THE FRICK COLLECTION RIDER BY REMBRANDT van RIJN

by

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Abstract

The Frick Collection Rider by Rembrandt (commonly known as the Polish Rider) has been studied and supposedly identified by art historians. This thesis reviews writings on the painting from its description by Anton Bredius in 1897 to the present day, and proposes new material relevant to a better understanding of the function and meaning of the painting.

Julius Held firmly established the art historical study of the Polish Rider in an article in 1944. His source material includes Polish and non-Polish writings, as well as pictorial comparisons. His conclusion is that the Polish Rider is not a commissioned portrait, perhaps not even Polish, but rather a representation of some important allegorical or historical figure. W.S. Valentiner writing in 1948 agreed while Jan Bialostocki in 1969 and Colin Campbell in a number of articles in the 1970's agreed with qualifications. There are others, however, who strongly disagree. Zdzislaw Zygulski in 1965 proposes that the Polish Rider be identified as a real portrait of a Lisowski-like cavalryman while B.P.J. Broos in 1975 concludes the portrait is of a seventeenth century Polish sitter.

In the painting itself, there is no evocation of the glory of seventeenth century Netherlands. It hints rather of the glories and thoughts of other times and
places. The rider is not real but lost in ancient stories, in exploits that he has been through. His bearing, his horse and the land around him create an atmosphere of the exotic. The viewer is left to sense the heritage and strength of the rider and his life.

The attitude of a noble hero, a symbol to be held in admiration, is found in few characters with the Polish Rider's attributes. As Bialostocki had said, it would almost be better suited to the graphic medium of the emblematata. One figure in particular fits the description and the mood of the Rembrandt painting, and that is the three-fold personality of St. Reinold of Pantaleon/Renaud of Les Quatre Fils Aymon. Here is one of the few persons who was popular in seventeenth century literature, and who as a soldier and a saint gives acceptable meaning to the Frick Collection Rider.
The *Frick Collection Rider* by Rembrandt van Rijn

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Chapter One

The painting: its physical and formal description

Hidden in a small collection in Poland, a painting of a rider on his horse in a landscape was discovered at the end of the last century. It was immediately identified as a Rembrandt, but the character has to this day eluded identification. Polish writers have hailed this as a powerful representation of a Pole, claiming him as a national hero. Other writers, on the other hand, completely disregard the supposed Polish-ness of the rider and claim him as an allegorical hero or as a biblical character. The painting comes from a crucial period of Rembrandt's career, and it is shrouded in mysteries of identity and context.

The painted representation of an unknown figure and his horse rise from the bottom frame almost to the top frame and near the left edge almost to the right edge of the canvas, 46 by 53 1/8 inches. The mounted rider demands the viewer's fullest attention as he and his mount press near to the surface of the canvas. The effect is that one approaches the figure in the same way as the personality of a commissioned portrait, even though there is not the same immediacy of time and place inherent in the Polish Rider. The sharp lighting on the figure contrasted with the sombre colours of the background from another light source emphasizes the predominant figure. The predominance is reinforced by more precise rendering of this area and by the more
complicated brushwork on this part of the surface.

The rider moves through the landscape from left to right. He is casually seated on a grey horse which seems to be moving easily but not gracefully across the ground. The top of the canvas contains all the figure except his right leg, the head of the horse and the undulating landscape which rises behind the figure to provide a backdrop for both the figure and the horse. The curve of the horizon provides a flow for the direction of the horse and rider, and is interrupted only by the crown of the hat of the rider. Beyond the horizon the sky is partially lit by a rising or setting sun.

The rider seems to have been momentarily distracted by something he is just passing, to the left of the viewer. He is not looking at the viewer, nor has he been completely halted from his passage. He continues the journey without emotion. The kutas, the animal skin saddle blanket and the corner of the coat flutter with the gentle swaying of the animal. In the lower third of the painting, only the legs of the horse animate the space, and far behind them is the backdrop-style landscape.

The grey horse trots (in seventeenth century terms: a Le Pas or Trot) briskly; its excitement manifests itself in the taut muscles and tendons, perked ears, flared nostrils, open mouth and high step. Only the obvious verticals of the tower in the not too distant background and the rushing stream before his feet interrupt the forward movement of the
horse. The horse's gaze is single-mindedly turned to the direction of the movement; nothing has interrupted, even for a moment, his motion. It is, perhaps, this determination of the horse that gives the viewer such a strong sense of movement. The well-built and wide, muscled chest of the horse add to the feeling of powerful, forward movement, and counteract the gangly construction of the horse's body into which neither head nor legs seem to fit, even when allowance is made for the knowledge that the two lower hooves were re-done at some later date.

The rider clutches the reins in his left hand, a squarish not-clearly-defined fist fitted onto a stumpy and too short left arm. It is grossly inaccurate in comparison to the complicated and more complexly represented right hand. Rather than a shadow (as the left was) the right hand and arm are painted with deep contrasts of bright white accents and heavy brown contour lines of shadow. The highlight moves around the torso of the figure and pushes out the foreshortened arm toward the viewer. The right hand presses its back against the rider's waist and the fingers wrap loosely around the handle of a hammer in a pose that is difficult but not impossible. In the right hand, unlike the left, detailing is so intricate that fingernails, knuckles and musculature are apparent.

The gap behind the figure and before the background is filled by an indistinct mass of water which moves like the figures from the left, out of a waterfall, and across
the canvas to the right. The water then twists downward along the right edge to spill awkwardly into the right foreground of the painting in front of the horse's legs. On the edge of the water in the centre right of the composition is a campfire. A number of figures are seated around the fire that lights up their immediate environment and spills across the water, casting a warm reflection on it.
In 1883 Wilhelm Bode announced the existence of a Rembrandt painting that had been in Vienna for restoration.\(^1\) It wasn't until 1897 that Anton Bredius reported on the painting that was in the collection of a Count Tarnowski in Galicia. Bredius quoted Bode that even at this early date "everybody seems to have a different opinion about the painting;"\(^2\) however, there is no mention of who "everybody" is. Bredius saw the painting and described it as unmistakably a Rembrandt, one of his masterpieces. Approximately four feet square, the painting shows a young man riding through a beautiful landscape. The setting sun lights up his colorful clothing, yellow coat, red pants and golden leather boots, and his outfit which includes a Turkish sabre adorned with silver ornamental work. A little campfire in the midst of a dark, fantastic hilly landscape throws a mysterious light on the face of the 25 or 30 year old rider. Bredius tried unsuccessfully to buy it but was able to have it included in an exhibition in 1898.

This 1898 Rembrandt exhibition in Amsterdam brought the painting to the general view of Western art historians for the first time. The catalogue entry listed it as a "Portrait of a Polish rider; wearing the uniform of the Lysowski regiment, in a landscape."\(^3\) The entry continued with a brief physical description and ascribed ownership
to Count Tarnowski at Dzikow Castle, Galicia.

The Rembrandt exhibition spurred a number of responses to the Polish Rider. An immediate response was a romantic reflection by F. Warre Cornish published in the Spectator. According to Julius Held, Cornish assumes that the painting is an actual portrait of a Polish officer. The poet speculates on the rider's purpose and on his destination but he is unable to penetrate the meaning of "that inscrutable smile." Held mentions also the response of K. Madsen who wrote in Tilskueren "one of the finest and most circumstantial descriptions of the picture." Again, there was a feeling on the part of the author that the rider is off on a mission of adventure.

In 1906, A. von Wurzbach disclaims von Bode's attribution of the painting preferring to ascribe it as the work of Aart [sic] de Gelder (1645-1727). The Count Tarnowski collection painting is described as a full-length Tartar rider in a hilly landscape moving to the right. He added that the painting had been in Vienna in the art market.

In the same year, Bode published a description of the painting as a Rembrandt work and again as a Polish rider. The young rider is of noble origin. The horse is a dapple grey covered with a Shabrack. His lone yellow tunic is closed with a row of blue buttons. A mace is grasped by his right hand, at his right side is a quiver in Oriental form, and he is outfitted with two sabres. The landscape consists of a fortress, a waterfall, a lake with
houses on the beach and a campfire. Bode sees the rays of the setting sun on the left.

The painting was on exhibition in London in 1910 and was passionately reviewed by the painter Walter Sickert. He claims the painting as the property of painters, not of the press, critics, curators, experts and so on. He is convinced that this spiritual, not plastic, portrait is the face of Rembrandt's son. It has to have been done from drawings and from remembrance of expression and character. Sickert, describing the horse's head, mentions "the exquisite looseness of touch and firmness of intention," and then later in the short article gives an impassioned description of an artist's response to the painting:

Look at the amazing welding, in one fluent impasto with the low-toned cool white, of touches, mere flicks of porphyry and moss-green, here a hint of black and there a touch - a touch like a spark that has come and gone - of red . . . . The left arm and the hand holding the rein are done in one painting, right and expressive beyond possibility of improvement or need of reinforcement, masterly summarising.

Sickert was in love with the painting, and went so far as to condemn a viewer who had criticized the handling of the horse's legs.

