

KATARZYNA KRZYŻAGÓRSKA-PISAREK
LONDON

CORPUS RUBENIANUM *VERSUS* REMBRANDT RESEARCH PROJECT. TWO APPROACHES TO A *CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ*

INTRODUCTION

In the past, anything that bore even a slight resemblance to an artist's work was sold under his name. Hundreds of paintings were attributed to Rembrandt by the eighteenth-century tradition. Hundreds more were rediscovered at the beginning of the twentieth century, and certified authentic by the leading scholars of the day. The rediscovered and reattributed works were then included in the rapidly expanding *catalogues raisonnés*, distorting Rembrandt canon. An account of the state of affairs in America at that time can be found in G. Seligman, *Merchants of art 1880–1960: eighty years of professional collecting*, who was an art dealer himself: 'As the passion for names grew along with the demand for paintings, attributions to the great masters were made, so to speak, in generic terms. A great many canvases were called Rembrandts, for instance, simply because they were close to the master's technique; and anyway Rembrandt was an awfully good name. The man who had no informed opinion of his own, yet could not bring himself sometimes wisely, to rely entirely upon the word of a dealer, had recourse to the services of the third party – the professional expert, the art historian, or the consulting connoisseur'¹.

The situation with Rubens's oeuvre was not dissimilar, although on a smaller scale as he was less popular with wealthy American collectors at the turn of the century. The German art historian Wilhelm Valentiner, in his book *Rubens paintings in America* (1946) gave us an overview of the American market for the artist at that time. According to him, Rubens was the last of the great Dutch and Flemish masters to be appreciated by the American private collectors and museums. Rembrandt and Hals were the heroes of the first generation. Rubens was less sought after because of the puritanical prejudice against the sensuous nature of his art. Many American millionaires such as Frick, Altman, Mellon or Widener did not like Rubens's style and did not buy his paintings. Only Morgan acquired half a dozen works which were, in Valentiner's own words, 'not of equal quality'. The 1920's and 1930's saw a new vogue for Rubens in Europe, which resulted in the American market showing more interest for the artist towards the middle of the 1930's.

There was perhaps another reason for the greater stability of Rubens's core oeuvre – he was less imitated and copied than Rembrandt. His complex compositions with many figures in full movement, the virtuoso technique, and the nervous brushwork were arguably more difficult to imitate than Rembrandt's *chiaroscuro* technique. A broadly sketched face of an old bearded man (there are scores of those!) painted in the style of Rembrandt, highlighted in some parts and hidden in deep shadows in others, was an effect

¹ G. Seligman, *Merchants of art 1880–1960: eighty years of professional collecting*, New York 1961, p. 125.

reasonably easy to achieve. But the amplitude and complexity of Rubens's multi figural compositions, his light touch and transparency of colours, might have been harder to imitate.

The core of Rubens's oeuvre was relatively stable but the number of accepted Rembrandt works had doubled in the first half of the twentieth century, mainly through the inclusion of many rediscovered and reattributed works. The first early twentieth-century *catalogue raisonné* of Rubens's paintings was compiled by A. Rosenberg² (1905), and later revised by R. Oldenbourg³ (1921). These had followed the earlier and important nineteenth-century publications by J. Smith (1829–1842)⁴, and especially M. Rooses (1886–1892)⁵. Rubens *catalogues raisonnés* are fewer (4) and arguably less outdated than those of Rembrandt (10) in the height of the artist's popularity. The maximum expansion of Rembrandt's oeuvre took place at the beginning of the twentieth century when, as pointed out by G. Schwartz, the 'supreme judges among art historians were working for the market'⁶. The nine Rembrandt *catalogues raisonnés* published after J. Smith (1836)⁷ were written by W. von Bode and C. Hofstede de Groot⁸ (1897–1906), A. Rosenberg (1906)⁹, W. Valentiner¹⁰ (1909), C. Hofstede de Groot (1915)¹¹, W. Valentiner (1921)¹², A. Bredius (1935)¹³, K. Bauch (1966)¹⁴, H. Gerson (1968)¹⁵, and A. Bredius edited by H. Gerson (1969)¹⁶.

To remedy the confusing situation in the field of Rembrandt attributions an authenticating organisation The Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (RRP) was set up in 1968 in Amsterdam. It aimed at producing the final *catalogue raisonné* of Rembrandt paintings by extensively using technical investigations (such as X-radiography, infrared and ultraviolet photography, chemical analysis of paint layers, study of supports including dendrochronology and canvas thread count) in order to establish authenticity. The leading figure of the project, Josua Bruyn, said in 1969, by recalling Gerson, that 'the tradition the 18th century has handed down to us must be considered corrupt. I should like to add that some people in the 18th century must have been aware of this. A glance at the annotated copies of eighteenth century sale catalogues makes this very clear – and problems of attribution appear to have been known for a long time!¹⁷. The same could be applied to the early twentieth century. The RRP was set up in the wake of the Van Meegeren affair, which involved fake Vermeers and other forged paintings accepted as authentic by the leading art experts such as A. Bredius, W. Martin and H. Schneider of the Mauritshuis, F. Schmidt-Degener and J. Roell of the Rijksmuseum, or J.G. Van Gelder and D. Hannema. Even Gerson was duped by Van Meegeren's forgeries. There was a strong suspicion among scholars that there may also be many imitations and fake Rembrandts in circulation.

The RRP was predominantly set up as a massive and ruthless attempt to correct the corrupt tradition. The aim was to establish a definitive chronological Rembrandt canon *A Corpus of Rembrandt's Paintings* by using modern and scientific methods (sometimes described as 'obsessively technical') as well as the more traditional connoisseurship. As a result a very large amount of valuable technical data on Rembrandt's supports, grounds, paint layers and radiography has been gathered over the years. The scholars involved in the early RRP stressed a need for a greater clarity in the interpretation of the available evidence and for the full explanation of the final verdicts on authorship: 'After the monosyllabic pronouncements of Hofstede de Groot and Bredius, there is a need now for a precise definition of our observations and of

² A. Rosenberg, *P.P. Rubens. Des Meisters Gemälde in 538 Abbildungen*, Stuttgart–Leipzig 1905.

³ R. Oldenbourg, *P.P. Rubens. Des Meisters Gemälde*, Klassiker der Kunst, Berlin–Leipzig 1921.

⁴ J. Smith, *A catalogue raisonné of the most eminent Dutch, Flemish and French painters*, part II, *P. P. Rubens*, London 1830.

⁵ M. Rooses, *L'Oeuvre de P.P. Rubens: Histoire et description de ses tableaux et dessins*, 5 vols. Antwerp 1886–1892.

⁶ G. Schwartz, 'Rembrandt: connoisseurship and erudition', *Revue de l'art*, 42 (1978), p. 105.

⁷ J. Smith, *A catalogue raisonné of the most eminent Dutch, Flemish and French painters*, part VII, *Rembrandt van Rhyen*, London 1836.

⁸ W. von Bode and C. Hofstede de Groot, *The complete works of Rembrandt*, 8 vols, ed. Sedelmeyer, Paris 1897–1906.

⁹ A. Rosenberg, *Rembrandt. Des Meisters Gemälde*, Klassiker der Kunst, Stuttgart–Leipzig 1906.

¹⁰ W.R. Valentiner, *Rembrandt. Des Meisters Gemälde in 643 Abbildungen*, Klassiker der Kunst, Stuttgart–Leipzig 1909.

¹¹ C. Hofstede de Groot, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century*, based on the work of J. Smith, vol. VI, London 1915.

¹² W. Valentiner, *Rembrandt, Wiedergefundene Gemälde (1910–20)*, Stuttgart–Berlin 1921.

¹³ A. Bredius, *Rembrandt Gemälde, 630 Abbildungen*, Vienna 1935.

¹⁴ K. Bauch, *Rembrandt Gemälde*, Berlin 1966.

¹⁵ H. Gerson, *Rembrandt Paintings*, London 1968.

¹⁶ A. Bredius, ed. by H. Gerson, *The Complete Edition of the Paintings by Rembrandt*, London 1969.

¹⁷ D.C. Stam (ed.), *Rembrandt after Three Hundred Years: A Symposium*, The Art Institute, Chicago, October 22–24, 1969, Chicago 1973, p. 33.

the standards by which we interpret them. Only thus will our opinions become rational judgments'¹⁸. During the first fifteen years of their activity the RRP has demoted scores of Rembrandt paintings, but not without strong opposition and criticism from owners, museums, and other art historians. This strict reductionist attitude radically changed in 1993 when Ernst van de Wetering took over the Project as the sole arbiter of authenticity. This in turn led to many reattributions to Rembrandt, so a part reversal of the previous process. Although the Project was originally envisaged to take a decade, it ended up lasting almost fifty years and is still unfinished. It is also officially terminated, as Van de Wetering has retired.

A similar organisation called Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard (CRLB) was set up in 1963 in Antwerp. This equally long-standing and extensive study of Rubens's oeuvre aimed at compiling his definite *catalogue raisonné*, and it is the only project in existence which is equivalent to the RRP in scope. It was initiated before the Second World War by the German art historian Ludwig Burchard (1886–1960), and is based on his documentation, with the addition of all the new material which came to light since. Although the CRLB's team of Rubens specialists from around the world has been working on this project for over fifty years, it also remains largely unfinished. The CRLB has had a very different approach to attributions (only briefly addressed in the catalogue), the technical examination of works (not undertaken), as well as chronology (not followed), with an emphasis on iconography and the historical context. Every work Ludwig Burchard accepted as by Rubens was given a catalogue number.

This paper aims to discuss briefly the history of both organisations and to compare their methodologies and results. It was originally part of my (unpublished) PhD thesis on the subject of *Rubens and Connoisseurship; on the problems of attribution and rediscovery in American and British collection*, completed in 2009 at the University of Warsaw under the supervision of Prof. Juliusz A. Chrościcki, now revised and updated. Although much critical material has been published on the work of the RRP, including in the press, relatively little has been said about the publications of the CRLB, except for book reviews¹⁹. A comparison of the two organisations has been made by Koen Bulckens in his articles *Cataloguing Rubens and Rembrandt. A Closer Look at the Corpus Rubenianum and the Rembrandt Research Project*²⁰, and in *A Clash of Titans. The Rubens and Rembrandt Corpuses compared*²¹. The two catalogues raisonnés of Rembrandt and Rubens are now in large parts available online at <http://www.rembrandtdatabase.org/> and <http://www.rubenianum.be/>.

I. THE OLD REMBRANDT RESEARCH PROJECT

The Rembrandt Research Project was unprecedented in terms of the amplitude of research on the authenticity of one master's oeuvre. No artist had hitherto been submitted to a similarly thorough investigation, in the quest of establishing correct attributions through scientific analysis and study of the painting technique. A team of Dutch art historians spent the first four years (1968–1972) examining all the Rembrandt paintings around the world. This involved extensive travel and years of research analysing the results. The team known as the Committee or the Group consisted of six members, two of whom later

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

¹⁹ For book reviews of the CRLB volumes see G. Martin, 'J.R. Martin, CRLB, vol. I, The Ceiling Paintings for the Jesuit Church in Antwerp, Turnhout 1968', *The Burlington Magazine*, 112, 1970, pp. 543–544; C. White, 'D. Freedberg, CRLB, vol. VII, The Life After the Passion, Turnhout 1984; W. Adler, CRLB, vol. XVII (1), Landscapes, Turnhout 1982', *Master Drawings*, 23/24, no. 2, 1985/86, p. 251; C. Brown, 'D. Freedberg, CRLB, vol. VII, The Life of Christ after the Passion, Turnhout 1984', *The Burlington Magazine*, 129, 1987, pp. 403–404; K. Renger, 'A. Balis, CRLB, vol. XVII (2), Hunting Scenes, Turnhout 1986; H. Vlieghe, CRLB, vol. XIX (2), Portraits after Identified Sitters Painted in Antwerp, Turnhout 1987', *Kunstchronik*, 41, 1988, pp. 566–572; C. Brown, 'R.A. d'Hulst and M. Vandeven, CRLB, vol. III, The Old Testament, Turnhout 1989', *The Burlington Magazine*, 133, 1991, pp. 716–717; F. Haskell, 'E. McGrath, CRLB, vol. XIII (1), Subjects from History, Turnhout 1997', *The Burlington Magazine*, 140, 1998, pp. 42–43; C. Göttinger, 'E. McGrath, CRLB, vol. XIII (1), Subjects from History, Turnhout 1997', *Kunstchronik*, 53, no. 9–10, 2000, p. 488; C. White, 'J.R. Judson, CRLB, vol. VI, The Passion of Christ, Turnhout 2000', *Master Drawings*, 40, 2002, no. 2, p. 171; C. White, 'G. Martin, CRLB, vol. XV, The Ceiling Decoration of the Banqueting Hall, Turnhout 2005', *Historians of Netherlandish Art Newsletter*, 23, 2002, no. 2, p. 20; G. Soltz, 'The Unobtrusive, Ongoing, Exhaustive, Unprecedented 29-Volume Rubens Catalogue', *ARTnews*, June 2007.

