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Witnessing the Crucifixion: Rembrandt and John Donne's "Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward"

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Rembrandt, who is known for his varied interpretations of traditional religious subject matter, often depicted the Crucifixion in his prints, drawings and paintings.[1] Two early representations of this subject, *The Descent from the Cross* (Fig. 1)[2] and *The Raising of the Cross* (Fig 2),[3] presently in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich, were painted by the artist around 1633. These works formed part of a *Passion* series (1632-46) for Prince Frederik Hendrik, Stadtholder of the United Provinces (1625-47).[4] On August 31, 1633, around the same time Rembrandt was occupied with *The Descent* and *The Raising*, the Stadtholder's Secretary, Constantijn Huygens, an admirer and promoter of Rembrandt,[5] translated John Donne's *Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward* into Dutch.[6] Huygens completed the poem, the only religious work translated by him, while traveling on horseback during a military expedition for Prince Frederik. Despite the apparent chronological coincidence of Huygens' translation and the two paintings of the crucifixion sent to him by Rembrandt around 1633/34,[7] the relationship between these artistic and literary works has not been examined in any depth by scholars. While Gary Schwartz suggested without elaboration in 1985 that Rembrandt's *Raising* was inspired by Huygens' interest in Donne's *Good Friday,* this intriguing idea has not been pursued by him or other scholars.[8] In addition, the relationship between the poem and Rembrandt's *Descent* has not been treated in art historical literature. This paper investigates the connections between *Good Friday* and Rembrandt's paintings, *The Raising* and *The Descent from the Cross.*

