



The Origin
of
the World

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ISBN: 978-1-78310-170-2

The famous psychologist, professor Lacan, was the last owner of Courbet's *The Origin of the World*. He loved the painting so much that he couldn't even bring himself to look at it. Instead, he hid it behind a "safer" painting.

The Chinese called it the "valley of the roses" (watch out for the thorns!), the Persians, the "honey-pot" (watch out for the bees!), and the Greeks, "the mound of Venus" (mind the steep climb!); to each era its fantasies and its theories about the feminine mystique. Then there are the testimonies of poets, painters, and even of some famous psychiatrists. *The Origin of the World* is a work of art only suitable for lovers of intrigue.



Gustave Moreau

Cleopatra, 1887
Watercolour and gouache highlights,
39.5 x 25 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris

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Gustav Klimt

Renoir

EGON
SCHIELE

G. Courbet

Manet Rodin

Michel Delacroix

Rueby Rembrandt
Degas

Paul Gauguin



Song of Songs

³ All night long on my bed
I looked for the one my heart
loves;

I looked for him but did not find
him.

² I will get up now and go about
the city,

through its streets and squares;
I will search for the one my heart
loves.

So I looked for him but did not
find him.



Sleeping Venus

Giorgione, c. 1508-1510
Oil on canvas, 108.5 x 175 cm
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen
Dresden, Dresden





³ The watchmen found me
as they made their rounds in the
city.

“have you seen the one my heart
loves?”

⁴ Scarcely had I passed them
when I found the one my heart
loves.

I held him and would not let him
go

till I had brought him to my
mother’s house,
to the room of the one who
conceived me.

⁵ Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge
you

by the gazelles and by the does
of the field:



Venus Rising from the Sea (“Venus Anadyomene”)

Titian, c. 1520

Oil on canvas, 75.8 x 57.6 cm

National Gallery of Scotland,
Edinburgh





Do not arouse or awaken love
until it so desires.

⁶ Who is this coming up from the
wilderness

like a column of smoke,
perfumed with myrrh and incense
made from all the spices of the
merchant?

⁷ Look! It is Solomon's carriage,
escorted by sixty warriors,
the noblest of Israel,

⁸ all of them wearing the sword,
all experienced in battle,



The Nymph at the Fountain

Lucas Cranach the Elder, c. 1530-
1534

Oil on wood, 75 x 120 cm
Thyssen Bornemisza Museum,
Madrid





each with his sword at his side,
prepared for the terrors of the
night.

⁹ King Solomon made for himself
the carriage;

he made it of wood from
Lebanon.

¹⁰ Its posts he made of silver,
its base of gold.

Its seat was upholstered with
purple,

its interior inlaid with love.

Daughters of Jerusalem, ¹¹ come
out,

and look, you daughters of Zion.



Venus of Urbino

Titian, 1538

Oil on canvas, 119 x 165 cm

Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence





Look on King Solomon wearing a crown,
the crown with which his mother
crowned him
on the day of his wedding,
the day his heart rejoiced.

He

⁴ How beautiful you are, my
darling!



Oh, how beautiful!
Your eyes behind your veil are
doves.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
descending from the hills of
Gilead.



The Three Graces

Peter Paul Rubens, 1630-1635
Oil on wood, 220.5 x 182 cm
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid





² Your teeth are like a flock of
sheep just shorn,
coming up from the washing.
Each has its twin;
not one of them is alone.

³ Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon;
your mouth is lovely.
Your temples behind your veil
are like the halves of a
pomegranate.



⁴ Your neck is like the tower of
David,
built with courses of stone;



Danaë

Rembrandt, 1636

Oil on canvas, 185 x 202.5 cm
The State Hermitage Museum, St
Petersburg





on it hang a thousand shields,
all of them shields of warriors.

⁵ Your breasts are like two fawns,
like twin fawns of a gazelle
that browse among the lilies.

⁶ Until the day breaks
and the shadows flee,
I will go to the mountain of myrrh
and to the hill of incense.

⁷ You are altogether beautiful, my
darling;
there is no flaw in you.



Bathsheba with King David's Letter or Bathsheba Bathing

Rembrandt, 1654

Oil on canvas, 142 x 142 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris





⁸ Come with me from Lebanon, my
bride,
come with me from Lebanon.
Descend from the crest of Amana,
from the top of Senir, the summit
of Hermon,
from the lions' dens
and the mountain haunts of
leopards.



⁹ You have stolen my heart, my
sister, my bride;
you have stolen my heart
with one glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.



Young Woman Sleeping

Anonymous, 18th century
French miniature painted on ivory





¹⁰ How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride!

How much more pleasing is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your perfume more than any spice!

¹¹ Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride;
milk and honey are under your tongue.

The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.



Nude Maja

Francisco de Goya, 1797-1800
Oil on canvas, 98 x 191 cm
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