²⁰ K. Bulckens, 'Cataloguing Rubens and Rembrandt. A Closer Look at the Corpus Rubenianum and the Rembrandt Research Project', *Rubensbulletin*, V (2014), pp. 93–128.

²¹ K. Bulckens, 'A Clash of Titans. The Rubens and Rembrandt Corpuses compared', *The Rubenianum Quarterly*, 2012, no. 3, pp. 3–4.

died: J. Bruyn, B. Haak, S.H. Levie, P.J.J. Van Thiel, and the late J.G. van Gelder and J.A. Emmens. According to Bruyn's own words, there was a need for a radical and comprehensive action in Rembrandt connoisseurship as 'deeply-felt songs of praise have been written in the past about highly suspect paintings in which no one believes today'²². H. Gerson, taking part in the symposium *Rembrandt after Three Hundred Years* in 1969, acknowledged that there never was and is not yet a stable oeuvre of Rembrandt's paintings: 'Only a small group of pictures by Rembrandt are historically sound. The rest are attributions or not Rembrandts at all'²³. Gerson also suggested that the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the National Gallery in Washington [...] 'still label many different things with Rembrandt's name [...] these shortcomings are sociologically conditioned by the personal interests of the owners and their advisors [...] I cannot express better the tendency for future Rembrandt research than by misquoting a Panofsky formula: we should have less respect for poor tradition and none at all for authority, dead or living'²⁴.

The progression of the rediscovered Rembrandt paintings was impressive. Rosenberg (1906) listed 399 paintings by the master. The monumental catalogue by Bode and Hofstede de Groot (1897–1906) included 595 pictures, many rediscovered for Sedelmeyer, an art dealer and the publisher of the volume. Valentiner (1908) listed 606 paintings by the master. Hofstede de Groot's *catalogue raisonné* (1915) published by Kleinberger, another art dealer, included as many as 644 works by Rembrandt. With Valentiner's *Rembrandt, Wiedergefundene Gemälde* (1910–1920) the number of Rembrandt paintings reached 690. Valentiner's book added 120 paintings to Rembrandt's oeuvre, which were reattributed to the artist in the short period of only ten years. Most works were in minor European collections in Germany, England, Austria, France and Sweden. The second largest group of paintings was in private collections in North America, about half of the first group. The remaining works were widely spread between the art dealers such as Sedelmeyer and Preyer, Kleinberger, Goudstikker, Böhler, Cassirer, Colnaghi and others. The majority of the 'rediscovered' paintings were small portraits dominated by as many as 29 portraits of bearded old men, so a quarter of all the pictures. The rest of the portraits were described as Rembrandt's family members, anonymous portraits, or portraits of saints. In the introduction to the Rembrandt Research Project's first volume Valentiner's book was described as the result of 'an absurd expansionist approach'²⁵.

The connoisseurship that almost doubled Rembrandt's oeuvre at the beginning of the twentieth century was principally the work of four scholars – Wilhelm von Bode, Abraham Bredius, Cornelis Hofstede de Groot and Wilhelm Valentiner²⁶. The rediscovered works between 1883 and 1921 included an extraordinary number of self-portraits and the supposed portraits of Rembrandt's family. Two out of five Rembrandt portraits bought and sold by Sedelmeyer in the years 1894–1905 were showing either the artist or a member of his family. Valentiner identified no less than 182 pictures as self-portraits or portraits of Rembrandt's family.

Valentiner's publication of 1921 marked a turning point in Rembrandt connoisseurship. When Bredius published his catalogue of Rembrandt paintings in 1935, he included only 630 works from the 690 listed by Valentiner. The self-portraits of the artist and the supposed portraits of his family were reduced from 182 to 131, rejecting about 50 paintings. This inverse movement was also followed by Bauch, who in 1966 listed 562 pictures by Rembrandt. In 1968, Gerson catalogued only 420 paintings by the master. Initially, the Rembrandt Research Project aimed to reduce this number even further, to about 250 works. By the time the first three volumes of the Corpus were published in 1982, 1986 and 1989, over 100 works by Rembrandt had been rejected, which caused a considerable crisis in Rembrandt studies.

Volume I of the Corpus was published in 1982, and covered the early Rembrandt paintings from the Leyden's period (1625–1631). It classified the works in three categories: A, for paintings firmly attributed to the artist; B, for paintings where Rembrandt's authorship could not be positively either accepted or rejected; and C, for paintings definitely rejected by the Committee, which numbered 40. Volume II appeared in 1986 and dealt with Rembrandt's early years in Amsterdam (1632–1634); it rejected

²² J. Bruyn, B. Haak, S.H. Levie, P.J.J. van Thiel, E. van de Wetering, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings I, 1625–1631*, The Hague, Boston, London 1982, p. XVI.

²³ Stam, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ Bruyn (at al.), *op. cit.*, p. X.

²⁶ For the study of the work of the four scholars see C.B. Scallan, *Rembrandt, Reputation and the Practice of Connoisseurship*, Amsterdam 2004.

37 paintings. Volume III published in 1989 covered the years (1635–1642), and rejected 39 paintings. The first three volumes followed each other closely by 3–4 years, but as many as sixteen years had passed since Volume III in 1989 and Volume IV in 2005, dealing with Rembrandt's self-portraits. The reason for this was that the Project went through a crisis caused by the many rejections of Rembrandt's works, and was officially abandoned in 1993.

As expected, the results of the Project's first phase (Vols. I–III) were unpopular. The Committee rejected and downgraded 116 Rembrandt paintings, including many well-known and well-loved works both in private and public collections, many in North America. These rejections had serious financial consequences. The verdicts of the Committee were not accepted unanimously and were much criticized, only adding to the general confusion reigning in Rembrandt studies. The Project has generated much comment, both good and bad, sometimes even before anything was published²⁷. American art periodicals and the daily press were fascinated with it and 'chronicled Dow-Jones-like, the fate of various Rembrandt paintings in American museums either rejected or downgraded by the Dutch experts'²⁸.

The Group was accused of many things. Their working methods were called into question and they were said to encourage and instill doubt. There was an interesting commentary on Volume I, by Leonard J. Slatkes from Queens College, City University of New York²⁹. Slatkes described the situation in terms of 'expert-and-museum-bashing'. One of his most important lines of criticism was the so-called 'committee connoisseurship', a methodological issue much discussed. How did the Group make collective decisions? Were some members more influential, with perhaps more persuasive, stronger and more domineering personalities? How did they work out their differences? Were they truly unanimous in their decision, as it seemed in most cases, except when in rare instances someone disagreed with the final verdict, or when the B category paintings were left unattributed? Slatkes compared the RRP to the Corpus Rubenianum as the only generally comparable series dealing with one artist's production. He rightly wondered why the CRLB set so much lower standards of authenticity for Rubens than for Rembrandt. Why in the CRLB series paintings are described and judged by the author of the given volume, rather than a committee of experts? The catalogue entries are, however, based on the notes left by the late Ludwig Burchard, so his opinion is also taken into consideration.

'I have no doubt that the authors realize that like modern forgeries of certain Old Masters pictures [...] the monographic studies and oeuvre catalogues are only completely accepted for about a generation before they fall victim to what might be termed the art-historical generation gap'³⁰ – Slatkes somewhat prophetically commented. This was a reminder that attributions can change quickly. This was certainly true, as many of the Committee's earlier verdicts have already been overturned by their youngest member, Ernst Van de Wetering.

Another critical opinion of the RRP was voiced in 1987 by Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, in an article on the state of research in Northern Baroque Art³¹. His review of the RRP's work contained both approval and criticism. The method of grouping paintings according to formal or stylistic cohesion got his support. But whether the groups established indicated variations of one artist or other artists remained for him largely subjective. Those groups could still be groups of paintings according to Rembrandt's changing style. The method of visual analysis of paintings and of the artist's overall approach to his subject such

²⁷ See some reviews and comments on the publications of the old RRP: 'Editorial', *The Burlington Magazine*, 125, 1983, pp. 661–663; H. Adams, 'If Not Rembrandt, Then His Cousin?' *The Art Bulletin*, 66, no.3, 1984, pp. 427–441; J.R.J. van Asperen de Boer, 'Review of vol. 1,' *Akt*, 9, 1985, pp. 14–19; P. Schatborn, 'Review of vol. 1', *Oud-Holland*, 100, 1986, pp. 55–63; E. Haverkamp-Begemann, 'The State of Research in Northern Baroque Art', *The Art Bulletin*, 69, Dec. 1987, pp. 510–519; C. White, 'Review of vol. 2, 1631–1634', *The Burlington Magazine*, 129, 1987, p. 809; W. Liedtke, 'Reconstructing Rembrandt: Portraits from the Early Years in Amsterdam (1631–1634)', *Apollo*, May 1989, pp. 323–331, 371–372; S. Hochfield, 'Rembrandt: The Unvarnished Truth?', *Art News*, Dec. 1987, pp. 102–111; M. Kirby Talley Jr., 'Connoisseurship and the Methodology of the Rembrandt Research Project', *International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*, 8, 1989, pp. 175–214; L.J. Slatkes, 'Review of Corpus I', *The Art Bulletin*, 71, March 1989, pp. 139–144; E. Grasman, 'The Rembrandt Research Project: reculer pour mieux sauter', *Oud Holland*, Vol. 113, no. 3, 1999, pp. 153–160. Also see exh. cat. by H. Von Sonnenburg, W. Liedtke, C. Logan, N.M. Orenstein, and S.S. Dickey, *Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt in The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Aspects of Connoisseurship*, Volumes I and II, New York 1995.

²⁸ Slatkes, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 139–144.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 141.

³¹ Haverkamp-Begemann, *op. cit.*

as perspective, composition, definition of figures or details was declared as valid – despite its subjectivity. Judgments of quality, however, were less convincing as a yardstick of authorship. The quality of a painting or its execution can be subjective characteristics. We should note that the word ‘subjective’ was used by the author as many as three times in the text, and appears as the most serious objection to the ‘collective decisions’ of the RRP. Incidentally, Haverkamp-Begemann disagreed with some of their negative verdicts.

As examples of controversial verdicts by the Group one can cite the Wallace Collection in London, where eleven of its twelve Rembrandt paintings were demoted at that time. Only one painting by Rembrandt was accepted by the old RRP, *Titus, the Artist's Son*, c. 1657. From among all the works acquired between 1803 and 1868 by Lord Hertford as genuine Rembrandts, two were deemed copies or pastiches, one was attributed to Backer, five were ‘probably’ by Flinck, one by Drost, and two were ascribed to Rembrandt’s studio. Among the demoted works was *Rembrandt in a Black Cap*, 1637, *The Good Samaritan*, 1630, and the pendant portraits of *Jean Pellicorne and his Son Casper* and *Susanna Van Collen and her Daughter Anna*, both dated c. 1632. All these paintings were later reattributed to Rembrandt by Van de Wetering. The rejections and de-attributions were graciously accepted by the Gallery’s Director as part of the necessary process to credit Rembrandt with a realistic output as well as to raise his quality. Other directors were not as understanding. Some defended their paintings in art historical reviews and museum publications, most were reluctant to lose their masterpieces. Many scholars objected too, which led to several publications analysing and justifying the current attributions to Rembrandt³². There was a general lack of agreement on the de-attributions made by the Group.

VAN DE WETERING’S APPROACH TO CONNOISSEURSHIP

In 1993, the four older members of the Committee: Bruyn, Haak, Levie and Van Thiel announced their withdrawal from the project. This was a result of serious tensions within the Group, especially between Bruyn and Van de Wetering, when the latter disagreed with some of Rembrandt rejections and broke the consensus. The older members stood by the reductionist approach based on collective connoisseurship and resigned. Van de Wetering was left alone in charge of the Project, although there were other multidisciplinary collaborators involved.

