

# Contents

List of Illustrations	vii
Acknowledgements	xvii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Rembrandt's Dialogue with Italian Art: <i>The Shipbuilder and his Wife</i> of 1633 <i>Amy Golahny</i>	9
Chapter 2: Breeding and Bridling: The Equestrian Marriage Portrait in Georgian England <i>Margaret A. Hanni</i>	33
Chapter 3: The Pre-Raphaelization of the Modern Literary Heroine <i>Susan P. Casteras</i>	53
Chapter 4: Edward Burne-Jones's Love Songs: Art, Music and Magic <i>Liana De Girolami Cheney</i>	75
Chapter 5: <i>The Waverley Oaks</i> : Something Borrowed, Something New <i>Lucretia Hoover Giese</i>	105
Chapter 6: Maurice Prendergast: Confronting the Culture of Early Twentieth-Century Boston <i>Sister Ellen Glavin</i>	125
Chapter 7: Worpswede, Idyll and After: Creativity and Partnership in the Early Twentieth Century <i>Diane Radycki</i>	137
Chapter 8: Home Sweet Home: A Feminist Look at Nellie Mae Rowe <i>Joyce Cohen</i>	157

vi Contents

Chapter 9: Portrait as Performance: The Theater of the Self in Kathleen Gilje's Series of Curators, Critics and Connoisseurs <i>Beth Gersh-Nešić</i>	185
Chapter 10: Reinventing Silverpoint: An Ancient Technique for the Twenty-First Century <i>Susan Schwalb</i>	217
Chapter 11: New Approaches to Sculpture in the Twenty-First Century <i>Suzanne Volmer</i>	233
Chapter 12: Not Just Jesting: Art and the Fool <i>Bridget Lynch</i>	247
Notes on Contributors	273
Index	281

## Rembrandt's Dialogue with Italian Art: *The Shipbuilder and His Wife* of 1633

*Amy Golahny*

### **Introduction**

Rembrandt is most often regarded as a portrayer of figures expressing psychological depth and physical presence, whether they are his contemporaries or historical characters.<sup>1</sup> Among Rembrandt's earliest paintings are depictions of figures in animated conversation and with forceful gestures. Typical of these is the 1628 *Two Old Men Disputing* (Fig. 1). Rembrandt depicted two men discussing the material in the large books they hold open. Compositionally, this painting has long been recognized as deriving from an engraving by Lucas van Leyden of *Saints Peter and Paul Seated in a Landscape* of 1527 (Fig. 2). Undoubtedly, Rembrandt was familiar with and inspired by the print by Lucas van Leyden, his illustrious predecessor in his hometown. But where Lucas clearly identified the apostles by their attributes of keys and sword, Rembrandt omitted such identifying signs. Depicting two old men in discussion, the Rembrandt painting and the Lucas print share a thematic kinship, even as Rembrandt omitted to identify the figures.<sup>2</sup> This is a typical case in which an example provided a prompt for the concept and design, in Lucas' paired figures with animated gestures and direct gazes, but Rembrandt's resultant painting achieves a physical and psychological intensity that is quite far from precedent. Rembrandt's *Two Old Men Disputing* serves here as an exemplar of the artist's dialogue with others' inventions, with the goal to emulate and surpass them.

The *Two Old Men Disputing* here serves to emphasize Rembrandt's interest in showing speech and listening. The man seen full face is open-mouthed, as in speech, while the other, seen in lost profile with a prominent ear, appears silently listening. Their contrasting postures and actions indicate a single moment of their relationship. One guiding principle in Rembrandt's approach to portraits and historical subjects is the inclusion of speech and its consequence. That is, one person speaks while the other is quiet, so that both figures do not speak at the same time. However effective this approach may be, it had not been articulated until relatively recently by Julius Held, and this approach is in contrast to many, if not most, portrayals of conversation in illustrations of the Renaissance and baroque.<sup>3</sup> This principle may be followed throughout the artist's work, from an outward, physically manifested display toward an inward, psychologically-implied expressiveness. Furthermore, this principle involves not only the corollaries of speech and hearing, but also the physical manifestations of verbal communication and its consequences.

