



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS



REMBRANDT'S "POLISH RIDER" IN ITS EAST EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Author(s): THOMAS M. PRYMAK

Source: *The Polish Review*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (2011), pp. 159-186

Published by: [University of Illinois Press](#) on behalf of the [Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences of America](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41550431>

Accessed: 07/02/2015 09:53

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of Illinois Press and Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences of America are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Polish Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

THOMAS M. PRYMAK

REMBRANDT'S "POLISH RIDER" IN ITS EAST EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669) is well known as the foremost artist of the Golden Age of Dutch painting and one of the most talented of all European artists. A "realist" who eschewed classical perfection and decorum to depict life as it really was, complete with its flaws and its mundane side, he was a master of the psychological portrait with a clear capacity to infuse life, vitality, and movement into his canvases, to express personality, to raise contradictory emotions, and even to shock. Yet there is always something solemn and mysterious about his pictures, especially his portraits, and the people portrayed are usually thoughtful, and never without a certain depth. This immediacy, personalism, and depth is evident in almost all of his acknowledged paintings, which number from three hundred to six hundred (critics have exposed many imitators and reduced the number over the years), and many hundreds of drawings, sketches, and prints which are prized by collectors and museums all over the world.¹

¹ See especially, Kenneth Clark, *An Introduction to Rembrandt* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978). For a particularly well-put brief characterization of Rembrandt, which devotes some attention to the "Polish Rider" see Robert Hughes, "The God of Realism," *New York Review of Books*, April 6, 2006, pp. 6, 8, 10; also available under the title "Connoisseur of the Ordinary," *The Guardian*, February 11, 2006, and available on-line: www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2006/feb/11/art/print. For authoritative syntheses which are informed by recent scholarly debates, see Simon Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), and Gary Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book* (New York: Abrams, 2006). Both volumes are well illustrated, though the latter is missing a reproduction of the "Polish Rider." Somewhat older, but with a respectable commentary on the Rider is Michael Kitson, *Rembrandt*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Phaidon, 1982), especially section 34. For a recent synthesis in Polish, see M. Monkiewicz, "Rembrandt," in *Sztuka świata* [Art of the World], vol. VII (Warsaw, 1994), 137-59. At this point, I feel it appropriate to acknowledge the influence of my maternal grandfather, Jan Międzybrocki, a Polish *szlachcic* and native of eastern Galicia under the Habsburgs, who inspired in his Canadian children and grandchildren a certain affection for their Polish heritage, which, in part, eventually led me to this study of the "Polish Rider."

In eastern Europe too Rembrandt has always been highly valued and for a long time the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg enjoyed one of the largest collections of Rembrandt paintings in the world. In the course of the twentieth century, however, parts of this collection were sold off or dispersed in other ways, while the Dutch, anxious to preserve their artistic heritage, conscientiously reassembled as much of it as they could. Today the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam holds the largest number of Rembrandt paintings and the Rembrandt House Museum the largest number of Rembrandt prints.²

In Poland, patrons have been collecting Rembrandts for many years. In addition to numerous prints and drawings, at present there are at least three prized Rembrandt paintings in Polish museums: "Landscape with the Good Samaritan" (Czartoryski Museum in Kraków), and "Scholar at a Lectern" and "Girl in a Hat" (both in the Royal Castle Museum, Warsaw). The last two were originally held in the Royal Collection of the last king of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski (1732-1798), who was an avid collector and patron of the arts, somewhat like his former patroness and ultimate nemesis, Catherine II of Russia. More importantly though, Poland entered Rembrandt's oeuvre during his lifetime as well. This is amply manifested by two famous Rembrandt paintings: "The Polish Nobleman" (1637, National Gallery in Washington, DC), which is believed by some to be a portrait of the Protestant diplomat Andrzej Rej, and the "Polish Rider" in the Frick Gallery in New York City, which for a long time was believed to be a portrait of some unknown person. It is the much discussed second of these, exceptional in every way, yet immediately recognizable as work of the master, which is the subject of the present essay.³

² For some rather full collections of Rembrandt's paintings which list the "Polish Rider," see, for example, Abraham Bredius, *The Paintings of Rembrandt*, 2 vols. (Vienna and New York: Phaidon Press, 1937), esp. vol. I, no. 279, and Kurt Bauch, *Rembrandt: Gemälde* [Paintings] (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1966), esp. no. 211. The latter labels the picture: "Gijsbrecht van Amstel," which is an allegorical interpretation discussed below.

³ For some general observations, see H. Gerson, "Rembrandt in Poland," *The Burlington Magazine*, XCVIII, 641 (August, 1956), 280-3, and Michał Walicki, "Rembrandt w Polsce" [Rembrandt in Poland] *Biuletyn historii sztuki* [Art History Bulletin], no. 3 (1956), 319-48, with a resumé in French, 347-8. (This important article is reprinted in Walicki's *Obrazy bliskie i dalekie* [Paintings Near and Far] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1963), pp. 171-97, but all references in the present essay are to the journal edition.) On the "Polish Nobleman," see Otakar Odložilik, "Rembrandt's Polish Nobleman," *Polish Review*, VIII:4 (1963) 3-33. At the time that Gerson and Walicki were writing, there were four generally acknowledged Rembrandts in Poland: "Landscape with the Good Samaritan" (1638), "Portrait of Martin Day" (1634), "Self-portrait" (about 1628), and "Portrait of Saskia" (1633). Some half century later, only the first of these remained unquestionably recognized as a genuine

The "Polish Rider" is a moderate-sized painting, about half life-sized (46 x 53½ in. [116.8 x 134.9cm]), an oil on canvas, depicting a young man, perhaps eighteen to twenty-five years old, mounted on a slender white horse which is trotting across a dark and barely discernable landscape dominated by browns and deep orange. It appears to be twilight, either early dawn or late dusk. The Rider's face is serious but calm and self-assured, bright and handsome, with regular square features. He is gazing off into the distance as if to discern his future destiny. His hair is fairly long and partly covered by a fur cap with flaps on either side that look like they can fold down to protect him from the cold when necessary. The Rider is armed for war with a saber on one side and what looks to be another saber or perhaps a short sword on the other. He carries a mace or war-hammer in his right hand and holds the horse's reins with the other. A full quiver of arrows hangs at his waist and the end of his bow protrudes behind him. Both Rider and his mount are dressed in what is surely "oriental" costume, the Rider wearing a long coat extending to his ankles and tied at his waist; he wears tight red breeches. The horse bears an ornamental horsetail banner which hangs from his bridle and is blown backward by his movement. Beneath the high saddle to just above the short stirrup is spread what looks to be a leopard-skin saddle-cloth.

The horse and Rider clearly stand out from the dark background across which they are quickly moving. Rising in the distance behind them is a domed building which might be a fortress, church, or some other antique building of some kind, and barely discernable to the right is a stream and small campfire. The whole picture unites exotic arms, costume, and scenery with the attractive confidence and innocence of a youth with whom we immediately identify. But who is this young man? What is he thinking? And to what battle does he ride with such confidence? This mysterious picture has haunted viewers, art critics, and historians for the full century that has passed since it left eastern Europe and crossed the Atlantic to hang in the private gallery of Henry Clay Frick in New York City.⁴

Rembrandt. Meanwhile, in the 1990s, Karolina Lanckorońska of Vienna donated "Girl in a Hat" (1641), formerly called "The Jewish Bride," and "Scholar at a Lectern" (1641), formerly called "Father of the Jewish Bride," to the Royal Castle Museum in Warsaw. In 2006, Ernst van de Wetering, a representative of the notably rigorous Amsterdam-based Rembrandt Research Project expressed the opinion that both paintings were true Rembrandts. See Dorota Jurecka, "Mamy prawdziwe Rembrandty" [We have genuine Rembrandts] *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Warsaw), February 14, 2006. For a more detailed history of the attribution of these paintings, see the website of the Royal Castle in Warsaw, page devoted to "Autorstwo obrazów:" www.zamek-krolewski.com.pl/?page=1434.

⁴ "The Polish Rider," *The Frick Collection: An Illustrated Catalogue*, vol. I: "Paintings," (New York: Frick, 1968), pp. 258-65, with a brief bibliography.

When in the 1890s it first came to the attention of the western art community, the painting was hanging in the private collection of Count Zdzisław Tarnowski (1862-1937), and this particular work was housed in the ladies' drawing room in his family home, Dzików Castle, in the Austrian Crown Land of Galicia in the Habsburg Monarchy. Dzików Castle, a venerable old building then recently renovated in the neo-gothic style, was located in the western part of Galicia in what is today part of Tarnobrzeg District in Poland. (The eastern part of old Galicia is today in Ukraine.) The Tarnowski family was at that time still a great landowning family with estates in both Poland and Ukraine and entire towns and cities like Tarnobrzeg and Tarnów in today's Poland and Ternopil in today's Ukraine associated with its name. The picture itself seems to have been held in great esteem by the Poles and was noted in print as early as 1842 (by the poet Kajetan Koźmian); the following year, it was described in some detail by the historian Maurycy Dzieduszycki, who printed a somewhat fanciful engraving of it in an important Galician scholarly journal and noted that in 1833 it had been sent to Vienna for "restoration" [*do odchędżenia*] where, in Dzieduszycki's own words, the canvas "delighted the experts who without any doubts recognized in it Rembrandt's brushwork."⁵ The painting was studied in greater detail by various Polish scholars near the turn of the century, but for some reason, probably because he did not believe it to be a family portrait, and perhaps also for taxation purposes, Count Tarnowski wished to sell his painting and had it again sent to Vienna for restoration. In this way, it came to the attention of the prestigious art historian and Berlin curator, Wilhelm Bode, a Rembrandt expert, who on the basis of the use of color in the canvas dated it to "probably" 1654, that is to Rembrandt's late period. "The picture depicted," he wrote, "is a young Polish magnate who casually trots past the viewer in his national costume on an Arabian white horse." In a footnote, Bode added that "it is worth mentioning that even when Polish and other great men from half-civilized eastern Europe visited Holland, they showed a partiality for having themselves painted by Rembrandt." This clearly chauvinistic comment by one of Europe's foremost art historians may be explained in part, perhaps, by the fact that it

There is a serviceable color reproduction of the "Polish Rider," under an article of the same name in the English language Wikipedia. Unfortunately, this article is not linked to its Polish language counterpart, which displays the same photograph and contains some additional information and many links to related Polish subjects. The latter is titled: "Jeździec Polski" [The Polish Rider] Accessed August 5, 2010.