Van de Wetering started his career as an art teacher and trained artist, which in my view is one of the most significant aspects of his ability to judge paintings. He also studied and practiced Old Masters’ techniques. To understand how paintings are made on a practical level can be of great help to art historians, especially when making judgments of quality. When Van de Wetering was studying art history, he ‘learned that art historians in general paid relatively little attention to the creative process between the artist and artwork’³³. It was perhaps this discovery that later defined his most important contribution not only to the Rembrandt Research Project, but also to connoisseurship in general³⁴. The fact that he examines Rembrandt’s paintings with an artist’s eye (particularly the *peinture* – the perhaps slightly awkwardly used French word for ‘painting’, to describe brushwork) is crucial, although nothing new in the history of connoisseurship. The idea that an artist is the best connoisseur was already advanced by Dürer in the 1520s, and Van de Wetering quoted this fact in his book. At least three seventeenth-century theorists – Etienne Binet, Abraham Bosse and Samuel Van Hoogstraten, also declared that only painters were able to adequately assess pictures³⁵. Also Karel Van Mander, in his widely read treatise on painting *Het*

³² In defence of the Rembrandts in the Wallace Collection see C. Brown, ‘Rembrandts reassessed’, *Apollo*, 148, 2006, pp. 54–61; on the controversy of the *Polish Rider* see A. Bailey, *Responses to Rembrandt: Who painted The Polish Rider? A Controversy Considered*, New York 1994; Z. Żygulski, ‘Further Battles for the “Lisowczyk” (Polish Rider) by Rembrandt.’ *Artibus et Historiae*, 21, no. 41, 2000, pp. 197–205.

³³ E. van de Wetering, *Rembrandt's Paintings Revisited. A Complete Survey, A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, Vol. VI, Dordrecht 2014, p. 3.

³⁴ See some more publications by E. van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*, Amsterdam 1997; E. van de Wetering and P. Broekhoff, ‘New Directions in the Rembrandt Research Project, Part I: The 1642 Self-Portrait in the Royal Collection.’ *The Burlington Magazine* 138, 1116, 1996, pp. 174–180; E. van de Wetering, ‘Connoisseurship and Rembrandt’s Paintings: New Directions in the Rembrandt Research Project, Part II.’ *The Burlington Magazine* 150, 1259, Feb. 2008, pp. 83–90.

³⁵ A. Tummers and K. Jonckheere (eds.), *Art Market and Connoisseurship; A Closer Look at paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens and their Contemporaries*, Amsterdam 2008, p. 139.

Schilderboeck, 1604, underlined that hands-on experience is very important when judging art, and he was an artist too. Van Mander encouraged connoisseurs to acquire at least a basic knowledge of the art of drawing³⁶. Van de Wetering's personal contribution to the 21st-century connoisseurship comes full circle here, and the old adage still holds true – the more things change, the more they stay the same.

According to Van de Wetering, the original working methods of the RRP required a revision to reflect how radically ideas have changed since 1968. In 1993, he published an article³⁷, in which he expressed some of the concerns of modern art historians dealing with seventeenth-century artists such as Rembrandt and their workshop practices. He stated that 'it has been advanced in art historical circles that the idea at the basis of RRP that there is a need to isolate the works of Rembrandt's hand from that of his pupils and assistants would be a complete anachronism, a wrongly applied projection of the 19th century cult of genius to everyday 17th century workshop practice'³⁸. This new approach was in line with the New Criticism in literature, which has developed as a reaction to the Romantic notion of a genius where 'work' replaced 'author' as the central force. The question of whether looking for Rembrandt's hand is an anachronism was previously answered by the Group: 'it was [...] postulated in volume II that the concept of differentiating the hand of the master and his workshop assistants is not anachronistic'³⁹.

We also know that seventeenth-century connoisseurs such as Félibien or Richardson, were concerned with the authorship of paintings. Van de Wetering rightly quoted Rubens's case: 'There are, as we know in the case of Rubens, sources which indicate that 17th c. art lovers were quite keen on differentiating between the hand of the master and those of others working in the master's studio'⁴⁰. A. Tummers wrote that seventeenth-century connoisseurs were keen on recognizing the master's touch, but were not particularly preoccupied if a picture was entirely autograph. This is what she called the paradox of the seventeenth-century connoisseurship⁴¹. Connoisseurs were looking for the masterly passages in a painting where they could recognize the artist's distinctive brushwork, but were not concerned with secondary elements usually executed by pupils in the studio. Van de Wetering wrote in his *Preface*⁴² to Volume IV, that other members of the RRP also began to realise that the methods adopted for the first three volumes could no longer be applied to Rembrandt's paintings from the 1640s and early 1650s, 'because his output from this period and its coherence were surprisingly limited'. A reassessment of the methodology and a radical revision were called for. This and other factors led to the decision to terminate the Project with the publication of Volume III.

Volume IV dedicated to Rembrandt's self-portrait published in 2005, was written under the leadership of Van de Wetering, with a multidisciplinary group of scientists and scholars⁴³. It contains long essays on a number of topics such as problems of authenticity and function, Rembrandt's clothes, or grounds in his workshop production. Rembrandt's self-portraits were placed in a wider context including drawings and etchings, more like in the CRLB catalogues. The *catalogue raisonné* part of the volume included twenty-nine Rembrandt self-portraits listed in the chronological order and dated between 1640 and 1669. There was also a Corrigenda to the previous volumes, in which some earlier de-attributions were reversed. Later, Van de Wetering explained these multiple reattributions to Rembrandt by saying that 'in the 1980's, the thinking about style and the evolution of style was still dominated by the idea of a correspondence between a painter's unique character and his equally unique style (in Max Friedländer's words, "the unchangeable

³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 130–133.

³⁷ E. van de Wetering, 'The Search for the Master's Hand: An Anachronism?' (A Summary), *Kunstlerischer Austausch = Artistic Exchange*, Akten des XXVIII Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte Berlin, 15–20 July 1992, (ed.) Thomas W. Gaetgens, vol. 2. Berlin 1993.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 627.

³⁹ E. van de Wetering (at al.), *Self-portraits (1625–1669), A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, Vol. IV, Dodrecht 2005, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Van de Wetering, 'The Search for the Master's Hand'..., p. 628.

⁴¹ Tummers and Jonckeeere, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁴² Van de Wetering (et. al.), *Self-portraits*..., pp. XIII.

⁴³ For reviews and comments on the publications of the new RRP and Vol. IV in particular, see C. White, 'Review of a *Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, Vol. IV', *The Burlington Magazine*, 148, no. 1235, Feb. 2006, pp. 120–121; G. Schwartz, 'Review of *Corpus IV*', *HNA Review of Books*, Nov. 2006, pp. 28–31; L.B. Rønberg, and J. Wadum, 'Two Paintings in Copenhagen Re-Attributed to Rembrandt', *The Burlington Magazine*, 148, no. 1235, 2006, pp. 82–88; C. Brown, 'The Rembrandt Year', *The Burlington Magazine*, 149, no. 1247, Feb. 2007, pp. 104–108; C.B. Scallien, 'Review of Ernst van de Wetering, et. al. *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*. Vol. IV. The Self-Portraits, Amsterdam, 2005', *Oud Holland*, 123, 2010, pp. 172–175.

core of the man and his style”). That idea, however, proved to be very much a product of its time and, as in the case of Rembrandt, led to a number of unwarranted disattributions⁴⁴.

Volume IV and the following ones echoed the evolved conception of Rembrandt as an atelier master who worked more collaboratively with his students and assistants. A new category of paintings was introduced – works executed by Rembrandt with the assistance of others. Research on Rembrandt’s workshop practice, the training of his pupils, and their contribution to his production was much intensified. Surprisingly, not to attribute non-Rembrandt works to pupils, but to examine the workings of his studio: ‘We are not primarily interested in connecting the names of pupils to non-Rembrandt paintings, but rather in discovering the conventions of seventeenth century training – and workshop practices’⁴⁵. Van de Wetering’s postulated to include in the process of attribution any relevant information such as painterly technique and theoretical writings. He compared his approach to the theories of the 18th-century statistician and clergyman, Thomas Bayes, bringing every smallest piece of evidence into account in order to establish the highest degree of probability (of authorship). These new insights were possible only if the group of non-Rembrandt works to be investigated was also expanded. Van de Wetering was looking for ‘the objective truth’, relying more on the documentary evidence than style criticism. He has grown critical of the ‘intuitive connoisseurial judgement’ and the ‘subjective connoisseurship’ of the old RRP, based on ‘rigid stylistic criteria’, which overruled factual evidence. If a number of objective arguments converged, a reattribution to Rembrandt was possible.

Another distinctive difference between the volume IV and the previous volumes was that the questionable ABC system had been abandoned. Equally, the strictly chronological organisation of the first three volumes was dropped in favour of thematic groupings. Thus Volume IV only dealt with Rembrandt’s self-portraits, dating from 1642 onwards. The focus on the subject of attributions has shifted towards thematic issues, particularly in relation to workshop practices as witnessed by lengthy introductory essays. This looked like a complete change of strategy.

Surprisingly, the initial high hopes of the RRP for the scientific research as proof of authenticity had to be abandoned too. It transpired that the results of detailed technical investigations carried hardly any weight in attribution and the scientific research was of limited use: ‘Whilst in theory it may sometimes be possible to prove that a painting is not by Rembrandt by means of technical investigation, the converse – using the same methods to prove conclusively that a painting is certainly by Rembrandt – is never possible’⁴⁶. Although the RRP expected to find many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works which had infiltrated the large Rembrandt’s oeuvre, very few works were later than the seventeenth century. The vast majority were executed with a technique similar to Rembrandt’s, so were probably made in his studio. Furthermore, Rembrandt’s oeuvre was accessible for technical examinations only to a limited degree, as for instance collecting paint samples from valuable and important paintings was restricted depending on the museum or the owner. Science could, however, still be used for other purposes. In the first fifteen years of the Project, dendrochronology was of inestimable value: ‘No single oak panel came from any tree felled substantially later than the year to which the painting in question was dated on the basis of style or the date it bears. Moreover, the fact that it seemed possible to demonstrate that two or more panels came from the same trunk in relatively many instances indicated that there was a high degree of probability that the works concerned were painted in the same workshop’⁴⁷. Dendrochronology, the research on the grounds, and the X-radiography came to play the most important role in the Project. Van de Wetering stressed, however, that the Project’s participants had to accept their reliance on a type of evaluation consistent with the traditional connoisseurship. But in contrast with the experts of the past, they were prepared to voice their arguments as explicitly as possible.

Eventually two more parts of the Corpus Rembrandt were published: Volume V in 2011, and Volume VI in 2015; the latter will be discussed further on. Initially, Volume V called *The Small-scale History Paintings* was meant to be the last in the series. It contained more reattributions to Rembrandt, reversing more previous decisions of the RRP. The reattributed paintings were marked with an asterisk in the catalogue.

⁴⁴ E. van de Wetering (et al.), *The Small-Scale History Paintings, A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, Volume V, Dodrecht 2011, p. 191.

⁴⁵ Van de Wetering (et al.), *Self-portraits...*, p. IX.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. XI.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

SOME CASE STUDIES OF REATTRIBUTIONS

Despite the remarkable achievements of connoisseurship under Van de Wetering, in some cases their investigations could perhaps be taken further. In the Corrigenda to Volume IV, the catalogue entry I A21 *Tronie with Rembrandt's features*, oil on oak panel, c. 1629, Mauritshuis, The Hague, (Fig. 1) previously listed as Rembrandt's self-portrait (not a *tronie*), was downgraded to a workshop copy. The main reason was that an underdrawing was discovered in The Hague portrait, an unusual feature for Rembrandt⁴⁸. Volume VI listed *Tronie with Rembrandt's features*, c. 1629, oil on oak panel, Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (Fig. 2), as the original, previously thought to be a copy. Only Eric Jan Sluijter thought that The Hague version may be Rembrandt's own after the (presumed) original in Nuremberg⁴⁹. In Volume I the portrait in The Hague was described as 'a well preserved painting (though slightly reduced in size some time prior to 1752) that to some extent stands alone among the works from around 1629; there can however be no doubt as to attribution and dating in that year, on the grounds of various detail features and of its overall high quality'⁵⁰. The painting displays a careful and smooth technique of execution, and is of high quality. The initial attribution to Rembrandt was made by 'on the one hand resemblances in motifs and details, and on the other by a strong impression of authenticity that is borne out by examination of the paint structure'⁵¹. Also *pentimenti* were noted, and for these reasons the painting was identified as an original by Rembrandt. The version in Nuremberg was deemed a copy: 'this is of relatively high quality yet has unmistakable weaknesses, most evident in the neck area'⁵².