In 1910 the painting was sold to Henry Clay Frick and transferred to his residence in New York City. In an article of the same year, Sigismund Batowski laments the loss of the painting to Europe's scholars. He suggests that high taxation was the reason the painting left Europe.
Batowski says that European research on the painting was well done, yet he does not point to specific items. In a note, however, he claims something that no one else has mentioned to date, that the Bode-Sedelmayer catalogue is incomplete; "one could decipher in the second line of the signature 'pinx . . . .'."¹³

According to Batowski, the painting came from the Collections of Stanislaus Augustus, King of Poland, who had acquired it in Amsterdam through a government envoy, Michael Oginski, probably in the year 1790-91. The painting was sold in 1795 as part of the Warsaw Lazienki Palace dispersal of royal assets to the Bishop of Wilna, H. Stroynowski. Shortly later, after his death, it passed to his brother's daughter, Countess Tarnowska, and the painting remained in the family for 90 years.

Batowski questions earlier reports that the rider's identity was a Lisowski officer. While it will be seen later that the identification with the Lisowczyk is of nineteenth century origin, it is possible that Rembrandt could have seen Lisowczyk troopers along the Rhine during the Thirty Years War, or a similar outfit worn by someone from seventeenth century Poland. "Yet the described person is neither a Pole nor a Cossack."¹⁴ He cites the words of Prof. J. Boloz Antoniewicz¹⁵ who saw the youth as a dressed up member of Rembrandt's society. According to the latter author the rider is actually the painter's son Titus at eighteen years of age, and therefore the painting should be
dated 1658 to 1659. Batowski points out that Antoniewicz had also singled out what Batowski thinks was a more important element of his composition, that is the peculiar form of the horse.

C. Hofstede de Groot's catalogue entry in 1916 is almost identical to Bode's 1906 description. But his description of a decade later alters the size of the painting. While the measurements given by Hofstede de Groot were 117 cm. by 135 cm., those quoted by Bode agree with the measurements given in the 1793/5 inventory of Stanislaus II Augustus of 109 cm. by 134 cm. Hofstede de Groot also notes that the painting was retained, in an interval between the Tarnowski Collection in Dzikow and the Frick Collection in New York, in the possession of the London art dealers M. Knoedler.

In 1938 George Stout submitted a conservation report and description of the painting which reveals that the canvas had been relined and that the paint surface, although retouched, is basically good structure. In spite of the cloud of surface film of old varnish Stout determines that "The principal figure and his horse have escaped the amount of loss and of renovation which the rest has suffered." In 1944, Julius Held published the article "Rembrandt's Polish Rider." It is the first comprehensive discussion of the painting in English and one of the first to posit an academic evaluation of the subject matter. In the lengthy article Held deals with the known history of the painting, the Lisowski regiment, the costume, equestrian
representations, the horse and riding subjects. In a search for a definitive answer to the question, "who is the Polish Rider," Held directs his attention to the concept of an Erasmian "Miles Christianus".

Held is enamoured by the apparent parallels between the rider of Bamberg Cathedral and the Polish Rider. His study begins with the contemplation of their mutual destinities, both riders of the Christian forces in Europe. He then goes on to summarize much of the material mentioned above and some of the Polish material available on Rembrandt which gave details about the early history of the painting.

The first mention of the painting appears in 1793 in an entry in King Stanislaus II Augustus' Catalogue. Held explains that, actually, Michael Oginski had bought the painting while on a trip through Western Europe. Contrary to Batowski's information that the painting was bought for the King, Held claims that Oginski may have bought it for himself and sold it later to the King. Therefore, Held concludes, the painting must have remained in Western Europe until 1790.

Because of the political misfortunes of Stanislaus, the painting was crated and taken to Lazienski castle along with the other works in the King's collection. Its location was then unknown until 1814, when, in the dispersal of the King's assets, it was sold to Prince F. Ksawery Drucki-Lubecki, an opportunist and financier who founded the Bank of Poland in 1828. It was sold quickly and for a handsome
profit to Count Hieronymous Stroynowski, rector of the University of Wilna and bishop of the city. After the bishop's immediate death (in 1815) the painting was inherited by his brother, and then passed to the latter's daughter, Valeria Stroynowska. She married Count Tarnowski and the painting came to rest in his gallery in Dzikow.

Having traced the provenance to the Tarnowski collection, Held notes that it was here that the identification with the Lisowski regiment originated. The name was suggested by a patriotic Polish poet, Kajetan Kozmian, who proposed the officer identity in 1842. Held then goes on to discuss the history of the Lisowski regiment, its founder, and other Polish heroes. But ultimately, Held rejects the Lisowski identification for a number of reasons: regimental colours and uniforms had not yet become a part of the armed forces, the Lisowski regiment died out two decades before the date of the painting. Dutch and German authors believe that the picture is of a young Pole in Amsterdam; Polish authors see him as a Netherlander in Polish costume.

In light of these opposing views Held goes on to explore the established traditions of portraiture in relation to the Polish Rider. He notes that the full-size equestrian portraits like that by Rembrandt in the London National Gallery and by Titian were uncommon in the Netherlands. These paintings, besides being large, made use of newly-established academic equestrian principles. "Cabinet-size" equestrian portraits, on the other hand,
were quite common in the Netherlands. They shared the larger portraits' concern for elegance and direct eye contact between sitter and viewer. However, as their classification denotes, they are much smaller. The figures are usually placed within a wide landscape. According to Held, the in-between size, the uncommon costume and absence of elements of portrait elegance and pose preclude the identification of Rembrandt's Polish Rider as a portrait.

If the Polish Rider is not a portrait, Held wonders, what role do the costuming and the trappings on the horse play? He notes that the new-rich Amsterdam people were in the fashion of dressing up in fancy-dress portraiture. He discards suggestions that this was Titus dressed up in Polish costume. Then, in his discussion of the costume, he identifies specific items of attire, the possible national origins of the coat, the pants, the hat and the arms. Yet, in a consideration of these individual elements gathered together, Held cites O. Goetz' conclusion "that Rembrandt generally made the most arbitrary and queer use of his Eastern models . . ." and himself concludes that the whole investigation into the nationality of the rider might be meaningless. However, in spite of such a conclusion, Held states, after discussing seventeenth century military types, that this is not a true Cossack rider, probably not a Lisowski, and not simply a student or merchant "in such an outfit, armed to the teeth," but rather is meant to be in general terms a military figure from Eastern Europe.
From a direct physical identification of the outfit of the rider and his horse, Held turns to the iconographic relationships of works from the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as Rembrandt's works. Within the fifteenth century Held isolates a specific representation, that of the exotic foreign military dress figure, and points especially to those of Turks as horsemen. In the seventeenth century Held identifies the similarities of the work of Stefano della Bella. There is a strong argument for the influence of the Italian printmaker from whom Rembrandt gathered ideas for equestrian representations, particularly from sets of military types which he worked into his personal themes and styles. Held refers to a compositional formula used and developed by artists other than della Bella where single figures pose large in the foreground under a big sky.

Held points specifically to some of Rembrandt's etchings and paintings where Rembrandt had already been dealing with the equestrian figure. Closest to the Polish Rider was the Baptism of the Eunuch, an etching from 1641, in which a mounted "Oriental" soldier dominates the left side of the composition. The identification of these Rembrandt works, in the light of the prints of della Bella and others, led Held to the conclusion that "there must have been some special impetus which induced Rembrandt to occupy himself with this theme."

Held then turns his attention to elements within the painting: at this point, the horse. Horses within
Netherlandish painting at this time, even in Rembrandt's work, are generally depicted as the "Spanish-type"; they are horses with well-rounded bellies, flowing manes and long wavy tails. The Polish Rider's horse, though, was emaciated and small in relation to the figure. Held turns to a specific example in Rembrandt's drawings: that of the Skeleton Rider in the Darmstadt Museum. Here he is interested in the process of Rembrandt's development of the horse in the Polish Rider. Held explores the possible origins of the drawing; certainly, he feels, it comes from the anatomical theatres of the Netherlands. He did not find the exact source; yet he proposes that the execution of the drawing provided ideas for the painting of the Polish Rider.

Throughout his paper, Held is able to present numerous sources which he combines with his own perceptive observations on the Polish Rider. His concluding section is again supported by numerous citings, each adding to the argument that some specific meaning to the painting may be forthcoming. Yet Held's conclusion is not so specific. It is, of course, a young rider on horseback. Held says it may be a representative hero of Eastern Europe, someone known through legends to the people of the Netherlands. He would then be equated with the Christian forces fighting against the infidel Turks and Tartars. He is, according to Held, much like the rider in Dürer's Knight, Death, and the Devil, and like Dürer's figure is a more naturalistic expression of Erasmus' "Miles Christianus." For Held, seeing in the
Polish Rider the spirit of the Crusaders and the antithesis of much of Rembrandt's contemporary work on old people (that is, of uncertainty and inner moral conflict), this painting by Rembrandt is a symbol of youth and Erasmian strength.