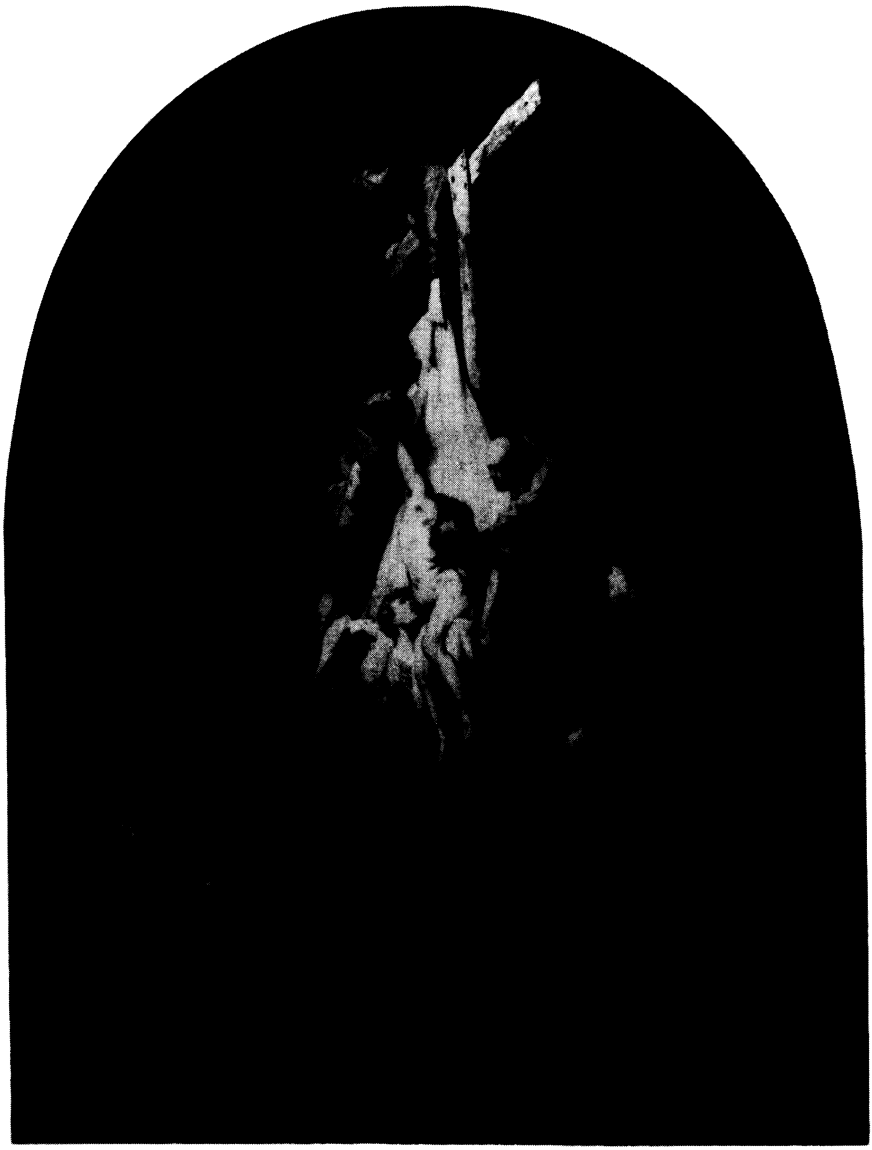

Figure 1

The earliest of the two paintings under discussion is *The Descent from the Cross.*[9] This work was inspired by a painting of the same subject by Rubens that was reproduced in a print of 1620 by Lucas Vorstermans.[10] A large etching by Rembrandt of the same subject, dated 1633 (Fig. 3), predates this artist's painting and represents an early idea for it.[11] Since the two paintings were intended to be hung side by side according to narrative sequence, I will discuss *The Raising* before *The Descent.*

The composition of *The Raising* (Fig. 2) is based upon a diagonal that ascends from the hunched soldier in the foreground, and then culminates in the sleek lines of Christ's taut, luminous body, the focal point of the painting.[12] The figures gathered around the cross strive against the physical difficulties of hoisting it into place. The armored soldier in the foreground, whose feet bear down upon the lower shaft, pulls with all his might on a rope wrapped around the lower crossbar, while two figures push against the cross from the back. At the center of the action, a troubled figure in a fancy beret wraps himself around the fulcrum of the cross, his left arm pulling upward, his right pushing downward. This figure has been convincingly identified as Rembrandt himself. The physical actions of these figures create centrifugal and centripetal forces about the cross.

Just behind the artist, the Roman Centurion, a turbaned figure on horseback, gazes outside the picture, directly at the viewer. This sympathetic figure carries a martel, a symbol of his rank as a seventeenth-century cavalry officer.[13] On the left, some Jews mock Christ, among them, a figure gesturing with open hands toward the crucifixion.[14] This grouping is balanced on the right by spear-bearing Roman soldiers who bring two thieves to be crucified with Christ. In the foreground, the handle of a spade is set into the earth near the hole dug for the cross.

In *The Descent from the Cross* (Fig. 1), the dynamic energies of *The Raising* have been stilled, forcing the viewer to confront the harsh reality of Christ's suffering and death. Jerusalem's gate, with its lugubrious tower silhouetted against a darkened sky, provides the backdrop for this tragic scene.[15] *The Descent* focuses upon the lifeless, tortured body of Christ, which is being taken down from the blood-

Figure 2

stained cross by five figures, nearly all of whom are involved in the act of supporting the limp body. While the man in a fur hat at the top reaches over the cross to receive the shroud from the figure standing on the ground, another figure on the ladder at the right grips Christ's left arm. The young man dressed in blue on the ladder at the left, who embraces Christ's right arm as he looks down at him, has been justly identified as Rembrandt. Another young man, whose youth and intimacy with Christ suggest that he is St. John, receives the contorted body of the Crucified. Although John's hands are wrapped in the winding sheet so as not to touch sacred flesh, his face nonetheless comes in direct contact with Christ's sagging belly. The emotional tenor of the scene further is accentuated by the figure of Mary, who has collapsed in grief and is nearly shrouded in shadow at the lower left, where she is attended by two women. Gazing intently upon the scene from the right, Joseph of Arimathea solemnly waits to receive Christ's body for which he donated his own tomb.[16] Two Jews in the shadows at the left are also deeply affected by the scene.

Clearly then, *The Raising* and *The Descent* are deeply moving interpretations of the Crucifixion. A close study of these paintings in relation to Donne's *Good Friday*, translated by Huygens, suggests that Rembrandt was inspired by it. Since Donne's poem does not only express the conflicts of a single rider, but rather the spiritual concerns of all humankind, Rembrandt created multiple figures invoking different aspects of the westward rider's religious struggles. Even we, as beholders of the paintings, are engaged in the external and internal drama of confronting Christ's sacrifice.

