’s seven engravings after Elsheimer comprise Goudt’s entire graphic oeuvre. Completed in 1610 while he was still in Rome, \textit{The Mocking of Ceres} (fig. 55) was Goudt’s first dark-toned print after Elsheimer.\textsuperscript{29} Here, and in other prints after Elsheimer, Goudt employed a dense, regular net of fine crosshatching and closely laid parallel lines to evoke the intense darkness of night.\textsuperscript{30}

Goudt’s seven engravings influenced northern printmakers, including Rembrandt, through their emphasis on tone over line and darkness over light. Although Goudt’s seven prints were certainly influential, it is important to remember that they formed part of a broader cross-media interest in graphic tone. As discussed in chapter two, the popularity of nocturne prints in the seventeenth century should thus also be linked to Goltzius’ graphic colorism and tonal system, which had a strong impact on early seventeenth-century printmakers and was adopted by Goudt in his prints after Adam

\textsuperscript{28} It is not known when Goudt arrived in Rome or why he sought out Elsheimer. Scholars generally assume that he was a pupil of Elsheimer, even though he had already completed training as an engraver in the northern Netherlands, possibly in The Hague under Simon Frisius; however, he modeled his style after Jacques de Gheyn II and Hendrick Goltzius. He certainly had mastered the art of engraving before his arrival in Rome. His calligraphic skills were probably learned under Jan van de Velde I, and as such provide an interesting link with the work of his son, Jan van de Velde II. Three of the seven plates were made in Rome during Elsheimer’s lifetime, and two bear his name as \textit{inventor}: \textit{Tobias and the Angel} (the ‘\textit{Small Tobias},’ 1608) and the \textit{Mocking of Ceres} (1610). The third is the small oval \textit{Salome Receiving the Head of Saint John} (undated). After Elsheimer’s death, Goudt took some of Elsheimer’s paintings back with him to the northern Netherlands and made the remaining four engravings from them. The four prints executed after his departure from Italy are: \textit{Jupiter in the House of Philemon and Baucis} (1612), \textit{Aurora} (1613), \textit{Tobias and the Angel} (the ‘\textit{Large Tobias},’ 1613), and \textit{The Flight into Egypt} (1613). The series was completed in 1613, at which point Goudt seems to have stopped producing art entirely. The engraver issued the remaining prints with his own name and suppressed Elsheimer’s authorship, perhaps testifying to a strained relationship while Elsheimer was alive.

\textsuperscript{29} Goudt dedicated the print to Cardinal Scipione Borghese, a leading art collector who patronized the works of Dutch and German artists working in Rome. See Heinrich Weizsäcker, \textit{Adam Elsheimer}. (Berlin, 1936): 115.

\textsuperscript{30} Goudt’s engraving inspired at least two other nocturnal versions of the subject: Willem Ackersloot’s engraving after Jan van de Velde’s design (Holl. 210), and Carel van Mander III’s etching (Holl. 2).
Elsheimer. Influenced by Goltzius’ tonal system, Goudt’s systematic technique for creating dramatic chiaroscuro through an engraved tonal grid greatly influenced printmakers in and outside the Netherlands. For example, in his etched night-scenes of the 1620s, the French printmaker Jacques Callot employed a dense, regularized web of lines to evoke darkness.\(^{31}\)

Goudt’s most ambitious engraving, *The Flight into Egypt* (fig. 56), dates from 1613, the last year in which he is known to have produced prints. Goudt’s calligraphic Latin caption to the engraving reflects upon the dramatic chiaroscuro of the image: “In darkness flees the light of the world, and wondrously the ruler of the world hides at the tyrant Pharaoh’s.” Although usually described as an engraving, Goudt’s *Flight into Egypt* was also etched extensively, with Goudt continuing to define darkness through a dense web of systematically crisscrossing lines. Etched lines have a rougher quality than engraved ones because of their chemical process of creation. They also yield a more velvety texture than do engraved lines. This is evident in the dark masses of the trees enshrouding the Holy Family. The sky consists of closely laid parallel etched lines, with their blunt ends visible where the lines end to define the stars of the Milky Way. This regularized web of etched crisscrossing lines produces the effect of continuous tone. Goudt also left small areas of white paper exposed through the deeply etched areas of intense blacks. Because the burin produces precise lines, Goudt switched to engraving wherever illumination occurs in order to give a crystalline sharpness to the light source. He also employed short stipples and flicks on the surface of the moon to generate small areas of tone.

\(^{31}\) Callot’s etched night scenes include *Holy Family at Table* (Lieure 595) and *Card Game* (Lieure 596).
Following Elsheimer and Goudt’s lead, the Dutch nocturne became especially popular in the 1620s in the graphic works Jan van de Velde II, who produced a number of nocturne prints in Haarlem. Van de Velde, son of the famous calligrapher, made almost five hundred prints, most of which were landscapes after his own designs or reproductions after the works of Esaias van de Velde, Willem Buytewech, and Pieter Molijn.

After about 1622, Van de Velde began to render night scenes using his own adaptation of Goudt’s system for creating printed tone. In addition, he modeled works such as Nox (fig. 57) on compositional devices from Goudt’s prints, adopting the starry sky, the Milky Way, the illumination of the moon, and reflections in the water from the Flight into Egypt; however, Van de Velde incorporated these effects into an identifiable setting rather than a fantasy forest. The setting of Nox is Het Binnenhof, the palace of the Stadtholders in The Hague. This work, like many of his nocturne prints, is part of a traditional series that depicts the four times of day. Others, such as Ignis (fig. 58), also from the 1620s, formed part of a cycle of the four elements. In this print, Van de Velde transformed a daytime scene designed by Willem Buytewech into a nocturne, again quoting elements from Goudt’s Flight into Egypt.

Segers’ technical experimentations with graphic tone

Hercules Segers was one of the most experimental of the Dutch etchers, although even Segers was inspired by Goudt’s prints after Elsheimer. Segers’ Large Tree (fig. 59), for example, adapted Goudt’s system for producing dark tones through a mesh of regular,

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32 See Northern Nocturnes, cat. 13.
crisscrossing lines. This is found particularly in areas of the sky where tone was created in two layers, with “positive” lines drawn into the ground with the etching needle, and “negative” crosshatching painted on with resist.33 Goudt’s *Flight into Egypt*, where sharply defined areas of white paper oppose the deep tones created through engraved and etched lines, may also have suggested to Segers the use of resist to create strong contrasts of light and tone.34

Segers’ work is characterized by an interest in tone over line, particularly through his evocation and actual use of color. Segers was highly inventive in his employment of colored inks and papers while he also took advantage of a variety of techniques to create tone, such as constructing bundles of drypoint lines with burr to produce continuous areas of tone. This is the case with his *Rocky Landscape, a Church Tower in the Distance* (fig. 60), which resembles a dark wash drawing. An impression of the etching in Boston was printed in blue on pink prepared paper, which was then washed over with olive green pigment after printing.35 Although it may have been accidental in origin, the granular foul biting evident in the sky of *Rocky Landscape* provides another tonal effect. Probably the result of an overly soft and porous etching ground, this accident may have subsequently spurred the application of a porous ground in a controlled way in others of his prints to achieve passages of tone.36 Segers’ use of a fine, granular bitten tone to achieve subtle gradations of light and dark imitated the appearance of an ink wash.

33 Ackley, *Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt*, 112.

34 Ibid., 112.

35 Segers used this striking combination of pink and blue for ten impression of this etching. See Ackley, *Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt*, 56.

36 See, for example, the granular tone that shades the waterfall in *River Valley with a Waterfall: Version II*, Haverkamp-Begemann, 22.
Scholar Haverkamp-Begemann listed fifty-four etchings, but also one hundred eighty-three impressions in his catalogue of the artist’s graphic œuvre. Segers treated each impression individually, leading Samuel van Hoogstraten to proclaim that he “drukte…Schildery” or “printed…painting.” He often added highlights and additional details by hand. Segers also left streaks of ink on the surface of the plate, heightening the painterly character of the resulting print.

**Rembrandt’s Engagement with Seventeenth-Century Graphic Precedents**

In his first dark-toned print, which was also his first nocturne print, *The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*, 1634 (fig. 14), Rembrandt achieved tonal effects through painstaking platework, creating a dense, irregular web of etched cross-hatching with additions in engraving and drypoint. The emphasis of darkness over light and areas of tone over individual lines, as well as the translation of the atmospheric qualities of painting to intaglio, became a signal part of Rembrandt’s graphic œuvre from an early date.

In Rembrandt’s early dark-toned prints, the debt to prints by Goudt after Elsheimer and Jan van de Velde’s engravings from the 1620s is apparent. Rembrandt’s only etched nocturne landscape, the *Small Grey Landscape* (fig. 61), from about 1640 (which may have been his first landscape etching) is reminiscent of Jan van de Velde’s moonlit scenes. Like Van de Velde’s works, there are no strong contrasts, and the print is

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37 Hoogstraten, 1678, 312. Haverkamp-Begemann interprets the phrase alternately as “printed paintings,” “printed colors,” or “printed with painterly means.” Ibid., 49.

38 Goudt’s *Flight into Egypt* influenced Rembrandt’s painted oeuvre; for example, see his 1647 painting *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* in The National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.
a study of a narrow range of tones.\textsuperscript{39} Rembrandt’s direct engagement with Van de Velde’s work is also evident in his earlier etching, the \textit{Pancake Woman}, 1635 (fig. 62), in which Rembrandt treated the composition in a manner much like Van de Velde’s 1626 depiction of the same subject (fig. 63).\textsuperscript{40} Van de Velde’s \textit{Pancake Woman} is set in a darkened interior with shadows rendered through a dense web of regular crosshatching and resembles the still earlier print by Goudt, \textit{Jupiter and Mercury in the House of Philemon and Baucis} (fig. 64), after Elsheimer’s painting, thus suggesting the vitality of this artistic lineage.\textsuperscript{41}

Rembrandt’s engagement with the dark-toned prints of the late 1590s to the 1620s led to his development of new methods for achieving a wide range of tones. Unlike Goudt’s regularized grid of etched and engraved lines, Rembrandt’s technique consisted of creating areas of tone through a dense, irregular net of crosshatching.\textsuperscript{42} Instead Rembrandt looked to the Flemish tradition brought to the Dutch Republic by landscape artists who settled in Amsterdam at the end of the sixteenth century and further developed by Haarlem landscape etchers, such as Willem Buytewech. Working primarily in etching rather than engraving, Rembrandt freed his linework from anything resembling Goudt’s

\textsuperscript{39} White, \textit{Rembrandt as an Etcher}, 214-215. Also see the 1633 \textit{Good Samaritan} (B. 90), inspired by Van de Velde, although Rembrandt turned Van de Velde’s nocturne into a daylit scene.

\textsuperscript{40} See Ackley, \textit{Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt}, cat. 61 and cat. 72.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 102. Goudt must have witnessed Elsheimer’s struggle with the theme because he was living in his house at the time of its creation. The engraving was published in 1612, after Elsheimer’s death, with no mention of Elsheimer as the inventor. Rembrandt also probably knew Elsheimer’s \textit{Jupiter and Mercury in the House of Philemon and Baucis} through Goudt’s engraving. He transformed the figure of Jupiter into Christ in his \textit{Christ at Emmaus} from the late 1620s (Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André). It is significant that Rembrandt chose to look to Elsheimer’s depiction because both the \textit{Jupiter and Mercury in the House of Philemon and Baucis} and \textit{The Christ at Emmaus} involve the revelation of the divine to mankind.

\textsuperscript{42} Ackley, \textit{Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt}, 129.
rigid system, which, as discussed previously, was adopted by Jan van de Velde and other etchers of the 1620s. Many of these printmakers approached the creation of etched tone through the use of regular hatching and density of line, essentially simulating the properties of the engraved line and reflecting an attitude toward etching that persisted from the sixteenth century.

Although there are some exceptions, the general trend in the sixteenth century was to apply the aesthetic of engravings to the new medium of etching. Etchers emulated the clean line of the burin through the application of a hard ground, which produced a precise line that emulated engraving. Rembrandt began his career as an etcher under the influence of this aesthetic, as can be seen in his choice of a hard ground for what may have been his first etching, *The Circumcision*, about 1626, (Gersaint 48, fig. 65).

However, Rembrandt quickly moved in another direction, developing a free approach to etching, facilitated by the adoption of a soft ground, which allowed the artist to draw with greater freedom and thereby develop the essential difference between an engraved and an etched line.

Ackley suggested Johannes van Vliet as a source for Rembrandt’s unsystematic technique. Van Vliet was an independent etcher who collaborated with Rembrandt to create reproductive prints of some of the master’s paintings and prints. Probably working under Rembrandt’s direction in the early 1630s, Van Vliet invented his dense, unsystematic web of lines to evoke Rembrandt’s painted chiaroscuro. Rembrandt relied

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43 One of these exceptions includes Parmigianino in Italy. Although a softer ground was developed by the seventeenth century, the application of the engraving aesthetic to etching was still widely pursued until well into the middle of the century. See White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, 5.

44 Ibid., 5.

45 Ackley, *Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt*, 129.
on a dense, unsystematic web of lines as well through the 1640s in graphic works such as “The Schoolmaster” (fig. 66), the Man Drawing from a Cast (fig. 67), the Student at a Table by Candlelight (fig. 68), and The Rest on the Flight into Egypt: A Night Piece (fig. 69), all of which are considerably smaller than The Annunciation to the Shepherds, (1634) thus involving less time-consuming platework. However, Ackley’s suggestion of Van Vliet’s etchings made after Rembrandt’s paintings as a possible source of inspiration for Rembrandt’s unsystematic mesh of lines is unconvincing, particularly because Van Vliet’s shading techniques to describe dark tones and twilight differ significantly from Rembrandt’s, often producing the moiré-effect as seen in the background of the 1633 Descent from the Cross (fig. 70). Further, there were certainly other visual sources from which Rembrandt could have drawn.

It seems more likely that Rembrandt adopted and adapted the unsystematic graphic vocabulary found in works such as Vinckboons’ Adoration of the Shepherds, which can be traced back to Bruegel’s graphic work. It is telling that in Christ at Emmaus, Rembrandt employed broken lines in the rays of Christ’s halo and stippling in the right side of Christ’s face. Both of these techniques were part of a graphic lineage that can be traced back to Bruegel through the work of Vinckboons, Saverij, and the Haarlem landscape etchers.

Rembrandt’s later dark-toned prints were also clearly inspired by the individuality of Segers’ impressions and his experimental techniques. Following Segers’ lead, Rembrandt increasingly used drypoint and granular bitten tone, and relied upon

differentiation of impressions through paper choice and plate tone. He also made many small adjustments to tonality through burnishing and the addition of burin work or drypoint. Segers’ exploitation of a fine, granular bitten tone to achieve subtle gradations of light and dark resembling an ink wash was a technique that Rembrandt would later emulate. Rembrandt experimented with granular bitten tone in works such as the portraits of Jan Cornelis Sylvius (fig. 18) and Jan Lutma (fig. 71), which were probably created around the time of the 1654 dark-toned prints.

Segers’ taste for technical experimentation became an increasingly direct inspiration for Rembrandt. Segers’ influence can be seen in Rembrandt’s graphic oeuvre in the combination of the etched line with other kinds of lines, particularly drypoint. The impact of Segers’ individual treatment of each impression is also evident in Rembrandt’s prints. Segers’ work best suggested to Rembrandt that the first state need not be the only one and could serve as a stimulus for further work on the plate. Segers certainly influenced Rembrandt’s approach to the 1654 dark-toned prints. Although the Presentation in the Temple and the Descent from the Cross by Torchlight exist in only one state, Rembrandt used plate tone and selective wiping to create highly differentiated impressions. There are three state changes to The Entombment; however, Rembrandt again created a broad range of tones through selective wiping and variations in inking. Even Christ at Emmaus, which is not a dark-toned print, fell under Segers’ influence, with significant work in drypoint added in the second state.

Although Rembrandt’s use of dramatic chiaroscuro and emulation of earlier Northern artists was certainly motivated by personal artistic interest, it is vital to consider

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the role of the market on the creation of these prints. In the seventeenth century, dark-toned prints were considered a specialty of Dutch artists, and contemporary collectors often grouped these works into a separate category of imagery. As discussed in the introduction, Florent le Comte recommended as part of an “ideal cabinet” that collectors organize works by Rembrandt, Goudt, Van Vliet, Van de Velde, and others into a separate category of “Nuits et pièces noires.” That the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus exist in such varied states and individual impressions may suggest that print collectors were one of Rembrandt’s target audiences for these works, as collectors often wanted to purchase printed images in their multiple “versions” in order to own a complete set.