W.S. Valentiner, sees more than simply a portrait of a soldier in Amsterdam in the Polish Rider. His article on historical portraiture also touches on two other paintings, an Oriental and The Falconer. In them, as in the final section on Gysbrecht van Aemstel [the Polish Rider], Valentiner describes Rembrandt's historical portraits as fantastic creations. Commenting on the tendency of Baroque culture to identify persons through traditionally accepted characteristics rather than through naturalistic physiognomy, he cites an instance in which Rembrandt himself seems to have accepted the transformation of one of his paintings of a Jew into a print of the Christian heretic Jan van Leyden. Valentiner also feels that Rembrandt's work after the 1650's follows a general trend in Amsterdam to ignore Biblical themes in favour of patriotism. He presents the possibility that Rembrandt was part of the Muiden circle, a group of famous poets, philosophers and artists initiated by Constantin Huygens and Caspar van Baerle and led by T.C. Hooft.

In the case of the Polish Rider, Valentiner feels that it is the product of Rembrandt's need to attach himself to actuality in his symbolical, allegorical works. Valentiner concludes it must be a biblical or historical character; he once thought it was Esau, but has since discarded that
Valentiner thinks, rather, that one could assert that the costume is Polish, or nearly so, while the person is Dutch. He goes on to say that the elements of both the figure and the landscape are appropriate to the figure of Gysbrecht van Aemstel, a thirteenth or fourteenth century folk hero of the Dutch. Gysbrecht has been one of the first masters of the city of Amsterdam, but had left Holland after a conspiracy against Count Floris. He escaped to East Prussia (Poland) where he established the town of New Holland. He later returned to Amsterdam but was driven out finally by warring peasants from neighbouring provinces. Valentiner also cites the popular play, "Gijsbrecht," of 1638 by Vondel.

Besides the general hero image of Gysbrecht that Valentiner makes note of, he mentions the psychological transformation that Rembrandt may have been working toward. The old man Gysbrecht (as he was in literary references) becomes here in the Polish Rider a young hero, typical of Rembrandt's heroes in the 1650's. Thus Rembrandt was able to represent one of the greatest Dutch heroes of the Middle Ages.

In early 1950 the Polish Rider was inspected and subsequently restored by William Suhr. He notes that the original paint is especially sensitive in this picture, and that the reds and ochres (as expected) are more sensitive than any others. He notes that there are various punctures and paint losses on the canvas; in particular, there is a
row of nail holes, now filled with gesso, about 1 3/4 inches from the top of the painting.

Suhr mentions a significant correction to Held's observations of 1944. "The dark, semi-circular shape in front of the cap is not due to accident or design by a former restoration."

Suhr blames the conclusion of himself and Held on the dark, opaque varnish. He can only explain the shape as a darker piece of fur and hair.

Another significant observation made by Suhr refers to the legs and hooves. He notes that an added strip at the bottom of the canvas (according to Held it is 8 to 9 cm. wide) may not be contemporaneous to Rembrandt's time and so raises the problem of the authenticity of the two lower hooves. Of the four hooves only the right foreleg looks finished; the other three are only blocked in. This observation of Suhr's can be confirmed by simple examination of the painting - only the right foreleg has strong light falling upon it and corresponding bright accents of colour. But, Suhr further wonders if the lower hooves were restored according to Rembrandt's design or the Darmstadt drawing.

The Treatment Report then goes on to note some "unexpected, rich details: the blue-green mountain dome ... behind the tower with a dash of red" and "Narrow brush marks along the right edge of the tower, in the blue of the mountain behind," and in other places rose-madder dashes in the lower foreground at right. Suhr notes that there were a number of pentimenti: arrows once in the place of the elbow;
a higher bow, the rider's leg, a longer coat, and a thric­changed bit. It seems to Suhr that the "R", the last vestige of signature, does not conform to a typical Rembrandt signature, although he uses this remnant to propose the loss of canvas (approximately five inches) along the right side. He also proposes that the same width (i.e. five inches) should be added to the left side and some to the top of the canvas.

After his examination Suhr went on to retouch paint losses on the canvas and then to apply coats of varnish to the painting.

Ten years later, Andrew Ciechanowiecki announced his discovery of a letter which provided evidence of the early history and ownership of the Polish Rider. Although he recognizes the important contributions of Held to understanding the painting and to making available publications from Polish sources, he wanted to bring to light some new points on the painting. Ciechanowiecki notes that Michael Cleophas Oginiski, a cousin to the King of Poland, Stanislaus II Augustus, through marriage and Grand Hetman of Lithuania, had written a letter to the king. Although there was no date to the letter, the king had annotated in the margin a date received of August 1791.

The whole contents of the letter are significant, but two items are particularly important. Oginiski said he had "a Cossack, whom Reinbrand had set on his horse." This appellation became the painting's title and was recorded in the King's inventories. And Oginiski stated that the
horse had eaten "420 German gulden." In spite of the use of the term "gulden," Ciechanowiecki feels that Oginski had written this letter in the Hague or Amsterdam subsequent to his stay and previous letter writing in Germany.

Ciechanowiecki suspects that, given Oginski's life style of intrigue, the Grand Hetman purchased the painting for his own collection. It was the sole Oginski painting to pass into the King's collection. In 1810 it was mentioned in the diary of Countess Valérie Tarnowska née Stroynowska. The future owner of the painting had seen it in the former Royal Collection in Warsaw. She saw in the "shining-youth" not a peasant-cossack but a noble condottiere from the Lisowski regiment, perhaps even an ancestor, Colonel Stroynowski, even though it will be seen that the Lisowczyk attribution was not to be attached in print until Kajetan Kozmian's poetry was published in 1842. Still, Ciechanowiecki does see the painting as "a monument erected by the great master to the youthful vitality, alertness and suspense of a Polish cavalryman."
Chapter Three

Historiography, part 2, recent art history articles on the painting

In 1963 Zdzislaw Żygulski wrote an article that examines the details of identity of part of the painted figure. The author, a staff member of Warsaw's National Museum, writes from the approach of a cultural historian. The study presents a sharp break from art historical material which preceded it for it attempts to prove without a doubt that, in spite of Held's thesis, the Polish Rider can be positively identified as a figure who is an "officer of Polish light cavalry from the mid-seventeenth century in costume and arms not differing from those of the Lisowski corps."  

His study begins the scholastic battle between those who identify the painting as a portrait of a Pole and those who identify it as a historical or biblical narrative.

Żygulski begins his article with a review of Held's work and conclusions. He insists that Held had worked without the benefit of modern Polish scholarship, but unfortunately is in turn used by modern Polish writer, such as Bialostocki and Ciechanowiecki. Żygulski feels that modern research could be applied to solving the problem of the identity of the young rider.

In his first approach to the problem, Żygulski looks at the methods used by Rembrandt is his workshop. While not
looking specifically at painting techniques, he discusses the important use of props and their acquisition by Rembrandt. As Żygulski sees it, these props were used in the artist's early career to construct "analytic" historical or allegorical composition, that is, "each object is defined clearly and distinctly." In his later work, however, Rembrandt constructed "synthetic" compositions, "people and their objects, landscapes and buildings in an artistic and ideal unity." When Żygulski turns to Rembrandt's self-portraits and paintings of his family and closer friends, he sees the same ostentatious display of antiquities adorning the people and the compositions. Included in this exotica, Żygulski mentions Rembrandt's arbitrary "Oriental" dress of a number of Old and New Testament subjects (figures individually and in groups).

In his view of Rembrandt's work, however, there is one area of endeavor where costumes and arms suit perfectly the person to whom they belong, and that is in the real portrait. The Polish Rider, now referred to as the Lisowczyk, belongs to this category. "This may be proved by the analysis of his appearance, his costume, arms, riding pose and gesture, and also of the features of the horse . . . ." Żygulski notes that the Polish light cavalry inherited a great tradition of mobility, courage and fighting from close contact with Oriental people. Although there were among them Tartars, Wallachians and Cossacks, the majority were small Polish gentry or plebians who passed
on a great fighting tradition into Europe, until their ultimate annihilation in the Second World War. During their history their weapons remained unchanged: "the sabre, lance, bow and pistol." And during much of their history they kept their horses, a special Polish breed, which disappeared in the nineteenth century. In his discussion, though, of the national characteristics of the Polish cavalry, which Żygulski maintains was highly distinctive, he includes a statement that it was not uniform. In spite of his claim for a type of Polish cavalry, he notes that many members from many nations and from many social classes served, and that they presented a variety of costume and colour (although the prevailing colours were red and blue).

In his historical description of the Lisowski regiment Żygulski finally comes to the conclusion that Rembrandt's painting cannot be a portrayal of a Lisowski corps officer, but, he insists, "He could have met and portrayed an officer of the Polish light cavalry not different from the Lisowski officers." Żygulski is struck by the uniformity of this painting and concludes that this cannot be a reconstruction from second-hand sources of the figure. Yet when he turns to the horse he makes the sweeping statement that, "we must agree that Rembrandt was not very successful with equestrian representations. . . ." This horse, Żygulski sees as not the best representative of the Polish breed, but a good and actual example. Żygulski also points out the features of the Polish riding style manifested in this painting.
Żygulski rejects the possibility that this face is that of Titus, Rembrandt's son. He mentions, rather, the new fashions that were brought home to Poland by fighting men: from the East shaven heads and from the West shaven faces with long, curly hair. The cap, the coat and other parts of the costume are shown to have been imported into and developed in Poland. While Held had identified the inside of the rider's coat, Żygulski notes that the lining was traditionally brown silk, as it was in the Rembrandt painting. However, Żygulski does not benefit from a re-examination of the Rembrandt painting, in which William Suhr had discovered the error of J.S. Held and himself in concluding that the design of the rider's hat was due to a restorer's mistake. Żygulski adds to the error by citing a "proper" reconstruction undertaken for him by Maria Rychlewska. Żygulski also points out the distinctive boots that the rider wears, as well as the tight fitting breeches.