Three major concepts developed by Donne in the poem are the focus of this paper. One is the dilemna of the westward rider's self-imposed separation from the Crucifixion; the second, the speaker's attempt to come to terms with the confounding nature of Christ's sacrifice through the use of paradox; the third, the rider's hope for reconciliation with Christ. In order to be closer to the Dutch version of *Good Friday* which Rembrandt would have known, the quotations used in this paper are taken from Koos Daley's excellent English translation of the Huygens text.[17]

Figure 3

A major theme in *Good Friday* is the westward rider's alienation from Christ's sacrifice. The speaker in the poem rides westward on business, led by the affairs of the world, while his soul yearns toward the east, the spiritual world of Christ: "So is the soul moved by desire, so is she moved awry/ By business's whirr, as if it is her main journey. Just so, I am carried away Westward today. Westward, the wrong way, while during my leaving I feel that my soul's journey pulls to the East."[18] All of the characters in Rembrandt's *Raising* are alienated from the heroic, stoic figure of Christ, who rises high above them in triumph. None of the figures in the painting looks into his face, not even the Centurion on horseback who is closest to him. This Roman soldier, whose face conveys both concern and compassion, looks out of the picture, making eye contact with the beholder outside the painting, who is on the same level as the Centurion. Since the viewer returns this Roman soldier's riveting gaze, the spectator, like the other figures in the picture, is not looking at Christ. In this way, Rembrandt underscores the beholder's separation from Christ and the Crucifixion. The spectator in this painting is not unlike Donne's rider, who has paused for a moment before traveling toward the west (to the left in the painting), away from Christ. Carrying a symbol of his authority in his hand, the Centurion in Rembrandt's picture is a man of worldly responsibility, much like Donne's westward rider, who is driven by "business's whirr." Huygens, who translated *Good Friday* while riding on horseback during a military campaign for the Stadtholder, surely would have empathized with Donne's westward rider, as well as with the Roman soldier on horseback in Rembrandt's *Raising*. The equestrian Centurion, which appears in this composition for the first time in Rembrandt's art, is unprecedented in art history in terms of its extreme prominence in a Crucifixion scene.[19] It appears likely that the inspiration for the Roman cavalryman in *The Raising* originated with Donne's westward rider.

The considerable distance separating the speaker and Christ in *Good Friday* is compounded by the westward rider's own feelings. The speaker confesses that he is glad to be far from the Crucifixion. "Yet, it almost delights me that far from my face/ The spectacle remains that weighs too much for me,/ Who sees God's face, who is life, must die,/

What dying would it be to see God lose his life?"[20] Donne's rider goes on to describe the gory details of the crucifixion that make it so difficult to witness. He describes the holes in Christ's hands, which in Huygens' translation become nails. The westward rider laments, "Could I behold the nails driven through the hands?"[21] He then focuses upon the blood: "Could I behold the beloved blood shed and moulded from dust to dirt? The blood that quickens all souls Even his own?"[22]

Like Donne, Rembrandt emphasizes the gruesome details of the Crucifixion. In *The Raising* he meticulously paints the large nails piercing Christ's body, as well as the blood flowing from the wounds. Christ's suffering, however, is expressed even more powerfully in *The Descent.* The beams of the cross are virtually soaked in blood. But most pitiful of all is Christ's degraded, naked body, one of the most unusual features of the painting. The artist's interpretation may have been inspired by Donne's poem which describes Jesus' abused flesh: "Could I behold the flesh God wore, Wore as his garment, ripped open and torn up?"[23] Indeed, Christ's sagging, wrinkled flesh in the painting, hanging from his body like a ragged "garment," seems to recall Donne's metaphor.

Good Friday further underscores Christ's suffering by contrasting his cosmic grandeur with his earthly diminishment. The rider in the poem relates, "Could I behold the nails driven through the hands that reach the North and South Pole and connect them/ and give with a turn each heavenly globe its tune? Could I behold th' eternal height and beauty humbled, / Humbled below us; our uppermost now beneath us?"[24] While both Donne and Huygens mention the humbling of Christ's infinite height, Huygens adds the word "beauty" to his description of Christ's glory.

Like Huygens' translation, Rembrandt's *Raising* emphasizes both Christ's "eternal height and beauty." Jesus rises high above the other figures, including Rembrandt himself grasping the center of the cross. Radiographs reveal that the artist altered the position of Christ's head so that it is directed upward and to the left, rather than toward the beholder, so that both eyes of the Crucified were in view.[25] In this way, Jesus appears distant and remote, more closely connected with God in

Heaven, than with the actions of men. The body and face of Christ in this painting are idealized, especially in comparison with the tortured figure of *The Descent,* who both figuratively and literally has been lowered from the cross. More accessible and human, the Crucified in *The Descent* is "Humbled below us; our uppermost now beneath us?" These lines recall Christ's placement in both paintings; he is above Rembrandt in *The Raising,* and beneath the artist in *The Descent.*

As expressed in Huygens' translation, another aspect that makes the Crucifixion so difficult to bear is to "see and know" the pain suffered by Mary at her Son's death. The rider laments, "If it scares me to behold that, dare I see and know/ How sorrowful she was, who had a part in this doing, And provided with God half of the expiation of man?"[26] As depicted by Rembrandt, Christ's Mother is overcome by the tragedy of the ordeal; she has fallen into a faint and lies on the ground, attended by the other women. This figure of the swooning Virgin, however, was not employed by Rembrandt during the early stages of the development of *The Descent.* It doesn't appear in the earlier print, nor in the early stages of the painting, as revealed by radiographs (Fig. 3).[27] Perhaps the etching, as well as the artist's initial work on the painting, were done before Rembrandt read Huygens' translation of *Good Friday.* It is not without significance that the swooning Virgin begins to appear in Rembrandt's art around 1633, the year of Huygens' translation.[28] From this point onward, this motif appears again and again in his art.[29] Donne's description of the Virgin's sacrifice probably was the stimulus for Rembrandt's use of this element borrowed from Catholic art.[30] Mary's share in Christ's sacrifice, asserted by Donne, is expressed in visual terms in *The Descent* by the way her collapsed body and sagging arm replicate the posture of her Son. Her posture clarifies her participation in the Crucifixion.[31] In this way, if the westward rider in the poem would "dare" to look upon Mary, he would not only see her, but would 'know," that is, understand her part in Christ's sacrifice. When Huygens translated the passages on Mary, he added "Dare I to see and know" to the line in which Donne simply wrote "Dare I to see."[32] Rembrandt makes it clear in his painting that if one were to penetrate the shadows and observe the Virgin, the viewer would both "see and know." One

wonders if Rembrandt is making a comment here about the power of art and its ability to make known religious mysteries.

Rembrandt's *Raising* and *Descent* further may be related to the paradox of the simultaneous rising and setting of the sun developed by Donne in *Good Friday*. The rider laments: "I feel that my soul's journey pulls to the East. To the East, where today a Sun while rising sets, And by this setting raises the day, day without end."[33] The paradox of the sun that both rises and sets at the same time refers to Christ's life and death. Jesus is both sun and son, according to the well-known pun, which also exists in Dutch.[34] In rising, Christ triumphs over death, bringing salvation to the world; as the setting sun/son, he dies in order to save humankind. This metaphor of Christ as the sun rising and setting may be related to the two paintings as pendants, intended to be hung side by side. The rising of the sun is suggested in *The Raising,* the setting of the sun in *The Descent.* Like the rising sun, Christ's strongly-lit body in *The Raising* pierces the darkness, as it is lifted in triumph above the horizon line. (Radiographs of the painting reveal that Rembrandt adjusted the position of Christ's arms to accentuate the diagonal movement of his body.[35]) Bathed in light, he drives away death's darkness. The light from Christ's body falls upon the sinful figure of Rembrandt grasping the cross, and glides over the metal armor of the soldier pulling on the rope. Rembrandt's portrayal seems to resonate with the words of the westward rider, "If not that Sun had risen on the cross and died, Sin would have kept eternal night over all things."[36] The spade near the hole, reminiscent of a grave, reminds the viewer of Christ's submission to and defeat of the "eternal night" of death. The shovel's symbolic association with the Crucifixion is evoked by its shape and angle echoing that of the cross.[37] In this way, death, life, and the Crucifixion are all interconnected.

As suggested in *Good Friday*, before Christ as the son/sun can triumph over death or rise like the sun, the sun/Son first must set, that is, Jesus must die. The poem further develops the metaphor: "And by this setting raises the day, day without end." These lines may be related to *The Descent* in which Christ's death, the setting sun, is conveyed by the lowering of his body from the cross. *The Descent* signals the

completion of Christ's sacrificial act. The raising of the day, "day without end," is suggested in the picture by the intense light emanating from him like the sun, its warm glow enveloping the figures closest to him in the divine light of the "day without end."

Another significant theme developed in *Good Friday* is the westward rider's desire to be reconciled with Christ. The speaker in the poem rides away from the Crucifixion, but the memory stays within him: "It remains in my thoughts, that show it to my memory/ That steadily looks there, just as thou from th' wood/ Steadily, Lord, keep thy eye mercifully on me."[38] Similarly, the Centurion in Rembrandt's *Raising* embodies the sinner's/viewer's hopes for reconcilement. This figure on horseback, who gazes out of the picture, is the Roman soldier who is converted, along with others, at the Crucifixion. As stated in Matthew 27:54: "When the Centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake, they were filled with awe, and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God.'" In *The Raising*, the equestrian Roman soldier makes eye-contact with the viewer outside the picture. The implication of this interaction is that the spectator can direct himself toward Christ, like the Centurion. This Roman soldier thus serves as exemplar for the viewer. If the observer is conceived as occupying the space outside *The Raising,* as a distant, momentary witness to the Crucifixion, where is the viewer in *The Descent*? The spectator is now a part of the grouping that "steadily looks" upon Christ. Thus, in passing from *The Raising* to *The Descent,* the viewer moves from outside to inside the pictorial space to directly confront the Crucifixion.

Before the speaker in *Good Friday* can turn toward Christ, however, he first must be chastised: "Now I turn you my back, but it is for flogging; Until mercy will stay thy hand and whip; Oh punish me, and suffer that I am worth thy wrath; Burn off my rust, and straighten my crookedness."[39] The guilty, westward rider first must suffer and then place his sins upon the cross. In *The Raising*, Rembrandt is shown in pain, his face contorted, his forehead deeply furrowed. He attaches himself to the cross as Christ's executioner, but hopes, as well, that his sins will be expiated by Christ's rising.[40] Another sinner in the painting, the armor-clad soldier who pulls on the rope, recalls the westward

rider's plea, "Burn off my rust, and straighten my crookedness." The soldier's hunched back, emphasized by the light glinting over it, is positioned for flogging, the chastisement necessary for his salvation. Crookedness or moral obliqueness is also implied by the bent posture of one of the thieves in the right background of the picture. Because of his position to the right of the other thief, he most certainly is the good thief who later will be redeemed from the crookedness of his sins.

Good Friday ends with a plea: "Recreate in me thine image so that you will be able to recognize it once more: and then I'll turn my face to you."[41] Once the sinner is restored to his original purity, he can look upon Christ's face. Reconciliation with the crucified is here implied in *The Descent* by the fact that nearly everyone looks at him. In addition, not a single figure peers out of the picture to distract the viewer from gazing upon Christ. Joseph of Arimathea, at the right, looks at Jesus, as do the two repentent Jews at the left. The one to the far left clasps his hands in repentence much like the Judas figure in an earlier painting by Rembrandt, *Repentant Judas returning the 30 pieces* (1629).[42] Huygens had praised the Judas figure in this painting which he saw during a visit with Rembrandt and Jan Lievens around 1629 in Leiden. Perhaps Rembrandt, aware of Huygens' preference for this figure, chose to quote it in *The Descent* in hopes of pleasing the Stadtholder's secretary. By using this motif, Rembrandt was assured that Huygens would be moved by this figure's plaintive gesture of repentance.[43]

The guilty, armored soldier of *The Raising* is replaced in *The Descent* by the figure standing just in front of the ladder. This man presumably has "burnt off" his armor and straightened his "crookedness." Purified of sin, he now stands upright on tiptoe to pull on the shroud, rather than the rope, and to participate not in Christ's execution, but in his burial.

Among the figures reconciled with Christ in *The Descent* is Rembrandt himself, who lovingly grasps Jesus's arm. Thus, when viewing both *The Raising* and *The Descent* in sequence, Rembrandt, as the suffering sinner/executioner in *The Raising,* is redeemed by the Crucifixion. In *The Descent,* Rembrandt as sinner is cleansed of sin; he takes his place at the cross and embraces Christ.

Indeed, a comparison of Donne's *Good Friday* and Rembrandt's two paintings of the Crucifixion offers much to ponder. Despite the strength of the arguments presented here, any conclusions drawn from this study must be qualified. For one, it would be irresponsible to suggest that Donne's poem entirely explains the profundity of Rembrandt's paintings. Moreover, I am certainly not suggesting a one-on-one relationship between every detail of these pictures and every line in *Good Friday*. Yet, despite all this, the evidence is strong that Rembrandt was influenced by the poem when he painted these works. The most compelling points of comparison have to do with the treatment of the figures of the Centurion, Christ, and Mary, as well as the dramatic way Rembrandt used contrast and paradox in the juxtaposition of *The Raising* and *The Descent*. This study, which illuminates the meaning of these famous works by Rembrandt, also offers new insights on John Donne's reception in the Netherlands, achieved through the influence of Constantijn Huygens' Dutch translation of *Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward.*

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Notes

1. Some examples (other than those mentioned in this article) include: *The Crucifixion:Small Plate*, ca. 1635, etching, (Bartsch 80); *Christ Crucified between The Two Thieves*, ca. 1641, etching, (Bartsch 79); *The Three Crosses*, etching in five states, (Bartsch 78); *Descent from the Cross: A Sketch*, 1642, etching, (Bartsch 82); *Descent from the Cross: By Torchlight*, 1654, etching, (Bartsch 83); *Golgotha*, ca. 1645-50, pen and brush drawing, Stadelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, (Benesch III, no. 586); *Christ on the Cross*, 1631, oil on canvas, Le Mas d'Agenais (Bredius-Gerson 543A); *Christ on the Cross*, ca. 1650-53, pen and brush drawing, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (Benesch V, no. 924).

2. Oil on panel, 89.4 x 65.2cm. (Bredius 550).

3. Oil on canvas, 96.2 x 72.2 cm. (Bredius 548).

4. Other paintings in the series include: *The Ascension, The Entombment, The Resurrection*, and also two works, not part of the Passion narrative, which were hung with the others, *The Adoration of the Sheperds* and *The Circumcision.* For a complete discussion of the chronology of the series see Ernst Brochhagen, "Beobachtungen an den Passionsbildern Rembrandts in München, *Munuscular Discipulorum. Kunsthistorische Studien Hans Kauffmann zum 70 Geburtstag* (Berlin: 1968), pp.38-39. Seven letters by Rembrandt to Huygens deal with this commission. See H. Gerson, *Seven Letters by Rembrandt* (The Hague:1961).

5. In Huygens' autobiographical memoir of 1629 or 1630, the Stadtholder's Secretary praised Rembrandt. See A.H. Kahn, *De Jeugd van Constantijn Huygens door hemzelf beschreven* (Rotterdam: 1646). Also consult English translation in Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt, His Life, His Paintings* (New York:1985), pp.73-74, 76. Rembrandt was commissioned through Huygens to paint three portraits at The Hague around 1632; one of Huygens' brother Maurits, the other of Jacob de Gheyn Jr., and another of the wife of the Stadtholder Prince Frederik. For additional information on these works consult Christian Tümpel, *Rembrandt* (Antwerp:1993), p.133. By 1632 Huygens already owned two paintings by Rembrandt, *Minerva in her Study* and *The Abduction of Proserpina*, both dating from around 1631 (presently in Berlin). Huygens believed that Rembrandt's art would add prestige to the Prince's court.

6. For a discussion of Huygens' translations of Donne consult the following: Koos Daley, *The Triple Fool. A Critical Evaluation of Constantijn Huygens' Translations of John Donne* (The Hague: 1990); "Donne and Huygens Travel Westward," *Dutch Crossing. A Journal of Low Countries Studies* 40 (Spring 1990): pp.23-27; " Traduttore, Traditore: Huygens as translator of Donne," *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies* 12, no.2 (1991), pp. 11-14; "Good Friday: Donne, Huygens and the Protestant Paradigm of Salvation," in *The Great Emporium. The Low Countries as a Cultural Crossroads in the Renaissance and the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Richard Todd (Amsterdam: 1992), pp. 43-55.

7. Tümpel (p. 136) suggests these dates for the delivery of the pictures.

8. Schwartz (pp.108-109), in discussing *The Raising*, quotes from Donne's poem, "But that Christ on this Crosse, did rise and fall...Sinne had eternally benighted all."

9. For a discussion of this subject in Rembrandt's art see Wolfgang von Stechow, "Rembrandts Darstellungen der Kreuzabnahme," *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 50 (1929): 217-32.

10. Rubens' painting, *The Descent from the Cross* (1611-14), was produced for an altar in Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal in Antwerp. Its dimensions, 420 x 310 cm, are huge in comparison with Rembrandt's painting (89.4 x 65.2 cm). For discussion and an illustration consult Tümpel, p. 139. Ben P.J. Broos ["Rembrandt borrows from Altdorfer," *Simiolas* 4 (1970): 105-06], rightly suggests a woodcut by Altdorfer of 1513 as a source for the painting.

