

On first seeing Rembrandt's self-portrait as St. Paul

by [Charlotte F. Otten](#) in the [June 11, 2014](#) issue

Was it Rembrandt  
or was it Saint Paul  
who raised his brows  
in doubt  
about that time  
when ecstasy  
embraced him  
in a Third Heaven?

Can anybody made of clay  
penetrate the barriers  
that keep human eyes  
from seeing into habitations  
fit only for wanderers  
who've been there before?

Words like "epiphany"  
escape Rembrandt's brush,  
he contemplates in oil,  
mixes paints in angst,  
Paul's tears glaze his eyes,  
the weight of glory  
sags  
on the tilt of Paul's shoulder.