Conclusion

Rembrandt’s 1654 dark toned prints were part of a seventeenth-century cross-media interest in dark toned and nocturne imagery, which itself grew out of a larger focus on tone in Dutch art. Although visually participating in the context of his contemporaries’ nocturne prints, Rembrandt’s dark-toned prints were influenced technically by the work of etchers working with an unsystematic vocabulary traceable to later sixteenth-century Flemish printmakers and by the original, even idiosyncratic etchings of Hercules Segers. Rembrandt moved away from the use of a systematic tonal grid, instead creating areas of tone through a dense, irregular net of crosshatching. While he relied upon extensive platework, creating tone through etched crosshatching alone, in his early nocturne prints, Rembrandt’s later dark-toned prints, including the Presentation

48 Introduction, 10. Another example is the category of “Various Nocturnes” in the collection of Abbé de Marolles’ 1666 album number LXIII. See Ackley, xxxvi-xxxix.
in the Temple, in the Dark Manner, the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, and *The Entombment*, increasingly relied upon the use of drypoint, granular bitten tone, and plate tone to produce dramatic chiaroscuro.
Chapter 4:

The Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus and Rembrandt’s Techniques for Producing Chiaroscuro

Introduction

As demonstrated by the Presentation in the Temple (fig. 1), Descent from the Cross by Torchlight (fig. 2), Entombment (fig. 3), and Christ at Emmaus (fig. 4), the expressive use of chiaroscuro is one of the key stylistic elements of Rembrandt’s prints, and it is equally important in his paintings and drawings. Rembrandt’s painted chiaroscuro has been the focus of several recent studies, most notably by Ernst van de Wetering who has approached light and shade in Rembrandt’s paintings from a technical standpoint, as in his 1997 publication Rembrandt: The Painter at Work.¹ To date, however, there has been comparatively little attention to cross-media connections of Rembrandt’s interest in the creation of tone. Van de Wetering, for example, only looked to prints in Rembrandt: The Painter at Work in order to “check” his findings about light and shade in the paintings. Discussion of similarities between Rembrandt’s paintings and graphic work have been relatively few, creating an artificial distinction in the artist’s approach to media. Thus the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus provide an opportunity to examine Rembrandt’s cross-media interest in and creation of dramatic chiaroscuro. This chapter endeavors to locate the graphic chiaroscuro of these four prints within a broader interest

¹ Ernst van de Wetering, Rembrandt: The Painter at Work (Amsterdam, 1997).
that spanned Rembrandt’s entire artistic oeuvre, which necessitates an examination of the techniques Rembrandt used to generate chiaroscuro as well as his expressive use of light and shade in prints, drawings, and paintings.

**Rembrandt’s Approach to Chiaroscuro in Drawings and Paintings after 1650**

Throughout his career, Rembrandt created drawings in which tone evokes atmosphere and mood.² Because Rembrandt’s thinking about tone probably crossed media boundaries, this section will address connections between Rembrandt’s approach to chiaroscuro in his paintings, drawings, and other prints made after 1650 in order to understand Rembrandt’s approach to the 1654 Life of Christ prints. Although Rembrandt employed a variety of drawing techniques to create tone, he generally worked from light to dark by applying layers of brown wash with a brush and created highlights by leaving areas of white paper untouched. This was the technique preferred by Northern European artists after the 1520s when chiaroscuro drawings with black ink on prepared paper gave way to drawings in pen and washes in which tonal variations were emphasized.³

Rembrandt’s interest in tone can be seen in drawings such as *Minerva in her Study* (Ben. 914, fig. 72), dated 1652, in which Rembrandt layered brown and white washes over pen with brown ink to produce subtle modulations of light and shadow.⁴ As

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² Rembrandt was not the first northern artist to emphasize tone over line in drawings. In the early sixteenth century, German artists such as Lucas Cranach and others of the Danube school used the chiaroscuro technique to produce dramatic tonal effects. See chapter two, n. 20.

³ See Bialler, 24-25.

⁴ Rembrandt’s pupils and followers also created dark-toned drawings, attesting both to the artist’s and to the broader seventeenth-century Netherlandish interest in graphic tone. For example, there are two drawings by Barent Fabritius in Munich that exhibit strong contrasts of light and dark: *Amorous Couple with Cupid* (1650-55) and *Three Young Men Drawing by Candlelight* (1650-55). See Thea Vignau-Wilberg, *Rembrandt auf Papier: Werk und Wirkung*, exh. cat. Munich, 2002, 279-311. For information on the other drawing by Rembrandt, *Homer Reciting Verses*, in the album of Jan Six, see Nicola
in Rembrandt’s etched portrait of Jan Six (1647, fig. 31), for whom the Minerva drawing was made, or Albrecht Dürer’s Saint Jerome in his Study (1514, fig. 74), a scholar in an interior is illuminated by light from a window. The chiaroscuro of Minerva in her Study also functions expressively, suggesting the light of knowledge, which is apt given Minerva’s role as the Roman goddess of wisdom, science, and the arts. Created shortly before the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus, Minerva in her study can be compared to them through its expressive use of chiaroscuro.

In the 1650s, Rembrandt’s drawing style may have been influenced by his work in drypoint on “The Three Crosses” (fig. 11) and Christ Presented to the People (fig. 10). Clifford Ackley pointed out that Rembrandt increasingly used the reed pen from the late 1640s when his graphic style moved toward greater breadth, simplicity, and expressive abstraction. \(^5\) A good example is the drawing in Berlin of The Raising of the Cross (Ben. 1036, fig. 75). With its rough, looping and angular shorthand of strokes suggesting the human figure, the thickest strokes of the reed pen resemble areas of drypoint in Rembrandt’s prints of the 1650s. Additionally, the blunt nib of a reed pen lends itself to short, powerful strokes that resemble the rough brushstrokes of Rembrandt’s later paintings rather than conventional pen lines, producing a graphic colorism closer to painting than drawing. When fully charged with ink, a reed pen can produce dense bands; when almost dry, it leaves mottled trails. Both types of strokes are present in this drawing, as well as small areas of wash indicating shadows.

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\(^5\) Ackley, Rembrandt’s Journey, 252.
Rembrandt created a rich range of tones in his *Seated Female Nude* (Ben. 1122, fig. 76) from the early 1660s. Rembrandt initially established the figure’s position with a series of short, straight pen strokes. He then elaborated details using curved lines, as at her right ankle and calf; however, he also chose to use open, broken contours in many places to suggest the effect of bright light dissolving form. When compared to a drawing attributed to his pupil Arent de Gelder of the same model (fig. 77), the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt’s drawing becomes all the more striking.\(^6\) Whereas the contours of the figure consist of lightly drawn and deliberate lines in De Gelder’s drawing, Rembrandt has used shorter, broader, and seemingly quicker strokes to generate the figure’s form. Further, the slight shadow found in De Gelder’s drawing is in Rembrandt’s depiction a background divided between a dark curtain of shadow on the left and what appear to be powerful rays of light falling diagonally from the upper right. Finally, where De Gelder focused on faithfully recording details such as the curls of hair upon the figure’s forehead, Rembrandt concentrated on the broader patterns of light and form.\(^7\)

Rembrandt’s preoccupation with tone and chiaroscuro is also reflected in his process of creating a painting. In his examination of Rembrandt’s painting process, Van de Wetering has made some interesting discoveries that suggest parallel aspects to the artist’s process and techniques for printmaking.\(^8\) Rembrandt seems to have painted on a

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\(^7\) Ackley, *Rembrandt’s Journey*, 290.

\(^8\) Van de Wetering also examined the way Rembrandt incorporated highlights and shadows, determining that the artist placed the highest lights in a light surrounding, and the darkest tones in areas flanked by slightly less dark tones. The author then “checked” Rembrandt’s intentions as to the lights and darks in the paintings against the etchings. He concluded that Rembrandt followed a similar procedure in his
tinted or colored ground rather than a white ground. The fundamental difference is that on a white ground, all tonal shades have to be applied deliberately, whereas on a tinted ground, the ground itself serves as a middle tone. This allows an artist to select the position and intensity of highlights with great precision. With a white ground, every area insufficiently covered with paint would act as a highlight, whereas with a tinted ground, the ground can remain uncovered without affecting the tonal cohesion of painting.\(^9\) Thus the use of a tinted ground made sense to an artist such as Rembrandt who was highly concerned with the organization of light and shadow in a composition. This employment of a tinted ground also compares to the color of vellum and of Japanese paper in some of Rembrandt’s prints, where the support lends warmth to the overall composition. As in paintings with a tinted ground, the use of vellum or Japanese paper as a support reduced bright highlights, thus adjusting the chiaroscuro effects of a print.

Van de Wetering identified three main stages to Rembrandt’s painting process: inventing, dead coloring, and working-up, followed by what de Lairesse called the “retouching.” In the first two stages, the main concern was composition, shape, and the overall relationship between light and dark. During the final stage, the main concern was to give everything its correct coloring, to render materials appropriately, and to fix the final contours of forms.

The first stage of a painting was the first lay-in of a composition, called “inventing;” this layer was brushed on quickly with brown paint.\(^{10}\) Following his lay-in


\(^9\) Ibid., 22.

\(^{10}\) It is not likely that he started immediately with an underpainting in tone, but probably initially set out shapes using lines. Van de Wetering pointed to Justus Müller Hofstede’s analysis of a Munich drawing
of the initial sketch lines, Rembrandt applied tone over large areas, as in a wash drawing, thus showing that the arrangement of lights and darks in the painting was important from the very beginning. The tonal dead-color stage is the second stage in the process, outlining the compositional and tonal organization in monochrome. The dead-coloring stage in Rembrandt’s case was not a transitional stage but a provisionally completed whole. In his discussion of dead-coloring in the *Groot Schilderboeck*, De Lairesse advised artists to follow a fixed working sequence:

Here it seems to me that the surest and most certain way is to start from the back, especially when the landscape has the most to contribute. For all things have to suit the lightness or darkness of the sky, and the tints of objects found; because the light on the foreground, and the boldness of the figures, must be matched to this, which if begun differently might turn out very uncertainly.

Van de Wetering pointed out that Rembrandt’s concern with this procedure is confirmed by the fact that the early states of a number of his etchings have fully formed tonal values in the backgrounds, while foreground figures are still in sketchy stage. This is the case with the first state of *The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds* (fig. 78), for example.

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11 These findings are in agreement with Van Hoogstraten’s recommendations to keep the initial sketch fairly rough: “First, draft what you intend in its broad sweep, on your paper [and] where rough sketching is concerned this is the first principle of drawing well, and of such great importance that if the main bulk is shown fully, well and intelligently one often achieves more with this than can be obtained with much labour afterwards.” Ibid., 25.

12 Painters sometimes kept a stock of dead colored paintings (Lastman had ten in his inventory) to be worked up after discussion with a client; Rembrandt possibly followed this procedure. Ibid., 25.

13 Although De Lairesse was Rembrandt’s junior by thirty-four years, it is important to keep in mind the generally unchanging nature of studio practices in the seventeenth century. Ibid., 43.

14 Rembrandt also seems to have followed this procedure for *Saint Jerome Reading in an Italian Landscape* (B. 104), c. 1653.
From 1651 to 1669, Rembrandt reinforced the effects of light by applying light-colored paint thickly and with uneven relief, in essence to trap light on the surface and heighten the spatial and atmospheric effect. Called the “rough manner” in the seventeenth century, the impasto in works such as Portrait of Jan Six, 1654 (fig. 79), or The Jewish Bride, 1661 (fig. 80), also added “perceptibility,” a coarse surface that gives the eye something to focus on and makes it appear closer.\(^{15}\) Therefore, roughness makes objects appear closer, while smoothness makes them recede. The interaction of sharp and blurred elements stimulates the eyes to explore the spatial illusion of the image instead of simply taking it for granted as a description of reality.

Rembrandt’s primary considerations for the use of a “rough” style were likely based upon the rendering of surface textures and suggestions of space. Although impasto is certainly absent from his graphic works, drypoint seems to function in a similar manner. The velvety tone produced by the burr raised on the plate seems to add “perceptibility,” making these areas advance toward the eyes. For example, the accents in drypoint in the foreground of Landscape with a View Toward Haarlem (“The Goldweigher’s Field), 1651 (fig. 81), are crucial for the definition of space in this print. In later impressions, where there is little or no burr, space appears to be flattened.\(^{16}\)

**Tone and Technique in Rembrandt’s Prints**

Because the tone and chiaroscuro of Rembrandt’s prints is directly linked to his printmaking techniques, those techniques need to be described in detail. Polishing the

\(^{15}\) Discussions of the rough and smooth manner are not new. Jan Emmens was the first to demonstrate that the Netherlandish understanding of the two modes was determined by contemporary art theory. Ibid., 160. For more on “perceptibility,” see Paul Taylor, “The Concept of Houding in Dutch Art Theory,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* LV (1992): 21-32.

\(^{16}\) See cat. no. 185, pg. 272, in *Rembrandt’s Journey*. 

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plate was the first task in preparing a plate for printing. Early in his graphic career, Rembrandt had trouble polishing his copper plates. For example, scratches left on the surface of the plate printed as a curtain of shadow over the sunlit scene in the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, 1626 (fig. 82). Later in his career, Rembrandt seems to have remembered the potential of such surface abrasion as a way to add atmosphere. In the 1650s, he made use of fine scratches to add haziness in *Clump of Tress with a Vista*, 1652 (fig. 83), and symbolic darkness in *The Blindness of Tobit*, 1651 (fig. 84).

After polishing the plate, Rembrandt applied an etching ground. According to a contemporary treatise by English printmaker Alexander Brown, Rembrandt used a composite etching ground that consisted of a thin coat of ground that was dark chocolate brown in color, which he then covered with a layer of white ground. 17 Most seventeenth-century etchers used a dark ground then blackened it with candle smoke to make it darker so that the copper red scratches produced with the etching needle would appear clearly against it. 18 While a white ground would have been advantageous for transferring a design, only a few of Rembrandt’s drawings seem to have been used for this purpose; he

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17 “The Ground of Rinebrant of Rine: Take half an ounce of Expoltum burnt of amber one ounce, of Virgins Wax half an ounce, of Mastick, then take the Mastick and Expoltum, and beat them severally very fine in a Mortar; this being done, take a new earthen Pot and set it upon a Charcole fire, then put the Virgins Wax into it and melt it, then shake into it the Mastick and Expoltum by degrees, stirring the Wax about till they be thoroughly mingled, then pour it forth into fair water and make a Ball of it, and use it as before-mentioned, but be sure you do not heat the Plate too hot when you lay the ground on it, and lay your black ground very thin, and the white ground upon it. This is the only way of Rinebrant.” Alexander Brown, *The Whole Art of Drawing, Painting, Limning and Etching. Collected out of the Choicest Italian and German Authors: To Which is Added Exact Rules of Proportion for Drawing the Heads of Men, Women, and Children and of What Bigness Soever*. London, 1660, 33. As quoted in Thomas E. Rassieur, “Looking over Rembrandt’s Shoulder,” in Clifford Ackley, ed. *Rembrandt’s Journey*, 49.

18 A white ground was not unknown in the seventeenth century. According to Rubens, “before [Elsheimer] etched the plate with the acid, he covered it with a white paste. Then when he engraved with the needle through to the copper, which is somewhat reddish by nature, it seemed like drawing with a red chalk on white paper. I do not remember the ingredients of this paste, although he very kindly told me.” White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, 7.
rarely used his composite ground for this method. It is more likely that Rembrandt employed the white ground for its similar appearance to paper and for its ability to suggest the finished chiaroscuro of a print.

There is no documentation about the kind of acid Rembrandt used to etch his plates; however, almost all of his plates are very finely bitten, suggesting that he used mordant, a solution of potassium chlorate and hydrochloric acid, that bites slowly and precisely, rather than nitric acid, which works quickly but spreads out underneath the ground, producing wide, coarse lines. During the 1630s, Rembrandt often varied the strength of his lines through multiple bites, producing a wide variety of tones. Rembrandt seems to have quickly mastered the process of multiple bites in order to produce a subtle blending of tones, and it is often impossible to determine the number of times he subjected a plate to the acid. However, Rembrandt largely abandoned this laborious technique in the 1640s, favoring a uniform single bite augmented with drypoint and burin work.

In early works such as *The Circumcision* (fig. 65), Rembrandt worked quickly across the plate, with his vocabulary of lines including zigzags, scrawling arcs, and staccato jabs. For details his hand slowed, drawing short lines to render complex structures with precision. By 1628 when he first dated his prints, Rembrandt had developed a much more subtle stroke and employed a delicate, layered web of closely spaced lines, as in the *Head of an Elderly Woman* (B. 352, fig. 85). He also drew small details with freely arranged flicks and tiny curved strokes.