In all his work, Rembrandt strove for an expressive movement, both physical and mental, that affected the viewer. In so doing, he may be placed firmly within the intellectual developments of Dutch philosophy. The prints and paintings by other artists, both his contemporaries and earlier, that provided his source material have been eagerly traced by art historians during the past century or so. Such sources, including the *Two Old Men Disputing* and its Lucas model, reveal how thoroughly Rembrandt studied the art of others. These models contribute to his wide and deep visual experience. Yet identifying Rembrandt's sources and analyzing how the artist derived inspiration from them still fascinate the viewer; answers to these questions, whether conclusive or tentative, offer fresh insight into the artist's creative process. Rembrandt arrived at his original solutions by emphasizing communication, through speech, gesture, and gaze. We are able to follow Rembrandt's transformations of visual sources, toward wholly original and unprecedented results. The *Two Old Men Disputing* is but one example of Rembrandt's reshaping a conventional theme.

In this essay, I explore a well-known composition by Rembrandt of two figures in dramatic communication, to demonstrate

how he adapted a pictorial model from Italian art to achieve an unprecedented dynamic result.

*Griet Jans Interrupts Jan Rijcksen at Work, 1633*

One of Rembrandt's earliest formal portraits depicts a married couple, traditionally called *The Shipbuilder and his Wife*, signed and dated 1633 (Fig. 3). In this large canvas, the man is seated at a table, located in the corner of a room with a window; a purse and paper hang on the wall, and stacked papers, books and inkwell lie on the table. He holds a drafting compass in one hand and rests the other on a sheet of paper, on which he has drawn the cross-section of a ship's hull. The woman bursts into this space by opening a door, grasping its handle to push it to the wall; she leans forward over the man's chair to give him a letter. The two figures unite over the chair: the man, seated, leans toward his wife, and she steps forward and reaches over the back of the chair. As he has been interrupted, he turns around slowly, and she rushes into the room, her arms stretching between door and desk. Their actions are not only markedly different, but also relate to gender distinctions. The man has been at work, while the woman has presumably been attending to the domestic scene. Yet, as he calmly sits, and she stands and reaches over to him, their conventional gender-based postures are reversed. In two significant ways, Rembrandt is an innovator here: the active/passive gender-based roles are reversed, and the domestic setting is of a daily work routine, rather than a formal pose.

In Dutch portraits generally, a couple pays their attention to the artist, for whom they pose. A man indicates his wife by gesture or embrace, and the man's pose is more forceful than the woman's. Usually, both are seated, and the man gestures toward his wife, who keeps her hands close and her gaze demure. Occasionally the man stands and the woman sits, again a gender-based juxtaposition of active and passive roles. The foremost portraitists who followed the convention of active men and passive women—in double or pair portraits—include: Frans Hals, Nicolas Elias Pickenoy, Thomas de Keyser and Bartolomeus van der Helst. These artists shaped the immediate context for Rembrandt's portraits. This tradition has been well examined by David Smith and Eddy de Jongh, who have set

forth the social conventions and pictorial requirements of marriage portraiture, and, at the same time, demonstrated how Rembrandt worked both within this tradition and without it, to explore innovative solutions in each case.<sup>4</sup>

All Rembrandt's marriage portraits conform to this type of active man and passive woman, except the *Shipbuilder and his Wife*. (This is even the case in Rembrandt's *Anslo and his Wife* of 1641, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, another case that is wholly unusual in its narrative of speaker and listener, and in its portrayal of the man in his working role as preacher, wherein the man is active and the woman passive.) The *Shipbuilder* slowly turns as the woman bursts into the room and leans dramatically over his shoulder. They contradict convention not only in their postures but also in their speaking and listening roles. The woman opens her mouth in speech as the man harks to her noisy entrance. The dramatic communication is comparable to the 1628 *Two Old Men Disputing*, but the identifiable living people in a domestic setting and the active/passive gender-role reversal call for further examination.

Archival research provides some information about the couple portrayed. I. H. van Eeghen identified the couple as Jan Rijcksen (ca. 1561-1637) and Griet Jans (dates unknown).<sup>5</sup> The grand double portrait appears in the 1659 Amsterdam inventory of their son's goods, among a number of artworks.<sup>6</sup> We may surmise that the couple was pleased with Rembrandt's portrait. In the inventory of their son Cornelis Joan Reyxse (d. 1659), the painting is listed as "*een schilderije van des overledens vader ende moeder geschildert by Rembrandt van Reen,*" in "*de beste kamer*" ("A painting of the father and mother of the deceased by Rembrandt van Rijn located in the grand room"). The son's inventory lists twenty additional paintings, including a portrait by Rembrandt of a male relative, two heads by Jan Lievens of Saints Peter and Paul, a landscape by Jan van Goyen, and two pieces by the sixteenth-century artists Lambert Lombard and Pieter Aertsen. The family was Roman Catholic, which might account for the few religious paintings in the son's inventory. It is most likely that these paintings, as well as others in this list, were inherited by Cornelis Joan from his parents. Lievens, an associate of Rembrandt, and Jan van Goyen, also a Leiden artist, might reflect fashionable acquisitions around 1635, and the earlier works