⁵ M[aurycy] D[zieduszycki], "Wizerunek Lisowczyka, obraz olejny Rembrandta" [Portrait of a Lisowczyk, an oil painting by Rembrandt] *Biblioteka Naukowego Zakładu imienia Ossolińskich* [Ossolineum] vol. VII-IX (1843), 157-9.

was made in the wake of the so-called *Kulturkampf* when German-Polish relations were quite tense.⁶

The first western Rembrandt scholar to actually study the original in any detail was, in fact, the Dutch scholar, Abraham Bredius, who seems to have been encouraged by Bode and was invited to Dzików by the Polish art historian, Jerzy Mycielski, a cousin of the Tarnowskis. In 1897, the two scholars visited Dzików and Bredius shortly later described his experiences in detail in the Dutch magazine *De nederlandse Spectator* (1897, no. 25, 197-99). Bredius was very impressed and any doubts that he had had about the work instantly vanished. "Just one look at it," he wrote, "a few seconds' study of the technique, were enough to convince me instantly that here, in this remote fastness, one of Rembrandt's greatest masterpieces had been hanging for nigh on a century." Mycielski and Bredius arranged to have the painting exhibited in Amsterdam the following year and notices, reproductions, and reviews of the exhibition were widely printed. The picture instantly became a true sensation for the art world. At that time, it was clearly noted that the remnants of Rembrandt's signature "Rem...." still appeared at the bottom of the painting. Bredius himself, despite Bode's research, always considered the "Polish Rider" as it now came to be called in western Europe, as his greatest discovery.⁷

At that time, there was only one dissenting voice that questioned the painting. That voice belonged to Alfred von Wurzbach who in the first volume of his encyclopedia of Dutch painting published in 1906 denied Rembrandt's authorship of the work and assigned it rather to Aart de Gelder (1645-1727), one of Rembrandt's last students who copied his later style but, as von Wurzbach put it, could not compete with his use of color. Von Wurzbach called the picture "A Tatar Rider," and he noted that Aart de Gelder was enamored of oriental costume. However, he gave no explanation whatsoever as to why it should be considered the work of de Gelder and not Rembrandt, and his opinion was generally disregarded.⁸

⁶ Wilhelm Bode, *Studien zur Geschichte der holländischen Malerei* [Studies in the history of Dutch painting] (Brunswick: Friedrich Viewege, 1883), pp. 499-500.

⁷ See Anthony Bailey, *Responses to Rembrandt* (New York: Tinken, 1994), who quotes Bredius on p. 118, n. 5. For more detail on Bredius' research trip to Galicia, Poland, and Russia, on which he claimed to have discovered a number of "new" Rembrandts, see Catherine B. Scallen, *Rembrandt: Reputation and the Practice of Connoisseurship* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2004), pp. 132-3.

⁸ Alfred von Wurzbach, *Niederländisches Künstler-Lexikon auf Grund archivalischer Forschungen bearbeitet* [Lexicon of Dutch artists, on the basis of archival research], 3 vols. (Vienna-Leipzig, 1906-1911: repr. 1963), I, 573: "Dzikow. Graf Tarnowski. Ein tatarischer Reiter..." [Dzikow. Count Tarnowski. A tatar horseman].

Meanwhile, Count Tarnowski had still not given up his idea of selling the painting. Knowing that the sale abroad of such a great national treasure would cause a negative reaction in Poland, the count tried to keep the matter secret. In 1910, he decided to sell it through the Carfax Gallery in London and Knoedler and Co. in New York. The prospective buyer was Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919), a steel, coke, and railway magnate, then known as one of the most hated men in America for his merciless business practices and ruthless breaking of labor strikes. During the infamous Homestead Strike of 1892, which was pretty much provoked by Frick, ten men were killed and some sixty wounded. Most of these workers were poor immigrants, crudely called “foreigners” at the time, many of them being Poles, Slovaks, and other Slavs from eastern Europe. Frick lived in Pittsburgh and New York where in a specially designed building he placed his exquisite collection of old European masters. The purchase of the “Polish Rider” was carried out through the mediation of Roger Fry, an English writer, painter, and art critic who, at the insistence of Tarnowski, went to Dzików to finalize arrangements. Fry was not impressed by Dzików Castle or its furnishings, which he considered “second rate” but was simply stunned by the painting that he had come to purchase. He later told a colleague that suddenly a cord was pulled, a curtain was rolled back, and there before his eyes “was revealed one of the world’s masterpieces of painting.” The agreed price for the work was £60,000 or \$293,162.50, an enormous amount for that time. Meanwhile, news of the sale was leaked to the press and became common knowledge in Poland where the public was greatly aroused. Articles appeared in the press, and the Polish art historian, Zygmunt Batowski, claiming great art as the property of the entire nation rather than just the individual collector and lamenting the decline of appreciation for such art in his country, noted his objections to the sale in the Polish journal *Lamus*. The painting was exhibited in London on its way to New York and a copy was made for the count. But in 1927 a fire broke out in Dzików Castle and part of the family art collection, including the Rembrandt copy, was destroyed. Had the “Polish Rider” remained in Galicia after 1910, it is possible that it too would not have survived.⁹

⁹ “The Polish Rider,” *The Frick Collection*, pp. 258-65; Julius A. Chrościcki, “Rembrandt’s ‘Polish Rider’: Allegory or Portrait?” in *Ars Auro Prior: Studia Ioanni Białostocki Sexagenario dictata* [Art preferable to gold: Studies for the sixtieth birthday of Jan Białostocki] ed. Alicja Dyczek-Gwizdź and others (Warsaw: PWN, 1981), pp. 441-8, *passim*, and Zygmunt Batowski, “Z powodu sprzedaży Lisowczyka,” [Concerning the sale of the Lisowczyk] *Lamus*, III, 6 (1910), 189-96. Also see Bailey, *Responses to Rembrandt*, pp. 4-5, who emphasizes Fry’s experience. On Frick as an industrialist and “robber baron” as well as a collector of art, see, for example, Samuel A. Schreiner, *Henry Clay Frick: The Gospel of Greed* (New York: St Martin’s press, 1995). For a more positive assessment, see Martha Frick Symington Sanger, *Henry Clay Frick: An*

The assembling of the Frick Collection and the arrival of the "Polish Rider" in New York roused a new wave of publicity about the canvas. Articles appeared in the press and poems were written to commemorate it. In 1917, shortly before Frick's death, an article was published in a leading art magazine describing the Frick Collection and discussing the exotic and somewhat mysterious "Polish Rider." The author wrote:

Who the young man is, no one knows, but his red cap with a thick border of fur, his long tunic of a pale yellow note secured by blue buttons, his close-fitting red breeches and yellow boots proclaim him a Pole or a Russian, a man of the Slavs to the eastward who furnished light cavalry to western armies, the forerunners of the Hussars... [The art historian] Bode thinks that he can specify the regiment to which he belonged — Prince Lisowski's: at any rate that is the name this picture bore when in Count Tarnowski's collection...

The author concluded:

Rembrandt rarely painted horses and among the immense number of his etchings there is scarcely one. Yet what a horse this is! ... It is not the somewhat barbaric harness and garb of the horse rider, nor the stern landscape well in keeping with the light, that compels the attention and urges conjecture... it is the human being, the expression of the face which is pondering, if not exactly dreamy — but the look is decipherable.¹⁰

Similar sentiments were expressed in poetry. As early as 1910, the *Lotus Magazine* reprinted F. Warre Cornish's poem on "the Polish Rider" that had first appeared in the British journal *The Spectator*. With a direct reference to the siege of Vienna by the Turks and its relief by Sobieski in 1683, and an

Intimate Portrait (New York: Abbeville, 1998), with some speculations concerning Frick's feelings about the Rider on pp. 72-4, and 452-4. The importance of eastern European immigrants, especially Slavs, in the Homestead Strike of 1892 is stressed in Paul Krause, *The Battle for Homestead 1880-1892: Politics Culture and Steel* (Pittsburgh and London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), pp. 221-6, 315-28, who believes the efforts of these Slavic workers on behalf of organized labor have been seriously underrated. On the Tarnowski family and its varied fortunes during the twentieth century, see Andrew Tarnowski, *The Last Mazurka: A Tale of War, Passion and Loss* (London: Aurum, 2006), who mentions the "Polish Rider" on p. 4.