Yet it could also have been the other way round. The Nuremberg sketchy and freely painted portrait could have been made after the carefully painted early self-portrait by Rembrandt, who was twenty-three years old at the time. The arguments advanced by Van de Wetering in the Corrigenda⁵³ are rather short. He sees 'the enlargement and elongation of the figure' (as compared to the other version) in The Hague as 'typical faults of the copyist'. But one could see the reduction and the widening of the figure in the other work as such a fault. He advances some more arguments, clearly from an artist's point of view: 'the author has set the various elements of physiognomy – eyes, nose, mouth and chin – as it were on the same basic cylindrical form, whereas in the Nuremberg prototype the anatomically more correct disalignment of the lower jaw and mouthparts with respect to the upper facial parts is observed and executed with exceptional acuity and intelligence'. Does the author mean that the lower jaw in the Nuremberg portrait is protruding, compared to the top lip and part of the face? If so, this is not the case with other Rembrandt portraits, where the lower jaw is well aligned. Another argument, 'the painting in The Hague passes over the eyelid also argues against the authenticity'⁵⁴, does not sound convincing enough to demote the painting to the status of a copy. The figure of the youthful Rembrandt in The Hague portrait looks anatomically correct, well recognisable and spatially rendered. The Nuremberg portrait, on the other hand, is weaker in expression and displays some anatomical problems with the contour of the face and neck. The portrait of the young man looking at us from The Hague painting has arguably more presence and truth in it than the Nuremberg one. Was the copyist a better artist than Rembrandt?

As the present paper was written for a Polish art journal, it is only fitting that Polish-related works be discussed as case studies in Volume V. The first work catalogued as Rembrandt V 20, *The Polish Rider**, oil on canvas, c. 1655⁵⁵, The Frick Collection, New York (Fig. 3), is known worldwide. The question of its attribution has attracted much attention since J. Bruyn suggested in 1984 in an article, that it might have

⁴⁸ J. Wadum, 'Rembrandt under the Skin. The Mauritshuis "Portrait of Rembrandt with Gorget" in Retrospect.' *Oud Holland* 114.2/4, 2000, pp. 164–187.

⁴⁹ E.J. Sluijter, 'The "Tronie of a Young Officer with a Gorget" in the Mauritshuis: A Second Version by Rembrandt Himself?' *Oud Holland* 114.2–4, 2000, pp.188–194. More discussions on the subject in E. Buijsen and R.E.O. Ekkart, 'Rembrandt by Himself?' *Oud Holland* 114.2/4, 2000, pp. 53–63; E. Buijsen, 'Rembrandt's Self-Portrait with Gorget. An ongoing debate', *Oud Holland* 114, 2–4, 2000, pp. 155–163.

⁵⁰ Bruyn (at al.). *op. cit.*, p. 225.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 228.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 229.

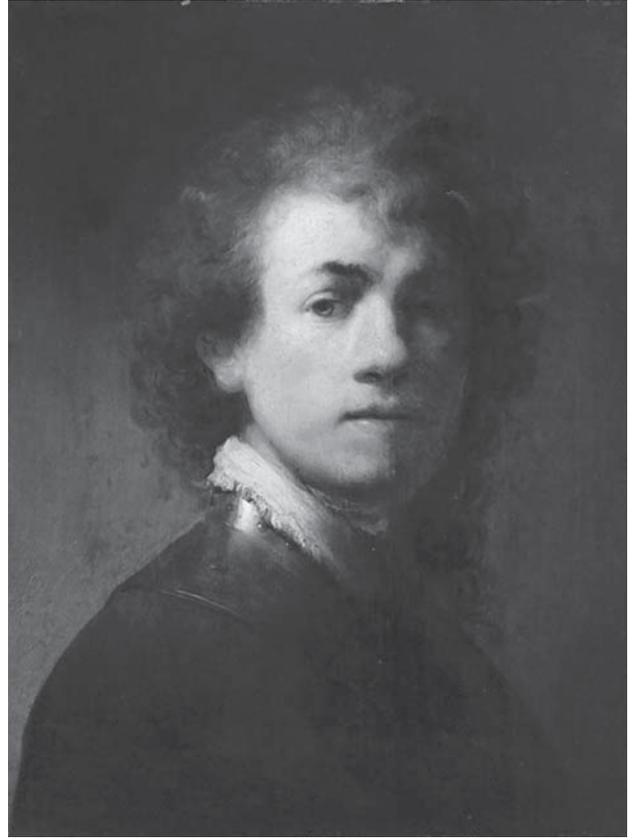
⁵³ Van de Wetering (at al.), *Self-portraits...*, p. 598.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵ Van de Wetering (at al.), *The Small-Scale History Paintings...*, pp. 535–550.



1. Rembrandt?, *Tronie with Rembrandt's features*,
 c. 1629, oil on oak panel. The Hague, Mauritshuis.
 Photo: Wikipedia



2. Rembrandt?, *Tronie with Rembrandt's features*,
 c. 1629, oil on oak panel. Nuremberg, Nationalmuseum.
 Photo: Wikipedia

been painted by Rembrandt's pupil, Willem Drost⁵⁶. Since then controversy has surrounded it, perpetuated by 'the myth that the RRP had definitely eliminated the *Polish Rider* from Rembrandt's oeuvre'⁵⁷, which Van de Wetering incidentally dispels. He convincingly defends the attribution to Rembrandt, while at the same time accepting that it was partly painted by other hands. We first get a meticulous description and visual analysis of the painting from an astute observer who is clearly an artist. Then arguments against the attribution are duly listed: 'The work lacks the coherence in the handling of space and light that characterises Rembrandt's paintings of full-length figures in a landscape or other setting', and 'an almost excessive amount of attention given to certain details whose meticulous execution does not match the rest of the brushwork, which is in places much freer'⁵⁸. The fact that the figure is curiously 'loose' in the picture plane is also highlighted and the attention is drawn to the prevailing red-yellow colouring, which may have led Bruyn to think about Drost. Some parts are singled out as too weak in execution and handling of form to be regarded as the work of Rembrandt, while others are typically Rembrandtesque in style, execution and quality – this is a judgement on quality. The proportions of the figure of the rider as well as anatomical details are also described as 'oddly weak'. The author concludes that on the basis of such passages, it is indeed difficult to believe that this is a work by Rembrandt.

On the other hand, other parts of the picture are identified as characteristic of Rembrandt's hand and his pictorial vision, such as the head and the neck of the horse where the complex forms and lighting are suggested with sureness of touch, and in accordance with his painterly method. The highlights on the metal parts are characteristic of Rembrandt, as is the handling of the quiver with its sheaf of arrows, the war hammer, the bow and the scabbard of the sabre. Also the building with a dome in the background can be

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 540.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 541.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 541.



3. Rembrandt, *The Polish Rider (Lisowczyk)*, c. 1655, oil on canvas. New York, The Frick Collection. Photo: Wikipedia



4. Rembrandt, *A Girl in Fanciful Costume in a Picture Frame*, 1641, oil on oak panel. Warsaw, the Royal Castle. Photo: Wikipedia

found in several works by Rembrandt and is marked by ‘tectonic and perspectival strength’. We are told that it is one of the motifs that contribute to the impression of stability that emanates from Rembrandt’s landscapes and landscape background. Van de Wetering suggests that the parts that were judged too weak by the critics might have been left in the underpainting stage. This applies to the horse’s legs, hindquarters and tail as well as the landscape and the terrain in which the rider is placed. Throughout his reasoning Van de Wetering makes frequent and one must say, convincing, comparisons to other works by Rembrandt.

The same detailed investigation involves the dating and provenance of the *The Polish Rider*. The date 1655 is accepted, as that same year Rembrandt painted two works which also display the characteristic combination of a broad, “rough” treatment and meticulous almost still-life-like definition of certain elements: *Joseph accused by Potiphar’s wife* (V 22) in Berlin, and *Slaughtered Ox* in Paris (V 21). They are also relatively large works like *The Polish Rider*. The Polish provenance is discussed in details; the most important contribution deemed that of the illustrious Polish scholar, Z. Żygulski Jn., who produced ‘telling reference material which convincingly demonstrated that the dress and weapons were characteristically Polish’. The rider’s pose and the horse’s build are typical of the Polish light cavalry of the 17th century. But according to Van de Wetering, the work is not a portrait of a Polish nobleman, as has been advanced by others, but a *tronie* in the Polish manner. Interestingly, we learn that many old stone tablets on Dutch houses, especially in Amsterdam, depict Poles or Polish riders and they have much in common with this painting. Many Poles also apparently featured in Dutch theatre, often as ‘the stereotypical short-tempered, proud nobleman.’

Two more Polish-related works, of which one was reattributed back to Rembrandt, are listed in Volume VI, and their entries are very interesting. Catalogue entries *185 and *186 correspond to Rembrandt, *A Scholar at a Writing Desk*, 1641, and Rembrandt, *A Girl in Fanciful Costume in a Picture Frame*, oil on panel, 1641, (Fig. 4) both at the Royal Castle in Warsaw⁵⁹. Coming from the Count Lanckoroński’s collection in Vienna, they were in the Polish King Stanislaus Augustus’s collection between 1770 and 1815. Earlier listed together in 1769 in an inventory of the Comte de Kamke, as *La Juive fiancée* and *Le Pere de la fiancée reglant sa dot*, they were considered as pendants. The portrait of the scholar is indisputably by Rembrandt’s hand, but some doubt was expressed about the portrait of the young girl, among others by Gerson, Ziemia

⁵⁹ Van de Wetering, *Rembrandt’s Paintings Revisited...*, pp. 575–576.

(who opted for Bol), and Liedtke and Brown (both suggested Van Hoogstraten). Van de Wetering proposes another approach to the question of their pairing, which allows for Rembrandt's authorship of both works. They are of the same size and are both on poplar panels, but the girl's portrait was probably larger. This is shown by the cropping of the frame on the side and at the top. The way the figures are placed in the images is also different: the girl is standing in a picture frame in a manner of *trompe l'oeil*, but the old man is sitting at a desk. The floor level in both works is different. Additionally, a pairing of an old man with a young girl was unconceivable in the seventeenth-century Dutch pictorial tradition. The painterly treatment of both works is different too, as the old man's outfit is much richer in detail.

If Lanckoroński paintings are not pendants, some differences in their execution become explicable and need not reflect different hands at work. Rembrandt's *Portrait of Agatha Bas*, also dated 1641, shows indeed some differences in execution, and looks more sophisticated than the portrait of the girl. But according to Van de Wetering, the latter could have been the earlier prototype and inspired the Bas portrait. This is confirmed not only by the idea of the *trompe l'oeil*, but also the artist's attempt to portray movement. The girl is moving, as perceptively noticed by the author. The hand is suspended above the window frame, the earring is swinging, and the body is slightly turned to the left. This invention does not feature in Rembrandt pupils' work. Van de Wetering lists other arguments in favour of the reattribution, building up the probability of authorship. The panel comes from the same batch of poplar planks as other works of the period. The picture is painted over an unfinished portrait of a woman, as in other Rembrandt works. The girl's dress is most likely unfinished. The treatment of the face and hands is masterly and can be compared to other works by the artist. The painting was signed by Rembrandt freshly after the execution of the painting. The treatment of the texture of the dress is similar to *Saskia as Flora* and to the clothes of one of the men in the *Night Watch*. There is also a 17th copy of the work possibly executed in Rembrandt's studio. The probability that this painting was painted by Rembrandt is therefore 'fairly high'. The arguments advanced are convincing and testify to the author's high powers of observation, probably largely derived from his experience as an artist.

VOLUME VI: THE RETURN OF THE MORE CONVENTIONAL CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ

Volume V, which was meant to be the last in the series, has left many post-1642 paintings uncatalogued. This included large scale history paintings, life-size biblical, mythological and allegorical works, all the portraits (except for self-portraits) and landscapes, in total about one hundred works which would make nearly a quarter of Rembrandt accepted oeuvre. This situation left many unsatisfied parties – art historians, owners of paintings both private and institutional and Rembrandt students. So what C. White called in his 2015 article *The Rembrandt Research Project and its denouement*⁶⁰, a 'mopping-up operation' followed. Between 2005 and 2012 Van de Wetering travelled the world and saw every Rembrandt painting in existence except for three works. In 2015 he authored the final Volume VI, *Rembrandt's Paintings Revisited: A Complete Survey*. This large, beautifully illustrated book contains the complete works of Rembrandt accepted by Van de Wetering, including paintings rejected by others and rejecting those others have accepted. The author practically single-handedly ('a volume, which contains all the paintings of which, I am convinced, Rembrandt was the author or the co-author'⁶¹) reattributes to Rembrandt and his studio a large number of demoted paintings, and declares that 'in retrospect, it is surprising to note how shallow the underpinning of these frequently negative opinions was'⁶². He describes Gerson's connoisseurship as 'remarkably simple judgements of quality, always related to the execution of the painting concerned'⁶³. He also admits to 'the fallibility of connoisseurship' in general, 'specifically with Rembrandt as the major artist concerned'⁶⁴.

⁶⁰ C. White, 'The Rembrandt Research Project and its denouement', *The Burlington Magazine*, Feb. 2015, no. 1343, Vol. 157, pp. 71–73.

