

### 1. Introduction and description

Two small, closely related paintings, *Tobit and Anna with the kid*, discussed here, and *Joseph's dream* examined in the next entry (V 8), raise questions about working and teaching practices in Rembrandt's workshop. The entry on *Joseph's dream* will assess the relationship and the differences between these two paintings and propose an explanation of the genesis of these works based on a putative aspect of workshop practice. The present entry looks first at the question of what *Tobit and Anna and the kid* would have meant for a 17th-century viewer. Following this, the possible connections between the Berlin painting and a number of drawings of the same subject are considered.

The scene with Tobit, Anna and the kid is an episode in the apocryphal Book of Tobit. The blind and impoverished Tobit waits for his wife Anna, who is coming home with the earnings from her work. The painting is based on Tobit 2:11 And my wife Anna did take women's works to do.

2:12 And when she had sent them home to the owners, they paid her wages, and gave her also besides a kid.

2:13 And when it was in my house, and began to cry, I said unto her, From whence is this kid? is it not stolen? render it to the owners; for it is not lawful to eat any thing that is stolen.

2:14 But she replied upon me, It was given for a gift more than the wages. Howbeit I did not believe her, but bade her render it to the owners: and I was abashed at her. But she replied upon me, Where are thine alms and thy righteous deeds? behold, thou and all thy works are known.

3:1 Then I being grieved did weep, and in my sorrow prayed ...

Tobit sits in an armchair before an open fire with Anna standing beside him at the centre of a rather dilapidated room, whose rear wall runs parallel to the picture plane. The room is lit by daylight entering through one of two large windows. Tobit is wearing a long robe and a cap; he holds a stick in his left hand, which rests on the arm of the chair, and gestures with his other hand as though arguing. This gesture and his open mouth indicate that he is talking to Anna and the tilt of his head seems to emphasize his dismay and sorrow. Anna is wearing dark clothes and a light neckerchief; a bag hangs from her belt. With her left hand at her waist and the other holding a rope to which the struggling kid is tied, she looks at Tobit.

The room in which Tobit and Anna are situated and its furnishings are depicted in considerable detail. Behind Tobit is a closed door; to his right, against the rear wall, stands a bed on a raised floor. From a cross beam fixed to the ceiling hang opened curtains that are draped over the foot and head of the bed. To the left of the kid there is a cupboard with its top right door open and on it lies a white cloth. In the wall above this cupboard there is a rough opening in which stand an earthenware pot in a yellow metal frame with ring-shaped handles and a copper bowl. There are two large windows with leaded glass; the

lower part of the one further to the rear is covered by a curtain. The lower part of the nearer window is opened inwards. The post between the windows forms the support for a long beam running parallel to the rear wall. Behind this beam a second one can be seen in the opening in the wall with a plank leaning against it. At the top left the backlit brace strengthening a third beam is visible. On these beams rest five planks at unequal intervals. Between the fourth and fifth plank there is an opening in the middle of the ceiling through which a space above can be seen. Across the beams lies a nursing basket, which extends deep into the space behind. Beside it ropes hang over the middle beam. From the brace which supports this beam and which is fixed to the post hangs a vessel on red cords. Under the open window is a bench, to the left of which lies a red cushion, visible through the spokes of a spinning wheel. In front of this wheel there is a low basket.

#### *Working conditions*

Examined in November 1968 (S.H.L., E.v.d.W.), in December 1988 (P.B., E.v.d.W.), in April 1992 (M.F., V.M.) and in July 1993 (M.F., V.M., E.v.d.W.): in good daylight and artificial light, out of the frame and with the aid of a stereomicroscope and an X-radiograph, covering the whole painting, infrared reflectography and neutron activation autoradiography. The painting is covered with a thin, yellowed layer of varnish which, together with local degradation of the paint surface (see *Paint layer Condition*), impedes examination.

#### *Support*

Jequitiba panel, grain horizontal, c. 20.2 ( $\pm$  0.2) x 28 ( $\pm$  0.2) cm. Thickness at left 0.4 cm, at right 0.6 cm. Single plank. A strip 0.7 cm wide was later added to the bottom edge, possibly to replace a strip of the original panel. Back bevelled on all four sides over a width varying from 1.7 cm (on the right and the greatest width on the left) to c. 0.7 cm at top and bottom.

The wood has been identified as 'Jequitiba' (*Cariniana sp.*); the panel of V 8 is from the same tree.<sup>1</sup> According to P. Klein (Hamburg) such panels of South and Central American origin were often parts of sugar cases.<sup>2</sup> See also *Corpus IV*, p. 657.

#### *Ground*

A yellowish ground almost everywhere covered by reddish-brown underpainting is visible to the left above the door, to the right of the slanting beam in the recess and just under the end of the nursing basket; it shows through in transparent parts of the background and in Anna's clothing.

#### *Paint layer*

Condition: The condition of the paint is good in the main parts of the painting, apart from a disturbance of the surface in which the contrasts and the light effects are impaired by a locally occurring grey haze of degraded paint. The paint is affected locally, particularly on the right, by severe shrinkage cracks. The appearance of the paint and crack pattern may have been influenced by one

Fig. 1. Panel 20.2 x 28 cm



or more Pettenkofer treatments. Thus, above the fire, particles of loose pigment were observed with a stereomicroscope in the varnish. At the top, in the middle of the planks and beams of the ceiling, there are quite extensive areas of retouching which are also visible by ultraviolet fluorescence. At the lower right, close to the edge of the original panel, another retouched spot can be seen.

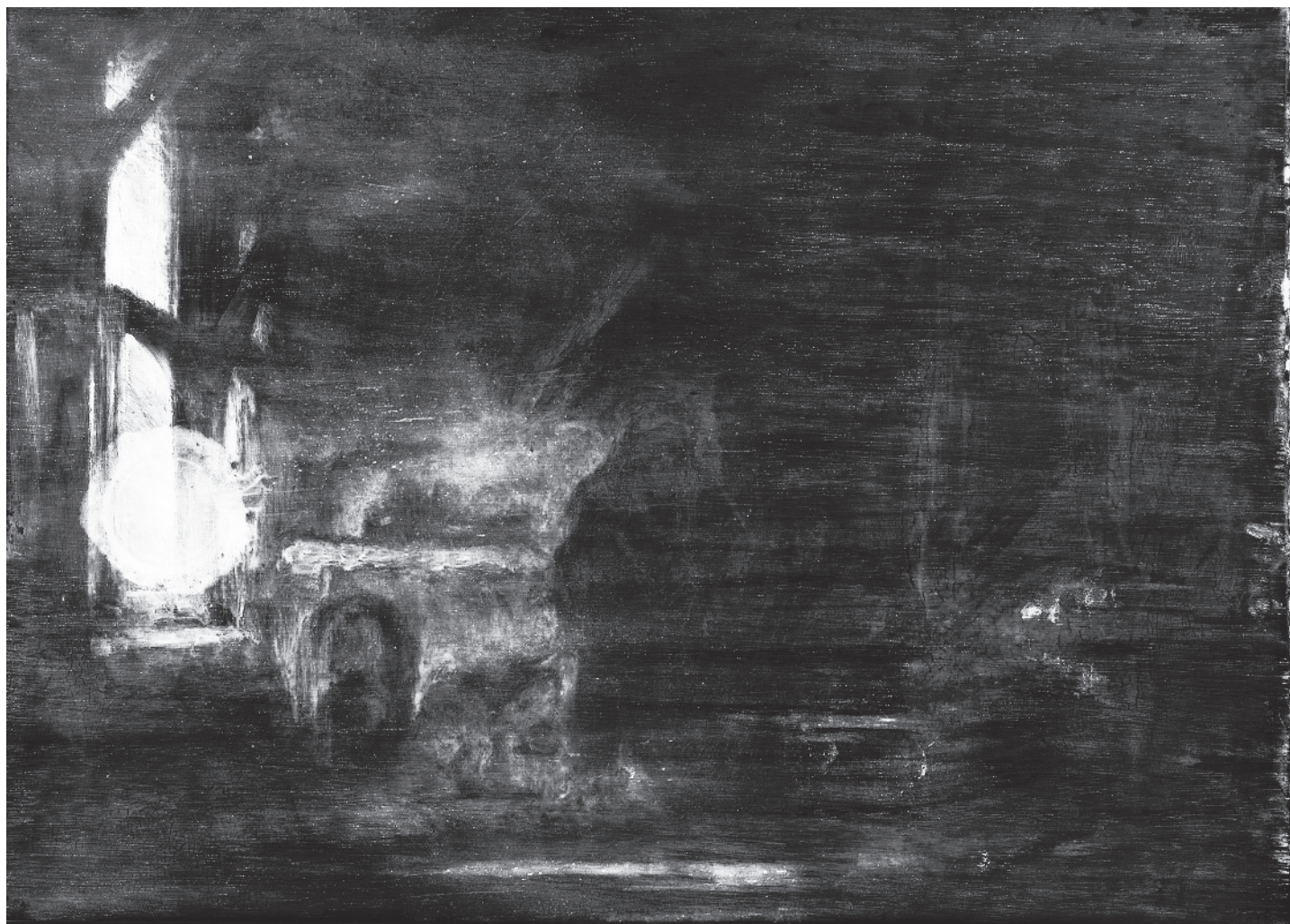
**Craquelure:** The thickly painted greyish white of the window openings has a fine pattern of small, mainly horizontal fissures. Otherwise, as stated, at many points (e.g. in the floor, in front of the fire, above the door, beside and below the bench on the left under the window) an irregular pattern of shrinkage cracks is seen. On the right, in the bed, they are quite short and broad.

The appearance of this small painting is partly determined by the transparent, reddish brown underpainting which was applied over the yellowish ground and is locally exposed or shines through. This contributes to the warmth of the colour scheme based on grey and yellow but predominantly brown and black shades. The red cords by which the vessel is suspended in front of the window, the subdued red of the cushion behind the spinning wheel in the left foreground and the yellow and red flames of the fire form the strongest colour accents, though they

merge into the general palette. As stated above, many details are depicted. Yet the execution is far from being detailed throughout. Some of the lit forms are executed in an uncontrolled manner with lumpy, thick paint. This is particularly so in the case of the windowsill, the cupboard and the lit parts of the wall and floor. Elsewhere, on the other hand, as in the figure of Anna, and in the rendering of the leaded-glass window, a very steady hand is evident. The lights in the earthenware and copper vessels are indicated by small, exactly placed dabs and thickly applied lines. The impastoed paint has been applied with a high degree of control. In the open lower near window through which light streams, the brushstrokes run in the direction of the light. The lit parts of the window frame are set against this in composed, opaque yellowish brushstrokes. In the upper half of this window the painter has indicated lead strips with very thin painted black lines.

The indistinctness of certain elements in the painting, for instance in the figure of Tobit and in the kid, can be explained to some extent by the degradation of small parts of the paint surface. Alterations can be seen in Anna's contour, particularly in her shoulders. Originally, a larger reserve was left in the background for her right shoulder, so that a narrow gap between the impasto of the background and her present shoulder remains. In the case

Fig. 2. X-Ray



of her left shoulder and upper arm, a correction has been made by applying grey paint over an earlier contour; this may have been intended to turn slightly the figure which was originally placed more frontally. See *Radiography* for alterations to the figure of Tobit and for a quite significant change, also visible in relief, where the cupboard is located.