¹⁰ "The Henry Clay Frick Collection," *The Art World*, vol. I, no. 6 (March, 1917), 374-8.

indirect allusion to the later partition of the country by its voracious neighbors, he asked:

Does he ride to a bridal, a triumph, a dance, or a fray,
 That he goes so alert, yet so careless, so stern and so gay?
 Loose in the saddle, short stirrup, one hand on the mane
 Of the light-stepping pony he guides with so easy a rein.
 What a grace in his armor barbaric! Sword, battle-axe, bow,
 Full sheaf of arrows, the leopard-skin flaunting below.
 Heart-conqueror, surely — his own is not given a while,
 Till she comes who shall win for herself that inscrutable smile.
 What luck had his riding, I wonder, romantic and bold?
 For he rides into darkness; the story shall never be told:
 Did he charge at Vienna, and fall in a splendid campaign?
 Did he fly from the Cossack, and perish, ingloriously slain?
 Ah, chivalrous Poland, forgotten, dishonored, a slave
 To thyself and the stranger, fair, hapless, beloved of the brave!¹¹

After the death of Frick in 1919, in accordance with his will, his New York home became a museum which finally opened its doors to the public in the 1930s, and the “Polish Rider” was free for all to see in the original. About a decade later, that is, in 1944, a Jewish refugee from Nazi occupied Europe, Julius S. Held, who could read a little Polish, had done research in Poland, and in 1933 had even visited Dzików Castle, penned the first extensive study of the picture in the English language. Others followed.

On the basis of the research of these scholars and their Polish predecessors, the provenance of the “Polish Rider” was traced back to the end of the eighteenth century, a tumultuous time when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, sometimes called “the Commonwealth of the Two Nations,” which had been one of the great states of eastern Europe, was on its last legs. Amidst the chaos that accompanied the decline and fall of this multi-national Commonwealth, the last king, Stanisław August Poniatowski, continued his great role as patron of learning and the arts. His collection of old European masters was renowned, and he wished to expand it further. In August, 1791, he received the following letter from Michał Kazimierz Ogiński (1728?-1800), Grand Hetman of Lithuania, and a composer, writer, and poet of note:

¹¹ “Mr Frick’s Rembrandt,” *The Lotus Magazine*, vol. I, no. 3 (1910), 7-8. Another poem in honor of the “Polish Rider” was published in *Art in America* (October, 1920). The first stanza is quoted in full in Bailey, *Responses to Rembrandt*, p. 119, n.7.

Sire,

I am sending Your majesty a Cossack whom Reinbrand had set on his horse. [*Odsyłam Waszey Królewskiej Mości kozaka którego Reinbrand osadził na koniu...*] This horse has eaten during his stay with me 420 German gulden. Your majesty's justice and generosity allows me to expect that orange trees will flower in the same proportion.

Bowing to your feet, Your Majesty's,

My Lord Master's

most humble servant.

Michał Ogiński,

G[rand] H[etman] of L[ithuania].¹²

The scholar who discovered this letter, Andrzej Ciechanowski, believed that since Ogiński had spent much of the year preceding this letter in western Europe, including Holland, the Grand Hetman had purchased the painting, which he called "Cossack on Horseback," for the king's collection in return for which he wanted to obtain some orange trees for the palace that he was then building at Helenów near Warsaw. (The king possessed an orangery in the gardens of his Lazienki Palace in Warsaw). Ciechanowski thinks that, apart from the suggested barter agreement, the letter is "whimsical" and the reference to the "Cossack on Horseback" fanciful. At any rate, the painting entered the king's collection where it was labeled in French *Cosaque à cheval*.¹³ Nevertheless, it soon seemed to receive a new name, one somewhat more pleasing to Polish ears, since at that time the most famous Cossacks in Europe were the Ukrainian Cossacks of the mid- and late-seventeenth century, formerly subjects of Lithuania, then Poland, who through their great insurrection of the 1640s and 1650s were in part responsible for the decline and fall of the Commonwealth as a major European power. There is some evidence that as early as 1797, the king referred to the painting as being a portrait of a "Lisowczyk," that is, a soldier of the Lisowski company, a freebooting regiment of light cavalry often referred to as "Cossacks" in Polish service, which was formed during the Muscovite wars but also saw some action on the Catholic side during the Thirty Years War. Poles, Ukrainians, and even some Tatars formed the ranks of this company; it was disbanded in the 1630s.¹⁴

¹² In Andrew Ciechanowski, "Notes on the Ownership of Rembrandt's 'Polish Rider'," *The Art Bulletin*, XLII, 4 (1960), 294-6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, citing Inventory of 1795. Also see Walicki, "Rembrandt w Polsce," p. 329.

¹⁴ See Chrościcki, p. 443, and p. 448, n. 9, citing T. Mańkowski, "Obrazy Rembrandta w Galerii Stanisława Augusta" [Paintings of Rembrandt in the Gallery of Stanisław August] *Prace Komisji Historii Sztuki PAU* [Proceedings of the PAU Art History Section] V (1930), pp. 17-19, who refers to the king's

By the end of the 1790s, the Third Partition of Poland had occurred, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth disappeared from the map, and the king was dead. The Royal Art Collection, however, remained until the king's niece and heiress, Countess Thérèse Tyszkiewicz, ordered its sale and dispersal some ten years later. In 1810, while viewing the former Royal Collection, Countess Valérie Tarnowska, née Stroynowska, expressed a wish to buy this so-called "Lisowczyk" since she saw in this "shining youth" not any lowly Cossack, but rather a noble *condottiere* from the Lisowski Regiment, perhaps even her distant relative, Colonel Stanisław Stroynowski who commanded the regiment during the Thirty Years War. Therefore, argued Ciechanowski, it was probably she who talked her uncle, the Bishop of Vilnius, Hieronim Stroynowski, into buying the supposed portrait of their ancestor for the rather high price of five hundred ducats. Stroynowski purchased the painting not directly from the Royal Collection, but rather from Prince Franciszek Ksawery Lubecki (1779-1846), who had saved it from falling into the hands of the Russian plenipotentiary, Nikolai Novosiltsev (1761-1836), a determined foe of independent Poland, who wished to acquire as many Polish cultural treasures as possible. After the premature death of the bishop, the painting, the now so-called "Lisowczyk," was inherited by Valérie's father, Senator Valerien Stroynowski, and went from Vilnius to his castle at Horokhiv (Horochów in Polish) in the Province of Volhynia in Right-Bank Ukraine (then under Russian rule). Upon the senator's death in 1834, it went across the border to Dzików in Austrian Galicia, the residence of Valérie Stroynowska and her husband, Count Jan Amor Tarnowski, and there it remained until 1910.¹⁵

Although the "Lisowczyk" was largely unknown to the western world and to western Rembrandt scholars before 1910, it was much better known inside partitioned Poland itself and gave rise to a certain amount of animated discussion. On the scholarly level, Dzieduszycki noted that the Lisowczyks had been across the Rhine twice, once in the early 1620s when Rembrandt was still too young to have painted them, and again in 1636 when they even reached the Netherlands and one of them may have been sent to Amsterdam as an envoy where he attracted the painter's attention. Dzieduszycki speculated that Rembrandt painted his "Lisowczyk" about this time, although he thought it unlikely that the painting was a portrait of

letter. Chrościcki, however, was unable to find this letter in his examination of the surviving correspondence. On the Lisowczyks, who were basically brigands in Royal and then Imperial service, See Henryk Wisner, *Lisowczycy* [The Lisowczyks] (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1976), who even put a full color reproduction of Rembrandt's picture on the cover of his book. The first historian of the Lisowczyks was actually Maurycy Dzieduszycki, who published a two volume study of the subject in 1843, that is, the same year that he wrote his pioneering article on Rembrandt's picture.

¹⁵ Ciechanowski, p. 296; Chrościcki, p. 441.

Stroynowski himself.¹⁶ Dzieduszycki's speculations influenced opinion in Poland for at least the next forty years, that is, until Bode, given his international prestige, expressed the revised opinion that the painting belonged to Rembrandt's "late" and not "middle" period.

On the artistic level, two of the most successful nineteenth century Polish painters of horses and battle scenes, Juliusz Kossak (1824-1899) and Józef Brandt (1841-1915) seem to have come under the powerful spell of Rembrandt's famous canvas. Brandt, who was especially attracted to painting Cossacks and the Polish-Cossack and Polish-Tatar wars of the seventeenth century, that is, the time when Rembrandt was flourishing, painted at least three significant pictures dealing with the Lisowski Regiment: "The March of the Lisowczyks" (1863), "Stroynowski presenting Archduke Leopold Horses seized by the Lisowczyks in the Rhine Palatinate" (1869), and "Lisowczyk (Bunczuczny)" (1885), while Kossak, whose name actually means "Cossack" painted his own striking though inferior "Lisowczyk" (1860-65), in direct imitation of Rembrandt's more famous canvas. Other Polish artists inspired by the "Lisowczyk" include Michał Płoński, A. Orłowski, and L. Kapliński. Moreover, around mid-century a lithograph of Rembrandt's painting by Karol Auer was printed by the Piller lithograph firm in the Galician capital, Lemberg (Lwów in Polish). At the close of the century, the subject also received some attention, including an engraved interpretation of the painting, in Zygmunt Gloger's influential *Encyklopedia Staropolska Ilustrowana* [Illustrated Encyclopedia of Old Poland]. "The portrait of the young 'Polish Rider,'" concludes the art historian, Michał Walicki, "was the best-known Rembrandt picture in Poland."¹⁷

¹⁶ Dzieduszycki, "Wizerunek Lisowczyka," p. 158.

¹⁷ For a brief survey of the various Polish artists influenced by Rembrandt's painting, see Walicki, "Rembrandt w Polsce," p. 330. (Auer's lithograph may be the same image as that printed by Dzieduszycki in 1843, though I have not been able to confirm this by examination of the Piller version.) Also see Zygmunt Gloger, "Lisowczyki," *Encyklopedia Staropolska Ilustrowana* [Illustrated encyclopedia of old Poland] 4 vols. (Warsaw, 1972), III, 145-6. (This work was first published from 1900 to 1903.) On Brandt in particular, see for example, Anna Bernat, *Józef Brandt (1841-1915)* (Warsaw: Edipresse, 2007), which gives further references; on Kossak, see Kazimierz Olszański, *Juliusz Kossak* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1988), esp. nos. 126, 127, 130, which in terms of biography and images is the most detailed account, and Maciej Masłowski, *Juliusz Kossak* (Warsaw: WAiF, 1986), esp. no. 71, which contains the best reproduction of Kossak's "Lisowczyk on a White Horse." Unlike Rembrandt's Rider, however, Kossak's has a slight mustache but no fire or high "fortress" in the background. Also, his hat is more natural than that of Rembrandt's Rider, lacking the puzzling black arc of the latter, which appears to have been added by a later hand, perhaps a "restorer," though the Frick Gallery ("The Polish Rider," *The Frick Collection*, p. 264, n. 4) maintains that technical examination shows

The transfer of the painting across the Atlantic, as mentioned above, was the occasion of a certain amount of grumbling in Poland and celebration in the United States, where it was almost universally deemed, not an unrecognizable "Lisowczyk," but rather a somewhat more congenial "Polish Rider," romantically linked in many people's minds, as Cornish's poem clearly shows, to the Polish struggle for political independence. A generation later, however, this linkage, though still maintained by some, was put into question by Julius Held in his pioneering article in the most prestigious American art journal, *The Art Bulletin*.¹⁸

In his article on the Rider, which adhered quite closely to the professional standards of art history as developed in recent times in western Europe, Held accepted the authenticity of the painting as the work of Rembrandt but put the word "Polish" in the title in quotation marks thus giving the impression that the painting's Polish connection was questionable. He pointed out that the Lisowski Regiment was disbanded by the 1630s and thus Rembrandt could not have painted one of its members as a youthful rider in the mid-1650s when all previous Rembrandt experts beginning with Bode believed that he completed the masterpiece. Indeed, it was doubtful whether Rembrandt had any idea who the Lisowczyks even were. Held also agreed that the Rider could not have been a Ukrainian Cossack since they customarily wore bright-colored clothing and not the apparently drab outfit worn by the Rider. As a clincher to this argument, he maintained that the Cossacks commonly wore loose baggy pants (called

that "the peculiar shape results from the dark fur trimming of the two upturned flaps merging with some dark hair on the Rider's forehead." Somewhat strangely, the article on "Rembrandt" in the most extensive partition-era Polish encyclopedia does not even mention the "Lisowczyk." See "Rembrandt," *Encyklopedia Powszechna S. Orgelbranda* [S. Orgelbrand's universal encyclopedia] vol. XII (Warsaw, 1902), 563. This was also true of the most detailed Russian-language encyclopedia of that time which was widely read in Poland: A.A. Somov, "Rembrandt van Rein," *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar* [Encyclopedic dictionary] vol. XXVI (St Petersburg: Brokgauz i Efron, 1899), 552-4.

¹⁸ Unless otherwise noted, I have used the extensively revised edition of this article which contains an important "Postscript." See Julius S. Held, "The 'Polish' Rider," in his *Rembrandt Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 59-97, and 194-199. For reasons of comparison, I have also consulted the original: "Rembrandt's 'Polish' Rider," *The Art Bulletin*, XXVI, 4 (1944), 246-65. Held's ideas are not fully accepted by A. J. Barnouw, "Rembrandt's Tribute to Polish Valor," *The Polish Review* [nb. a publication not associated with the present quarterly, -ed.], V, 18 (1945): 8-9, 16, who saw the painter's attention to Poland as a visionary and prophetic "token of gratitude" for Polish help in the liberation of Holland from the Nazis in 1945. Barnouw's highly charged enthusiasm for the theme, however, has more to do with the exhilaration of the victory of 1945 than with real art history.

sharavary in the Ukrainian language) and not tight breeches like the Rider. Held as well maintained that previous Polish scholars, who suggested that the handsome sitter for this painting may have been Rembrandt's son, Titus, were wrong, since Titus was far too young to be mounted on a horse in the early or mid 1650s when the Rider was supposed to have been painted. Held examined the Rider's costume, weapons, and horse and concluded that these were not specifically Polish, but rather general accoutrements of east European soldiers, including Hungarian ones. Thus the Rider's cap, coat, and weapons, and the horse's decorative horsetail standard, which Held called by a Hungarian name *kutas*, and other equipment as well, were all generic items and not specifically Polish. Indeed, according to Held, even the Rider's personal grooming was un-Polish since his hair was long and his mustache shaved, unlike most martial Poles of the time who wore their hair short and were quite proud of their bushy mustaches. Held pointed to the medieval statue of a rider in Bamberg Cathedral in Germany, Rembrandt's own sketch of the skeleton of a Dutch horse, and most importantly, following the Polish scholar, Jan Bołoz-Antoniewicz, reminded his readers of the sketches of Polish cavalry visiting Rome by the Italian artist, Stefano della Bella, and he indicated that these were all possible models for the "Polish Rider" and his horse; he concluded that the picture was not necessarily a portrait but rather a generalized allegory of the *Miles Christianus*, the good Christian knight, riding off to defend Christendom from the Turks and Tatars who were then threatening it. Held never questioned Rembrandt's authorship of the work but only its traditional connection with Poland. Had the Rider been discovered in a Hungarian castle instead of a Polish one, he concluded, it would today universally be known as the "Hungarian Rider."¹⁹

Held's influential essay opened up a new trend in scholarship about the "Polish Rider." This trend denied that the picture was a portrait of a real person and claimed it was primarily or solely an allegorical representation of

¹⁹ Held (1991), pp. 59-97. On Stefano della Bella, to whose sketches of Polish cavalry Rembrandt's Rider bears a striking resemblance, see Phyllis D. Masser, "Presenting Stefano della Bella," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, new series, XXVII, 3 (1968), 159-76. Bołoz-Antoniewicz's comparison of the two dated from about 1905. See Held (1991 ed.), p. 81, n. 95. Held went on to say, p. 82, that the Rider's background, "this landscape, with its powerful fortress on top of a steep and massive mountain" is, however, "an element quite foreign to Stefano's etchings with their wide plains and low horizon." To an east European eye, however, this building with its broad, almost flat dome, reminds one rather of the Orthodox churches of the eastern Mediterranean. Take away the minarets added by the Turks, and the dome looks very much like that of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Walicki, "Rembrandt w Polsce," pp. 343-6, compares it to the ruins of the Temple of Minerva in Rome which appeared on a print of the later sixteenth century and on Rembrandt's own "David taking Leave of Jonathan" (1642) in the Hermitage.

some more ethereal or literary hero. For example, Jacob Rosenberg closely followed Held's interpretation, including his *Miles Christianus* theory, in his highly influential book titled *Rembrandt: Life and Work*, which was first published in 1948.²⁰ Meanwhile, this same year, the veteran Rembrandt scholar, W.R. Valentiner, identified the Rider as Gijsbrecht van Amstel, the traditional Dutch hero of a famous play by the same name by the prominent poet, Joost van den Vondel, which Rembrandt surely knew; J.Z. Kannegieter thought he was *Sigismundus van Poolen* from a play performed in 1647 and available in print in 1654, that is, very close to when Rembrandt is supposed to have painted his picture; Colin Cambell thought that Rembrandt had painted the Prodigal Son riding out into the world after having received his "portion" (Luke 15:11-13); Leonard Slatkes in a book on *Rembrandt and Persia* saw a biblical "young David" in the Rider; Reiner Hausherr thought of him as a kind of Jewish Messiah figure, painted especially for the Jews; a Canadian scholar, D.W. Deyell, in 1980 declared that the Rider was St Reinold of Pantaleon, one of the few popular seventeenth century literary figures who "as a soldier and a saint gives acceptable meaning to the Frick Collection Rider;" and finally in 1985, the distinguished Rembrandt expert, Gary Schwartz, declared the Rider to be none other than an equestrian soldier from the play *Tamerlane* by Joannes Serwouters first performed in Amsterdam in 1657. Of course, all of these allegorical interpretations are pure speculation and none of them contradict the fact that a real person in real costume probably served as a model for the painting. Moreover, some of them are far-fetched indeed since, for example, as Held pointed out in his "Postscript" of 1991, Gijsbrecht van Amstel was already an old man when he supposedly fled to Poland while Rembrandt's Rider is very young; the Prodigal Son is usually depicted with a purse to carry his inheritance, while the Rider has none; there is no iconic precedent for a "David" on horseback; and finally, Rembrandt's Rider looks rather nonchalant for a Tamerlane or one of his men in pursuit of the Ottoman Sultan Bayazet, as Schwartz claimed.²¹

²⁰ This interpretation remained unchanged in later editions of the work. See, for example, Jacob Rosenberg, *Rembrandt: Life and Work*, revised ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 251-4. Clark, *Introduction to Rembrandt*, pp. 57-9, also follows Held quite closely, though he sees an anti-classical "rebel" element in the Rider's almost emaciated horse and "an almost feminine beauty" in the Rider himself. He calls the canvas a "magical work typical of Rembrandt" and "one of the great poems of painting."