When Żygulski turns to the arms of the rider, he continues to reemphasize the Polish exclusivity of the equipment. In the case of the hammer, this specific "national" style can be determined by the "tiny ornaments applied on the metal mountings on the haft." He adds the observation of the right hand holding the hammer, and concludes that the gesture confirms the opinion that he is an officer.

In a review of the sabre (on the left), Żygulski traces the genealogy to swords illustrated in Persian miniatures as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
The sword on the right side of the rider is actually an estoc, not usually used by light cavalry, but sometimes carried as a decorative piece of armament. Here, Zygulski takes exception to Held's claim that the positioning (left or right) of the sword is determined by nationality. The bow, while being replaced by firearms at this time, was still used in Poland as a sign of the noble class. The origins of this fragment of bow could be traced specifically to an Asiatic type produced in Lwów by Armenian artists. The saddle, too, was quite distinct and different from saddles common in Turkey, Persia, Russia and Hungary.

Zygulski then, on the basis of his observations, concludes with three points:

1) The hypothesis that Rembrandt based the painting on second hand material of drawings or engravings of any other artist must be rejected.

2) It would be hard to assume that Rembrandt possessed in his collection such a complete and exquisite set of Polish costume, and arms and horse harness.

3) The picture represents an officer of Polish light cavalry from the mid-seventeenth century . . . .57

Half a decade after Zygulski's article, in 1969, Jan Bialostocki published a study on the Polish Rider. In his research, Bialostocki finds material that is acceptable in both Held's and Zygulski's articles. He feels that Zygulski has shown that the outfit of the Polish Rider is indeed Polish, and that Zygulski is most likely correct in stating that the picture is based on a direct study of a
Polish rider. However, rather than accept Žyrgulski's claim that the Frick picture is a portrait, Bialostocki feels that research shows a more tenable suggestion that the picture represents Eques Polonus. Bialostocki mentions Held's findings, especially that there is no continuity in the use of the modern name of the picture, the Polish Rider. He sees the rider as a general representation of an East European soldier. Although Bialostocki thinks this "emblematic" role of the Polish Rider more naturally belongs to the graphic medium, he insists on pursuing the motivation for the creation of the painting as an expression of the concept of Eques Polonus and Miles Christianus.

For his answers, Bialostocki looks to the cultural and spiritual links of Holland and Poland. He points out that there are very close links between Rembrandt and Poland. The Uylenburgh family, with whom he had lived in Amsterdam in the thirties, and into whose family he had married, had for three generations been connected with activities in Poland. Rembrandt's sister-in-law married a Polish Calvinist theologian and Hendrick van Uylenburgh was baptised in Gdansk. Bialostocki makes an association between the Mennonite ties of Hendrik and Rembrandt and a Polish dissident group known as the Socinians.

According to Bialostocki, the Socinians affected the religious life of both Holland and Poland. The main tenets of Socinianism include Antitrinitarianism, emphasis on the human character of Christ and a highly developed concept of
tolerance. Many theologians wrote against the sect, and it was finally outlawed in 1653. In spite of the clandestine nature of the sect, Bialostocki feels that Rembrandt would not have adhered to the strict simplistic orthodoxy but would, on the contrary, have been attracted to the various doctrines of the Socinians. He cites the opinions of Hans Martin Rotermund and Hans van de Waal. The former sees a lack of bodily suffering in Rembrandt's conception of Christ, while van de Waal sees Faustus Socinus in Rembrandt's *Faust*. In any case, Bialostocki is sure that Rembrandt's genius would necessitate independent religious and spiritual thinking. Therefore, he concludes, Rembrandt could have very easily and probably been attracted to the broadminded attitudes of the Socinians.

Bialostocki maintains that the defense of the Socinians published in 1654 by Jonasz Szlichtyng would have been a specific document that could have attracted Rembrandt. Although the painting would not have been created solely on behalf of the publication, it could have found its impetus in the character of the author's pseudonym, Eques Polonus. Thus, Rembrandt would have incorporated the idea of the spiritual hero into the image of the *Polish Rider*. Since the painting was done at the time of Rembrandt's financial difficulties, and since it does not appear to be described in the 1656 inventory, Bialostocki concludes that the painting must have been purchased by the time of the bankruptcy, and hence commissioned at that time.
Bialostocki insists on a specific conclusion: that the picture is intended to represent an *Eques Polonus*. He is quick to point out, however, that there are many faults and unexplained incongruities with his hypothesis. He notes some details he cannot explain: a waterfall to the left, a boat on a river or lake with some people and a fire near it, some romantic scenery, the military character of the rider and the use of the painting medium, which is less suitable for Bialostocki's proposed subject than is the graphic medium. Yet, Bialostocki feels that here is an answer that could truly be placed within the context of the seventeenth century society of the Netherlands.

When Held re-published his essay on the *Polish Rider*, he left his thesis basically the same, adding only material brought to light by Ciechanowiecki. The publication also includes, however, a postscript detailing Held's reaction to a number of articles on the *Polish Rider*. Held points out the logical problems of giving a young Polish appearance to an old man running away from Holland. He disclaims, too, Valentiner's proposed relationship between Vondel, the Dutch seventeenth century playwright, and Rembrandt. Held sees no such relationship. As he ponders Žygulski's article, Held notes discrepancies in the article and calls its worth "local." It is Bialostocki, Held claims, who has brought Žygulski's article into a more popular position. Bialostocki has misunderstood the personality and meaning of "Eques Polonus," the pseudonym of Jonasz Szlichtyng and has mistaken Rembrandt's
motivation for creation. Yet another reason for Bialostocki's error, Held says, is the nature of the Socinian movement, which was non-militaristic and clandestine. To conclude, Held reiterates that the painting is martial and secular.

Colin Campbell discards much of what has been written previously about the Polish Rider. His study seeks to show that different layers of meaning proposed (for instance, by Held an allegorical subject, by Żygulski a literal portrait and by Bialostocki an allegorical representation of a Polish knight) do not exist in the work, but that the picture falls into a definite category. When Campbell traces the historical comments on the Polish Rider, he notes that Held's interpretation has gained the most acceptance in spite of Valentiner's observation that Rembrandt's interest in allegorical subject matter was minimal. Campbell notes that, even though Żygulski is able to show that "some at least of these elements of costumes and weapons very probably do have specifically Polish origins," there is nothing to prove that the picture is a portrait. Therefore, Campbell proposes to lay aside the problem of the possible Polish identity of the costume and arms. In fact, he suggests that, in view of the content of the artist's work, there is no "special national significance to the Polish Rider's costume."

Campbell then introduces two drawings, one in Groningen and one in Berlin, that he finds have elements in common with the Polish Rider. In the Groningen drawing Campbell sees a similar hat, a sword hanging on the youth and another curved
weapon on the horse, quivers on the horse (implying the presence of a bow), and a three-quarter length coat. In the second drawing Campbell sees a similar saddle cloth and a kutas. Equating them with the theme of the Prodigal Son, Campbell proceeds to discuss the development of the iconography of the Prodigal Son in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and notes that in the other Rembrandt works of the Prodigal Son, there is more in common with sixteenth century illustrations. He next introduces a roundel series of the Prodigal Son from the sixteenth century. In one roundel specifically, Campbell enumerates the similarities to the Polish Rider: the passage of the horse from left to right, its gait, the direction faced by the rider, his pose with hand on hip, the relationship of horse and rider to the landscape, and the inclusion of a castle, which is obviously a counterpart to the fortress in Rembrandt's picture. Campbell mentions that there is a great similarity in the lighting in both the roundel and the Polish Rider. He further points out that the light was probably the first rays of light, rather than a setting sun.62

When Campbell looks at the costume of the Polish Rider, he compares it with an etching by Martin Van Heemskerck. Like van Heemskerck, Rembrandt chose such costume not for its historical authenticity but for its intrinsic character. The "Polish" character would not be congruent with the "Oriental" origins of Rembrandt's other biblical costumes. Żygulski's assertion that such a Polish outfit would not be available unless the bearer was also the patron can be disproved in
light of the close connections between Holland and Poland in the seventeenth century. His second assertion that the outfit is of a Lisowski corps could not be proven to be exclusive to the military unit. Again, Campbell re-emphasizes that arms, also, are not an historically authentic reference to the military, but are used in Rembrandt's work to show "rank or wealth, especially in youthful characters," and Campbell notes that other authors have expressed that view.