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19 He may have experimented with nitric acid at the beginning of his career in plates such as *Self-portrait bareheaded* (B. 338) and *Peter and John at the Gate of the Temple* (B. 95), both of which have deep, coarse lines. White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, 8.
However, Rembrandt’s vocabulary of etching strokes did not develop along a single path. In his 1629 *Self-Portrait* (fig. 86), for example, Rembrandt appears to have used a quill pen or a double-pronged tool that simulated a split nib rather than the etching needle to produce broad double lines, possibly in an attempt to simulate drawing in etching. By the 1640s, Rembrandt varied the handling of his etching needle and burin to help generate meaning. This is evident in the 1639 *Self-Portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill* (B. 21, fig. 87), where extremely fine etched strokes and closely modulated tone mirror the gentlemanly refinement and self-possession he wanted to convey. Another example is the 1639 *Death of the Virgin* (B. 99, fig. 88), where sweeping strokes in the floor, ceiling, vapors, and drapery reflect the inner turmoil of the mourners.

In the 1640s, Rembrandt expanded his use of drypoint. Small amounts of drypoint burr, raised by scratching the etching needle directly into the plate, produce a softened line. Large amounts can produce dramatic, velvety lines and appear similar to ink applied with a broad-nibbed pen or wash applied with a brush, drawing techniques both favored by Rembrandt. Previously used by Rembrandt for small touch-ups or delicate rendering of a complete image, drypoint now served as the principal means of adding strong accents and provided much of his shading. He apparently found it to be a versatile printmaking technique that matched the color and breadth of line produced by charcoal or ink applied with brush or broad-nib pen.

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20 Rassieur, 51.

21 Ibid., 51.

22 Ibid., 53.
In the 1630s, Rembrandt had begun to investigate ways to add tonal effects without relying on strokes of the needle or burin.\footnote{Other seventeenth-century artists were printing tone using mechanical methods, such as extremely fine engraving, stippling, and the new technique of mezzotint, which was pioneered in the 1640s and perfected in the 1660s.} For example, he used acid to corrode the surface of the plate in the 1633 *Flight into Egypt* (B. 52, fig. 89) and 1634 *Angel Appearing to the Shepherds* (B. 44, fig. 14). Close inspection of these plates, which still survive, reveals that they were locally covered with countless tiny pits.\footnote{Rassieur, 52.} By the early 1640s, Rembrandt no longer relied on the acid bath to pit the surface of his plates. Instead he seems to have applied a corrosive agent, probably in paste form, with a brush or rag. This produced long striated bands of speckles, called bitten tone.\footnote{Ibid, 52-53.} Such bitten tone is found in *The Presentation in the Temple*, 1639-40 (fig. 90). Using a brush or rag enabled Rembrandt to selectively add bitten tone with the same degree of precision as applying an ink wash in drawings. In this print, he then burnished the figure of the Christ child, making him the brightest point in direct contrast with the aged, black-robed Simeon. Through the 1650s, Rembrandt continued to work with the surface textures of his plates, although the surface irregularities are often so fine it seems inappropriate to call them granular.

During the first two decades of his printing career, Rembrandt exclusively used white European paper.\footnote{There is only one documented purchase of paper, when Rembrandt bought a large amount at auction. Ordinarily it seems that he bought paper in small quantities, using up most sheets of a given size before buying more. Until 1650, Rembrandt used paper produced in Switzerland, south Germany, and eastern France. After 1650, his paper source was central France. See White, 9.} Erik Hinterding’s research into the watermarks of the paper Rembrandt used has indicated that rather than printing continuously from plates or...
printing on demand when a customer wanted an image, Rembrandt seems to have printed a ready supply and sold impressions over a period of years before reprinting.\textsuperscript{27} The creation of new images may have stimulated renewed interest in and reprinting of older images; however, in 1653, Rembrandt stopped reprinting old plates, which suggests that they left his hands at this point. Plates dating from before 1653 were after this date printed on papers with watermarks typical of the printseller Clement de Jonghe’s shop.\textsuperscript{28}

Shortly after 1647 when he became increasingly interested in richer pictorial effects, Rembrandt began to vary his supports, broadening the range of color, luminosity, and texture of his prints. Around this year, he obtained a quantity of Japanese paper.\textsuperscript{29} Different in color, texture, and absorption of ink, his experiments with this exotic and expensive paper led him to investigate other supports on which to print. Generally yellower and shinier than European paper, Japanese paper was available in various thicknesses and a range of colors. It provided a smooth surface that allowed the ink to bleed a bit, causing closely laid lines to fuse together into areas of tone. Compared with European paper, which tends to provide prints with high contrast and a greater sense of space, Japanese paper provides a soft, muted, and atmospheric support that was


\textsuperscript{28} Rassieur, 54.

\textsuperscript{29} The primary source for these papers was Japan; the Dutch East India Company imported it into the Netherlands and as a result, it was known as Indian paper. Accounts of Dutch East India Company indicate that about four thousand sheets of paper shipped from Japan to Amsterdam from 1644-45. Three different kinds of Eastern papers that were used by Rembrandt have been identified. The most common was Japanese \textit{gampi}. A very thin paper, called Chinese paper, was very probably of Japanese origin but produced to resemble paper used for Chinese calligraphy. A third, a pale yellow paper with bunches of yellow strands, known as Indian paper for its similarity to the paper used for Indian miniatures, was also occasionally employed. See White, 10.
particularly suited to the qualities of drypoint. After 1647, Rembrandt printed at least a few impressions of each new plate on Japanese paper.\textsuperscript{30}

Rembrandt also printed a few impressions of ten plates on oatmeal paper or “cardoes” paper, a cheap support produced with the remnants in the vat after paper is produced. Through his choice of an inexpensive support such as oatmeal paper, it is clear that Rembrandt was not entirely motivated by typical market demands, as print collectors would have been more likely to prefer an impression on a luxury support.\textsuperscript{31} Instead, Rembrandt seems to have chosen oatmeal paper because it gives prints a somewhat grainy, muted appearance as the paper itself lent a middle tone to the print (see for example, \textit{St. Jerome Reading in an Italian Landscape}, ca. 1654, B. 104, fig. 13).

More frequently (for about twenty plates), Rembrandt used vellum, the sturdy polished skin of a lamb, kid, or calf, which provided Rembrandt with a smooth yellow surface that produced luminous impressions. Because of its lack of absorbency, Rembrandt primarily used vellum for prints that were either primarily or wholly completed in drypoint, such as “\textit{The Three Crosses}” (fig. 91), in which fourteen of the nineteen known impressions of the first state are on vellum. The varied coloristic effects of vellum can be seen in a second state impression of \textit{The Entombment} (B. 86, fig. 92), where Rembrandt wiped the plate more cleanly and evenly than for impressions on paper, revealing the color of the vellum itself.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30} Rassieur, 55.

\textsuperscript{31} My thanks to Jane Glaubinger, Curator of Prints at the Cleveland Museum of Art, for pointing to the aesthetic value of oatmeal paper.

Although he seems to have approached each impression individually, carefully selecting various supports that suited the desired effect, Rembrandt approached plates that underwent a number of reworkings, such as *The Entombment*, in a more systematic manner. For the early working states, Rembrandt varied the paper on which he printed, making use of vellum and Japanese paper. After working through various states and reaching the desired result, he limited his paper selection to white European paper. Perhaps Rembrandt chose to print exclusively on European paper after the drypoint lines had been worn down in the press, no longer producing the velvety lines that blurred into an area of tone when printed on Japanese paper or vellum. However, an impression of the fourth state of the *Entombment* in the Cleveland Museum of Art has rich drypoint, suggesting that the artist also chose to use European paper for aesthetic reasons.

About 1647, the same time he began to experiment with his supports, Rembrandt also began to employ surface tone in broad open areas and to employ selective wiping, wiping parts of the plate cleaner than others.\(^{33}\) Other artists had utilized selective wiping—Dürer had done so in the 1510s—but none so frequently and dramatically as Rembrandt. Throughout the 1630s and first half of the 1640s, Rembrandt wiped the plates clean to produce high quality but standardized prints. He did not, however, completely wipe plates that were very closely worked, such as *Saint Jerome in a Dark Chamber* (B. 105, fig. 93), where ink is left in the interstices between lines but wiped clean in the larger, open spaces. For the large plates of 1650s, Rembrandt often used

\(^{33}\) Although he was highly innovative in his control of ink on the surface of the plate, Rembrandt was fairly conservative with respect to the ink itself, limiting himself to black. He thus did not follow Segers’ innovative and experimental practice of using colored inks. Rembrandt probably used ink that was prepared in the workshop by one of his students. Basically, it was a mixture of carbon and heated oil; the Dutch favored linseed oil and often added resins to increase viscosity. Ter Brugghen’s 1616 recipe called for this combination and recommended the dregs of white wine as a source of carbon. Rassieur, 56.
selective wiping to manipulate tone and for specific visual metaphors. For example, Rembrandt greatly varied the density of ink on the surface of the plate on impressions of the second state of the “Three Crosses.” He left a thick film around the periphery, except at the upper center where he cleaned off a little more ink, enhancing the sensation of light coming from above. He also wiped the central part of the image cleaner, with Christ’s body as the most thoroughly wiped area, but left a slight film to prevent strong highlights from breaking the somber mood.

By 1654, when Rembrandt created the Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus, the artist had experimented with a variety of techniques to create graphic tone in his prints, including granular bitten tone, drypoint, selective wiping, and choice of support. The extent to which Rembrandt employed these techniques in these four prints will be discussed in the following section.

**Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner**

In his discussion of the Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner, Christopher White compared the handling of the etching needle in this print to the open brushwork of Rembrandt’s paintings of the 1650s, such as A Woman Bathing (London, National Gallery, fig. 94) from 1654. In this painting, the brushwork is as important as color in conveying the texture of various surfaces. As White pointed out, color was generally not at an etcher’s disposal, and handling was the primary means of conveying texture. In The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner, Rembrandt made use of hatched lines, curls, and loops to evoke the varied pattern of the priest’s cloak, without

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34 White, Rembrandt as an Etcher, 96.
resorting to the minute detail of his earlier prints. The whole plate has been covered by a
mesh of lines suffusing everything with a range of shadows. The highlights on the three
central figures are the only areas of the plate left untouched.

Although *The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner* exists in only one
state, there are many highly differentiated impressions of this print, from cleanly wiped
ones, such as an impression in the Cleveland Museum of Art (fig. 95) that reveals the
dense network of etched and drypoint lines, to those heavy with surface tone, which
submerges the descriptive elements of the image into darkness.\(^\text{35}\) The cleanly wiped
impressions reveal that the majority of this plate was etched, with drypoint used to touch
up details, such as the faces of the Virgin and Joseph, the priest’s ornate vestments, and
the wrap covering the Christ Child.

In *The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner*, Rembrandt was
preoccupied with the use of restricted light. He thus printed the *Presentation* on various
supports. Cleanly wiped impressions on white or ivory European paper reveal the
masterful blending of etching, drypoint, and engraving.\(^\text{36}\) Other impressions printed on
Japanese paper lend softer tones to the etching and somewhat blur the forms. Rembrandt
also experimented with the inking of this plate on the four known impressions printed on
Japanese paper and on one impression printed on white European paper. The impression
in Amsterdam on Japanese paper is suffused with tone, with only the highlights on the
standing figure’s breastplate, the edge of the book, and the face and beard of the high


\(^{36}\) See, for example, The Art Institute of Chicago impression, reproduced in cat. 76 in Felice Stampfle, et.
priest cleanly wiped (fig. 30). Rembrandt left a thin film on Simeon’s face, with even deeper tone on the figures of Mary and Joseph. Rembrandt also employed a thin film of ink on an impression on Japanese paper in the Teylers Museum, Haarlem, in which the Christ Child seems to disappear into shadow in contrast to the cleanly wiped face and chest of the priest. In the Pierpont Morgan Library impression on Japanese paper, ink was only left on the legs of the priest, the Christ Child, and Simeon’s face. A thicker film of ink was left on an impression in the British Museum that was printed on white European paper (fig. 96). Here Rembrandt left tone on Simeon’s face and on the Christ Child, wiping away a bit more ink on the Child’s halo and left arm. The priest and the standing figure’s headdress and staff are the only areas wiped clean. All other figures, including Joseph and Mary, are barely discernable. As in the Rijksmuseum and Haarlem impressions, the highlights are concentrated on the figures of the two priests.

Descent from the Cross by Torchlight

In the Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, several figures carefully lower Christ from the cross, while a man with a torch stands behind a cloth draped from the cross to help support the lifeless body. Only two places on the plate appear to have been completely polished: the upraised hand near Christ’s shoulder and the standing figure at right. Even the flame on the torch has a slightly grey tone. Rembrandt may have slightly roughened the surface of the plate with a quick acid rinse or he may have burnished

38 An impression in the Rothschild collection, Paris, was very similarly inked and wiped.
specific parts of the plate with extra care. This distribution of light is true of cleanly wiped impressions.

Like the *Presentation*, the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* exists in only one state; however, plate tone and selective wiping again differentiate the various impressions. When he printed this image on white European paper, Rembrandt seems not to have employed surface tone. In these impressions, one can best discern the fairly regular net of dense hatching that creates the darkness in the background. Although the darkness in the background appears velvety in some impressions, it was created with etching alone, and Rembrandt only used drypoint sporadically in this print. Burr can be seen in some of the earlier impressions in the winding sheet, the face and chest of the man descending the ladder, the neck and shoulder of the man seen from behind, Christ’s face, and the shroud on the bier in the foreground. But, by and large, the broad dark passages of the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* were generated by means of a dense net of deeply bitten cross-hatching. It is probable that Rembrandt did not wipe the plate completely clean in the darkest passages, leaving a film of ink in the interstices as he had on earlier prints such as *The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*.

Rembrandt also modulated tone in this print through his choice of support. On some of the early impressions, Rembrandt printed on Japanese paper and left a light film of ink. Selective wiping was seldom employed in impressions of the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, although there is one example on Japanese paper in the Pierpont Morgan Library where tone extends from the foot of the cross down to the lower edge of the left corner of the plate.⁴¹ Impressions on Japanese paper have overall less sense of

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⁴¹ Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. *The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, RvR 130. The copperplate is also in the Pierpont Morgan Library (1993.10) and reveals that there is a skull in the
contrast, compressing the space and lending a quieter and less dramatic feel to the composition.

**The Entombment**

The 1654 *Entombment*, the only example of this subject in Rembrandt’s printed oeuvre, explores the emotional states of the figures around Christ in a study of restricted light in a nocturnal setting. Unlike the *Presentation* and *Descent*, Rembrandt worked through four states in this print, radically altering the appearance of the image through the addition of drypoint and burin work, as well as through selection of paper and variations in inking. Apart from a few touches in drypoint, the first state was executed entirely in etching and is a prime example of Rembrandt’s vocabulary of open parallel shading, which he frequently employed in the 1650s.\(^{42}\) The plate was evenly bitten, yielding lines of equal width regardless of whether they suggest form or depict areas of tone. At this stage of the plate, Rembrandt relied on variations in the length and direction of his etching strokes to differentiate between form and shading.\(^{43}\) The outlines of the figures are reminiscent of the qualities of lines drawn with the reed pen.\(^{44}\)

Even in this first state, Rembrandt has produced a plate with fully realized effects of light. He created shadow and volume through simple parallel lines of hatching, with

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\(^{42}\) In the first state, drypoint can be found on the Virgin’s left elbow and the side of the coffin. See White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, 90.

\(^{43}\) Rembrandt contrasted straight hatching that was quickly scratched into the ground (revealed by the loops at the end of the etched lines) with more hesitant lines that follow the contours of individual figures. Ibid., 90.

\(^{44}\) Rembrandt had previously evoked the feel of reed pen drawings only with drypoint; however, as White pointed out, Rembrandt’s experience with *The Three Crosses* may have allowed him to reproduce this effect in etching. Ibid., 90.
cross-hatching used only in the darkest passages. Unworked areas were used to simulate light emanating from below and also reflecting off the various surfaces of figures and architecture. The light source is not made evident but seems to emanate from within the sarcophagus. The body of Christ is flooded with light that reflects onto the faces of the figures surrounding him, revealing their emotions as they perform the task of lowering his corpse into the grave. These light effects are magnified by the choice of support: all impressions of the first state examined for this dissertation were printed on shiny, white Japanese paper.

The second state incorporates dramatic changes to the plate. Rembrandt covered the entire background with a dense net of cross-hatching, executed with both the burin and drypoint. The result is a mysterious space shrouded in darkness in which the figures (in cleanly wiped impressions) are dramatically lit. In the third state, Rembrandt burnished away some of the dark background in order to restore some of the definition of the architectural space. There is also a fourth state, but differences between the third and fourth state are extremely minor, with only the addition of further diagonal shading on the lower part of the wall halfway down the right margin to reach the top of the wall on the right.