might have been inherited by Jan Rijcksen and Griet Jans. Only two items appear to be related to shipping and the sea: a seascape by Simon de Vlieger and a drawing by Willem van de Velde the Elder, a specialist in seascapes. Jan Rijcksen, a wealthy designer of ships, and his son, Cornelis Joan, a master carpenter in the service of the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West Indian Company (V.O.C. and W.I.C.), were not avid collectors of art. Rather, they owned paintings that decorated the walls of their houses, and that demonstrated a variety of themes. These were family portraits, and paintings of landscapes, genre subjects, two seascapes, and several religious and historical subjects. They did not possess more art than would comfortably hang on view.

Occasionally Rembrandt's sitters were portrayed by several artists. In this case, we have no additional images with which to compare. We may assume that Jan Rijcksen and Griet Jans were content with their large double portrait by Rembrandt, and evidently were not inclined to have another artist render their features. They passed it on to their son who displayed it in the biggest room of his house. The second Rembrandt portrait is of "*Harder oom*" (literally, "uncle Harder," but indicating an older male relative). This would most likely be a portrait of the older son who died in 1637. Several portraits of young single men of the mid-1630s, otherwise unidentified, exist, and have been tentatively related to the Rijcksen young man by the Rembrandt Research Project.<sup>7</sup> A limited pattern of patronage is also suggested by the two portraits by Rembrandt, two heads by Jan Lievens, and landscape by Jan van Goyen—all Leiden artists. Rembrandt and Lievens were closely associated, and similar in age to both sons of Jan Rijcksen and Griet Jans. The older son, Harder, may well have become acquainted with the young Leiden artists, Rembrandt and Lievens, and had his own portrait made around the same time as that of his parents. However, identifying the couple does not provide insight into their spectacularly unconventional appearance in this double portrait.

### **The Man in his Study: Immediate Precedent and Fashionable Models**

To help establish a visual context for this double portrait we may investigate Rembrandt's experiences in the art world of Amster-

dam. After studying in Amsterdam with the painter Pieter Lastman for about six months around 1624-1625, Rembrandt established himself as an independent artist in his native Leiden. By 1631, however, he moved from Leiden to Amsterdam to further his career as a portraitist of prosperous merchants, devout clergy, and their spouses. During his Leiden years, he concentrated on historical figures and episodes, such as the 1628 *Two Old Men Disputing*, but at the same time, he studied current trends in portraiture. The surviving documents of the mid-1630s indicate that Rembrandt was a presence in the commercial milieu of the art dealing business of Hendrick Uylenburgh.<sup>8</sup> Rembrandt attended the Amsterdam auctions, where he was a buyer in quantity and a keen observer.<sup>9</sup> By 1656, Rembrandt possessed one of the largest art collections in the Netherlands, with spectacular paper art, a respectable number of paintings by foremost Italian and Northern artists, a quantity of large sculptures, and exotic specimens, medals, weaponry and other objects. His level of collecting belongs to those who formed *kunst-kameren*, or comprehensive collections of natural and fabricated objects. Documents, including the itemization of the collection in the 1656 inventory made on the occasion of his bankruptcy, reveal that Rembrandt himself acted as an art dealer repeatedly, in purchasing and selling artworks.<sup>10</sup> Such activity indicates a pattern of intense engagement with the commerce and collecting of art. Considering the tracing of Rembrandt's visual prompts in the works of other artists, as in his inspired use of Lucas van Leyden in the *Two Old Men Disputing*, we may recognize that Rembrandt, from his early career, was keenly aware of the art available on the market. We may also surmise that Rembrandt was keenly aware of the corollary of the art market: the ownership and display of art in the private houses of Holland.

The immediate precedent within Rembrandt's circle for a man interrupted while at his work is Thomas de Keyser's *Constantijn Huygens and a Servant* of 1627 (Fig. 4). This painting was surely familiar to Rembrandt, as Huygens had befriended the young artist and fostered his career.<sup>11</sup> As a general type, the depiction of a man with his secretary at a working desk has its genesis in Sebastiano del Piombo's *Ferry Carondolet Triple Portrait* (Fig. 5). With a third person as a shadowy servant entering at the left, the Carondolet