Before concluding, Campbell points to one last element, the posture of the rider. It further reinforces the allusions to a person of elegance and in fact distinguishes the Polish Rider from military types. The Polish Rider is therefore cultivating an elegance of bearing. The manner and the outfit are typical of any gentleman or cavalier who would be equipped to defend himself against highwaymen. So Campbell is able to say, finally, that the deeper meaning of the Polish Rider is to be found in identifying the painting with the parable of the Prodigal Son and thus with Rembrandt's devotion to themes of human weakness and divine forgiveness.

In a later paper, presented in Berlin in 1972, Campbell for the most part reiterates his argument that the Frick painting be given the designation of the Prodigal Son. However, an important addition to the late publication is the resumé of discussion between Campbell and other art historians responding to his paper. Amongst the responses
Bialostocki is impressed with the interpretation, although he would have liked to see more proof of an iconographic tradition. Bialostocki points out later in the discussion that Żygulski has shown that the dress, arms and pose of the rider are most conclusively Polish, and yet that such a conclusion does not exclude Campbell's thesis. Renger adds a number of examples which he feels confirm Campbell's ascription of the Polish Rider to the Prodigal Son tradition. Von Simson wonders for whom and for where the painting was intended. The discussion brings out concerns that the Polish Rider is a single scene, according to Campbell, in contrast to the tondo example which was part of a sequence of a Prodigal Son cycle. The discussion also brings out the concerns of a number of scholars regarding the allocation of importance to the national origins of the elements of the painting: on the one hand Held sees the figure as a sympathetically treated military character, while on the other Campbell does not see the weaponry signifying military activity, but rather nobility, and that not from a necessarily identifiable region.

In contrast to Campbell's approach, B.P.J. Broos returns to the propositions of Żygulski and Bialostocki, that is, that the painting is a commissioned portrait. Broos notes that Campbell has omitted or erred in a number of his points in the article: Campbell has disregarded Żygulski's evidence, he uses examples from series, he neglects the omission of narrative details of purse and dog and military character of the figure. After noting previous authors' conclusions, Broos
decides that so many different solutions to a deeper meaning must indicate that the painting could only be a direct representation of a commissioned portrait.

Broos explains first the painting's initial conception as an equestrian portrait. He examines Held's categories of portraits, reviewing the sizes of each category and their periods of currency. He points out that horsemanship was only at the time of Rembrandt gaining more popularity. Although Held has cited the life-size and the cabinet-size portraits, Broos feels that the latter became current only after the painting of the Polish Rider. There was instead, earlier in the century, a hesitation in the use of new forms of portraiture. Broos brings forward an example which he feels is comparable to the Polish Rider and which has similar equestrian portrait characteristics. La Promenade by Abraham Calraet, after Albert Cuyp, is approximately the same size (two centimetres higher and, with reconstruction, twenty-nine centimeters wider). As in the Polish Rider, both figures enter from the left in front of the towering decor and dark background shapes; both horses raise one foreleg and one hind leg while their riders are posed artificially with one hand on reins and the other at the waist, palm outward and elbow pointed toward the observer. The correspondences are sufficient for Broos to accept the Polish Rider as a commissioned portrait, and to disprove Held's contentions to the contrary.

Broos laments the lack of recognition and acceptance
of Żygulski's articles on the evaluation of the accoutrements of the horse and rider. Żygulski's conclusion that these are Polish elements of a Polish light cavalry officer are endorsed by Bialostocki but are not accepted by Campbell or Held. Even though he looks to models of Polish riders, Broos finds that they are equestrian portraits like those of Stefano della Bella.

Broos agrees with Held that the depiction of the horse is not that of a Spanish type; he maintains that Rembrandt was obliged to paint this unpleasant type because it was the Polish breed of the time, one that died out in the late nineteenth century. He cites descriptions by Weidn- keller in the nineteenth century and Löhneisen in the seventeenth century. Broos points out similarities between Rembrandt's horse and della Bella's Polish horses: saddlecloth, high seat, bow and arrow, sword and buntchak, and the thinness of the animal. Although the Dutch equestrian portrait traditionally uses an archetypal horse, Broos sees the prominence of the horse's portrayal (in relation to the figure) as the sitter's intended desire.

Having provided the basis of a portrait claim to the painting, Broos turns to the identity of the figure. He searches for a Pole who would have been in Amsterdam in Rembrandt's time, and who would have commissioned the portrait. He first establishes the prominence in seventeenth century Amsterdam of Poles. There were students in the universities and there were merchants. There are artifacts
which point to the presence of Poles, such as the painting, *Boy in Polish Costume* by Ferdinand Bol. Polish Jews had immigrated to Amsterdam as had Polish refugees who embraced the Socinian beliefs.

Closer to Rembrandt's acquaintance, Broos shows the Polish connections of the van Uylenburgh family. Not only did Hendrick van Uylenburgh have close connections with Poland, Saskia's sister, Antje, married the Polish theologian, Johannes Maccovius. Broos feels that it was very possible that Rembrandt and Maccovius met. It is while looking at these sources that Broos notes that nothing is known of the painting's early provenance. The first known owner, Michael Kazismierz Oginski, supposedly bought the painting in the Netherlands and sent it back to the King of Poland. Broos suggests that, on the contrary, the painting may have been in the Oginski family since its creation. The cost of German gulden simply is a means of putting a value on the painting equal to the value of the desired royal orange trees. Since the painting was in the Oginski family, Broos traces the family genealogy. Broos focusses on two brothers who were students at Franeker, Marcyan Michal and Jan, Oginskis, whose father had also been in the Netherlands undertaking unknown business. Broos suggests that more research should be undertaken in this direction, and that the Oginski family may very well have commissioned the portrait.
Chapter Four

A consideration of past historiography and present knowledge relevant to the painting's context in relation to art historical determinants

It is not possible to combine, as Bialostocki attempts, all the opinions published about the identification and meaning of the Polish Rider in order to arrive at the true solution. There is wide divergence regarding the function of the figure: somewhere between symbol and mimetic representation. It is commonly agreed that great importance is to be attached to the figure. It cannot be assumed that this is obvious; the importance is such that he is in the process of becoming an allegorical hero. His evaluation is reinforced (rather than diminished) by the powerful representation of the horse and the landscape. The emblematic character of the whole lends further weight to this allegorical image.

The formal analysis of the painting has not to date been dealt with and is unfortunately not possible within the scope of research of this paper. Suhr, who is noted above, has provided the best physical description. As he mentions, the painting contains rich, unexpected details of colour and the brushwork enlivens the surface of the canvas. The palette, the complicated brushwork, and the kind of execution all point to Rembrandt's hand.

Even in those areas where art historians have
written on the painting, there are large gaps of knowledge. Held, Żygulski and Campbell have dealt with iconographical analyses of the Polish Rider, but there is still not a clear understanding of the recognition of the meaning of every element within the painting. Neither the role of the elements in conjunction with each other nor the role of elements within the context of the mid-seventeenth century Netherlands has fully been explained.

Among specific iconographical items, the original state of the hat has already been brought into question. The bow, too, has an ambiguous form. Both the bow and quiver belong to a specific Asiatic type made by Armenian artisans, yet Żygulski maintains that this small fragment of representation could positively be identified as a bow that could originate only from Łwów. The state of the under-painting suggests, however, that the bow was not only changed in position, but that its form was closer to the contemporary representations of Turkish bows, that is, with more back curve on the end of the bow. By Żygulski's own words the identification points generally to East Europe. The saddle, for instance, is said to be "of Polish and Cossack style." The saddles in the State Armoury Museum in Moscow, for instance, come from such diverse areas as Iran, Poland and Turkey, and each shows elements similar to those found in the saddle of the Polish Rider, even though none exclusively can claim kinship to the painted saddle. One of the sabres Żygulski identifies as a Mongolian type is used in Turkey, Persia and Hungary, as well as Poland.
The horse in the *Polish Rider*, like the costume, has been investigated for its identity and purpose. Źygulski, in this connection, makes the claim, "To begin with we must agree that Rembrandt was not very successful in equestrian representations."\(^7\) From the apparently commonly known statement, Źygulski concludes (without clear logic) that the *Polish Rider*, such a unified portrait, must be a realistic portrait. Although other authors agree that clearer identification of the painting as a whole is necessary, there are only Źygulski's comments and Held's brief comments referring to the Spanish type horse. There is a curious change of approach by the majority of authors, including Held. Rather than concern themselves with an identification of the horse from contemporary records, they concentrate on the horse as it is portrayed in equestrian pictures.\(^7\)

Although there is some confusion in seventeenth century accounts of horsemanship, it is clear that patterns had been developing since the previous century in breeds of horses, riding styles and other aspects of horsemanship. Thomas Blundeville, for instance, had written in the sixteenth century about horsemanship in at least two publications.\(^7\) His descriptions, unfortunately, are vague enough to elude specific application to Rembrandt's *Polish Rider*, but they do point out that the horse represented in the painting could quite possibly be found in one of many places in the Occident.\(^7\) More contemporaneous with Rembrandt's work was the writing of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle.\(^7\) In his sections on national types he refers to, among others,
horses in Poland. They relate, he says, to those called Irish Hobbys. Their proportions are the same as those for common horses and "guildins" of England. The riders use not bits having crosses that attach the reins, but only snaffles connected to the reins by simple rings. According to the descriptions by both Blundeville and Cavendish, the most fitting characteristics of a nationality of horses to be compared to Rembrandt's horse is that of the Barb (or Barbary) horses. Blundeville mentions a number of types of Barbs but notes that they are generally little, although very swift, and able to make a very long "Cariere." William Cavendish thinks that the horse is "a little thin and delicate, having something of the Ladies in quality," but notes that the horse was cold and negligent in its step and stumbled, trotted like a cow and galloped near the ground. In addition to comments about the ease of dressing the Barb, Cavendish continues to describe the procedures for buying a Barb. From his discussion it is clear that this breed was well known in Europe, even very much bought and sold, and that it was a common sight in the lands.

