



How To Cite

Ilona van Tuinen, "Lot and His Daughters", (AB-100), in *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., Ed., New York, 2017

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The prospect of human extinction can drive people to desperate measures. The morally charged story of Lot and his daughters, recounted in Genesis 19, demonstrates just how far people will go to ensure the continuance of their lineage. The old, righteous Lot, one of Abraham's nephews, lived in the doomed city of Sodom among its immoral citizenry. As a reward for his virtue, God spared Lot, along with his wife and two daughters, from Sodom's destruction. During their flight, however, Lot's wife defied God's command and looked back. As punishment, she was turned into a pillar of salt. Lot eventually settled inside a cave with his daughters. The elder



Fig 1. Lucas van Leyden, *Lot and His Daughters*, 1530, engraving, 18.9 x 24.6 cm, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. RP-P-OB-1587

sister, convinced that there was “no man left on the earth” (Gen. 19:31), devised a scheme to intoxicate Lot, enabling the two women to sleep with the old man on consecutive nights in order to “preserve the seed of their father” (Gen. 19:32). These one-time acts of incest, however questionable, yielded results. Nine months later, the sisters bore the sons Moab and Ben-Ammi, founders of the Moabite and Ammonite tribes. From the Moabite tribe eventually emerged Ruth, who, according to some theologians, was the ancestress of Christ.^[1]

Already in the Middle Ages, depictions of this biblical story served to moralize on the danger of female seduction and the unfavorable effects of alcohol.^[2] In 1530 Lucas van Leyden (ca. 1494–1533) added a blatantly erotic dimension to the scene by depicting Lot and his daughters as cavorting nudes (**fig 1**).^[3] His vastly influential composition—the three protagonists in the foreground against the backdrop of the burning city and Lot’s petrified wife in the distance—was adopted by many artists, including the Haarlem artist Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617) in his 1616 painting of *Lot and His Daughters* (**fig 2**).^[4] When Abraham Bloemaert executed this painting in 1624, he drew inspiration from both Van Leyden and Goltzius, but he also altered the narrative thrust of their scenes. Much as had his predecessors, Bloemaert placed the main figure group in the foreground, depicted the bed at the left, and relegated Lot’s wife and the burning city to the distant right. The position of Lot’s legs and the cylinder-like smoke plumes also derive from Goltzius’s example. Nevertheless, Bloemaert portrayed Lot and his daughters as mostly clothed and psychologically disconnected from one another, not as nudes engaging in a range of carnal pleasures.

In Bloemaert’s painting, the bearded Lot gazes broodingly at the ground before him, his right hand placed somewhat stiffly on his daughter’s bare shoulder, his left hand balancing a full *tazza* of wine on his knee. The patriarch is unreceptive to the advances of his youngest daughter, who has removed the top part of her dress, flung her pearl necklace and gold chain behind her on the bed, and placed her right hand on her father’s lap. He is equally unresponsive to his eldest daughter, who stands behind him while reaching over his shoulder to undo his robe with her left hand. His detached attitude is reinforced by the shadow cast over his eyes by his broad-brimmed hat.^[5] Thus, in Bloemaert’s rendering of the story, Lot is no longer portrayed as an active participant in the erotic character of the story, but rather as a disengaged participant.



Fig 2. Hendrick Goltzius, *Lot and His Daughters*, 1616, oil on canvas, 140 x 204 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. SK-A-4866



Fig 3. After lost drawing by Abraham Bloemaert, *Lot and His Daughters*, black chalk, pen in brown and gray wash with white highlights, 19.5 x 23.9 cm, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich, inv.no. 1057

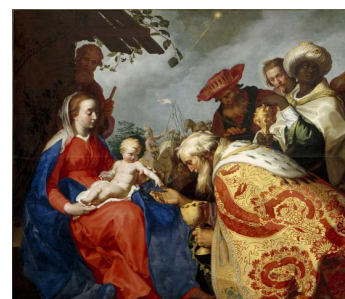


Fig 4. Abraham Bloemaert, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1624, oil on canvas, 168.8 x 193.7 cm, Centraal Museum Utrecht, inv. no. 2575