²¹ See Held, esp. the "Postscript," pp. 194-99, which outlines most of these theories and raises objections to them. For the most widely influential among them, see W.R. Valentiner, "Rembrandt's Conception of Historical Portraiture," *Art Quarterly*, XI (Detroit, 1948), 116-35; Colin Cambell, "Rembrandt's 'Polish Rider' and the Prodigal Son," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXXIII (1970), 293-303, and revised as "The Identity of Rembrandt's 'Polish

Only one Polish scholar came up with an allegorical theory like the ones listed above. That was Jan Białostocki who had discovered a pamphlet by a Polish Socinian group in Holland pleading for religious tolerance. The author signed himself only *Eques Polonus* [A Polish Knight], but was otherwise known as Jonasz Szlichting, a man of about sixty years at the time. Białostocki proposed that the Polish Rider was none other than this Polish knight, though a "spiritual" rather than a real one since Szlichting was too old to be the person depicted by Rembrandt. But the Socinians were a radical Protestant sect committed to unitarianism and pacifism and how Rembrandt's well-armed Rider could reflect their ideals is, as Held correctly pointed out, open to serious question.²²

In fact, the whole question of a proposed allegorical origin for the "Polish Rider" disturbed some scholars. In particular, Zdzisław Żygulski (Junior) refused to abandon the idea that the picture was, in fact, a portrait of a real person into which allegorical meaning could later be read, if desired. Furthermore, Żygulski rejected Held's idea of a generalized *Miles Christianus* and questioned the Rider's supposed Hungarian connections, as postulated by Held. In a detailed and well documented study published in the mid-1960s, Żygulski pointed out that Rembrandt produced two distinct types of paintings of people in costume: 1) Artificial compositions of models dressed up for the occasion in clothing and accouterments from his own large collection, and 2) Real portraits which were remarkably accurate and loyal to the subjects portrayed. Żygulski thought that the "Polish Rider" which he still called the "Lisowczyk" belonged to the latter category.

Żygulski began by admitting that the Rider could not be an actual Lisowczyk since they had already disappeared in the 1630s (Polish scholars had already agreed upon this long before Held's article appeared); nevertheless, he thought that the Rider was an actual portrait of a Polish light cavalryman of some type. These cavalrymen were loosely called "Cossacks" in Polish parlance of the seventeenth century and were made up of warriors from many nations: Poles, Ukrainians, Walachians, Tatars and others. Żygulski stressed the "Cossack" label and the fact that "here served also the

Rider," in *Neue Beiträge zur Rembrandt-Forschung* [New contributions to Rembrandt studies] ed. Otto von Simon and Jan Kelch (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1973), pp. 126-37; Leonard J. Slatkes, *Rembrandt and Persia* (New York: Abaris, 1983), pp. 60-92; and Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt: His Life His Paintings* (London: Viking, 1985), pp. 273, 277-8. The St Reinold of Pantaleon theory was proposed in a dissertation by Daniel Wayne Deyell, "The Frick Collection Rider by Rembrandt van Rijn," Unpublished MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1980, to which Held did not respond.

²² Jan Białostocki, "Rembrandt's *Eques Polonus*," *Oud Holland* [Old Holland], LXXXIV (1969), 163-76. This "Socinian theory" is in part accepted by Pierre Descargues, *Rembrandt: Biographie* (Paris: Jean-Claude Lattès, 1990), pp. 205-6. For Held's objections, see his "Postscript," pp. 195-6.

people from the Ukraine for whom war constituted the proper element, the source of support and fulfillment.” He noted that the Rider’s steed was specifically Polish, light, and not of the heavier west European or even Hungarian variety, that it was ridden in a specifically Polish style, upright but leaning slightly forward, and bent at the knee; he added that Poles visiting the West often imitated west Europeans and wore their hair long and shaved their mustaches, like the Rider; that he sported a fur cap called a “kuchma” (*kuczma* in Polish orthography) which was most common in Poland and Ukraine, less so in Hungary, that his coat was a “joupane” (*żupan* in Polish orthography) knit most probably of closely woven silk, a kind of soft armor specific to Poland and its eastern neighbors, and that his arms and especially his bow were unique to Poland. (It was of a type, Żygulski maintained, made only by Armenian artisans in the city of Lviv (Lwów in Polish) which today is located in western Ukraine. Finally, he concluded that the saddle, harness, and brass stirrups were all of the Polish and Cossack style. Moreover, the horse-tail standard was a typical “bunchuk” (*buńczuk* in Polish orthography) widely used in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and adopted under Turkish influence; these also were supposedly more popular in Poland than in Hungary. Thus, all in all, Rembrandt’s Rider was an exact replica of a “Polish light cavalryman,” which the artist could never have made up or created from his own collection of artifacts without a real model. In his final paragraphs, Żygulski hinted that the artist had a “well-known” interest in Polish matters through his family connections, and that this may have spurred the creation of the Rider. Thus the “Lisowczyk” was a real person and no generic *Miles Christianus* and most certainly not Hungarian. All allegorical interpretations of the picture, he concluded, must be relegated to secondary place.²³

Żygulski’s research was generally well received by western art historians unfamiliar with the Polish language, who quietly yielded to his authority in matters of Polish arms and costume. Among Polish scholars, however, at least one historian believed that his conclusions were somewhat too categorical. The Polish émigré scholar living in London, Mieczysław Paszkiewicz, acknowledged Żygulski’s detailed knowledge of Polish arms and costume but disagreed with him on his claim about the uniqueness of Rembrandt’s “Polish Rider.” He maintained that Żygulski’s “either/or” approach to Rembrandt’s pictures of people in costume was too rigid, and he pointed out that Rembrandt sometimes copied and developed other artists’ work, and that artifacts in the picture like the Rider’s war-hammer and

²³ Zdzisław Żygulski, “Rembrandt’s ‘Lisowczyk’: A Study of Costume and Weapons,” *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie* [Bulletin of the National Museum of Warsaw], VI, 2/3 (1965), 43-67. Rembrandt’s “Lisowczyk” is also treated as a real example of Polish military history in Bronisław Gembarzewski, *Polska jej dzieje i kultura* [Poland, its history and culture], 3 vols. (Warsaw, n.d., but published in the 1930s), II, 53-4, a highly respected work.

"kuchma" or fur hat also occurred in some of his other creations which otherwise had nothing to do with Poland; at the same time depictions of Poles in long hair, even in the west, were very rare, thus indicating a non-Polish model. Paszkiewicz suggested that the picture was based upon the drawings of Stefano della Bella and a Polish embassy passing through Holland in 1645 (that of Opaliński and Leszczyński) which Rembrandt, given his lively interest in things exotic, might have personally witnessed. (Some of della Bella's drawings were actually of this same embassy, which was on its way to Paris). Thus Rembrandt's painting was probably not a commissioned portrait of a particular Pole, but rather a kind of composite genre scene, very Polish, but nonetheless not an exact likeness of a "Polish light cavalrman," much less a "Lisowczyk" of the 1630s. Paszkiewicz concluded that the painting would be better titled "A Rider in Polish Costume" rather than a "Polish Rider," a more pedantic title, perhaps, but certainly, in his opinion, a more accurate one.²⁴

Needless to say, Paszkiewicz's arguments did not convince Żygulski in the least. He immediately responded to the Polish scholar in London, reasoning, for example, that the war-hammer (*nadziak* in Polish) was a weapon specific to lieutenants of the Polish light cavalry, just as the mace or "bulava" (a term common to several languages in eastern Europe) was specific to the supreme commander or "Hetman," and that while certain elements from the picture might be found elsewhere in Rembrandt's oeuvre, or in images that Rembrandt may have seen, such as certain Persian miniatures, it was the detailed combination that was unique to the Rider and marked him as definitely Polish. Moreover, the Polish embassy to Paris, which had passed through Holland, occurred some ten years prior to the artist's work on the Rider, which was a rather long time for the artist to remember such details. Thus the probability remained that the work was a portrait of a real person rather than a copy of another artist's work or some kind of genre composition. Moreover, Żygulski concluded, Polish costume and armament changed very little between the 1620s and the 1660s and thus the nineteenth century Polish name, "Lisowczyk," was not so far-fetched as might seem at first glance.²⁵

The next step in the history of Rider scholarship came when Mykhailo Bryk-Deviatnytsky, a Ukrainian living in Holland, took the time to examine the Dutch archives for further information on Poles living in Holland in the 1650s. Bryk-Deviatnytsky was intrigued by Rembrandt's family connection with Poland and thought that this might have put him in

²⁴ Mieczysław Paszkiewicz, "'Jeździec polski' Rembrandta," *Biuletyn historii sztuki*, XXXI, 2 (1969), 216-26.