⁶¹ Van de Wetering, *Rembrandt's Paintings Revisited...*, p. IX.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. X.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

Apart from displaying the chronological order and the more conventional style of the earlier catalogues, the volume also contains a remarkable personal account of the history of the RRP, especially the animosity and ideological differences between Bruyn's 'narrow viewpoint' and Van de Wetering's inclusive approach. We are told that Bruyn's view was dominated by the idea that Rembrandt's way of painting changed from one period to another, but largely remained uniform within those periods in which there were no radical variations. Van de Wetering postulates an important, albeit perhaps controversial, idea that a range of styles within the same period of an artist is entirely acceptable. As noted by White, he is also 'at pains to emphasise that he is *not* offering a conventional *catalogue raisonné* of which paintings he accepts as by Rembrandt, but instead is providing what are modestly called notes to the plates following the style of Gerson's notes to Bredius'⁶⁵. Once again we come full circle, this time to the earlier *catalogues raisonnés* in the style of Gerson and Bredius, where the entire oeuvre was catalogued by one man only – the final authority on the master. The more things change, the more they stay the same. Van de Wetering's notes to the plates are rather fragmentary and succinct and mainly concentrate on the complexities of problems of attribution. They lack provenance and condition of paintings and very few references are provided. According to the author, the plates are the most important part of the book, and they are of the highest photographic quality.

In Volume VI, Van de Wetering adds to the Rembrandt Corpus eight rediscovered pictures in the wake of the acceptance of *The Baptism of the Eunuch*, 1626, Utrecht and the *Laughing Soldier*, 1630, oil on copper, The Hague (Fig. 5) (I am not entirely convinced about the validity of this attribution). This also includes the latest Rembrandt discovery, *Self-portrait laughing*, oil on copper, c. 1628, which emerged in 2007 at auction in England, and was later sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum. The author reattributes to Rembrandt as many as 44 pre-1642 paintings rejected by the RRP in vols. I–III, such as *The Good Samaritan*, 1630 and the *Self-Portrait*, 1637 from the Wallace Collection. As to the post-1642 works not listed in the previous five volumes, he includes 26 pictures previously rejected by various authors, primarily Gerson and Tümpel. Volume VI brings the total number of accepted works by Rembrandt to 340. As many as 70 paintings, which were removed from Rembrandt's oeuvre or were strongly doubted, are re-instated by Van de Wetering. Paradoxically, some of the reattributions continue to be rejected by the museums, who own the paintings, as has been reported in the press⁶⁶. The re-instated Rembrandt, *An Old Man in an Armchair*, 1650s in the London National Gallery, is still labelled 'Follower of Rembrandt'. The reattributed to Rembrandt *Auctioneer*, 1658 at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, is still labelled 'Follower of Rembrandt'; and *Rembrandt as a Young Man*, 1630 (downgraded by the early RRP to 'imitation') in the same museum, is also still labelled 'Style of Rembrandt'. Smaller museums such as the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Mass, are more willing to accept new attributions. *Portrait of a Man Reading by Candlelight* (1648), also known as *Man Reading* is now 'attributed to Rembrandt'.

Van de Wetering himself is realistic about the certitude of his conclusions. 'Having learnt from the experience of having to change his mind over the course of time, Van de Wetering makes no claims to finality of judgment. He is aware that a definitive answer to what Rembrandt did or did not paint is not achievable, at least at present, and there will always be much scope for discussion' – underlines C. White⁶⁷. He then concludes, somewhat contradictorily: 'And so after forty-six years of intensive research on the part of the dwindling band of the RRP, we are finally presented with a newly defined corpus of Rembrandt's painted oeuvre'. But are we?

The comprehensive technical examination of Rembrandt's paintings, the wide-ranging and insightful analysis of the artist's painterly technique and his studio practices, the full articulation of the process of attribution as well as an honest admittance of any existing doubts, must deserve our highest praise. The detailed hands-on discussions on attributions are also extremely interesting and exciting, when conducted

⁶⁵ White, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁶⁶ For press reports on the re-attributions see J.S. Marcus, 'An Expert Cites Dozens of Paintings as Rembrandt's', *The Wall Street Journal*, 8 Oct. 2014; N. Siegal, 'Disputed Painting Is Declared an Authentic Rembrandt After Decades', *The New York Times*, 9 June 2015; M. Brown, 'Rembrandt expert urges National Gallery to rethink demoted painting', *The Guardian*, 23 May 2014; E. Zolfaghariard, 'It's official! Rembrandt was master of the selfie: Portrait of the Dutch artist has been scientifically verified after 50 years of doubt', *The Daily Mail*, 9 June 2014; J. Lopez, 'A Rembrandt Becomes a Rembrandt Again', *The Wall Street Journal*, 6 May 2014; V. Noce, 'Rembrandt or not Rembrandt, Le spécialiste Ernst van de Wetering propose de réattribuer 70 toiles au maître baroque hollandais', *Liberation*, 19 Nov. 2014, etc.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.



5. Rembrandt?, *Laughing Soldier*, 1630, oil on copper.
 The Hague, Mauritshuis. Photo: Wikipedia

by Van de Wetering with his artist's insights. It is clear, however, that him and the new RRP, unlike the emphatically overconfident scholars of the past, no longer claim to be able to determine a definitive Corpus of Rembrandt's works – the initial objective of the Project. In the RRP's own words: '[...] the team's classification of a painting in one of the three categories was emphatically presented as a matter of opinion [...] this is why in each case we try to convey the full extent of our doubts [...] ultimately, of course, no conclusive evidence or proof can be provided, only degrees of probability, which may nonetheless be very high'⁶⁸. This lack of certitude as to the final verdicts on authorship is also reflected in the disclaimer: 'The opinions expressed in this volume (IV), and the previously published volumes I–III in the Series *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, should be understood as "opinions" that are meant for academic use only. [...] Opinions have been changed in the past according to new insights and scholarship. [...] Therefore, the conclusions expressed in the volumes are only opinions and not a warranty of any kind. [...] Anyone is free to disagree with the opinions expressed in these volumes'⁶⁹.

Van de Wetering admits to the confusion in Rembrandt reattributions and de-attributions: 'it is at present barely possible for the uninitiated to find a way through the forest of attributions, disattributions, revisions of the same and the more recently newly discovered works by Rembrandt etc. that are now distributed over the whole of the Corpus'⁷⁰. According to Schwartz, 'the attributions and especially the de-attributions in vols. 1–3 of the Corpus are today fairly useless and continue to create confusion – all the greater for the lingering prestige of the RRP'⁷¹.

Van de Wetering tellingly quotes Max Friedländer's words in his *Preface* to Volume IV: 'One should gather up the courage to say "I do not know" and remember that he who attributes a painting incorrectly displays unfamiliarity with two masters, namely of the author, whom he does not recognise, and of the painter, whose

⁶⁸ Van de Wetering (at al.), *Self-portraits...*, p. XVI.

⁶⁹ Van de Wetering, *Rembrandt's Paintings Revisited...*, p. VI.

⁷⁰ Van de Wetering (at al.), *The Small-Scale History Paintings...*, p. XVI.

⁷¹ G. Schwartz, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings as a Test Case for Connoisseurship*, p. 234. Accessed online April 2016 at <https://schwartzlist.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/connoisseurship-schwartz.pdf>

name he announces'⁷². Has the final outcome of the many years of intensive research on the authenticity of Rembrandt's oeuvre caused even more confusion than the early twentieth-century connoisseurship?

If every painting by Rembrandt is individual and unique as now postulated ('there is no such thing as a typical Rembrandt; each painting is unusual in its own way'⁷³) how are we going to find the necessary common ground for making reliable attributions? Norms of authenticity and style do exist for other artists and attributions are still made on basis of style. Why would Rembrandt be such an exceptionally changeable artist who painted in so many different styles at the same time? Why do Rembrandt's paintings illustrated in the latest *catalogue raisonné* look so disparate and of such variable quality when painted in the same period of time? The complexities of problems of attribution connected with Rembrandt are now staggering, even for experts. When Van de Wetering, the last member of the RRP and the final authority on the subject disappears, will his opinions still stand? Who will be the next arbiter of authenticity and will he or she make more corrections? Despite fifty years of research and all the technical investigations the confidence in Rembrandt connoisseurship is lower than ever. Today nobody seems to know what a Rembrandt painting should look like anymore.

II. LUDWIG BURCHARD AND THE CORPUS RUBENIANUM

The first *catalogue raisonné* of Rubens's paintings was compiled in 1830 by the London art dealer John Smith (1781–1855), as the second part of his *Catalogue raisonné of the most eminent Dutch, Flemish and French painters* in nine volumes, published between 1829 and 1842. The catalogue does not contain illustrations, only a biographical chapter, preliminary observations discussing Rubens's output and authorship, descriptions and subject of works, their dimensions, prices if sold, the galleries and private collections where found, and the names of engravers. The enormous scope of John Smith's work must however impress today's readers, as he was not only capable of compiling Rubens's *catalogue raisonné* single-handedly, which is now considered virtually impossible, but at the same time the catalogues of so many more artists – including Rembrandt!

Fifty years later, Max Rooses (1839–1914) published his own monumental *catalogue raisonne, L'Œuvre de P. P. Rubens: histoire et description de ses tableaux et dessins* (Antwerp 1886–1892), arranging the existing material according to subject. The five large volumes were illustrated, mostly with engravings. Rooses also studied contemporary painters in Antwerp and published books on the work of the sixteenth-century print publisher Christophe Plantin. In 1876 he became the first curator of the Plantin-Moretus Museum. He was selected to complete Rubens's *catalogue raisonné* while simultaneously compiling an inventory of the Plantin's archives, so his monumental work was done when he was also busy on another large project!

In 1905, Adolf Rosenberg published his mainly photographic catalogue, *Des Meisters Gemälde P.P. Rubens*, revised in 1921 by Rudolf Oldenbourg. Both volumes contained an introduction, photographs of Rubens's paintings in the chronological order with short captions, but nothing more. It is surprising that there was no other complete modern *catalogue raisonné* of Rubens's works (apart from the still unfinished CRLB), except for Michael Jaffé's *Rubens, Catalogo Completo*, published in 1989 in Italian. Jaffé's one volume catalogue is illustrated and includes short entries on each painting, but is considered unreliable, as it contains a number of questionable and weak works attributed to Rubens by the author alone and disputed by other scholars. Perhaps significantly, it has not been translated into English.

Ludwig Burchard, who laid the foundation of the Corpus Rubenianum conceived the plan for a Rubens *catalogue raisonné* in the 1920s, and outlined his goals in the 1939 prospectus for the publisher Elsevier⁷⁴. He stated in it that he aimed at 'the complete embodiment of our improved knowledge of Rubens's work'. Burchard adopted the methods and framework used earlier by Smith and Rooses, while adding any new information which came to light since. This conservative, traditional approach which still continues today at the CRLB, contrasts strongly with the radical goals and the cutting-edge methods of the RRP,

⁷² Van de Wetering (at al.), *Self-portraits...*, p. XIII, quoting M. J. Friedländer, *Von Kunst und Kennerschaft*, Oxford–Zürich 1946, p. 158.

⁷³ Van de Wetering, *Rembrandt's Paintings Revisited...*, p. 664.

⁷⁴ Prospectus published in *extenso* in the foreword by F. Baudouin and R.A. d'Hulst to J.R. Martin, *The Ceiling Paintings of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp. Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*, Vol. I, London–New York 1968, pp. IX–XI.

implemented to establish the core of authentic works. As the pivotal figure of the *Corpus Rubenianum* project, Burchard warrants a biographical introduction⁷⁵.

Ludwig Burchard was born in 1886 in Mainz, Germany and died in London in 1960. He studied at the universities of Munich, Heidelberg and Halle-Wittenberg, later volunteering at the print rooms in Dresden and Berlin, earning the praise of the Director Wilhem von Bode. In the 1920s, he was editor of the *Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon*, founded by Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker (Thieme-Becker) in Leipzig. During this time he wrote his first articles in art history periodicals, bringing to light several unknown paintings and drawings by Rubens. Burchard moved to Berlin as the editor of *Zeitschrift für bildenden Kunst*, 1921–1922. In 1921 he completed the volume on Rubens in the *Klassiker der Kunst* series, left undone by the untimely death of Rudolf Oldenbourg. Shortly afterwards, Gustav Glück, Director of the Gemäldegalerie, Vienna, approached him to assist on the publication of Rubens's *catalogue raisonné*. It was then that he started planning the new catalogue, which would become his lifetime project. He settled in Hampstead, London in 1935 with his large archive of Rubens material. In 1939 he published the previously mentioned prospectus for his upcoming illustrated *catalogue raisonné* of paintings, drawings and engravings, *The Work of Peter Paul Rubens*, in six volumes. Burchard was optimistic in thinking that great progress has been made in the critical distinction between what is by the master and what is not. The outbreak of the Second World War stopped his publishing plans. After the war, many Rubens paintings emerged on the market or changed owners, and their whereabouts became unknown. The final *catalogue raisonné* was once again delayed. In 1955, Burchard conducted a seminar on Rubens, which in the following year he expanded to a Rubenshuis exhibition of Rubens drawings. The exhibition catalogue, co-written with Roger d'Hulst, was enlarged in 1963, and remains one of his rare publications⁷⁶.