composition implicitly included the interruption of work. Very well known in the seventeenth century, the Carondolet portrait was considered to be by Raphael, and acquired by Thomas Howard around 1608. On his visits to London in 1618 and later, Huygens visited the Arundel collection, and would have likely seen the *Carondolet* there. The portrait undoubtedly was in his mind when he commissioned Thomas de Keyser to portray himself and a servant. The spatial divisions of Huygens in his luxuriously-furnished study recall the colonnade and landscape of the *Carondolet*. In both, the main figure is framed by a background that emphasizes his stature: Carondolet, by the portal and colonnade, Huygens by the tapestry. But apart from their portrayals of men at work and framed by a background rectangular element, these two portraits have less in common than has been assumed in the literature. De Keyser showed the moment of interruption, while Sebastiano merely suggested such an interruption, as the main figure coolly regards the viewer as his secretary writes, and the third figure bearing a letter is hidden in the shadows. Other Italian portraits explore the potential for interruption more fully. Among these is Giovanni Battista Moroni's *Seated Man and Boy Bearing a Letter, Count Alborghetti and his Son* (Fig. 6). Moroni's portraits were often attributed to Titian. Huygens may have seen a similar painting during his travels to England (1618) and Italy (1620), but it is equally possible that he saw such a double portrait in the Netherlands. De Keyser most likely acted on Huygens' wishes to depict him seated, turning to respond to the entering servant.

Rembrandt's ship designer belongs thematically to the category of the professional man at work, interrupted by a messenger, but this grand painting departs radically from precedent by an intensity of gesture and action. For Griet Jans' sudden entrance to Jan Rijcksen's study, neither the *Huygens*, the *Carondolet*, nor the *Alborghetti*, would have sufficed as a point of departure. No earlier portrait, whether Dutch or Italian, prepares us for the wife as messenger who delivers the letter to the man at work. Griet Jans has urgent communication as her goal. The written, silent letter is not enough for her purposes and her open mouth imparts speech, to which Jan Rijcksen turns his attention. Thomas de Keyser's genteel interruption of the scholar-secretary Huygens at work, gracefully and

quietly turning toward a deferential young man holding his hat in one hand and letter in the other, is a far cry from the noisy wife breaking the calm of her husband at work. The common theme of the letter-bearing and interrupting figure is insufficient to explain Rembrandt's unique solution to a marriage portrait. And indeed, it may have been so radical that it inspired no variations.

### **Rembrandt's Inspiration for Urgent Communication: Art in Amsterdam**

We may suggest another visual prompt that was in Amsterdam and within Rembrandt's circle of contacts in the early 1630s. The emphasis on urgent communication in the *Shipbuilder and his Wife* has a kinship with the two figures in dynamic exchange of Guercino's *Semiramis Receiving the News of the Revolt of Babylon* (Fig. 7). The painting belonged to the Gerard Reynst collection in Amsterdam, from which it went to England with the Dutch Gift of 1660, a major group of paintings presented to Charles II by the Dutch Republic. Engraved for the *Caelaturae*, a selection of Reynst paintings begun c. 1655, Guercino's *Semiramis* would have been among the most prized of the Reynst paintings.<sup>12</sup>

Around 1630, Gerard Reynst (1599-1658) brought to Amsterdam much of the art that he and his brother Jan (1601-1646) acquired in Venice, and included the comprehensive Vendramin collection of sculptures, coins, precious objects, and paintings, most of which were by Venetian artists. Other paintings in the Reynst collection were familiar to Rembrandt, and inspired several appropriations, during the early 1630s and during the 1650s. From Bassano's *Lamentation*, Rembrandt adapted the figure of the fainted Virgin in his own *Descent from the Cross* of 1633, part of the Passion series commissioned by the Stadholder Frederik Hendrick.<sup>13</sup> From Palma Vecchio's *Courtesan*, Rembrandt appropriated the theme and compositional guide for his *Hendrickje at an Open Door* of ca. 1656.<sup>14</sup>

Guercino's *Semiramis* received a brief notice in the diaries of the Bolognese historian Carlo Cesare Malvasia (1616-1693). With access to Guercino's own account books and the records kept by his family, Malvasia is generally reliable, but in this case, his remarks require some interpretation. According to Malvasia, in 1624 Guercino

painted *Semiramis* for Daniele Ricci, about whom nothing is known; the painting was exhibited in Bologna at that time as a "*maraviglia dell'arte*;" and the painting went to the King of England.<sup>15</sup> Malvasia, relying on a document presumably from Guercino himself, omitted the painting's whereabouts between Ricci and Charles II, that is, when the painting was in the Reynst collection. Malvasia was less well-informed from sources outside Italy, but was aware that the painting found its way to the English monarch; his informants did not place it in Amsterdam between 1624 and 1660. And yet, the sensational display of the painting in 1624 indicates that it was a striking image, even among Guercino's early and notable works.