Bloemaert's interpretation of the story of Lot and his daughters is consistent with the approach he had taken earlier in the century in two drawings of the subject.^[6] The first, a roundel in a Dutch private collection, which Bloemaert executed around 1600–5, depicts Lot fully clothed and wearing a similar hat.^[7] The second, an anonymous copy after a lost drawing that Bloemaert probably executed around 1610–15 (**fig 3**), similarly depicts Lot as a disengaged participant.^[8] In each of these works Bloemaert remained faithful to the Old Testament story, which explicitly recounts that, in both instances, Lot was unaware when his daughter “lay down, nor when she rose up” (Gen 19:33). As a practicing Catholic, Bloemaert would have been aware of how Lot was described in the New Testament and in biblical exegesis. In 2 Peter 2:7, Lot is referred to as a “righteous man,” and in Luke 17:28–30, Christ uses Lot as an example of a virtuous man who was saved by God. Later theologians such as Erasmus and Calvin did not condone the inappropriate seduction, but they did not fully condemn it either: they understood that Lot was not consciously aware of the act and that the daughters were trying to save humankind from extinction.^[9]

A striking feature in Bloemaert's rendition is the sumptuous still life spread out on a stone table partially covered by a plain white damask tablecloth. It consists of apples and grapes in a Wan-li porcelain bowl, half a bread loaf stacked on top of an old Gouda cheese, a pewter dish with oysters, and a knife balancing precariously on the edge of the table. These objects and motifs are typical of early seventeenth-century still-life painting. Some of them—the bread, grapes, and cheese in particular—appear frequently in depictions of *Lot and His Daughters*, including in Goltzius's version.^[10] Standing before the table is a large, ornate, gilded ewer and on it a covered goblet. Bloemaert probably based these vessels on actual prototypes, possibly by the Utrecht silversmith family Van Vianen.^[11] The rarity of still lifes in Bloemaert's oeuvre suggests that he intended this still life as a commentary on the complex moral and ethical issues surrounding this biblical narrative.

A prominent element of this still life is the plate of oysters—aphrodisiacs that allude to the imminent sexual consummation planned by Lot's daughters. Discarded shells of consumed oysters lying on the ground in the shadow of the elder sister's dress further indicate the sexual implications of the story. Nevertheless, also prominently displayed in this still life are bread and wine, fundamental elements of the Eucharist. Anne Lowenthal argued that the prominence of such Christological symbols in depictions of *Lot and*



His Daughters presents the moral dilemma of this story to the viewer. They serve as reminders that Lot was a sinner, redeemed by Christ, but also that he was also an archetypal prototype for Christ.^[12]

In most depictions of this scene, including Van Leyden's and Goltzius's versions, one of the sisters is shown pouring the wine into Lot's cup, a motif that echoes this ambiguity. While the pouring of wine is traditionally associated with the virtue of Temperance, in this context it also points to Lot's drunkenness and intemperance. The bread is usually depicted untouched, possibly suggesting that Lot and his daughters have neglected the most basic nourishment, Christ's body.^[13] Bloemaert chose a different approach. While he included oysters to emphasize the sexual character of the scene, he did not emphasize Lot's drunkenness by having one of his daughters pour wine into his cup. Instead, Lot solemnly holds his *tazza* made of gold, the color of Christ's kingship, much as a priest would do during the celebration of the Eucharist.^[14] The half a loaf of bread in the still life alludes to participation in the other central element of the Eucharist—the body of Christ. The red admiral butterfly hovering above the still life also has Christological implications, for it refers symbolically to the resurrection of the soul.^[15]