²⁵ Zdzisław Żygulski, "Odpowiedź w kwestii 'Lisowczyka'" [An answer to the "Lisowczyk" question] *ibid.*, 227-8. Also see *idem*, *Polska: Broń wodzów i żołnierzy* [Poland: the weapons of its leaders and soldiers] (Kraków: Kluszczyński, 2003?), pp. 54-5.

contact with Ukrainians from the Commonwealth, specifically Cossacks, who might have served as a model for the Rider. Among Bryk-Deviatnytsky's compatriots it was even said that Rembrandt's Rider might even have been a representation of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky (d. 1657), who was leading the great Cossack insurrection against Poland at the exact time that the work was being painted (1648-57), or even a young Ivan Mazepa (d. 1709), later Hetman of Cossack Ukraine, who between the ages of seventeen to twenty while he was still supposedly a courtier to the Polish King, was sent to Holland to study artillery (1656-59). Bryk-Deviatnytsky had the idea of examining the archives of the Frisian Academy at Frankener where Jan Makowski, the Polish husband of Rembrandt's sister-in-law was then teaching theology and philosophy. The curious Dutch Ukrainian scholar did in fact find some Ukrainians enrolled at Frankener, but also discovered that some members of the powerful Ogiński family of Lithuania were similarly enrolled at the academy. Bryk-Deviatnytsky hypothesized that Makowski, who was always short of money, got Rembrandt to paint one of these Ogińskis — either one of two brothers, Bohdan (Theodorus in Latin) or Aleksander — in his national costume and mounted on his horse. Thus the fact that the painting turned up some 150 years later in the hands of this same family was no coincidence. The Ukrainian researcher also pointed out that the Ogińskis were actually an old Ruthenian family ("Ruthenian" being the old generic name for Ukrainians and Belarusians in the Commonwealth) and in the 1650s still loyal to Orthodoxy and subjects of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and not the Polish Crown, and thus, in east European terms, they could hardly be considered "Polish." Bryk-Deviatnytsky concluded by suggesting that the old label should be restored to the painting and that it should once again be properly called "Rembrandt's Cossack," or by some other such title.²⁶

At any rate, it was not long before Bryk-Deviatnytsky's research came to the attention of a number of Rembrandt specialists and one of them, B.P.J. Broos, soon followed his lead in investigating Rembrandt's personal connections with Poland and with the Ogiński family in particular. Broos also thought Żygulski's work very important and underestimated in the literature, and he cited work in both Dutch and Ukrainian by Bryk-Deviatnytsky. He identified several of Rembrandt's overlooked Polish connections and noted the existence of a stone relief of a *Poolse Cavalier* dating from Rembrandt's time on an Amsterdam street but labeled *Poolsche Kozak* by a scholar of the nineteenth century. This carving, which still exists,

²⁶ Mykhailo Bryk-Deviatnytsky, "Pro Rembrandta i ioho 'Polskoho Vershnyka'" [On Rembrandt and his "Polish Rider"] *Vilne slovo* (Toronto), May 6, 1972. Through the good graces of archivist James Kominowski, I obtained an electronic copy of this rather rare newspaper article from the Oleksander Baran Collection, vol. "Kozaky" [Cossacks] University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Broos wrote, appeared to be "an interpretation of the 'Polish Rider' by a simple mason." Broos also stressed Rembrandt's close relationship with the art dealer, Henrick van Uylenburgh, in whose workshop he painted for four years and who was instrumental at getting him commissions and promoting his career. Rembrandt married Uylenburgh's niece, Saskia, in 1634 and Rembrandt subsequently bought the house next door to Uylenburgh's studio in Breestraat. It also happened that Uylenburgh had spent his childhood and youth with his parents and siblings in Kraków, and by 1620 was acting as an agent of the Polish king and buying art for his collection. Thus Uylenburgh, an art dealer of international importance, may have arranged the sitter for the "Polish Rider." At any rate, Rembrandt married into Uylenburgh's family and thus became related to the theologian Jan Makowski (called Maccovius in Latin) and through him, as Bryk-Deviatnytsky first suggested, probably came into contact with various students from the multi-national Commonwealth, in particular, some of the Ogińskis, of whom Broos identified at least five: the two, Bohdan and Aleksander identified by the Ukrainian scholar, and also three more, Marcjan, Jan, and Szymon Karol, all of whom studied at Leyden University where they were registered as "Poles." Broos seems to have been inclined to think that the best candidate for a Rembrandt sitter was Szymon Karol who had settled in Holland, married a Dutch woman, and fathered three children there, but all he could firmly conclude was that at least one of these Ogińskis was probably the model for the Rider.²⁷

The careful scholarship of Broos, which publicized the Bryk-Deviatnytsky thesis that had been originally published in one or more little-known Ukrainian émigré newspapers, made an immediate impact upon the tight circle of established Rembrandt scholars. It was noted by Held in a postscript to the German version of his article which appeared in 1981 and attracted attention in Poland as well. Held seemed to awaken to the possibility that the Rider could, in fact, be a portrait of a real person rather than just an allegory, but he dismissed Szymon Karol as this person since he was thirty-four years old in 1655 when the picture was supposed to have been painted and thus was too old to be the model. Instead, he proposed Marcjan Aleksander Ogiński who was still very young (eighteen or nineteen in 1650) and thus the most suitable candidate.²⁸ Meanwhile, in Poland,

²⁷ B.P.J. Broos, "Rembrandt's Portrait of a Pole on his Horse," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, VII, 4 (1974), 192-218. See, in particular, p. 214, where he cites an article in Dutch by Mychalj Bryk-Dewjatnyckyj [Mykhailo Bryk-Deviatnytsky], "Morozenko in Frankener," *Ut de smidte*, 1, part 4 (1969), 10-14, and refers to his work in Ukrainian. Held, p. 198, interpreted Broos to have already firmly decided the matter in favor of Szymon Karol.

²⁸ Held, "Nachwort zum 'Polnischen' Reiter" [Epilogue to the "Polish" Rider] (1981), as quoted in Held, p. 198, n. 13. Broos, p. 215, quotes the register of

Juliusz Chrościcki who thought Broos's article simply "brilliant," came to the same conclusion and began doing research on Marcjan. He eventually discovered that Marcjan Aleksander Ogiński was portrayed in a picture by Ferdinand Bol, one of Rembrandt's students, and that Rembrandt's Rider bore a striking resemblance to him. "Ogiński's face," he wrote, "is easily recognizable in the 'Polish Rider.'" As a clincher to this argument, Chrościcki pointed to the fire faintly observable in the background of the painting and noted that the name "Ogiński" in Polish means "of the fire," *ogień* being the root word. What Chrościcki failed to notice, however, but what would have most certainly added more force to his argument, was the fact that Rembrandt's Rider was mounted on a white horse moving across a dark background, and both the old Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the modern post-Soviet republic display such a rider on their traditional coat-of-arms. This rider, today called *Vytis* "the chaser" in the Lithuanian language, is armed with a raised sword and mounted on a white steed set upon a field of red. He also appeared together with the Polish White Eagle on the arms of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth where he represented the Grand Duchy. Thus Ogiński's presence in Holland in 1650, his age, nationality, status, personal appearance, and the "of the fire" argument, as well as the "white steed" hypothesis, all seemed to confirm the true identity of Rembrandt's Rider, which, of course, turned up some 150 years later in the possession of this same Ogiński family.²⁹

Marcjan Aleksander Ogiński (1632-1690), in fact, was a perfect candidate to be Rembrandt's Rider. Born into one of the great landowning families of Lithuania, his father was the last senator of the Orthodox faith in the *Sejm* or parliament of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Although the family was of venerable Ruthenian ancestry with lands in the Smolensk region and a lineage that stretched back to Kievan Rus', it gained prominence in the sixteenth century when the Lithuanian Grand Duke Aleksander gave it the estate of Ogintai. It was, in fact, this estate, and not

Leyden University for July 14, 1650: "Martianus [Marcyan] Oginski Polonus, 19, Pol[itices]."

²⁹ See Chrościcki, pp. 445-7, with a photograph of Bol's picture. Also, Rembrandt's Rider wears a very light colored "joupane" (*zhupan*) or coat, indeed, almost white, and the *Vytis* on the Lithuanian coat-of-arms is also generally white, as is also for that matter the mounted figure of St George slaying the dragon, who appears on the Ogiński family coat-of-arms. Aleksander Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego* [Etymological dictionary of the Polish language] (Kraków: M. Arct, 1927), in his brief article on the *żupan*, p. 668, informs us that there were two kinds worn by the Polish gentry: a summertime *żupan*, which was made of linen and was white, and a wintertime *żupan*, which was made of wool and was grey, or at least somewhat darker in color. For some general information on Lithuanian heraldry, see Edmundas Rimša, *Heraldry: Past to Present*, tr. Vijolė Arbas (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2005), esp. pp. 58-71, with several antique illustrations of the *Vytis*.

the Polish word for "fire" that actually had given the family its name, though by the seventeenth century few people may have remembered this.³⁰

Marcjan himself was born into and raised in the Orthodox faith and studied in Vilnius and Kraków before going to Holland; he was enrolled in the University of Leyden in 1650 but shortly thereafter returned to the Commonwealth and entered military service; by 1654 he was named a "standard bearer" [*chorążny*] and by 1656 fought in the ranks of Prince Sapieha's Lithuanian army; he took part in the 1663/4 Muscovite expedition and became deeply involved in Commonwealth politics. In 1663, he married Marcebella Anna Hlebovich and through this marriage became one of the wealthiest of all Lithuanian magnates. In 1668, he founded the Orthodox Church in Śmiłowiczy but shortly afterwards converted to Catholicism and founded a Catholic Church at Rogov and a Jesuit College in Minsk. In 1684, he became Grand Chancellor of Lithuania. He died in 1690.³¹

The discovery of Bol's portrait of Ogiński and the identification of the "Polish Rider" with Marcjan was convincing for many hitherto skeptical Rembrandt scholars. Held himself largely accepted the evidence accumulated by Żygulski, Bryk-Deviatnytsky, Broos, and especially Chrościcki, and retreated somewhat from his allegorical interpretation, which he claimed was not all that rigid, and wrote: "While I believe that Rembrandt's martially handsome rider derives some of his appeal from the old concept of the *Miles Christianus*, I never claimed that Rembrandt intended him to personify such an allegorical character, and always admitted the possibility that 'he may have called him by a definite name.'"³² The Dutch-American cultural historian, Simon Schama also accepted the new

³⁰ "Ogiński (Lith. Oginskis)," *Encyclopedia Lithuanica*, 6 vols. (Boston, 1970-78), IV, 109. Also, at this point it should be noted that since the family was of old "Ruthenian" or East Slavic origin (even sponsoring publications in the Ruthenian and Church Slavonic languages), the mooted "of the fire" derivation would have meant that the name derived from an East Slavic and not Polish word for "fire" (cf. the modern Belarusian *vahon'*), though admittedly these two cognate words sound very similar to an outside ear. Further on the Ogiński family, *Ahinski* in modern Belarusian, see the *Polska encyklopedia szlachecka* [Encyclopedia of the Polish nobility], vol. IX (Warsaw, 1937), 135-6, with brief vital statistics on prominent members of the family, including Marcjan Aleksander.