While it may not be possible to pinpoint the specific origins of the horse, he is portrayed with enough particularized detail that he is set apart from many horse types and within cultural boundaries. What is clear from the writings of both Blundeville and Cavendish is that Rembrandt's horse is not simply a figment of the painter's imagination. The animal could very well have existed in Europe, and
not necessarily exclusively in Poland.

Rather than consider the Polish Rider within the context of writings contemporaneous with its conception, Held brings forward one of Rembrandt's drawings as a crucial link to the origins of the painting. Yet his argument dwells on the emaciated, cadaverous condition of the horse's body, leading him into the comparison with the drawing of the skeleton rider. There are many discrepancies that are overlooked when Held promotes the drawing as relevant to the development of the painting. In the drawing the structure of the horse differs markedly from that in the painting; the neck is longer and lower in position, the rear legs indicate none of the exertion and stress that those of the Polish Rider create, and the front legs push out against any forward movement (the left leg stands pitted against the ground while the right gradually, effortlessly curves from near the cannon to the abdomen). In the drawing also, the rider sits well back, near the end of the rib cage, in a typically Western riding position.

In addition to the costume and the horse, one more aspect of the Polish Rider can be considered for identification, that is the landscape. It has, unfortunately, only barely been dealt with and its identification or value to the painting as a whole has been overlooked. Żygulski claims that this landscape, of all Rembrandt's landscapes, is one of the "most realistic, probably based upon an indirect observation of nature," supporting his idea that the Polish Rider was painted at a specific place
and time. The elements of the landscape do not agree with this proposal, nor can one accept the idea that this sketchy, ambiguous landscape is more realistic than, for instance, the etching of the *Three Trees*. Žygulski states, "The hypothesis that Rembrandt based the painting on second-hand material of drawings or engravings of any other artists must be rejected." Yet is is known that Rembrandt worked from other artists' products; that in spite of his usually literal approach to iconography, he did take iconography and visual constructions from predecessors' works. He was successful for the very reason that he was able to gather disparate elements into a unified, powerful painting. Thus it is quite possible (contrary to Žygulski's assertion) that tentatively Polish elements in the *Polish Rider* could originate from Rembrandt's renowned collection of exotica.

Art historians wrote not only about the elements found within the painting. Many based their writings on extrinsic factors that affected the painting. One mentioned above was Andrew Ciechanowiecki, who has reported on part of the early existence of the *Polish Rider*. Rembrandt's life was in turmoil in the years surrounding the painting's creation. No one has yet looked in depth into the psychological effects of such turmoil, nor has anyone examined carefully the bearing cultural life in Amsterdam may have had on the creation of the painting at this time.

As mentioned previously, Valentiner, Bialostocki, Campbell and Broos have all contributed to a better
understanding of the society in which the painting was created. There are, however, discrepancies in the understanding of the religious attitudes of the mid-seventeenth century Dutch. Compared with Valentiner's assertion that interest in religious themes declined, J.L. Price claims that the middle years of the seventeenth century saw a flourishing of movements for religious renewal, particularly those of a radical or ecumenical nature. And Muller reinforces the assertion that there was religious flourishing in Rembrandt's life by reminding the reader that Rembrandt often returned to biblical subjects after producing portraits; the presence of interest in religion can be inferred from the strength of Bialostocki's emphasis on religious ideas in his article.

His article sheds much light on Dutch attitudes toward the Anabaptist movement. However, the 1653 edict by the State General (which condemned the Socinian movement) was not political interference into religious and moral toleration, as Bialostocki states, but was a response at the promptings of the theological concerns of the orthodox denominations and of Mennonites and Remonstrants toward the whole Anabaptist movement. Rembrandt may have been influenced by the Socinian sect, yet Bialostocki is right to be cautious regarding effects of the clandestine movement upon the painter. Rembrandt recognized some of the officialities of the Reformed Church and he considered the diverse teaching of Catholics and Jews as well as Mennonites.
The *Polish Rider* is one of two equestrian portraits by Rembrandt, but there is very little similarity between them. While the conventional *Portrait of a Man on Horseback* (Bredius No. 225), follows portrait convention and displays the aristocratic bearing of the rider and the good breeding of the horse, the *Polish Rider* seems awkward and coarse as a portrait. The *Portrait of a Man on Horseback* is life-size and one of the largest extant Rembrandt paintings. The horse performs a pesade and the rider, dressed in his finest civic guard uniform, rides in correct academy form. Unlike the "Polish" rider, the sitter for the *Portrait of a Man on Horseback* looks squarely out of the picture toward the viewer, typically like other portrait figures. Unlike the mount in the *Polish Rider*, the horse in the later painting looks like it has come from an amusement ride. The muscles are smoothed down, the hair is neatly cut and curled and flows in decorous folds across the neck and behind the horse.

Isolated elements parallel to the *Polish Rider* occur throughout Rembrandt's paintings, etchings and drawings, besides his portraits. Rembrandt used the combination of rider and mount with a posture similar to that in the *Polish Rider* in two other works. In the *Stoning of St. Stephen* (Bredius No. 531A), a painting from Rembrandt's early period, and in the *Baptism of the Eunuch* (Boon 168), an etching from Rembrandt's middle years, the riders are positioned to the left of the main event, a lone figure surrounded by secondary characters. Both of the riders
are dressed in Rembrandt's Oriental-biblical costuming (unlike the *Polish Rider*). In the painting the rider wears a turban and a cloak while in the etching the rider wears an exotic headpiece and a long robe. While the horse in the *Polish Rider* moves forward, that in the *Stoning of St. Stephen* rears back from the action in front of him, and the horse in the *Baptism of the Eunuch* is casually standing watching the figures in the background. Unlike the *Polish Rider's* horse, both other horses exhibit heavy musculature and full-bodied form; they stand in sharp contrast to the tendon-predominant and small-bodied form of the horse in the *Polish Rider*.

In spite of the subdued landscape in the *Polish Rider*, created by formal means, the setting makes a significant contribution to the content of the story. However, other landscape paintings by Rembrandt generally do not relate to that in the *Polish Rider*. One exception is the painting, *Landscape with a Castle* (Bredius No. 450), which gives an identification of the kind of space that is portrayed and the kind of grandeur which the structure on the horizon in the upper left of the *Polish Rider* is meant to have. The crest spreads itself across the crest of the hill and dwarfs the human figure below to the right of the *Landscape with a Castle*. There is a prophetic indication of future artists' attitudes towards landscape which will eventually express itself as the concept of "the sublime." When this grand scale of buildings is juxtaposed behind a
figure on a horse the latter are presented with monumental proportions, and the space between the figure and the structure becomes ambiguous.

The right centre of the landscape viewed in isolation reflects another Rembrandt landscape, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (Bredius No. 567), although in the case of the latter the landscape is constructed around the elements of a new Testament story. In both the canvases, above and beyond the high rise of hills and village, there is a dimly lit sky. Figures huddle beneath these hills around a fire that lights up the immediate environment. Rembrandt has very effectively minimized the iconographic image of the Holy Family, which is, naturally, very easily distinguishable in the *Rest of the Flight into Egypt*. Instead, a device is created by the indistinguishable figures and other possible elements around the fire in the Polish Rider that makes a strong contribution to the emotional level of the scene.

It becomes apparent from the comparison with the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* and other constructed landscapes which act as backdrops or stage settings to biblical and mythological stories that the *Polish Rider* is similar to those works. In some cases there are one or two corners of the picture used for "zooming" back into the distance, to give the scene some space. Yet there are significant differences between the setting of the *Polish Rider* and other Rembrandt paintings, and indeed with other seventeenth century Netherlandish paintings. The *Polish Rider* shares more with prints produced in northern Europe in the sixteenth
century, especially in Germany. There are works, for example, like "The King," cited previously or like some of Dürer's work. In Dürer's St. Anthony (if it is reversed) and less so in his St. Eustache the landscape assumes a strong backdrop character; the contour of the land against the sky accentuates the figure in the foreground just as it does in the Polish Rider. As in Rembrandt's painting, the horse of St. Eustache vies with the saint for importance.

