I, Thomas S Thompson, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Art History.

It is entitled:
The Maturing of Rembrandt (1630-1662): Four Stages of Expressive Development in the Depiction of the Female Nude in Drawings and Etchings

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The Maturing of Rembrandt (1630-1662): Four Stages of Expressive Development in the Depiction of the Female Nude in Drawings and Etchings

A thesis proposal presented to
the Art History Faculty of the School of Art
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ABSTRACT

The Dutch painter, etcher, and draftsman Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (July 15, 1606 – October 4, 1669) is generally regarded as one of the greatest artists in European history. This study documents Rembrandt’s representation of the female nude in his drawings and etchings, highlighting his ongoing expressive and stylistic development. Following a brief introductory biography of Rembrandt’s life, this thesis reviews the chronological stages which have been previously suggested in studies of Rembrandt’s works, and examines the nature of the drawings and etchings of the female nude, with particular consideration given to the role of the gaze. Integral to this study is a review of the publications in which scholars use psychological theories to understand Rembrandt’s diverse images of women, particularly the nude. Further, this review includes the most recent art historical publications analyzing Rembrandt’s representations of the female nude.

Margaret Mahler’s psychoanalytic theory is used in this study as a means of more fully understanding Rembrandt’s personal and pictorial advancements as manifested in his drawings and etchings of nude women. A close examination of Rembrandt’s portrayal of the nude throughout his career reveals four chronological stages of personal and artistic development, which parallel Mahler’s four stages of psychosocial development. Rembrandt began with a generally simplistic and objectified view of women that over the years developed into a more mature and integrated one in his later years. In the first stage of development, Rembrandt depicted women as unknowingly or unwillingly observed and eroticized by men. In the following stage, he then represented them as powerful and fear-inducing beings, capable of gaining power over men and bringing about their destruction. Next, in the third stage of development, Rembrandt began to etch and draw more mature images in which he depicted
female nudes as appealing and approachable, women who were neither overwhelmed by men nor
overwhelming to men. In his last mature stage of pictorial development, Rembrandt represented
women as neither victims nor seductresses, but simply as full participants in their own lives and
eroticism.

This thesis breaks new ground in the study of Rembrandt’s depiction of the nude. In fact,
Mahler’s theory of psychosocial development has never been used as a means of analyzing an
artist’s body of work. In addition, this study is not formulated upon the biographical events of
Rembrandt’s life as is typical of studies that examine stages of development in his works;
instead, the focus is on the development of Rembrandt’s artistic style and themes as presented in
the works themselves.
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INTRODUCTION

In this study, I will examine Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn’s (1606-1669) progression of representing the specific pictorial category of the female nude in his drawings and etchings. I will argue that Rembrandt’s depiction of the female nude was inextricably connected to his psychological self-development. Using the psychoanalytical theories of Margaret Mahler, I will show his various representations of the female nude reveal four successive stages of depiction that reflect the corresponding four stages of development in his sense of self and of others through the five decades of his work as an artist. While I will note pertinent biographical details in this analysis, I will focus mainly on an examination of Rembrandt’s various female nudes as pictorial evidence of his ongoing expressive development, and the way in which this corresponds with his intra- and interpersonal advancement through the years. In addition to psychoanalytic theory, I will use stylistic analysis and an examination of the subject matter in order to determine the correspondence between the psychological and artistic development of Rembrandt as a depicter of the female nude. Significantly, I will not use specific biographical information in defining the evolving changes in Rembrandt’s representations; instead the stylistic and thematic aspects of the artwork will be used to make my determinations.

I will thus provide an analysis of Rembrandt’s female nudes in this study, illustrating how his representations reveal a progressive maturity in understanding and depicting women—beginning with a generally simplistic and objectified view of women that eventually yielded a more mature and integrated view in his later years. I will provide evidence that the young Rembrandt initially presented women as unknowingly or unwillingly observed and eroticized by men. He then represented them as powerful and fear-inducing beings, capable of gaining power over men and bringing about their destruction. Next, Rembrandt began a stage of more mature
representations in which he depicted female nudes as appealing and approachable, women who were neither overwhelmed by men nor overwhelming to men. In his last mature stage of pictorial development, Rembrandt represented women as neither victims nor seductresses, but simply as full participants in their own lives and eroticism.

In chapter one of this study, I will provide a brief biography of Rembrandt, with a focus on the personal aspects of his life, including a review of the women with whom he was involved. I will then review many of the art history scholars who have suggested clear chronological stages of stylistic and conceptual development in Rembrandt’s depictions of women. Next, I will review Rembrandt’s approach to depicting the female nude as understood by past writers in the field of art history. Important to this study is an examination of the nature and purpose of his drawings and etchings of the female nude, along with a consideration of the role of the observer’s gaze in these works. In chapter two, I will fully explore prior scholarship using psychological theories to understand Rembrandt’s drawings, etchings, or paintings of women. This review will include any studies in which the writer has studied drawings, etchings, or paintings of Rembrandt involving women from a specifically psychological viewpoint. Further, I will review the most recent research and publications about Rembrandt’s representations of women.

In chapter three, I will explore my theoretical base for this study, the psychoanalytic writings of Margaret Mahler (1897-1985), a Hungarian pediatrician and child development theorist. I will describe her proposal of four stages of emotional development involved in the creation of a stable sense of self and a mature relational stance in life. Mahler’s developmental stages will be used in this study to structure a psychological understanding of the stages of Rembrandt’s personal and pictorial development as evident in his drawings and etchings of nude
women. Mahler specifically proposed four distinct stages involved in the creation of a stable inner representation of others and of a secure sense of self.⁴ Though these stages of development were originally applied to children, the concepts have also been applied to the process of relational maturation in adults. I will offer these four stages as a means of facilitating an understanding of Rembrandt’s progression through the many representations of female nudes in his oeuvre.

In the two remaining chapters of this study I will discuss specific examples of Rembrandt’s depiction of female nudes in his drawings and etchings. While I will sometimes make reference to his paintings that involve female nudes, this thesis will focus on Rembrandt as a draughtsman and etcher in order to limit its size and scope. I will look at the four proposed chronological stages of expressive development found in Rembrandt’s portrayal of the nude, and show how the evolution of his representation of women parallels Mahler’s stages of psychological development, beginning with his initial nonintegrated approach to women in the early 1630s to the mature drawings and etchings of the female nude produced in the 1650s and 1660s that show women as full participants in their own lives.

In chapter four, I will explore the first and second stages of development in Rembrandt’s depictions of the female nude. I will demonstrate how Rembrandt’s first portrayals of nude women in the early 1630s were clearly presented as objects of men’s erotic gaze, thus corresponding to the consuming and undifferentiated view of a woman (initially the mother) in Mahler’s Symbiotic stage of relational development. In the next stage of the mid to late 1630s, Rembrandt portrayed nude women as manipulative betrayers of men, powerful in their ability to either withhold from men or entice men with their seductive abilities. These depictions of

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women suggest a parallel with the Differentiation stage of development proposed by Mahler in which the mother is experienced as fully able to either excite or frustrate through offering or denying the things the child wants.

In chapter five, I will look at Rembrandt’s third and fourth stages of expressive development in drawing and etching the female nude. In the 1640s woman depicted by Rembrandt were presented as participants with men in positive relational experiences, and as emotionally and sexually appealing. This period can be compared to the Practicing stage of Mahler’s theory of relational development, in which exploration of a genuine relationship with another begins and initial independence is in the process of being attained. The last chapter illustrates how Rembrandt’s mature representations of the female nude produced in the 1650s and 1660s depict women as full participants in their own lives (including their own sexuality and identity) and parallels the final stage of development in Mahler’s theory called Rapprochement in which an integrated sense of self and of others as separate and secure entities is produced.

I have used two main sources to select the Rembrandt drawings and etchings that I will analyze and discuss in this thesis: the exhibition catalogue Rembrandt's Women by Julia Lloyd Williams² and Rembrandt and the Female Nude by Eric Jan Sluijter³. These two recent scholarly works together examine every drawing and etching of the female nude currently agreed upon as attributed to Rembrandt. According to Peter Schatborn, with only a few exceptions, there is near unanimity among specialists regarding the authentic Rembrandt drawings.⁴ The number of etchings currently accepted as being unmistakably by Rembrandt is regarded to be approximately

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² Eric Jan Sluijter, Rembrandt and the Female Nude (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).
Edmé Gersaint created the earliest catalogue raisonné of Rembrandt prints in 1751, followed by the well-known compilation by Adam Bartsch in 1797. There is also the chronicling of Rembrandt’s prints found in the well-respected catalogue of etchings by Christopher White and K. G. Boon. The Rembrandt paintings referred to in this study have never been seriously questioned with regard to authenticity. In particular, all of the paintings are accepted as undisputed Rembrandt works by Gary Schwartz and Mariët Westermann.

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6 Holm Bevers, “Rembrandt as an Etcher,” Rembrandt: The Master and His Workshop (Drawings and Etchings), 160.
7 Christopher White and K. G. Boon, Rembrandt’s Etchings; An Illustrated Critical Catalogue in Two Volumes (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1969).
CHAPTER 1

BIOGRAPHY, STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN REMBRANDT’S ART, AND THE NATURE OF THE FEMALE NUDE IN HIS WORKS

A Brief Biography of Rembrandt

The life of Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (July 15, 1606 – October 4, 1669) has been extensively documented in a number of studies. As a Dutch painter and etcher, he is generally regarded as one of the greatest artists in European history. His contributions to art came during the so-called Golden Age of Dutch Art in the Netherlands. This brief overview will focus only on the personal aspects of his eventful life, especially as related to the women in his life as an adult. It specifically follows Mariët Westermann’s review of key dates in Rembrandt’s life found in the appendix of her study of 2000. This chronology of personal events will help provide a biographical context for the four proposed time frames of expressive development found in Rembrandt’s depiction of the female nude.

The four stages of development proposed in this study are not, however, determined by the biography of Rembrandt, but by simply grouping his representations of the female nude in successive chronological clusters. Rembrandt began depicting the female nude in 1630 and he created two drawings and four etchings of this subject between 1630 and 1632. In the period between 1634 and 1639 Rembrandt produced a different thematic and stylistic grouping of nudes that included six drawings and three etchings. After a brief four-year period with no works involving nudes, Rembrandt created a third grouping of works with nude figures between 1643 and 1650, etching two prints and drawing two sketches of the female nude. Rembrandt took another break of four years before he began to depict the nude once again, this time creating six

10 See, for example, S.A.C. Dudok Van Heel, “Rembrandt: his life, his wife, the nursemaid, and the servant,” Rembrandt's Women, 19-28; Schwartz, 1991; and Westermann, 2000.
etchings and three drawings between the years of 1654 and 1661.

Rembrandt was born in the city of Leiden, the ninth child born to Harmen Gerritsz van Rijn and Neeltgen Willemsdr van Zuytbrouck. Rembrandt’s father was a miller. In 1618, at the age of 12, he attended Latin school and was registered at the University of Leiden at the age of 14. From 1621 to 1624, Rembrandt was a pupil to the history painter, Jacob van Swanenburgh, followed by an apprenticeship with Pieter Lastman in Amsterdam for six months in 1624. He opened his own studio in Leiden in 1625, and his first students join him in 1628. In 1629, Rembrandt was visited and admired by the statesman Constantijn Huygens, who praised Rembrandt, specifically for his “sure touch and liveliness of emotions.”

In this thesis, the first period of Rembrandt’s pictorial development is identified as 1630 to 1632. In 1630 Rembrandt’s father died. At the end of 1631, Rembrandt moved to Amsterdam, initially staying with an art dealer, Hendrick van Uylenburgh, where he began to paint portraits for patrons in this prosperous city. This first period is prior to Rembrandt’s marriage to Hendrick’s cousin, Saskia van Uylenburgh, in 1634, which initiates the second period studied in this paper extending from 1634 to 1639. In this period, Rembrandt became a member of the Guild of St. Luke, the local union or guild of painters in Amsterdam. He also acquired a number of students during this time. In 1635, Rembrandt and his wife moved into their own rented house in Nieuwe Doelenstraat. A son and a daughter were born in the years between 1635 and 1638, but both of them died within their first few months of life. In 1639, the van Rijn’s moved to a prominent house on the Sint Anthonisbreestraat (now the Rembrandt House Museum).