³¹ Andrzej Rachuba, "Ogiński, Marcjan Aleksander," *Polski słownik biograficzny* [Polish biographical dictionary], vol. XXIII (Wrocław etc., 1978), 618-20. This article makes no mention of Rembrandt's "Polish Rider." Somewhat more surprisingly, there is no mention of the "Polish Rider" in the article on "Rembrandt" in the *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN* [PWN great universal encyclopedia], IX, (Warsaw, 1967), 769-70.

³² Held, p. 197, n. 11. Also by 1991, Held had dropped all further speculation about a Hungarian origin for the painting, though he reprinted his original observations.

evidence about the painting, as did some Polish scholars, like the military historian, Richard Brzezinski, who welcomed the new evidence and concluded that Chrościcki "...had finally identified it as a portrait of a Lithuanian nobleman, Martin Alexander Ogiński."³³

Of course, even the compelling evidence accumulated by the above named scholars did not convince everyone. It was only a few years after the publication of Chrościcki's influential article that Gary Schwartz ignored all this evidence and proposed his somewhat fanciful *Tamerlane* theory about the origin of the picture;³⁴ and about this same time Leonard Slatkes, echoing Held's earlier position, denied that the Rider's arms and costume were specifically Polish, pointed out their general "oriental" (that is, Central Asian and Middle Eastern) qualities, flatly rejected the significance of the Bol portrait purported to be of Ogiński, and proposed his "young David" thesis.³⁵ A few years later, the Frick published a large and beautifully illustrated catalogue of its paintings, which treated the Ogiński evidence as a mere "proposal," and put it on the same level as Białostocki's "Socinian hypothesis." The author of this particular passage added: "The rider's costume, his weapons, and the breed of his horse have also been claimed as Polish. But if *The Polish Rider* is a portrait, it certainly breaks with tradition." He/she explained: "Equestrian portraits are not common in seventeenth century Dutch art, and furthermore, in the traditional equestrian portrait the rider is fashionably dressed and his mount is spirited and well-bred." The author concluded by returning to Held's original *Miles Christianus* theory, though this theory too was treated as simply another unverified proposal.³⁶

³³ Richard Brzezinski, *Polish Armies 1596-1696*, 2 vols. (London: Osprey, 1987), I, 5; Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, pp. 599-603.

³⁴ He has, however, dropped it in his most recent publication, *The Rembrandt Book* (2006).

³⁵ Slatkes, *Rembrandt and Persia*, pp. 60-92.

³⁶ Bernice Davidson and others, *Paintings from the Frick Collection* (New York: Abrams, 1990), pp. 58-60 (but with pagination missing due to a printing error). This volume contains a beautiful color reproduction of the "Polish Rider" with close-up details of the rider and his handsome face. Some fourteen years later, the Frick was only a bit more conclusive in its judgment, reporting that the canvas "is not a conventional equestrian portrait, nor does it appear to represent a historical or literary figure, though a number have been proposed. Rembrandt may have meant only to portray an exotic horseman, a popular contemporary theme, or perhaps, intended the painting as a glorification of the latter-day Christian knights who in his time were still defending eastern Europe from the advancing Turks." See *The Frick Collection: Handbook of Paintings* (New York: Frick and Scala Publishers, 2004), p. 126. Sanger, *Henry Clay Frick*, pp. 72-4, was obviously influenced by this opinion when she speculated that Henry Clay Frick identified with the Rider as a Christian knight since he himself was a Masonic knight of the three highest orders of the York Rite. This was highly

On a somewhat different level, as late as 2007, Andrew Gregorovich, a Ukrainian researcher in Canada specializing in printed images and antique maps, somewhat more firmly rejected the identification with Marcján Ogiński and again proposed that the original name be restored and the painting called the "Cossack Rider." Gregorovich returned to the older theory that the eighteenth century Lithuanian Grand Hetman, Michał Kazimierz Ogiński, had purchased the painting and not inherited it. Gregorovich also provided some convincing evidence that Held's major argument as to why the painting could not be a Ukrainian Cossack — the idea that seventeenth century Cossacks wore loose-fitting *sharavary* and not tight breeches — was completely off-base. He printed several seventeenth century pictures and drawings of Cossacks, in fact, wearing such breeches and noted the similarity of the Rider's *kuchma* and *zhupan* to those of the Ukrainian Cossack Hetman, Bohdan Khmelnytsky (d. 1657) and his followers. Indeed, so important were they to Ukrainian culture that the words *kuchma* and *zhupan* remained current in the Ukrainian language until recent times, the former even being turned into a common surname.³⁷

Continuing his argument on a slightly different level, Gregorovich pointed out that the Rider's plain clothing and unimpressive horse were more likely to belong to a simple Cossack than to a great Polish magnate, and that Rembrandt probably knew something of the Ukrainian Cossacks

unlikely, however, since Held first enunciated his *Miles Christianus* theory some twenty-seven years after Frick's death. As mentioned above, in Frick's time, the Rider was much more associated with the struggle for Polish independence than with Christendom as a whole.

³⁷ It was even carried by the second president of independent Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, who governed the country from 1994 to 2005. It should be noted here, however, that the word *kuchma* has changed its meaning somewhat in modern Ukrainian and now also means "a bushy head of hair." Max Vasmer [Maks Fasmer], in his *Etimologičeskii slovar russkogo iazyka* [Etymological dictionary of the Russian language], 4 vols. (Moscow, 1964-73), II, 438, informs us that it also entered Russian from Ukrainian, and that Ukrainian had got it through the Polish *kuczma* from the Hungarian *kucsma*. As for *zhupan*, Metropolitan Ilarion, *Etymolohično-semantychnyi slovnyk ukrainskoi movy* [Etymological-semantic dictionary of the Ukrainian tongue], 4 vols. (Winnipeg, 1979-1994), II, 51, tells us that it entered Ukrainian from the Polish *żupan*, which in turn had got it from the Italian *giubhone* or *giupone*, which signified a certain kind of jacket. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, pp. 279, and 668, gives the same etymologies. It must be admitted, though, that these etymologies, if accurate, somewhat reduce the force of Żygulski's evidence that such apparel came to Poland from the east and not from Italy, or, more significantly, Hungary. On the other hand, Brückner, p. 49, also believed that the word for the horse-tail standard, "*buńczuk*" which was of Turkish origin, came to Polish from Ukrainian "...od Małej Rusi do nas" [...to us from Little Russia].

because their successful revolt against Polish rule was exactly contemporaneous with the creation of his canvas and was reported in the Dutch and French press of the time. Indeed, he continued, even the cartouches of various maps of that time displayed Cossack figures which might have been seen by Rembrandt. Gregorovich did not address Żygulski's argument about the complete authenticity of the Rider's outfit (which required a sitter), but Bryk-Deviatnytsky, as noted above, had identified some Ukrainian students at Frankener. Moreover, there were then still many Ukrainian Cossacks enrolled as light cavalry in Polish armies, and even Ivan Mazepa, who was always noted for his charm and success with the ladies, as mentioned above, was in Holland at exactly this time. On the other hand, any closer Ukrainian connections with Rembrandt and his painting have not yet been established. Thus while Gregorovich's hypothesis about a "Cossack Rider" may not convince all, we may conclude at the very least that it does reveal the extent to which some modern Ukrainians identify with Rembrandt's Rider.³⁸

In the 1980s, however, many of the conclusions reached by the Polish, Ukrainian, and Dutch scholars who had investigated Rembrandt's family and other connections with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, were put into question by certain members of the Rembrandt Research Project, an informal committee at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam who, beginning in 1968, were investigating Rembrandt's entire corpus (which they believed had been greatly inflated over the years by false attributions) to see what was actually produced by the master himself as opposed to his students and imitators. The team, which was headed by Josua Bruyn of Amsterdam University, and included such eminent Rembrandt scholars as

³⁸ Andrew Gregorovich, "Rembrandt's Painting: 'Cossack Rider,'" *Forum: A Ukrainian Review*, no. 114 (Fall/winter, 2007), 5-10. With regard to Mazepa, it should be noted that the legend of his famous "ride" across the steppes, tied naked to the back of a wild horse by a jealous husband as a result of an amorous affair, dates from somewhat later. On Mazepa generally, see Clarence A. Manning, *Hetman of Ukraine: Ivan Mazepa* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), esp. pp. 39-43, and Hubert F. Babinski, *The Mazepa Legend in European Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974). On his stay in Holland, see Theodore Mackiw, "Mazepa's Love Affair and Its Veracity," *Ukrainian Quarterly*, XLIV, 1-2 (1988), who states that he spent one year (1657-8) studying in the city of Deventer. He quotes F.J.G. Ten Raa and F. De Bas (eds.), *Het Staatse Leger, 1568-1795* (Breda, 1913), VII, 238, to the effect that "...Johannes Koledynski, latere Hetman Mazepa, was een jaar in Nederland bij Geschutfabriek Willem Wegewaad in Deventer" ["...Jan Koledynski, later Hetman Mazepa, spent one year in the Netherlands at the arms factory of Willem Wegewaad in Deventer"]. For an introduction to the problem of Mazepa as portrayed in art, which, however, does not treat the "Polish Rider," see John P. Pauls, "[A] Great Maecenas of the Arts Glorified by Painters," *Ukrainian Review*, XIII, 4 (London, 1966), 17-32.