In addition to three state changes, Rembrandt created a broad range of tones through his choice of support, selective wiping, and variations in inking to the extent that no two impressions of this print are the same. The use of white Japanese paper for an impression of the rare first state in the Cleveland Museum of Art (fig. 97) increases the sense of luminosity in the print, with the light seeming to come from an artificial source concealed within the grave in front of the man with his back to us or perhaps from the
body of Christ. The silken quality of the Japanese paper strengthens the impression of radiance.\footnote{The Cleveland Museum of Art, \textit{Entombment}, 1992.4. See also an impression on white European paper in The Art Institute of Chicago, 1938.1756.} For the second and third states, Rembrandt printed on vellum, Japanese paper, and white European paper.\footnote{For the fourth state, Rembrandt printed only on white European paper.} Through variations in inking and wiping, some impressions submerge the figures almost completely into darkness through the use of surface tone, while on others Rembrandt chose to highlight the body of Christ and the figures bearing him by wiping the plate in this area.

Impressions of the second state in particular can differ dramatically from one another. Rembrandt printed a few impressions of the \textit{Entombment} on vellum. An impression in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (fig. 98) on cream-colored vellum is relatively cleanly wiped; however, the creamy color of the support adds a subtle glow to the image and reduces any sharp contrasts.\footnote{Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, \textit{Entombment}, 23.1013.} An impression on yellow-colored vellum in Amsterdam (fig. 99) was printed with heavy surface tone, almost completely submerging the figures on the left into darkness.\footnote{Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, \textit{Entombment}, RP-P-OB-152.} In this instance, Rembrandt wiped the plate cleaner in places so that it would appear as if a flickering light was falling on Christ’s feet and torso, as well as on the faces of the two men on the right.

Like the Amsterdam impression on vellum, a number of impressions of the second, third, and fourth states were printed with plate tone left on the unworked areas (fig. 100).\footnote{For example, see an impression on European paper suffused with a broad range of tones in the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1992.5.} Rembrandt inked the plate so heavily in an impression in the British
Museum (fig. 101) that most of the figures are almost completely lost in the darkness, apart from a faint glimmer of grey light that barely reveals Christ and the face of the Virgin.\textsuperscript{50} For other impressions (including another in the British Museum, fig. 102) Rembrandt left only a light film of ink on the surface of the plate, and he did not cleanly wipe any details, leaving no highlights. Rembrandt added white body color to at least two of these impressions in an attempt to create highlights.\textsuperscript{51} An impression of what is probably the second state is remarkable for the way Rembrandt used ink to “draw” the outline of arched windows in the background of the cavernous space (fig. 103).\textsuperscript{52}

\textit{Christ at Emmaus}

An examination of \textit{Christ at Emmaus} (B. 87) serves as an important corollary to the study of Rembrandt’s dark-toned prints. In contrast to the darkness of the \textit{Descent} and the \textit{Entombment} which describe Christ’s death, the form of the resurrected Christ in \textit{Christ at Emmaus} seems to dissolve in radiant light in a composition that is set in the light of day.

The etched lines of \textit{Christ at Emmaus} are stylistically similar to those of the first state of the \textit{Entombment}. Rembrandt made use of quickly laid open parallel hatching that is not confined to the forms it defines and of more deliberate contours that roughly follow the contours of figures and objects. He again took full advantage of the unworked areas of the plate and the color of the support to suggest visually the effects of radiating light.

\textsuperscript{50} British Museum, London, \textit{Entombment}, 1843,0911.45

\textsuperscript{51} These impressions are in the British Museum, London (1848,0911.44) and the Fogg Museum, Boston (M2899).

\textsuperscript{52} Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, \textit{Entombment}, RP-P-OB-153.
In the first state (fig. 6), the head and halo of Christ are lightly etched and seemingly ethereal, giving the viewer an image of Christ as a spiritual being about to vanish from the sight of his disciples. Rembrandt heightened this quality in an impression in Boston, which was printed on thin, pale Japanese paper (fig. 104). A number of impressions of the first state are printed on paper of this kind (figs. 105-106). Rembrandt added significant work in drypoint in the second state, completing the face of Christ and adding more rays to his halo, creating a more material than ethereal feel to the image.

In addition to varying the supports for this plate, Rembrandt once again made use of selective wiping. In an impression of the first state on white European paper in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (fig. 107), Rembrandt incorporated a small amount of plate tone in the shaded areas of the curtain and along the right edge of the print, visually increasing the area of brightness around Christ. In an impression in Cleveland (fig. 108), Rembrandt employed plate tone around Christ’s right hand. In an impression on white European paper of the second state in the Pierpont Morgan Library, Rembrandt employed plate tone on both of the figures at the right side of the composition, on the curtain at the left and right sides of Christ, the lower corners of the

53 In his catalogue entry for *Christ Appearing to the Apostles*, Ackley pointed out that the broken, dotted, and suggestive line in that print parallels the drawing style of some of his religious drawings of the 1650s in which he used an almost dry pen to achieve a delicate “spidery” line that seems to dissolve into the blank paper. The same could be said for Rembrandt’s handling of the etching needle in the first state of *The Christ at Emmaus*. See Rembrandt’s Journey, cat. 152, p. 230.

54 The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Christ at Emmaus*, 60.1543.

55 Two further examples on Japanese paper can be found in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam: an impression of the first state, RP-P-1962-46, and an early impression of the second state, RP-P-OB-158.

56 National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. *Christ at Emmaus*, 1943.3.9111.

57 The Cleveland Museum of Art, *Christ at Emmaus*, 1922.280.
plate, and the upper right edge, including part of the sky seen through the window.\textsuperscript{58} Rembrandt apparently used this light film of ink to temper the highlights from the sun and instead focus our attention on Christ’s radiance.

\textit{Conclusion}

Rembrandt’s painted chiaroscuro has been the focus of several recent studies, most notably by Ernst van de Wetering who has approached light and shade in Rembrandt’s paintings from a technical standpoint. Van de Wetering examined Rembrandt’s working process in the creation of his paintings and argued that the use of light and shade by Rembrandt and other seventeenth-century Dutch artists was integral to the creation of plausible space.

There has been comparatively little attention to cross-media connections of Rembrandt’s interest in the creation of tone. Although the technical creation of chiaroscuro has been discussed for Rembrandt’s paintings, Van de Wetering only looked to prints in \textit{Rembrandt: The Painter at Work} in order to confirm his findings about light and shade in the paintings. However, many of the goals that Rembrandt sought in terms of chiaroscuro in his paintings apply equally to prints, as can be seen with the comparison of the “rough manner” to the effects of drypoint. Through experimentation with a variety of supports, etching techniques, inking, and biting the plate, Rembrandt developed a number of inventive ways of developing tone and chiaroscuro in his prints. Further, by linking the \textit{Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross, Entombment}, and \textit{Christ at Emmaus}, New York, Christ at Emmaus, RvR 138.
at Emmaus with paintings and drawings, this chapter sought to address Rembrandt’s cross-media interest in dramatic chiaroscuro.

Rembrandt’s use of dramatic chiaroscuro and his technical experimentation with printmaking inform our understanding of the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross, Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus*. In order to best understand this group of etching, this chapter examined Rembrandt’s formal innovations in the creation of graphic chiaroscuro in relationship to other prints from the artist’s oeuvre. The following chapter will investigate the extent to which expression is a function of these technical choices as witnessed by different states as well as individual impressions of the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross, Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus*. 
Chapter 5:

Technique and Meaning in the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus

Introduction

Through experimentation with his etching and drypoint technique, papers, and inking, Rembrandt created a group of prints in which each impression is unique. This chapter links technique with meaning in a detailed discussion of the various states and individual impressions of the Presentation in the Temple (fig. 1), Descent from the Cross by Torchlight (fig. 2), Entombment (fig. 3), and Christ at Emmaus (fig. 4), leading to an investigation of the expressive function of dramatic lighting in these four works. The first part of this chapter explores the expressive qualities of darkness in the Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Presentation in the Temple, and Entombment, while the second part addresses the role of bright light in Christ at Emmaus as its corollary. A close look at different states and individual impressions reveals how changes in and experimentation with technique affect the meaning of the image. In addition to Rembrandt’s technical approach to these four prints, this chapter will examine the narrative and compositional differences in Rembrandt’s treatment of these four subjects across his oeuvre in order to establish similarities in the artist’s approach to the 1654 Life of Christ prints.

Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner

Each time Rembrandt took up the theme of the Presentation in the Temple in etching (B. 51, 49, and 50), he altered his interpretation of the narrative. The earliest
composition, (B. 51, 1630, fig. 109) belongs to a group of three etchings of episodes from the childhood of Christ, all of which are small-scale and highly finished.\(^1\) In the 1630 etching, Rembrandt focused on Simeon’s address to Mary (Luke 2:34-35) that “this child is set for a fall and resurrection of many in Israel and for a sign that will be spoken against. And also a sword shall go through thine own soul that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”\(^2\)

The second etching of *The Presentation in the Temple: Oblong Print* (B. 49, fig. 110), datable to about 1639-41, is much bigger with figures that are larger in scale.\(^3\) As in the composition of the 1630s, Anna is a major presence in this etching as she is literally at the center of the composition. The dramatic diagonal fall of light from the upper left, however, ultimately leads the viewer’s eyes past Anna to Simeon, holding the infant Christ, who prophesies to Mary the tribulations she and her son will face.

Rembrandt foreshadows Christ’s Passion in this etching through the rigid pose and deathlike stillness of the infant Christ in Simeon’s arms.\(^4\)

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1 The 1630 *Presentation in the Temple* measures 10.2 x 7.8 cm. Others of this group include *The Circumcision*, 1630 (B. 48) and *Christ Disputing with the Doctors*, 1630 (B. 66).

2 An early Rembrandt painting (about 1627-28) in the Kunsthalle, Hamburg depicts the same moment of narrative and makes use of equally dramatic raking light (Br. 535; Corpus A12).

3 *The Presentation in the Temple: Oblong Print* measures 21.2 x 29 cm. As is typical of many of Rembrandt’s etchings from the end of the 1630s, the etched line is very fine and the overall tone of the print is a light mid-grey. Rembrandt employed a web of delicate cross-hatching to render the shadows of the Temple in the background. Diagonal rays of divine light lead the eye to Simeon and the Christ Child. As in other etchings of the late 1630s and early 1640s, such as *The Death of the Virgin* (1639, B. 99), Rembrandt made use of various degrees of finish to focus the viewer’s attention on the central event. Ackley, *Rembrandt’s Journey*, 66.

4 In their examination of the *Presentation in the Temple: Oblong Print*, Perlove and Silver also note the importance of the three female figures that bear witness to Simeon’s and Mary’s exchange as connecting this scene with the Passion through their similarity to the three Marys at Christ’s tomb. Perlove and Silver, 213.
In the third etched version, *The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner* (B. 50), Rembrandt further reduced the space and number of figures in the composition in order to focus the viewer’s attention on Simeon’s song of thanksgiving (the Nunc Dimittis) at the center of the composition.\(^5\) Anna, a central figure of the earlier compositions, has been moved to the periphery, while Simeon holds the Christ child as he kneels before a priest seated on a podium. Another sumptuously dressed priest with a staff towers over this central group of figures.\(^6\) In this etching, Simeon and the Christ child are not separated from the two priests; instead they are united in a stable pyramidal grouping at the center of the composition. Mary and Joseph kneel in the shadows behind Simeon, and Anna witnesses the scene from the darkness of a balcony at the upper right. In the shadows above Mary and Joseph at the left is another figure who peers down from a gallery opposite that of Anna.\(^7\) Rembrandt evoked the sense of a dark, quiet corner of the Temple through the use of restricted light and focused attention on Simeon, the *sagan* (the seated high priest) and the *Cohen HaGadol* (the standing priest) by reserving the brightest highlights for these three figures in most impressions; everything else is

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\(^5\) Perlove and Silver, 217. The authors identified the narrow enclosure as a space on or near the upper landing of the steps of the Nicanor Gate of the Court of Women, the location where priests officiated in his earlier etchings of the *Presentation in the Temple*.

\(^6\) Perlove and Silver, 221. The authors note that the staff resembles descriptions of Aaron’s rod, which was kept in the Ark of the Covenant until it was lost in the destruction of Solomon’s Temple. According to Christian legend, the rod was hidden in Jerusalem until the birth of Jesus. Jewish Midrashic sources predict that the lost staff would reappear with the Messiah and will serve as his kingly scepter.

\(^7\) Perlove and Silver identified this figure as an “old mournful Jew,” 219. However, this figure is enshrouded in darkness in even the most cleanly wiped impressions, making it difficult to discern his facial features, let alone his emotional state.
suffused with a broad range of shadows, leaving the highlights on these figures as the only areas of the plate left untouched.⁸

As discussed in the previous chapter, Rembrandt’s use of various supports suggests that he was preoccupied with the use of restricted light in *The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner*. Thus cleanly wiped impressions on white or ivory European paper reveal the masterful blending of intaglio techniques, while other impressions printed on Japanese paper lend softer tones to the etching. Even when cleanly wiped, impressions on Japanese paper do not exhibit the same dramatic contrasts of darkness and light as do impressions on white or ivory European laid paper. Thus, the choice of Japanese paper functions in part to lessen the sense of drama.⁹

As discussed in chapter four, Rembrandt also experimented with the inking of this plate on the four known impressions printed on Japanese paper and on one impression printed on white European paper (fig. 30).¹⁰ Through these experiments with inking, Rembrandt seems to have been exploring the expressive potential of darkness. Across all the impressions discussed in chapter four, Rembrandt left plate tone on Simeon’s face, the Christ Child, and Mary and Joseph. The artist consistently created highlights by cleanly wiping the face of the *sagan* and the breastplate and staff of the *Cohen HaGadol*. Darkness functions here to connect figures, not obliterate them, and may even serve a

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⁸ Perlove and Silver identified the standing priest as the *Cohen HaGadol* because he wears the breastplate, which indicates his privileged entrance into the Oracle or Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, while the seated priest in his sumptuous robe is the *sagan*, the chief priest in charge of all the other priests. Perlove and Silver, 221.

⁹ Instead of emphasizing narrative and visual drama, as he had in the 1630s, Rembrandt’s etchings of the 1650s generally focused on creating a sense of emotional connection or isolation through the use of light and shadow. Scallen, “Rembrandt’s Nocturne Prints” 16.

It is important to remember that the Holy Family is about to embark on a perilous journey as they flee from Herod. Impressions of Rembrandt’s *Flight into Egypt: a Night Piece* (B. 53, fig. 15) from just a few years earlier often represent the protective cover of night through the use of heavy surface tone.

Darkness and shadow in the *Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner* also provide a somber, funereal mood. Simeon’s offering of the Christ child foreshadows Christ’s future sacrifice and unifies the Presentation scene within the Passion narrative. Perhaps it is to this expressive end that Rembrandt chose to create an area of shadow on the Christ child’s face, as well as the faces of Mary, Joseph, Anna, and the man in the gallery. It is significant that the window described by Shelley Perlove and Larry Silver as referring to the opening to the Holy of Holies is placed directly above Mary’s head, linking this new mother with the veil rent upon Christ’s crucifixion. Her bowed head and shadowed face suggest that her thoughts are heavy with the tribulation her son will face. In some impressions, particularly those on Japanese paper, Rembrandt also left a film of ink on Simeon’s face, possibly suggesting that his revelation of Christ as High Priest is tinged by the awareness of Christ’s coming Passion or his own impending death.

It is also significant that Rembrandt chose to shade the face of the *Cohen HaGadol*. It should be noted that Rembrandt chose to cleanly wipe the area of the

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11 Perlove and Silver refer to the darkness of this print as “an enshrouding darkness [that] threatens to obliterate all that is untouched by the miraculous light,” providing an atmosphere of “prophetic doom and mystery” as Mary, Joseph, and Anna “threaten to disappear into the darkness of the etching’s shadows.” Perlove and Silver, 219.