In 1640, a second daughter was born to Rembrandt and Saskia, but she died after living

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11 Westermann, 2000, 44.
barely a month. In 1641, Titus was born, the only child between them who survived into adulthood. Saskia died on June 14, 1642. The third period of expressive development proposed in this study began shortly afterwards in 1643 and extended to 1650. During Saskia’s illness in her last year of life, Geertge Dirix was hired as Titus’ caretaker and soon became Rembrandt’s mistress. Later in 1649, Geertge sued Rembrandt with breach of marital promise and Rembrandt was ordered to pay her an annual allowance of 200 guilders a year. Rembrandt then paid to have her committed to the women’s house of correction in Gouda, after learning Geertge pawned jewelry once belonging to Saskia. Around 1647, Rembrandt employed a much younger Hendrickje Stoffels as his live-in servant, and she became Rembrandt’s new mistress.

The final period examined in this thesis began in 1654 and extended to 1661. In 1654 Rembrandt and Hendrickje had a daughter, Cornelia, out of wedlock, resulting in a summons from the Reformed Church Council for Hendrickje to answer the charge “that she had committed the acts of a whore with Rembrandt the painter.” She was banned from receiving communion, whereas Rembrandt, who was not a member of the Reformed Church, was not subject to censure. In 1656, Rembrandt sold most of his paintings and his large collection of antiquities in order to avoid bankruptcy. He eventually sold his house and moved to a rented house on the Rozengracht in 1660. Also in this year, Rembrandt became an employee of an art dealership directed by Hendrickje and Titus. Hendrickje’s death came in July 1663, and Titus, his son, died in 1668, survived by his wife and a single baby daughter. Rembrandt died on October 4, 1669 in Amsterdam, and was buried in an unmarked rented grave.

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12 Westermann, 2000, 237.
Suggested Stages of Development in Rembrandt’s Drawings and Etchings

In this study, four successive stages of expressive development are hypothesized in regard to the manner in which Rembrandt pictorially represented the female nude in drawings and prints. Over the years, many writers have suggested specific stages of development for Rembrandt’s works in general. For example, Bob Haak, a considerable expert on Rembrandt’s drawings, states that it is a common tendency to divide Rembrandt’s life into periods, even suggesting that Rembrandt’s development as a painter and etcher can be quite easily followed. He suggests an early Leiden period lasting until 1631, an early Amsterdam period beginning in 1640, a later Amsterdam period beginning in 1649, and a period late in life beginning in 1662. Otto Benesch, another scholar who studied Rembrandt’s drawings, proposes similar periods. He notes the surprising change in Rembrandt’s manner at the beginning of the 1640s. He emphasizes the need to recognize that changes took place gradually in Rembrandt’s expressive development and that any chosen dividing line should be held as tentative. But his argument that Rembrandt’s drawings evolved through the years is emphatic:

His artistic ideas and conceptions were in a state of constant evolution and development, changing indefatigably and procreating new forms, new solutions… Never satisfied with an attainment, with a solution, he moulded [sic] his ideas and inventions further and further, giving them ever new appearances. The unfolding of the artistic idea itself becomes no less a work of art than its single embodiments. This unfolding is, without prejudice to its quality of unceasing further development, accomplished and organically completed in every single stage. (emphasis mine)

With regard to the nudes of Rembrandt, the eminent scholar Eric Jan Sluijter concludes that Rembrandt’s handling of the nude “changed considerably in the course of three decades.”

While he attempts no specific dividing lines, his discussion points to periods of time similar to

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15 Benesch, 1960, 6.
those noted above. Christopher White does offer clearly delineated periods, with an extended early phase, leading to a second stage of development beginning in the mid-1640s and a final stage during the 1650s. White describes a change in Rembrandt’s style in the mid-1640s, especially in the drawings, by which outlining and modeling of the form of the body was regularly heightened by Rembrandt. The change in the 1650s, according to White, is that Rembrandt was no longer interested in simply the rendering of flesh or the representation of form, but “was entirely concerned with a monumental image of the female figure, created by an abstract equivalent rather than a conventional outline.”

Anat Gilboa’s discussion of this change is not discussed in formal periods of expression, but in the convention of the nude developed over time. She notes that Rembrandt’s depictions of the female nude show an evolution regarding the use and purpose of the overall thematic context involved. Early years find Rembrandt presenting the women in his images subordinate to the narrative theme; but later pictorial representations show that the female presence predominates over the theme or historical convention.

There is a clear development in his work from depictions where the woman is defined more by pictorial tradition or narrative context, to later depictions where the nude woman and eroticism become the central theme. This development is not only artistically satisfying, it also provides a more defined and mature image of the woman as seen in his great nude works such as the Danaë or the so-called ‘Young Woman in Bed’.

The four successive stages of expressive development that I propose in this study are determined not by biography or by the psychological framework of each period, but by simply grouping the representations in successive chronological clusters; each cluster is separated by a two to four year break from producing female nudes. From 1630 to 1632, Rembrandt produced

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17 White, 1984, 140-147.
18 White, 1984, 143.
two drawings and four etchings that all present nude women as objects of the male erotic gaze (Illus. 1-6). From 1634 to 1639, another grouping of works show nude women depicted as more powerful, either as able to entice men with their seductive abilities or to possess some power in response to the male eroticization of their bodies. This period includes six drawings and three etchings (Illus. 7-15). There are no works between 1639 and 1643. A third grouping of nudes, involving two etchings and two drawings occurring between 1643 and 1650 (Illus. 16-19), are depictions of female nudes as relationally appealing and approachable, and these women participate with men in apparently positive experiences, especially as presented in the etchings.\(^{20}\)

Finally, beginning in 1654, a final stage of development is indicated by a grouping of three drawings and six etchings (Illus. 20-28), in which Rembrandt depicted women who are full participants in their own life, neither victims nor seductresses – in fact, not seemingly defined by men in any way. The table found in Appendix A includes all of the drawings and etchings that will be discussed in this paper; paintings of nudes produced in each stage are also provided.

### The Nature of Rembrandt’s Female Nude

Rembrandt depicted women in various settings, exhibiting varying states of minds, and as different individuals from scripture, mythology, and other sources. He painted, etched, and drew portraits, tronies, genre works, and history images with women as the main protagonist. His output ranged from a two and one half inch etching of his mother (*An Elderly Woman*, 1628) to a life-size painting of *Danaë* in 1636 (Illus. 29). It has often been proposed by art historians that

\(^{20}\) One exception to the proposed theoretical framework of this study is found in this third period. Rembrandt first created a drawing of *Susanna and the Elders* in 1635 (Illus. 8), but he continued to produce additional works depicting this story throughout his life; his drawing of *Susanna and the Elders* of 1650 (Illus. 17) does not fit into the thematic focus of this study, probably due to the inherent moralizing nature of the story. This drawing has the features of the second stage of development, and Rembrandt appears to have continued to work out the issues of this subject into the third chronological stage of drawings.
Rembrandt demonstrated a special sensitivity to the emotional experience of women overall in his depictions. According to the Rembrandt scholar Albert Blankert, one of the ways that Rembrandt emphasized the emotional experience of women was through the use of “expressive naturalism,” referring to Rembrandt’s depictions of women who are not classically idealized. Rembrandt also heightened the emotional impact of his representations of women by isolating the figures visually from their narrative context (Christian Tümpel’s concept of herauslösungen). This strategy was one of Rembrandt’s ways “of emphasizing the female figure as the main protagonist in a scene, in order to intensify the impact of what she is feeling.”

One specific and ongoing pictorial means of expressing the emotional world of women was through the portrayal of the female nude. The depiction of the nude reveals the woman in her most vulnerable state and the viewer sees her exposed both physically and emotionally. The language of the body can be presented more clearly in a nude and the picture thus reveals more information about the woman’s psychological state of being. Representing the nude is also useful as a strategy for inducing the maximum amount of emotional involvement from the viewer, according to Eric Jan Sluijter. Rembrandt followed this agenda in his drawings, etchings, and paintings of the female nude. Whether on paper, metal plate, or canvas, his nudes are powerful in both their emotional and expressive content and their construction. They reveal both Rembrandt’s artistic ability in general, and his remarkable ability through the careful

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24 Ibid.,16.
manipulation of formal elements to communicate to the onlooker the internal state of the female subject, in particular.

The nude played an important role in Rembrandt’s works. Nudity (especially in studies that have no mythological or historical basis) was most frequently presented in the mediums of drawing and etchings since they were often kept in closed albums and were not offered for public consumption. This was due to the fact that nudity not in the service of religious or mythological narrative was usually deemed suspect in the highly moralistic Dutch culture of the seventeenth century. It was specifically the “immediacy of the media of etching and drawing that made them especially suitable for depictions showing a live, nude model.” His representation of the nude began with the drawing Diana and Her Bath, 1630 (Illus. 1) and came to an end with several drawings and etchings completed in the early 1660s. Mythological and biblical subjects were depicted, as well as nudes drawn from models with no apparent narrative intent.

While artists of this period often created nudes reflecting a moralistic approach, Rembrandt’s representation of the nude is usually seen by scholars as containing few or no didactic messages. They were merely an exploration of physicality that transcends the traditional representation of the nude conforming to a classical ideal. Rembrandt’s etchings and drawings of the nude, in particular, seem to reveal his persistent attempt to comprehend the feminine form and to adequately represent the physicality of women. Norbert Wolf regards Rembrandt’s nudes as “simply the focus of a keen eye that probes their physicality, rendering them at times with the firm lines of youth and at other times with the flabbiness of age.”

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27 For example, Hendrick ter Bruggen’s Unequal Couple, 1623 or his Allegory of Taste, 1627.
Jakob Rosenberg goes so far as to say that Rembrandt demonstrates an “almost scientific interest in the nude.” This is particularly true in Rembrandt’s early attempts at rendering the nude form, when a youthful Rembrandt seemed fascinated with the flawed aspects of the feminine form. Anat Gilboa encompasses and summarizes these ideas well by noting:

The artist, however, did not perceive this as absurd, disgusting or abnormal; his interest in female physicality was without negative or moralistic associations. It is more a representation of the young Rembrandt’s attempts to capture the authentic, in the form of a discourse on pictorial tradition, in which the classical ideals taken from Italian art and Dutch Mannerism are contrasted with the raw physicality of northern graphic art.

Rembrandt thus provided the viewer with tangible female bodies branded by life and lacking the classical idealization customary in the depicted nudes of this period.

Many writers criticized Rembrandt’s nudes later in the seventeenth century and in the eighteenth century due to his deviation from the ideal classicist approach to the nude. Amateur artist Jan de Bisschop, in a 1671 published handbook on ancient and Italian art, began the disparagement of Rembrandt’s depictions of nudes. Joachim von Sandrart, Andries Pels, and Arnold Houbraken followed, disapproving of Rembrandt’s seeming rejection of classicism and his deliberate opposition to the rules of art, with Houbraken going so far as to say that “they are too awful to make a song about… usually the pictures make one sick and it is incredible that such an ingenious man would be so willful in his choice” For an extensive survey of the criticism throughout the centuries regarding Rembrandt’s nudes, one should consult Anat Gilboa’s excellent and thorough exploration of this topic.

32 Bailey, 1978, 166.
Eddy de Jongh has persuasively argued that the body shape depicted in Rembrandt’s etchings was actually considered attractive in the early seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{34} Anne Hollander, in her book \textit{Seeing through Clothes}, maintains that the shape of fashionable dress affects the way nudes are depicted in any given period – the more a nude corresponds to the silhouette of what is being worn in fashionable circles, the more appealing and erotic the nude will appear. Regarding Rembrandt, Hollander declares:

The fashionable silhouette was masterfully reflected in the nude images of the early Rembrandt, whose ladies have the modest breasts, fat shoulders, huge bellies, and general massiveness below the waist that was then so much admired in female bodies… lots of rippling texture—in these instances flesh, not silk.\textsuperscript{35}

Therefore, the typical middle-class seventeenth-century male (including Rembrandt himself) may have generally had a preference for women of a more fleshy full-figured nature. Rembrandt was, in both his life and art, as Eddy de Jongh succinctly put it, “at home with female flesh.”\textsuperscript{36}

As one result, Rembrandt projected this particular image of women into the works he created for others to gaze upon.