The painting's correct attribution has long been obscured. Around the beginning of the twentieth century it was attributed to Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) on the basis of a false signature applied in the nineteenth century.^[16] Throughout most of the twentieth century it was ascribed to Jacob Jordaens (1593–1678) and, when it was sold in 2004, it was attributed to Abraham Bloemaert's son Hendrick (1601/2–72).^[17] With the discovery of Abraham Bloemaert's signature and date during the painting's restoration in 2004, it became possible to identify this work as the "grand gallery picture" auctioned on 14 February 1811 in London, which, according to the sale catalogue, had belonged to King Charles II of England (1630–85).^[18] *Lot and His Daughters* corresponds stylistically to the two other paintings by Bloemaert dated 1624: *Parable of the Wheat and the Tares* at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, and *Adoration of the Magi* in the Centraal Museum, Utrecht (**fig 4**).^[19] The Utrecht painting is especially similar in the bright, primary colors of the monumental foreground figures, the pastel palette in the background, and the inclusion of gilded goblets which are, just as in *Lot and His Daughters*, reminders of Christ's kingship.

-Ilona van Tuinen



Endnotes

1. See Anne Lowenthal, "Lot and His Daughters as Moral Dilemma," in *The Age of Rembrandt: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting; Papers in Art History from The Pennsylvania State University*, vol. 3, ed. Roland E. Fleischer and Susan Scott Munshower (Philadelphia, 1988), 12–27. In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther explicitly made the connection between Ruth and Christ. Lowenthal also makes reference to Dürer's famous *Haller Madonna* of ca. 1495–1500, oil on panel, 52.4 x 42.2 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Foundation, inv. 1099. The inclusion of *Lot and His Daughters* on the reverse of Dürer's painting might allude to Christ's lineage.
2. For the appearance of this scene in the so-called *Power of Women* series, see Yvonne Bleyerveld, *Hoe bedriechlijk dat vrouwen zijn: Vrouwenlisten in de beeldende kunst in de Nederlanden, 1350–1650* (Leiden, 2000). The scene also appears on a coconut cup by Cornelis de Bye (d. 1598) (17.1 cm, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, inv. 57.1046) containing the inscription "Drunkenness is the root of all evil."
3. Ilja Veldman, "Lot en zijn dochters," in *Lucas van Leyden en de Renaissance*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar et al. (Exh. cat. Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal) (Antwerp, 2011), no. 104.
4. Lawrence W. Nichols, "Lot and His Daughters," in *Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617): Drawings, Prints, and Paintings*, ed. Huigen Leeftang and Ger Luijten (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Toledo, Toledo Museum of Art) (Zwolle, 1993), 304–5, no. 112.
5. The large, dark red hat Lot wears might allude to a clerical headdress, thereby emphasizing his role as a patriarch. It is similar in shape to the cardinal's hat that Bloemaert included in his *St. Jerome Reading by Candlelight* in the Bader Collection, also painted in the early 1620s. Marcel G. Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints* (Doornspijk, 1993), 223–24, no. 286. See also David DeWitt, *The Bader Collection: Dutch and Flemish Paintings* (Kingston, 2008), 68–69, no. 34, where the Bader painting is dated to ca. 1622. Bloemaert used the same model of a bearded old man for St. Jerome and Lot. The same man appears in numerous other paintings and drawings in his oeuvre. See for instance, Marcel G. Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints* (Doornspijk, 1993), 336, nos. 538–39, and 398, no. T34.
6. There are also four other, less related drawings of *Lot and His Daughters* by Bloemaert. See Jaap Bolten, *Abraham Bloemaert, c. 1565–1651: The Drawings* (Leiden, 2007), 23–25, nos. 20–25, for all six drawings, one of which is a drawing with black ink or chalk and *brunaille* on panel, dated to around 1646–47; see no. 23, present whereabouts unknown.
7. For the roundel, see Jaap Bolten, *Abraham Bloemaert, c. 1565–1651: The Drawings*



(Leiden, 2007), no. 20, and Marcel G. Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints* (Doornspijk, 1993), 223–24, under no. 495, with earlier literature. The roundel is generally dated to ca. 1600–5.