12 Perlove and Silver, 224.

13 Although aspects of his vestments are cleanly wiped and appear to reflect brilliant light, Perlove and Silver contend that the *Cohen HaGadol* peers down at the infant and sinks into darkness as he contemplates how Christ will assume the role of High Priest. Thus, according to Perlove and Silver, he is in the darkness because his function has been usurped. Perlove and Silver, 219. Although this is one
breastplate, as well as the golden plate of his turban and the staff, on every impression of
the Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner examined for this dissertation.
Rembrandt seems to have used darkness and shadow to connect the Cohen HaGadol with
the other shadowed figures in the print. Instead of looking down at the Christ child, as
suggested by Perlove and Silver, the Cohen HaGadol is possibly examining the gems on
his breastplate.\(^{14}\) The Cohen HaGadol used these gems to ask for guidance when he went
into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. The Lord then communicated an
answer with the play of light on the breastplate gems.\(^ {15}\) By shading the face of the Cohen
HaGadol, Rembrandt may have been linking him with the funereal atmosphere pervading
the print as he becomes aware of God’s plan of redemption through Christ’s sacrifice.
Because the Cohen HaGadol is wearing the breastplate, he is dressed for the Day of
Atonement (Yom Kippur) when he entered the Holy of Holies to atone for the peoples’
sins with a blood offering, foreshadowing in this print Christ’s death on the cross.\(^ {16}\)

Rembrandt followed visual tradition by dressing Simeon in luxurious robes like a
high priest.\(^ {17}\) The sagan, with his untrimmed white beard and aged visage, is a mirror

\(^{14}\) The most important element of the Cohen HaGadol’s attire was the “breastplate of judgment,” which
was comprised of three rows of four stones, as described in Exodus 28:17. Each of the twelve gems was
engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Urim and Thummim, stones used to
foretell the future and communicate with the Lord, were also set within the breastplate.

\(^{15}\) According to Christian interpretation, the stones of the breastplate that revealed God’s mind did not shine
from the time of the destruction of Solomon’s Temple until the days of Christ, the true high priest. The
golden plate of the Cohen HaGadol’s turban also glows. Described in Exodus 28:36, this plate was
inscribed with “Holiness to the Lord.”

\(^{16}\) Perlove and Silver suggest that perhaps Rembrandt was aware of the well-known belief held by Calvin,
among others, that Jesus was born in September rather than December. Perlove and Silver, 219.
Rembrandt depicted a similarly attired Cohen HaGadol in the Circumcision etching from the 1630s.

\(^{17}\) For example, see the Presentation panel of Rubens’ Descent from the Cross altarpiece in Antwerp
Cathedral.
image of Simeon, particularly in impressions where there is no film of ink shrouding Simeon’s face. The viewer is thus confronted with a juxtaposition of the blind Simeon who holds the infant Jesus and “sees” him as the Messiah and the sighted priest who holds the Law and does not “see.” The sagan’s face is the only one consistently left by Rembrandt in the light. In impressions where an area of tone is left on Simeon’s face, the sagan is evidently the only one untouched by the knowledge of Christ’s Passion.

In addition to its expressive role, darkness serves another function in this print. Even in the most heavily inked impressions, which are suffused with tone, figures and details of the composition are not completely obliterated. The shadows draw the viewer in closer in order to examine the forms partially hidden in the dark. In this way, Rembrandt used chiaroscuro in a manner akin to the diminutive size of his Circumcision: The Small Plate from 1630 (B. 48, fig. 111) or Albrecht Altdorfer’s Fall and Redemption of Man series. Like darkness in The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner, the small formats of these prints required simpler or more direct arrangements of traditional forms and figures as well as the reduction of detail, while drawing the viewer in to examine the tiny prints. Dramatic chiaroscuro allowed Rembrandt to omit superfluous detail while simultaneously bringing the viewer closer to investigate details shrouded in darkness.

Descent from the Cross by Torchlight

The Descent from the Cross was another subject that Rembrandt turned to repeatedly over the course of his career. Clifford Ackley has noted that in representations of the Descent from the Cross in all media, Rembrandt demonstrated his interest in
reimagining narrative details, especially the physical task of removing Christ’s dead body from the cross. In the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, the physical removal of the body is dramatically enhanced by the torchlight that shines in the profound darkness. This artificial light source contrasts with the rays of divine light that illuminate the nocturnal scene in the 1633 *Descent* (fig. 70), and yet it is equally dramatic. Drama and physical suspense are also provided by the full weight of Christ’s body being received by a small man with a powerful torso but short legs who stands at the edge of a steep drop. The addition of drypoint to the upper portion of the man’s torso adds to this effect by drawing attention to this figure while simultaneously suggesting the physical strength of the man’s upper body as contrasted with the slender legs supporting him.

Like the *Presentation*, the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* exists in only one state; however, plate tone and selective wiping were occasionally employed to differentiate the various impressions. As discussed in the previous chapter, impressions on Japanese paper have, overall, less sense of contrast, which compresses the space and lends a quieter and less dramatic mood to the composition. In these impressions, the viewer’s position relative to the cross and the figures attending to Christ’s body is changed. The distance between the action on the hill and the foreground figures near the bier is constricted, thus bringing the figures attending to the removal of Christ’s body from the cross in closer proximity to the viewer. These figures are the main subject, serving as witnesses and bearers of the body of Christ, concluding the process of physical support begun by Simeon in the *Presentation in the Temple*. Perhaps Rembrandt chose

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19 Perlove and Silver, 301.
to align the depiction of the Temple with the horizontal body of Christ in this composition in order to allude to the events in the Presentation, not simply to juxtapose old faith with new.  

That only two places on the plate appear to have been completely polished, the upraised hand near Christ’s shoulder and the shoulder of the standing figure at the right edge of the composition, seems to suggest that Rembrandt wanted these two particular areas of the composition to catch the light and the viewer’s attention. On a formal level, the highlights on these two figures serve to lead the viewer’s eyes along a diagonal path through the composition. The eyes follow the diagonal beginning with the winding sheet draped from the cross, continuing with the upraised hand and then ends at the standing man on the right side of the print. From there, the eyes are led horizontally across to the bier in the foreground. Ackley pointed out that the horizontal position of Christ’s body, parallel to the bier on which he is to be laid, reinforces this sequence of events by foreshadowing the position that Christ’s body will take once laid out. Rembrandt strengthened this association by leading the eye through the composition from the removal of Christ from the cross to the bier in the foreground, which suggests a sequence of events in time both within the composition and beyond.  

When examined alongside an impression of the 1654 *Entombment*, the location of the cloth on the bier in the

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20 Perlove and Silver’s discussion of the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* rests on the assumption that the juxtaposition of Old Testament covenant and the New Dispensation is the central meaning of the image.

21 Similarly, Ackley noted that certain details of the composition suggest a chain of actual and implied actions, such as the winding cloth with the ladder to lower Christ’s body and the bier in the foreground onto which he is to be placed. See Ackley, “Rembrandt as Actor and Dramatist,” 25.
Descent further implies a sequence of events leading toward the burial of Christ in its similar position in the foreground of the Entombment.

The Entombment

The subject matter of the 1654 Entombment (B. 86) was of interest to Rembrandt from an early point in his career; he explored the subject of the Entombment as early as the 1630s in a monochrome oil sketch in Glasgow (fig. 112).22 However, Rembrandt created no other prints of this subject. Like dark impressions of the 1654 print, the Glasgow Entombment also reduced detail to a minimum, focusing the eyes on the brightly lit body of Christ and the emotions of the figures surrounding him.

Unlike the Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner and the Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Rembrandt worked through four states in this print, deepening the darkness and further obscuring the figures with the addition of lines. As discussed in the previous chapter, in addition to three state changes, Rembrandt created a broad range of tones through his choice of support, selective wiping, and variations in inking.

22 It incorporates two artificial light sources into its nocturnal setting: a torch held by a woman at left and shaded by her hand and a dimmer lantern at the upper right. The figures around Christ are dramatically lit and have more defined facial features and expressions than the other figures in the composition. Rembrandt relied on a range of darks, from almost pitch black to creamy brownish grey, punctuated only by lead white and ochre yellow on the figures directly illuminated by the candle. The Glasgow Entombment is sometimes described as a stage in the evolution or a variation of the Entombment painting (Alte Pinakothek, Munich) for Frederik Hendrik of 1636-39. The painted Passion series for Frederik Hendrik included an Entombment, in which candlelight focuses viewer’s attention on the body of Christ and his followers. Gloom prevails under the rim of the cave, and the setting sun lights the three crosses on the hill in the distance. Rembrandt followed visual tradition in this painting and in his other depictions of the Entombment by placing Joseph of Arimathea at Christ’s head and Nicodemus at his feet. Ackley suggested that the Glasgow Entombment was not a preparatory work but was instead created for its own sake. See Rembrandt’s Journey, 112. For more information on Rembrandt’s oil sketches, see also Ernst Van de Wetering, “Remarks on Rembrandt’s oil-sketches for etchings,” Rembrandt the Printmaker, Erik Kinterding, Ger Luijten, and Martin Royalton-Kisch, eds. (London, 2000): 56. Van de Wetering suggested the possibility that the Glasgow Entombment was originally intended as a model for an etching, perhaps by Van Vliet.
Visually, an image shrouded in darkness requires close proximity in order to examine details and thus, in dark impressions of the *Entombment*, the viewer enters into an intimate relationship with the body of Christ and the figures surrounding him. The viewer’s position relative to the print changes when details are cloaked in shadows; when the impression is held up close, it may seem as if the viewer’s body is in the space of the grave at eye-level with the figures lowering Christ into the ground. That the action of lowering Christ’s body into the grave is confined to the lower right corner of the lower edge of the plate accentuates the feeling of descent, but also places the viewer within the space of the narrative.

Through the use of selective wiping, Rembrandt was able to alter the meaning of individual impressions. For example, in an impression on yellow-colored vellum in Amsterdam (fig. 99) that was printed with heavy surface tone, almost completely submerging the figures on the left into darkness, Rembrandt wiped the plate cleaner in places so that it would appear as if a flickering light was falling on Christ’s feet and torso, as well as on the faces of the two men on the right. Because the figures on the left are obscured by darkness, the viewer focuses on those figures lowering Christ’s body into the grave. Thus the narrative focus shifts toward the physical task rather than emotional response. The dramatic charge of the image is affected because the more theatrical emotional responses of the figures on the left are almost impossible to discern. In another impression in the British Museum (fig. 101), Rembrandt inked the plate so heavily that most of the figures are almost completely lost in the darkness, with only Christ and the

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23 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, *Entombment*, RP-P-OB-152.
face of the Virgin barely discernible. By visually linking the Virgin and Christ in this impression, Rembrandt may have expected the viewer to contemplate Mary’s emotional state in particular as her son is lowered into the grave.

**Christ at Emmaus**

In *Christ at Emmaus*, Rembrandt once again took full advantage of the unworked areas of the plate and the color of the support to suggest visually the effects of radiating light. In contrast to the darkness of the *Descent* and the later states of the *Entombment*, the form of the resurrected Christ in *Christ at Emmaus* seems to dissolve in radiant light in a composition that is set in the light of day.

Rembrandt portrayed the subject of *Christ at Emmaus* at least five times over the course of his career. For example, the painted *Christ at Emmaus* in the Louvre, Paris (1648, fig. 113) follows visual tradition in showing the moment when the two disciples recognize Christ at the table, while the waiter remains oblivious to the revelation before him. Like Dürer’s *Last Supper* from the *Large Passion* (fig. 114), the Louvre *Emmaus* is set within a high stone vault, although Rembrandt’s space is simpler. In the 1654 etching, however, Christ is enthroned beneath a large baldachin like a king. The baldachin in the print also recalls the canopy in a red chalk sketch in the Metropolitan Museum of Art after Leonardo’s *Last Supper* (Ben. 445, fig. 115), as well as the canopy

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25 Rembrandt’s interest in depicting the Resurrected Body reappeared two years later in *Christ Appearing to the Apostles*, 1656 (B.89). Like the first state of *The Christ at Emmaus*, here Christ’s features are only sketchily indicated, and indeed His radiance seems to be dissolving the forms of all the figures in the room. *Rembrandt’s Journey*, cat. 152, pg. 230.

26 Rembrandt may have included the baldachin in order to allude to the Second Coming where Christ would come in glory as a king.
in Dürer’s depiction in woodcut of the same subject from the Small Passion series (fig. 116).27

In the 1654 print, connections to the Last Supper are reinforced by the large glass goblet on the table and the lamb on the plate, which evokes the Paschal lamb sacrificed once a year by the Temple priest at Passover. Jesus proffers two pieces of bread to the apostles and the waiter. The breaking of bread and the goblet on the table also allude to Christ’s institution of the Eucharist during the Last Supper. Although the goblet on the table is suggestive of a wine goblet, thus referring to the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist, the liquid in the goblet is clear, leaving the association ambiguous. Perhaps Rembrandt chose not to specifically render wine in the goblet in order to leave the correlation vague enough to appeal to different segments of the market, thereby not limiting his market for this print. Even so, these narrative details serve as a visual reminder of Christ’s sacrifice through his physical death on the Cross.

In conjunction with narrative details, Rembrandt seems to have made use of state changes, variations in support, and selective wiping in order to emphasize Christ’s dual nature as both God and man. As discussed in chapter four, the head and halo of Christ are lightly etched and seemingly ethereal in the first state of the 1654 Emmaus, giving the viewer an image of Christ as a spiritual being about to vanish from the sight of his disciples.28 Rembrandt heightened this quality in a number of impressions printed on

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27 Rembrandt produced sketches of Leonardo’s Last Supper in 1635. Leonardo’s fresco would have been known to Rembrandt through a sixteenth-century Milanese engraving. The sketch mentioned above is in the Robert Lehman Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. See Ackley, Rembrandt’s Journey, 67 and Seymour Slive, Rembrandt Drawings, Los Angeles, 2009, 166-168. The posture of Christ in the print is also similar to the posture of Leonardo’s Christ.

28 See chapter four, p. 123-124 and note 52.
thin, pale Japanese paper. In the second state, Rembrandt added significant work in drypoint, completing the face of Christ and adding more rays to his halo, creating a more material than ethereal quality through the image. In addition to varying the supports for this plate, Rembrandt once again made use of selective wiping. The impressions in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (fig. 107) and the Pierpont Morgan Library described in chapter four incorporate plate tone to temper the highlights from the sun to instead focus the viewer’s attention on Christ’s radiance at the center of the composition. Both of these examples use plate tone to further underscore the moment of revelation, marked by the brilliant light around Christ.

**Conclusion**

In a detailed discussion of the various states and individual impressions of the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment,* and *Christ at Emmaus,* this chapter linked technique with meaning, leading to an investigation of the communicative function of dramatic lighting in these four works. The chapter explored the expressive qualities of darkness in the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Presentation in the Temple,* and the *Entombment,* as well as the role of bright light in *Christ at Emmaus* as its corollary. A close look at different states and individual impressions revealed how changes in and experimentation with techniques affect the meaning of the image. Unlike Rembrandt’s other prints of the same subjects, the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment,* and *Christ at Emmaus* share striking chiaroscuro effects and attention to individual

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29 For example, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam RP-P-1962-46 and RP-P-OB-158.

30 See chapter four, notes 55 and 57.
impressions through the use of varied inkings and papers, which affects the expressive qualities of each impression. The extent to which Rembrandt may have been thinking of these four images in a manner akin to a series will be explored in the next chapter.
Chapter 6:  
The Question of Series

Introduction

Should *The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner* (fig. 1), *The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* (fig. 2), *The Entombment* (fig. 3), and *Christ at Emmaus* (fig. 4) be classified as a series? This question, raised a number of times in the literature, will be discussed by comparing the subjects and use of light of these four prints to images from traditional Northern European print series, as well as to other Rembrandt prints with similar narrative subjects or dramatic chiaroscuro. An examination of Dürer’s prints, specifically his religious print series, such as the *Engraved Passion* and the woodcut series of the *Large* and *Small Passions*, serves an important role in determining the relationship of these four Rembrandt prints to traditional Northern print series. This chapter will focus on iconographic and narrative similarities between Rembrandt’s four prints and their counterparts in Dürer’s series. In addition to a comparison with Dürer’s series, this chapter also explores the relationship of Rembrandt’s four prints to the work of other Northern printmakers who created serial imagery, especially Albrecht Altdorfer’s *Fall and Redemption of Man* from about 1513, which was produced in response to Dürer’s series and is distinctly different in its interpretation of biblical events.¹ This discussion also considers the plate sizes of these prints and various supports used to print them in order to determine whether Rembrandt intended these...

¹ See Landau and Parshall, 202-206.
images to be set apart as a distinct group of images from others created around the same time.

**The Question of Series**

*The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner, The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, The Entombment,* and *Christ at Emmaus* have frequently been grouped as a series on the Life of Christ because of their subject matter, use of light, size, and vertical format. While some scholars have doubted whether the artist definitively created these images as a series, the prints are generally discussed as a stylistically and thematically related group. In 1895, Woldemar Seidlitz was the first to connect the four images through their use of light and suggested that Rembrandt conceived of these four prints as a closely related group.² Christopher White asserted in 1969 that the four vertical images of the Life of Christ (together with the six horizontal ones on the infancy of Christ) form a series in effect, if not in intention, probably as a result of Rembrandt’s engagement with Dürer’s *Engraved Passion* during this time.³ Clifford Ackley also noted the similarities of format and dimension among these four prints and suggested the possibility that Rembrandt was contemplating a more extended series on the Life of Christ.⁴ Similarly, Catherine Scallen linked these images through their common size and

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³ White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, 90.

date of creation but found that their narrative differences precluded identifying them as a formal series.  