Using psychoanalytic theory, some art historians have explored the important concept of the role of the gaze in association with images of women, particularly the female nude form.\textsuperscript{37} In Rembrandt’s nudes, the power associated with “looking” functions at various levels of meaning. There is the artist gazing at a woman he paints, etches, or draws, the woman who looks at the viewer from within the picture, the voyeuristic gazing at a woman by another individual from

\textsuperscript{36} De Jongh, 2001, 30.
within the image itself, and the viewer’s gaze (with varying levels of voyeurism possible) upon the woman depicted. Rembrandt was clearly intrigued with women being gazed upon by sexually interested observers as in his paintings of *Diana Bathing with her Nymphs* and *Susanna and the Elders* (Illus. 30 & 31). In works such as these, he depicted lifelike nudes, often isolated and in situations where they were caught unaware, and being viewed by a male protagonist from within the work.

The various methods in which Rembrandt showed nakedness and sexual engagement, and the manner in which he framed these themes within the narrative structure of his works, were clearly intended to involve and arouse the viewer by means of the strong voyeuristic implications inherent in his nude representations. Indeed, Rembrandt’s conventions often place the viewer in the position of being complicit as co-voyeur along with the men who are illicitly gazing upon the woman in the story being depicted. Eric Jan Sluijter emphasizes Rembrandt’s intentionality in this regard:

For Rembrandt, the specific context of subject matter in which the nude figure functioned, with all its emotional, moral, and erotic connotations, determined the nature and the effects of the nude…. Rembrandt’s choice of subject matter for his paintings containing female nudes – all of which deal with subjects that involve looking at the nude female body and arousing love and lust in the one who observes it – gives us insight into his particular approach to the nude figure. To challenge viewers to become intensely involved with the scene depicted… must have been crucial for Rembrandt.  

There is clearly a psychological dimension contained within these depictions of female nudes. In this regard, Gilboa observes that there are few depictions involving a nude in Rembrandt’s oeuvre that show a harmonious relationship between men and women. Indeed, the inclusion of a male figure typically emphasizes the confrontational. In many of Rembrandt’s works, when a man is introduced into the pictorial space he either violates the female in some

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38 Eric Jan Sluijter, 2006, 18.
way or the female uses her wiles to try to gain power over him and bring him to his destruction. This kind of situation is almost always seen in the first two stages of development in Rembrandt’s depiction of the nude. In his later more mature works of the last two stages of development, the erotic or nude woman is presented as more appealing and approachable, or even as an individual in her own right. Indeed, many of the later drawings and etchings show a woman alone with her thoughts and it is an accurate observation that she “seems most assured, her femininity most convincing, when she determines the interaction, and in most cases this is when she is seen alone.”39 This kind of psychological understanding of Rembrandt’s depictions of women has also been written about by other scholars, and forms the basic art historical structure by which this study is presented. It is to these studies that have highlighted the psychological aspects of Rembrandt’s etchings and drawings, as well as his paintings, that we now turn.

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CHAPTER 2

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF REMBRANDT’S IMAGES OF WOMEN:
A REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In this study, I analyze Rembrandt’s female nudes in his etchings and drawings, illustrating how his representations reveal a progressive maturity in understanding and depicting women – beginning with a generally simplistic and objectified view of women that eventually yielded a more mature and integrated view in his later years. This examination of Rembrandt’s nudes approaches his works from a distinctly psychological perspective. In fact, I apply a specific psychoanalytic theory (Margaret Mahler’s separation-individuation theory of psychosocial development) that has never been previously used to understand Rembrandt’s depictions of the female nude. However, the general application of a psychological approach to investigate Rembrandt’s oeuvre has a rich history in art historical studies.

In the 1970s, at the height of psychoanalytic studies in art history, Madlyn Kahr published two articles regarding paintings by Rembrandt. While the first analysis does not explore Rembrandt’s nudes in particular, it is of consequence to this thesis in that it shows Kahr’s attempt to understand Rembrandt’s psychological development. The first publication looks at four works of Rembrandt involving the Old Testament figure Delilah and other faithless women. Recorded in the Old Testament biblical story, Delilah succeeded in seducing the physically strong hero Samson to reveal the source of his strength, his uncut locks of long hair. She then betrayed him to his enemy, the Philistines, by calling in a man to cut off his hair while Samson was asleep on her lap. According to Kahr, Delilah’s betrayal of Samson was commonly used in the pictorial tradition of the North as a warning against the wiles of women, but “in no other artist’s development, however, did the story of Samson play so prominent a role as it did in

Kahr proposes that the new features and effects that Rembrandt introduced in the representation of this story give clues to his personal experiences and fears. In the painting *Samson and Delilah*, 1631 (Illus. 32), Samson is clearly shown as the helpless victim of a malevolent woman; in *The Blinding of Samson*, 1636 (Illus. 33), Kahr suggests a cunning Delilah with some features resembling Saskia who “flaunts the long locks she has cut off.” Saskia’s faithfulness is not at issue here; instead, Kahr attempts to establish that Rembrandt’s view of women as depicted in these paintings seems to be one of anxiety, and even fear. In *Samson’s Wedding Feast* (1638), the central figure is another faithless woman in Samson’s life, the woman of Timnath who betrayed Samson by revealing the answer to his riddle to a crowd. Kahr suggests that the depiction is of a self-satisfied and smug female who again has physical attributes of Saskia. In all of these paintings, as well as in *Self-Portrait with Saskia in a Moralizing Tavern Scene*, 1636 – also referred to as *The Prodigal Son* (Illus. 34), Rembrandt provided pictorial evidence to indicate that the man was the victim of a woman. Kahr concludes that Rembrandt had apprehensions in his relationships with women at this time and that “it seems fair to assume that feelings of fear, hostility, and insecurity in relation to women played some part in determining the nature of these paintings.” Most of these paintings were completed in the late 1630’s and fall within the proposed second stage of Rembrandt’s depictions of the female nude, in which women are seen as powerful and fear-inducing.

Kahr’s article on *Danaë*, 1636 (Illus. 29) is a biographical and contextual investigation of a painting. She describes the visual tradition of this mythological figure in detail. Her unique suggestion that the etching usually seen as showing *Jupiter and Antiope*, 1631 (Illus. 5), is more

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41 Ibid., 240.
42 Ibid., 249.
43 Ibid., 258.
likely to be Danaë is somewhat convincing. In Rembrandt’s painted rendition of the mythological character of Danaë, she retains the appearance of a common woman instead of a generic classical, idealized beauty. Kahr offers two quite interesting theses in this article: (1) Rembrandt opted for a more compassionate view of Danaë than is typical, depicting her as inviting the heavenly fulfillment offered to her, and (2) Rembrandt’s painting of Danaë communicated “a new conception: a sexual woman as neither saint nor sinner, victim nor seductress, but a participant in full humanity.”

This view of women was most often seen in Rembrandt’s works from his final years, but this was clearly an early example of this type of mature and integrated representation of a woman.

In *The Embarrassment of Riches* (1988), Simon Schama uses a largely historical analysis in order to argue that Rembrandt’s depictions of women tended to display an ambivalent attitude toward the female gender. Svetlana Alpers takes a more sociological approach in investigating the work of Rembrandt in her book *Rembrandt’s Enterprise: The Studio and the Market* (1988). Alpers argues that Rembrandt rarely represented either Saskia or Hendrickje in domestic settings, and in his first wife’s case, Alpers suggests that this may be indicative of marital alienation. Alpers goes on to state that in contrast, Rembrandt seems to create a separate realm for Hendrickje in his art and that he “entertained his desire for her in the studio and sustained it by capturing her in paint.”

Mieke Bal is an important scholar in Rembrandt studies. Attempting to describe her analysis of Rembrandt and his depictions of women is difficult given her combination of

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45 Kahr, 1978, 55.
semiotics, feminism, and psychoanalysis. In her seminal book *Reading “Rembrandt”: Beyond the Word-Image Opposition*, she regards ‘Rembrandt’ as a “cultural text,” to be read as a combination of his actual historical works and the responses to them over the centuries. Bal regards all of Rembrandt’s works, including his women, as informed by several conflicting discourses that create opposing frames of reference through which a contemporary viewer might perceive Rembrandt’s art. In Bal’s chapter of the book *Rembrandt’s ‘Bathsheba Reading King David’s Letter’* (1998), edited by Ann Jensen Adams, the author proposes:

> Representations like the *Bathsheba* produced narratives about, and attitudes toward, the constellation of sometimes contradictory discourses within which she might have been understood – including the visual tradition, art theory, the viewer’s experience, and history.

She is thus concerned with how the viewer creates meaning and how the visual art is “read” through an interaction between the painting itself, the iconographic tradition to which the painting relates, and the specific viewer’s perception of the work.

To this point it should be noted that both professional art historians and amateur viewers of Rembrandt’s pictures throughout history have intuitively perceived an emotional link between the artist and the women who are repeatedly portrayed in his works, a link that seems to “indicate a psychological or physical relationship between the two, born either of blood or bed.” It is perhaps inevitable that the viewer will conjecture that Rembrandt was conveying his true emotional self and his actual emotional attachments because the expressiveness of his subjects is so uncannily immediate and tangible. Whether seen as Rembrandt’s mother, sister, lover, or

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wife, observers have often connected the women in Rembrandt’s oeuvre with his personal life. The female nudes elicit the most interesting conjectures of this nature (e.g., Gary Schwartz going so far as to suggest that Hendrickje was the model for the *Bathsheba* of 1654 and that this was a factor in her being called before the church council that year). In this study, I will not attempt to specifically indicate a correspondence between wife/lover and any particular drawing, etching, or painting. In this way I will avoid projecting an imaginary *specific biographical* meaning to any *individual work*. Instead, I will look at the graphic media images of the female nude, produced throughout Rembrandt’s life, and group them into consecutive time frames. I will then propose *generalized psychological* meaning for each of these succeeding *groups of works* as a whole.

Three articles written since 2003, using methodologies from the social sciences, focus on Rembrandt’s art and offer potentially new areas of research and engagement in the study of the artist’s depiction of women. Martha Hollander explores the convention of so-called “shame dramas” to understand two of Rembrandt’s paintings, including *Susanna and the Elders*, 1636 (Illus. 31). She explores the “urgent realism” of the painting and the “eroticism of the everyday” that makes it hard to know our role in the shame—*is* she hiding from us or asking for our help? An article by Maria and Martin Bergmann, “A Psychoanalytic Study of Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits,” (2006) includes a section on women in Rembrandt’s art and explores his two self-portraits with Saskia. Their psychological reading identifies the couple as lacking intimacy and they further maintain that these works signify Rembrandt’s difficulty in maintaining close relationships. While noting there are no self-portraits with Hendrickje, the authors emphasize

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that his pictorial representations of her suggest his relationship to women had greatly matured by this time in his life.\textsuperscript{54}

Finally, a study by James A. Shirillo and Melissa A. Fox (2006) examined Rembrandt’s female portraits, finding that 74\% of the time, the subject’s left cheek faces the viewer (as opposed to 26\% of the time in male portraits). The rating by viewers of the left-cheeked female faces as more approachable may indicate sexual attractiveness when this cheek is highlighted. Because the right brain controls strong emotions and governs the left side of the body, the artist’s choice to emphasize the left cheek may be the best approach if a strong emotional impact is desired.\textsuperscript{55} Whether this study took into account the tradition for pendant portraits to place the woman on the viewer’s right is unknown, but since most portraits of women from this time and culture were as part of a pendant pair (including in Rembrandt’s oeuvre), and the woman’s face is fully lit with the left cheek most prominent in such works, they certainly should have considered such important data. Nonetheless, programs of study such as these offer new approaches and insights in understanding the women in Rembrandt’s art. In addition, these articles clearly point to the role of the viewer in art studies. The psychological role of the observer in Rembrandt’s depiction of women, especially his nudes (as eroticized voyeur, potential attacker or rescuer, or as appreciator of the beauty displayed), remains an important aspect to take into account when discussing Rembrandt’s art.

There have been three important full-length studies of the women in Rembrandt’s art produced in this decade that should be mentioned here. After decades of sporadic articles on individual works including women, these publications are now standards in this area of

\textsuperscript{54} Maria and Martin Bergmann, “A Psychoanalytic Study of Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits,” Psychoanalytic Review 93, no. 6 (December 2006), 977-990.