8. For the second drawing, see Jaap Bolten, *Abraham Bloemaert, c. 1565–1651: The Drawings* (Leiden, 2007), no. 25a. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam preserves another copy of the lost prototype in Munich, pen and brush in brown on blue-gray paper, heightened with white, 20.5 x 14.7 cm, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv. no. RP-T-1905-169. See Jaap Bolten, *Abraham Bloemaert, c. 1565–1651: The Drawings* (Leiden, 2007), no. 25b, and Karel G. Boon, *Netherlandish Drawings of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (The Hague, 1978), 17, no. 33, who calls the Amsterdam drawing an “[u]nimportant copy after a Bloemaert drawing.” Bolten dates the lost prototype for the Munich drawing to ca. 1610–15 based on a stylistic comparison with Bloemaert’s designs for Bolswert’s engraved series of *The Hermits*. Considering that Bloemaert appears to have modeled the position of Lot’s legs, which is identical in the Munich drawing and in the present painting, after Goltzius’s 1616 painting, it appears that the Munich drawing should be dated slightly later, to around ca. 1616–24.
9. See Joshua Benjamin Kind, “The Drunken Lot and His Daughters: An Iconographical Study of the Uses of This Theme in the Visual Arts from 1500–1650, and Its Bases in Exegetical and Literary History” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1967); Anne Lowenthal, “Lot and His Daughters as Moral Dilemma,” in *The Age of Rembrandt: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting; Papers in Art History from The Pennsylvania State University*, vol. 3, ed. Roland E. Fleischer and Susan Scott Munshower (Philadelphia, 1988), and, more recently, Ilja Veldman, “Lot en zijn dochters,” in *Lucas van Leyden en de Renaissance*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar et al. (Exh. cat. Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal) (Antwerp, 2011).
10. For the development of still-life painting in the early seventeenth century, see, for instance, Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.’s introduction in *Still Lifes of the Golden Age: Northern European Paintings from the Heinz Family Collection*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (Exh. cat. Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts) (Washington, DC, 1989), 11–25. For another, popular composition of *Lot and His Daughters*, by Joachim Uytewael in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, ca. 1600, oil on canvas, 163.6 x 212 cm (with another, autograph version in the Los Angeles County Museum), which also includes bread, grapes, and cheese, see Irina Sokolova, “A New Acquisition by the Hermitage Museum: Joachim Wtewael’s *Lot and His Daughters*,” *Burlington Magazine* 133 (1991): 619–22.
11. Bloemaert may have looked at the metalwork of the Utrecht-based Adam van Vianen (1569–1627). The figure on the lid of the goblet, as Alfred Bader observed in 2008, resembles a similar goblet by Vianen in St. Petersburg. See *Zeldzaam zilver uit de gouden eeuw: de Utrechtse edesmeden Van Vianen* (Exh. cat. Utrecht, Centraal Museum) (Utrecht,