Serial production was certainly not completely foreign to Rembrandt’s oeuvre. In 1630, Rembrandt created three highly finished, miniaturist etchings of the Childhood of Christ: *The Circumcision* (B. 48, fig. 111), *The Presentation in the Temple* (B. 51, fig. 109), and *Christ Disputing with the Doctors* (B. 66, fig. 116). Because of their approximate size, format, and conception, these three etchings are akin to a series, even though they were never issued as such. All three of these prints use a dramatically darkened foreground to heighten effects of theatrical lighting in the middle ground. In addition, they are all tonal in conception, employing dense bundles of fine lines to define broad ranges of light and shadow.

From about 1633 to 1639, Rembrandt was involved with the execution of five Passion paintings for the court of the stadholder, Frederik Hendrik. Rembrandt delivered the first two, *The Raising of the Cross* (fig. 118) and *The Descent* (fig. 119), in 1633, followed by *The Ascension* (fig. 122) in 1636, and finally *The Entombment* (fig. 120) and *The Resurrection* (fig. 121) in 1639. The five paintings are similar, though not

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6 B. 48 measures 9 x 6.4 cm; B. 51 measures 10.3 x 7.8 cm; B. 66 measures 10.8 x 7.8 cm. Clifford Ackley pointed out that there are two later Childhood of Christ etchings that are similar in dimension that readily compare with these three 1630 etchings: the 1633 *Flight into Egypt* (B. 52; 8.9 x 6.2 cm) and the 1644 *Rest on the Flight (a night piece)* (B. 57; 9.2 x 5.9 cm). See Ackley, *Rembrandt’s Journey*, 103.

7 These five paintings were originally commissioned by Frederik’s secretary, Constantijn Huygens, the art lover and humanist who admired the young Rembrandt’s work.
identical, in size and format.\textsuperscript{8} In 1646, two paintings from the childhood of Christ were added to the group, an \textit{Adoration of the Shepherds} (fig. 117) and a lost \textit{Circumcision}.\textsuperscript{9}

In the 1650s, Rembrandt produced his most ambitious, large format, horizontal narratives from the Passion: the prints \textit{Christ Presented to the People} (fig. 10) and \textit{Christ Crucified}, also called \textit{The Three Crosses} (fig. 11). Because they share similar format and dimensions, the two plates are generally considered together. Both are pure drypoint prints, unprecedented on this scale in this history of printmaking. After changes to the plates of both prints, Rembrandt moved the emphasis from the spectators to a dramatic emphasis on the figure of Christ in the final state. For example, Rembrandt shifted from the relative clarity and serenity of the first three states of \textit{The Three Crosses} to the dissonant, shadowy chaos of the radically revised fourth state, which resulted in dramatic changes in both postures and gestures of the participants and ultimately focuses the viewer’s attention on the figure of Christ on the cross. \textit{Christ Presented to the People} also underwent radical changes in the sixth through eighth states, in which Rembrandt removed a crowd of spectators in the foreground and replaced them with dark arches in the base of the platform upon which Christ and Pilate stand. In the seventh state, Rembrandt redrew the figure of Christ, making him more substantial and lending him a greater physical presence.

In 1654, in addition to the four prints discussed in this dissertation Rembrandt produced six horizontal etchings on the Childhood of Christ: \textit{The Adoration of the Shepherds} (B. 45, fig. 123), \textit{The Circumcision in the Stable} (B. 47, fig. 124), \textit{The Flight}

\textsuperscript{8} All five paintings are in the collection of the Alte Pinakotheck in Munich. They all share a vertical format with arched top and measure approximately 89 by 65cm.

\textsuperscript{9} The \textit{Adoration of the Shepherds} is also in the Alte Pinakotheck in Munich, and the \textit{Circumcision} is known only though a copy in the Herzog Anton-Ulrich Museum, Brunswick.
into Egypt (B. 55, fig. 125), The Virgin and Child with the Cat and Snake (B. 63, fig. 126), Christ Disputing with the Doctors (B. 64, fig. 127), and Christ Returning from the Temple with his Parents (B. 60, fig. 128). The Adoration of the Shepherds is slightly taller and squarer than the other five, which share a similar size and format. In addition, The Adoration of the Shepherds is signed but not dated, while the others are fully signed and dated. Despite these differences, all six are completely consistent in style and proportion of figures to space. Further, Rembrandt restaged the setting of the circumcision in the stable, which he had previously depicted as occurring in the Temple. This relocation allowed the print to better harmonize with an emphasis on the humble daily life of the Holy Family that characterizes all six prints.11

There is documentary evidence that the art dealer Dirck van Kattenburch left a set of copper plates with Rembrandt toward the end of his life that was intended for a Passion series; however, there is no evidence to suggest that it was completed. In 1671, the artist Allaert van Everdingen and his son Cornelis testified on Kattenburch’s behalf regarding Kattenburch’s claim to the commission of the painting of Simeon left unfinished in Rembrandt’s studio upon his death (probably the painting in Stockholm, fig. 129). Cornelis testified that he had visited Rembrandt’s studio a few months previously and that, in addition to discussing the ownership of the painting, Rembrandt showed him some polished plates that Kattenburch left him “om daer de passie op te

10 The Adoration of the Shepherds measures 10.5 by 12.8 cm, while the other five prints measure approximately 9.5 by 14.5 cm.

11 Earlier depictions of the Circumcision located within the Temple setting include his etchings of about 1626 (S. 398) and 1630 (B. 48). Shifting the location also allowed Mary to be present without violating religious law. See Ackley, Rembrandt’s Journey, cat. 162, p. 241.
meacken” (on which to execute the Passion), which suggests that Rembrandt was open to the possibility of creating serial imagery.\textsuperscript{12}

These examples make clear that, throughout his career, Rembrandt seems to have had periods of activity where he thought about a particular subject or related narratives in groups, if not in strictly defined series. Like many earlier printmakers, such as Dürer or Altdorfer, Rembrandt seems to have been thinking serially about biblical subjects. Unlike other printmakers, however, Rembrandt did not employ completely uniform dimensions, and aside from the small series of book illustrations etched in 1655 for Menassah ben Israel’s mystical treatise, he never published prints as a series.\textsuperscript{13}

Whether Rembrandt conceived of The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner, The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, The Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus as a series or not, they do not seem to have been printed together in batches. According to Erik Hinterding’s watermark research, all four prints were printed on papers with watermarks dating to the mid-1650s; however, of the impressions examined, the watermarks of the four prints do not overlap.\textsuperscript{14} Unfortunately, this information is not conclusive as it leaves out an important segment of impressions, namely those printed on oriental papers or vellum, since they lack watermarks. This lack of evidence is particularly important for these four prints since they were so often printed on these alternative supports. Further, Rembrandt’s printing habits of the 1650s, in which we find impressions of the same print on various supports, seem to indicate that he used whatever


\textsuperscript{13} Ackley, \textit{Rembrandt’s Journey}, 181 and 186, note 1.

\textsuperscript{14} See Hinterding, 134.
paper he had on hand, sometimes printing with papers of many different watermarks in close proximity to one another; thus, the possibility that impressions of these four prints were sometimes printed together in a single session cannot be dismissed at this point.\textsuperscript{15}

Even if Rembrandt had conceived of the images as a series, it would seem uncharacteristic for him to sell the prints only in sets. As with Dürer’s \textit{Engraved Passion}, which was sold in loose sheets or as an unbound set, perhaps Rembrandt sought to reach many segments of the market simultaneously, providing a series of Life of Christ images for those who were interested and single impressions for others. This is borne out by the fact that Rembrandt printed impressions of all four on highly varied supports, seeking to expand the market for his prints to include connoisseurs and collectors in addition to other sections of the market, such as the standard print market, those who wished to purchase religious prints, or artists, who often bought prints as study aids. Collectors may have also been among Rembrandt’s target audience for a set of images, as they would have been likely to recognize the correspondences between the 1654 Life of Christ prints and sixteenth-century Northern print series such as Dürer’s \textit{Engraved Passion} or Altdorfer’s \textit{Fall and Redemption of Man}.

\textbf{Northern Print Series in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries}

Most religious engravings of the later fifteenth century were executed as images within a series of the Passion of Christ or the Life of the Virgin.\textsuperscript{16} The Passion was one

\textsuperscript{15} Hinterding suggested that this practice of printing on various papers may reflect Rembrandt’s financial situation at this point, using whatever leftover stock the artist had on hand, rather than purchasing large quantities of new paper as he had done in the past. Further, it seems that Rembrandt stopped printing earlier copperplates around 1654, suggesting the possibility that the artist had sold or pawned these plates. Hinterding, 134-141.

\textsuperscript{16} Hinterding, 134-141.
of the oldest and most prominent themes of religious iconography. Painted and sculpted images of the Passion certainly influenced prints, but the greatest influence was probably derived from illuminated manuscripts. It is for this reason that images of the Passion appeared as a printed series with several images from the beginning. Private prayer books were increasingly available in the late fourteenth century, and books of the Hours of the Cross contained scenes from the Passion that followed pictorial tradition established over the course of centuries.

Early printmakers followed these traditional modes of representation. Cycles of several images commonly depicted central events from the New Testament, primarily the birth, childhood, and Passion of Christ. Schongauer’s twelve-part Passion cycle is, however, an outstanding example of a print series that does not entirely adhere to tradition. The series begins with the traditional scene of the Prayer on the Mount of Olives and ends with the Resurrection, as was traditional; however Schongauer omitted several customary episodes, such as the Descent from the Cross, and included the apocryphal Descent into Limbo and the Ecce Homo, which were previously found only in painted Passion scenes. Following Schongauer, printed Passion cycles commonly included both scenes.

Albrecht Dürer produced six passion cycles in the graphic arts.\(^{17}\) The *Albertina Passion* from the mid-1490s contains four woodcut images. The *Green Passion*, a set of

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16 A large number of Schongauer’s engravings, for example, depict scenes from the Life of the Virgin, the childhood and Passion of Christ, and individual saints, all typical religious themes for the era around 1500.

twelve pen drawings on green paper, was produced around 1504.\textsuperscript{18} In 1511, Dürer
published the twelve large-format woodcuts for the \textit{Large Passion} as a book,
accompanied by narrative verses.\textsuperscript{19} While finishing the \textit{Large Passion}, Dürer began his
most extensive series of Passion prints, the \textit{Small Passion}, which contains thirty-seven
woodcuts.\textsuperscript{20} Like the \textit{Large Passion}, the \textit{Small Passion} was issued in 1511 as a book
with accompanying narrative verses. Two years later, Dürer published the \textit{Engraved
Passion}, a series with sixteen plates.\textsuperscript{21} Between 1520 and 1523, Dürer once more took up
the depiction of the Passion in a small series of drawings known as the \textit{Oblong Passion}
because the format is horizontal rather than the traditional vertical orientation.

Dürer worked intermittently on the \textit{Engraved Passion} over a period of six years
beginning in 1507.\textsuperscript{22} The \textit{Engraved Passion} is the only print series that Dürer produced
without an accompanying text, and thus it was not published in book format.\textsuperscript{23} Whereas
the book format of the \textit{Large} and the \textit{Small Passion} imposed single plate viewing and
allowed for some variation in scale from scene to scene because bound images did not

\textsuperscript{18} It is possible that the surviving drawings are not by Dürer; however it is generally believed that the
compositions are his inventions as he referred back to the in later works. See Hass, 169.

\textsuperscript{19} Between 1497 and 1499, Dürer completed seven large format woodcuts for the \textit{Large Passion},
completing the final five a decade later.

\textsuperscript{20} In the \textit{Small Passion}, Dürer’s selection of narratives was unusual when compared to traditional Passion
cycles in that he omitted large portions of legendary tales concerning the childhood of Christ, his
ministry, and the Virgin’s life. Unlike earlier Passion cycles, Dürer commenced his set with what is
traditionally viewed as the first narrative moment of Christ’s Passion, \textit{Christ’s Entry into Jerusalem} (c.
1508-1509, B. 22).

\textsuperscript{21} Although it was published in 1513, Dürer began work on the \textit{Engraved Passion} as early as 1507.

\textsuperscript{22} Dürer worked on the series most intensely in 1512, one year after the successful publication of his four
books of woodcut series and the completion of the \textit{Landauer Altarpiece}. Ten of the sixteen plates were
completed in 1512.

\textsuperscript{23} Even so, there are examples of full sets bound by their owners from an early point. The earliest example
listed by Meder bears the arms of Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony. See Hass, 214 and 215, note 98.
allow for easy comparison of images, the scale of figures in scenes of the *Engraved Passion* is relatively homogeneous. In addition, Dürer consistently placed figures in the foreground, further unifying the series. Along with the moderate size of the sheets, this may suggest that scenes were intended to be spread out beside each other and viewed together.²⁴

This homogeneous continuity was achieved through a variety of means, such as consistent figural scale, the blurring of borders between images achieved by extending lines and patterns across edges of adjoining scenes, and the use of compatible tonality. For example, the use of similar tonal values is evident in the transition from *Christ on the Mount of Olives* (fig. 130) to the *Betrayal of Christ* (fig. 131) where the night sky is rendered in both with tightly streaked parallel lines placed horizontally. The transition from the *Betrayal* to the image of *Christ before Caiaphas* (fig. 132) is made through the repetition of the raised spears and weapons at the top right of the *Betrayal*, which are found at the same level at top left of the *Christ before Caiaphas*. Through this kind of visual interlocking of scenes, Dürer achieved a strong rhythmic fluidity among scenes, leading the viewer’s eye through the core narratives of Christ’s Passion.

Between 1511 and 1520 and coinciding with the publication of Dürer’s three *Large Books*, Albrecht Altdorfer produced some of the most technically impressive woodcuts ever realized, which were likely produced in response to Dürer’s woodcuts.²⁵ As discussed in chapter two, the technical *tour de force* of these woodcuts is Altdorfer’s

²⁴ Hass, 215. The sheets measure approximately 117 x 75 mm.

²⁵ Altdorfer was seemingly testing the limits of scale in response to Dürer’s *Small Passion*; the blocks for the *Fall and Redemption of Man* are just over one quarter the size (about 78 by 48 mm) of those for the *Small Passion* (127 x 97 mm).
Fall and Redemption of Man series, published in 1513, a cycle of forty prints without text illustrating the entire course of Christian redemption from Original Sin to Last Judgment. The technical refinement alone of this series suggests that these images were primarily intended as collector’s items. Akin to miniatures from illuminated books of hours, the small size of the prints requires very close inspection, bringing the viewer into close proximity with the narrative. Within the series, images from the Passion have the added dimension of darkness, requiring even closer examination to discern details of the composition. Further, the darkness of these images has a symbolic aspect as well. Beginning with the image of The Nailing to the Cross (fig. 133), the sky increasingly darkens from image to image through the narrative sequence of Christ’s death and burial until the Noli me tangere (fig. 134), in which the resurrected Christ is first revealed.

Rembrandt’s 1654 Life of Christ and the Northern Print Series

Dürer’s international and posthumous reputation was established largely through prints from his religious series.26 Dürer’s woodcut Passion series were frequently issued bound with text, yet Dürer also anticipated demand for loose impressions of these images without text.27 Unlike the woodcut series, the Engraved Passion was never intended to be issued with printed text as a book, although it seems that he often sold them as an

26 Bartrum, 164.

27 From about 1550, print publishers began to play an important role in the production of prints. Following Dürer’s success, series of biblical prints had become popular by the end of the sixteenth century, and publishers decided to collect series of particular themes by various artists and present them in single volumes as biblical picture books. Examples include the Thesaurus veteris et novi testamenti (Antwerp, 1585) of Gerard de Jode, the Theatrum biblicum (Amsterdam, 1639 and 1643) of Claes Jansz. Visscher and the Emblemata sacra (1653–4) by Jan Philips Schabaelje.
unbound set. 28 Artists such as Rembrandt who were looking for inspiration could turn to the various Passion series as ready collections of Dürer’s imagery. 29 An avid collector of Dürer’s work, Rembrandt purchased nine sets of Dürer’s Life of the Virgin series, along with a Passion series and various other Dürer prints at the Gommer Spranger sale in 1638. 30 He then repeatedly drew upon the prints in Dürer’s Passion series as stimuli for his own etchings.