Other illustrations generally contemporaneous with the Polish Rider are valuable in providing identification of some of the elements in the painting. Only Żygulski makes mention of the boots worn by the Polish Rider figure, yet in comparison with most of Rembrandt's work, this rider is one of the few who does not have either wrapped feet, soft and limp footwear or the fashionable apparel of seventeenth century Amsterdam. The yellow boots with small, sharp heels are related primarily, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to prints with subject matter of Eastern Europe, including not only Poland but very predominantly Russia.

Not all comparisons with illustrations identify elements of the Polish Rider with Eastern Europe. Although Żygulski assures readers that the harness "matches the general style of the Lisowczyk," a print by Peter Stevens represents the Dutch William Henry, Prince of Orange, ... riding a horse which is harnessed very much like the horse
in the Polish Rider. This is one of the few cases where the bit is the same style as that of the Polish Rider. The Prince's riding manner, also, is similar to the rider of the painting. He holds the reins in his left hand, and they fall over his clenched fist. Although it is only Rembrandt's figure that displays the palm of his right hand, the Prince's bony arm assumes the same position as the right arm of his anonymous counterpart. The stirrups seem to come from the same farrier; in both cases they are slender, minimal constructions.

The connection between the Polish Rider and contemporary illustrations lends importance to an illustration from a series by Hans Wiegel. The print of a Muscovy rider has been reproduced in writings published in Russia, but it originated in Germany, as can be seen from the verse and title accompanying it. The rider of the sixteenth century print rides from the right to the left across a small clump of earth sparsely decorated with vegetation. Although there are many differences, the similarities between this print and the Rembrandt painting are too many to ignore. Both riders sit high up towards the horses' necks. Both are short-stirruped and, in spite of the differences in boots and stirrups, both rest the ball of their feet on the stirrups with their heels turned toward the horses. The horses exhibit the same qualities inherent in their breeding: small rumps with long powerful legs and powerful hooves. Both horses are fitted with
kutas and short tails, and they carry the same style of saddle with high pommel and short cantle. The riders both wear the eastern joupane (that of the sixteenth century is quilted and short-sleeved while that of the seventeenth century is unstitched and has long sleeves) and fur-trimmed hats. Their weapons, too, are similar: the bow on the left side, the quiver on the right, and a sword hanging from the waist.

Contemporaneous with such illustrations as that in von Herberstein's book was the development of the emblem and the emblem "portrait." The emblem portrait since the late sixteenth century had gained enormous popularity. One which has a similar pose and setting to the Polish Rider is an anonymous sixteenth century German print entitled, "The King." The print is one of a series employing pictures and verse to describe vocations. The king is portrayed as a mighty Romulus who established the city surrounded by walls on the Palatine hill. The civilisation that was established by Romulus is defended by the king. In the background, just as in Rembrandt's painting, a domed fortress with buttressed walls and high narrow windows rises behind the king. In the same way as the painting, the fortress is skirted by edifices of a town and is set against the sky in the upper left of the composition. In the Rembrandt painting the impact of the rider is less confusing and is made stronger by the subdued, undefined portrayal of the town.
There is little doubt among scholars that elements of Eastern costume and accoutrements are present in the Polish Rider. Zygulski has been able to point out the similarities between museum artifacts contemporaneous with Rembrandt's life and with eastern Europe. His conclusions, though, for the most part have dubious relationships with the identifications he is able to make. The inconclusive, although at times revealing, identification of elements in the Polish Rider provides an illusive basis for claiming the painting as a portrait of some mid-seventeenth century patron. When this information is coupled with views of paintings, prints and illustrations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there appears to be a strong case for ascribing the Polish Rider to the realm of allegorical and historical portraits.
Conclusion

While it is difficult to deny an East European origin to the figure of the Polish Rider, Campbell's assertion that the rider is clothed in Oriental/biblical clothing nevertheless is more congruent with the mood of the painting; in spite of the modern appearance of the rider. The arguments that Held, Campbell and Bialostocki present expose the inconsistencies of articles that insist that the Polish Rider is an actual portrait. It seems that the most conclusive statement which can be made to date is that the painting portrays a noble hero, who by virtue of this identity, is a symbol of spiritual strength. He is not a dangerous soldier riding a beaten horse, but a well-armed traveller ready to defend himself.

The horse is a significant part of the identification of the narrative symbol. He plays an almost equal part in the drama and helps to establish a narrative sequence. He is no ordinary horse and his identity cannot be ignored. He is a finely tuned, long distance runner and his destination is definite.

The remainder of the painting is a stage. All of the landscape sits in shadow, and is handled without resolution. The fortress-like structure, which at first glance seems very significant and which plays such an important part in the composition of the painting, cannot be identified by location and is most probably symbolic. The water puzzles those who attempt to define its course, yet its very awkward
placement on the canvas makes it blatantly present, effectively separating the rider from the hillside and reminding viewers of the monumental intent of the structure.

The elements of the painting lead to parallel representations of saints and in many ways the Polish Rider does give the viewer the sense of the Miles Christianus which Held proposes in his study. The rider's bearing is full of self-confidence and he conveys it as he moves across the landscape. It is unfortunate that the concept of the Christian knight is foreign to Dutch history. In a search of one hero in the seventeenth century who was both a saint and a knight and who fulfilled that ideal of the Christian soldier, there is only one character available.

Reinoldus is a medieval figure with three not-totally distinguishable personalities. As a saint he is not very well known. His biographies tell of his life as a monk at St. Pantaleon in Cologne and of his work on Cologne cathedral. After his martyrdom by jealous fellow stoneworkers, the body is discovered by the Bishop of Cologne. Eventually, his relics are transferred to Tremoigne (present day Dortmund), which still venerates him as patron saint.

Reinoldus is usually confused with Reinhold, Renaud or Reinout, the paladin of Charlemagne, whose adventures are recorded in the thirteenth century Chansons de Geste, "Les Quatre Fils Aymon." In this story Renaud raises Charlemagne's anger against the sons of Aymon, by killing one of the Emperor's close relatives. He spends his life running from Charlemagne's
forces. He is aided in his fugitive life by his horse, Bayard, whom Renaud has captured miraculously in a forest. The horse has magical abilities to grow to hold all four sons, and has amazing swiftness. Another aide is Maugis (or Malagigi), a magician cousin, who accompanies Renaud on journeys through Frankish lands and to the Holy Land as a Crusader. Renaud returns to Cologne without either of his aides and ends his life in Cologne, in an identical way to the life of St. Reinoldus.

The third personna is Rinaldo, a Christian knight fighting in the Holy Land. His life is touched on by Boiardo, then by Ariosto in Orlando Furioso (whose protagonist is the Roland of the Chansons de Geste) and finally developed by Torquato Tasso in Rinaldo and Gerusalemme Liberata. This hero falls in love with a Saracen enchantress, but is convinced to return to his duty and to the Christian soldiers fighting to win the Holy City of Jerusalem. In the end, his actions are "Christian" even with Armida, the enchantress, when he forgives her of her mislead ways and spares her life.

In all accounts of Reinhold's life there are specific references applicable to the Polish Rider. In the Chanson de Geste, there is one point where Renaud and Bayard intend to ride from Orleans to Paris to compete in a race arranged by Charlemagne. In spite of the danger presented by the Emperor's knights, Renaud desires the prize of Charlemagne's crown and for his horse the honour of the fastest horse in the empire. Maugis is able to make Renaud's anonymity possible
through a magic herb that transforms the middle-aged Renaud to an inexperienced youth and the bay coat of his horse to a white. The magician insures lack of suspicion by tying an invisible thread onto the right forefoot of the horse, giving Bayard a lame step. Renaud is, thus, able to ride through the searching forces and wins the Paris race.

In Rinaldo's adventures, he too, must at one point pass through the enemy's front lines. In Tasso's narrative, Rinaldo assumes the costuming of his enemies and he dons one of the Easterner's coats, which is originally white, but transforms slowly so that it emanates a golden shine, reflecting the inner spiritual glow of the hero.

St. Reinoldus' personality is reinforced by the stories of both Renaud and Rinaldo. He becomes the Christian hero who gladly battles against the pagan forces of the world. The combined stories and legends reflect a personality which gives tangible identity to the Miles Christianus figure which Erasmus has developed.

Nothing can yet be discerned of the impetus for the painting. But it could be surmised that either Dortmund or Cologne had commissioned such a work. Both were among the closest "free cities" of Germany to Amsterdam. While Dortmund officially claimed the saint as their patron, Cologne never forgot the part he played in their history. Both cities enjoyed the free borders that touched upon the Low Countries and both played a part in the development of the new Republic. It was only fitting that a great painter like
Rembrandt could be a part of that interchange.

The firm identification of Rembrandt's Rider with Rinaldo may not yet be possible. However, the popularity of the hero/saint in the seventeenth century and the allegorical character of Rembrandt's painting makes the connection a possibility for consideration.
Provenance

Unknown before 1791. Possibly in the Oginski family collection, 1656 - 1791.


Sold to Stanislaus II Augustus, Poniatowski, King of Poland, for 180 ducats.

Possession unknown, 1798 - 1814. Josef Poniatowski Coll. (Nephew of the King) (?). Countess Thérése Tyskiewicz (?).

Seen in the former Royal Collection in Warsaw by Countess Valérie Tarnowska née Stroynowska, 1810.