11. 53 x 41 cm. Bartsch, no. 81.

12. Broos (pp. 100-08) convincingly relates aspects of the composition, such as the angle of the cross and the figures struggling to erect it, to a woodcut by Albrecht Altdorfer. For a discussion of the preparatory drawings for Rembrandt's *Raising* consult Broos *(Ibid.)* and Pieter van Thiel, Christopher Brown and Jan Kelch, *Rembrandt: The Master and his Workshop. Paintings* (New Haven and London:1991), p. 158.

13. The martel and the right hand of the Centurion are greatly damaged. See Josua Bruyn, B. Haak, S. Levie, Pieter van Thiel and Ernst van de Wetering, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, 2, (The Hague: 1986), p. 311, A69.

14. Else Sass ["Comments on Rembrandt's Passion Paintings and Constantijn Huygens' Iconography," *Historisk-Filosofiske Skrifter* 5 (1971): 3-38] claims without substantial evidence that this figure represents Pilot and is a portrait of Huygens.

15. Broos (p. 106) suggests a woodcut by Altdorfer as the source for the composition.

16. Bruyn et.al. (p. 282) claims that this figure is Joseph of Arimathea. Tümpel (p. 136), on the other hand, identifies him as Nicodemus. Although it is difficult to be sure, the figure's elegant dress and gold chain associate him with the wealthy follower of Christ, Joseph of Arimathea.

17. For Donne's and Huygens' text and Daley's back translation into English consult Koos Daley, *The Triple Fool. A Critical Evaluation of Constantijn Huygens' Translations of John Donne* (The Hague: 1990), pp. 107-10.

18. "Soo werd de ziel van lust, soo werdt zij mis-bewogen/ Van besicheijts gesnorr, als waer 'thaer oppertocht./Soo raeck ick desen dagh ten Westen wegh gebrocht,/ Ten westen averechts, dewijl ick in 't vertrecken/ Mijn eighen zielentocht ten Oosten aen voel recken."

19. The motif of the Centurion on horseback appears in Rembrandt's preparatory drawing for this painting in the Albertina in Vienna. Consult Broos (p. 101).

20. "Nochtans 'tverheught mij schier, dat verr van mijn gesicht/ 'Tgesicht gebleven zij van mij te swaren wicht:/ Die Godes aenschijn siet, die 'tleven is, moet sterven,/ Wat sterven waer het, God het leven te sien derven?"

21. "En kost ick nagelen sien drijven door de handen."

22. "Kost ick het diere bloed sien storten, sien verkneden/ Van stoff tot slijck? het bloed daer all ziel in leeft,/ Tot sijn' toe?"

23. "Kost ick 't vleesch dat God gedragen heeft,/ Gedragen als sijn kleed, onternt sien en gereten?"

24. "En kost ick nagelen sien drijven door de handen/ Die 'tNoord en 'tZuyderpunt bereicken, dat sij 'tspanden,/ En geven met een draeij elck hemel-rond sijn toon?/ Kost ick vernedert sien 'tonendigh hoogh en schoon,/ Vernedert onder ons; ons boven, ons beneden?"

25. Brochhagen (pp. 39-40) relates that the original position of Christ's head was similar to that of Rembrandt's *Christ on the Cross* of 1631, in Le Mas d'Agenais, France. See illustration in Tümpel (p. 47). Clearly, Rembrandt does not emphasize the idea of Christ looking at the rider, as in the poem. Daley (1992, pp. 53-54) states that Huygens emphasized Christ's constant gaze upon the rider. She interprets this as an indication of Huygens' certainty as a Calvinist that the rider will be saved.

26. "En schrickt' ick dat te sien, hoe dorst ick sien en weten/ Hoe sij te moede was, die deel hadd in dit doen,/ En leverde met God de helft in 's menschen soen?"

27. Brochhagen (p. 40) states that in an earlier stage of the painting, the figure of Mary stood behind Joseph, moving toward the cross and clinging to the drooping forearm of Christ.

28. Tümpel (p. 136) rightly suggests that Rembrandt took up this subject to emphasize an "element of compassion." At around the same time, Rembrandt wrote below his drawing of the Virgin beneath the cross (Benesch, no. 152) that Christ's words, entrusting his mother to John, were "a treasure of modesty that we should keep in our hearts, to comfort the compassionate soul" (translation by Tümpel, *Ibid.*). It is possible that this statement may have been influenced by the artist's reading of Huygens.