Rembrandt certainly looked at and drew inspiration from individual prints from Dürer’s and Altdorfer’s Passion series; however, his 1654 Life of Christ prints also made use of techniques that characterized the series of his predecessors. As with the Passion images from Altdorfer’s Fall and Redemption of Man series, Rembrandt’s use of darkness in three images of the Passion of Christ and brightness in a depiction of the revelation of the Resurrected body functions both formally and symbolically. The images of the Passion shrouded in darkness illustrate the extinguishing of Christ’s life, while simultaneously serving to bring the viewer into close proximity with the images, heightening the viewer’s identification with the figures surrounding Christ and their emotional response to the Passion.

Rembrandt also employed other techniques used by both Dürer and Altdorfer in the 1654 Life of Christ prints. The scale of figures in all four prints is fairly consistent. Again, like Dürer and Altdorfer, Rembrandt also employed repetitive or rhythmic

28 It has been argued that the medium Dürer chose for each of his Passion series reflects the intended audience; for example, Erwin Panofsky suggested that the Engraved Passion was aimed at collectors because it was executed in a medium sought after by this group. See Erwin Panofsky, Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer (Princeton, 1955): 140.

29 Bartrum, 239.

30 See Strauss and Van der Meulen, The Rembrandt Documents: 150.
elements that move the eyes of the viewer from one image to the next across the four plates. The column at the left side of *The Presentation in the Temple* is echoed by the cross in the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*. Further, the placement of the podium upon which the *sagan* is seated in *The Presentation* is echoed by the bier upon which Christ will be laid in *The Descent*. When the two prints are placed next to one another, the patterns on the *sagan’s* robe seem to be echoed in the foliage at the right side of the hill, blurring the boundaries of the prints. Another rhythmic element is seen in the fall of the parted curtain in *The Presentation*, echoed by the fall of the winding sheet in *The Descent*. Further, the diagonal movement of the eyes from upper left to lower right then horizontally from bottom right to bottom left is identical in both compositions. Perhaps to underscore the movement from *The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner* to *The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, Rembrandt included a depiction of the Temple in the background of the latter.

In *The Entombment*, the form of Joseph of Arimathea provides a visual echo with the vertical elements on the left side of the previous two prints and also provides continuity through his repeated appearance from the *Descent* to the *Entombment*. In addition, the arch of the vault above his head hearkens back to the arch on top of the column in *The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner*. There appear to be fewer repeated elements between the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* and *The Entombment*; however, it is striking that the bier in the *Descent* is in the same location in which Christ’s body is being laid into the tomb in the *Entombment*. Although the composition is described by Christopher White as a u-shape mirrored by the arch above, the eyes move along the vertical axis of Joseph of Arimathea, then follows his gaze.
diagonally to Christ’s face at the bottom right, and then moves horizontally back to the left side along the line of Christ’s body, in the same manner as with the previous two prints.31

In *Christ at Emmaus*, the standing disciple on the left side echoes the vertical elements in the other three prints. In addition, Rembrandt provided continuity through the repetition of certain horizontal elements in *The Entombment*. For example, the back of the bench upon which Christ sits echoes the low wall with skulls. Significantly, the edge of the tomb is visually carried over into the access to the stairs, blurring the boundary between the two prints. Additionally, the fall of drapery on the left is strikingly similar to the parted curtain in the *Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner*. Like the other three prints, there is some diagonal movement of the viewer’s eye following the gaze of the disciple on the left, to Christ, then to the servant descending the stairs; however, the viewer’s gaze is ultimately brought back to focus on the head of Christ near the center of the composition.

**Conclusion**

It is apparent that Rembrandt had periods of activity throughout his career in which he thought about a particular subject or related narratives in groups. Like earlier printmakers, he often seems to have thought serially about Biblical subjects, even if the resulting prints were not published as a series in the strict sense. Although he depicted the subjects of three of the four prints under discussion several times over the course of his career, the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*,

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31 The print of the *Raising of Lazarus* is similar in composition, see 1642 etching (B. 72); also see the *Circumcision* of 1630 (B. 48).
Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus stand apart through their common compositional devices, narrative focus, and expressiveness. Rembrandt seems to have adopted aspects of Northern European print series, particularly those of Dürer and Altdorfer, as can be seen across the images in his use of light and dark, repetitive formal elements, and the blurring of boundaries. In addition to these devices from Northern European print series, the common size, format, and narrative focus on depicting or evoking the body of Christ and the emotional responses of the spectators in the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus suggest that Rembrandt created the 1654 Life of Christ prints in conjunction with one another. Rembrandt’s approach to the four prints certainly appears to be serial; however, in order to take best advantage of the print market, the artist most likely did not intend to issue the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus solely as a strict series.
Conclusion

The *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus* were not identified as a group until the end of the nineteenth century, when Woldemar von Seidlitz published his *Kritisches Verzeichnis der Radierungen Rembrandts* in which he determined that the four etching form a series of Life of Christ prints. Scholarly opinion as to whether the four prints form a series has varied over the course of the twentieth century, often focusing on issues of dating and the seeming incongruence of the *Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner* among a sequence of Christ’s Passion.

Although Rembrandt depicted the subjects of three of the four prints under discussion several times over the course of his career, the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus* stand apart through their common compositional devices, narrative focus, and expressiveness. Moreover, unlike other prints created by Rembrandt of the same subjects, the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus* share striking chiaroscuro effects and attention to individual impressions through the use of varied inking and papers, which affects the expressive qualities of each impression.

The role of chiaroscuro in the creation of meaning is a subject which has been largely overlooked in Rembrandt scholarship. In a detailed discussion of the various states and individual impressions of the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus*, this dissertation explored the
expressive qualities of darkness in the *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, *Presentation in the Temple*, and the *Entombment*, as well as the role of bright light in *Christ at Emmaus* as its corollary. A close look at different states and individual impressions revealed how changes in and experimentation with techniques affect the meaning of the image. This approach is one that has been seldom taken in the Rembrandt print literature, yet it is important to our understanding of Rembrandt’s etchings because the artist often produced state changes that drastically altered the image and created a multitude of unique impressions that make it impossible to assume a singular meaning for a group of such varied images, even if they were printed from the same plate.

In these four prints, Rembrandt seems to have adopted aspects of Northern European print series, as can be seen across the images in his use of light and dark, repetitive formal elements, and the blurring of boundaries. In addition to these devices from Northern European print series, the common size, format, and narrative focus on depicting or evoking the body of Christ and the emotional responses of the spectators in the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus* suggest that Rembrandt created the 1654 Life of Christ prints in conjunction with one another. Rembrandt’s approach to the four prints certainly appears to be serial; however, in order to take best advantage of the print market, the artist most likely did not intend to issue the *Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus* solely as a strict series.

Rembrandt also took advantage of the market for prints by using sixteenth-century sources of inspiration, which would have been of interest to print collectors who would have recognized and appreciated Rembrandt’s emulation of these earlier artists.
This investigation revealed that although he was highly innovative, Rembrandt’s techniques were largely derived from an artistic lineage belonging to the Northern print tradition. In this way, Rembrandt placed himself in the history of printmaking as the successor to the only Northern European printmakers discussed by Van Mander: Dürer, Lucas, and Goltzius.

In addition to aligning himself with internationally recognized sixteenth-century Northern European printmakers, Rembrandt participated in a seventeenth-century cross-media interest in dark toned and nocturne imagery, which itself grew out of a larger focus on tone in Dutch art. Although they can be understood within the context of his contemporaries’ dark-toned and nocturne prints, Rembrandt’s dark-toned prints were influenced technically by the prints of etchers working with an unsystematic vocabulary traceable to later sixteenth-century Flemish printmakers and by the original, even idiosyncratic etchings of Hercules Segers. Rembrandt moved away from the use of a systematic tonal grid, instead creating areas of tone through a dense, irregular net of crosshatching, and increasingly relying upon the use of drypoint, granular bitten tone, and plate tone to produce dramatic chiaroscuro. Ultimately, this shift away from the aesthetic of engraving, as seen in the systematic approach of Goudt, toward a free approach to etching allowed Rembrandt to develop the essential difference between an engraved and an etched line.

Although the technical creation of chiaroscuro has been discussed in the Rembrandt literature for the artist’s paintings, there has been comparatively little attention to cross-media connections of Rembrandt’s interest in the creation of tone. This dissertation sought to address this lacuna by locating the graphic chiaroscuro of these
four prints as part of a broader interest that spanned Rembrandt’s entire artistic oeuvre. For example, the employment of a tinted ground in his paintings compares to the color of vellum and of Japanese paper in some of Rembrandt’s prints, where the support lends warmth to the overall composition. As in paintings with a tinted ground, the use of vellum or Japanese paper as a support reduced bright highlights, thus adjusting the chiaroscuro effects of a print. Rembrandt’s cross-media approach to tone can also be seen in the comparison of the “rough style” of painting and the velvety tone of drypoint, both adding “perceptibility,” making these areas advance toward the eyes of the spectator. An examination of Rembrandt’s printmaking techniques for generating tone revealed that the artist began to experiment from an early date with ways to add tonal effects without relying on the needle or burin. These experiments continued throughout his career, eventually including the use of drypoint, different supports, and selective wiping. These techniques for generating tone are all found in the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus.

That the Presentation in the Temple, Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, Entombment, and Christ at Emmaus exist in such varied states and individual impressions may suggest that print collectors were one of Rembrandt’s target audiences for these works, as collectors apparently wanted to purchase printed images in their multiple “versions” in order to own a complete set. Once again, Rembrandt’s use of sixteenth-century sources of inspiration along with his emulation of Segers’s experimental and individual techniques would have been of interest to print collectors, who would have recognized and appreciated Rembrandt’s emulation of these earlier artists.
By looking to the market as a factor in the creation of Rembrandt’s prints, the present study sought to balance the recent focus by scholars such as Perlove and Silver on a narrow religious context. For example, Perlove and Silver’s identification of Christian millenarians who anticipated the Second Coming around 1655 as the prime market for *Christ at Emmaus* does not take into account the possibility that Rembrandt purposefully left a religious context ambiguous in these four prints to appeal to both Protestants and Catholics alike, nor does it acknowledge seventeenth-century collectors as a group of potential buyers. That collectors were targeted by Rembrandt as a potential market may be one reason why he looked to the Northern print tradition and chose to create dark-toned prints in varied impressions and states. This dissertation sought to reveal Rembrandt as an artist whose artistic choices were likely made for both expressive and practical reasons.

In *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*, Ernst van de Wetering identified Rembrandt as an experimental painter working within the constraints of the workshop, a figure “scrupulously committed to the material, studio-bound aspects of his art.” Artistic process had long been the focus of Rembrandt print scholarship, beginning with Christopher White who looked at individual impressions, states, and groups of images, tracing the artist’s working method in *Rembrandt as an Etcher*. Following White and Van de Wetering’s lead, this dissertation sought to keep the material aspects of the process of printmaking at the core of discussion.

Unlike most Rembrandt scholarship, this dissertation explored the artist’s cross-media approach and his dialogue with the past. Because of a bias in the literature that was maintained until recently against prints and printmaking as separate and unequal in
an artist’s oeuvre, the role of Rembrandt’s prints in his identity as an artist has been largely neglected. It is doubtful that Rembrandt isolated his thinking about or activities in each medium, yet discussions of similarities between Rembrandt’s paintings and graphic work have been relatively few, creating an artificial distinction in the artist’s approach to media. Most likely, Rembrandt did not regard his prints as an inferior or completely distinct part of his production, and, as such, the present study connected the graphic chiaroscuro of the four Life of Christ prints to Rembrandt’s entire oeuvre.

Similarly, the focus on Rembrandt’s emulation of Dürer, Lucas, and Goltzius in this dissertation sought to address an imbalanced view in twentieth-century Rembrandt print literature in which scholarly attention to Rembrandt’s individual impressions, choice of support, and variations in inking has led to the description of the artist as an experimental printmaker. Although many of his printmaking techniques can be classified as experimental, by linking the Life of Christ prints with the Rembrandt’s interest in the Northern print tradition, this dissertations sought a balanced view of the artist as both innovative and interested in aligning himself with internationally acclaimed Northern masters. Furthermore, an investigation of the connections between Rembrandt’s prints and the Northern print tradition also addressed a bias in the literature published in English of Rembrandt’s sources of inspiration as deriving mainly from the Italian Renaissance.

By focusing on Rembrandt’s simultaneous use of experimentation and emulation, the present study sought to adjust our understanding of the artist, making clear that Rembrandt was self-consciously forging an identity as both highly innovative and working within the Northern print tradition. Although the market for prints remains little discussed in the Rembrandt literature, largely due to the lack of documentation, it seems
likely that Rembrandt’s etchings were central to the way in which he marketed himself as an artist. Because prints are produced in multiple, it was primarily through this medium that Rembrandt was able to broadcast his identity as both an experimental artist and the successor to the great Northern masters.

By experimenting with etching technique, drypoint, papers, and inking, Rembrandt created a highly expressive set of prints of the Life of Christ that can be classified as a series even if they were not strictly marketed as such. Through an examination of individual states and impressions of the *Presentation in the Temple*, *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, *Entombment*, and *Christ at Emmaus*, a cross-media exploration of Rembrandt’s interest in tone, and comparison with the printed work of contemporary and earlier Northern artists, this dissertation examined the relationship of these four prints to one another, their place in Rembrandt’s oeuvre, and their art historical context. This dissertation has revealed the extent to which Rembrandt aligned himself with the great masters of the Northern print tradition as a source of inspiration and as a means to place himself within the history of art.
Appendix: Images
Fig. 1
Rembrandt, *The Presentation in the Temple*, c. 1654
B. 50
Etching and drypoint with burin on ivory laid paper
Chicago, The Art Institute, 1950.1508
20.9x16.2cm
Fig. 2
Rembrandt, *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*, 1654
B. 83
Etching and drypoint
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, P474
20.9x16.1cm
Fig. 3
Rembrandt, *Entombment*, c. 1654
B. 86 iv
Etching, drypoint, and engraving
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1992.5
21.1x16cm
Fig. 4
Rembrandt, *Christ at Emmaus*,
B. 87 ii
Etching, drypoint, and engraving
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1922.280
21x16cm
Fig. 5
Rembrandt, *Entombment*, c. 1654
B. 50 i
Etching with a few touches of drypoint on Japanese paper
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1992.4
21x16cm
Fig. 6
Rembrandt, *Christ at Emmaus*, 1654
B. 87 i
Etching on China paper
10.9x16cm
Fig. 7
Albrecht Dürer, *Saint Jerome Seated Near a Pollard Willow*, 1512
Drypoint
London, The British Museum, 1857,0411.16
21.1x18.4cm
Fig. 8
Lucas van Leyden, *David Playing the Harp Before Saul*, c. 1508
Engraving
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, R-P-P-OB-1601
25.2x18.5cm
Fig. 9
Lucas van Leyden, *The Man with the Torch and the Woman Followed by a Fool*, c. 1508
Engraving
London, The British Museum, 1849.1027.76
12.0x8.8cm
Fig. 10
Rembrandt, *Ecce Homo, Christ Presented to the People*, 1655
Drypoint
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 2006.155
36.1x45.6cm
Fig. 11
Rembrandt, *The Three Crosses*, 1653 (iv/v)
Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1954.9
Drypoint and burin on paper
38.1x45.0cm
Fig. 12
Albrecht Dürer, *Saint Jerome Beside a Pollard Willow*, 1648
Etching and drypoint on paper
18.0x13.3cm
Fig. 13
Albrecht Dürer, *Saint Jerome Reading in an Italian Landscape*, c. 1653
Etching, engraving, and drypoint
Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1943.37168
26.1x21.2cm
Fig. 14
Rembrandt, *The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*, 1634
Etching, with drypoint, engraving, and sulfur tint
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1949.115
26.3x22cm
Fig. 15
Etching, burin, and drypoint
12.7 x 11.0 cm
Fig. 16
*Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalene*
Royal Collection, Buckingham Palace, London
61x50cm

Fig. 17
*Portrait of Gerard de Lairesse*, mid-1660s
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975.1.140
112.7x87.6cm

Fig. 18
Rembrandt, *Jan Cornelis Sylvius, Preacher*, 1646
Etching and drypoint with sulfur tint and grey wash
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1942.756
27.8x18.8cm

Fig. 19
Fresco
Milan, Santa Maria delle Grazie
460x880cm
Fig. 20
Albrecht Dürer, *Last Supper* from the *Small Passion*, 1508-9
Woodcut
London, The British Museum, E.2.229
12.6x9.7cm
Fig. 21
Rembrandt, *Entombment*, c. 1654
B. 86 iii
London, The British Museum, 1843,0513.249
Etching, drypoint, and burin with much surface tone on Oriental paper
20.7x16.2cm
Fig. 22
Albrecht Dürer, *Man of Sorrows with Hands Bound*, 1512
Drypoint
11.4x7.1cm