#### *Radiography*

In the region of the window, the X-ray image is impaired by a large wax seal on the back of the panel. A horizontally running pattern is visible over the entire surface that corresponds with the ground-filled grain of the panel. Otherwise, the X-radiograph broadly corresponds to what might be expected from the paint surface. Passages in the painting which absorb X-rays are found in and near the window in particular and in the lit part of the wall in which a rough reserve has been left for the figures of Anna and the kid. The reserve for Anna is slightly larger at her right shoulder than the final contour. The reserve for the kid was considerably smaller than the final form and suggests that the painter did not yet have a clear idea of the pose and positioning of the animal. Where the cupboard stands, the X-radiograph shows a dark oval form left in reserve against the light surroundings which must have been part of an earlier version of the spinning wheel now

placed in the left foreground. Above this oval shape the X-radiograph reveals a horizontal, light band which could be interpreted as indicating a board. In the wall above, which shows up less lightly, reserves are left for shapes which suggest that kitchenware was intended on this board. The spinning wheel and the board can be seen in relief on the paint surface by raking light. Where a curtain covers the window, two light areas are visible in the X-radiograph. It is possible that this window was first depicted uncovered. Vague shapes to the right of Tobit correspond in part to elements in the present painting, especially the bed curtains. The X-radiograph clearly shows the strip added to the bottom of the panel. Also evident in the X-ray image are the horizontal craquelure pattern of the window openings and the shrinkage cracks on the left below the window and in the chair, the curtains and the bed among other places. The long horizontal band just above the bottom edge appears to belong to the ground rather than to the paint layer, since the pattern of shrinkage cracks found in the latter is absent.

Infrared rays reveal hardly anything more than can already be seen in the paint surface (fig. 3). The black lines in which the contours and internal detail of the figure of Anna are executed do, however, emerge more clearly. In the figure of Tobit and in the chair on which he sits vigor-

Fig. 3. Infrared reflectogram assembly



ous dark lines are visible which cannot be seen on the surface. These dark lines and streaks, particularly near his legs, suggest that alterations were made during the execution of the work. This also applies to the left foreground, where several lines that show up dark may indicate that a form was painted out. This may have been part of the spinning wheel, which included the oval shape in the X-radiograph. Given the asymmetry of the roughly vertical two bands, one of which curves and is thicker towards the top, these lines could also be the hind legs of an earlier version of the kid.

Neutron activation autoradiography yielded no new insights.

#### Signature

At the lower right, on the side of the raised floor on which the bed stands, in dark paint which is locally strengthened with transparent brown paint: <Rembrandt. f 1645>. The last digit is not clear; it can be read as a 5 but could also be a 6 (fig. 4).

## 2. Comments

Consideration of the painting's pictorial and stylistic characteristics, their implications for the question of author-

ship, the interpretation of the pentimenti and the significance of these aspects for the relationship between *Tobit and Anna with the kid* and *Joseph's dream* in the next entry (V 8) will be found in the comments on the latter painting. In what follows below the possible relations are examined between the Berlin *Tobit and Anna* and a number of drawings of the same subject, preceded by a consideration of possible allusions this subject could have had for the 17th-century viewer.

In the 17th century, the apocryphal Book of Tobit was one of the most revered biblical texts. After the Reformation, Christian theology and literature drew on the moral and didactic nature of the text regardless of denomination. The foreword to the Apocrypha in the *Statenbijbel* (authorised Dutch Bible) of 1637 contains a warning that these books '... should not be publicly read in the Congregation ... and may [not] be used to confirm any article of faith'.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, reading them is recommended because 'some good sayings, exhortations and examples may be found in them'.<sup>4</sup>

In general, the central features in the history of the exegesis of Tobit are the obedience of Tobit's son Tobias, who follows his father's instructions by marrying a woman from his own people, and the piety of Tobit himself.<sup>5</sup> It is this piety of Tobit that Rembrandt portrayed in the 1626