Rembrandt research. Especially because of the 2001 exhibition called *Rembrandt’s Women* in England and Scotland, there is renewed interest in the topic after it had been neglected in the 1980s and 1990s. The catalogue to the exhibition of Rembrandt’s women contains six important essays by different scholars, along with the Rembrandt images seen in this exhibition (with catalogue entries by Julia Lloyd Williams).\(^{56}\) Williams also writes an introduction in which she reviews the possible references to the women in his life found in Rembrandt’s paintings. She also discusses the painter’s fascination with portraying women being observed. and she notes that Rembrandt depicted women wielding their influence “through beauty, charm, ruse and wile to attract man, gain power over him and thus bring about his destruction.”\(^{57}\) S.A.C. Dudok Van Heel gives us a small formal biography that traces each of the three women in Rembrandt’s household. He makes the interesting conclusion that Rembrandt stopped painting women with erotic charge after the church’s intervention with Hendrickje.\(^{58}\) The article by Eddy de Jongh reflects on the social status of women in the Netherlands, and considers the sitter’s level of control over a portrait, and the cultural beliefs regarding beauty as seen in the depictions of women in Rembrandt’s oeuvre.\(^{59}\) Eric Jan Sluijter writes an essay on the pictorial history of representations of favored nude subjects, *Andromeda, Diana, Susanna,* and *Bathsheba*\(^ {60}\) while Volker Manuth writes about the reputation of nude models of the time, pointing out that most of them were prostitutes\(^ {61}\).


\(^{58}\) Dudok Van Heel, 2001, 27.

\(^{59}\) Jongh, 2001, 29-36.

\(^{60}\) Sluijter, 2001, 37-46.

Anat Gilboa’s 2003 tome, *Images of the Feminine in Rembrandt’s Work* (2003), reviews the historical criticisms of Rembrandt’s depictions of women, traces the female figures as seen throughout his art production of five decades, and takes up five major areas of study regarding women (the presentation of the mother of Christ, portraiture, the nude and the erotic, intimacy and distance in Rembrandt’s relationships with women companions, and goddesses and heroines rendered by Rembrandt). As noted by Gilboa, while her text is not specifically a gender study, it is an important part of her discussion.

Rembrandt’s perception of the other sex is a reflection both of the conventions of his time and his personal attitude. I have therefore quite deliberately chosen the term ‘feminine’ in the title of this study and not ‘women’: the guiding principle behind this approach is that ‘the feminine’ is a social construct, not a biological determination. How women are perceived is determined by phenomena that were as valid in Rembrandt’s time as they are today…

*Rembrandt and the Female Nude* is a recent comprehensive study by Eric Jan Sluijter. He proposes that Rembrandt’s choice of subject matter for female nudes always deals with an onlooker whose love or lust is aroused by the observation of the nude. He also demonstrates that traditional imagery is Rembrandt’s point of departure for depicting nudes. With each major painted nude (*Andromeda, Susanna, Diana, Danaë, and Bathsheba*), Sluijter provides information on the iconographic tradition, notes the major works by previous artists of that image, and supplies the contemporary pictorial examples of the specific nudes discussed. He also writes five so-called *intermezzos* that discuss thematic topics such as the “from life” ideology and the female nude model. One quote in his discussion of *Danaë* will suffice to provide a feel for the exquisite writing he uses in this book and the understanding he has of Rembrandt’s vision:

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63 Ibid., 19.
64 Sluijter, 2006, 18.
Danaë’s body shows that Rembrandt wanted to suggest that this woman was painted from life, that we have a ‘living’ woman before our eyes – which was not always appreciated…Her squat proportions, the large, almost neckless head, and especially the stomach sagging slightly to the side and the left breast pressed upwards by the hand on which she leans, are elements not found in any of the Danaës or recumbent Venuses of Rembrandt’s predecessors. Rembrandt is almost the only painter who allows the law of gravity to exert its pull. 65

Eric Jan Sluijter’s Rembrandt and the Female Nude will remain an invaluable source in understanding the pictorial tradition underlying Rembrandt’s depiction of female nudes for years to come. However, he does not attempt in any way to explore the possible influence of the progression of Rembrandt’s emotional and psychological development in representations of this type of pictorial form. While several writers have alluded to or approached this topic directly with regard to one or more individual works of art (e.g., Kahr and Bergmann as noted above), to this point, no scholar has attempted to examine the drawn and etched female nudes produced by Rembrandt in order to show the successive psychosocial development found in the works themselves.

In this study, I will attempt to provide an analysis of the pictorial progression that Rembrandt made in representing the female nude, particularly in his drawings and etchings. To do this, I will use the paradigm of Margaret Mahler’s theory of relational development to explore the stages of expressive development that occur in Rembrandt’s production of the female nude. This important developmental theorist provided four stages of relational progress that an individual initially moves through as a child. Mahler and other writers using her formulations have further applied these stages to ongoing personality development in the adult. The next chapter explains Mahler’s ideas and their application to relational formation in adults.

CHAPTER 3

THE FOUR-STAGE DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY OF MARGARET MAHLER AND ITS APPLICATION TO ADULT PERSONALITY FORMATION

Mahler was a Hungarian pediatrician and theorist interested in how children develop a sense of self. Interestingly, she actually began studies in Art History at the University of Budapest, before switching to Medical School. Mahler’s developmental research on the phases of separation and individuation of the infant from the mother have contributed greatly to an understanding of the development of relationships in early childhood that impact an individual for the rest of his or her life. She studied autism and emotionally disturbed youngsters as a means of understanding and appreciating the child’s attachment processes. She was the psychological researcher who “perhaps most decisively placed the mother-child interaction in a developmental context.” Mahler described in detail what she called the “separation-individuation process,” the succession of internal representations (or, in her language, the internal object formations) created within the mind of the child that serves to form a unified sense of others and of self. Her theory has been hailed as “perhaps the most compelling vision of early childhood since Freud’s depiction of the oedipal complex.”

Mahler contended that a child’s relationship with its mother forms the core of the self in adulthood. She identified four distinct stages of emotional development involved in the creation of a stable inner representation of the significant other and the resulting creation of a secure sense of self. Margaret Mahler named these four stages of child development, which are usually

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66 Jill Savege Scharff and David E. Scharff, *Scharff Notes: A Primer of Object Relations Therapy* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1992), 64.
successfully completed between birth and thirty months, Symbiosis, Differentiation, Practicing, and Rapprochement (the last stage achieved by means of a critical conflict at the end of the Practicing stage).

Mahler believed that the first months of a child’s life involves a primitive experience of normal symbiosis with the mother in which the newborn is, at first, unaware of others in the interpersonal sense of the word.\(^{69}\) The child then becomes aware of the caregiver, but with no sense of individuality. The infant sees him or herself and the mother as one closed system, and does not yet experience the mother as a separate autonomous presence.\(^{70}\) She is merely available for the child’s consumption; thus, there is a basic narcissism operating within the infant.

With the beginning of the separation-individuation stage of development at about five months of age, the child begins on a path of independence from the mother figure. Development during this stage will largely determine how he or she will experience a sense of self over time and influence the nature of interpersonal relationships in life. The first stage of this separation-individuation process following the initial stage of undifferentiated Symbiosis is called the Differentiation stage. This stage of relational growth finds the infant beginning to experience the separateness of the mother (and others) as the child’s vision becomes more developed. The self and the other are increasingly differentiated “as the child starts to investigate the world and discovers that it extends beyond his lips and fingertips.”\(^{71}\) It is in this phase that the infant first experiences the well-known phenomenon of “stranger anxiety.” While the child is most comfortable engaging the outside world from the safety of the caregiver’s arms in the early period of this beginning differentiation, he or she begins to understand that the mother is fully able to either fulfill or frustrate their desires through offering or denying the things the child

\(^{69}\) Mahler, 1975.
\(^{70}\) Cashdan, 1988, 13.
\(^{71}\) Ibid., 14.
wants. Therefore this stage is increasingly anxiety producing to the child as he or she begins to realize that the mother has the power to give or withhold what is needed by the child in the relationship that exists between them.

The Practicing stage is entered at about ten to twelve months of age. Largely brought on by the infant’s ability to crawl and then walk freely, the child is able to bodily separate from the mother. The child begins to explore his world more actively and to distance himself physically from the mother. Yet, the infant is not completely ready for extended separation from the caregiver, and typically the child is only comfortable playing on its own when the mother is within sight. He or she still seeks the mother’s presence and reassurance and will visually check on the mother’s location while involved in other activities. Still, the child is ready to begin the initial steps of individuation.\(^2\)

The reward to be found in this practicing stage for the infant is the child’s developing ability in locomotion. Mahler proposes that this “has to do not only with the exercise of the ego apparatuses, but also with the elated escape from fusion with, from engulfment by, mother.”\(^3\) According to Mahler, the infant at the same time has the distinct need for “emotional refueling,” requiring regular intervals of experiencing the mother’s presence and her provision of emotional and physical connection to remain actively engaged in the outside world.

During the Practicing stage of child development, children move away from their mother and return for refueling, but they do not yet have a stable inner representation of the mother or a sense of being completely separate from her. In the fourth stage of the separation-individuation process between 16 and 30 months, referred to by Mahler as Rapprochement, the sense of a

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\(^2\) Mahler, 1975.

\(^3\) Ibid., 71.
separate self begins to emerge and eventually results in the so-called rapprochement crisis.

Mahler writes:

The rapprochement struggle has its origin in the *species-specific* human dilemma that arises out of the fact that, on the one hand, the toddler is obliged, by the rapid maturation of his ego, to recognize his separateness, while, on the other hand, he is as yet unable to stand alone and will continue to need his parents for many years to come.²⁴

The awareness of being truly separate is a distinct and traumatic event that severely deflates the infant’s sense of grandeur and omnipotence. The child “becomes actually aware of his vulnerability and dependence.”²⁵ Mahler discussed the way in which the infant will often attempt to cling to the mother after discovering his or her own intrapsychic separateness. The toddler’s need for individuation conflicts with the vulnerability that separation will create for the child. How the child resolves this internal struggle will form the basis of his or her interpersonal relationships. An unsuccessful conclusion to this rapprochement crisis will lead the child to either excessive narcissism or a withdrawal from love objects in order not to feel vulnerable and dependent.²⁶ The successful management of this crisis leads to the creation of “libidinal object constancy.”²⁷ This means that the child has an internal representation of self and others that is stable and that will serve him or her well in years to come.

In rapprochement, the child reaches a stage in which the self is both separate from and yet safely connected to the significant other. The child who successfully navigates the rapprochement crisis has a stable inner representation of the mother and of him/herself. The understanding and acceptance of a self that is independent from, yet engaged with and cared for by a separate other, is the essence of the successful transition from the rapprochement crisis to

²⁴ Mahler, 1975, 229.
²⁶ Almaas, 1988, 286.
²⁷ Mahler, 1975.
internal object constancy (positive and integrated internal representations of self and other) in the child. This development of a stable sense of self and others enables the individual to function autonomously in the future and to establish healthy relationships with others in years to come.

Mahler and those who have employed her psychological theories have applied them to personality development throughout life and also to the clinical treatment of individuals for a variety of issues. The specific importance of the progress of the separation-individuation process in childhood is that it is viewed as a precursor to the strengths and difficulties involved in personal and relational development in later years. For example, Mahler’s ideas have been used to examine such areas as adolescent development\(^{78}\) and issues related to adult male intimacy.\(^{79}\)

In addition, theorists and mental health clinicians have used Mahler’s concepts and methods to prescribe general therapeutic interventions in psychotherapy.\(^{80}\) Her formulations regarding the roots of relational development have been used to provide clinical direction for a number of different areas of psychological concern. Mahler’s ideas on separation and individuation have been referenced in order to assist in planning psychosocial rehabilitation for disturbed adolescents and young adults.\(^{81}\) Addictions counseling\(^{82}\) and marriage counseling\(^{83}\) have also been informed by Mahler’s formulations about healthy relationships with self and

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\(^{79}\) Christopher Blazina, “Part objects, infantile fantasies, and intrapsychic boundaries: an object relations perspective on male difficulties and intimacy,” *The Journal of Men’s Studies*, 10, no. 1 (Fall 2001), 89-99.