Fig. 23
Albrecht Dürer, *The Ravisher, or a Young Woman Attacked by Death*, c. 1495
Engraving
Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1952.1109
11.3x10.2cm
Fig. 24
Martin Schongauer, *Death of the Virgin*, c. 1470-74
Engraving
London, The British Museum, 1868,0822.153
25.8x17.0cm
Fig. 25
Albrecht Dürer, *Saint Eustace*, c. 1501
Engraving
London, The British Museum, E,4.113
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Fig. 26
Albrecht Dürer, *Carrying of the Cross (Engraved Passion)*, 1512
Engraving
London, The British Museum, E.2.52
11.7x7.4cm
Fig. 27
Martin Schongauer, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, c. 1470-82
Engraving
London, The British Museum, 1895,0915.247
16.5x11.7cm
Fig. 28
Albrecht Dürer, *Deposition of Christ (Entombment)*, from the *Engraved Passion*, 1512
Engraving
London, The British Museum, E,4.2
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Fig. 29
Albrecht Dürer, Ecce Homo (Engraved Passion), 1512
Engraving
Boston, The Museum of Fine Arts, M8842
11.7x7.5cm
Fig. 30
Rembrandt, *Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner*, c. 1654
Etching and drypoint with plate tone on Oriental paper
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1962-27
21.0x16.2cm
Fig. 31
Albrecht Altdorfer, *Resurrection*, 1512
Woodcut
London, The British Museum, 1895,0122,357
23.0x17.8 cm
Fig. 32
Albrecht Altdorfer, *Presentation of Christ in the Temple, from the Fall and Redemption of Man*, c. 1513
Woodcut
London, The British Museum, 1895,0122.319
7.2x4.8cm

Fig. 33
Albrecht Altdorfer, *Descent from the Cross, from the Fall and Redemption of Man*, c. 1513
Woodcut
London, The British Museum, 1837,0616.231
7.2x4.8cm
Fig. 34
Albrecht Altdorfer, *Entombment*, from the *Fall and Redemption of Man*, c. 1513
Woodcut
London, The British Museum
1845,0809.1197
7.2x4.8cm

Fig. 35
Rembrandt, *Saul and David*, c. 1630
Frankfurt am Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut
62x50cm
Fig. 36
Lucas van Leyden, *The Raising of Lazarus*, by 1508
Engraving
Amsterdam, The Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-1619
28.4x20.2cm
Fig. 37
Lucas van Leyden, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1513
Engraving
Amsterdam, The Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-1612
28.6x42.9cm

Fig. 38
Lucas, *Esther before Ahasuerus*, 1518
Engraving
Amsterdam, The Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-1605
27.5x22.1cm
Fig. 39
Lucas van Leyden, *The Passion: Agony in the Garden*, 1521
Engraving
London, The British Museum 1849,1027.21
11.4x7.4cm
Fig. 40
Lucas van Leyden, *Portrait of Maximilian*, 1520
Etching and engraving
London, The British Museum, 1868,0822.606
25.8x19.4cm
Fig. 41
Hendrick Goltzius, *Standard Bearer*, 1587
Engraving
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1996.364
26.8x18.7cm
Fig. 42
Hendrick Goltzius, *Venus and Mars Surprised by Vulcan*, 1585
Engraving
London, The British Museum 1857,0613.456
42.0x31.0cm
Fig. 43  
Hendrick Goltzius, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1587  
Engraving  
London, The British Museum  
Left: 1852, 211.63, 42.7x28.3cm  
Central: 1852, 1211.64, 42.7x28.4cm  
Right: 1852, 1211.65, 42.7x28.2cm  
42.7x28.3cm
Fig. 44
Hendrick Goltzius, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1598-1600
Engraving
London, The British Museum, 1851,1213.4
21.5x15.5cm

Fig. 45
Titian, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1532-3
Florence, Palazzo Pitti
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Fig. 46
Gerrit van Honthorst, *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, c. 1622
Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 90.PA.26
34.5x27cm
Fig. 47
Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *Nativity at Night*
London, National Gallery, NG4081
34x25.3cm
Fig. 48
Peter Paul Rubens, *Landscape with Gallows*, c. 1637-39
Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

Fig. 49
Schelte Adamsz Bolswert after Rubens, *Landscape with Moon and Stars* from the *Small Landscapes*, c. 1638
Engraving
London, The British Museum, 1891,0414.1284
32.1x45.0cm
Fig. 50
Pieter Bruegel, *Rabbit Hunt*, 1560
Etching
London, The British Museum, 1878.0713.131
22.3x29.4cm

Fig. 51
David Vinckboons, *Bagpiper and Child under a Tree*, 1606
Etching and drypoint
Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina
8.1x5.5cm
Fig. 52
David Vinckboons, *Annunciation to the Shepherds*, 1604
Etching, drypoint, and engraving
15.7x11.8cm
Fig. 53
Jacob Saverij, *Six Landscapes: Path Between Swamp and Wooded Bank*, c. 1595
Etching
Fig. 54
Willem Buytewech, *Ruins of the Huis te Kleef*, c. 1616
Etching
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1988.22
9x12.3cm
Fig. 55
Hendrick Goudt, *The Mocking of Ceres*, 1610
Engraving
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1981.23
Fig. 56
Hendrick Goudt, The Flight into Egypt, 1613
Engraving
London, The British Museum, F.3.92
36.0x40.5cm
Fig. 57
Jan van de Velde, Nox, c. 1622
Etching and engraving
London, The British Museum, S.5959
13.5x22.0cm

Fig. 58
Jan van de Velde, Ignis, c. 1622
Etching and engraving
London, The British Museum, S.5896
18.5x29.0cm
Fig. 59
Hercules Segers, *Large Tree*, c. 1615-30
Etching printed in black ink on white paper
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-849
21.8x27.7cm

Fig. 60
Hercules Segers, *Rocky Landscape, a Church Tower in the Distance*, c. 1630
Etching and drypoint printed in bue on paper prepared with a pink ground, with olive-green wash
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 1973.208
13.3x18.7cm
Fig. 61
Rembrandt, *Small Grey Landscape*, c. 1640
Etching
3.8x8.2cm
Fig. 62
Rembrandt, *Pancake Woman*, 1635
Etching
London, The British Museum, 1848,0911.62
10.9x7.9cm

Fig. 63
Jan van de Velde, *Pancake Woman*, 1626
Engraving
London, The British Museum, S.5839
18.5x12.9cm
Fig. 64
Hendrick Goudt, *Jupiter and Mercury in the House of Philemon and Baucis*, 1612
Engraving
London, The British Museum, F.3.105
22.1x23.5cm
Fig. 65
Rembrandt, *The Circumcision*, c. 1626
Etching
London, The British Museum, 1848,0911.28
21.4x16.5cm
Fig. 66
Rembrandt, “The Schoolmaster,” 1641
Etching
9.3x6.1cm

Fig. 67
Rembrandt, *Man Drawing from a Cast*, c. 1641
Etching
London, The British Museum, 1843,0607.86
9.4x6.4cm
Fig. 68
Rembrandt, *Student at a Table by Candlelight*, c. 1642
Etching
14.2x13.0cm
Rembrandt, *The rest on the Flight into Egypt: A Night Piece*, c. 1644
Etching and drypoint
9.2x5.9cm
Fig. 70
Johannes van Vliet and Rembrandt, *The Descent from the Cross*, 1633
Etching
53.0x41.0cm
Fig. 71
Rembrandt, Jan Lutma, Goldsmith, 1656
Etching, engraving, and drypoint
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1963.85
19.9x15cm
Fig. 72
Rembrandt, Minerva in her Study, 1652
Amsterdam, Six Collection
Fig. 73
Rembrandt, *Portrait of Jan Six*, 1647
Etching, drypoint, and burin
24.8x19.4cm
Fig. 74
Albrecht Dürer, *Saint Jerome in his Study*, 1514
Engraving
24.8x18.9cm
Fig. 75
Rembrandt, *The Raising of the Cross*, 1657-58
Pen and brown ink, brown wash, white watercolor
Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett
17.9x21.1cm
Fig. 76
Rembrandt, *Nude Woman Seated on a Stool*, 1654/56
Pen and brown ink, brush and brown wash, white gouache
Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1953.38
21.2x17.4cm
Fig. 77
Arent de Gelder dwg, *Seated Female Nude*, c. 1660-62
Pen and brown ink, brush and brown wash, white gouache
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen
29.2x19.5cm
Fig. 78
Rembrandt, *Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*, 1634
State I
Etching, burin, and drypoint with light surface tone in worked areas
25.9x21.8cm
Fig. 79
Rembrandt, *Jan Six*, 1654
Amsterdam, Six Collection

Fig. 80
Rembrandt, *Jewish Bride*, c. 1665
Oil on canvas
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-C-216
121.5x166.5cm
Fig. 81
Rembrandt, *Landscape with a View Toward Haarlem ("The Goldweigher’s Field)*, 1651
Etching and drypoint with light surface tone
12.1x32.0cm

Fig. 82
Rembrandt, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, 1626
Etching with plate and surface tone
21.2x16.3cm
Fig. 83
Rembrandt, *Clump of Trees with a Vista*, 1652
Drypoint
London, The British Museum, 1868.0822.68
12.4x21.1cm

Fig. 84
Rembrandt, *The Blindness of Tobit*, 1651
Etching and drypoint
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 2002.10
15.8x12.9cm
Fig. 85
Rembrandt, *Head of an Elderly Woman*, 1669
Etching
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, P713
6.2x6.5cm

Fig. 86
Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait*, 1629
Etching with plate tone
London, The British Museum, 1848.0911.19
18.2x15.6cm
Fig. 87
Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill*, 1639
Etching and drypoint
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1940.879
20.5x16.4cm
Fig. 88
Rembrandt, *Death of the Virgin*, 1639
Etching and drypoint
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1926.467
Fig. 89
Rembrandt, *Flight into Egypt*, 1633
Etching with surface tone
9.0x6.4cm
Fig. 90
Rembrandt, *The Presentation in the Temple*, 1639-40
Etching and drypoint
21.3x29.0cm
Fig. 91
Rembrandt, “The Three Crosses”
Drypoint and burin on vellum
London, The British Museum, 1842.0806.139
37.8x43.4cm
Fig. 92
Rembrandt, *The Entombment* (B. 86 ii), c. 1654
Etching with drypoint and burin on vellum
Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1997.419
20.6x15.7cm
Fig. 93
Rembrandt, *Saint Jerome in a Dark Chamber*, 1642
Etching with surface tone
15.1x17.4cm
Fig. 94
Rembrandt, *A Woman Bathing*, 1654
Oil on wood
London, National Gallery
61x46cm
Fig. 95
Rembrandt, *The Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner*, c. 1654
Etching, drypoint, and engraving
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1999.3
21x16.3cm
Fig. 96
Rembrandt, *Presentation in the Temple in the Dark Manner*, c. 1654
Etching and drypoint
21.0x16.3cm
Fig. 97
Rembrandt, *Entombment*, c. 1654
B. 86 I
Etching and drypoint on Japanese paper
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1992.4
21x16cm
Fig. 98
Rembrandt, *Entombment*, c. 1654
B. 86 ii
Etching, drypoint, and engraving
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 23.1013
20.9x16.2cm
Fig. 99
Rembrandt, *Entombment*, c. 1654
Etching, drypoint, and engraving with plate tone on vellum
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-152
20.5x15.8cm
Fig. 100
Rembrandt, *Entombment*, c. 1654
Etching, drypoint, and engraving with surface tone
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1992.5
21.1 x 16 cm
Fig. 101
Rembrandt, *Entombment*, c. 1654
B. 86 iii
Etching, drypoint, and burin with almost black surface tone and some double printing along right side
British Museum, London, 1843,0911.45
21.0x16.2cm
Fig. 102
Rembrandt, *Entombment* (B. 86 iv), c. 1654
Etching, drypoint, and burin with surface tone and touched with white body color
London, British Museum, 1848,0911.44
21.2x16.2cm
Fig. 103
Rembrandt, *Entombment*, c. 1654
Etching, drypoint, and burin with plate tone
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-153
21.0x15.9cm
Fig. 104
Rembrandt, *Christ at Emmaus*, 1654
B. 87 i
Etching, drypoint, and engraving on Japanese paper
Boston, The Museum of Fine Arts, 60.1543
21x15.9cm
Fig. 105
Rembrandt, *Christ at Emmaus*, 1654
B. 87 i
Etching on Japanese paper
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1962-46
21.0x16.1cm
Fig. 106
Rembrandt, *Christ at Emmaus*, 1654
B. 87 i
Etching, drypoint, and burin
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-158
21.1x16.0cm
Fig. 107
Rembrandt, *Christ at Emmaus*, 1654
B. 87 i
Etching, drypoint, and burin
Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1943.3.9111
Fig. 108
Rembrandt, *Christ at Emmaus*, 1654
B.87
Etching, drypoint, and engraving
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1922.280
21x16cm
Fig. 109
Rembrandt, *Presentation in the Temple*, 1630
Etching
10.3x7.8cm
Fig. 110
Etching and drypoint
London, The British Museum, 1843,0607.31
21.3x29.0cm
Fig. 111
Rembrandt, *Circumcision, The Small Plate*, c. 1630
Etching with touches of drypoint
8.9x6.4cm
Fig. 112
Rembrandt, *Entombment*, c. 1630s
Oil on panel
Glasgow, Hunterian Art Gallery
32.1x40.3cm

Fig. 113
Rembrandt, *Supper at Emmaus*, 1648
Oil on panel
Paris, The Louvre
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Fig. 114
Albrecht Dürer, Last Supper from the Large Passion, 1510
Woodcut
London, The British Museum, 1895.0122.596
39.8x28.7mm
Fig. 115
Rembrandt, Copy of Leonardo’s *Last Supper*, 1634-5
Red chalk
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975.1.794
36.2x47.5mm
Fig. 116
Rembrandt, *Christ Disputing with the Doctors*, 1630
Etching
8.9x6.9cm
Fig. 117
Rembrandt, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1646
Oil on canvas
Munich, Ältere Pinakothek
97x71cm
Fig. 118
Rembrandt, *The Raising of the Cross*, 1633
Oil on panel
Munich, Alte Pinakothek
92x72.2cm
Fig. 119
Rembrandt, *The Descent from the Cross*, 1633
Oil on panel
Munich, Alte Pinakothek
89.4x65.2cm
Fig. 120  
Oil on canvas  
Munich, Alte Pinakothek  
92.5x68.9cm

Fig. 121  
Rembrandt, *The Resurrection*, 1639  
Oil on panel  
Munich, Alte Pinakothek  
92x67cm

Fig. 122  
Rembrandt, *The Ascension*, 1636  
Oil on canvas  
Munich, Alte Pinakothek  
92.5x68.5cm
Fig. 123
Rembrandt, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, c. 1654
Etching
London, The British Museum, 1910,0212.379
10.5x12.9cm
Fig. 124
Rembrandt, *The Circumcision in the Stable*, 1654
Etching
London, The British Museum, 1843,0513.245
9.5x14.4cm

Fig. 125
Rembrandt, *The Flight into Egypt*, 1654
Etching
9.3x14.4cm
Fig. 126
Rembrandt, *The Virgin and Child with the Cat and Snake*, 1654
Etching
London, The British Museum, 1910,0212.380
9.5x14.3cm

Fig. 127
Rembrandt, *Christ Disputing with the Doctors*, 1654
Etching
London, The British Museum, 1843,0607.45
9.6x14.4cm
Fig. 128
Rembrandt, *Christ Returning from the Temple with his Parents*, 1654
Etching and drypoint
9.4x14.5cm

Fig. 129
Rembrandt, *Simeon Presenting the Christ Child*, c. 1661-69
Oil on canvas
Stockholm, The National Museum of Fine Arts
98x79cm
Fig. 130
Albrecht Dürer, Christ on the Mount of Olives from the Engraved Passion, 1512
Engraving
London, The British Museum, E.4.33
11.6x7.2cm
Fig. 131
Albrecht Dürer, *Betrayal of Christ from the Engraved Passion*, 1512
Engraving
London, British Museum, E,4.27
11.7x7.4cm
Fig. 132
Albrecht Dürer, Christ before Caiaphas from the Engraved Passion, 1512
Engraving
London, The British Museum, E.4.29
11.7x7.4cm
Fig. 133
Albrecht Altdorfer, *The Nailing to the Cross*, from *Fall and Redemption of Man*, 1513
Woodcut
London, The British Museum, 1845.0809.1192
7.2x4.8cm
Fig. 134
Albrecht Altdorfer, *Noli me tangere*, from the *Fall and Redemption of Man*, 1513
Woodcut
London, The British Museum, 1895,0122.343
7.2x4.8cm
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