During his long career Burchard frequented major auction houses, art dealers and collectors for whom he provided professional opinions and certificates of authenticity, as was the practice at the time. Visitors came to him every day at 23 Cannon Place, Hampstead, with their works of art. Despite his great knowledge and unquestioned authority on Rubens's oeuvre he was criticised for withholding from other scholars much of the material he collected. His reason for not publishing his work on Rubens was his constant dissatisfaction with the incomplete state of Rubens studies. After his death in 1960, his personal archive was acquired for the Kunsthistorische Museum by Frans Baudouin with the assistance of d'Hulst. It became the nucleus of the *Rubenianum*, a documentation center for the study of Rubens and the 16th and 17th century Flemish art, housed in Antwerp. One condition of the bequest was that Rubens's *catalogue raisonné* should be published on the basis of Burchard's documentary material. The city of Antwerp made an agreement with his heirs and the Nationaal Centrum voor de Plastische Kunsten in de 16de en de 17de eeuw, presided over by d'Hulst, to edit and publish a set of six volumes, known as the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*. The task of the compilers was to complete and if needed to revise his material, adding their own contribution as well as the results of modern research.

The publications of the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* adhered as much as possible to his original intentions expressed in the 1939 prospectus. However, Dr. Burchard planned only a six-part catalogue which later became twenty-six, and now twenty-nine parts, each sometimes made of two or more volumes to include the vast amount of new material that has come to light in the last fifty years. Since the writing of the prospectus, the documentation on Rubens's work has increased substantially, not least through Burchard's own reattributions and rediscoveries. In the new *catalogue raisonné* Rubens's paintings, drawings and engravings were to be dealt with together not separately, as has been done before.

So far the following volumes of the CRLB were published:

- I John Rupert Martin, *The Ceiling Paintings for the Jesuit Church in Antwerp*, 1968;
- II Nora De Poorter, *The Eucharist Series*, 2 vols. 1978;
- III R.-A. d'Hulst & M. Vandenven, *The Old Testament*, 1989;
- V (1). Hans Devisscher & Hans Vlieghe, *The Life of Christ Before the Passion: the Youth of Christ*, 2014 (2 vols.);

⁷⁵ L. Burchard's biography is online at <https://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/burchardl.htm> sourced from Martin, *op. cit.*, pp. VII–XIV. For a more comprehensive biography, see L. Nijkamp, P. Valkeneers, K. Bulckens (eds.), *Picturing Ludwig Burchard (1886–1960). A Rubens Scholar in Art-Historiographical Perspective*, Turnhout 2015.

⁷⁶ Burchard and d'Hulst, *Rubens Drawings*, 2 vols., Brussels 1963.

- VI J. Richard Judson, *The Passion of Christ*, 2000;
- VII David Freedberg, *The Life of Christ After the Passion*, 1984;
- VIII Hans Vlieghe, *Saints*, 2 vols. 1972–1973;
- IX Svetlana Alpers, *The Decoration of the Torre de la Parada*, 1971;
- X Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, *The Achilles Series*, 1975;
- XIII Elizabeth McGrath, Arnout Balis, *Subjects from History*, 2 vols, 1997;
- XIII (3). Koenraad Brosens, *Subjects from History. The Constantine Series*, 2011;
- XV Gregory Martin, *The Ceiling Decoration of the Banqueting Hall*, 2 vols. 2005;
- XVI John Rupert Martin, *The Decorations for the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*, 1972;
- XVIII (1). Wolfgang Adler, *Landscapes*, 1982;
- XVIII (2). Arnout Balis, *Landscapes and Hunting Scenes*, 1986;
- XIX (1). Frances Huemer, *Portraits Painted in Foreign Countries*, 1977;
- XIX (2). Hans Vlieghe, *Portraits of Identified Sitters Painted in Antwerp*, 1987;
- XXI J. Richard Judson & C. Van de Velde, *Book Illustrations and Title Pages*, 2 vols, 1977;
- XXII (1). Herbert W. Rott, *Architecture and Architectural Sculpture. Palazzi di Genova*, 2 vols., 2002;
- XXIII Marjon Van der Meulen, *Copies After the Antique*, 3 vols. 1994;
- XXIV Kristin Lohse Belkin, *The Costume Book*, 1978;
- XXVI (1). Kristin Lohse Belkin, *Copies and Adaptations from Renaissance and Later Artists. German and Netherlandish Artists*, 2 vols., 2009;
- XXVI (2.1). Jeremy Wood, *Copies and Adaptations from Renaissance and Later Artists. Italian Masters I. Raphael and his School*, 2 vols. 2010;
- XXVI (2.2). Jeremy Wood, *Copies and Adaptations from Renaissance and Later Artists. Italian Masters II. Titian and North Italian Art*, 2 vols. 2010;
- XXVI (2.3). Jeremy Wood, *Copies and Adaptations from Renaissance and Later Artists. Italian Masters III. Artists working in Central Italy and France*, 2 vols, 2011;
- XI (1). E. McGrath, G. Martin, F. Healy, B. Schepers, C. Van de Velde, K. de Clippel, *Mythological Subjects; Achilles to the Graces*, 2 vols. 2016 (published as the article is going to press).

The following volumes still need to be published:

- IV *The Holy Trinity, Life of the Virgin, Madonnas, Holy Family*;
- V (2). *The Life of Christ Before the Passion: the Ministry of Christ*;
- XI (2). *Mythological Subjects H–O*;
- XI (3). *Mythological Subjects O–Z*;
- XII *Allegories and Subjects from Literature*;
- XIII (2). *Subjects from History. The Decius Mus Series*;
- XIV (1). *The Medici Series*;
- XIV (2). *The Henry IV Series*;
- XVII *Genre Scenes*;
- XIX (3). *Portraits of Unidentified Sitters*;
- XIX (4). *Portraits after Existing Prototypes*;
- XX (1). *Anatomical Studies*;
- XX (2). *Study Heads*;
- XXII (2). *Architecture and Architectural Sculpture. The Rubens House*;
- XXII (3). *Architecture and Architectural Sculpture. The Jesuit Church*;
- XXII (4). *Architecture and Architectural Sculpture. Architectural Sculpture*;
- XXII (5). *Architecture and Architectural Sculpture. Sculpture and Designs for Decorative Art*;
- XXV *The Theoretical Notebook*;
- XXVII (1). *Works in Collaboration: Brueghel*;
- XXVII (2). *Works in Collaboration: Other Masters*;
- XXVIII *Drawings Not Related to the Above Subjects*;
- XXIX *Addenda*.

Rubens *catalogue raisonné* includes all the works that Burchard regarded as authentic – they were illustrated and given a catalogue number. This fundamental rule of the CRLB was acknowledged among others by E. McGrath: ‘the basic principle of the Corpus that all the items which were accepted as works of Rubens by Burchard are accorded a catalogue number’⁷⁷. So the many paintings listed as copies (‘after Rubens’) or with a question mark before the artist’s name (?Rubens), which were given a catalogue number, must have been considered authentic by Burchard, but the authors compiling the volumes disagreed with his opinion. Some low quality paintings with Burchard’s certificates of authenticity, which can be found in the photographic documentation of the Witt Library in London, were altogether omitted in the catalogue.

To complete the task of writing Rubens *catalogue raisonné* a large number of international scholars working on specific subjects were brought in over the years. As a result, the volumes vary not only in size but also in style and approach. In general however, they follow the iconographic and patronage-based groupings in the largely humanist tradition, rather than chronological progression as was the case with the first three volumes of the RRP. Some subjects are treated as monographs with a catalogue section; others are in the form of a *catalogue raisonné* with essays. There are many detailed and erudite essays in the form of introductory chapters in this series, written by various authors dealing with complex historical and iconographical aspects of Rubens’s oeuvre. The *catalogue raisonné* section usually contains a detailed description of the given work, a date, technique, support and dimensions, a detailed provenance, a list of replicas and copies, a list of engravings, exhibitions and literature. Historical and iconographic topics are also discussed within the catalogue section, sometimes in great depth. The relevant preparatory drawings, oil sketches, engravings and tapestries are also included in the catalogue, which is one of the most commendable features of the CRLB. The RRP only lists paintings in their *catalogue raisonné*. On the other hand, most of the black and white photographs are disappointing, especially when compared to the RRP’s high quality colour images. More importantly, the physical condition of works and the painting technique are rarely if at all mentioned or addressed. Regrettably, no technical examination of Rubens’s works was carried out as part of the CRLB project. These important shortcomings have not been rectified in the latest volumes, in line with the more advanced authenticating methods of the RRP.

Crucially from our point of view, attributions to Rubens are often left unquestioned, or if challenged by the author of the given volume, not discussed or supported by arguments. Old opinions of such scholars as Oldenbourg or Held are sometimes mentioned, but not addressed. If the author of the volume expresses his or her personal opinion on attribution, especially if they disagree with Burchard, it is usually without providing any specific arguments other than a simple judgment of quality (‘too weak to be by Rubens’ *etc.*) The diverging opinions are mainly expressed in the form of a personal view, rather than a final verdict. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that some works might not have been viewed in person, but were judged on the basis of photographs; or it could stem from relying on Burchard’s opinions. The weaker paintings carrying a question mark before the name of Rubens would be the equivalent of B paintings in the old RRP’s system, but in many cases because of their distinctly low quality they should be classified as C paintings. Overall, the subject of attributions and authenticity is only treated as marginal in the volumes of the CRLB, unlike in the volumes of the RRP where they rightly take centre stage.

Admittedly, the large and well-documented participation of Rubens’s studio makes the differentiation between various hands working on the same painting particularly difficult. Especially as the contribution of Rubens’s assistants, with the exception of Van Dyck, remains on the whole visually anonymous. We also know that Rubens retouched paintings executed by his pupils from his own designs (*modelli*), mostly in large commissions such as monumental narrative cycles or cartoons for tapestries. Nevertheless, some smaller workshop pieces, replicas and copies must have been confused with the master’s work as they are of distinctly poor quality. I would agree with Liedtke, who wrote in a rather discreet note to his article *Reconstructing Rembrandt*: ‘One hesitates to think how many paintings would be dropped from the Corpus Rubenianum if the same standards were applied as they are by the Rembrandt team in entries on previously unquestioned ‘C’ pictures’⁷⁸.

⁷⁷ E. McGrath and A. Balis, *Rubens subjects from history*, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, part XIII, vol. I, p. 10.

⁷⁸ W. Liedtke, ‘Reconstructing Rembrandt and his circle: more on the workshop hypothesis,’ in: *Rembrandt, Rubens, and the Art of Their Time: Recent Perspectives*, 1997, R.E. Fleischer and S. Clare Scott (eds.), Pennsylvania State University, note. 61, p. 372.



6. Rubens and studio, *Lot and his family fleeing Sodom*, 1613–1615, oil on canvas. Sarasota, John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. Photo: Wikipedia

As far as matters of connoisseurship are concerned, there are some marked differences between the volumes of the Corpus. The two volumes on *Subjects from History*, 1997, by Elizabeth McGrath and Arnout Balis, are in my view exemplary, erudite and accurate in their attributions. McGrath does not hesitate to disagree with some of Burchard's opinions and correctly labels lower quality works as 'after Rubens' or 'Rubens and studio'. She puts it down to new evidence that came to light since Burchard's death, and generally praises his meticulous scholarship. She admits however that the classification of works was not without problems, because of the complex arrangements in Rubens's workshop: 'Sometimes the designated original of a painting might be a work executed almost entirely by assistants; at other times a good studio replica, which may in fact have been sold by Rubens as an example of his work, finds itself simply listed among the copies, even if it features first in the list'⁷⁹.