Fig. 4. Detail with signature (infrared photograph, enlarged)



painting of this subject in Amsterdam (I A 3). In this picture, Rembrandt focused on Tobit praying in sorrow (Tobit 3:1-6), with a gesture of despair or remorse. Here, Rembrandt relied on a print by Jan van de Velde after Willem Buytewech with the inscription 'Come wife, return that stolen kid, says Tobit, who sees with his heart though robbed of his sight'.<sup>6</sup> The central theme of Van de Velde's print is not Tobit's praying in sorrow, but his accusation, a slightly earlier moment in the story (Tobit 2:13-14). Tobit's accusation that Anna had stolen the kid she was given in payment for her work is also the subject of the *Tobit and Anna* in Berlin, in which the allegation is expressed by Tobit's raised hand. In the 17th century, Tobit was not only appreciated for his piety, but also for his sense of justice. The Mennonite author Pieter Jansz. Twisck (1566-1636) mentions Tobit as a 'pious, righteous and God-fearing' man.<sup>7</sup> In connection with righteousness, Twisck refers explicitly to Tobit 2:13, which recounts Tobit's accusation.<sup>8</sup> Thus, while the early Amsterdam picture portrays piety, the Berlin painting may have alluded to righteousness in the eyes of the 17th-century viewer. However, the Berlin picture may contain yet another allusion. In the Amsterdam picture, Anna stares at Tobit wide-eyed, while in the Berlin picture, she reacts angrily to the charge of theft, as shown by the hand at her waist. Her gesture and subsequent indignant reaction to Tobit's unjust charge appears to follow contemporary interpretations. Twisck cited Anna's fierce reaction as an example of 'onverduldighe' (impatient) anger under the entry for 'Anger, wrath, indignation, persecution. Interdiction, warning and admonition against anger and indignation'.<sup>9</sup>

Most authors relate the Berlin painting to a group of drawings (Ben. 561, 572 and 584) which also show the accusation of Tobit. A drawing in Stockholm (fig 5; Ben. 561), considered by Hofstede de Groot as a preparatory drawing for the painting,<sup>10</sup> is no longer regarded as being by Rembrandt, but as the work of a pupil or follower based on Rembrandt's drawing style of the 1640s.<sup>11</sup> With minor changes in the composition, the drawing depicts the same scene with the figures in reverse, Anna with her hand at her hip and the kid digging in its heels. The spinning wheel, however, is in the left foreground, as in the painting. On the basis of these resemblances it could be concluded that the Stockholm drawing is a paraphrase by a pupil of the painting discussed here. It could equally well be argued, however, that the Stockholm drawing and the Berlin painting are both related to a hypothetical, now lost third version.

Apart from slight variations, the poses and placing of the figures in the drawing in Stockholm correspond to

Fig. 5. Pupil or follower by Rembrandt, *Tobit and Anna with the goat*, 1640s, pen and brown ink, 11.9 x 20 cm (Ben. 561). Stockholm, Nationalmuseum

those in a drawing in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin (Ben. 572). However, apart from the question of whether it can be attributed to Rembrandt, this drawing must be dated to the 1650s or later and is therefore not relevant to the painting under consideration here.<sup>12</sup> A drawing in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (Ben. 584), whose attribution to Rembrandt is also doubted, has the same subject as the Berlin painting, but this is the only point of resemblance. It is closer to a painting from the School of Rembrandt formerly attributed to Rembrandt, Jan Lievens, Gerrit Willemsz. Horst or Karel van der Pluym,<sup>13</sup> which is now thought to be by an anonymous Rembrandt pupil of the early 1650s. Thus the relationship between these drawings and the Berlin *Tobit and Anna with the kid* lies primarily in the depiction of the same scene from the Book of Tobit. The drawings mentioned here do not afford greater insight into the genesis of the Berlin painting.

For a discussion of the attribution of the painting, see V 8, under 2. *Comments*.

### 3. Documents and sources

None.

### 4. Graphic reproductions

None.

### 5. Copies

None.

### 6. Provenance

– Hofstede de Groot mentions a sale Amsterdam 17-18 April 1759 (Lugt 1046) no. 103, described as: 'Tobias zyn Huisvrouw bestraffende, door Rembrand van Rhyn' (Tobit chastising his wife, by Rembrand van Rhyn) (to Yver - 27 guilders).<sup>14</sup> It is, however, unlikely that this refers to the painting discussed here

since there is no mention of *Joseph's dream* although both paintings always seem to have remained together.

– Mentioned in 1769 together with V 8 in the royal collection in Berlin and Potsdam: 'Der blinde Tobias und sein Weib mit dem Böckchen, von Rembrandt.'<sup>15</sup>

– Transferred in 1830 from the royal palaces to the Königlische Museen, Berlin.

– Since 1904 in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, cat. no. 805.

## NOTES

1. J. Bauch and D. Eckstein, 'Woodbiological investigations on panels of Rembrandt paintings', *Wood Science and Technology* 15 (1981), pp. 251-263, esp. 254.
2. P. Klein, 'Hat Rembrandt auf Zuckerkistenholz gemalt?', *Zuckerhistorische Beiträge aus der Alten und Neuen Welt*, Schriften aus dem Zucker-Museum, Heft 25, Berlin 1988, pp. 37-43.
3. '... niet en behooren opentlick in de Gemeynthe gelesen te worden... en [niet] mogen genomen om eenigh artijckel des geloofs te bevestigen'.
4. 'in deselve oock eenige goede spreucken, vermaningen, ende exemplen gevonden worden'.
5. See, for example, Georg Rollenhagen's *Tobias, eine schöne, tröstliche Comaedia oder Spiel vom heiligen Ehestand* of 1576 (*G. Rollenhagens Spiel von Tobias 1576*, ed. J. Bolte, Halle 1930) and *De historie van den ouden Tobias, ende van zijnen sone den Jonghen Tobias vol schoonder leeringhen...* of 1580 (B. van Selm, *Een menighe tref-felijcke Boecken*, Utrecht 1987, p. 278 no. 25).
6. Hollst. IV, p. 77, no. 17: 'Furtivam Uxor, ait Tobias, age redde capellam,/Corde videns, quamvis lumine captus erat.'
7. Pieter Jansz. Twisck, *Concordantie der Heyligher Schrifturen, ofte: Vergadering vande ghelijcklykende Spreuken, Woorden, Gheschiedenissen ende t'Samen-stemmende plaetsen der Heyligher Schrifturen*, Haarlem (Thomas Fonteyn) 1648, p. 190: 'vromen, rechtveerdigen, ende Godt-vreesenden'.
8. Twisck, op. cit. <sup>7</sup>, p. 190.
9. Twisck, op. cit. <sup>7</sup>, p. 232: 'Toorn, toornigh, gramschap, vervolgentheyt. Verbodt, leer ende waerschouwinghe voor toorn en gramschap.'
10. C. Hofstede de Groot, *Die Handzeichnungen Rembrandts. Versuch eines beschreibenden und kritischen Katalogs*, Haarlem 1906, cat. no. 1549.
11. P. Schatborn in: *Het boek Tobit. Met etsen en tekeningen van Rembrandt en zijn leerlingen*. Foreword C. Tümpel, notes to the reader P. Schatborn, Zeist 1975, p. 56, ill. p. 15.
12. H. Bevers, *Rembrandt. Die Zeichnungen im Berliner Kupferstichkabinett*, Berlin 2006: Holm Bevers does not accept the drawing as autograph. See the forthcoming publication of the second volume of the Berlin catalogue.
13. Sumowski *Gemälde IV*, no. 1935.
14. HdG 64.
15. F. Nicolai, *Beschreibung der Königlichen Residenzstädte Berlin und Potsdam*, Berlin 1769, p. 367. In the third edition, of 1786, II, p. 885, no. 17 the painting is listed as: 'Tobias und sein Weib mit dem Böcklein, von Rembrandt'.