29. Some etched examples include: *The Crucifixion:Small Plate,* ca.1635 (Bartsch, no. 80); *The Three Crosses*, states 1-5, ca. 1653; *Descent from the Cross*, 1642 (Bartsch, no. 82).

30. Stechow (pp. 221-22) suggests Jacopo Bassano's *Entombment* of 1574, presently in Vienna at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, as the source for Rembrandt's swooning Mary. Actually, any number of Italian examples could suffice as the source. In my opinion, Rembrandt's swooning Mary was inspired by Annibale Carracci's *Crucifixion*, presently in the Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. This painting of 1594 would have been known to Rembrandt through Cornelis Bloemaert's print published early in the seventeenth century. For an illustration of Annibale's painting consult Giuliano Briganti et.al., *The Age of Correggio and the Carracci* (Washington, D.C.: 1986), p. 280.

31. This idea was not invented by Rembrandt, but was often employed in Italian art. See, for example, discussion in Shelley Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death* (University Park and London:1990), pp. 38-39 and Shelley Perlove, "Guercino's *Esther Before Ahasuerus* and Cardinal Lorenzo Magalotti, Bishop of Ferrara,"*Artibus et Historiae. An Art Anthology* 10 (1989): pp. 135-136

32. Koos Daley ["Donne and Huygens Travel Westward," *Dutch Crossing. A Journal of the Low Countries Studies* 40 (Spring, 1990): p. 24 and 1992, p. 49] discusses this change in Huygens' text. She states that Huygens' addition of the word "know," transforms the rider from a "passive onlooker" into an "active participant."

33. "Mijn eighen zielen-tocht ten Oosten aen voel recken./ Ten Oosten, daer van daegh een Sonn in 'trijsen daelt,/ En daelende den dagh, dagh sonder eind, op haelt."

34. Daley (*Triple Fool*, p. 117) claims that Huygens also implies "sond" (sin in Dutch) by the use of this pun.

35. Bruyn et.al., p. 311.

36. "Waer niet die Sonn aen 'tCruijs geresen en gevallen,/ De sond' hadd eewigh nacht behouden over allen."

37. As described by Pieter van Thiel et.al. (1991, p. 157), "The spade with its handle introduces this powerful upward thrust, which terminates at the horizontal beam of the cross."

38. "Tstaet mijn gedachten bij, die 'tmijn gedencken tooghen,/ Dat stadigh derwaert siet, gelijck ghij van dat Hout/ Gestadigh, Heer, uw oogh, genadigh op mij houdt."

39. "Nu keer ick u den ruggh, maer 't is om geeselingen;/ Tot dat genad' uw hand en geessel sal bedwingen./ O straft, en lydt dat ick Uw gramschap waerdigh zij;/Brandt mij 'tverroesten uyt en recht het scheef in mij."

40. Tümpel (pp. 136, 381, note 127) justly relates the idea of Rembrandt as executioner to such contemporary poems as Jacobus Revius' *Hy droech onse Smerten* (He Bore Our Sorrows), which was published in an anthology of 1630, *Over-Ysselsche Sangen en Dichten.* This poem conveys the idea that the sinner must bear the guilt for Christ's suffering and death, since his sins made it come to pass. Also consult Perry Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits. A Study in Seventeenth-Century Identity* (Princeton, New Jersey: 1990), pp. 112-13 and Ingvar Bergström, "Rembrandt's Double Portrait of Himself and Saskia," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 17 (1966): 164-66.

41. "In mij uw beeld herschept tot dat ghij 't soo ghij 'tkenden,/ In mij herkent: en dan sal ick v 't aensicht wenden." The English translation used here (taken from Daley, 1992, p. 52) is less awkward than the same author's earlier version (published in *Triple Fool*, 1990, p. 110).

42. Sass (pp. 7-8) discusses the resemblance of this figure to Rembrandt's Judas figure of 1629, but identifies the Judas-type figure in *The Descent* as an apostle rather than a Jew and characterizes his emotions as sadness rather than repentance.

43. It is relevant to note that in Rembrandt's letter to Huygens of January 12, 1639, the artist justifies his lateness in finishing other paintings for the *Passion* series by stating that he "observed the greatest and most natural movement" in his pictures (referring to the expression of the inner sentiment of his figures through posture). See discusssion of the letters in Tümpel (pp. 137-38).