If today *Semiramis, Queen of Assyria*, is a somewhat obscure figure, in the seventeenth century she belonged to the general historical material handed down from antiquity by Herodotus and other historians who may have blended fact and fiction in their accounts.<sup>16</sup> The pertinent episode from the life of *Semiramis* does not appear within their narratives, but is added by Valerius Maximus. He included it in his compendium of notable actions (*Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*), which was frequently published in Latin and in the vernacular after 1500.<sup>17</sup> *Semiramis* is having her hair coiffed when she is interrupted by a messenger who brings news of the revolt of Babylon. *Semiramis* reacted so immediately that she went straight into battle with her hairdo half-done, and did not complete her coiffure properly until after the revolt was successfully put down.

During the seventeenth century, the episode was rare in the visual arts, although it had some currency in Rembrandt's circle. Mattaeus Merian engraved it for an illustration in the historical compendium by J. L. Gottfried (1629), a book used in Rembrandt's studio. Pietro da Cortona's painting of *Semiramis*, ca. 1623, was owned by the Uylenburgh firm in Amsterdam, somewhat later but certainly by 1675. For his painting for Daniele Ricci, Guercino evidently had no pictorial precedent, and followed the account in Valerius Maximus.<sup>18</sup> Each of the three figures—the queen, messenger, and maid—plays a crucial role in illustrating the narrative. The queen sits, crowned and dressed in richly brocaded and bejeweled robes and a cape; she rests one hand upon the arm of the chair, and the other cups her ear as she listens to the words of the agitated messenger. He points with one hand to the left, presumably to the

direction of the Babylonian insurgence, and holds a cap with the other. The maid combs Semiramis' hair, already tied up on one side of the queen's head but loose on the other. The hair is essential to the narrative, as the half-done coiffure is the identifying feature of the queen. Guercino crafted an intense confrontation between the queen and a messenger, in gaze and gesture, with the calm attendant emphasizing the hair as the queen's attribute.

Guercino's *Semiramis* was among the extraordinary Italian paintings in Amsterdam around 1630. These included Caravaggio's *Madonna of the Rosary* which arrived in Amsterdam 1616, and was taken to Antwerp ca. 1620; Louis Finson's copy remained in Amsterdam. The impact of the *Madonna of the Rosary* on the painters in Amsterdam was powerful. For Pieter Lastman (1583-1633), who had seen Caravaggio paintings in Italy during his years there (1603-1607), the study of the *Madonna of the Rosary* decisively affected how he composed his later historical paintings.<sup>19</sup> In his remark to Huygens that some of the best Italian art was to be seen north of the Alps without the bother of travel, Rembrandt indicated how thoroughly he knew the Italian art in Amsterdam. Indeed, he had studied the Caravaggio altarpiece, and it guided his figural arrangement in his 1629 *Judas Returning the Silver* (Private Collection). Much of the Italian art in Amsterdam was of the highest quality, and was accessible to artists, especially Lastman and Rembrandt.<sup>20</sup>

Three aspects of Guercino's *Semiramis* appealed to Rembrandt. One was the psychological and physical movement, so strikingly conveyed by the two main figures. The second was the theme of speech and its consequences: one active figure, arriving suddenly with a serious message, and a passive figure, attentive to this news. Guercino's messenger communicates by speech and gesture, while Griet Jans communicates by speech and letter. As we have seen, these are constant interests of Rembrandt, appearing throughout his oeuvre.

The third aspect was the compositional organization of a seated figure who turns to receive an arriving messenger. In reversing Rembrandt's *Shipbuilder and his Wife*, the formal similarities are emphasized (Fig. 8). Both paintings feature two main figures, whose bodies form essentially a right angle; the arms of the Shipbuilder and of Semiramis loosely form counterparts: Jan Rijcksen's hands

rest on the table and chair armrest, and compare to Semiramis' hands, one of which rests on the armrest and the other holds her ear. The messenger's arms and hands form an upward diagonal, loosely corresponding to Griet Jans' arms, which extend from the door handle at the edge of the painting to the center. In his early paintings, Guercino typically rendered arms, hands, and bodies in dynamic and occasionally confused patterns, as if such physical attitudes could impart an intensified expressiveness.<sup>21</sup> Rembrandt would have found Guercino's solutions appealing.