Sold to Prince Ksawery Drucki-Lubecki (1799 - 1846), 13 June 1814, for 150 ducats.

Sold to Count Hieronym Stroynowski (d. 1815), 1814/15, for 500 ducats.

Passed to Senator Valérien Stroynowski, 1815, into his collection at Horochów Castle, Volhynia.

Passed to Valérie Stroynowska, daughter of the Senator, who married Count Jan Amor Tarnowski. Acquired 1834.

In Vienna for restoration, 1877.

In K.M. Knoedler Galleries, London, 1910 (?).

Roger Fry acted as agent for Henry Clay Frick; painting bought from Tarnowski for 60,000 ($293,162.50). (Equivalent to 1,200,000 DM).

Present location: The Frick Collection, New York City.
Footnotes


2. Ibid., p. 197. "... waarover zoo verschillend geordeeld is, en waarvan ik graag zou weten of hij echt is." I must express thanks to Mr. George Visser with assistance in translation.

3. The title is translated from the French edition catalogue entry, Rembrandt, Collection des Oeuvres du Maître . . . (Amsterdam: Musée de la Ville, 8 September to 31 October 1898), cat. no. 94.


5. Ibid.


8. "Shabrack" is a seventeenth century word originating in an East European language. It refers to a saddle-cloth used in European armies. From the Oxford International Dictionary of the English Language, 1958 ed.

9. Although one author alter echoed Bode's observation that the row of buttons were blue (n. 16 below), an examination record typescript by Mr. William Suhr (June - January 1950) states that the row of buttons were always the colour of the coat.


11. The curatorial notes at The Frick Collection mention that Roger Fry acted as the agent.


13. Ibid., p. 65, n. *, "... doch konnte man mehr entziffern als, Re ... jedenfalls in der zweiten Zeile: 'pinx ... .''
14. Ibid., p. 67, "Boch ist die dargestellte Person weider ein Pole noch ein Kosak."

15. J. Boloz Antoniewicz, cited in Ibid.


17. Held, op. cit., p. 248, n.18, attributes this discrepancy to the reported restoration in Vienna in the nineteenth century.


20. In a letter of 21 June 1957 to The Frick Collection (and contained in their curatorial files), Prof. Bohdan Marconi from Warsaw cites the painting's entry in "Catalogue des tableaux appartement à sa Majesté le Roi de Pologne, 1795." It states that the painting was 44 by 54 Polish inches, which Prof. Marconi states were equal to 2.48 cm.

21. According to Mr. William Suhr's typescript Examination Report of 1950 in The Frick Collection curatorial file, his contemporary head of Knoedler's, Mr. Henschel, claims that the firm has never owned the painting and has never had any transactions in respect to the painting.


24. Batowski, op. cit., p. 65

25. Cf. Ibid.


27. Ibid, p. 250, cites Batowski in an article in Lamus. The Batowski article in *Blätter für Gemäldekunde* is not so specific.


29. O. Goetz, "Oriental Types and Scenes in Renaissance


31. Ibid., p. 257.

32. Ibid., p. 259.


34. Ibid., p. 130.

35. This is the most recent cleaning. It is known that the painting was cleaned prior to the 1898 exhibition by Hauser in Berlin.


38. Suhr, loc. cit.


40. Ibid., p. 295 a.

41. Ibid.

42. Count Henry Krasinski, The Cossacks of the Ukraine (London: Partridge and Oakey, 1848), p. 3, n. a, notes that "the Poles and the Russians mean by the word KOSAK, a brigand lightly armed."

43. Ciechanowiecki, p. 296 a.

44. Ibid., p. 296 b.


46. Ibid., p. 66.

47. Ibid., p. 45.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., p. 50.
50. Ibid., p. 55.

51. Ibid.

52. Żygulski reconstructed the hat according to information he received from an examination by Held and Suhr. Suhr, however, found during a re-examination that the hat was in its original state. Żygulski's reconstruction is therefore in error.

53. Żygulski, op. cit., pls. 18 and 19.

54. Ibid., p. 64.

55. While it is true that the presence of the hammer can identify the rider as an officer, the posture is not exclusively that of an officer, as can be seen from many Stefano della Bella prints (eg, an etching entitled A Lady Riding in a Landscape).

56. Żygulski, op. cit., p. 65.

57. Ibid., p. 66.


61. Ibid., p. 294.

62. Another print from the late sixteenth century confirms Campbell's assertion. The print, by Goltzius and Saenredam, is entitled The Morning. Through the windows in the upper right a landscape shows a rising sun, with an allegorical dawn and two figures, one very much like the Polish Rider (same hand pose, reverse of the horse's step and tied up tail). The illustration is from Georg Hirth, ed., Kulturgeschichte Bilderbuch aus drei Jahrhunderten (Munich: Knorr & Hirth, 1882/90), pl. 1442.

63. Campbell, op. cit., p. 301.

64. Sickert, loc. cit.; F Warre Cornish, cited in
Held, op. cit., p. 45 n. 1; Clark, Rembrandt and the Italian Renaissance (London: John Murray, 1966), p. 36.


67. Ibid., p. 198.


69. Żygulski, op. cit., p. 65.

70. The illustrations come from The State Armoury Museum of the Moscow Kremlin (Moscow: n.p., 1958), pls. 229, 232 and 231.

71. Żygulski, op. cit., p. 55.

72. It is to be remembered that Rembrandt often chose literary sources over visual; hence the classic example of Claudius Civilis.


74. Ibid., fol. 4 - 7.


76. Ibid., p. 57.

77. Blundeville, op. cit., fol. 7, has described the Iryshe Hobby as "having a good head, and a body indifferently well proportioned, saving that many of them be slender and pin buttocked, they be tender mouthed, nimble. light, pleasent. . . and for the most part they be amblers, and therefore very meet for the saddle."

78. Ibid., fol. 4. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "Cariere" is a derivative of "carrier," which means one who carries or bears (something).

79. Cavendish, op. cit., p. 44.

81. Žygulski, loc. cit.

82. Ibid., p. 45. Žygulski contradicts himself: "Rembrandt represented people etc. . . in an artistic and ideal unity, in an incomparable manner."

83. Ibid. Žygulski mentions Andries Pels and his poem, "Use and Misuse of the Stage," (Amsterdam, 1698), for Rembrandt's collection of exotica.

84. Campbell's conclusion, for instance, has no regard for the theological significance of the story. The stages in the Prodigal Son story which would be important singly are the departure of the son, his arrival back at home, spending his inheritance or feeding the pigs.


88. It measures 294.5 x 241 cm.

89. A pesade, according to Francois Robichon de la Guérinière, École de la Cavalerie . . . (Paris: "the Company," 1769), p. 149, is an air in which the horse raises his forefeet high while the hind feet stay firmly on the ground without moving.

90. Clark, loc. cit., perceives the influence of sixteenth century woodcuts in the artist's work of the 1650's.

91. For example, in the print of Prince William Henry of Orange by Peter Stevens (illustrated in Hirth, op. cit., pl. 2653) where the horse is walking, not running, but has still been given some indication of movement, or in the emblem of "The King," (Hirth, op. cit., pl. 1164).

92. It is surprising and quite illogical that Žygulski should discount the value of "second hand material of drawings and engravings by any other artist" and claim that they "must be rejected." Žygulski, op. cit., p. 66.

93. For instance, the figures from the illustrations by Erich Palmquist of 1674 where members of the Russian court are wearing similar coats, hats and footwear as the Polish Rider. Cited in A.E. Cross, Russia Under Western Eyes, 1517 - 1825, figs. 20 and 35 - 37.
94. Źygulski, op. cit., pp 65f.

95. Hirth, op. cit., pl. 2653.

96. The illustration is copied for Charles Berjeau, The Horses of Antiquity, Middles Ages, and Renaissance . . . (London: Dulau & Co., 1864), pl. 51, where it is identified as a Russian on horseback, by Hans Wiegel, from the series, "Habitus praecipuorum populorum" of 1577. A more accurate reproduction was published in Sigismund von Herberstein, Zapiski o Moskoitskikh Dalakh (St Petersburg: Izdanie A.S. Suvorina, 1908).

97. I extend my thanks to the Head of Information Services of the British Library who provided me with the identification.


99. See note 91 above.


108. Ciechanówiecki, loc. cit.


110. Batowski, op. cit., p. 65.

Barnouw, A.J. "Rembrandt's Tribute to Polish Valour." The Polish Review 5 #18 (31 May 1945): 8, 9, 16.


The Frick Collection. Curatorial Files, up to September 1979.


Rembrandt. Collection des Oeuvres du Maître, Réunies, à l'occasion de l'inauguration de S.M. la Reine Wilhelmine. Amsterdam: Musée de la Ville [sic, i.e. Stedelijk], 8 Sept. - 31 Oct. 1898.

Rembrandt Paintings; with an introduction by Thomas Bodkin; paintings selected by Professor W. Martin. London: Collins, 1948.


Stout, George L. "98, Rembrandt van Rijn; 'The Polish Rider.'" Typescript in the Curatorial Files of the Frick Collection, New York.