Some volumes are more radical than others in terms of connoisseurship, such as *The Old Testament* by R.A. d'Hulst and M. Vandeven, 1989, where the authors openly disagreed with several of Burchard's opinions, and listed the rejected works as copies. Even so, some of their verdicts were questioned further, especially the lack of articulation when it comes to judgments of quality. Brown wrote the following commentary to one of the catalogue entries, which could be treated as symptomatic of many other entries in the volumes of the Corpus Rubenianum:

'In the case of *Lot and his family fleeing Sodom* the discussion of the three versions is very brief. D'Hulst simply states that he concurs with Burchard's opinion that the Ringling Museum painting (Fig. 6) is the best, painted by an assistant and then retouched by Rubens and that the versions in the Bass Museum, Miami Beach (not the Bass collection) and the Museum of Western Art are copies. D'Hulst adds that he considers the Tokyo painting to be by Jordaens. It would have been valuable for these judgments to have been argued in detail rather than stated, not least because the Ringling painting has been doubted

⁷⁹ McGrath and Balis, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

and the Bass picture seems, at least from photographs, very impressive. It also raises the question why in 1613–1615 Rubens would have allowed an assistant to carry out such a substantial part in what must have been a major commission: is there a lost prime version?’⁸⁰

PROBLEMS OF ATTRIBUTION

Rubens has been credited with a number of rediscovered early works which were supposedly misattributed to his pupils and followers. Some found their way into the volumes of the CRLB. These paintings were executed soon after Rubens’s return from Italy in 1608. They display a strong modelling with hard dark outlines, garish colouring, and an overall crude impression. A good example of such a painting dated c. 1609 rediscovered by Burchard in the 1920s and reattributed to Rubens, is the large *Samson and Delilah* (Fig. 7), now in the National Gallery in London. It was listed in Volume III of the CRLB, *The Old Testament*, as cat no. 31. *Samson Asleep in Delilah’s Lap*, oil on panel, 185 × 205 cm, c. 1609–1610, London, National Gallery. The entry does not mention that the panel was at some time planed down to a thickness of a few millimetres and glued onto a modern blockboard, despite being in excellent condition, as noted by Burchard in his 1930 certificate of authenticity⁸¹. The catalogue also fails to address the fact that the original Rubens panel was last recorded in 1640 in the collection of Antwerp mayor Nicolas Rockox, and that all later records in the Antwerp inventories referred to copies only. It does not mention that the Rockox panel was sold at an auction in 1641, and then disappeared for the next 300 years. In the year 1700 a similar painting of *Samson and Delilah* by Rubens was mentioned as bought by Johann Adam Andreas I, Prince of Liechtenstein in Vienna, but in later catalogues of the collection it was attributed to Jan Van den Hoecke, a follower of Rubens. The Prince sold the work in 1881 in Paris where it was rediscovered by L. Burchard in 1929 and sold to a German millionaire August Neuerburg. In 1980 the National Gallery of London purchased the work at an auction for a record price as an early Rubens masterpiece.

The painting now in the National Gallery, which most likely came from the Liechtenstein’s collection, was acquired in 1700 from Councillor Segers in Antwerp, through art dealers Forchondt. Gathering from their correspondence, the brothers Forchondt thought it might have been a copy: ‘I have duly received the painting of Samson by Rubens, but when I look at it closely, it appears to me that it’s a copy, and Mr Segers has sold it as a Rubens, which is not right; I fear that Prince Adam does not want to keep it’⁸². In 2004 Carolien de Staelen has established that Councillor Seger’s *Samson* came from the Antwerp collection of Maria de Sweerdt, the wife of Jan II Moretus, where it was indeed listed as a copy: ‘Although not every link in the chain is equally strong, we may conclude on the basis of the available information that the painting at the National Gallery can be traced to Liechtenstein and ultimately back to the 1655 inventory of Maria de Sweerdt’s possessions, where the panel is described as a copy after Rubens’⁸³.

Samson and Delilah immediately raised doubts when first displayed at the National Gallery, because of its style and execution. Critics noted the strong modelling, the harsh colouring and lighting, and the paucity of the rendering of textures⁸⁴. They also noted Samson’s extremely long arm, while his toes were awkwardly cut off by the frame. My in-depth study⁸⁵ of this ‘unusual’ Rubens demonstrated that the

⁸⁰ C. Brown, ‘Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, Part III, book review’, *The Burlington Magazine*, no. 1063, vol. 133, October 1991, pp. 716–717.

⁸¹ L. Burchard’s certificate of authenticity, quoted as part of a letter dated 8th of April 1930, is in the dossier of the National Gallery’s archive in London, and was published in *ArtWatch UK Journal*, N. 21, Spring 2006.

⁸² J. Denucé, *Art-Export in the 17th century in Antwerp: The Firm Forchoudt*, Antwerp 1931, p. 249.

⁸³ C. de Staelen, ‘Rubens’s “Samson and Delilah” in the National Gallery: new facts relating to its provenance’, *The Burlington Magazine*, CXLVI, July 2004, p. 468.

⁸⁴ In 1992, an independent scholar and artist, Euphrosyne Doxiadis, and the London artists Steven Harvey and Siân Hopkinson, submitted a written analysis to the National Gallery, challenging the authorship of *Samson and Delilah*. Michael Daley, artist and Director of ArtWatch UK, has also been campaigning for many years against the attribution to Rubens, followed by me in the late 1990s. Their websites are: www.afterrubens.org and <http://artwatch.org.uk/>.

⁸⁵ The chapter on *Samson and Delilah* was part of my PhD thesis *Rubens and Connoisseurship. On the problems of attribution and rediscovery in the British and American collections (late XIX–XX c.)*, 2009, written under the supervision of Prof. Juliusz A. Chrościcki at the University of Warsaw. Also see articles: ‘The *Samson and Delilah* – a question of attribution’, *ArtWatch UK, Journal*, no. 21, spring 2006, pp. 6–16; ‘Rubens: mistrzowskie początki’, *Barok. Historia-Literatura-Sztuka*, XIII, 25, 2006, pp. 245–249;



7. Rubens, *Samson and Delilah*, 1609–1610, oil on panel.
 London, The National Gallery. Photo: The National Gallery

work has a number of problems not mentioned by the CRLB catalogue. First of all, it differs in some aspects from the three extant contemporary witnesses. In the engraved copy by Jacob Matham (Fig. 8), dated 1611 or 1613, dedicated to Rockox and probably executed from the painting in his house, Samson's foot and the old woman's back are entirely contained in the picture, unlike the work in the NG. Yet the London panel was not cut in size, as witnessed by the dimensions in the Liechtenstein inventories. If it were larger, it would not have fitted above the Rockox's fireplace, where it was originally hanging, and which has still survived in Antwerp. More importantly, there are only three soldiers at the door instead of five as in the London painting. The same discrepancies can be seen in the miniature copy in the "Kunstkamer" (art cabinet) by Frans Francken II, *Banquet in the House of Burgomaster Rockox or The Five Senses*, possibly executed *in situ* c. 1630, oil on panel, Alte Pinakothek, Munich (Fig. 9). There are three soldiers at the door, and Samson's foot is complete as well as the old procuress's back. One of the additional soldiers in the London panel has curly hair, no helmet, and is looking straight at the observer. This might be the self-portrait of the person who painted it.

We also have a carefully executed preparatory oil sketch on panel (possibly *a ricordo*) also rediscovered in the 1930s in York (by strange coincidence a preparatory drawing was also rediscovered by Burchard in 1926), now in the Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio (Fig. 10). The *modello* also shows only three soldiers at the door, but part of the foot and back of the woman are missing because the panel has lost two strips of wood to the left and the right after the sale in 1966 at Christie's in London. This last fact was not mentioned in the catalogue, where only the reduced panel is illustrated. When these additional strips were in place the composition agreed with Matham's engraving and the Francken's miniature copy, not the NG picture. J. Held wrote in *The Oil sketches of Peter Paul Rubens*, 1980: 'I consider it likely that the sketch has lost small sections on either side (at the right, the toes of Samson are missing, which is an

'Powrót 'Samsona i Dalili' do Antwerpii', *Barok. Historia-Literatura-Sztuka*, XV/1 (29) 2008, pp. 228–234; 'Samson i Dalila' Rubensa. Problematyka atrybucji a polityka wystawiennicza muzeów', *Rocznik Historii Sztuki*, XXXV, 2010, pp. 189–211.



8. Jacob Matham (after Rubens), *Samson and Delilah*, c. 1612, engraving.
Photo: The British Museum



9. Frans Francken II, *Banquet in the House of Burgomaster Rockox or The Five Senses*, c. 1630, oil on panel, a fragment. Munich, Alte Pinakothek. Photo: Alte Pinakothek



10. Rubens, *Samson and Delilah*, 1609, oil on panel.
 Cincinnati, Ohio, Cincinnati Art Museum. Photo: Wikipedia

unlikely manner for Rubens to handle such a detail)⁸⁶. By saying that, Held admitted that the fact that the toes were missing in the National Gallery's painting is unlikely of Rubens. Incidentally, according to Held, the greatest authority on Rubens's oil sketches, the panel was made of softwood, a conifer, instead of oak that was traditionally used⁸⁷. This would be the only recorded exception among Rubens's sketches. The panel was later reinstated as oak by the Cincinnati Museum.

There are further issues with the *Samson and Delilah* attribution to Rubens. The painting has some technical anomalies. The smooth and thinly painted panel differs in technique of execution from Rubens's other contemporary works such as the *Adoration of the Magi*, c. 1609 (repainted by Rubens in 1628–1629), *Susanna and the Elders*, c. 1609–1610, both in Madrid; *The Real Presence of the Blessed Sacrament*, 1609, or *Raising of the Cross*, 1610–1611, both in Antwerp. It has no complex paint layers as in other paintings, no varied and vigorous brushwork with many impastos; the striped *imprimatura* is light brown instead of grey and shows through as in Rubens's oil sketches. Oddly there are no blue or green pigments, craquelures, underdrawing, underpainting, restorations, retouchings, and no *pentimenti*. When there is an absence of *pentimenti*, we are often in presence of a copy. None of these aspects were discussed by the CRLB, even though the technical analysis of the painting carried out by the National Gallery was available at the time, published in 1983 by J. Plesters in the National Gallery Technical Bulletin⁸⁸. A re-evaluation of such old attributions is much needed in the volumes of the CRLB, as well as an openness and transparency in line with the RRP's approach.

Some volumes of the CRLB accepted a higher number of works of weak quality than others. This in my opinion is the case of Volume XVIII, Wolfgang Adler's *Landscapes*, perhaps relying on Burchard's notes. Judging from photographs almost every Rubens painting with a question mark is of too poor quality to be by the master. Some more works could perhaps be investigated further: n. 24. *Landscape with a Shepherd and his Flock*, Rydal. Penn. Coll. Stanley S. Wulc; n. 32. *The Afternoon (A Peasant driving a cart)*, Farnham, Coll. Wolfgang Burchard; n. 33. *The Evening (A Peasant driving a cart)*, in the same coll.; n. 61. *Landscape with a Hanged Man*, Berlin-Dahlem, Staatliche Museum, etc.

⁸⁶ J. Held, *The Oil sketches of Peter Paul Rubens*, Princeton 1980, p. 432.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, n. 312, p. 8.

⁸⁸ J. Plesters, 'Samson and Delilah: Rubens and the art and craft of painting on panel', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, vol. VII, 1983, pp. 30–49.

On the other hand, A. Balis in his introductory essay to Volume XVIII, part 2, *Hunting Scenes and Landscapes*, extensively discussed the participation of Rubens's pupils in the execution of his paintings, as well as various copies and replicas. Sometimes, he also disagreed with some of Burchard's old attributions.

A small number of perhaps misattributed works found their way into Volume XIX, 2 parts: F. Huemer's, *Portraits Painted in Foreign Countries*, 1977, and H. Vlieghe's, *Portraits of Identified Sitters Painted in Antwerp*, 1987. Volume I by F. Huemer lists the following works by Rubens where the attribution is not entirely convincing: n. 15, *Francesco Gonzaga*, Plympton, Saltram House; n. 16, *Margherita Gonzaga*, Zurich, Dr. J. Bruppacher; n. 21a, *Louis XIII*, Melbourne, National Gallery, Victoria (Fig. 11); n. 46, *Theodore Turquet de Mayerne*, New York, NY University Art Collection; n. 47, *Theodore Turquet de Mayerne*, Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art, and others. Also Volume II lists a few pictures which could perhaps be investigated further: n. 70, *Albert Archduke of Austria*, Castagnolo, coll. Bentinck-Thyssen; n. 68, *Albert Archduke of Austria and Isabella, Infanta of Spain*, both at Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum; n. 84, *Rogier Clarisse*, and n. 85, *Sara Breyll*, both at San Francisco, California, the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum; n. 101, *Suzanna Fourment*, Brussels, private collection. Perhaps in such cases Burchard's opinion was given precedence over that of the compilers?

In 1976, Julius Held wrote about the problems facing the CRLB in his review of H. Vlieghe's two volumes on *Saints*⁸⁹. He noticed some traces of haste, some inaccuracies, and a 'lack of consistency in the way the material was organized. Moreover, there was no statement that would explain why some works have been included while others iconographically of the same order were not'⁹⁰. Held also acknowledged what he called the 'Burchard problem': 'the author had to cope with another, more delicate problem which in most cases he solved commendably even though here too, some compromises had to be made, out of respect for the scholar to the memory of whose work the Corpus has been dedicated. Authors of the previous volumes had occasionally questioned some of the Burchard's attributions, yet those instances were rare and generally concerned minor works. Vlieghe did not hesitate to contradict Burchard even where Burchard opinions were not part of published records but were accessible to him only in form of written certificates. There is not one instance in which I would prefer Burchard's opinion to that of Vlieghe's'⁹¹.

A few more pictures could be reevaluated in Volume I of *Saints*: n. 52, *St. Paul*, New York, coll. Dr. and Mrs. R.J. Heinemann; n. 53, *St. Peter*, *ibid.*; n. 76, *The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine of Alexandria*. Present whereabouts unknown. In volume II: n. 4, *Two Apostles Heads*, New York, G. Callimanopolis; n. 5, *Two Apostles Heads*, oil sketch. Whereabouts unknown; n. 12, *Christ as the man of Sorrows*. Formerly Farnham, Wolfgang Burchard; n. 43c, *Head of a Young man turned to the Left*, oil sketch. New York, private collection, on loan to Metropolitan Museum NY; n. 43e, *Head of a Man turned to the Right*, oil sketch. Newcastle, New South Wales, Bowmore collection; n. 58, *Lamentation*, Jacksonville, Florida, Cumner Gallery of Art *etc.*

More recently, H. Devisscher and H. Vlieghe's, *Rubens. The Life of Christ before the Passion: The Youth of Christ*, published in 2014, still largely follows the previous volumes of the Corpus in terms of presentation (except for higher quality colour plates) and organization of the catalogue entries. The emphasis is, as previously, on the detailed description of paintings, the iconography and the historical context. Recurring motifs are extensively compared with those identified in other works by Rubens. Regrettably no technical examination or condition of works is mentioned and problems of attribution are only briefly addressed by including some opinions by Burchard, Jaffé, Held, Muller Hofstede, Valentiner or Vlieghe. Pros and cons are rapidly assessed and a decision is made. Barbara Haeger, from The Ohio State University, underlined in her review of the volume⁹² that 'particularly valuable is the discussion of the various opinions regarding attribution that appear in the literature. As connoisseurship figures increasingly less prominently in the art historical literature, these analyses are especially appreciated'. Yet these discussions are rather short, especially when compared with the lengthy arguments advanced by the RRP. Haeger also noted that 'it is their examination of the various figures and motifs that the artist

⁸⁹ J.S. Held, 'Rubens's Saints', *Burlington Magazine*, vol. CXVIII, n. 884, 1976, pp. 775–778.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 775.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 776.

⁹² B. Haeger's review of H. Devisscher and H. Vlieghe, *Rubens. The Life of Christ before the Passion: The Youth of Christ, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, V [1]*, London, an Imprint of Brepols Publishers, Turnhout 2014, 2 vols. at the "Historians of Netherlandish Art" website accessed May 2016 at http://www.hnnews.org/hna/bookreview/current/vl_Youth-of-Christ0316.html



11. Rubens, *Louis XIII of France*, 1622, oil on paper on wood panel. Melbourne, National Gallery, Victoria. Photo: NGV website

designed and employed sometimes with little variation in this group of pictures that provides the most distinctive contribution’.

To give an example, the catalogue entry No. 22, Rubens, *The Adoration of the Magi*, private collection, is said to have been accepted by Burchard as a *modello* for a lost or never executed work. As stated in the text, it was rejected by Gelder and Jost, Vlieghe and Renger, but the attribution to Rubens is ‘deemed here to stand up to scrutiny’. The theory of the *modello* is discarded because of the high degree of finish of the painting. The authors duly note that some aspects of this painting do not immediately favour attribution to Rubens. But they point out the similarities with Veronese’s *Adoration of the Magi* in the Brera, and say that it cannot be denied that the painting ‘contains numerous motifs that would recur almost constantly in Rubens’s Epiphanies or would clearly present in later works’. But are such similarities of motifs proof of authorship?

Jeremy Wood’s three volumes on *Copies and Adaptations from Renaissance and Later Artists; Italian Masters*, 2010 and 2011, focus on drawings and are considerably more radical in terms of attributions. Very few works are catalogued as being by Rubens; most are listed as ‘retouched by Rubens’ even if scholars such as Burchard, d’Hulst and especially M. Jaffé, thought they were entirely by Rubens’s hand. An explanation of this more critical approach can perhaps be found in Wood’s *Preface*: ‘much of the Rubens – or supposed Rubens – material that I have scrutinised has been the subject of fiercely held attributional opinion in the past. In my opinion, the only way to deal with this was to set received opinion aside and look at everything afresh’⁹³. Wood rightly notes that ‘the idea of compiling a complete *catalogue raisonné* has become contested’ and says: ‘I am less concerned that I was that some doubtful or marginal material has been included in the present volumes, sometimes on the basis of the Burchard’s opinion’⁹⁴.

Perhaps there is a need felt among the latest contributors to the CRLB, that a fresh approach is required to Burchard’s old attributions?

⁹³ J. Wood, *Copies and Adaptations from Renaissance and Later Artists. Italian Master I. Raphael and his School*, Turnhout 2010, p. 11.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

WORK IN PROGRESS

In 2014, Koenraad Jonckheere, the then new Director of Publications of the CRLB, acknowledged that the whole project proved to be more complex than expected⁹⁵. This would explain the long delays and the ‘work in progress’ situation after fifty years of research. The new Rubenianum Fund was to give new impetus to the project, and as a result, the remaining volumes should be published by 2020. Jonckheere wrote that ‘simultaneously and with the generous support of the Kress Foundation, the staff of the Rubenianum have started to digitize the older CRLB volumes, taking them into the twenty-first century. These volumes have been updated and are enriched through links with RKD images and hyperlinks⁹⁶. I have examined some of the CRLB volumes online, but they only show the old black and white photograph of low quality, even more so that they were scanned.

According to Jonckheere, the lesson from the past fifty years of the CRLB is that too much reliance on the ‘ultimate truth’ (received opinions) was not a good thing. ‘Indeed, if the ambitious project of writing the *catalogue raisonné* of Rubens’s oeuvre has taught art history one thing, it is the importance of clearly plotting the status quaestionis, allowing future scholars to phrase new hypotheses and answers instead of claiming the ultimate truth’⁹⁷. Does he refer to Burchard’s (and other scholars) old opinions and the fact that at times they took precedence?

Significantly, Jonckheere also acknowledges that we must be ‘keeping in mind the fact that answers are not always clearly apprehensible’, and ‘the history of the project teaches us both the limitations of scholarly research’. This for me recalls Van de Wetering’s final conclusion as to the limited reliability of the current attributions. Completing the many remaining volumes of the *catalogue raisonné* in the next few years is, according to Jonckheere, ‘a daunting task, but not impossible’ [...] ‘as long as we are humble enough to understand that not all the answers are necessarily to be given in our own lifetime’.

So what in the past was the task of one man such as Max Rooses (working simultaneously on yet another large project!) and took him only six years, cannot be accomplished by more than twenty authors in over fifty years! One hesitates here to mention that to bring all the existing volumes of the CRLB to the 21st-century standards raised so high by the RRP, they should now be improved and expanded to include the physical condition of works, the technical analysis of materials, the study of the painting technique, the better quality colour images with the inclusion of valuable close ups, and the in-depth discussions on connoisseurship issues directly related to the catalogued works, arguably crucial in a modern *catalogue raisonné*. Burchard’s attributions ought to be closely examined and decisions about authorship explained or even justified if problematic. The standards of authenticity in Rubens’s oeuvre should be raised along the lines of the Rembrandt Research Project and old attributions scrutinised for inconsistencies and contradictions with more in-depth studies of major works acting as touchstones for future attributions. Perhaps such a project could only be done online, where an on-going *catalogue raisonné* could be easily and gradually updated or amended when required, by a team of international scholars working together.

CONCLUSION

Both monumental projects to establish the definitive *catalogues raisonnés* of Rubens and Rembrandt works, respectively Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard and Rembrandt Research Project, exceeded their original deadlines by many decades. Both are still unfinished, and while the latter is officially terminated, the former could be finally completed by 2020. Throughout their fifty years of research the approach of the RRP has changed radically, while the CRLB has not changed enough.

The scientific examination of Rembrandt’s works in order to prove authorship has proven ineffective. The strict reductionist attitude of the RRP based on judgements of quality and style became unpopular, as the organisation demoted many Rembrandt paintings. Van de Wetering changed the direction of the Project, and focused the research on the practical analysis of the painting technique and on studio practices. He

⁹⁵ K. Jonckheere, ‘Koenraad Jonckheere, the Corpus’s new Director of Publications, on a work in progress’, *The Rubenianum Quarterly*, 2014, 2, p. 2.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

introduced a new vision of Rembrandt as a master collaborating with assistants on his own compositions. Van de Wetering postulated, rightly or wrongly, that the artist painted in many different styles at the same time. His highly personal connoisseurship, which has dominated the entire RRP, was based on documentary evidence, degrees of probability, and an artist's eye. He reattributed many demoted works back to Rembrandt, but his decisions continue to divide opinions.

The hands-on technical approach of the RRP strongly contrasts with the purely theoretical approach of the CRLB. While Rembrandt's paintings underwent a thorough technical investigation in order to establish the correct authorship, Rubens's works were not technically investigated at all within the framework of the CRLB. Instead, the CRLB has concentrated on the historical and iconographic material, following the documentation of the late Ludwig Burchard, and adding to it. Where the RRP set out to correct the corrupt tradition, to innovate, and to take Rembrandt connoisseurship into the 21st century by using scientific investigation, the CRLB has followed the traditional methods based on the earlier scholarships of Smith, Rooses and Burchard aiming to complete and update their material.

The early RRP was very radical in the desire to weed out fakes, imitations, copies and pupils' works from Rembrandt's autograph oeuvre but under Van de Wetering it became more inclusive, while reinventing Rembrandt as the experimenting artist actively collaborating with his pupils. The CRLB, on the other hand, was from the start and continues to be overly cautious about the matters of attribution. It still attaches much importance to Ludwig Burchard's old opinions through the respect for his scholarly reputation and the agreement with his heirs. This approach can be seen as indecisiveness.

Despite their ups and downs throughout the years, both projects are outstanding in their own way and have gathered an impressively large amount of information on Rubens's and Rembrandt's oeuvres. They would perhaps benefit from drawing from each other's methods. In fact, Koen Bulckens who has also compared both projects, noticed that they have somewhat evolved towards one another during their fifty-year life span. According to him, the RRP is focusing more on the iconography and less on attribution, and the CRLB shows more interest for Rubens's technique and the problems attributions.

Looking at the wider picture, the idea of a definitive *catalogue raisonné* seems to be contested these days, and attributions are only seen as current opinions, not firm decisions like in the past. Confidence in modern connoisseurship even as thoroughly researched as that of the RRP or the CRLB seems surprisingly low, and attributions continue to divide opinions.

CORPUS RUBENIANUM VERSUS REMBRANDT RESEARCH PROJECT. DWA PODEJŚCIA DO KATALOGU ROZUMOWANEGO

Streszczenie

Artykuł ma na celu omówienie historii dwóch monumentalnych katalogów *raisonné* Rembrandta i Rubensa, opublikowanych przez Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project i Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, oraz porównanie ich metodologii i wyników. Oba projekty przekroczyły pierwotne terminy o dziesiątki lat i oba są nadal niedokończone. Przez prawie pięćdziesiąt lat badań podejście RRP do tematu atrybucji zmieniło się radykalnie, ale metody badawcze CRLB pozostały bez zmian. Rembrandt Research Project od początku koncentruje się na kwestiach autentyczności i atrybucji, z naciskiem położonym na badania technologiczne obrazów. Pod kierunkiem E. Van de Weteringa katalogowanie dzieł stało się mniej restrykcyjne i opiera się na studiach nad warsztatem i techniką malarską artysty oraz na źródłach literackich. Corpus Rubenianum bazuje na tradycyjnych metodach historycznych i ikonograficznych zainicjowanych przez Roosesa i Burcharda, zaniedbując sprawy znawstwa i badania technologiczne. Podczas pierwszej fazy projektu RRP odpisało wiele obrazów Rembrandta, ale pod kierunkiem Van de Weteringa 70 obrazów na nowo przypisano artyście. Corpus Rubenianum nadal kataloguje wszystkie dzieła Rubensa uznane przez Burcharda w 1. połowie XX w. za autentyczne, zbyt rzadko weryfikując i kwestionując dawne atrybucje. Cały format katalogu *raisonné* jest dziś poddawany krytyce. Pomimo ogromnych dokonań obu projektów w badaniach nad twórczością Rembrandta i Rubensa poziom zaufania do współczesnego znawstwa jest nadal zaskakująco niski.