However, the Guercino example in Amsterdam was also a theme of a strong woman from antiquity. Guercino rendered her seated and listening, in a relatively passive pose, contrasting to an arriving male messenger. By transferring the active role to the female and the passive role to the male, Rembrandt reformulated the Dutch pair portrait. Perhaps Griet Jans actually participated as a partner in her husband's business, as suggested by David Smith.<sup>22</sup> Dutch women assumed responsibilities within family businesses, as the shipping industry demanded that men be often away at sea. Yet given that the pattern of active wife and passive husband was not imitated in other Dutch marriage portraits, that explanation does not sufficiently explain Rembrandt's singular portrayal of the couple.

Nonetheless, it is tempting to view this role reversal in this grand double portrait as a nod to the power of women. At just this time, Rembrandt explored the character of the ancient queen Artemisia, who, with her husband Mausolus, was renowned for building a massive tomb; after Mausolus' death, Artemisia had his body cremated and she daily mixed his ashes in a drink. She was consistently represented as the exemplar of wifely devotion by drinking this mixture. Less recognized is Artemisia's patronage of the literary arts in commissioning eulogies to honor Mausolus, who predeceased her by a short time. In 1634, Rembrandt portrayed Artemisia with a large book that contains these eulogies (Fig. 9).<sup>23</sup> In so doing, he emphasized how Artemisia patronized the art of oratory to serve the memory of her husband. While other artists portrayed the queen only as ash-drinker, Rembrandt uniquely rendered her as both ash-drinker and arts patron.

In general, Rembrandt's portraits of contemporary women con-

form to the passive and conventional type, and his historical women are unfortunate targets of male lust, as Callisto, Susanna and Bathsheba, or duplicitous characters avenging men, as Delilah.<sup>24</sup> Exceptional for emphasizing the active roles of women both within conventional portrayals and within Rembrandt's work are Griet Jans and Artemisia. As a strong character in history, Guercino's *Semiramis* may well have suggested to Rembrandt to show another historical woman, Artemisia, as active in her role as arts patron. For Rembrandt's *Shipbuilder and his Wife*, Guercino's model provided a dynamic solution for a double portrait, by transferring the messenger to the wife, and the monarch to the husband. Blurring the boundaries between formal portrait and narrative, Rembrandt created a moment of work interrupted, by taking the sudden action of an arriving messenger from a history painting.

The relationship between Rembrandt and Guercino is not limited to the Dutch artist studying the Italian's art in Amsterdam in the early 1630s. Twenty years later, the Sicilian nobleman Antonio Ruffo acquired Rembrandt's canvas *Aristotle and the Head of Homer* of 1653 (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art). Ruffo wished Guercino to paint a pendant for the *Aristotle*. The Italian artist interpreted that work as a physiognomist, and planned a cosmographer to go with it. In one of his many letters to Ruffo, Guercino noted that Rembrandt's etchings "*riuscite molto belle, intagliate di buon gusto e fatte di buona maniera*" ("succeed very beautifully, [they are] engraved with good taste and made with a good manner").<sup>25</sup> Sharing an appreciative patron in Ruffo, the relationship between Rembrandt and Guercino is better understood, at least around 1660, as collaboration at a distance.

## Conclusion

For portraiture, Rembrandt appropriated poses from various sources. On the one hand, he was pragmatic, and selected models that served his purpose. Given the commission for a marriage double portrait, he looked at the latest solution for a double portrait in Thomas de Keyser's 1627 *Huygens and a Servant*. But he wished a more dramatic effect. Just arrived from Italy were the Reynst paintings. These included fine examples by Palma Vecchio, Jacopo Bassa-

no, and Guercino. Rembrandt regarded these works as touchstones for his own compositions. The Guercino was among the newest examples of Italian art available in Amsterdam. It provided a stunning guide for a dynamic portrayal of two figures in one frame, and resonated with Rembrandt's already-formed interests in representing movement and speech. For the commission of a married couple, he took inspiration from a source that offered a solution, if he reversed the typical gender roles and portrayed the woman as the active messenger and the man as the passive draughtsman. If we could reconstruct more biographical details of Jan Rijcksen and Griet Jans, we might craft a narrative into which this dramatic moment fits. What letter with news of family or commerce might arrive to elicit Griet Jans' swift and immediate response? For all we know, and it is highly speculative, this news might even have some resonance with Semiramis' own story of urgent communication, as a notice of a sea calamity, a business loss, or a family event.

Lack of more thorough factual information has not prevented such fictional recreations of those portrayed in Dutch paintings. Susan Vreeland, Tracy Chevalier, and others have seized on Vermeer's imagery to construct sweeping narratives and poignant stories about figures in Vermeer's paintings. Rembrandt's paintings, whether real or imagined, have figured prominently in fiction. But the domestic life and business collaboration of Jan Rijcksen and Griet Jans are stories waiting to be told.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup>I'd like to acknowledge funding from Lycoming College, which contributed to my research for this article.