- 1984), no. 51. For a similar 1607 *tazza* with the *Judgment of Paris* by Paulus van Vianen at the Rijksmuseum (silver, 17 x 20.3 cm diam., inv. RBK-1953-13), see Reinier Baarsen in *Dawn of the Golden Age*, ed. Wouter Kloek et al. (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (Zwolle, 1993), 506–7. Unlike Van Vianen's *tazza*, Bloemaert did not include any specific scene.
12. Anne Lowenthal, "Lot and His Daughters as Moral Dilemma," in *The Age of Rembrandt: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting; Papers in Art History from The Pennsylvania State University*, vol. 3, ed. Roland E. Fleischer and Susan Scott Munshower (Philadelphia, 1988). In her discussion of Uytewael's composition of ca. 1600, she also notes other Christological features, such as the disguised crosses in the background.
 13. For a similar interpretation of intact bread, see Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Willem Claesz. Heda, *Banquet Piece with Mince Pie*," in *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century* (Washington, DC, 1995), 99–102. For the diverse interpretations of cheese, which could allude to intemperance, see Eddy de Jongh in *Still Life in the Age of Rembrandt*, ed. Eddy de Jongh (Exh. cat. Auckland, Auckland City Gallery) (Auckland, 1982), 65–69, no. 4; J. Bruyn, "Dutch Cheese, a Problem of Interpretation," *Simiolus* 24 (1996): 201–8. See also Alan Chong and Wouter Kloek, "Floris van Dijck, *Laid Table with Cheese and Fruit*," in *Still-Life Paintings from the Netherlands, 1550–1720* (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum; Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Arts) (Zwolle, 1999), 130–32, no. 10, where they refer to Goltzius's *Lot and His Daughters*, suggesting that the juxtaposition of cheese and wine signifies intemperance.
 14. For the color of gold as a symbol for Christ's kingship in Bloemaert's *Adoration*, see Liesbeth Helmus, "Adoration of the Magi," in *The Bloemaert Effect: Color and Composition in the Golden Age*, ed. Liesbeth Helmus and Gero Seelig (Exh. cat. Utrecht, Centraal Museum; Schwerin, Staatliches Museum) (Petersberg, 2011), 112, no. 33.
 15. For the statue of Lot's wife, Bloemaert may have used one of the female figures he drew between 1620 and 1625, which were later engraved in a series of fifteen prints by his son Frederick for the composition of the salt statue. Marcel G. Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints* (Doornspijk, 1993), 242–43, no. 357, 11.9 x 12 cm, probably engraved after 1635. This print is no. 7 in the series. On the symbolic meaning of butterflies alluding to the Resurrection in still-life painting, see Sam Segal, *A Flowery Past: A Survey of Dutch and Flemish Flower Painting from 1600 until the Present* (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Gallery P. de Boer; 's-Hertogenbosch, Noordbrabants Museum) (Amsterdam, 1982), 21. For a concrete example, see Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Jan Davids de Heem, *Vase of Flowers*," in *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century* (Washington, DC, 1995), 103–6, in which a butterfly hovering above a poppy, symbol of the Passion, alludes to the Resurrection.
 16. The painting was on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York between 1883 and



1887, during which time it was recorded in several collection catalogues as being by Rubens. See *Metropolitan Museum of Art Hand-Book No. 1: Pictures by Old Masters in the East Gallery* (New York, 1883–84), 13, no. 46; (1884), 14, no. 51; (1884–85), 10, no. 49; (1885), 10, no. 48; (1885–86), 10, no. 51; (1886), 10, no. 48; (1886–87), 10, no. 48; (1887), 10, no. 49.

17. Between 1933 and 2004, the painting hung at the Des Moines Women's Club in Iowa as attributed to Jacob Jordaens. See *Des Moines Women's Club: Catalogue of Paintings and Byers Collection* (Des Moines, n.d.), addendum, 8–9, no. 86, as by Jacob Jordaens; *Des Moines Women's Club: Art Treasures: Possessions Catalogue* (Des Moines, 1941), 14, no. 43; (1952), 10, no. 36, as by Jacob Jordaens. For the attribution to Hendrick Bloemaert, see the sale catalogue of Sotheby's, New York, 22 January 2004, no. 24.
18. See the sale catalogue, Farebrother, London, 14 February 1811, no. 90, where it was still attributed to Bloemaert. See also Marcel G. Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints* (Doornspijk, 1993), 319, under no. 495, where it was still recorded as a lost painting.
19. For the latest catalogue entry on that painting, see Liesbeth Helmus, "Adoration of the Magi," in *The Bloemaert Effect: Color and Composition in the Golden Age*, ed. Liesbeth Helmus and Gero Seelig (Exh. cat. Utrecht, Centraal Museum; Schwerin, Staatliches Museum) (Petersberg, 2011), 112–13, no. 33. *Parable of the Wheat and the Tares*, oil on canvas, 100.3 x 137.8 cm, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, inv. 37.2505. See, also, Marcel G. Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints* (Doornspijk, 1993), 260–61, no. 391.