Bob Haak and Ernst van de Wetering, sought to purge the artist's inflated corpus through analysis of the style of the paintings and through iconographic and technical methods including autoradiography (analysis of brush strokes). At least two members of the team viewed each considered work in person and eventually the entire Rembrandt corpus was to be divided into three categories: a) paintings recognized as authentic Rembrandts b) disputable works c) rejected works. After many years of work, the team rejected a great many paintings as not being the work of Rembrandt. One of these rejected works was the famous "Man in a Golden Helmet" (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) which had previously been almost universally thought to have been by Rembrandt. Indeed, it had been considered one of his most impressive creations. Also the prestigious Wallace Collection in London saw its collection of Rembrandts reduced from twelve to only one, though the Wallace did not completely accept this judgment. Then in 1984, in a brief review of a book by Werner Sumowski on Rembrandt's school, Bruyn, for the first time since von Wurzbach in 1906, called into question Rembrandt's authorship of the "Polish Rider." Bruyn cautiously suggested a possible attribution to the master's student, Willem Drost.³⁹

Other members of the Rembrandt Research Project expressed their doubts about Rembrandt's authorship less formally and did not necessarily believe it was Drost's work, but doubts they certainly had. For example in correspondence and conversations with Żygulski, Bruyn himself pointed out the soft outline of the Rider's figure, which in his opinion, was unlike Rembrandt, and indicated a female artistic temperament instead; Haak criticized disproportions in the figure of the Rider and the strangeness of the horse, the nondescript background and the lack of brush strokes typical of Rembrandt; and van de Wetering mentioned the 'corporality' and 'stability' of human figures characteristic for Rembrandt but missing in the Rider, who seems to be too unsubstantial and vibrating in the unreal gleam, and he opined upon the lack of close association between the background and the

³⁹ J. Bruyn, review of W. Sumowski, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler* [Paintings of the Rembrandt school] 5 vols. (Landau, 1983-1990), in *Oud Holland*, vol. XCVIII (1984), 146-62, esp. 158. Bruyn phrased his suggestion very carefully, writing: "In the field of Drost research much remains to be done. This applies to the portraits ... as well as to the history pieces. A further examination of the field reveals that a number of paintings still accepted as Rembrandts cannot be forgotten: 'A Man Seated with a Stick' in London (National Gallery, no. 51) which has already been questioned by MacLaren, and the so-called 'Polish Rider' in the Frick Collection, which shows at least [some] affinities with Drost's early work which was strongly influenced by Rembrandt." "...of de z. g. Poolse ruiter in de Frick Collection die op zijn minst treffende verwant schappen vertoont met Drosts vroege, Rembrandtieke werk." Translated with the help of Alta Vista Babel Fish translation service online.

Rider, which would be indicative of a painter other than Rembrandt. In this way, the entire question of the authorship of the painting was opened up quite widely and the much-feared authorship genie certainly came out of the bottle.⁴⁰

In general, however, Bruyn's tentative attribution to Drost, made without explanation or evidence, but made by one of the world's most authoritative Rembrandt scholars, to say nothing about the private opinions of other Project team members, caused an immediate uproar among art historians and museum curators to whom this attribution seemed fantastic. The Frick Gallery in New York refused to change its attribution to Rembrandt in its catalogues; Held was indignant and in an interview even referred to the Rembrandt Research Project as "the Amsterdam mafia," and Anthony Bailey wrote an entire book pointing out the weaknesses in the team's arguments and putting its qualifications and methods under the same microscope as they had done with the "Polish Rider." In his book, Bailey managed to treat the Rembrandt Research Project with a certain amount of respect, but still, finding its attention to documentation inadequate and its reliance on modern technology too rigid, saw some irony in its overly severe judgments of a kind sometimes unadvisedly made by connoisseurs. He even quoted a limerick from the 1920s to the effect that:

When the Rembrandt came to the cleaner
It began to look meaner and meaner.
Said Rembrandt van Rijn,
I doubt it is mine,
Ask Bode or else Valentin.⁴¹

Somewhat in this same vein, New York artist, Russell Connor even painted a canvas purporting to show Rembrandt actually painting his controversial picture. Connor titled his composition: "Hands off the 'Polish Rider!'"⁴²

⁴⁰ Zdzisław Żygulski, "Further Battles for the *Lisowczyk* (Polish Rider) by Rembrandt," *Artibus et Historiae*, XXI, 41 (2000), 197-205, esp. 203. Żygulski himself, however, never seems to have doubted the authorship of Rembrandt. By contrast, further east, Viktor Vlasov, in his comprehensive Russian-language encyclopedia of art, referred to the Rider as "a conventionally named picture which had been earlier ascribed to Rembrandt." Vlasov printed a reproduction of the painting in his encyclopedia, but put a question mark after Rembrandt's name. See V. Vlasov, "Polskii vsadnik" [The Polish rider] *Novii entsiklopedicheskii slovar izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva* [New encyclopedic dictionary of pictorial art] VII (St Petersburg, 2007), 576-7.

⁴¹ See Bailey, *Responses to Rembrandt*, p. 123, n. 3, for the limerick, and p. 94 for Held's remark about "the Amsterdam mafia." On these issues more generally, see Donald Sassoon, "The Neverending Project," *Muse*, IX, 3 (March 1, 2005), 8. eLibrary.Web. 01 Oct. 2010.

This growing chorus of protest over the "Polish Rider" in which Americans, and New Yorkers in particular, played such an important role, coincided with the retirement of Bruyn and several other members of the Project and a public declaration that its methods, especially its "over-rigorous classification of the paintings into categories," would be changed.⁴³ A younger scholar, Ernst van de Wetering, took over both Bruyn's chair at Amsterdam University and chairmanship of the Project. It was not long before van de Wetering expressed an opinion on the "Polish Rider" quite at variance with that of Bruyn. In van de Wetering's view, the painting was indeed by Rembrandt, but certain parts may have been completed by a later hand, possibly one of his students. The faces of the Rider and his horse seem to have been by Rembrandt but the new chairman believed the shank of his boot and the folded-back tail of the coat and possibly his hose were by that other hand.⁴⁴ A few years later, Jonathan Bikker published the first scholarly synthesis on Willem Drost and stated categorically that no arguments had been made supporting Drost's authorship of the Rider and he saw no reason for attributing it to him.⁴⁵ Thereafter, Robert Hughes, writing in the *New York Review of Books*, summed up Anglo-American opinion on the matter thus:

There can be few paintings of comparable quality of which less is known for sure than the "Polish Rider." But the doubts cast on it by the Rembrandt Research Project are also guesswork. The efforts to reattribute it to one of Rembrandt's pupils, Willem Drost, about whose life and work very little is known, are quite inconclusive. They are like attempts to "prove" that Hamlet was really written by someone other than William Shakespeare — but someone who was still as good a writer as Shakespeare, for whose existence there is no actual evidence. Until such a phantom turns up, to imagine Rembrandt without the "Polish Rider" is rather like trying to imagine Wagner without *Parsifal*.⁴⁶

⁴² Connor's painting (68x64 in.) is reproduced on-line from his personal collection. See www.russellconner.com/gallery_7.html Accessed August 19, 2010.

⁴³ For the declaration, see Bailey, *Responses to Rembrandt*, pp. 115-6.

⁴⁴ Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), pp. 207-11, with a portrait of the Rider. The New York newspapers did not let van de Wetering's opinion go without notice. See Carol Vogel, "Rembrandt at Frick Passes," *New York Times*, October 24, 1997.

⁴⁵ Jonathan Bikker, *Willem Drost (1633-1659): A Rembrandt Pupil in Amsterdam and Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), section R16, with a portrait of the Rider.

⁴⁶ Hughes, p. 10.

Could the entire question have been stated any more clearly?

By way of conclusion, it may be said that the “Polish Rider” remains one of Rembrandt’s most mysterious and most controversial paintings. Its origin, provenance, and meaning have aroused debate since it first came to the attention of the western public at the end of the nineteenth century. Was the Rider really a Cossack as he was identified when he was first documented? Or, less likely, was he a Tatar as von Wurzbach thought? Or, again, was he a Pole, or a Lithuanian? And what meaning did these national categories have in the mid-seventeenth century when Rembrandt painted his canvas? More basically, did the painting originate as a portrait or merely an allegorical representation of some historical or literary figure? And most basically of all, was it Rembrandt himself who painted it, or one of his students or imitators? The evidence presented above tends to support the idea that the author of the painting, or at least the most important parts of it, was indeed Rembrandt and that it was a portrait of a very real person into which allegorical meanings (only perhaps intended by Rembrandt) have been read by certain modern scholars. Moreover, the identification of this person with the Lithuanian magnate, Marcjjan Aleksander Ogiński, is fairly firm, if not conclusive. We may thus end by saying that Rembrandt’s Rider of about 1650, if not a Pole by political origin, ethnicity, or religion, was at least an actual citizen of the great multi-national Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth who was, in fact, registered as a “Pole” in the University of Leyden, and who later in a certain sense (like many other Orthodox Ruthenians of that era) might have become a “Pole” through his conversion to Catholicism. Moreover, his family — Ruthenian and Lithuanian by origin, and Polish and Lithuanian by destiny — was to play an important role in that constitutionally complex polity called the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the end of its existence. Thus though some, with a certain amount of justification, may refer to it in other ways, the picture’s current label, “Polish Rider,” remains more or less accurate both because of the provenance of the painting through the Royal Collection of Stanisław August and the Dzików Castle in Galicia, and also because of the complex personal history of the Ogiński family in general, and of Marcjjan Aleksander Ogiński in particular, who is presently the best-known candidate for being Rembrandt’s marvelous and eternally intriguing “Polish Rider.”