<sup>2</sup>A. Blankert et al., *Rembrandt: A Genius and His Impact*, exhibition catalogue, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria/Canberra, National Gallery of Australia, 1997, 90. Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* (The Hague: Stichting Rembrandt Research Project, 5 vols., 1982-2010), II:1631-1634, A 77, 367 ff. (Abbreviated here as *Corpus*).

<sup>3</sup>J.S. Held, "Rembrandt and the Spoken Word," in *Rembrandt Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 164-83.

<sup>4</sup>For the *Shipbuilder and His Wife*, see *Corpus* II, A77. Rembrandt's more conventional marriage portraits, especially as regards the active man and

passive woman, include the *Man Rising from his Chair and Woman* (Cincinnati, Taft Museum; and New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; *Corpus A* 78 and 79), the Beresteijn pair portrait (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; *Corpus C* 68 and 69), the 1633 *Couple in an Interior* (Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; *Corpus C* 67), and the 1641 *Cornelis Anslø Speaking to his Wife*, in which Rembrandt inserted the narrative element of a speaker and a listener (Berlin, Gemäldegalerie; *Corpus A* 143). For the tradition of marriage portraiture, see David R. Smith, "Rembrandt's Early Double Portraits and the Dutch Conversation Piece," *The Art Bulletin* 64 (1982) 259-288; E. De Jongh, *Portretten van echt en trouw: Huwelijk en gezin in de Nederlandse kunst van de zeventiende eeuw* (Waanders/Zwolle and Teyler's Museum/Haarlem, 1986).

<sup>5</sup>I. H. van Eeghen, "Jan Rijcksen en Griet Jans," *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 57 (1970), 121-27.

<sup>6</sup> For the inventory of their son Cornelis Joan Reyxse (d.1659), of 7 November 1659, see The Montias Database of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Inventories of Dutch Art Collections from the Gemeentearchief Amsterdam, Nr. 125 (Access through the Frick Art Reference Library, New York).

<sup>7</sup> See *Corpus IIA*, 77.

<sup>8</sup> For the Uylenburgh documents, see F. Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen, *Uylenburgh & Son: Art and commerce from Rembrandt to De Lairese 1625-1675*, (London and Amsterdam: Dulwich Picture Gallery/The Rembrandt House Museum, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> For Rembrandt at auctions in Amsterdam, see Walter Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York: Abaris Books, 1979), especially 1635/1; 1637/2; and 1638/2.

<sup>10</sup> For the 1656 inventory, see Strauss, *Rembrandt Documents*, 1656/12. Among Rembrandt's best known art dealing activities is his 1637 purchase of a Rubens painting, which he sold it at a profit seven years later; see Strauss, *Rembrandt Documents*, 1637/6. But he made many other purchases and sales, including a sale of plasters to the Elector Karl Ludwig Palatine; see Strauss, *Rembrandt Documents*, 1658/31.

<sup>11</sup> For Huygens and Rembrandt, see, among other sources, Strauss, *Rembrandt Documents*, 1630/5. Thomas de Keyser's portrait of Huygens clearly is the most famous example of the motif in Rembrandt's circle. However, another example was most likely known to Rembrandt; see Nicolaes Elias Pickenoy, *The Governors of the 'Spinhuis,' 1628*, Amsterdam Historisch Museum; see *Corpus III*, 129, under A 44, fig. 7. However, the Pickenoy example has none of the urgency so striking in Rembrandt's *Shipbuilder and his Wife*, and merely indicates the prevalence of the motif of letter-bearer in Amsterdam portraiture.



<sup>12</sup> For the Dutch Gift and the Reynst collection, see Anne-Marie S. Logan, *The 'Cabinet' of the Brothers Gerard and Jan Reynst* (Amsterdam, Oxford, New York: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen Verhandelingen, 1979), 124. For the possibility that Rembrandt was prompted by another Italian model in his first commissioned portrait, see A. Golahny, "Rembrandt's 'Ruts' and Moroni's 'Bearded Man,'" *Source* 10 (Fall 1990), 22-25.

<sup>13</sup> For Rembrandt's use of the Bassano figure, see Lammertse and Van der Veen, *Uylenburgh & Son*, 280.

<sup>14</sup> For Rembrandt's *Hendrickje at an Open Door* and its guide in the Palma Vecchio *Courtesan*, see K. Clark, *Rembrandt and the Italian Renaissance* (New York: New York University Press, 1966), 132.