Provenance

- Possibly King Charles II (1630–85), England. 1
- Baron van Dornick (his sale, Farebrother, London, 14 February 1811, no. 90, as by A. Bloemaert [for £39.18]).
- [Possibly Charles F. P. Dillon, art dealer, New York, before 1883, as by Jacob Jordaens].
- Nason Bartholomew Collins (1834–94), New York and Iowa, as by Rubens; by descent to his daughter Mrs. Robert Coskery (b. 1866; née Elizabeth N. Collins), Des Moines, Iowa, by whom bequeathed to the Des Moines Women's Club, 1938.
- Des Moines Women's Club, Hoyt Sherman Place, Des Moines, Iowa, 1938, as by Jacob Jordaens; (sale, Sotheby's, New York, 22 January 2004, no. 24, as attributed to Hendrick Bloemaert [to Dr. Alfred Bader, Milwaukee and Gui Rochat, New York; Robert Simon Fine Art, New York, 2006]).
- From whom acquired by the present owner.

Exhibition History

- New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, on loan with the permanent collection, November 1883–October 1887 [lent by N. B. Collins, New York, as by Peter Paul Rubens].
- Des Moines, Des Moines Women's Club, Hoyt Sherman Place, on long-term loan, 1933–38 [lent by Mrs. Robert Coskery, née Elizabeth N. Collins, Des Moines, as by Jacob Jordaens].

References

- *Metropolitan Museum of Art Hand-Book No. 1: Pictures by Old Masters in the East Gallery*. New York, 1883–84, 13, no. 46; 1884, 14, no. 51; 1884–85, 10, no. 49; 1885, 10, no. 48; 1885–86, 10, no. 51; 1886, 10, no. 48; 1886–1887, 10, no. 48; 1887, 10, no. 49, as by Peter Paul Rubens.
- *Des Moines Women's Club: Catalogue of Paintings and Byers Collection*. Des Moines, n.d. [after 1933], addendum, 8–9, no. 86, as by Jacob Jordaens.
- *Des Moines Women's Club: Art Treasures; Possessions Catalogue*. Des Moines, 1941, 14, no. 43; 1952, 10, no. 36, as by Jacob Jordaens.
- Roethlisberger, Marcel. *Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints*. Doornspijk, 1993, 319, under no. 495.
- Bader, Alfred. *Chemistry and Art: Further Adventures of a Chemist Collector*. London, 2008, 84–87, pl. 35.

Technical Summary

The support, a single piece of fine-weight, plain-weave fabric with tacking margins removed, has been lined. Cusping along all four edges indicates the original dimensions have not been significantly altered. There are no wax collection seals, stencils, paper labels, or import stamps along the lining canvas or stretcher reverse.

A gray-brown ground has been thinly and evenly applied. The image has been constructed in both glazes blended wet-into-wet and in smooth opaque layers with no use of impasto, even on highlights along the pearls and gold chain.

No underdrawing is readily apparent in infrared images captured at 780–1000 nanometers. The images and pentimenti reveal compositional changes to the body and spout of the gold vessel along the lower right corner and gray vertically oriented lines which delineate the central axis of each of the three gold vessels.^[1]

The painting is signed and dated in dark paint along the lower right quadrant. A spurious “Rubens” signature was removed during a past conservation treatment to reveal Bloemaert’s signature and date.^[2]



The painting was cleaned, lined, and restored prior to its acquisition in 2006. The painting is in fair condition and in a fair state of preservation, with areas of unrestored abrasion and out-of-tone restorations along the background, tablecloth, and upper left and right quadrants.^[3]

-Annette Rupprecht