\(^{81}\) S. Schneider, “Separation and individuation issues in psychosocial rehabilitation,” *Adolescence* 27 (Spring 1992), 137-145.


others. Further, the understanding of Mahler’s work has guided treatment in domestic violence cases and the treatment of sexual abuse. Finally, relational pathologies have been explored using Mahler’s developmental theories, including such diverse diagnoses as narcissism, borderline personality disorder and multiple personality disorder.

Christopher Blazina has completed important research on intimacy difficulties in adult males, in which he uses the object relations perspective of Margaret Mahler and Melanie Klein. Object relations theory is the field of psychological study concerned with the internal representations made of self and others in the developing child, constructions within the psyche that remain influential in relationship functioning as an adult. Blazina’s approach is particularly relevant for this study of the stages of pictorial expression in Rembrandt’s images of the female nude. Blazina and others conceptualize that relationship difficulties in men often result from the socially expected disidentification of a young boy with his primary caregiver (usually female), resulting in an emotional trauma that hinders his ability to form and sustain intimate relationships. This disidentification causes an early splitting of the world into a black and white

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85 Jill Savege Scharff and David E. Scharff, *Object Relations Therapy of Physical and Sexual Trauma* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1994).
89 Another important post-Freud developmental theorist
dichotomy of either gratifying or ungratifying (good or bad) others. The boy is “consequentially arrested at an unintegrated place within the psyche.”

In normal functioning adults, primitive ways of experiencing another person can still exist within the psyche. As they mature emotionally, adults will often replicate the developmental succession of Mahler’s stages in order to work out the identity and relational tasks that have not been fully accomplished. Blazina indicates that male intimacy is:

Achieved by realizing and seeing our partners as well as ourselves as the mixed human beings we are – encompassing both human fragility and life-giving connection. By working through these [separation-individuation] dynamics, part objects can become integrated into whole objects, garnering more relational potential.

The overall structure of Mahler’s four stages presented in this chapter provides a means by which to analyze Rembrandt’s adult relational development as exhibited in the four periods of pictorial expression proposed in this study. Examining chronologically the drawings and etchings of the female nudes by Rembrandt reveals an evolutionary progression of relational maturity, beginning with his early-objectified view of women and leading finally to a mature and integrated view of women in Rembrandt’s later years. I will begin by looking as Rembrandt’s earliest nudes, which are simplistic, anatomically focused, and clearly intended as gratifying objects of consumption through the male gaze. These early depictions represent the symbiotic stage of development according to Mahler’s paradigm of relational development.

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92 Blazina, 2001, 90.
CHAPTER FOUR
STAGES ONE AND TWO

Stage 1 (1630-1631)

Rembrandt created his earliest graphic nudes in Leiden. His drawings of the female nude during this period include a black chalk preparatory study of Diana at her Bath, 1630/1631 (Illus. 1) and A Study of the Female Nude Seen from the Back, 1630/34 (Illus. 2). The etchings by Rembrandt from this period include Diana at her Bath, 1631 (Illus. 3), A Seated Female Nude or Nude on a Mound, 1631 (Illus. 4), Jupiter and Antiope, 1631 (Illus. 5), and the euphemistically entitled A Woman Making Water, 1631 (Illus. 6). These two drawings and four etchings clearly show a young Rembrandt who went out of his way to assert his independence as a draftsman and etcher of nude women. He captured the female body in a full physicality of form and with a seemingly purposeful gracelessness of execution. Of note in these first compositions is that Rembrandt generally depicted nude women unknowingly observed and eroticized. This corresponds to Mahler’s Symbiosis stage of development as the nudes are offered as “objects” for viewing, provided so that they may be indulged in for the emotional satisfaction of the observers’ needs.

Rembrandt invites the viewer, in these first drawings and etchings of women gazed upon, to look at the nudes with a consuming curiosity. Rembrandt gives the viewer an omnipotent position by making the woman either unaware of being seen, or having her blatantly stare back; the woman is also clearly presented for the eroticized stare, often blatantly by exposing her sexual organs to scrutiny. This is most obviously presented in the etching of Jupiter and Antiope, 1631 (Illus. 5) with Jupiter’s leering, voyeuristic behavior toward the sleeping nymph clearly depicted by the artist. Rembrandt’s overall psychological state in creating these first
works is that of a young man still relatively unfamiliar with women, who thus depicts nude female forms that invite the clandestine stare. These drawings and etchings thus most parallel the symbiotic stage of relational development as described in Mahler’s schema, in which the woman (beginning with the mother) is observed only with an eye to what can be received and consumed from her through a raw narcissistic connection.

Rembrandt focused, during this period, on capturing the unidealized anatomical reality of the female body. He took this to the point of including in this period an etching of a woman relieving herself, with breasts and genitalia exposed to the viewer, as she both urinates and defecates on the ground. Rembrandt left a portion of light between her legs in order that the viewer might plainly examine her actions. The pair to this etching, *A Man Making Water*, is much less explicit and is clearly related to Rembrandt’s drawings and prints of vagabonds and peasants. But in *A Woman Making Water* (Illus. 6), Rembrandt revealed all of her physical attributes in all of their shocking anatomical realities.

One of Rembrandt’s first studies of the nude is surely the somewhat tentatively drawn *Study of the Female Nude Seen from the Back* (Illus. 2). This black and white chalk drawing has many oddly demarcated features, including a restless line beneath the figure, an unpleasing form under her right elbow, and an over-emphasis on the cleft made by her spine. The woman’s back is presented in a way that suggests a real individual with cellulite, the effect of which Rembrandt augmented in his other drawing *Diana at her Bath* (Illus. 1). The woman, while preserving some modesty through being observed from the rear and through the depiction of a cushion covering her lap, is clearly presented for inspection by the viewer. She is no idealized creature, but a woman of flesh and blood to be pored over and erotically considered. Like all of

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93 Williams, *Rembrandt’s Women*, 2001, 81
the nude studies of this period except for one, she is presented alone without a relationally informed narrative content.

The rare preliminary study, *Diana at her Bath*, is a black chalk drawing completed in preparation for the later etching. This drawing is unusually tentative for Rembrandt, with legs that are unresolved and heavily drawn over. The drawing has been scored along the outline of the figure to transfer it to a copper plate for a “tracing” of the nude.\(^94\) Apparently, Rembrandt was wary about etching his first female nude onto the plate with no guidelines (while, on the other hand, showing no lack of confidence in filling in the background). Probably drawn in the studio, Rembrandt provided an outdoor background through fine lines and sketchily added a bow and quiver of arrows to indicate that this is indeed Diana. He placed Diana in a pose that harkens back to many representations throughout the history of art of women being watched. Indeed, voyeurism is central to the myth of Diana, in which Actaeon spied on her as she bathed with her nymphs. His punishment for this act of gazing was to be transformed into a stag and then hunted to death. The informed viewer of the painting is likewise implicated in an illicit gaze, although Diana quietly returns our gaze without anger, so that we (unlike Actaeon) can safely view and consume her image.\(^95\)

Traditionally, goddesses have been given bodies that do not experience the effects of age or even gravity. Not so in Rembrandt’s depiction of Diana. Her breasts droop, her stomach falls heavily into her lap, and there are lumpy deposits of fatty flesh in various locations on her body. Rembrandt succeeded in bringing this woman as close as possible to the world of the viewer. He dismissed all classical stylization with regard to proportions of the nude and instead paid


\(^{95}\) Sluijter, 2006, 273.
attention to the surface and texture of the skin in order to emphasize the naturalness of this real breathing woman. This is even more evident in Rembrandt’s etching of Diana.

Rembrandt first two etchings of the nude seem to be conceived of as a pair of sorts. The etchings *Diana at her Bath* (Illus. 3) and *A Seated Female Nude*, also called *Woman on a Mound*, (Illus. 4) are made on plates almost exactly the same size, in a format not used again, and with poses that are virtual mirrors of each other.\(^96\) Both figures sit naked in a wooded setting and appear to be bathing. In addition, the two figures are seated on their drapery, each resting one arm on a higher level of the bank and gazing directly at the viewer. While the Diana etching is clearly identified by her quiver and arrows and the richly embroidered material that suggests an antique costume, there is nothing specific with which to identify *A Seated Female Nude*. However, given the parallels noted above, it has been suggested that the unidentified nude is one of Diana’s nymphs, possibly even Callisto, made pregnant by Jupiter.\(^97\)

Given the rarity of unidentified female etched nudes in Rembrandt’s oeuvre until 1658, other than the genre studies *A Woman Making Water* (1631) and *The Artist Drawing from a Model* (1639) and given its shared format with the *Diana*, it would seem probable that *A Seated Female Nude* was indeed intended to be a mythological character such as Callisto.

The bodies of these two women are recorded with great realism, with Rembrandt executing an uncompromising representation of “rolls of fat, double chin, sagging breasts, awkward extremities and crude stocking marks that rivet our attention.”\(^98\) Rembrandt provided a frank fidelity to nature through the depiction of such “splendid imperfection”\(^99\) in these etchings of women. Rembrandt created a scandalizing twist on the grand nude of classical tradition:

\(^{97}\) Ibid., 78.
\(^{98}\) Westermann, 2000, 58.
He was probably out to make a point; but deeper down he seems to be saying that life is like this, not a matter of smooth, marble limbs but of marks made by garters.

Rembrandt apparently wanted to underscore the fact that a close observation of a specific woman’s body would yield a view of the unadorned branding of life on her body.

Rembrandt may have seen himself building upon the achievements of the great painters of the human form through these early etchings. He knew the work of Annibale Carracci in Italy (the etching of Susanna and the Elders may be a prototype for these etchings), the nude etchings of Willem Buytewech in Haarlem, and the work of Rubens in Antwerp through prints. Possibly in mindful opposition to Rubens who depicted voluptuousness to suggest fertility or seductiveness, a youthful Rembrandt exhibited a fascination with the flawed aspects of the feminine form. He “uncovers” the female form down to its complicated raw reality in order that it might be gazed upon and understood.

As previously noted, Anne Hollander has effectively argued that the body shape depicted in Rembrandt’s etchings was actually one considered appealing in the early seventeenth century. Rembrandt’s contemporaries, unlike his critics of later decades, may have thus appreciated his etchings as attractive nudes. This is implied by the fact that Wenzel Hollar copied A Seated Female Nude (1635) “not because Hollar felt himself a co-rebel, but because the print was a commercial success.” In addition, Eric Jan Sluijter argues that the composition of the beautiful Louvre Bathsheba, 1654 (Illus. 35) was modeled after Diana at Her Bath. Of further interest is that a clothed version of A Seated Female Nude is possibly seen in a painting

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100 Martin Gayford, “Majestically Unglamorous,” The Spectator 287, no. 9034 (September 29, 2001), 43
that is usually entitled *Old Testament Heroine at Her Toilet*, 1633 (Illus. 36). The woman’s form is similar to the seated nude; indeed, if we imagine her undressed, the lower part of her body may be even more corpulent than the one presented in the etching.

One thing is for certain – there is clear voyeurism in the first two etchings of the spied-upon Diana and “Callisto” or *A Seated Female Nude*. This element is even more articulated in the etching of Jupiter and Antiope, 1631 (Illus. 5). Antiope outstretched arm lying across her pubic area both hides and draws attention to that region. Her other hand dangles limply in relaxed unconsciousness. This was the first of many depictions of women in bed by Rembrandt. Julia Lloyd Williams, in the catalogue for the exhibition *Rembrandt’s Women*, suggests that this etching anticipates Rembrandt’s Danaë (1636) painting, with the overall structure of the compositions remarkably similar.\(^{105}\) Interestingly, Rembrandt revisited the subject of Jupiter and Antiope later in his life.

The drawings and etchings of this first stage provide simple and objectified views of women that emphasize the real flesh and blood body of the nude female. The preparatory drawing of Diana at her Bath and three of the etchings reveal mythological women with stories featuring male voyeurs. Of note is the fact that all three paintings of this period that feature nudes (*Andromeda*, 1630, Illus. 37; *The Rape of Proserpina*, 1631, Illus. 38; and *The Rape of Europa*, 1632, Illus. 39), each include mythological women abducted and made available for the male gaze; indeed, both the stories told and the pictures Rembrandt painted expose them.

This stage of expressive development in Rembrandt’s nudes, paralleling Mahler’s Symbiotic stage of relational development, involves a quality of narcissistic consumption of the woman by the male character in the myth (e.g., Actaeon, Jupiter), as well as by the assumed viewer of the print or drawing. In each of the drawings and etchings of this stage, the viewer is

invited to treat the body of Rembrandt’s nude in an objectified manner. Rembrandt drew or etched an isolated nude woman in all of the works of this period except in *Jupiter and Antiope* (that possibly marks the most explicit example of the theme of this period with its lecherous voyeuristic narrative). Thus, an assumed unseen observer views the exposed female subject in nearly every case during this period of artistic creation of the nude, and even in the case of *Jupiter and Antiope*, the watcher is still a barely-visible figure in the shadows.

**Stage 2 (1634-1639)**

Following Rembrandt’s early phase in which the sheer physicality of the individual nude woman was repeatedly depicted in the drawings and etchings, Rembrandt entered a second phase of expressive development in which the artist depicted the nude woman from a different stance — one in which she is in relationship to another. There are six drawings to consider in this stage: *Three Couples of Soldiers and Women*, 1635 (Illus. 7), *Susanna and the Elders*, 1635 (Illus. 8), *A Seated Woman, Naked to the Waist*, 1637 (Illus. 9), *A Nude Woman, with a Snake*, 1637 (Illus. 10), *A Study for the Etching of Adam and Eve*, 1638 (Illus. 11), and *The Artist Drawing From a Model*, 1639 (Illus. 12). The last two drawings were done in conjunction with two etchings of this period. There are only three etchings from the mid to late thirties that depict nude women — *Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife*, 1634 (Illus. 13), *Adam and Eve*, 1638 (Illus. 14), and *The Artist Drawing from the Model*, 1639 (Illus. 15). Two of these etchings are illustrations of biblical stories of a man and woman in conflict, and the final one is a representation of a woman in a studio who is in relationship with the man who draws her.

Rembrandt explored the complex nature of gender relationships in this period, with seven of the ten works involving men and women together in some state of confrontation. In this stage of depicting the nude, Rembrandt produced etchings and drawings that show conflict between
men and women, which best parallels the Differentiation stage of relational development as theorized by Mahler. In childhood, the infant begins to understand that the mother is able to either fulfill or frustrate the child’s need through either providing or denying what the child wants from her. The woman is thus viewed as powerful in her capacity to seduce the child into believing that his or her desires will be met, and she also has the force and potential to thwart or punish the child for expressed needs. The adult who is relationally working through this stage of development will view women similarly, and the images by Rembrandt at this time are indicative of this particular psychological level of relational maturation.

The earliest work from this period is *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* of 1634 (Illus. 13). The biblical story from Genesis involves a man named Joseph who was employed in Egypt by an official named Potiphar. Potiphar’s faithless wife attempts to seduce the righteous Joseph. When he rejects her advances, she accuses him of rape, resulting in Joseph’s imprisonment. Thus the capacity of women to be powerful and fear-inducing, capable of gaining power over men and bringing about their destruction is represented in this print. Rembrandt chose to emphasize the specific nature of the two sexes as described by this story through his use of extremes in dark and light in the etching:

The use of *chiaroscuro* in the composition is especially determined by the moral exemplar the scene conveys: while the figure of Joseph is set against a light background, Potiphar’s wife is shown against the darkly shaded area of the bed.\(^\text{106}\)

In addition, Rembrandt exposed the woman’s genitals as a means of emphasizing her lust and the connection between sex and sin. Rembrandt also used this tactic later in the etching of *Adam and Eve*, with Eve’s pubic area, although somewhat darkened, still explicitly rendered.

\(^{106}\) Holm Bevers, Peter Schatborn and Barbara Welzel, eds. *Rembrandt: The Master and His Workshop (Drawings and Etchings)* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1991), 188.
In 1635, Rembrandt produced two drawings, one sheet with three sketches that feature different groups of men and women (*Three Couples of Soldiers and Women*, Illus. 7) and a red chalk copy of his teacher Pieter Lastman’s *Susanna and the Elders* (Illus. 8). The three sketches involve soldiers who are “amusing themselves with women in various states of undress.”\(^{107}\) Otto Benesch proposed that the sheet was used to work out compositional ideas for *The Prodigal Son in the Tavern* (1635).\(^ {108}\) The pose of one of the women who tries to defend herself from a soldier’s hand being thrust between her legs is similar to the pose used for Susanna as she tries to preserve her modesty in Rembrandt’s first painting of this subject in 1636. The confrontational aspect of the male-female relationship is overtly indicated by these studies.

Rembrandt painted two versions of *Susanna and the Elders*, one in 1636 in which the elders in the story are hidden among the bushes revealing only their heads and shoulders, and a much later one from 1650 in which the elders are completely visible and more actively assaulting Susanna. Susanna, according to the Apocryphal story, was a chaste woman surprised by two elders who secretly watched her taking a bath. When she attempted to return to her house, they stopped her and threatened to claim that she was meeting a young man in the garden unless she agreed to have sex with them. She refused to be blackmailed, saying she would prefer to die rather then to accommodate their immoral request. Susanna was arrested and about to be put to death for promiscuity when Daniel interrupted the proceedings and assessed the truth. In the end, the lecherous elders were themselves put to death for their evil deed. In the seventeenth century, the story of Susanna was:

> undoubtedly the most popular vehicle for the depiction of the female nude in painting, and one that explicitly visualized the forbidden act of spying upon, or even pawing a

\(^{107}\) Wolf, 2006, 53.

\(^{108}\) Benesch, 1960.
nude young woman, a chaste beauty who had undressed to take a bath and by doing so unwittingly aroused the basest desires of those watching her.\textsuperscript{109}

The red chalk drawing of \textit{Susanna and the Elders} is a copy of a 1614 Lastman painting. There are many differences between Rembrandt’s copy and Lastman’s original, including Rembrandt’s manner of reducing in scale of the peacocks and his enlarging of the building in the background. The most important change related to this study is the way in which Rembrandt drew the elders nearer to Susanna stretching out his arm behind her. The threat of this elder is thus heightened and the conflict between the figures is strengthened by the artist’s alterations. In a pen sketch of the same year, Rembrandt showed a stronger reaction by Susanna in response to the threatening elders. As in other drawings and etchings of this period in which women and men are in a dance of conflict, Susanna and the elders are at mortal odds with one another in these drawings.

One exception to the theme of conflict between the sexes in this period of time is found in the drawing entitled \textit{A Seated Woman, Naked to the Waist} of 1637 (Illus. 9). This black chalk drawing softened in places by the use of white shows a young woman seen from behind and holding a cushion over her breasts. Rembrandt’s drawing skills here are more assured than when he rendered the seated female nude drawn in 1630. On the reverse side of the sheet the same woman is again shown naked from the waist up, but standing. These drawings were made with a few quick lines for the contours and heavy shading around the figure to give “a sense of enveloping space.”\textsuperscript{110}

Rembrandt’s \textit{A Nude Woman, with a Snake} (Illus. 10) is believed to be contemporaneous with \textit{A Seated Woman, Naked to the Waist}. The woman has been traditionally identified as

\textsuperscript{109} Sluijter, 2006, 113.
\textsuperscript{110} Williams, \textit{Rembrandt’s Women}, 2001, 150.
Cleopatra, who committed suicide by encouraging an asp to bite her breast. Indicators that this figure by Rembrandt is Cleopatra include the elaborate headdress, the looping snake, and the prominent display of the breast. The importance of recognizing this identity is that it provides another example of how this second period of Rembrandt’s depiction of the nude includes art that shows or alludes to a narrative involving conflict between a man and a woman. In this case, Cleopatra’s death came after Mark Anthony believed he had been betrayed by her and committed suicide himself.

This drawing is usually dated about 1637, partially due to the similar protruding stomachs and general body shapes of Cleopatra and Eve from the etching of 1638. In fact, the scholar Lee Hendrix has gone so far as to suggest that Rembrandt intended to portray Eve in the drawing usually understood to depict Cleopatra. She has discovered some print sources for this particular depiction of Eve, and argues that the presence of the snake represents Satan rather than an asp. Perhaps the best answer, as Gilboa proposes, is that Rembrandt simply combined several elements of several individuals in this drawing in order to convincingly display the theme of erotic seduction. This fits with the argument of this study concerning Rembrandt’s second stage of producing nudes: that he presented nude women in the late 1630s as manipulative betrayers of men, powerful in their ability to entice men with their seductive abilities. These depictions of women thus parallel Mahler’s Differentiation stage of development in which another (originally the mother) is experienced as able to excite and frustrate through offering or denying the things desired. The majority of the nude women depicted during this period proved to be temptresses of men, intentionally or not.

111 Williams, Rembrandt’s Women, 2001, 152.
There are actually three preparatory sketches for the etching of *Adam and Eve* dated 1638 (Illus. 11). The first one shows Adam and Eve sitting, with Adam raising his hands in dismay as Eve offers him the apple of the forbidden tree. The second sketch shows the couple standing, with Adam blocking Eve’s gift with both hands while Eve grasps at Adam’s genitals, drawing attention to the sexual implications of the sinful act, identifying Eve doubly as the true culprit in man’s woes. On the same page as this second sketch is a quickly drawn outline that more closely suggests the final more ambiguous resolution offered in the etching of this subject.

The etching of *Adam and Eve* (Illus. 14) shows the moment when Eve is presenting the apple to Adam for consideration. The closest inspiration for this etching would appear to be a print by Albrecht Dürer, *Christ in Purgatory*, which Rembrandt profoundly admired and had purchased at auction in 1638 (the date of this etching).\(^{113}\) Making an exception to the iconographic tradition, Rembrandt placed Eve in the center of the composition,\(^ {114}\) possibly to emphasize her role as the original temptress. Eve’s round swell of a belly is suggestive of Rembrandt’s earlier etchings.

Rembrandt’s *The Artist Drawing from the Model* (Illus. 15) is a partially executed etching that is carefully worked out in the background of the upper register and only shown in a few sketchy drypoint strokes in the foreground lower register. It shows an artist drawing a female nude with various studio props inhabiting the space around them. Sluijter argues that it may be that this etching was left unfinished because Rembrandt was not yet actually drawing from life (he firmly believes none of the previous etchings were drawn from live models).\(^ {115}\) Eighteenth-century writers interpreted this etching as a portrayal of Pygmalion (based on a tale of an artist who falls in love with the sensual female nude he has sculpted). Wolf believes that the rear view

\(^{113}\) Bevers, Schatborn and Welzel, 1991, 196.
\(^{114}\) Ibid., 196.
\(^{115}\) Sluijter, 2006, 281.
of the woman in *The Artist Drawing from the Model* distinctly recalls the ancient Greek statue known as Aphrodite Callipygos, or “Venus of the lovely buttocks.”\textsuperscript{116}

The drawing entitled *The Artist Drawing from a Model* (Illus. 12), currently in the British Museum, is believed to have been executed after the second state of the etching had been completed.\textsuperscript{117} In the drawing, Rembrandt resolved some of the problems of the etching (e.g., the length of the model’s legs) and also eliminates some of the objects in the foreground for better clarity of space. It has been suggested that Rembrandt deliberately left the etching incomplete in order to instruct pupils in the way in which a composition is developed. It is also possible that this print represents a time in which Rembrandt was unable to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion to a specific pictorial theme, particularly one meant to represent gender harmony. Due to the conflict and confusion exhibited by Rembrandt’s pictorial expressions during this time, I propose that Rembrandt’s attempt to etch a more relational experience with a woman at this time was simply unsuccessful.

In representations of sexuality and relationships between men and women in this second period of drawings and etchings, Rembrandt emphasized the confrontational, with seven of the ten works showing a clear conflict between a man and a woman. His paintings of *Diana Bathing with her Nymphs* (Illus. 30) and the first *Susanna and the Elders* (Illus. 31) are further displays of the difficulty between men and women represented in this period. He clearly differentiates between the male and female body in the works of this time and suggests in both of the biblical etchings and four of the six drawings of this period that the woman is a dangerous ensnarement to the male participant (and viewer?).

\textsuperscript{116} Wolf, 2006, 55.
The Differentiation stage of development described by Margaret Mahler is exhibited within many aspects of these drawings and etchings. There is a depressive and anxious energy presented in the recognition of the woman’s power in the relationship to seduce and/or frustrate, and the resulting internal conflict is projected onto the page (literally). In these depictions of the female nude, the differentiation between men and women is characterized by a relatively primitive stage of relational development. This occurs initially in life, according to Mahler, when the child first begins to realize the mother’s power to give or withhold the child’s needs or desires. The psychological stage of development in an adult corresponding to this childhood phase is one in which the woman is seen as powerful and fear-inducing, thus creating conflict and indecision for the male who tries to relate to her.
CHAPTER FIVE
STAGES THREE AND FOUR

Stage 3 (1643-1650)

The third stage in the development of Rembrandt’s etchings and drawings occurred in the 1640s, a period of new and developing relational experiences for him. During Saskia’s illness in her last year of life, Geertge Dirckx was hired as Titus’ caretaker and became Rembrandt’s mistress; Saskia died in 1642. Around 1647, Rembrandt employed the younger Hendrickje Stoffels as his live-in servant, and she subsequently became Rembrandt’s mistress replacing Geertge. It is perhaps predictable then that he would depict lovemaking during this time; though technically there is no real nudity in the two prints from this period, the explicit nature of the works makes them suitable for this theoretical model concerning relationships between the genders. Sexual intercourse is portrayed in Ledikant (Illus. 18) and The Monk in a Cornfield (Illus. 19) of the same year, 1646. Interesting, this is the same year that he made three etchings of half-nude men. In these two depictions of lovemaking, the sexual positions of the couple are similar, although in Monk in a Cornfield the faces are not shown. While there is a long artistic tradition of satirizing the immoral behavior of priests and monks, Ledikant is probably the first etching to depict domestic lovemaking.¹¹⁸ In this tender scene, Rembrandt seduces the viewer with velvety lines and a soft light bathing the lovers as they lay on a disheveled bed. Michael Taylor describes the scene this way:

They gaze at each other wordlessly amid their entangled limbs (so tangled that, on close inspection, one notices that the faintly smiling woman is in fact favored with two left arms). Their noses are almost touching: hers is raised, a snub nose, its nostrils wide and offered; his long and swollen at the tip, looks as if it was about to penetrate hers.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Westermann, 2000, 268.
These two plates showing lovemaking fall within the third phase of the depiction of nude women in Rembrandt’s works. They are not strictly nudes, and there is nothing coarse or pornographic about these etchings (they show no open genitalia as some prints discussed earlier did); they merely illustrate a private act of intimacy with little flagrant detail. They create a kind of bridge between the scientific exploration of physicality that dominated Rembrandt’s first stage and the confrontational nature of the erotic as studied in his second phase with the mature and sensual nudes of his final period of representation yet to come. This period of Rembrandt’s depiction of the nude can be compared to the Practicing stage of Mahler’s theory of relational development, in which the exploration of a genuine relationship with another begins and there is a practicing of identity within the experience of a shared emotional connection.

There were only two drawings completed during this stage of expressive development that lasted from 1643 to 1650. The first one, *A Seated Female Nude as Susanna* (Illus. 16), was completed in 1647 and was probably executed in order to work out the final pose of the second painting of *Susanna and the Elders* of the same year (Illus. 40). A woman with her upper body bared displays a startled expression and sits on a chair holding her left arm up to reveal a small portion of her breast. A second drawing, *Susanna and the Elders* of 1650 (Illus. 17), has been discussed earlier as the only exception to the theoretical program of this thesis. Art historians have very infrequently explored this drawing and its purpose has not been completely understood. Even its date has been seriously questioned.  

Rembrandt’s works of this stage correspond to the Practicing stage of development suggested by Margaret Mahler. In this phase, there is recognition of shared power, a more fully developed differentiation (originally between mother and child, later between self and all others)

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120 Sluijter, 2006, 113.
and a reduced fear of the relational bond. The Practicing stage involves an exploration of relationships and a beginning development of a more mature way of seeing both the other and the self. Rembrandt, in this stage, etched safe relational experiences of sexuality and also provided one drawing that served to study Susanna’s position in space in order to conclude a project of many years. While this stage provides only a few examples, the women depicted by Rembrandt in the etchings of this stage clearly show men and women in positive relational and sexual experiences, and the woman is seen as emotionally and erotically appealing – not just for looking at, but for meaningful relating and the joining of bodies.

**Stage 4 (1654-1662)**

In his last two decades of life, Rembrandt made three drawings created between 1654 and 1662 and six etchings made of the female nude in the last four years of this period, four of these prints dating from 1658. Scholars agree that Rembrandt used live models in this fourth phase. The women depicted have highly individualized faces and are desirable and sensual beings.\(^{121}\) The figures in these drawings and etchings by Rembrandt were carefully modeled to create solid forms often suffused in tender light. Indeed, White notes that each of these simple studies is extraordinary due to the effects of light cast upon a part of the body and in the backgrounds of the works.\(^{122}\) The sumptuous form of the female body is the clear focus of each work, unmistakably created to capture the unique mood and personhood of each woman.

The earliest drawing of this period was the so-called *Rembrandt’s Studio with a Model*, 1654 (Illus. 20). This was the first drawing or etching of a nude since 1647. In this work, a woman nude from the waist up sits on a chair in a studio with prominent high windows through which sunlight falls and reflects on walls, furniture, and the skin of the woman with her bared

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\(^{121}\) Sluijter, 2006, 330.

\(^{122}\) White, 1984, 144.
chest. There are books, easels, and a cradle on the table. Schatborn suggests that perhaps a woman (Hendrickje?) has been breastfeeding her child (Cornelia?) as Rembrandt drew this marvelous interior.\textsuperscript{123} The woman’s mood or state of being is hard to ascertain, since her face is turned away from the viewer. But there is clearly no conflict involved, no fear displayed, nothing but restful (or possibly bored or tired) energy indicated by her pose.

In 1658, Rembrandt completed four etchings and one drawing depicting the female nude. In these studies, the female form is graceful and approaches a more idealized construction. In addition, the women of these works are shown completely alone, dressed in merely their thoughts and internal feelings. In the etching \textit{A Woman Sitting with a Hat Beside Her}, 1658 (Illus. 23), a model sits with her feet in a bath, a hat on the chair beside her. The meaning of the hat is unclear, but de Winkel has shown that women rarely wore hats like this in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{124} Therefore, given the state of undress and the presumption that the hat belongs to a man, there may be the hint of an imminent illicit meeting. Her contemplative mood is conveyed through her relaxed pose and calm facial expression.

In \textit{A Woman Bathing Her Feet in a Brook}, 1658 (Illus. 24), an intimate reflection of the woman on the surface of the water is enhanced by a poetic display of light and shadow. In this etching, completed on an unusually tall and narrow scrap of copper, Rembrandt probably drew the nude before him in the studio directly on the treated surface of the etching plate.\textsuperscript{125} In both of these prints, the women turn their heads to the side and look down. The female nudes before us are no longer gazing back at the viewer in all of their unflattering realness; instead we see the modesty of a real seventeenth-century woman who would not confront anyone while nude.

\textsuperscript{123} Bevers, Schatborn, and Welzel, 1991, 116.
\textsuperscript{125} Ackley, 2003, 284.
Though not fully classical, they are quite comely and appealing according to contemporary standards. The manner in which Rembrandt accomplished his vision during this mature phase of etching is well described in the exhibition catalogue Rembrandt’s Journey:

Rembrandt’s tonal vision subordinated detail to broader perception. His observation of her [A Woman Bathing Her Feet in a Brook] soft, plump flesh is based on how her body takes the light. His ineffable modulation of tone fully models her form. His skill is apparent in the gentle undulation of form from shoulder to shoulder across her collarbone. Instead of recording the imperfections of her skin, his etching needle made countless tiny dots and flicks to soften the light and deepen the transparent shadows (emphasis mine).  

In these late etchings Rembrandt demonstrated little interest in exploring each fold of overabundant female flesh as the artist did in his earliest etchings. He seems to be no longer focused on examining contentious relationships between a nude woman and a man as in the biblical prints. He is instead now fully focused on a more idealized woman who is smoother and of a more sensual nature. Even Rembrandt’s choice of very soft and expensive papers in these late etchings contributes to the effect he desired. He has entered the fourth stage of relational development in which he depicted women as full participants in their own lives, where the women display a sense of integrated identity and are not defined by others within the pictorial frame. The works of this time frame parallel the final stage of development in Mahler’s theory called Rapprochement in which an integrated sense of self and of others is attained and a secure relational experience can be experienced.

A Woman Sitting Half-Dressed Before a Stove, 1658 (Illus. 25) is perhaps Rembrandt’s finest print of a nude. The image is considered a compositional successor to the Louvre Bathsheba from 1654, but one that is full of domesticity. The position and orientation of the woman’s body would have resembled the painting when Rembrandt drew the figure on the plate

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126 Ackley, 2003, 284.
Both figures look down without expression in shy eroticism and chaste nakedness. Of the six prints of the female nude made in this final period, only this one does not show her completely naked. According to White, the line of her leg is visible beneath her skirt, suggesting that Rembrandt originally depicted her completely nude.\textsuperscript{128}

The organization of this print involves a high, undefined space, with the stove standing in for the backdrop of columns and drapes found in so many Baroque compositions. The relief on the cast iron stove depicting Mary Magdalene at the foot of the Cross has been frequently discussed in the literature and may be related to the woman’s gesture of placing her foot across her slipper creating a cross (spiritual reform as the theme of both depictions).\textsuperscript{129} However, the studio model may have simply been trying to keep her feet off the cold floor. Norbert Wolf, who compares this nude with the nudes of Edgar Degas in the nineteenth century, tenderly notes:

\begin{quote}
In the chilly studio, it was an act of kindness to let the naked models pose by the stove or sit there during the breaks when they could relax and be themselves. Rembrandt has rendered the heat radiating from the stove tiles as a metaphor of human warmth that protects the vulnerable, semi-clothed woman.\textsuperscript{130}
\end{quote}

As in the other two prints discussed above that were executed in 1658, the woman looks down slightly and turns her head to the side, appearing contemplative. The nude is no longer fearful or fear inducing; she is simply undressed with her inner state also somewhat exposed.

Another alluring nude of this period, \textit{A Reclining Female Nude}, 1658 (Illus. 26), has been known throughout the years by different titles, including \textit{The Little Sleeping Woman}, \textit{A Sleeping Nude Woman}, \textit{the Buttocks Exposed}, and finally, \textit{Negress Lying Down}, the title given it by Adam

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Christopher White, \textit{Rembrandt as an Etcher}, 1999, 204.
\item Williams, \textit{Rembrandt’s Women}, 2001, 226.
\item Wolf, 2006, 54.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Bartsch. Karel Boon has argued effectively that Bartsch’s title was misleading, citing the impression in the first state in which the body is considerably paler. However, in the recent monumental work *Rembrandt and the Female Nude*, Eric Jan Sluijter, while acknowledging the paleness of the first state, posits that Rembrandt clearly meant to render a black woman from the start:

This is not a white body modeled by way of shadowing, but the body of a black woman modeled through light that falls on her shining dark skin. Moreover, the contrast with the white bed sheets – there is no reason why these would reflect more light than the body – and the light edges along the soles of her feet make clear that Rembrandt portrayed a dark-skinned woman.

Regardless of whether a dark-skinned woman is pictured or the print is merely a study in half tones depicting a fairer skinned individual, the body’s graceful S-curve suggests a later Ingres or Matisse odalisque. The female form lies across a more brightly lit disheveled bed. Her right leg is folded underneath her, with the underside of her foot sensually emerging from the sheet to face us. The focus is upon the volume and shape of her body. This figure’s delicate shape confirms that Rembrandt was no longer avoiding the portrayal of a refined female nude; his attitude seemed to have developed into a significantly more appreciative one for idealized beauty. Indeed, when compared to his earliest etchings, he did not just change the physique of the female nude he depicted. More importantly, perhaps, the difference lies “in the softened contours, the smoother modulation of bare skin and the more relaxed and pensive position.”

A drawing entitled *A Nude Woman Lying on a Pillow* (Illus. 21), also completed in 1658, has a woman relaxing in a similar pose to the etching *A Reclining Female Nude*. It was created with a reed pen and brown ink with an extremely dilute wash that creates a delicacy to the form.

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131 Ackley, 2003, 286.
132 Ibid., 286.
133 Sluijter, 2006, 299.
of the woman’s body. Rembrandt broke with convention in this drawing by displaying the nude form in a very natural way, allowing her arm to limply fall across her body and her head to fall forward in an authentic looking manner. It is one of Rembrandt’s most powerful creations among his late drawings. It also appears to foreshadow the figure of Antiope in the etching of the following year.

Indeed, Rembrandt returned to the subject of *Jupiter and Antiope* in 1959 (Illus. 27). In this etching the nude Antiope is shown deep in sleep, her arms spread above her body across the pillow upon which her head lies. Her upper body is fully exposed while her lower body is shaded, thus hiding her pubic region from the viewer, while Jupiter’s ogling gaze is unmistakably directed there. Rembrandt creates a clear contrast between lecherous male desire and sleeping female innocence, heightened by depicting that instant right before something is about to happen (which he so often did in his paintings). Jupiter, disguised as a satyr, is leaning into the bright space where Antiope lies, where, according to the myth, he will take her by force in the succeeding moments. While this etching repeats a subject from Rembrandt’s first stage of development, it is clearly less menacing. Jupiter pauses in admiration of Antiope’s body (as the viewer certainly does), and although he is much closer to her than in the print of 1631, he appears less threatening and more tentative about his decision to take her by force.

Michael Taylor regards this female figure as Rembrandt’s lushest nude.\(^{135}\) By this time, Rembrandt had drawn and painted many women asleep; this image benefited from his history of such depictions. He executed a refined display of light and shading that helps to highlight Antiope’s body. He used three printing techniques in this one print – etching, engraving, and drypoint – in order to develop the effects he wanted.

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\(^{135}\) Taylor, 2007, 123.
Lines etched, and drawn with the burin, mark out the contours of the figures, half-tones are stippled, tresses of hair are given velvety texture by the ink caught in the burr of drypoint strokes, while the intensity of the cross-hatched shadows heightens the impact of the image.\textsuperscript{136}

He was, in fact, a complete master of these various techniques by this time. It should be noted that Rembrandt’s progressive abilities in printmaking over the years might be part of the reason that his depictions of the female nude seem to gain a sense of greater maturity in each succeeding stage of these representations.

Rembrandt’s last drawing of the female nude is a beautiful sketch of a woman who appears to have been asked to sit in this pose so that Rembrandt and his pupils could draw her from various angles. A Female Nude Seated on a Stool, 1660 (Illus. 22) appears to have been drawn with a series of short, straight strokes:

These angular strokes are visible in the woman’s hips, legs, feet, and breasts. He also rounded certain features, such as her right calf and ankles. Details such as her toes, eyes, and cap are sketched with rapid yet absolutely precise strokes. With his pen, he completed curves in a few places, such as her right ankle and calf, but he also judiciously chose to use open, broken contours in many places… Despite its abbreviation of detail, this luminous drawing conveys the living presence of a specific woman at a specific moment in time.\textsuperscript{137}

 Indeed, this simple drawing appears to convey the essence of the unique individual who sat posed for others to sketch. Even in a small drawing such as this, we see the humanity of the woman in front of us. Perhaps the artist Odilon Redon said it best when he posited that no one master has produced internal drama the way Rembrandt did -- “Everything, even the smallest sketches, involve the human heart”\textsuperscript{138}

The last known etching that Rembrandt made of a female nude is A Woman with an Arrow, 1661 (Illus. 28). The pose was created from a live model; this is known because of

\textsuperscript{136} Williams, Rembrandt’s Women, 2001, 230.
\textsuperscript{137} Ackley, 2003, 287.
several drawings of this model in the same pose now attributed to one of his students. In the
drawings, the model is clinging to a rope that was provided in order to support this
uncomfortable pose. The diagonal in the upper right of Rembrandt’s etching has been argued to
be a slit of light in the curtains,\footnote{Bailey, 1978, 167.} but in the best prints, it is clearly an arrow. While both
Cleopatra and King Candaules’ wife have been suggested as the figure represented,\footnote{Williams, Rembrandt’s Women, 2001, 233.} both
Stechow\footnote{Wolfgang Stechow, “Rembrandt’s Woman with the Arrow,” Art Bulletin 53, no. 4 (December 1971),
487-492.} and Sluijter\footnote{Sluijter, 2006, 300.} convincingly contend that this is Venus, who in pictorial tradition is
often found confiscating Cupid’s arrows in a playful manner because of the trouble he has
caused by shooting them indiscriminately. Indeed, the stubby-nosed head of Cupid can be seen
in the darkness next to Venus’ left arm.

Rembrandt’s Venus is a representation of a nude that has come a long way from
Rembrandt’s original “scientific” studies with their unsparing details of female anatomy and
flaws. Rembrandt even made her more slender than the model in the corresponding drawings.
Her neck has been lengthened, she has been given a slender, low waist, and her shoulders have
been kept relatively wide.\footnote{Ibid., 300.} These choices are clearly in direct contrast to his earlier nudes.
Does this mean that Rembrandt had finally arrived at a more classical type of nude? Sluijter
provides a complex answer to this question:

> It seems probable that this type of body does not necessarily show Rembrandt’s
adjustment to more classical forms, although this possibility should not be ruled out.
However, it may be more important that the contemporary ideal of female beauty had
gone through quite a radical change, as we can see in the fashion of the time… \textit{To make the appearance of his nude as lifelike as possible}, Rembrandt gave her the forms that had
come to be considered attractive (emphasis mine).\footnote{Ibid., 302.}
Rembrandt’s fourth stage does, in fact, present nudes that are somewhat more classical, but the prints and drawings of this stage show each woman’s body as uniquely personal, not merely the creation of a general idealized form. In these works, Rembrandt represented women thematically as neither victims nor seductresses (as he did in stages one and two), but as fully capable of defining their own lives. The eroticism present seems more a product of the woman’s internal identity than simply flesh presented for display. The solitary forms with individualized faces and bodies represented in meditative poses give the women a strong sense of identity and uniqueness. Rembrandt’s representation of nudes in this fourth stage of development is consistent with the elements of Mahler’s stage of Rapprochement in which the child achieves a sense of self as both separate from and yet safely connected to the significant other. These final nudes rendered so exquisitely by Rembrandt are thematically and formally presented in a manner quite consistent with an individual who has reached an integrated sense of self and a mature internal conceptualization of others.
CONCLUSION:  
BATHSHEBA AND REMBRANDT’S FINAL STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

This last stage of expressive development had only one painting of a female nude, the magnificent *Bathsheba* of 1654 found in the Louvre (Illus. 35). I will close this thesis by looking briefly at Rembrandt’s penultimate painting of the nude as a final statement in the evolution of his representation of the nude. This work, along with the drawings and etchings of this stage, exhibit the final aspect of development in Mahler’s theory called Rapprochement in which an integrated sense of self and of others as separate and secure entities is produced. Therefore, his works display the psychological maturity involved in producing pictures that respect the woman he creates in his art as a person with her own sense of self, one who has an intrinsic sense of worth as an individual.

In *The Classicism of Rembrandt’s ‘Bathsheba’*, Henrick Bramsen discusses the difference between traditional classicist ideas of human beings and Rembrandt’s conception of beauty and reality as shown in *Bathsheba*.\(^{145}\) According to Bramsen, Rembrandt certainly “had no Venus in mind, but a tragic heroine, Bathsheba”\(^{146}\) and his depiction (even in one of his most classically painted figures), emphasizes the natural form of the female body and highlights the emotional presence of Bathsheba.

In *Rembrandt’s ‘Bathsheba Reading King David’s Letter’* (1998), several scholars write essays in this eclectic compendium of interpretations. Leo Sternberg argues that the actual treatment of *Bathsheba* (1654) suggests modesty instead of a voyeuristic notion, and he suggests

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\(^{146}\) Bramsen, 131.
that the naturalism of the nude indicates reliance on a model rather than a print.\textsuperscript{147} Alpers takes a psychosocial approach to the image’s production in another essay in the book,\textsuperscript{148} while Margaret D. Carroll’s approach is largely biographical in nature.\textsuperscript{149} Both women regard Bathsheba as resistant to the viewer, but Alpers simply suggests a professional model was able to resist Rembrandt’s gaze, whereas Carroll proposes that the image represents Hendrickje’s personal circumstances at the time – when called before the church council, she, “like Bathsheba, had to respond to authority’s disturbing command.” (Bathsheba was called by king David to come to him even though she knew that he had contributed to her husband’s death)\textsuperscript{150} Thus it is proposed that the image of Bathsheba reciprocates with Hendrickje’s concurrent reality and is shown as an individual lost in her own thoughts and thus oblivious to the viewer’s gaze.

Finally, Jan Leja, in an article of 1996, briefly explores Bathsheba in a study predominately devoted to the investigation of the painting Woman Bathing in a Stream, 1654 (Illus. 41). Leja shows how both Bathsheba and Callisto (whom Leja believes is the women represented in Woman Bathing in a Stream) are not simply to be seen as figures unknowingly observed, but women “whose psyches are as much the subject of the painting as their beautiful bodies.”\textsuperscript{151} Of particular interest is Leja’s contention that there is a change in Rembrandt’s depiction of nudes from earlier presentations in which women such as Susanna are staring at the viewer seeming to express an imminent state of danger. By contrast, Bathsheba and Callisto in Woman Bathing in a Stream are both absorbed in thought and refuse to make contact with the

\textsuperscript{147} Leo Steinberg, “An Incomparable Bathsheba,” in Rembrandt's Bathsheba Reading King David's Letter, 100-118.
\textsuperscript{148} Svetlana Alpers, “Not Bathsheba: I. The Painter and the Model,” in Rembrandt's Bathsheba Reading King David's Letter, 147-158.
\textsuperscript{149} Margaret D. Carroll, “Not Bathsheba: II. Uriah’s Gaze,” in Rembrandt's Bathsheba Reading King David's Letter, 159-175.
\textsuperscript{150} Carroll, 165.
viewer, resulting in what appears to be more of a psychological study of the internal state of the protagonists. Leja views these paintings of women to be more psychologically integrated in both their pictorial presentation and their psychological representation. In his final mature stage, Rembrandt thus drew, etched, and painted his subjects in ways that represent women as psychologically mature and as full participants in their own lives. As has been shown in this study, his depiction of nude women has progressed through the years, finally arriving at Bathsheba, which like his mature etchings and drawings, fully represent this final phase.

This study has attempted to understand the known drawn and etched female nudes produced by Rembrandt in terms of a successive psychosocial development exhibited within the works themselves. This is the first time that his works have been examined in this fashion. I have shown how Rembrandt followed a distinct path in creating his drawn and etched nudes, from originally depicting the naturalistic, and often explicit anatomical detail of female nudes to representing women in their own right in his mature images of the 1650s and 1660s. I have documented how Rembrandt’s representations display a progressive maturity in depicting women reflective of Margaret Mahler’s four stages of relational development. Rembrandt’s first depictions of the female nude were generally objectified views of women that parallel the Symbiotic stage in Mahler’s theory. These images presented women as unknowingly or unwillingly observed and eroticized by men. He next represented women as powerful and seductive beings, capable of frustrating men and even bringing about their destruction. Rembrandt’s works in this stage often focused on the confrontational relationship of the female nude to a single man (in two biblical etchings and in four of the six drawings he completed). These depictions correspond to the Differentiation stage of development in Mahler’s theory of psychosocial maturation.
Rembrandt then began to draw and etch women relating to men in a mutual fashion. These women were depicted as appealing and approachable, and sexual engagement were presented as shared and satisfying. These traits match the third stage in Mahler’s formulation, the Practicing stage, in which the development of some initial individuation creates the beginning of a more mature relational experience. Rembrandt’s final works are indicative of an integrated view of women that parallels the Rapprochement stage in Mahler’s system of development. In this last stage of pictorial development, Rembrandt represented women as neither victims nor seductresses, but as full participants in their own lives. Rembrandt had no interest in this last stage in recording the blots and blemishes of the nude female body; he developed a more refined interest that allows these last six etchings to become “the final mastery of all that he had searched for”\textsuperscript{152} in depicting the female nude. These works are ones that an observer may feel “almost beholden to, for having established for all time something essential about female nature.”\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{152} White, 1999, 215.
\textsuperscript{153} Bailey, 1978, 166.
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### APPENDIX 1: Depictions of the Female Nude in Rembrandt’s Drawings, Etchings and Paintings

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