<sup>15</sup> For Guercino, see Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice. Vite dei pittori bolognesi* (Bologna: Guida all'ancora, 2 vols., 1841) II, 251; see also D. Mahon, "Guercino's Paintings of Semiramis," *Art Bulletin* 31 (1949), 217-23. I am grateful to Giovanna Periti and Shilpa Prasad for their insights into Guercino's *Semiramis*.

<sup>16</sup> From about 1600, Semiramis became popular on the stage, and belonged to the broad canon of personages in series of strong women. See further Jane O. Newman, "Sons and Mothers: Agrippina, Semiramis, and the Philological Construction of Gender Roles in Early Modern Germany (Lohenstein's *Agrippina*, 1665)," *Renaissance Quarterly* 49 (1996), 77-113.

<sup>17</sup> D. Schackleton Bailey, trans., Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, 2 vols. (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Edition, 2000), Book 9, cap. 3, ext. 4. Valerius compiled his material from various sources, including Diodorus Siculus and Herodotus, but only he presented the coiffure anecdote.

<sup>18</sup> J. L. Gottfried, *Historische Chronica, oder, Beschreibung der furnembsten Geschichten, so sich von Anfang der Welt biss auff unsere Zeitten zugetrage ...* (Frankfurt: Caspar Roeteln, 1629-1634), I, 17. The Gottfried chronicle was used by artists, including Rembrandt; see A. Golahny, *Rembrandt's Reading: The artist's bookshelf of ancient poetry and history* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2003), 138 ff. Merian's illustration of Semiramis and the accompanying text would have provided a ready reference for this anecdote. The near-contemporary portrayal of Semiramis by Pietro da Cortona may have some bearing on Guercino's choice of subject. However, Cortona depicted the moment when Semiramis swears to quell the revolt, while Guercino portrayed the earlier moment of the news. See Lammertse and Van der Veen, *Uylenburgh & Son*, 241, for Cortona's *The Oath of Semiramis*, ca. 1623-1624 (Oxford, Ashmolean).

<sup>19</sup> For Lastman's regard and adaptation of Caravaggio's *Madonna of the Rosary*, see A. Golahny, "Rembrandt and Italy: Beyond the disegno/colore

paradigm," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen, Neue Folge* 51 (2009), 113-20, Special volume: *Rembrandt – Wissenschaft auf der Suche. Beiträge des Internationalen Symposiums Berlin 4/5 November 2006*.

<sup>20</sup> See Strauss, *Rembrandt Documents*, 1630/5 for Rembrandt's remarks to Huygens. For Rembrandt's *Judas* and Caravaggio, see Golahny, "Rembrandt and Italy," 117.

<sup>21</sup> Shilpa Prasad, *Guercino: Stylistic Evolution in Focus* (San Diego and Seattle: Timken Museum of Art/University of Washington Press, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Smith, "Rembrandt's Early Double Portraits," 273.

<sup>23</sup> See A. Golahny, "Rembrandt's 'Artemisia': Arts Patron," *Oud Holland* 114 (2000), 139-52.

<sup>24</sup> Eric Jan Sluijter, *Rembrandt and the Female Nude* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> This is my translation, which does not fully convey Guercino's measured enthusiasm in Italian; see further Jaco Rutgers, *Rembrandt en Italië. Receptie en verzamelgeschiedenis* (privately printed, 2008), 14; Strauss, *Rembrandt Documents*, 1660/7.



1.1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Two Old Men Disputing (Peter and Paul?)*, 1628, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest.



1.2. Lucas van Leyden, *Peter and Paul in a Landscape*, engraving, 1527, British Museum, London.



1.3. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Double Portrait of Jan Rijcksen and Griet Jans ('The Shipbuilder and his Wife')*, 1633, oil on canvas, The Royal Collection © 2011, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



1.4. Thomas de Keyser, *Portrait of Constantijn Huygens and a (his?) Clerk*, 1627, oil on canvas, © The National Gallery, London, Bequeathed by Richard Simmons, 1847.



1.5. Sebastiano del Piombo, *Ferry Carondelet*, ca. 1515, oil on canvas, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid.



1.6. Giovanni Battista Moroni, *Seated Man and Boy bearing a Letter, Count Alborghetti and his Son*, ca. 1545, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Museum purchase with funds donated by Mrs. Turner Sargent (Amelia J. Holmes), Turner Sargent Fund.



1.7. Guercino, *Semiramis Receiving the News of the Revolt of Babylon*, 1624, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Francis Welch Fund.



1.8. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Shipbuilder and his Wife*, reversed.





1.9. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Artemisia*, 1634, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid.