

ACCADEMIA POLACCA DELLE SCIENZE
BIBLIOTECA E CENTRO DI STUDI A ROMA



CONFERENZE 145

HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI
AND THE INTERNATIONAL
ARTISTIC MILIEU
IN ROME

A CURA DI
MARIA NITKA
AGNIESZKA KLUCZEWSKA-WÓJCIK



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Publicato da
Accademia Polacca delle Scienze
Biblioteca e Centro di Studi a Roma
vicolo Doria, 2 (Palazzo Doria)
00187 Roma tel. +39 066792170
e-mail: accademia@rzym.pan.pl
www.rzym.pan.pl



**POLISH
INSTITUTE
OF WORLD
ART
STUDIES**



**NATIONAL PROGRAMME
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITIES**

Il convegno ideato dal Polish Institute of World Art Studies (Polski Instytut Studiów nad Sztuką Świata) nell'ambito del programma del Ministero della Scienza e dell'Istruzione Superiore della Repubblica di Polonia (Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education) "Narodowy Program Rozwoju Humanistyki" (National Programme for the Development of Humanities) -

"Henryk Siemiradzki: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings" ("Tradition 1 a", no. 0504/nprh4/h1a/83/2015).

Il convegno è stato organizzato con il supporto ed il contributo del National Institute of Polish Cultural Heritage POLONIKA (Narodowy Instytut Polskiego Dziedzictwa Kulturowego za Granicą POLONIKA).

Redazione:

Maria Nitka, Agnieszka Kluczevska-Wójcik

Recensione:

Prof. Dr. Waldemar Deluga, Prof. Dr. Lechosław Lameński

Progetto grafico:

Anna Wawrzyniak Małoni

Impaginazione e stampa

LogoScript Sp. z o.o.

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ISSN 0239-8605

ISBN 978-83-956575-5-9 Polish Institute of World Art Studies

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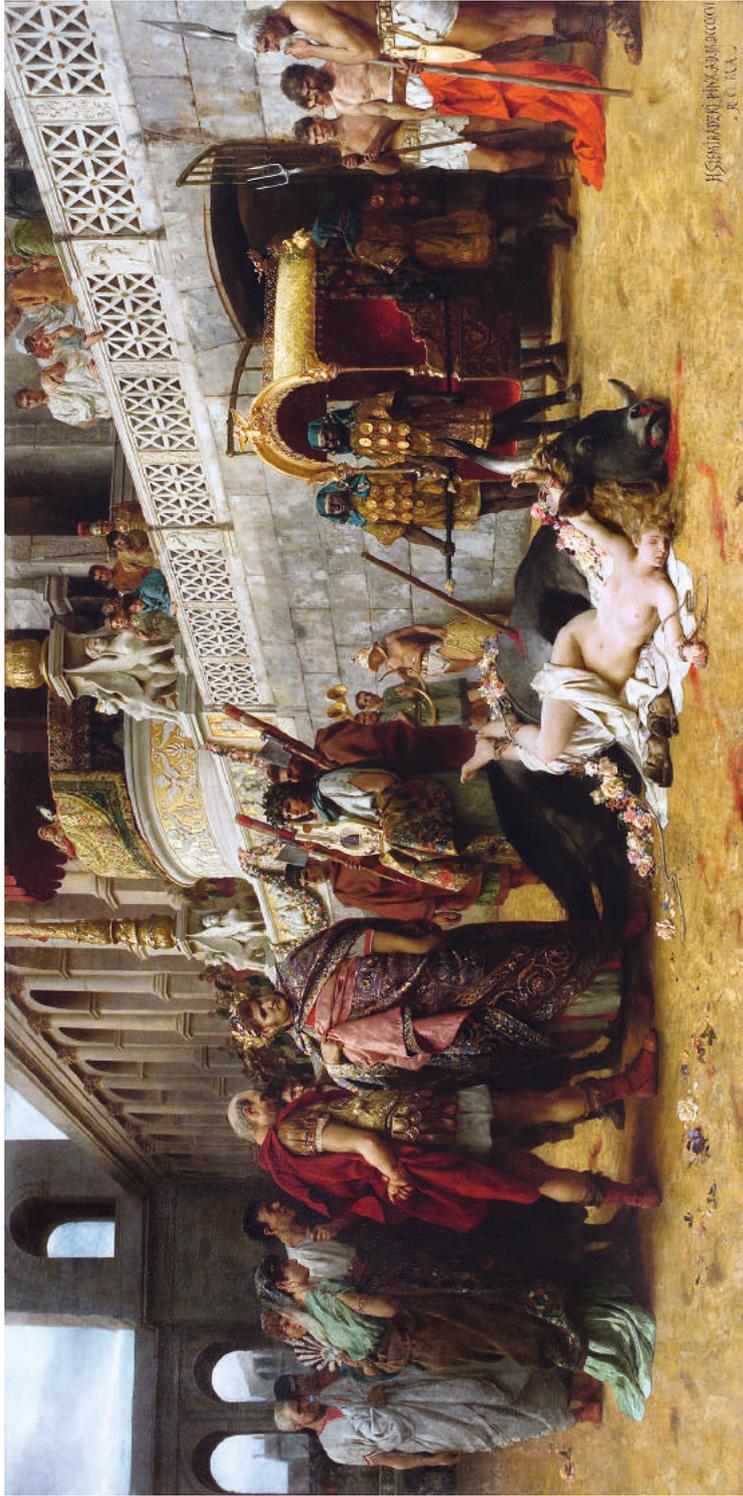
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INTRODUCTION

The 24th of October 2018 marked the 175th anniversary of birth of Henryk Siemiradzki, the painter, whose origin, education and artistic and social activity united various areas of today's Europe: Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Germany, Italy and Austria (fig. 1). His painting, representing academism – one of the two main artistic options, is of key importance for the art of the 19th century in Central and Eastern Europe.

The cultural genesis of his painting is of great significance. The pre-partition lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were dominated by the tradition of Mediterranean culture, propagated by the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and, the most important at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, Wilno (Vilna, Vilnius) University. The Siemiradzki noble family came from Małopolska – Lesser Poland (from the Radom area, south of Warsaw); in the 17th century they moved to the area of Nowogródek (Navahrudak) in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where the artist's ancestors held public offices – his grandfather was a chamberlain of Nowogródek Voivodeship. The family had close contacts with Vilna University, where in 1794 Franciszek Smuglewicz, an outstanding painter who had lived in Rome for many years, founded the first Department of Drawings at the Faculty of Literature and Art. Among the students of this Faculty was the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz, who visited the Siemiradzki's manor house on a number of occasions. After the November Uprising of 1831, the University was closed down by the Russians.

Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich of Russia, the Viceroy (namiestnik) of the Tsar of Russia in the Kingdom of Poland, established after

the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and commander of the Lithuanian troops and of those of the Russian provinces that had formerly belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth while passing through Nowogródek met the artist's father, Hipolit, and offered him studies at the officer cadet school in St. Petersburg. After graduation, he was sent to a regiment of infantry in Novobelgorod (now Pechenihiy) near Kharkov (Kharkiv, now in eastern Ukraine). He completed his service in the rank of general.

Novobelgorod was where the future painter was born. In Kharkov, he studied at gymnasium and university, obtaining a doctorate in natural sciences (fig. 2). At the same time he studied sketch and painting with Dmitry Bezperchy, a student of Karl Briullov at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg. Knowledge of classical culture and the basics of painting opened the way for Siemiradzki to Saint Petersburg Academy. His fate and work at the Academy and after 1872, when he settled in Rome will be the subject of speeches by the conference participants.

His international debut took place at the 1873 Vienna World's Fair, where he received a medal for the painting *Christ and the Harlot* (now in the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg). He received gold medals at subsequent World Expositions in Philadelphia in 1876, Melbourne in 1882 and, above all, in Paris in 1878, among others for his painting *Nero's Torches* (or *Candlesticks of Christianity*), which he donated to the city of Krakow, thanks to which the National Museum was established in 1879. The painting *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis*, purchased by Emperor Alexander III from an individual exhibition at the Academy in St. Petersburg in 1889 began the collection of what is today known as the State Russian Museum. The last of Siemiradzki's great paintings, *Christian Dirce*, after a posthumous exhibition in 1903 at the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts (Zachęta) in Warsaw, was donated by the artist's wife Maria to the Zachęta collection, from where it was transferred to the National Museum. In Rome, where he exhibited his works and participated in artistic life as a member of the Academy of St. Luke, he built a villa-studio at Via Gaeta, which was visited by eminent personalities, artists and art lovers from all over the world (fig. 3-4). Ever since 1884 he spent his summers in his manor house in Strzałków near Częstochowa in Poland in which he also passed away in July 1902. Siemiradzki was laid to rest in the Polish National Pantheon in the crypt of the Pauline Church on the Rock in Krakow (fig. 5).

In the consciousness of Poles, Siemiradzki was, next to Jan Matejko, the most important Polish painter of that time. The artist exhibited his works in Krakow, Lwów (Lemberg, Lviv) and Warsaw, where his parents moved.

Siemiradzki also belongs to Russian culture. A graduate, an academician, then an honorary professor of the St. Petersburg Academy, he was recognized as the most outstanding academic painter of the second half of the nineteenth century. Throughout his life he participated in the Russian life, exhibiting in St. Petersburg and Moscow, realizing state orders for the decoration of temples and museums.

He reached a high status in Rome, hence the place of today's meeting, but also in Vienna and the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

After the artist's death, in 1903 the first monograph *Henryk Siemiradzki* by Stanisław Roman Lewandowski was published (Warsaw-Kraków 1903 and 1911) and the aforementioned *Exhibition of Henryk Siemiradzki's Paintings* was organized in Warsaw. Subsequent exhibitions were held at the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 1939, at the Museum of Art in Łódź at the turn of 1968 and 1969, and in Krakow *The Henryk Siemiradzki that we do not Know. An Exhibition of the Gift Received from the Family (Henryk Siemiradzki jakiego nie znamy. Wystawa daru otrzymanego od rodziny)* at the National Museum in 1980 and at the Museum in Stalowa Wola in 2008. The exhibitions showed only works from Polish collections. The next exhibition at the Museum in Stalowa Wola in the same year *Henryk Siemiradzki in Lwów* showed works from the Lviv National Art Gallery.

Although Siemiradzki never ceased to be written about, the signs of interest in his work appeared after the publication of Prof. Maria Poprzęcka's book *Academism (Akademizm)*, Warsaw 1977), and later in the 1980s thanks to Józef Dużyk's book *Siemiradzki. The Biographical Novel (Siemiradzki. Opowieść biograficzna)*, Warsaw 1986), in which the author included extensive excerpts from the artist's correspondence, as well as thanks to articles by Dr. Piotr Szubert, who undertook an attempt to compile a catalogue of the artist's works. Extensive research into the artist's work began after 2000. Pavel Klimov released the album *Генрих Семирадский*. (Moscow 2001), Dr. Franciszek Stolot published a small monograph *Henryk Siemiradzki* (Wrocław 2001), and Daria Lebedeva – a book of the same title (Moscow 2006).

On the centenary of his death, in 2002, the first conference devoted to the artist – *H. Siemiradzki's Creative Personality in the Context of*

the National and World Culture (Творча постать Г. Семирадського у контексті вичизняно та світової культури) was organized in Kharkiv with the participation of Polish and Russian researchers. The second conference with the same title took place in 2009.

Many publications in Poland and Russia presented the artist's work against the background of late academism, as well as in connection with the international artistic community in Rome. Most prominent among them was the catalogue *Compelled by Beauty. Russian Academic and Salon Art from 1830 to 1910* (Пленники красоты. Русское академическое и салонное искусство 1830-1910-х годов) edited by Dr. Tatiana Karpova (Moscow 2004, 2006, 2011).

In 2008 in St. Petersburg, Tatiana Karpova published the first full monograph *Генрик Семирадский – Henryk Siemiradzki*, significantly expanding the catalogue of works, prepared by the late Piotr Szubert.

Conferences of Polish and Russian art historians *Poland – Russia: Art and History* in Warsaw in 2012 and *Polish and Russian Artists and Architects in the Art Colonies Abroad and in Political Exile 1815-1990* in Toruń in 2013 allowed to establish contacts between the communities of both countries. Discussions on Siemiradzki's work and his role in the Polish and Russian art, which took place at that time, led to cooperation and preparation by the Polish side of a research project devoted to Siemiradzki, with the substantive support of Russian researchers.

International research project *Henryk Siemiradzki : Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings* developed by the Polish Institute of World Art Studies (*Korpus dzieł malarskich Henryka Siemiradzkiego*) was approved by the National Programme for the Development of Humanities of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and its implementation period covers the time from 16 September 2015 to 15 September 2020.

It is the second catalogue of works by a 19th-century Polish artist, created independently of exhibitions. The first one was the *Jan Matejko. Oil Paintings. Catalogue* edited by Dr. Krystyna Sroczyńska (long-term curator of the Polish National Museum in Warsaw) and Prof. Jerzy Malinowski, which was published in 1992.

The project, due to its scope, has an international and inter-institutional character. The Polish Institute of World Art Studies coordinates the documentation work and oversees its progress with respect to its

content. It is responsible for catalogue notes (entries), as well as the substantive editorship of the corpus and its publication.

In connection with work on the Catalogue, an international research team has been formed. Polish partners are the National Museum in Krakow and the National Museum in Warsaw. They are in possession of the largest sets of Siemiradzki's paintings and sketches in Poland, as well as of the documentation of his work and activities.

The Russian partners are the State Institute of Art Sciences and the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. Also the Museum of the Academy of Arts and The State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg collaborate on the project.

The partner in Rome is Pontificio Istituto di Studi Ecclesiastici, where the archive of the artist and his family is located (correspondence and collection of photographs).

The catalogue will include three comprehensive volumes: Volumes I and II will contain notes (entries) concerning individual works and their versions (with illustrations), a list of exhibitions, bibliography, manuscript sources (mainly the artist's correspondence), an extensive glossary with an overview of the content, iconography, symbolism, style and reception of the work, a list of oil sketches, drawings, also photographs of models and technical and conservation comments. Volume III will include studies of Siemiradzki's works and activities, as well as bibliography. The catalogue will be published in Polish and English.

In addition, there will also be prepared studies: *Painting Workshop of Henryk Siemiradzki*. After the completion of the project (and with the use of different financing), a several-volume publication *Correspondence of Henryk Siemiradzki* is planned, including digitised and indexed letters written in Polish to the family from the Roman Pontificio Istituto di Studi Ecclesiastici, as well as, among others, writings in Russian from the archives and libraries of St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Work on the project covered a wide range of documentation in the field of history of art, archaeology, museology, which became the basis for interdisciplinary research on the artist's painting against the background of European art and intellectual culture of the 19th century.

An important part of the research is the analysis of technology and technique behind Siemiradzki's paintings and the materials he used. The research of the painter's workshop was started already in 2012 in the National Museum in Krakow as a separate project, to be continued as part of the *Henryk Siemiradzki's Corpus of Painting Works*.

Scientists from the National Museum in Warsaw, the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg joined the project. It is essential for the conservator to cooperate with chemists, physicists and experts in other fields, such as dendrology. Exhibitions of Siemiradzki's works, such as *Searching for Arcadia* from the collections of the Lviv National Art Gallery at the National Museum in Krakow in the summer of 2016, are also helpful.

The findings of the research were presented mainly in the volumes of the yearbook *Sztuka Europy Wschodniej/Искусство Восточной Европы/The Art of Eastern Europe*, the yearbook of the Polish Institute of World Art Studies: volume IV (2016) – *Henryk Siemiradzki i akademizm (Henryk Siemiradzki and Academism)*. Volume V (2017) – *Co znajduje się w obrazach Henryka Siemiradzkiego (What is in the Paintings of Henryk Siemiradzki)* contains materials from the conference held on 21-22 April 2017 at the National Museum in Warsaw.

The jubilee year of the 175th anniversary of the artist's birth in 2018 started in December of the previous year with the exhibition *Henryk Siemiradzki and Colony of Russian Artists in Rome. (Генрих Семирадский и колония русских художников в Риме)*, prepared by Pavel Klimov in the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, accompanied by an extensive catalogue. The second exhibition *Compelled by Beauty. Henryk Siemiradzki and Artists of Late Academism. (Пленники красоты. Генрих Семирадский и художники позднего академизма)* opened in September 2018 at the Historical-Artistic Museum in Serpukhov near Moscow. The State Tretyakov Gallery was the co-organizer, and the author of the exhibition and the editor of the catalogue was Tatiana Karpova.

On 12-13 April 2018, in connection with the anniversary, an international conference *The Henryk Siemiradzki that we do not know* was organized at the National Museum in Krakow, with its title referring to the donation to the museum made by the artist's family in 1979.

In October, in connection with the anniversary, the National Museum in Warsaw organized a series of *Meetings with Siemiradzki*, presenting mainly researches carried out by this institution.

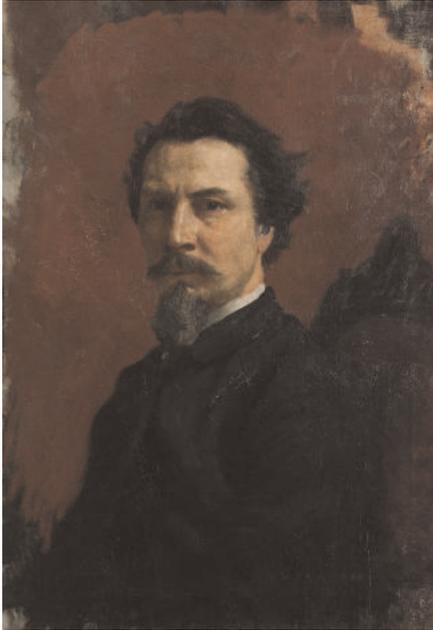
The international conference *Henryk Siemiradzki and the International Artistic Milieu in Rome* will close the jubilee year dedicated to the artist.

I hope that the research and publication of the catalogue raisonné will allow us to determine the place of Henryk Siemiradzki's work in

European painting of the 19th century and will provide an impulse for new and extensive research into the art of that time.

I would like to thank all participants of the conference. I do this on behalf of the conference's organizers: the Polish Institute of World Art Studies in Warsaw and Polish Academy of Sciences Scientific Center in Rome as well as co-organizer – POLONIKA the National Institute of Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad. The conference was prepared on behalf of the Polish Institute of World Art Studies by Dr. Maria Nitka in cooperation with Dr. Agnieszka Kluczevska-Wójcik and Dr. Magdalena Furmanik-Kowalska.

Prof. Dr. Jerzy Malinowski
President
Polish Institute of World Art Studies



1. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Self-portrait*, after 1876, oil on canvas, 80 × 55 cm, National Museum, Krakow. Photo Museum.



2. Villa of Siemiradzki's Family near Kharkov, woodcut by Alfred Kühlewein "Tygodnik Ilustrowany", 1877, no. 101 (1. 12), p. 337.



3. Photograph of Henryk Siemiradzki and his children in Rome, 1888, National Museum, Krakow, no. inv. MNK XX-f-33857. Photo Museum.



4. Photograph of Henryk Siemiradzki's villa at Via Gaeta 1. MNK-f-27010. Photo Museum.



5. The grave of Henryk Siemiradzki. Crypt in the Pauline Church on the Rock in Krakow. Photo in public domain.

* * *

To celebrate the 175th anniversary of Henryk Siemiradzki's birthday, an international scientific conference *Henryk Siemiradzki and the International Artistic Milieu in Rome* was held on the 7th-9th of November 2018 at the headquarters of the Polish Academy of Sciences Scientific Center in Rome. It was part of the ongoing work on the *Henryk Siemiradzki: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, conducted by the Polish Institute of World Art Studies, under the direction of Professor Jerzy Malinowski.

Henryk Siemiradzki was an artist of fundamental importance for Polish and Russian culture in the second half of the 19th century, which is demonstrated, for example, by the fact that his works constituted the base of the national museums of these two nations – Polish, thanks to the artist's donation in 1879 of *Nero's Torches*, which initiated the existence of the National Museum in Krakow, and Russian through the purchase of *Phryne at the Feast of Poseidon in Eleusis*, made by Tsar Alexander III, which provided the starting point for the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg in 1891. Educated at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts, Siemiradzki, in accordance with the tradition of his university, went to Italy in 1872. Upon seeing Rome he decided to settle there. The artist spent the next 30 years of his life in Rome. He created the city of the classics and he inscribed his work in the legacy of world academism, becoming, alongside Jean-Léon Gérôme, Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Frederic Leighton, one of the most important representatives of that painting movement, which depicts day-dreams about the ancient world.

The aim of the conference was to present the international aspect of Siemiradzki's *oeuvre* in various contexts, gathering in one place recognized scientific authorities from all over the world dealing with the art of the 19th century, with a particular emphasis on the researchers of the artistic output of the author of *Nero's Torches* and his milieu. The result of this meeting is a book, which we hereby present to our readers. It consists of 20 papers analysing Siemiradzki's *oeuvre* from different research perspectives. The book starts with an essay by Petra ten-Doesschate Chu showing the role of Roman studies in the formation of the academic artist. This context is further detailed in two following articles devoted to the role of Rome in the Russian culture of the mid-19th century. The first, by Pavel Klimov presents the Russian colony in Rome at the exhibition *Henryk Siemiradzki and Colony of Russian Artists in Rome* at the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg. The second one, by Leila Khasianova, presents the so far unknown plans to establish a Russian Academy in Rome, with the participation of Siemiradzki. The St. Petersburg theme of Siemiradzki's life and work is concluded by two essays. In the first, Kamilla Twardowska presents the artist's contacts with other artists on the Neva River on the basis of archival sources, while in the other, Nina Markowa analyses the painting *French Artist of the Times of Louis XV Paints a Portrait of the Marquise*, bringing closer the history of the artist and the tsar court.

The authors of subsequent studies employ various perspectives to analyse Siemiradzki's works already created in Rome, representative of his academic style. First, the author of *Nero's Torches* is portrayed as a painter exploiting the richness of antiquity, interpreting not only Roman antiquity – in a paper by Witold Dobrowolski, but also older Egyptian and Mesopotamian art in an essay by Grzegorz First. In the following articles, Siemiradzki's individual works are subjected to an in-depth and multi-faceted analysis: *Christ and the Harlot* by Michał Haake, *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis* by Maria Nitka and *In the Silence of the Cloister* by Tatiana Karpova. From such detailed presentation of an individual work of art, the reader is then taken by the following essays to the issues that explore groups of works by Siemiradzki in a broader perspective. Agnieszka Rosales-Rodriguez considers the problem of aestheticisation of perception in the works of the author of *Christian Dirce* through the category of "fetishisation of sight" (R. Krauss). Agnieszka Kuczyńska analyses Siemiradzki's curtains as a new medium as this notion is understood by H. Belting. The decorativeness of such works is considered in the essay by Marzena

Królikowska-Dziubecka, devoted to Siemiradzki's ceiling-paintings. Maria Poprzęcka, on the other hand, looks at the influence of the new technique – photography – on the artist's workshop and work. Subsequent articles analyse yet another issue of the academic artist's activity – the reception of his works. First, the horizon of expectations of the viewers is outlined. Waldemar Okoń confronts Siemiradzki's artistic output with the poetry of the bards, highlighting the inspirations and tasks of the academic artist. The pendant to this essay is an article by Leonée Ormond analysing the works of Siemiradzki's rival, Frederic Leighton, in the context of their literary references. The following essays analyse the ways in which Siemiradzki's works were received. Two subsequent articles present Siemiradzki's participation in the international exhibition market: Agnieszka Kluczevska-Wójcik outlines the system of organising exhibitions as a distinguishing feature of the functioning of a modern academic painter, such as Siemiradzki, while Veronika Bogdan examines the role of individual exhibitions in the career of the artist. Lidia Gerc, in turn, outlines the reception of Siemiradzki's exhibitions in Vienna, by presenting the positions of artistic critique based on an in-depth study of the press from the Habsburg Empire. Anna Masłowska, on the other hand, analyses the role of new techniques of reproduction of works of art for the reception of paintings by the author of *Nero's Torches*. Since the volume is a collection showing various research perspectives, we decided to present also essays known so far only to the Polish reader, but prepared and presented in English at the conference, as is the case with the essays by Witold Dobrowolski, Maria Poprzęcka and Waldemar Okoń.

We do sincerely hope that such a multi-faceted presentation of Siemiradzki's artistic output by many researchers from all over the world will contribute to a better understanding of academic art in Central and Eastern Europe. It will also make it possible to present more fully the role of Rome as an important centre of artistic life at the end of the 19th century, a centre of “figurative”, “representative” art, created on commission of the authorities and, sometimes only, for aesthetic pleasure, remaining outside the main movements of academic art and yet entering into a strong dialogue with them.

I would like to thank the Director of the Polish Academy of Sciences Scientific Center in Rome – Prof. Piotr Salwa, and the employees of the Scientific Centre for their hospitality and tireless work for the benefit of Polish science in the Eternal City, as well as all the participants of the conference and, last but not least, the co-organizers of that

event, Prof. Jerzy Malinowski, Dr. Agnieszka Kluczevska-Wójcik, Dr. Magdalena Furmanik, and The National Institute of Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad POLONIKA, especially Dorota Janiszewska-Jakubiak, Agnieszka Tymińska, Piotr Jamski and Marzena Janiszewska, for their help in the realization of that undertaking.

Maria Nitka

PETRA TEN-DOESSCHATE CHU

Seton Hall University, New Jersey

SIEMIRADZKI'S ROME

When Henryk Siemiradzki, in 1870, won a gold medal and a much coveted six-year travel award from the St. Petersburg Academy, he initially went to Munich, then, in 1872, to Rome. Instead of six years, he was to remain in the Eternal City for the next thirty years, except for the short time he spent in St. Petersburg, Moscow and on other professional and personal trips. Siemiradzki came to Rome only months after its elevation to Italy's capital in the wake of the full unification of Italy in 1871. The thirty-year period immediately following this event was a fascinating era in the city's history, when Rome was at once rapidly modernizing and reasserting its Classical roots. In the following essay, I will show how a rush of construction uncovered and recontextualized ancient Roman sites; how new archaeological practices coupled with new modes of history writing altered attitudes toward Roman Antiquity; and how these related changes informed the work of Siemiradzki and some of his contemporaries. This essay is, therefore, at once about the city in which the artist lived from 1872-1902 and about the artist's paintings of ancient Rome, specifically the most famous ones, *Nero's Torches* (1876) and *Christian Dirce* (1897).

THE ATTRACTION OF ROME

Siemiradzki's choice of Rome as a place to study and further his career was not unusual. Northern-European artists had flocked to the city since the late 16th and early 17th centuries, first, to study the monuments of ancient times, then to learn from the masters of the Renaissance, particularly Michelangelo and Raphael.¹ In 1666, the French government had institutionalized a period of study in Rome for its best art and architecture students by founding an academy in the city.² By the 18th century, Rome had become, in the word of Christopher Johns, "the intellectual entrepôt, the cultural clearing house, and the academy of Europe."³ It was a tourist destination for the rich and powerful, especially coming from the British Isles and a favorite gathering place for intellectuals. For artists it became a veritable mecca and it would remain so until the early 20th century.

The 18th century saw a growing fascination with the Rome of classical antiquity, which affected all who came to the eternal city. This interest was fostered, among others, by the opening of the Museo Capitolino in 1734, the discovery of Pompeii in 1748, the publication of Giovanni-Battista Piranesi's *Le Antiquità romane* in 1756, the publication of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* in 1764, the opening of the Museo Pio-Clementino in 1771; and, last but not least, the publication of Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the first volume of which appeared in 1776 and the last and sixth in 1789. Events, museums, and publications like these reawakened the interest in classical, especially Roman, antiquity, and led to the birth of the Neoclassical style, first seen in full force in Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii* (Musée du Louvre, Paris), shown to popular acclaim in the artist's studio in Rome in the summer of 1785. The depiction of scenes from Roman history as examples of virtue – *exempla virtutis* – would become one of the hallmarks of this style.

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- 1] The literature on this topic is vast. Among the most recent sources is *Viva Roma! Artists and the Trip to Rome*, eds. Vincent POMARÈDE, François BLANCHETIÈRE, Musée de la Boverie Liège, Musée du Louvre, Paris 2018. In following notes, I will mention some other publications that are particularly pertinent to my essay.
 - 2] See, among others, Philippe MOREL, *Villa Medici. Académie de France à Rome*, Franco Maria Ricci, Milan 1998.
 - 3] Christopher M.S. JOHNS, *The Entrepôt of Europe*, in: *Art in Rome in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Edgar Peters BOWRON, Joseph J. RISHEL, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia 2000, p. 37.

In the 19th century the artistic expatriate community became increasingly diverse. In 1809, four rebellious students from the Vienna Academy moved to Rome and occupied the monastery of San Isidoro, which had been closed by the French. They were soon joined by other German-speaking artists to form the so-called Nazarene movement, which, turning away from classicism, found inspiration in early Renaissance art.⁴ The Germans were followed by the Danes, who had a thriving colony in Rome in the 1830s,⁵ as well as by a group of Russian artists, who lived around the Isidoro Monastery and on the Via Felice.⁶ The latter included the Briullov brothers, Alexandr and Karl. Karl Briullov, who spent a considerable part of his life in Rome, was the teacher of Dmitry Besperchy, Siemiradzki's first art teacher in Kharkov. It is possible that this connection planted the seed for Siemiradzki's subsequent love affair with Rome. Perhaps the largest number of artists from a single nation to come to Rome during the second half of the 19th century were Americans.⁷ The lives of the first generation of American expat artists in Rome was famously evoked in Nathaniel Hawthorne's bestselling novel *A Marble Faun*, published in 1860; that of the second generation in Elihu Vedder's memoirs, *The Digressions of V.: Written for His Own Fun and that of His Friends* (1910), which gives a detailed account of the life of the American expat community in Rome at the end of the 19th century. Both sources suggest that there was relatively little close contact between artists of different nationalities, except between the Americans and the British.

Since the 17th century, foreign artists had tended to live around the Spanish Steps, in an area of Rome that stretched from the Piazza del Popolo via the Piazza di Spagna to the Piazza Barberini. The Villa

4] Among the most recent English-language books on the Nazarenes is Cordula GREWE, *The Nazarenes: Romantic Avant-Garde and the Art of the Concept*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park PA 2015. See also Klaus GALLWITZ, *Die Nazarener in Rom: Ein Deutscher Künstlerbund der Romantik*, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome 1981; German edn., Prestel Verlag, Munich 1981.

5] Laila SKJØTHAUG, *Bertel Thorvaldsen and the Danish Artists in Rome*, in: V. POMARÈDE, F. BLANCHETIÈRE, op. cit., pp. 95-99. Accessible online: <https://arkivet.thorvaldsensmuseum.dk/articles/bertel-thorvaldsen-and-the-danish-artists-in-rome>.

6] See Ludmila MARKINA, *German and Russian Artists: Rendezvous in Rome*, "Tretyakov Gallery Quarterly Magazine", Special Issue 2011, pp. 38-49. Accessible online: <https://www.tretyakovgallerymagazine.com/articles/si-italy-russia-crossroads-cultures/german-and-russian-artists-rendezvous-rome>.

7] On this subject, see William L. VANCE, Mary K. MCGUIGAN, John F. MCGUIGAN, and Paul S. D'AMBROSIO, *America's Rome: Artists in the Eternal City, 1800-1900*, Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown N.Y. 2009.

Medici and the Monastery of San Isidoro were to the North. The Via Margutta, where artists had lived since the 17th century was towards the West. Near the Spanish Steps, on 86 Via Condotti, was the Caffè Greco, which from about 1760 had been a hangout for foreign artists in Rome.

ROME IN THE TIME OF SIEMIRADZKI

When Siemiradzki arrived in Rome in 1872, he initially rented an atelier near the Spanish Steps, on Via Margutta 5, following the example of other expat artists. In 1883, however, he moved to the Via Gaeta (no. 1), which then was still on the outskirts of the city, and from where he had beautiful views of Rome and the Alban Hills. In 1872, the year in which Siemiradzki arrived in Rome, the city was on the cusp of a major political, cultural, and physical transformation. It had become the capital of Italy in July of 1871, when the government of a newly unified Italy had moved to Rome from Florence. During the next thirty years or so, the city would be transformed into a modern capital by the construction of the Termini railroad station; the erection of government buildings and new residential quarters; the creation of several major arteries, including the Via Nazionale, the Via Cavour, the Corso Vittorio Emmanuele II, and the Via Veneto; and, to top it all off, the erection of the National Monument to Victor Emmanuel II or the Altare della Patria – the Altar of the Fatherland. Designed by Giuseppe Sacconi, it was begun in 1885, dedicated in 1911, and completed in 1925.

Throughout most of the thirty years during which Siemiradzki lived in Rome, from 1872 to 1902, many parts of the city – particularly in the area where he lived, were construction zones, as old buildings and even entire streets, dating as far back as the Middle Ages, were torn down to make place for new government buildings as well as apartment buildings to house the growing population of the city. Siemiradzki certainly felt the impact of these changes. The new Termini station, which was near his house, had been constructed between 1868 and 1874, so it had already been completed when he moved to the Via Gaeta. But over the next decades the area around the station was gradually modernized with the building of the Via Cavour and the urbanization of the neighboring Monti district.

The older generation of expatriate artists and writers who had arrived in Rome some twenty or thirty years before Siemiradzki looked back with nostalgia to the time before Rome's elevation to Italy's capital city. Their sentiments are best expressed by the two children of the American sculptor Thomas Crawford, who had grown up in Rome, as their father lived in the city from 1835 to his death in 1857. Crawford's son, the novelist Francis Marion, recalled the charms of the Villa Negroni, their childhood home, which was destroyed in the late 1860s to make way for the Termini station.⁸ His daughter Mary Crawford Fraser, also a writer, lamented "the reckless destruction of beautiful buildings and venerated landmarks." For this, she blamed not only the new government but also "the Romans themselves, wealthy nobles who should have known better, [but] had gone mad with the insane greed of speculation."⁹

It is important to note that the parts of Rome that were sacrificed to modernization for the most part dated from the Middle Ages and after. The new government was keen to preserve and even highlight the ancient city. They did so by sponsoring archaeological excavations and providing better access to and more space around major classical monuments that served as reminders of the accomplishments of the city's ancient emperors – the ideological ancestors of Italy's modern leadership. As art historian Lindsay Harris, has argued, in late 19th-century Rome, "archaeology and modernization, while strange bed-fellows, shaped the development of [...] [the city] as capital of Italy."¹⁰

This active excavation and re-staging of ancient monuments is vividly characterized – and criticized – in a memoir entitled *Roman Holidays and Others*, published by William Dean Howells, an important and influential American writer of the late 19th and early 20th century. *Roman Holidays and Others*, published in 1908, was based on a prolonged visit to Italy, made when the author was seventy. It was Howells's second stay in the country as some forty years earlier, from 1860-1865, he had served as the American consul to Venice, from where he had frequently traveled to Rome. In *Roman Holidays*, Howells compares the new Italian capital of the early 20th century with

8] Francis Marion CRAWFORD, *Ave Roma Immortalis: Studies from the Chronicles of Rome*, vol. 1, Macmillan, New York 1898, pp. 148-149.

9] Mrs. Hugh FRASER, *A Diplomatist's Wife, in Many Lands*, vol. 2, Dodd, Mead, and Co., New York 1910, p. 198.

10] Lindsay HARRIS et al., *Imagining a Nation's Capital: Rome and the John Henry Parker Photography Collection, 1864–1879*, "Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide", vol. 14, 1 (spring 2014), n.p. Accessible online only: <https://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring15>.

the pre-risorgimento papal Rome of the 1860s. In earlier days, Howells tells us, the Roman Forum was called the Campo Vaccino or the Cow Field, as “wide-horned cattle was chewing the cud among the broken monuments.”¹¹ By 1908, the cattle were gone and the broken monuments cleaned and stabilized. Moreover, archaeologists, according to Howells, had “resurrected the ancient Forum, by lowering the surface of the Cow Field fifteen or twenty feet; by scraping clean the buried pavements; by identifying the storied points; by multiplying the fragments of basal or columnar marbles and revealing the plans of temples and palaces and courts and tracing the Sacred Way on which the magnificence of the past went to dusty death.”¹² To Howells, the result was an embarrassment of archaeological riches. Indeed, he bemoaned the loss of the old Cow Field, which to him had had “all the elements of emotion and meditation.”¹³ The newly excavated Forum, by contrast, presented a kaleidoscopic clutter of archaeological detail (fig. 6).

Howells found the Colosseum less changed than the Forum, though it too had lost its former charms since “a minion of the wicked Italian government had [...] scraped its flowers and weeds away and cleaned it up so that it was perfectly spoiled.”¹⁴ Moreover, the amphitheater was invaded by “hordes of [...] tourists,”¹⁵ most of them attracted to the monument for the memories it evoked of “terrible stunts in which men fought one another for the delight of other men in every manner of murder,” as well as of “wild beasts [that] tore the limbs of those glad to perish for their faith.”¹⁶

CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARDS ROME

William Dean Howells not only poignantly describes the transformation of Rome during the early decades of the city’s conversion from a papal city into a modern capital, but also articulates the development of a new attitude towards the ancient Roman monuments and, by

11] William D. HOWELLS, *Roman Holidays and Others*, Harper and Brothers, New York/London 1908, p. 93. Accessible online: <https://archive.org/details/romanholidaysoth00howeiaala>.

12] *Ibid.*

13] *Ibid.*

14] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

15] *Ibid.*

16] *Ibid.*

extension, towards Roman Antiquity, generally, that had important implications for late 19th-century art. In the late 18th and early 19th century, the ancient Romans were known and admired primarily for their literature. Relatively few people had a chance to travel to Rome but all those who had a secondary education were steeped in the writings of Livy, Pliny, Suetonius, and Tacitus, whose works provided inspiration to literature, theatre, as well as art. Ancient Roman literature was especially admired for the examples of virtuous behavior it provided and, in art, they became the preferred subjects of history painters. The artists who painted these *exempla virtutis* derived from classical literature made some effort at historical correctness; they studied classical monuments for posture, setting, and costume, but the focus was less on historical accuracy than on the selection of details that would dignify the moral lesson that was taught.

During the Romantic period, attitudes towards Rome changed. In the wake of Gibbon's *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the focus of the historical interest in Rome shifted from the Republican period to the Empire. Darwin and Hegel notwithstanding, there was, in the 19th century, a strong interest in cyclical models of history, in which the word "empire" came to signify the beginning of the end. The Russian historian Nikolai Danilevsky was an important representative of this circular view of history, sometimes referred to as "eternal return" or "eternal recurrence", which seemed particularly pertinent in the 19th century, when many believed in the imminence of what Oswald Spengler, in the early 20th century, would call *Der Untergang des Abendlands* or the Downfall of the Occident—commonly seen as a recurrence of the fall of the Roman Empire.¹⁷

The American painter Thomas Cole's *The Course of Empire* (New York, New York Historical Society), a series of five paintings executed in 1833-1836, illustrates this 19th-century belief in a cyclical or biological model of civilizations, which are born, mature, get old, and die. Cole's *Course of Empire* was inspired by a visit to Italy, during which the ancient ruins caused him to meditate on the transient nature of civilization. In a letter to his parents, written from Italy, Cole ruminates about his visit to the Colosseum:

"To walk beneath its crumbling walls, to climb its shattered steps, to wander through its long arched passages, to tread in the footsteps

17] Oswald SPENGLER, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*, vol. I Wilhelm Braumüller, Wien und Leipzig 1918, vol. II, Beck, Munich 1920.

of Rome's ancient kings, to muse upon its broken height, is to lapse into sad, though not unpleasing meditations".¹⁸

Cole's biographer Louis Legrand Noble, specifically mentions that Cole conceived *The Course of Empire* while contemplating the ruins of Rome,¹⁹ but though he made numerous sketches among them, Cole made no attempt to approximate Rome in his final paintings. It is clear to any viewer that *The Course of Empire* is imaginary, the product of a general meditation on the rise and fall of greatness. Take his *Consummation of Empire*, the fourth painting in the series (fig. 7). The painting represents a vast urban landscape that is, broadly speaking, classical but upon close inspection presents a strange conglomerate of buildings and sculptures from different places and times: Here is Phidias's *Athena* from the Parthenon, there the Column of Trajan, beyond the Caryatids of the Erechtheion, etc. Such fantasies were admired at the time because everyone understood them for what they were, imaginative pastiches of ancient monuments that evoked memories of past greatness, of transient glory.

Fast forward, it is illustrative to compare Thomas Cole's painting *Consummation of Empire* with Siemiradzki's *Christian Dirce* (fig. VI) painted some sixty years later. Both paintings are about empire and decadence, but whereas Cole's painting is a generic timeless fantasy couched in classical terms, Siemiradzki's painting is specific in as far as time, place, and even characters, are concerned, and it is based on careful historical and archaeological research. His painting depicts a scene of Christian martyrdom under Nero, detailed by the French historian Ernest Renan in his *L'Antéchrist*, the fourth volume of his eight-volume *L'Histoire des origines du christianisme*, published between 1863 and 1883. Renan describes how under Nero some of the tortures inflicted upon Christians were reenactments of classical myths, such as the Greek myth of the Naiad nymph Dirce, who was punished by being tied to the horns of a wild bull – a scene famously depicted in the *Farnese Bull*, now in the Museum in Naples.²⁰ Siemiradzki's painting is set in Nero's circus, where, according to Tacitus

18] Louis Legrand NOBLE, *The Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, Sheldon, Blakeman, and Co., New York, 1856, p. 159. Accessible online: https://books.google.com/books?id=xYcfAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=thomas+cole&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwujvMSk0ZfeAhUsWN8KHb_xBcAQ6AEIMzAC#v=onepage&q=Rome&f=false.

19] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

20] [Ernest RENAN], *Renan's Antichrist*, translated with an introduction by William G. HUTCHINSON, Walter Scott, London 1900, pp. 84-85.

many Christian martyrs found their death. The painting, like other paintings of Roman history painted by Siemiradzki, stands out for its wealth, if not the excess, of apparently carefully researched details. The figure of Nero, walking in the circus to inspect the naked dead women close-up, is an allusion to both classical sources like Tacitus, who mentions that Nero mingled with the people in the circus, and to Renan, who claims that Nero was shortsighted. Nero himself is clearly modeled after classical sculptures. Details of architecture, furniture, and clothing are copied from illustrations in scholarly books on life in ancient Rome that were popular in the second half of the 19th century, for example *Das Leben der Griechen und Römer nach antiken Bildwerken dargestellt* (Life of the Greeks and the Romans, rendered after classical sculptures) of 1862, by Ernst Karl Guhl and Wilhelm Koner, which appeared in numerous editions and translations since it was first published in 1862.²¹

The amount of detail in *Christian Dirce*, as well as other well-known paintings by Siemiradzki's depicting scenes of Roman history, like *Nero's Torches* (fig. II) equals that found in Thomas Cole's *Consummation of Empire*. Both paintings illustrate, what Gibbon saw as some of the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire: "immoderate greatness," "vain emulation of luxury," and corruption of imperial government. But whereas Cole's painting is a generic pastiche of details loosely modeled on Classical antiquity that evoke the "immoderate greatness" of a distant Mediterranean past, Siemiradzki's *Christian Dirce* is a careful archaeological construction of a specific episode in Roman history that illustrates an example of the vanity, corruption, and cruelty that Gibbon cites as the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire. His painting illustrates a new attitude towards ancient history that neither uses it as a source of *exempla virtutis* nor as a subject of a generic philosophical meditation on the course of history, but rather as a compelling narrative that brings home the lesson of history through its capacity to move and excite the viewer.

21] Some of these sources are discussed in: Jerzy MIZIOLEK, *Nel segno di Quo Vadis*, L'Erma di Bretschneider, Roma 2017, pp. 116-132.

 SIEMIRADZKI, ALMA-TADEMA, AND LENDING COLOR
 TO ARCHAEOLOGY

Siemiradzki's attempts to reconstruct the historical past based on careful archaeological and historical research was not unique. Indeed, he was part of a small international group of European painters, working at the end of the 19th century, who were all equally fascinated with Classical Antiquity, especially the Roman Empire, and who depicted it with the same attention to detail. Perhaps best-known among them was the Dutch-British painter Lawrence Alma-Tadema. In the last decades of the 19th century, both Alma-Tadema and Siemiradzki were among the most respected contemporary artists of their time. Internationally exhibited and widely collected, their works sold for exorbitant prices. Their reputation was short-lived, however. By the second decade of the 20th century, they came to be rejected for what was then thought of as an excess of detail that was denigrated as a ploy to make these paintings popular with a materialistic middle-class public that delighted in sensation and "stuff." The British critic Roger Fry put it best when he wrote, in reference to Alma-Tadema, "His [Tadema's] art [...] demands nothing from the spectator beyond the almost unavoidable knowledge that there was such a thing as the Roman Empire, whose people were very rich, very luxurious, and, in retrospect at least, agreeably wicked. That being agreed upon, Sir Lawrence proceeded to satisfy all the futile inquiries that indolent curiosity might make about the domestic belongings and daily trifles of those people."²²

Those damning words were written in 1913, when Modernism was reaching its height, and they spelled the beginning of a seven decades-long period when the paintings of Alma-Tadema, Siemiradzki, and other artists of similar ilk were relegated to museum storage areas and lost all of their former value in the market. It was not until the end of the 20th century, with the advent of Postmodernism, that art historians slowly began to revisit their works. Scholars like Elizabeth Prettejohn have raised the question whether the abundance of carefully researched and lushly painted archaeological detail found in the paintings of Alma-Tadema may have been more than merely a strategy to make antiquity palatable to Victorian middle-class viewers. She has suggested that perhaps we must consider them in the light of a new turn in historiography that had begun as early as the Romantic

22] *A Roger Fry Reader*, ed. Christopher REED, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1996, p. 148.

period,²³ when, under the influence of the historical novel, historians like Augustin Thierry and Prosper de Barante had introduced a form of narrative history writing that differed dramatically from the philosophically-grounded historiography then still in practice.²⁴ This new history was to be exact and serious but it was also, to use Thierry's words, "capable of touching popular sensibility" (*émouvoir la fibre populaire*).²⁵ To enliven history, Barante and Thierry inserted the data yielded by the archival record into an engaging narrative, thus lending color and relief to material that otherwise might seem dry and dusty. While the Romantic historians applied the new narrative method of history writing especially to the Middle Ages and subsequent periods in French history, at least one historian of the next generation, Ernest Renan, applied it to the late Roman Empire, especially in his eight-volume *Histoire des origines du christianisme*. To the previous generation's interest in narrativity, Renan added a scientific, positivist historical approach, which meant a critical philological reading of the historical sources and multidisciplinary attempts to verify those sources as much as possible. To write the first volume of his *Histoire, Vie de Jésus*, for example, Renan traveled to Italy and Ottoman Syria and Palestine, not only to be able to lend local color to his narrative, but also to verify various details of biblical and other historical sources. The other volumes of the *Histoire des origines du christianisme*, which are largely set in Rome, were similarly well-researched.

The new kind of scientific, positivist historiography represented by Renan, both undergirded and was prompted by a new approach to archaeology. In Italy, Giuseppe Fiorelli, best-known for his work in Pompeii, in the 1860 and early 1870s introduced an entirely new system for the excavation of the city. Instead of uncovering the streets first, in order to excavate the houses from the ground floor up, as had been done until that point, he imposed a system of uncovering the houses from the top down – a better way preserving everything that was discovered.²⁶ Of course, this uncovering of layer after layer was

23] Elizabeth PRETTEJOHN, *Recreating Rome in Victorian Painting: From History to Genre* in: *Imagining Rome: British Artists and Rome in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Michael LIVERSIDGE, Catharine EDWARDS, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol 1996, p. 64.

24] On the new narrative historiography of the Romantic era, see especially Lionel GOSSMAN, *Between History and Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/London 1990.

25] Augustin THIERRY, *Dix ans d'études historiques*, Garnier Frères, Paris 1834, p. 12.

26] Bruce G. TRIGGER, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/London 1989, p. 196. See also Giuseppe FIORELLI, *Descrizione di Pompei*, Tipografia Italiana, Napoli 1875.

even more useful in sites that had a long history, such as the Forum in Rome, where excavations undertaken between 1870 and 1885, by Italian as well as foreign archaeologists unearthed many layers of history and a wealth of archaeological detail.

All this brings us back to William Dean Howells. We remember how on his second trip to Rome in 1908, he was horrified by his visit to the Roman Forum, which he remembered as a peaceful cow field and which now had become an archaeological site cluttered with a kaleidoscopic variety of archaeological detail. One would expect Howells not to be a lover of the works of artists like Henryk Siemiradzki or Lawrence Alma-Tadema but, interestingly, he owned a work by the latter. How can we reconcile Howells's abhorrence of archaeological detail with an admiration of the work of Alma-Tadema? In a review of the 1876 Centennial art exhibition in the *Atlantic Monthly*, he wrote, "the great modern painters, Landseer, Leighton, Millais, Alma-Tadema [...] have not merely painted well, but they have painted about something, their pictures tell stories, and suggest stories where they do not tell them."²⁷

Clearly, Howells saw the excessive detail in Alma-Tadema's pictures quite differently from the excessive archaeological detail in the Forum. While the Forum offered a seemingly random scattering of archaeological details, in Alma-Tadema's paintings the details were carefully selected and subordinated to the story, which was paramount. In fact, the detail to a large extent, told the story, or, as Howells said, it "suggested a story where it did not tell one." He saw the detail in Alma-Tadema's work not as detail for detail's sake, as he saw the thousands of excavated pieces in the forum, but as the indispensable elements in the painting's narrative, which gave it both color and credibility.

Sentiments similar to Howell's reaction to Alma-Tadema's works are found in critiques of Siemiradzki's paintings. Writing about *Nero's Torches* in *Le Messager de Vienne* of 1877, a critic by the name of Juliusz Mien, argues that the detail in Siemiradzki's painting is both thoughtful and revealing: "The more one contemplates the painting of M. Siemiradzki, the more one is surprised by the thoughts and revelations that are contained within it."²⁸ Mien goes on to analyze some of

27] William Dean HOWELLS, *A Sennight of the Centennial*, "The Atlantic Monthly," vol. 38, 1876, p. 94.

28] Juliusz MIEN, *Causerie artistique: "Les Torches vivantes de Néron", Tableau de M.H. Siemiradzki*, "Le Messager de Vienne," no. 7 (supplement), 1877, p. 2.

the specific elements in Siemiradzki's painting, such as the figure of "the gladiator, leaning against the fountain [...]. Standing away from the crowd, attentive to the preparations of the sacrifice, his head, against all custom, is uncovered. Is he Christian? Will he become one? One cannot tell, but one sees that the spectacle does not leave him indifferent."²⁹ Mien's words are interesting not only because, like Howells, he suggests that the details are important to the telling of the story but also because they encourage the viewers of Siemiradzki's painting, to themselves become historical researchers – whether archeologists or philologists – trying to make sense of the past by studying it in its minutest detail.

CONCLUSION

Siemiradzki's monumental paintings of Roman history, like those of his contemporary Lawrence Alma-Tadema, stand out by what, at first glance, seems an abundance, even an overwhelming presence of carefully researched and painstakingly executed details. This explains, at once, the popular fascination these paintings have exercised since they were first exhibited, and the contempt in which they were held by modernist critics who felt that the detail was little more than a way for a artists to dazzle the public by their virtuoso technique and to cater to a materialist public's love of "stuff".

In their own time, already, some thoughtful critics of the works of Siemiradzki and Alma-Tadema realized that there was more to their paintings than bravura and crowd pleasing (although one should not altogether ignore these aspects). Influenced by contemporary historiography and archaeology, these artists were aware of the complexity of the archaeological as well as the historical record; they realized that each object and each archival document had its own story to tell; and that history was not a single narrative thread but number of threads woven together into a colorful and complex tapestry. That complexity, in a painting, could be expressed in thoughtfully placed and carefully painted details. To receptive and intelligent observers, these details, upon close observation, would yield different narrative threads and would enable them to deepen their understanding of history.

29] Ibid.



6. *Roman Forum and Capitol*, postcard, early 20th century.
Photo Collection of P. ten-Doesschate Chu.



7. Thomas Cole, *Consummation of Empire*, 1836, oil on canvas,
130.2 × 193 cm, Historical Society, New York. Photo in public domain.

PAVEL KLIMOV

State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

RUSSIAN ARTISTS IN ROME: THE ERA OF HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI (BASED ON THE ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION AT THE STATE RUSSIAN MUSEUM IN ST. PETERSBURG)

The topic of the lives and art of Russian artists in Rome in the first half of the 19th century is fairly well developed. It could not have been otherwise: Karl Briullov, Orest Kiprensky, Fyodor Bruni, Aleksandr Ivanov, and a number of less important masters who made up the “face” of Russian art of that time worked in Rome during the Romantic era. Yet, scholars did not rush to do research on the art works made by the “Russian Romans” in the second half of the century, which is quite understandable taking into account the history of Russian art. The turn to realism and the formation of the powerful movement by the Association of Travelling Art Exhibitions, known as the Wanderers (Peredvizhniki) created an entirely new mainstream, fuelled by the liberal reforms of Alexander II. The most talented artists addressed modernity and captured the public’s attention with the relevance of the topics they touched on. Consequently, adherents of academic art, with their Italian reveries, were relegated to the periphery. Italy did not attract young artists the way it used to, and those masters who still found themselves on the “Roman soil” were certainly inferior to their distinguished forebears, both in terms of ambition and the significance of their talent. Henryk Siemiradzki was the only Rome-based St. Petersburg Academy alumnus

eligible for the role of the “new Briullov” with his brilliant gift and the extent of his ambitions. Siemiradzki’s painting *Nero’s Torches* (fig. II) achieved basically the same triumphant success as *The Last Day of Pompeii* (fig. 8), and the artist reminded many viewers of Briullov. That is why for Russian artists based in Rome the last three decades of the 19th century were, without doubt, the era of Siemiradzki. His colleagues would argue about him, jealously study his art, and spread intriguing tales about him. But they also sincerely admired him and *acknowledged* the service he rendered to Russian and European art.

The anniversary exhibition *Henryk Siemiradzki and Colony of Russian Artists in Rome. (Генрих Селирадский и колония русских художников в Риме)* held at the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg allowed us to exhibit not only works by Siemiradzki himself, but also pieces created by his contemporaries who are now overshadowed by the famous artist, among them Fyodor Bronnikov, Aleksandr (Alessandro) Rizzoni, Wilhelm Kotarbiński, Aleksandr and Pavel Svedomsky, and many others. In total, about 100 paintings from Russian museums and private collections were on display at the exhibition, in addition to works of graphic art and sculptures. This comprehensive show of Siemiradzki’s works in the context of works created by other St. Petersburg Academy alumni who worked in Rome has allowed us to construct a more many-sided and complex image of the phenomenon that is now referred to as Late Academic Art.

In the second half of the 19th century the colony of Russian artists in Rome divided into two unequal parts – temporary and permanent ones. The first one was not numerous. Even if we leave aside the question of obtaining permission to live outside Russia, an artist’s long stay abroad required either commercial success or permanent subsidies from the state and patrons. Having both in the first half of the 19th century in Italy there worked Orest Kiprensky, Karl Briullov, Silvestr Shchedrin. At the same time Aleksandr Ivanov settled in Rome, having conceived his long-term work – the picture *The Appearance of Christ to the People* (1837-1857, State Tretyakov Gallery). In the mid-1850s besides Ivanov, who kept to himself, in Rome there lived Fyodor Moller, Pimen Orlov and landscape painter Anton Ivanov, once brought here by the brothers Grigory and Nikanor Chernetsov. The second much more numerous part of the colony, mainly consisted of pensioners of the Imperial Academy of Arts such as Evgraf Sorokin, Aleksei Chernyshev, Fyodor Bronnikov, Orest

Timashevsky and others. The composition of the colony, whose members almost daily gathered in the famous Caffè Greco, near Piazza di Spagna, changed regularly, as the term of stay of some artists ended, and others came instead. Sometimes the Academy demanded the return of some pensioners ahead of schedule, due to lack of creative results or reprehensible behaviour: their lives were supervised, although not very strict. The Academy was hoping that the pensioners would be succeeded, and they always had to be prepared to stand before the eyes of wealthy collectors, academic authorities or members of the Imperial family. For the latter, if they came to Rome, a visit to the workshops of Russian artists was part of the mandatory programme.

In the 1850s Russian art was on the eve of great changes. At the end of the reign of Nicholas I and in the early years of the reign of Alexander II the authority of the “great Karl”, as then Briullov was called, and his outstanding contemporaries – professors Petr Basin, Aleksei Markov, Fyodor Bruni, Vasily Shebuev – still remained indisputable at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. However, there was already a feeling that the era of big topics, big tasks, big style was passing away. It was felt by its adherents. The success of the genre, landscape and portrait led to a gradual revision of the concept of the “holy of holies” of academic art – historical painting. Having arrived in Rome in 1857, Nikolai Ge tried for some time to work in the romantic “Briullov” style. However, in 1860 he overcame the spell of “Roman captivity” and went to Florence, where he created his *Last Supper* (1863, State Russian Museum) – an innovative picture for Russian painting, imbued with the power of emerging realism. The work was well received in St. Petersburg, and Alexander II bought it for the Museum of the Academy.

The exhibition began with works created by artists of an older generation who lived in Rome in the 1860s, when Siemiradzki was studying at the Imperial Academy of Arts. The centrepiece of this part of the exhibition was a huge painting by Konstantin Flavitsky, *Christian Martyrs in the Colosseum* (fig. 9), commissioned by Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna, president of the Imperial Academy of Arts. Flavitsky had put great effort into it, but it was a failure for his career. Despite its elevated subject, the excellence of execution, and the patronage of the Academy’s president, *Christian Martyrs* did not make Flavitsky an academician or a professor. Moreover, the painting provoked displeasure among the Academy Council because of the

artist's explicit imitation of Briullov's style and his work *The Last Day of Pompeii*.¹

Luckier was Karl Wenig. Like Aleksandr Ivanov and Fyodor Moller, he was interested in the work of the German painter Johann Friedrich Overbeck, who lived permanently in Rome and was the head of the so-called Nazarenes with their stylization of the Renaissance. As before the picture by Moller *John the Theologian Preaching on the Island of Patmos* (1856, State Russian Museum), for which he received the title of Professor, picture by Wenig *The Entombment* (fig. 10), painted in the "Nazarene" style with reminiscences of Italian classics, had success in St. Petersburg: the artist became an academician.

And yet, more and more pensioners and those who came to Rome for their own money or funds from patrons wished to study landscape, portrait and genre, which were increasingly encouraged by the Academy. This, in particular, was due to the fact that in Russia, in parallel to the political and economic processes of development of bourgeois society, there gradually developed art market, similar to what had already existed in the main cultural centres of Europe. Thousands of painters, sculptors, graphic artists, masters of applied art from different countries worked not so much for the national Academies and the Courts, as for private collectors, customers, rich tourists and visitors of vernissages in Rome. Market competition forced to focus on mass tastes and, at the same time, to develop individuality in art, to carve out a niche in the market. Russian artist could get lost in a new environment or perform his duty to alma mater, or could try to fit into this market situation in order to stay in Rome forever.

Fyodor Bronnikov, Pavel Chistiakov, and Vasily Vereshchagin's understanding of the art market was more acute. In their works, one could trace both the influence of fading Romanticism and, at the same time, certain realistic trends.

Fyodor Bronnikov received all the applicable titles and awards from the Academy barely leaving Rome. He came to Italy as a fellow of the Academy of Arts in the late 1850s and stayed there forever. His painting *Scene at a Well* (1858, State Tretyakov Gallery) still follows Briullov's tradition in the choice of colours and rendition of images. Yet, subsequently Bronnikov noticed this change in tastes just in time.

1] See: *Николай Николаевич Ге: письма, статьи, критика, воспоминания современников*. (Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge: letters, articles, critique, memories of the contemporaries), Сост. и прим. Н. Ю. Зюгаф. Искусство, Москва 1978, p. 218.

In 1860s and later on, he created a number of genre and history paintings, the best of which were bought by Pavel Tretyakov, major patron of Russian realism, for his Gallery. Such paintings as *Old Beggar* (fig. 11) and *Execution Yard in Ancient Rome. Crucified Slaves* (1878, State Tretyakov Gallery) demonstrate a delicate balance between being true to life and making the depiction of this life beautiful that was found by Bronnikov.

For many years, Bronnikov maintained correspondence with the artist and collector Mikhail Botkin who also spent a lot of time in Rome. Bronnikov's letters to Botkin are preserved in the Pushkin House, St. Petersburg, and have not been published yet. These letters contain a lot of interesting information concerning the life of Russian artists in Rome. For instance, Bronnikov frequently mentioned Siemiradzki in his letters. Although Bronnikov was not a close friend of his, they communicated with each other fairly regularly. This allowed him to be aware of Siemiradzki's artistic plans. For example, it is thanks to Bronnikov's letters that we can now date two large panels created by Siemiradzki for the History Museum in Moscow. Bronnikov jealously observed Siemiradzki's commercial success writing that "he is a Pole and will remain a Pole" in order to emphasize how foreign Siemiradzki's works were to Russian national art. Yet, as time went on, he softened his opinion. Commenting on the fact that Siemiradzki's painting *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis* was purchased for the Russian Museum, in his letter to Botkin Bronnikov wrote that, after all, Siemiradzki "belongs to our school".²

During 1860s, two other major Russian artists – Pavel Chistyakov and Vasily Vereshchagin – worked in Rome as fellows of the Academy of Arts.

Upon his arrival to Rome, Chistyakov wrote to St. Petersburg, "I believe for an artist there is no place better than Italy and Rome."³ For six years, he worked on history pieces a lot, but all his endeavours in the field remained unfinished. He was much more successful with portraits and genre paintings. His portraits of the Roman girl Giovannina, who used to be his model, belong to the best examples of lyrical portraits of the time. When Chistyakov came back to Russia, he became

2] Manuscript Department of the Institute of Russian Literature (=MDIRL). (Рукописный отдел Института русской литературы). Fond. 365, ser. 1, rec. 16, f. 60.

3] П.[авел] П.[етрович] Чистяков. Письма, записные книжки, воспоминания. 1832-1919. Сост. и прим. Э. Белютин и Н. Молева. (P. P. Chistyakov. Letters, notebooks, memories. 1832-1919. Com. and notes by E. Belyutin, N. Moleva), Искусство, Москва 1953, pp. 34, 35.

a professor of the Imperial Academy of Art, and educated a myriad of artists pursuing very different artistic trends, starting from Viktor Vasnetsov and ending with Valentin Serov and Mikhail Vrubel. During all the time he spent in the Academy of Arts, Chistyakov was a consistent critic of Siemiradzki. He believed that at the basis of any painting were the artist's faithfulness to nature and neat drawing; and, according to him, Siemiradzki's art lacked both. But this excessive exactingness towards himself, as well as others, played a cruel joke on Chistyakov: he never managed to finish any of the large paintings he had in mind.

Much more efficient as an artist was Vasily Vereshchagin, the namesake of the famous battle painter. He, just like Chistyakov, would later become a professor at the Academy of Arts. Yet, Vereshchagin made a name for himself not as a teacher but as a portraitist, history painter, master of monumental murals in churches and nobles' palaces. In Rome, Vereshchagin looked closely at street characters. The watercolour *An Italian Woman in a Red Blouse Holding a Rifle in Her Arm* (1865, State Tretyakov Gallery) stands out from the other works created by the artist at that time. Vereshchagin watched with great interest Italy being united, the process to which the Papal States strongly opposed. In autumn 1867, the Russian artists witnessed a severe battle for Rome between Giuseppe Garibaldi's soldiers and the Pope's army supported by the French troops. Though Garibaldi was defeated, sympathy of the Russians staying in Rome was completely on his side. At that time Vereshchagin created a watercolour *Portrait of Aleksandra Peshkova-Toliverova* (1867, The Pushkin House, Moscow), the wife of Valery Jacobi. Peshkova-Toliverova took part in the Garibaldi's movement and worked in a hospital as a nurse. One of those days, she sneaked into the Roman prison *San Michele* pretending to be a fiancée of an imprisoned Garibaldian to pass him a letter with a detailed escape plan. The escape was successfully carried out later. This amazing story could possibly have suggested to Vereshchagin a plot for the painting *Prisoner Meeting His Family* (1868, State Tretyakov Gallery). The painting was displayed the same year at Piazza del Popolo gallery where it was awarded the first prize. Aleksandr Rizzoni, a genre painter, enthusiastically wrote in his letter to Pavel Tretyakov: "Finally, Russian artists start to prove themselves abroad."⁴

4] *Письма художников Павлу Михайловичу Третьякову. 1856-1869.* Сост. и прим. Н. Г. Галкина, М. Н. Григорьева. (*Artists' letters to Pavel Mikhailovich Tretyakov. 1856-1869.* Com. and notes by N. G. Galkina, M. N. Grigoryeva), Искусство, Москва 1960, p. 205.

The works by Aleksandr Rizzoni and other artists, who depicted the life of Rome of that time, were displayed in a separate hall. The father of Rizzoni was an Italian, native of Bologna, who found himself during the Napoleonic wars in the Russian Baltics where he married a German woman. After Rizzoni finished the Academy of Arts he went to Rome as the Academy's fellow and stayed there to the end of his life. He chose as his main specialization the depiction of the life of Catholic monks and high-ranking clerics, although he also reproduced scenes from the life of the Jewish diaspora, as well as women's heads. Rizzoni concentrated exclusively on the external aspect of life, as he was indifferent to religious matters and highly valued the beauty of Catholic architecture and ritual (fig. 12). Small, precisely painted pictures of the interior of old monasteries and scenes of the meetings and appearances of cardinals brought Rizzoni success among collectors and the title of professor from the St. Petersburg Academy. His artistic manner was distinguished by naturalism and preciseness of depiction. The whole concept of Rizzoni's art was the very opposite of Siemiradzki's. It was probably because of this the relationship between these artists went awry. In autumn 1873, soon after his arrival to Rome, Siemiradzki complained to Piotr Iseyev the Conference Secretary of the Imperial Academy of Arts that Rizzoni spread unreliable rumours about him and in fact made political denunciations. The life of Rizzoni in Rome ended in a tragic way. In 1902, the year of Siemiradzki's death, Rizzoni was shaken by insulting comments on his art published in *Мир искусства* [*The World of Art*] and shot himself dead.⁵ It is known that Rizzoni always kept his house open for artists. Some very interesting photographs of his Rome studio can be found in the Russian Museum collection.

By the end of the 1860s when Vereshchagin and Chistyakov returned to St. Petersburg they found themselves in an entirely new artistic milieu. 1870 was marked by the appearance of the Association of Traveling Art Exhibition (the Wanderers) uniting the leading realist artists. Besides the Imperial Academy of Arts there emerged another powerful centre which could influence the development of national art. Many things that previously enjoyed favourable treatment acquired negative connotations for the Academy graduates, thus giving them an

5] In his mocking style article "Interview with Mr Rizzoni", Alfred Nurok, who wrote under the pseudonym "Silen", stated that "Rizzoni is the worst painter of all" and that "this is an axiom that requires no proof." ("Мир искусства", ["Mir iskusstva"], 1901, no. 6, p. 330).

incentive to reorient from Rome to Paris, from classic art to modernity, from following established art forms to searches for individual distinctiveness.⁶ Firm adherents of “pure art” purposefully went to Rome, most of them were ethnic Poles. With many of them the choice was politically motivated. The situation when Poland was divided among Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany made some of the Poles wanted to paint in Rome without any political pressure.

Besides Siemiradzki among the “Russian Poles” working in Rome in the 1870–1890s such artists as Pavel Kovalevsky (Paweł Kowalewski), Wilhelm Kotarbiński and Stefan Bakałowicz were of special notice.

Pavel Kovalevsky was the son of a famous philologist Osip Kovalevsky (Józef Kowalewski). He was a close friend of Siemiradzki but, unlike him, was not much interested in antiquity as such. Having completed the battle scene class of the St. Petersburg Academy, while in Rome he continued painting scenes from life in the Caucasus. Kovalevsky did not find the historical past of Rome to be a source of inspiration, but was enthralled by the mind-boggling fact that the ancient city survived in such proximity to the modern man, whose life was just a flash when compared to the centuries of history that surrounded him. This spurred the artist on to the theme of a large-scale work full of modern people, *Excavations in Rome* (fig. 13) for this painting, Kovalevsky was given several international awards.

Stefan Bakałowicz was a different sort of painter. After he completed his fellowship trip Stefan Bakałowicz moved to Rome permanently. Like Rizzoni he painted small-scale works that recreated everyday life of ancient times, aided by a profound knowledge of archaeology and almost photographic accuracy. Greek and Egyptian motifs which had become ingrained in ancient Roman culture repeatedly appeared in his *oeuvre* (fig. 14). Bakałowicz’s naturalistic style was not lacking in lyricism. Secret passions often hid behind the external restraint exhibited by the characters in his paintings. Bakałowicz’s pieces, done with a refined taste and artistic mastery, were quite popular in Russia. At the exhibition in the State Russian Museum they were displayed in the same room alongside the works of other painters who worked on the subjects from the history of Ancient Rome – Wilhelm

6] Aleksei Bogoliubov played a significant role in this reorientation. In the early 1870s, he settled in Paris and patronized fellows of the Imperial Academy of Arts there. Later on, Fyodor Bronnikov recalled: “Bogoliubov has always been of the opinion that fellows of the academy should not live and, moreover, extend their stay in Rome, and that Paris is the only city for them where they can learn and develop”. MDIRL. Fond. 365, ser. 1, rec. 16, f. 43, 44.

Kotarbiński, the brothers Aleksandr and Pavel Svedomsky, and Vasily Smirnov.

Wilhelm Kotarbiński never studied at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. He graduated from the Warsaw School of Drawing and then studied for a couple of years at the Academy of Saint Luke in Rome, after which he remained in the city giving drawing lessons. The common search for lucrative customers brought Kotarbiński close to Russian artists. In the mid-1880s he began participating in academic exhibitions, and in 1887 he entered into a contract to assist in the painting of the St. Vladimir Cathedral and moved to Kiev. His large and evocative canvases in the theme of antiquity soon found admirers. Kotarbiński's work is similar to that of Siemiradzki in its sweeping brushwork, otherwise his creative conception differs from that of Siemiradzki in its indifference to *en plein air* painting. In Kiev Kotarbiński was chiefly occupied in decorating private houses and by the end of the 1890s his works acquired a certain tinge of *Art Nouveau*.

Kotarbiński's huge canvas *Orgy* (fig. 15) was one of the highlights of the exhibition. The State Russian Museum has been in possession of the canvas from the time of its foundation nevertheless from the 1920s the painting has been stored in the museum fund due to its poor condition. The painting has been restored for the exhibition so that it could reveal the magnitude of the artist's talent both to the audience and the experts.

Starting in the mid-1870s, the brothers Aleksander and Pavel Svedomsky – well-to-do landowners from Perm who fell in love with Italy – were the real soul of the Russian colony in Rome. They obtained their artistic education in Germany. The Svedomskys chose the bloodiest and most scandalous themes from antiquity, the Bible, and modern history. In this domain, Pavel Svedomsky became the more famous of the two; the colourful manner in which his works were executed gained attention at European exhibitions and were eagerly reproduced in popular magazines (fig. 16). The success of the Svedomskys didn't remain unnoticed. In 1887 together with Kotarbiński they were invited to decorate the St. Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev.

In the summers, the Svedomskys would return to their estate near Perm, where they had a studio constructed so that they might pursue their painting there as well. The rest of the time, however, they lived in Rome, maintaining friendly relations with those from the Russian Empire, regardless of their ethnicity. In 1884, Bronnikov wrote ironically to Mikhail Botkin: "At last the Svedomskys have arrived and

immediately gathered around themselves a whole array of Poles living here among whom Kotarbiński enjoys their special favour. It would be nice if they have brought money and much enough then all will be well for everyone, including Roman wenches and their procuresses.⁷⁷

Some old photographs stored in the archives of the State Russian Museum testify to the fact that Russian artists visited each other in their studios and their families were friends, they walked together around Rome and its picturesque outskirts. Most of the photographs date from the 1880s when besides Bakałowicz there lived in Rome as fellow students of the Academy such painters as Isaak Asknazy, Vasily Savinsky and Vasily Smirnov. All of them studied under Pavel Chistyakov and Vasily Vereshchagin who passed on to their students their love to the Eternal City. Smirnov's talent manifested itself most fully during his Roman period. His large canvas *Death of Nero* (fig. 17) can be classed among the masterpieces of Russian history painting. In this frieze-like canvas with several static figures the artist managed to render great dramatic tension using only colour and a perfectly balanced composition. No doubt great future awaited Smirnov but he fell ill and passed away prematurely on his way from Rome to Russia.

The outstanding canvases by Siemiradzki from Russian museums and private collections undoubtedly took the major place at the exhibition. The visitors especially noted the following large-scale drawings by Siemiradzki: *Christ Descending into Hell (The Last Judgment)* (1868, State Russian Museum), *The Massacre in Bethlehem* (1869, State Russian Museum) and *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* (1869, State Russian Museum). The artist created these works in sepia and whiting in the last years of his studies at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. They have never been exhibited before and until quite recently have been unavailable for specialists. The drawings demonstrated that Siemiradzki had set off for Rome with a large store of fairly mature skill and enormous creative potential. To realise this potential, one needed will, diligence and passionate love for his vocation. Siemiradzki possessed all those qualities. For this very reason we speak today about this prominent and truly European master whose personality and *oeuvre* combined several cultural, ethnic and historical backgrounds.

The 1880s were the heyday of Siemiradzki, Bakałowicz, Kotarbiński, the Svedomsky brothers and other outstanding representatives of late academic art, whose life was connected with Rome. But the artistic

77] MDIRL. Fond. 365, ser. 1, rec. 15, f. 117.

process in Russia, influenced by new trends, gradually developed, and by the beginning of the next decade, the heyday of late academic art would be perceived by critics as a deeply peripheral, conservative phenomenon. The reform of the St. Petersburg Academy in 1893, when the Wanderers started teaching young artists was meant to change general priorities in fine art. In 1891, shortly before the reform, Bronnikov wrote with sadness from Rome: “there are very few Russians here, and so artists are almost never seen. Only Stankevich’s [Polish painter Aleksander Stankiewicz] always sitting at Caffè Greco”.⁸

In 1902, shocked by the offensive review on his work on the pages of the magazine *Мир искусства* [World of Art], Aleksandr Rizzoni committed suicide in Rome.⁹ Then a small Roman colony lost two more members: Fyodor Bronnikov and Henryk Siemiradzki, who died in his estate Strzałków near Radomsko. It is impossible not to see in this coincidence a sign of the end of the epoch of academism in Russian art. But the fact of the matter is that the time changes but Rome, as an immortal idea of power, glory and beauty, remains.

Bronnikov, having visited in 1888 one of the Roman exhibitions, where he found a lot of works “without drawing, without modelling and even colour”,¹⁰ wrote: “I don’t know what the reason for this decline is, but I’m beginning to think that it’s almost a real shameless realism. Finally this direction, perhaps, will lead to the fact that it will be necessary again to make a turn to classicism and again take up the study of antiquities.”¹¹ These words were prophetic. It took only a few years after the death of the artist, as in 1908 *Society for the Encouragement of Young Artists*¹² was founded in Rome, and the ancient heritage was actualized in the works of the next generation of neoclassicists, who in the future had to compose a new version of the Imperial style and build the front facade of the “Soviet Empire”. Indeed, *Roma Aeterna*.

The work of Russian artists in Italy has always attracted the attention of researchers and this theme, one way or another, has been

8] MDIRL. Fond. 365, ser. 1, rec. 16, f. 16.

9] See: footnote 5 above.

10] MDIRL. Fond. 365, ser. 1, rec. 16, f. 51.

11] Ibid.

12] On the life of Russian artists in Rome in the 1900s-1910s, see further: И. В. Кувалдина, *Русские художники в Италии в первой половине 20 века*, (I. V. KUALDINA, *Russian Artists in Italy in the First Half of the 20th Century*), “Грамота” (Gramota), 2013, no. 7 (33): в двух частях (in 2 parts), I, pp. 116-120.

performed at the Russian Museum on many exhibitions, ranging from themes like *Romanticism in Russia*, *With an Easel Around the World*, *Remembering Italy* to monographic projects dedicated to Karl Briullov, Sylvestr Shchedrin, brothers Chernetsov and other famous masters of the first half of the XIX century. Thus the exhibition *Henryk Siemiradzki and Colony of Russian Artists in Rome* continued this tradition, covering the period of the second half of the century and the work of outstanding artists whose names for various reasons are still little known to a wide audience.



8. Karl Briullov, *The Last Day of Pompeii*, 1830-1833, oil on canvas, 456.5 × 651 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg Photo in public domain.



9. Konstantin Flavitsky, *Christian Martyrs in the Colosseum*, 1862, oil on canvas, 385 × 539 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo in public domain.



10. Karl Wenig, *The Entombment*, 1859, oil on canvas, 273 × 361 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo in public domain.



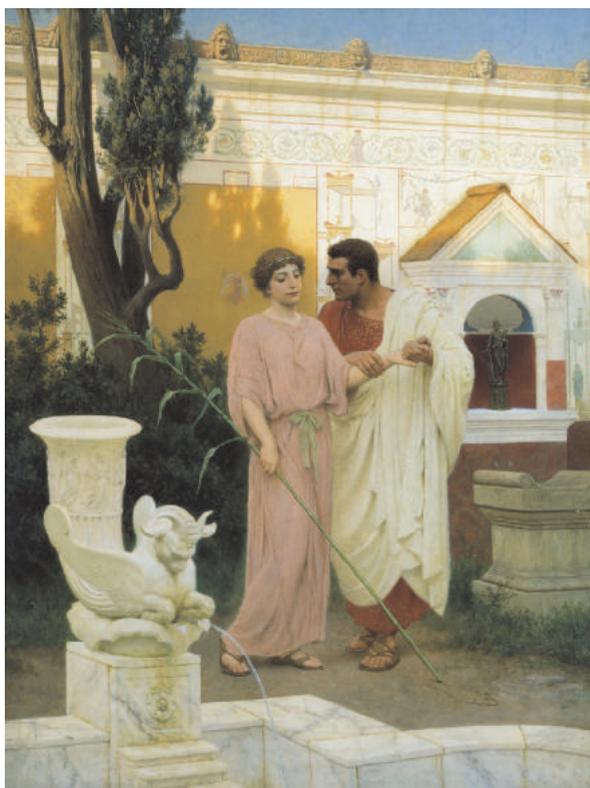
11. Fyodor Bronnikov, *Old Beggar*, 1869, oil on canvas, 76.2 × 52 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Photo in public domain.



12. Aleksandr Rizzoni, *The Cardinals Meeting*, 1900, oil on canvas, 61.3 × 44 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo in public domain.



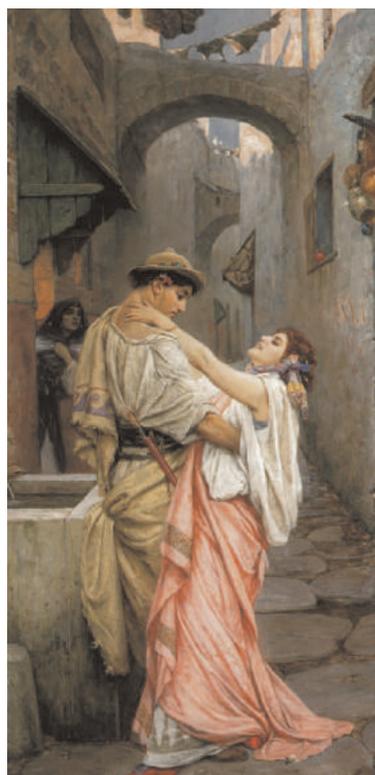
13. Pavel Kovalevsky, *Excavations in Rome*, 1876, oil on canvas, 165 × 300 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo in public domain.



14. Stefan Bakałowicz, *Question and Answer*, 1900, wood, oil, 58.5 × 45 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo Museum.



15. Wilhelm Kotarbiński, *Orgy*, 2nd half of the 1890s., oil on canvas, 300 × 500 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo Museum.



16. Pavel Svedomsky, *Messalina*, 1900, oil on canvas, 178 × 90 cm, State Museum of Fine Arts of the Republic of Tatarstan. Photo in public domain.



17. Vasily Smirnov, *Death of Nero*, 1888, oil on canvas, 177.5 × 400 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo in public domain.

LEILA S. KHASIANOVA

*Russian Academy of Arts
Polish Institute of World Art Studies*

“DO WE NEED A RUSSIAN ACADEMY IN ROME?” HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI AND ART EDUCATION

The first scholars of the Imperial Academy of Arts appeared in Rome at the time of Peter the Great. Initially, the graduates of the Academy were sent only to Rome, the center of classical art, but the Charter of the Academy of 1859 made staying in Rome – the Eternal City – optional. This decision lasted until 1886, until it was decided that Paris, Dusseldorf, Munich and other world art centers had a negative influence on the morality of young artists. Rome, of course, unlike Paris of that time, could not be called the center of art education and exhibition activities. However, the city of martyrs, which played a special role in the history of Christianity and became the second Holy City, had always attracted people of arts from all over the world. In Rome, everything was for the needs of artists “in abundance and for a pittance. The living was cheap; the wine was excellent, the artists felt at home there.”¹ It would seem they came there only for a while, but it turned out that many would prefer to stay there forever. Some, like Spanish artist José Villegas Cordero (1844-1921), having achieved fame, would build their villas with beautiful, elegantly finished workshops. His house was considered one of the sights of the

1] Antoni MADEYSKI, *Artyści polscy w Rzymie (Garsć wspomnień)*, “Sztuki Piękne”, 1930 (Year 6), no. 1, p. 2.

new Rome. Among the frequented ones was Henryk Siemiradzki's Villa, which was also an attraction for both, the Italians and the multilingual *cosmopolis*.

The Academy's scholars could stay abroad for six years. But when they came to Rome, they would not find there what they had dreamed about in St. Petersburg. Having breathed in the stupefying air of freedom, they wouldn't be able to bring themselves to work. Therefore, the issue of establishing an Academy for Russian scholars in Rome, modeled on Académie de France, in the Villa Medici, was on the agenda.

In 1872, Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich (1847-1909 son of the Tsar of Russia Alexander II) entrusted Aleksei Bogoliubov (1824-1896) with the supervision of young artists. But after the World's Fair in Vienna in 1873, when the latter left for Paris, the supervision of scholars in Rome was taken over by Piotr F. Iseyev², the Conference Secretary of the Academy.

Iseyev wrote a letter to Siemiradzki – in Rome at the time – whom he would favor as an outstanding student. In the letter, there were two issues that he touched upon – how to monitor and educate scholars, the latter being a particular priority for the Academy. Realizing that Iseyev wanted to entrust him with the supervision over the young artists, Siemiradzki avoided discussing the first issue. He only noticed that “as was always the case, those who were put in charge, would happen to be **the people** who could not boast of having the breadth of vision and, as a result, would display lack of tolerance.”³ In these words, there was an echo of recent groundless speculations that in Rome Siemiradzki kept aside from everyone and “the reason for this is his fanatical hatred of everything Russian.”⁴ Bogoliubov who was looking after the scholars then “hinted to the slanderer about his readiness to bring this to the attention of His Highness.”⁵ And he did so, eventually, judging by the reprimand received by the scholar soon.

2] Piotr F. Iseyev (1831-?) – the Conference Secretary of the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg (1866-1889).

3] Russian State Historical Archive (=RGIA). Российский государственный исторический архив, Санкт-Петербург, ф. 789, Академия художеств, оп. 4, д. 121, Личное дело Семирадского Генриха Ипполитовича, 13 октября 1864 – 9 октября 1902, лл. 40, 154 об., 155, 156, 342, 343 (St. Petersburg, Fond 789, Academy of Arts, ser. 4, rec. 121, Personal file of Semiradzki Genrikh Ippolitovich, 13 October 1864 – 9 October 1902, ll. f. 40, 154 recto, 155, 156, 342, 343).

4] RGIA. Fond 789, f. 113.

5] RGIA. Fond 789, f. 114.

The second issue – the scholars' education – was more focused on. In Siemiradzki's opinion, the main mistake of all European academies was that "none of them could see where to limit control, neither one was able to expand the notion of seriousness (of education) in accordance with the public opinion and artists' views."⁶ The subsequent reforms at the Academy of Arts showed how far-sighted he was: "Find a measure that would be timely to put a restriction on the tyranny of teachers. This is the task that should be set, together with the establishment of academies. This one alone would stop in the future the feuds between the Academy and the majority of artists, a sad phenomenon that has led to the loss of authority by many European academies of the Arts, loss of trust in them by young beginner-artists; to generating self-taught artists without elementary knowledge."⁷

Iseyev's desire to send graduates of the Academy to Rome did not find support either among the members of the Association of Traveling Art Exhibitions (the Wanderers), or with Vladimir Stasov: „it would be time to stop sending abroad at public cost, as has always been done, the best young artists that graduated from the Academy because, so far, nothing but harm ever came from it [...] Why should they live for 6 years in Rome or anywhere else in Italy, i.e. in places where there are just the works of ancient art. [...] We don't need cadavers, no matter how beautiful they are! But I'll say even more: why would they linger for 6 years not only in Italy, but also in Paris, Munich, Düsseldorf or any other centre of the modern advancing and developing art. Why spend the best, the strongest, most energetic and fiery years of one's life away from your genuine fatherland [...]. What's the point in living all these years and to look at the foreign nature, foreign monuments of art, foreign characters, types and scenes of life; **why use these years to copy some outdated, at least so-called, – Classical creations of ancient art**".⁸ Many efforts were made on their part to prevent success of

6] RGIA. Fond 789, f. 153. Письмо Г.И. Семирадского П.Ф. Исееву от 17 июня 1874 года (H[enryk]. I. Siemiradzki's letter to P[iotr]. F. Iseyev, 17 June 1874, f. 153).

7] RGIA. Fond 789, f.153.

8] Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906) wrote „пора бы прекратить посылку на казенный счет за границу, как это всегда делалось, лучших молодых художников, кончивших курс в Академии, потому что до сих пор ничего, кроме вреда, их этого не выходило [...]. Зачем им жить целых 6 лет в Риме, или где бы то ни было в Италии, т.е. в тех местах, где есть только одни произведения старинного искусства. [...] Что нам в кадаврах, как бы они красивы не были! Но я скажу еще более: зачем им прозябать 6 лет не только в Италии, но и в Париже, Мюнхене, Дюссельдорфе, или каком угодно центре современно движущегося вперед и развивающегося искусства. Зачем проводить лучшие, самые сильные, энер-

his undertaking: and although the idea of establishing the Academy's subsidiary in Rome had been in discussed, the project was eventually rejected. Bogoliubov defiantly refused the post of director of the Academy of Arts in Rome, and Stasov struck a final blow, reminding everyone of Major General Ludwig Karl von Kiel (1793-1851), who made Aleksandr Ivanov (1806-1858) "suffer a lot", and summarizing that "all this (the project) is a gross mistake, a wasted and falsely directed efforts; and the people's money, composed of labour pennies, obtained through sweat and tears, should not be spend on inflicting damage to the best graduates' abilities."⁹

Siemiradzki's term as a scholar was drawing to a close. He was finishing work on *Nero's Torches* which he had started in 1874. Although incomplete, the picture drew almost the entire art world of Rome to Siemiradzki's studio. Within a short time, it was visited by Domenico Morelli (1823-1901), Ernest Hébert (1817-1908), Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912) – all of them spoke about the picture with admiration.

In 1876, together with Scipione Vannutelli (1831-1894), Achille Verunni (1826-1897) and Alma-Tadema, Siemiradzki was elected to the Jury Board to award prizes for the best works of the annual exhibition in Rome. A year later he became a member of the Academy of Saint Luke in Rome.

Siemiradzki, now a European celebrity, was about to be back in St. Petersburg. His possible return made Stasov and the Wanderers concerned. It was not by chance that, shortly before the organization of the Association of Travelling Art Exhibitions, Ivan Kramskoi (1837-1887) (one of the member) had warned of new forces, having Siemiradzki in mind: "We are in for a fight! Take it or leave it. That's for certain!"¹⁰ Assessing the situation in the Art, Stasov shared his opinion with Vasily Vereshchagin:¹¹ "As to the art world, everything is going

гические и огненные годы своей жизни вдали от настоящей своей родины [...]. Зачем проживать эти годы в виде чужой природы, чужих памятников искусства, чужих характеров, типов и сцен жизни, зачем употреблять эти годы на копирование каких-то отживших, хотя бы и так называемых, – классических созданий старинного искусства". Transl. Agnieszka Pospiszil). *Собрание сочинений В.В. Стасова. 1847-1887 г. Художественные статьи (Collection of V. V. Stasov's writings. 1847-1887. Articles on art)*, т. I, Типография М. М. Стасюлевича, Санкт-Петербург 1894, p. 125.

9] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

10] *Переписка И.Н. Крамского. Переписка с художниками*, т. II, (*Correspondence of I. N. Kramskoy. Correspondence with artists*, vol. II), Государственное издательство «Искусство», Москва 1954, p. 284.

11] Vasily Vereshchagin (1842-1904) was one of the most famous Russian war artists, his mother had Tatar origins.

from bad to worse! Iseyev and the like (professorial dinosaurs, old fo-geys) have united around themselves a whole bunch of wise guys with no talent at all, such as Valery Jacobi (1834-1902), in the first place, and Siemiradzki, to boot."¹²

However, Henryk Siemiradzki decided to stay in Rome. Iseyev went on with his efforts to establish a subsidiary of the Academy of Arts in Rome. In 1886, when the Academy of Arts once again opted for Rome as the place for scholars to be sent to, he designed a "Note on the establishing a house for the scholars of the Academy in Rome" (1887).¹³

After Vice-President, Major General Grigory Gagarin (1810-1893) left his post, Iseyev became an omnipotent figure in the Academy which gave him the opportunity to openly express his opinion about the situation in the Russian art: "School, as an institution, has always been conservative, and, therefore, based on traditions. But suddenly, with a fresh wind new trends have emerged, the pseudo-liberal ideas of the 50s preaching global liberation, resolutely, from everything – from school, from authorities, from wonderful traditions."¹⁴ Regarding who will head the Roman subsidiary, he said that among all the 41 painters and 7 sculptors sent abroad in 28 years, only Siemiradzki and Fyodor Bronnikov (1827-1902) are the best to take the post.

The search for a suitable building for this purpose began. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs offered the Academy of Arts a house on Via dei Polacchi, where the embassy staff lived, but it turned out to be unsuitable for accommodation.¹⁵ So, they decided to sell it. Even a buyer,

12] *Переписка В.В. Верещагина и В.В. Стасова. 1874-1878*, т. I, Письма подготовлены к печати и примечания к ним составлены А.К. Лебедевым и Г.К. Буровой под редакцией А.К. Лебедева (*Correspondence of V. V. Vereshchagin and V. V. Stasov, 1874-1878*, vol. I, Letters prepared to publication and notes on them compiled by A. K. Lebedyev and G. K. Burova, ed. A. K. Lebedyev), Государственное издательство «Искусство», Москва 1950, p. 59.

13] RGIA. Fond 796, f. 451.

14] Department of Manuscripts of the National Library of Russia (= OR RNB). Отдел рукописей Российской Национальной библиотеки (ОР РНБ), Санкт-Петербург, ф. 796, Тюменев И [лья] Ф[едорович], оп. 1, ед. хр. 451, апрель 1888 г. (St. Petersburg, fond 796, Tyumenev I [lya] F[edorovich], ser. 1, ed. khr. 451, April 1888). OR RNB. Санкт-Петербург, ф. 796, Тюменев И[лья] Ф[едорович], оп. 2, ед. хр. 451, Исеев П.Ф. «Записка по вопросу об устройстве в Риме дома для пенсионеров Академии», апрель 1887 г. (St. Petersburg, fond 796, Tyumenev I [lya] F[edorovich], ser. 2, ed. khr. 451, Iseyev P. F. "Note on the issue of establishing a house for Academy pensioners in Rome", April 1887).

15] OR RNB. Санкт-Петербург, ф. 708, ед. хр. 736. Выставки (газетные вырезки) 1886, 1887 г., л. 150. Художественные новости, т. IV, 14-15 июля 1886 г. Внутренние известия. (St. Petersburg, fond. 708, ed. khr. 736. Exhibitions (paper clips) 1886, 1887, l. 150. Art News, vol. IV, 14-15 July 1886. Domestic news).

who offered 500,000 francs, was found. As was supposed, with this money, they could build a new house. Initially, there was an idea to build a house for the Academy's subsidiary next to Porta del Popolo, but then they opted for the site beyond Porto Pia away from the Tiber flooding.

In *The Art News*, published by the Academy of Arts, it was reported: "The Academy of Arts have been long cherishing the idea of establishing its own subsidiary in Rome for its scholars there. Lack of means has prevented its realization so far. This spring we have had a chance, a combination of circumstances *The New Time* is writing about. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not yet expressed its official consent to give the selected house in Rome to the Academy."¹⁶

The correspondence between Siemiradzki and Iseyev began. The artist gladly offered his help in settling this issue: "The warm and respectful attitude of the Court that I have enjoyed, the knowledge of the local life and my connections in the high society – all this could be more than once useful to scholars."¹⁷ Siemiradzki explained his reluctance to return to the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg to the conference-secretary: "Because of the genre of painting that I have chosen, living in Rome is a necessity, an artistic vocation for me."¹⁸ The eternal city became an everlasting source of inspiration for him. As to St. Petersburg, he did not like it (that was not his world). He thought it was a welcome place for anyone, but an artist.¹⁹

In August 1887, while in Minsk, he wrote to Iseyev: "Why haven't you got around to visiting Rome? You should have, indeed. Especially now that the Academy has sent all its scholars there. You really should have dropped by to see the Eternal City. You ought to come and stay at my place – it would be a great pleasure for me. I would be your *cicerone* [guide] and interpreter. I will always remember how kind you were to me when I was a student of the Academy. It would be an honour to oblige you."²⁰ Iseyev promised: "When the question of the

16] *Собрание сочинений В.В. Стасова...* (Collection of V. V. Stasov's writings...), p. 86.

17] RGIA. Fond 789.

18] Ibid.

19] Ibid.

20] RGIA. Fond 789. Академия художеств, оп. 4, д. 121, Личное дело Семирадского Генриха Ипполитовича, 13 октября 1864 – 9 октября 1902, Письмо Г.И. Семирадского П.Ф. Исеёву. Минск, 9 августа 1887 г., л. 245 (Academy of Arts, ser. 4, rec 121, Personal file of Semiradzki Genrikh Ippolitovich, 13 October 1864 – 9 October 1902, H[enryk]. I. Siemiradzki's letter to P[iotr]. F. Iseyev, Minsk, 9 August 1887, f. 245).

house in Rome is finally resolved, I will be there to settle household matters."²¹

Shortly after Iseyev had nominated Bronnikov and Siemiradzki as candidates for the post of the Academy's Roman subsidiary, *The Art News* of August 15 published Bogoliubov's refutation where he denied the fact that he had been seen as the one to supervise the subsidiary of the Academy of Arts in Rome. That rumor was allegedly launched by the Paris newspaper *Le Temps* and reprinted by many foreign and Russian newspapers. The loss of interest in his personality hurt Bogoliubov a lot. He wrote that he had never had pretensions to the post and "could not have had it because he considered the establishment of the Russian Academy in Rome as serving no purpose and useless for our art as well as artists."²² He was echoed by the venerable critic in the article "Is the Russian Academy in Rome necessary?"²³, in which the latter explained to readers why he was an ardent opponent of the Roman Academy. The critic was convinced that talented artists needed to travel, but "it is harmful to go abroad when you are staunchly devoted only to a few representatives of the old school and concepts; it is harmful to turn a blind eye to modernity and live only by traditions."²⁴ "The Russian Academy of Arts in Rome can not be useful either to our artists or our art – that's what I have believed for a long time, too. I will say more than that. In my opinion, it will not only be useless, but, also, just harmful. I am very glad that, on this matter, I see eye to eye with one of the most remarkable of our artists (Bogoliubov), [...], who, having lived abroad for many years [...], has had a chance, not only in theory but in practice, to see the fruits of such "roman academies" and weigh up all the pros and cons of the issue."²⁵ As a result, soon after these publications in the press, *The Art News* informed their readers

21] RGIA. Fond 789. Академия художеств, оп. 4, д. 121, Личное дело Семирадского Генриха Ипполитовича, 13 октября 1864 – 9 октября 1902, Письмо П.Ф. Исеева Г.И. Семирадскому. Август 1887 г. Письмо адресовано в Варшаву на адрес М.И. Семирадского, л. 247 (Academy of Arts, ser. 4, drec. 121, Personal file of Semiradzki Genrikh Ippolitovich, 13 October 1864 – 9 October 1902, P[iotr]. F. Iseyev's letter to H[enryk]. I. Siemiradzki. August 1887. Letter addressed to M[ichał]. I. Siemiradzki in Warsaw, f. 247).

22] *Собрание сочинений В.В. Стасова...* (Collection of V. V. Stasov's writings...), p. 866.

23] „преlestна Италия, чудесна для художника жизнь среди красот ее природы и музеев, но это не резон, чтобы ему там обезличиваться и терять свою физиономию и национальность в диком монастыре”. (“adorable Italy, a wonderful life for an artist among the beauty of its nature and museums, but it is not a reason for him to depersonalise and lose his physiognomy and nationality in a wild monastery”. Transl. Agnieszka Pospiszil). Ibid, pp. 873-874.

24] Ibid, p. 866.

25] Ibid, p. 866.

that the issue of the Academy's subsidiary in Rome is "purely hypothetical. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not yet expressed its consent to the cession of its house in Rome to the Academy and, actually, nothing has been positively resolved on the issue, and, therefore, all the assumptions about this matter are premature."²⁶

At the annual exhibition at the Academy of Arts, from January 23 – February 26, 1889, Siemiradzki presented his works he had created over the previous two years: *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis*, the second version of *After the Example of the Gods, Before a Bath, At the Fountain* and *The Temptation of St. Jerome*. *Phryne* and *After the Example of the Gods* were purchased from the exhibition by Tsar Alexander III at a price of 40,000 roubles. The artist was nominated an "extraordinary member" of the Council of the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich, the President of the Academy of Arts who had visited the exhibition on the eve of the opening ceremony, then personally commissioned the artist to find a suitable house in Rome for the Academy.

Siemiradzki returned to Rome on 12th April and proceeded at once with the most thorough search for a suitable building. In this, he was assisted by architect Francesco Azzurri (1831-1901). Two months later, the information they had collected was sent to Iseyev: there was not a single house that would fully meet the goal in view. Everywhere, significant restructuring was needed, besides, the main problem was that they needed to choose a building with the presence of natural light and the absence of reflexes. The most suitable villa was located just behind Porta del Popolo, next to Villa Borghese. There was a garden and a beautiful view of Rome, and the house itself was meant for studios – there were eight to four on each floor with tiny storage rooms not suitable for habitation. However, due to the lack of a basement, the ground floor was very damp, so it might be quite good for artists to work there but unhealthy to live in: "the whole neighborhood around Villa Borghese was infamous for poor sanitary conditions."²⁷ In fact, Siemiradzki suggested some other options: Villino Ruffo; sculptor William Wetmore Story's house at Via San Martino and a house at 123, Via Sistina. He asked the Academy to send an architect who would know Rome well. He was worried that "for all the thoroughness of the search, something could have escaped my attention. In any case, it

26] Ibid, p. 865.

27] RGIA. Fond 789.

would be desirable to resolve this issue as quickly as possible. The inevitable building of the house will also require a lot of time. If the inspection of the premises confirmed what I have said above, and the shortcomings of those listed by me and of the ones to be found were a serious obstacle to the realization of His Highness's desire, then I would offer the Academy to use my own house on the most advantageous conditions."²⁸

When building his house, the artist tried to provide for everything that would be necessary for work. In front of the house there were cavalry barracks and parade-ground of the Military Department, so there were no problems with light. The studio itself was so spacious "that no canvasses piling on will block it."²⁹ Moreover, there was another one – exactly the same – on the floor above. There was, also, a beautiful garden there, and from the terrace there was a beautiful view of the Sabatini Mountains and Tivoli Gardens; on the left one could see a beautiful silhouette of the Alban Hills and the desert-like Roman Campagna. Siemiradzki offered his house for the money that he had once invested in it himself, "without losing the interest"³⁰ and pledging to submit to the Academy all available construction bills. Making the offer to sell the house, he was not going to even consider that huge difference "in the price of the land between the time when I bought it in a completely out-of-the-way area and the present when it turned into a fashionable and beautiful part of the city."³¹

Siemiradzki really wanted to work with talented young artists, be head of the Academy's Roman subsidiary. He wrote openly to Iseyev that offering his house, "I was hoping to work later for the benefit of the new institution, and the burning desire to implement the idea in the soonest possible time prompted the above plan that combined in

28] RGIA. Fond 789. Академия художеств, оп. 4, д. 121, Личное дело Семирадского Генриха Ипполитовича, 13 октября 1864 – 9 октября 1902, Письмо Г. И. Семирадского П. Ф. Исееву. Рим, 1/13 июня 1889 г., л. 342 (Academy of Arts, ser. 4, rec. 121, Personal file of Semiradzki Genrikh Ippolitovich, 13 October 1864 – 9 October 1902, H[enryk]. I. Siemiradzki's letter to P. F. Iseyev. Rome, 1/13 June 1889, l. 342).

29] А. М. Матушинский. *Русские художники в Риме. Статья вторая*. Художественные новости, т. II, 12-15 июня 1884 г., с. 304-305 (A[ppollon]. M. Matushinsky, Russian artists in Rome. Second article, "Art News", vol. II, 12-15 June 1884).

30] RGIA. Fond 789. Академия художеств, оп. 4, д. 121, Личное дело Семирадского Генриха Ипполитовича, 13 октября 1864 – 9 октября 1902, Письмо Г. И. Семирадского П. Ф. Исееву. Рим, 1/13 июня 1889 г., л. 342 (Academy of Arts, ser. 4, rec. 121, Personal file of Semiradzki Genrikh Ippolitovich, 13 October 1864 – 9 October 1902, H[enryk]. I. Siemiradzki's letter to P. F. Iseyev. Rome, 1/13 June 1889, l. 342).

31] Ibid.

itself an equal benefit for the Academy and myself – all this being somewhat an ambitious desire to justify the trust of the Grand Duke as soon as possible. Presenting to you all that has been said, I am asking you, dear Piotr Fyodorovich, to convey the contents of my letter to His Highness.”³²

The artists, on their part, did not forgive the conference secretary, the “rude despot and impudent fellow”³³ for taking independent decisions, especially, the one to invite Siemiradzki to work at the Academy. “The rumor has it,” wrote Pavel Cherkasov (1834-1900) to Vereshchagin, “that Iseyev is in for some trouble, that a large party headed by Bogoliubov – who is very influential and close to the imperial Court – is in opposition to him.”³⁴ Eventually, on December 19, 1888, by the Highest Decree of the Ministry of the Imperial Court, Iseyev was made to resign. Soon he was accused of embezzling large sums of state money, brought to trial and exiled to Viatka. In fact, the President of the Academy Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich, whom Bogoliubov, once taught to draw, was involved in money fraud himself, and who, after all that happened, even never remembered about the Roman academy for Russian talented artists.

In 1893, Pavel Chistiakov (1832-1919) wrote to Pavel Tretyakov (1832-1898): “Iseyev has been convicted. I was among the witnesses there. The Secretary of State Nikolai Petrov (1838-1913) fell ill, and his treasurer died, and all this happened when the court hearings of Iseyev’s case were over.”³⁵

32] Ibid.

33] Department of Manuscripts of the State Tretyakov Gallery (= OR GTG). Отдел рукописей Государственной Третьяковской галереи (ОР ГТГ), Москва, 17/1159, Письмо Черкасова П. А. к Верещагину В. В. 11/23/XI 1892 г., л. 2. (Moscow, 17/1159, Letter of Cherkasov P[avel]. A. to Vereshchagin V[asily]. V. 11 /XI 1892, f. 2).

34] OR GTG. Москва, 17/1159, Письмо Черкасова П.А. к Верещагину В.В. 11/23/XI 1892 г., л. 2. (See footnote 49).

35] OR GTG. Москва, ф. 1, П.М. Третьяков, е/х 4164. Письмо Чистякова П.П. к П.М. Третьяков. 2 января 1893 г., л. 1. (Fond 1 (P. M. Tretyakov), ed. kh. 4164. P[avel]. P. Chistyakov’s letter to P[avel]. M. Tretyakov. 2 January 1893, f. 1).

KAMILLA TWARDOWSKA

National Museum in Krakow

HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI AND HIS PRIVATE
CORRESPONDENCE WITH POLISH PAINTERS
IN ST. PETERSBURG AND MUNICH IN THE
COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL
MUSEUM IN KRAKOW

Last year, as the conference *The Henryk Siemiradzki that we do not know* was being worked on, the National Museum in Krakow was contacted by Mr Rafał Janke, the owner of albums with photographs that had previously belonged to Henryk Siemiradzki. These photographs show the earlier period of the Artist's life: photographs of his friends from the Kharkiv and St. Petersburg period, of family friends, and even of the first suitor of Maria Siemiradzka, née Prószyńska. What is important for us is that some of them are signed on the back by the Master himself. Pictures and private letters are essential in recreating the artist's private contacts, far from official biographies.

Hence, the first picture to be listed chronologically, dating from 1864, should be:

– photograph no. 1 (fig. 18 a-b), signed on the back: “Morhun...¹, drawing teacher in Chernigov. My first acquaintance in St. Petersburg.

1] Most likely the artist had forgotten the surname after many years. In the artist's correspondence, which is in Archivio di Pontificio Istituto di Studi Ecclesiastici, Roma (PISE), 22 – Siemiradzki Legacy. There is no information to identify this person.

We met while drawing a test piece in sculpture class. Me – to join the Academy, him – to get a teacher's degree”.

– a photograph of Aleksander Kowalewski² signed on the back (fig. 19): Aleksander Kowalewski, friend from the Academy in St. Petersburg³, together in Munich⁴ and with wife in Rome⁵. We also have a few pictures of his wife and two children.

– a photograph of Józef Budkiewicz (fig. 20),⁶ with inscription, whose correspondence with Siemiradzki I will discuss below.

The next two photographs are very important (fig. 21): Mikołaj Nawrocki⁷ – “a respectable friend from university – from St. Petersburg. Guardian angel during my illness (typhus) in St. Petersburg” and Mamert Karpowicz⁸ (fig. 22). Late Mamert Karpowicz, an artist and later a doctor, St. Petersburg 1864. And an inscription written by Maria Siemiradzka: “Henryk's best friend and caring guardian during his typhus, he looked after him at night sleeping on the floor”.⁹

- 2] We know of Siemiradzki's friend called Paweł Kowalewski (Pavel Kovalevsky), who certainly is the very same person as the introduced Aleksander Kowalewski. Perhaps he used a different name among his friends. Paweł Kowalewski (1843-1903) son of a Polish Philomath and a Russian woman. He also studied in St. Petersburg and was valued as a painter of battle-pieces and horses, *Słownik Artystów Polskich*, vol. IV, Warszawa 1993, pp. 195-196. Siemiradzki wrote about him as *one of the most thinking and educated artists* (Henryk Siemiradzki, letter to parents, St. Petersburg, 12 July 1868. PISE, 22, file 1, letter no. 65, f. 172-175).
- 3] The Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg enjoyed great interest among Polish students. According to only approximate data, in the years 1867 – 1918 at least 65 Poles graduated from the Academy; see Bartłomiej GARCZYK, *Petersburg jako ośrodek akademicki przełomu XIX I XX wieku*, „Studia Ekonomiczne. Zeszyty naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach, 2016, no. 277, p. 129. An outline of the problem of Poles at the St. Petersburg Academy was presented by Dr. Dariusz Konstantynów: http://www.polskipetersburg.pl/images/upload/biblioteka/Polscy_malarze_i_rzeźbiarzewuczniowie_petersburskiej_ASP_Dariusz_Konstantynow.pdf. Bogusław MUCHA, *Artysty polscy w nowożytnej Rosji*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 1994, p. 68-104; Lija SKAŁSKA-MIECIK, *Polscy uczniowie petersburskiej Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w XIX I na początku XX w. Katalog wystawy*, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warszawa 1989, pp. 14-23.
- 4] Henryk Siemiradzki, letter to parents, Rome, 27 August 1873, PISE, 22, file 1, letter no. 145, f. 382-383.
- 5] About Polish artists in Rome see: Maria NIŹKA, *Twórczość malarzy polskich w papieskim Rzymie w XIX wieku*, Polski Instytut Studiów nad Sztuką Świata, Warszawa-Toruń 2014.
- 6] Józef Budkiewicz (1841-1895), he studied in St. Petersburg 1866-1873, where he made friends with H. Siemiradzki. They rent flat together in 1868-1869, (see PISE, 22, file 1, letters no. 55, 61, 62, 76). See: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. I, Warszawa 1979, p. 269.
- 7] In the period 1864-1869 H. Siemiradzki mentioned in letters to his parents about Nawrocki 19 times (see: PISE, 22, file 1, letters no. 7, 17, 25, 29, 27, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 53, 54, 55, 56, 59, 63, 64, 75, 77).
- 8] In the period 1865-1867 Siemiradzki mentioned in letters about M. Karpowicz 6 times (see: PISE, 22, file 1, letters no. 11, 14, 49, 53, 54).
- 9] Henryk Siemiradzki suffered from gastric typhus during I-IV 1867.

A few letters from Henryk Siemiradzki's student years are kept at the National Museum in Krakow. Unfortunately, we do not have the Master's letters, just his friends replies, but still, they constitute a very interesting research material.

The oldest one is a letter from Józef Budkiewicz.¹⁰ The letter is relatively well-preserved and I have been able to read almost all of the words. Hence: "Recently I have received a letter from our dear Kowal, in which there is no word of the thing I had asked him about, that is: have you left your favourite St. Petersburg yet, had it not been for Monika, I would not (!) know, where you are these days. My dearest Henryk, you have to answer me openly: I'm asking you in the name of our friendship, tell me if you can wait until the end of July with my debt, as it is currently quite difficult for me to pay you back, but at the end of July I will do it with pleasure and gratefulness, wherever you will to be found. Perhaps, I can still do it [...] in St. Petersburg, so please give me your address – and I will [...] as soon as I arrive in the capital, I will satisfy your credits. But, my dear Henryk, if my proposal is even slightly troublesome to you, be so kind and write to me without ceremony and showing your teeth, and I will – swearing, send you your fifty roubles right away. Monika writes to me that you asked why – and what right did I have to take Kowalewski's horse sketch: my dear Henryk! I must tell you that it was Kowal himself who gave this head sketch to me, and in exchange he gave some other sketch to you – whereas he gave to me those horse heads in exchange of the sketch which I had given to Sabaniejew, so dear Henryk, who of us is owing? Kowal, You – or me – you will be surprised that I hold you to blame – I will try to explain it to you: you knew very well that I was leaving – you were also [...] supposed to leave and this unfortunate sketch still remained on my table; hence if I thought that it belonged to you – so – first, you would have taken it with you – or you would have told me – to bring it back to your apartment. And since neither of these happened – and besides, Kowal has not for a long time told me that this sketch belongs to me – and that you have or will receive another one in exchange – and I will not have anything apart from this sketch – so my dear Henryk, don't be angry with me that it is what it is. Anyway, next year, if you want, I will bring it to you abroad; and I have spoken to my parents and stayed [...] so goodbye my dear Henryk I kiss you your friend Józef

10] MNK VIII manuscript 1588/39.

P.S. Remember about the money, don't make ceremony and don't make a scandal".

The letter was written on 19 July 1871 by Józef Kazimierz Budkiewicz, a painter. He studied at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts in the years 1866-1873. Kowal spoken of in the letter is Paweł Kowalewski (Pavel Kovalevsky). Unfortunately, at this stage of research it is not possible to identify Monika from the letter.

We also have another letter from Józef Budkiewicz, which is a reply to Henryk Siemiradzki's reply.¹¹ So: "Dearest Henryk! I have received your letter – and I kindly thank you. I thought that you – my dearest friend had forgotten about me completely – I felt so sad reading the letter addressed to Kowal and not seeing my name in it just once. I have to tell you, and you have no reason not to believe me – till now I still can't get used to your absence. While writing this letter, I'm hoping that it will reach you. The previous letters written and sent by Monika have almost all been lost – in the lost letters [...]. I described to you programmes for a big gold medal – don't have me repeat dear Henryk – it's boring – it's been so long and to tell you the truth I have forgotten what they looked like – the only great one was Repin programme and the rest is not to say much of [...] I was so happy to see your painting make such an impression on me, and it was even better to hear praise coming from everywhere. And so, (Bogdan) Willewalde told me to give regards to you and inform you that our professor really liked your painting – and the whole bunch of delighted professors – as far as I've heard some sponsor is appraising your painting. – I don't remember the name – only that it is Sretianov and not Salsatenov (?). Kowal has not yet exhibited his painting – I don't know our professors' and the public opinion – only that St. Petersburg has light views as far as battles are concerned – we will see how they like my dear Kowal. As for myself, I can't tell you anything my dear Henryk, apart from the word that the same sketch is the same [...] it is difficult to say anything about today's exhibition apart from [...] funeral and [...] some Finnish person and [...] there is nothing in [...] they attract attention [...] but so far nothing interesting. Monika sends you kind greetings. I am very happy that you have met our [...] (Józef Ignacy) Kraszewski – I knew this kind man back in Zhytomyr, he also made a nice impression on me, no wonder. Tell me dear Henryk if it is true [...] Matejko (?) has deceased – be as kind as to write. You should try to have the photograph/s of

11] MNK VIII manuscript 1588/40.

your painting sent to Hegrowow – he knows [...] in the number of whose I – your sincerely loving friend Józef Budka (Budkiewicz).”

The letter dates from 12 March 1872 and was sent from St. Petersburg. Both of them are exceptionally interesting material for research on the relationships within a small circle of friends. Money borrowing, a little jealousy a better relations with a friend, preparing works to be evaluated.

Another letter of this year came from Munich from an anonymous friend.¹² It is very difficult to read. What can we read, though?

“Munich Bellarea 1872.

Just as I was about to write to you and send you back the letter that was delivered to my address, I received your letter. I can see from it that Dresden has not yet made a repulsive impression on you and if [...] not having living conditions then [...] if you don't get stuck in the Saxon ground. After you had left, nothing new or exceptional happened here. Thanks to the last two weeks that I had spent with you in such a blissful manner, have enjoyed myself so much [...] All the efforts of Mr (Stanisław) Witkiewicz to make me go back to [...] are working very slowly. Stasiak can be barely dragged out of bed in the morning and in the evening it is hard to keep him awake [...]. It is understandable that [...] it manifests itself in such a terrible form as it has recently been – and it is slowly [...]. Nothing worse than giving up just once [...] once stop regularly [...] work and live [...] Soon [...] character [...] and one has to work on [...] to nip roguery in the bud [...] Do things to show off, but it is easier to stick to my beliefs and rules [...] of some general laws than [...] forcing [...] one's own organism.

Henryk [...] you go to [...] Berlin Kunst Zeitung it is also so sentimental. – Monika can with pleasure [...] welcome a huge colour talent that your painting is full of truth, strength, effect [...] doesn't hold to blame, [...] but I don't understand. [...] not bad since as far as I could [...] says it is full of terrifying truth In short, everybody misses you and the Lwów (Lemberg, Lviv) Society of Friends of the Fine Arts invites you to take part in their event in April. It would be great if you could prepare something as this is a renowned [...] This association has to be supported and besides let our society know that there is a new worker, that there is a new star in the “Artist” constellation, the star that can [...] forward [...] Leszek Borkowski signed on this paper is one of the greatest Galicia statesmen [...] Complaining [...] about Dresden [...] and here

12] MNK VIII manuscript 1588/69.

in [...] did not do better. – Böcklin showed a terrible [...] land-fire-escape that doesn't bring honour to anyone. As for the Polish artistic world than maybe only [...] I have seen with [...] Maksymilian Gierymski's hunting. – The great truth that characterises this painting would not lose anything had there been more life. – Superfluous phlegmatic mood of everything allows to keep what [...] is called lyricism, but again can lead to a lie. Don't think that [...] why wanted to [...] it is by the way. – Vicinity of young Kaulbach has a bad influence on poor [...] don't be angry about those [...]. I realised that when [...] at Albert's. – (Nicolaus) Gyzis is losing power and it seems [...] with the full finishing that we see at Kaulbach and which is not examined in small and great paintings – it seems that Gyzis does not have a lot of motifs. There is something [...] some inquiry that he may not get rid of in further development. – I was at the new pinacotheca because [...] it started [...] and so poor – But despite my sincerest attempts I only managed to rehabilitate one, and the rest remained sentimental. I was even very impressed by [...] his trumpets for [...] and [...] additions [...]. In my [...] it is like that: Drop is trying [...] effect with [...] and big stone that over his soul they jinx [...] went for [...] and was replaced [...] and you can even see. It shows that Drop has [...] because as he says he likes [...] sometimes [...] he said that he was [...] a little [...] heart, but he allows himself to think about this when he is not busy with horses. – [...] it is a nature so eccentric and also full of [...] and poetry, as is very scarce that starts at Massimov's (?) picture. I had it at [...] and currently we went [...] always [...] that we had been with you a few times. No way [...] wanted to watch [...]. I did [...] to [...] and I get to painting, in the evenings I draw nudes, and I try [...] roguery as my [...] – covered with sketches and plasters [...] is very good as I don't like empty hooks. What more should I tell you about my life – it is stupid and mundane and if anything more poetic can be mustered up, it is old memories, graves and ruins that bring those rare blissful moments. Sometimes you spring to your feet and shake off those [...] moaning [...] oils and you drift somewhere with your thoughts, but it is not for long, a short feast [...] and after a while [...] and clay. We have completely [...]. The day after you left there was warm and nice rain that encouraged me to take a long walk by the banks of the Isar. [...] of course I soaked through [...] and surely doesn't [...]. I didn't go to Brandt's cause I didn't have the courage. [...] whole in laurels [...] in your [...] atelier and paints [...]. The rest of Munich is like Munich. At (Herman) Anschütz's a half-naked model again – but I don't draw. It is most mundane and most (?) of her The

most artistic shelter [...] dirty floor, this coal dust and squeak [...]. Evening classes have a better and more beautiful character. I will not skip them. Henryk! Remember to do well and be ready to leave Dresden but with bigger ignorants and in the company of your source [...] it is a neologism that describes well what you know and I understand. Here everyone, and especially [...] sentimental about you [...]. I was there today and said that [...] we made them really happy. Muse is [...] that changed into [...] laurel [...] to non-French. The room has acquired a cold stiff armoured character that I only like during battle or in the drill area. Photographs will be ready the day after tomorrow. [...] I didn't find [...] in $\frac{1}{4}$ [...].

I shan't go further because you [...] will not have the time to read Your”.

Another letter, this time without a date, but with the initials: LK. The handwriting suggests it is the same author as the previous one.¹³

“My old man in the embrace of Dresden or its ladies and we don't hear from you. [...] was the utterance I struggled with [...] that as you know [...] make me think [...]. Fortunately still [...] a restraint for those excesses [...] that so often smothers me (?). – According to you [...] from Munich [...] I worked a little, because at Anschütz's [...] and I can't count painting a picture as work. Want [...] to join painting school. I was yesterday and [...] at Wagner's who promised to admit me to his school after holidays, if there are vacancies. [...] I liked the drawings [...] Recently, Anschütz didn't stop short of doing me [...]. Because I [...] didn't [...] draw. I leave this without a comment. Anyway, I was supposed to break up with him. – But Gerson's sentence „bees make honey even from poisonous flowers” brought me on the way of [...] myself. Brockhaus at whose place I'm writing [...] happy because his pictures were bought Expensive [...] not without [...] was not happy about the news that you were leaving and [...] [Russian sentence]. And we live so-so, that is uninteresting and [...] starvation remuneration [...]. Only have [...] from my family and friends – the only moments that [...] more warmth that I only spend with us in thoughts [...] they liked my room a lot I sometimes take them to [...] the sofa (?) and we talk till midnight and then we split [...] to meet in the morning [...], that as you know doesn't have [...] just in [...] photographs [...]. He said that if there is such a need then he will be happy to [...] that you will understand when you come. Today I'm sending them to you. One copy [...] that

13] MNK VIII manuscript 1588/70.

after you [...] sentimental, and [...] for this love [...] give me a glass whenever I visit [...] people [...] to you at [...]. Now, at the exhibition there is Brandt's picture that you know, although it is slightly changed. Good anyway. (Władysław) Malecki has also got better [...] at your place [...] though he did well [...] is moaning as usually and [...] bored. It is a happy shortcoming that does not stop him from being a good person. [...] are not very strained. I have repaired your casket and now I have 1 fl 45 kr very solid because I am sure and I will collect it from Brockhaus I allow myself to use a couple (?) two guldens of yours to use in my account, of course I will [...] contribute to your casket, I keep precise accounts. Do I need to tell you how curious I am of your life and [...] And the impression that the Dresden company is making on you. Write my friend, it will be a great pleasure for me. Don't be surprised that my letters are short and uninteresting. They reveal my mental block and the collapse of morale, which is the reflection of how I feel today. I don't know if the smell [...] of various waxes can dissipate this bad mood that is haunting me. With [...] I am as always [...] and [...] about I'm not good. Sometimes all these foreign countries with their masters seem worthless and then I think of [...] the fields of my homeland [...] burial mounds [...] and fearsome figures of forefathers as [...] threaten [...] and [...] recent, with the whole national suffering [...] are filled with a crowd of spectres that hate every weakness every moan and you are alive again and the blood flows quicker and your thoughts sail over huge areas – [...]

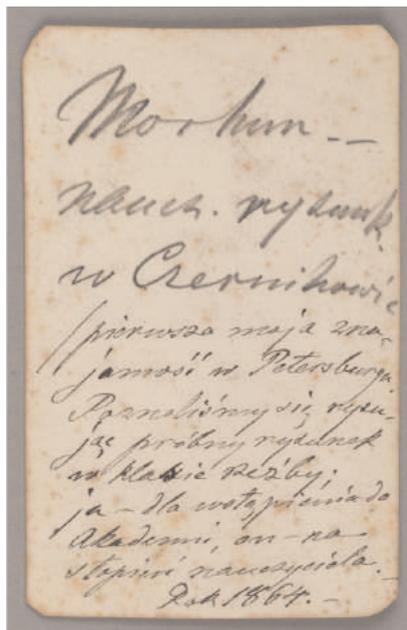
Your LK”.

Both letters were written while Henryk Siemiradzki was in Dresden and they are an extraordinary report and a review of the artists' works. While analysing the Polish artistic milieu in Munich,¹⁴ I found only one person that could have been the author of these letters: Polish painter Ludwik Kurella, who lived in Munich and knew the Polish artistic milieu in this city. The Polish painters listed are: Stanisław Witkiewicz, Maksymilian Gierymski, Józef Brandt, Wojciech Gerson, whom Henryk Siemiradzki was certain to have met while staying in Munich.

14] Halina STĘPIEŃ, *Artyści polscy w środowisku monachijskim w latach 1856-1914*, Instytut Sztuki PAN Warszawa 2003, pp. 24-26, 34-35. See also: Halina STĘPIEŃ, Maria LICZBIŃSKA, *Artyści polscy w środowisku monachijskim w latach 1828-1914, Artyści polscy w środowisku monachijskim w latach 1856-1914*, Instytut Sztuki PAN, Warszawa 1994.



18a. Photograph of *Morbun*, Janke's collection. Photo collection.



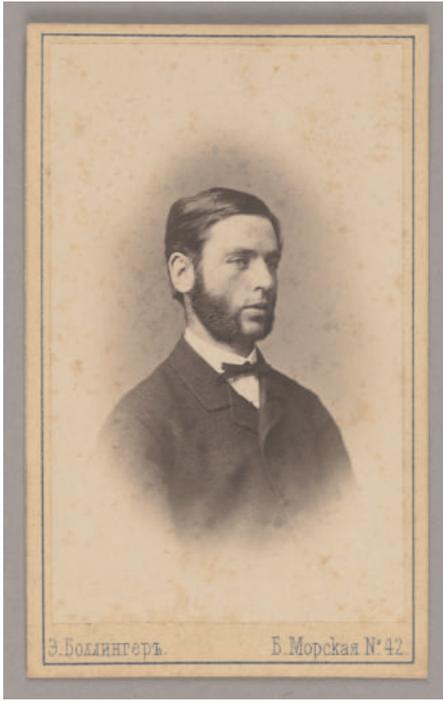
18b. Photograph of *Morbun* – verso, Janke's collection. Photo collection.



19. Photograph of Aleksander Kowalewski, Janke's collection. Photo collection.



20. Photograph of Józef Budkiewicz, Janke's collection. Photo collection.



21. Photograph of Mikołaj Nawrocki, Janke's collection. Photo collection.



22. Photograph of Mamert Karpowicz, Janke's collection. Photo collection.

NINA MARKOVA

State Tretyakov Gallery

SOME IDEAS ABOUT A FRENCH ARTIST OF
THE TIME OF LOUIS XV PAINTS THE PORTRAIT
OF A MARQUISE BY HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI

In the process of consultations on the *catalogue raisonné* of works by Henryk Siemiradzki, on which Polish colleagues have been working on, it became necessary to clarify the place of the painting *A French Artist of the Time of Louis XV Paints the Portrait of a Marquise (The Studio of a Fashionable Artist of the 18th Century)* (fig. 23) in the master's *oeuvre*. This report reflects on the subject.

The author of the monograph on the artist Tatiana Karpova connects the *Marquise* with the interest of Siemiradzki, a student of the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts, in the history of France.¹ From his correspondence with relatives, we know that he worked on the painting *Louis XI after Signing a Death-warrant* in 1865 and collected material in the Public Library: he studied costumes, furniture, and the life of that time.² Now the location of the work with such a plot is unknown,

1] Татьяна Л. КАРПОВА, *Генрик Сёмірадзкі* (Tatiana L. KARPOVA, *Henryk Siemiradzki*), Золотой век, Санкт-Петербург 2008, pp. 19-21.

2] Archivio di Pontificio Istituto di Studi Ecclesiastici, Roma (PISE), 22 – Siemiradzki Legacy, file 1, Henryk Siemiradzki, letter to parents, St. Petersburg, 11.01. 1866, no. 29 f. 75 and St. Petersburg, [February] 1866, no. 30, f. 83-84vv.

therefore, as a further example reflecting Siemiradzki's youthful interest in French history, the author cites the *Marquise*.

However, 1860s seem to be too early as the date of painting the *Marquise*. Unlike the 1880s, the era of active development of salon painting, when such a plot could emerge as one of the many variations on the theme of *le nu* (female nude), for Russian art of the 1860s, "the Holy sixties", it would have been absolutely untypical. The emerging democratic trend focused on other issues. Even in the paintings by artists associated with the academic line of art in this period the image of a naked (at least partially naked) female body is extremely rare it is and always justified by the plot, representing scenes from mythology or ancient life. Artists who turned to this topic were associated, as a rule, with the Western European artistic tradition by origin (Carl Neff, Andrei Belloli) or worked and lived in Italy (Fyodor Bronnikov). The image of the "gallant 18th century" was also not relevant; the theme of "boudoir of the Marquise" with its erotic associations arose in Russian art only in the early 20th century. The few painters of the third quarter of the 19th century, who worked on subjects from the history of that era, considered "the century madly and wisely" from the point of view of the civil moral ideal: condemned the vices of the society or the ruler and glorified enlightened virtue. The author of the monograph herself notes that the *Marquise*, dedicated to the French history, with its courtly culture, devoid of a positive ethical ideal, was a random plot for Siemiradzki with his moralism.³

It is unlikely that such a picture would have emerged from under the brush of a student of the academy of arts, whose morals were very chaste. The female model began to appear in the nature class of St. Petersburg Academy of Arts only after the reform of 1893-1894. Students working with an erotic component would have caused a scandal. The picture also could not have been painted for the free art market as, in the 1860s, it was practically non-existent. High-ranking clients, able to order a picture with a similar theme, turned to Siemiradzki later, when he successfully graduated from the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts.

At the same time, stylistically, *Marquise* is undoubtedly an early work of Siemiradzki, close to his graduate picture *Alexander Macedon and his Doctor Philip* (*Alexander of Macedon's Trust in Doctor Philip*) (1870, Belarusian National Arts Museum). Therefore, most likely,

3] T. JI. KAPHOBA, op. cit., p. 21.

it could have been painted not in the 1860s, but shortly after graduating from the Academy, in the early 1870s.

The painting is kept in the State Art Museum of Uzbekistan in Tashkent⁴ and comes from the collection of Grand Duke Nicholas Konstantinovich (1850 – 1918), nephew of Tsar Alexander II, a passionate collector of various works of art (fig. 24). It is logical to assume that that Grand Duke was the commissioner of the picture, moreover, after graduating from the Academy, Siemiradzki immediately received orders from other great princes, two of Grand Duke's cousins – Alexander Alexandrovich, the future Tsar Alexander III (*A Roman Orgy from the Imperial Era*, 1872) and Vladimir Alexandrovich (*Christ and the Harlot*, 1873).

Grand Duke Nicholas Konstantinovich was an extraordinary person with an incredible biography. He was the first of the Romanovs who out of his own initiative received a higher education and graduated from the General Staff Academy in 1870 with a silver medal. At the same time, at one of the masquerade balls, Grand Duke fell in love with an American adventurer Harriet Blackford, who lived under the pseudonym of Fanny Lear, named after the heroine of Parisian vaudeville (fig. 25). This love affair continued from 1870 till 1874 and it developed turbulently, the lovers broke off the relationship several times, but then they would come back to each other again. Twice, in 1872 and 1873, they travelled abroad, visiting Warsaw and Vienna, Germany, as well as Italy, in particular Rome and Naples. This passion disturbed the parents of the Grand Duke strongly. He was removed from St. Petersburg, sent in the spring of 1873 with the Russian expeditionary forces on the march to Khiva. However, this did not help, and when Nicholas Konstantinovich returned from Central Asia their love affair continued.

It ended scandalously in 1874. The mother of the Grand Duke, Alexandra Iosifovna, discovered the loss of three diamonds from the frame of the icon with which Emperor Nicholas I blessed her marriage. The investigation concluded that the diamonds were stolen by Nicholas Konstantinovich, and the money had been spent on gifts for Fanny Lear. At the general meeting of the family, headed by the Emperor, a decision was made that caused minimum damage to the family reputation: the Grand Duke was officially declared mentally ill and permanently removed from the capital, Fanny Lear was

4] State Art Museum of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, no. inv. 3287.

also expelled from Russia forever. She never saw the Grand Duke again and died of consumption in Nice in 1886, leaving published memoirs about her stay in St. Petersburg and relations with the Grand Duke.⁵

Nicholas Konstantinovich was taken away from St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1874 and in seven years changed at least 10 places of residence. Since the summer of 1881 he was settled in Tashkent. Here, the Grand Duke, despite constant police supervision, led the life of a grand gentleman-tyrant: shocked administration officials and officials who came from the capital, clashed with local eastern princes, became a de facto bigamist, got numerous offspring, including illegitimate children, and even tried to enter into a third marriage. However, he really improved the city of Tashkent. He paved streets, built a theatre, a hospital for the poor, a poorhouse, a circus, and even a brothel with the money allocated by the tsar court for construction of his palace. He was engaged in business: he started photographic workshops, billiard rooms, the first cinema in Tashkent, selling kvass, rice processing, soap and cotton manufactories. With money from his businesses, he became engaged in the construction of irrigation canals in the Golodnaya Steppe and cotton plants using advanced waste-free technology. Despite the eccentricity of his behaviour, the Grand Duke was very popular among the local residents, who considered him their benefactor and sincerely mourned his death from pneumonia in 1918.⁶

5] Fanny LEAR, *Le roman d'une Américaine en Russie accompagné de lettres originales*, A. Lacroix et Cie éditeurs, Bruxelles 1875.

6] Features of the biography of the Grand Duke provoke the authors of Internet and printed publications to exploit the most scandalous and sensational side of it; these are his popular biographies: Михаил АЗАРОВ, *Зазнобы августейшего ланьяка. Мемуары Фанни Лир* (Mikhail AZAROV, *Sweethearts of August maniac. The Memoirs of Fanny Lear*). Accessible online: <https://libking.ru/books/nonf-/nonf-biography/490309-mihail-azarov-zaznoby-avgusteyshego-manuyaka-memuary-fanni-lir.html/> ; Князь Михаил ГРЕЧЕСКИЙ, *В семье не без урода. Биография великого князя Николая Константиновича* (Prince Michael GREEK, *Every family has its black sheep. Biography of Grand Duke Nicholas Konstantinovich*), Zakharov, Moscow 2002. Accessible online: <https://mytashkent.uz/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/V-seme-ne-bez-uroda.pdf/>. This latest edition, written by the hero's great-nephew, interprets events in the most comfortable, ennobling relative light. Both authors use in their texts, the memoirs of Fanny Lear. Also informative memoirs are of interest: Михаил МАССОН, *Ташкентский Великий Князь. Из воспоминаний старого Туркестаниа*, (Mikhail MASSON, *Tashkent Grand Duke. From the memories of the old Turkestan*). Accessible online: <https://mytashkent.uz/2011/04/04/tashkentskij-velikij-knyaz-prodolzhenie-1/>. <https://mytashkent.uz/2011/04/04/tashkentskij-velikij-knyaz-prodolzhenie-2/>) and Михаил БАСХАНОВ, *Самодержец Голодной степи. Великий князь Николай Константинович в воспоминаниях Александра Половинова*, (Mikhail BASKHANOV

During the trip to Europe in 1872 together with his beloved, the Grand Duke ordered the Neapolitan sculptor Tommaso Solari (1820-1889) to copy the famous statue of Paulina Borghese by Antonio Canova, representing the model as Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, holding in the hand her attribute – an apple. But instead of Paulina Fanny Lear was to lie on the marble bed (fig. 26). Of course, in the few days the couple's stayed in Naples it was impossible to make a marble statue, so the primary task was to give it a portrait resemblance. In her memoirs, Fanny Lear described the unpleasant emotions she felt while the plaster mask was being made of her face.⁷ After the statue was made, it was sent to St. Petersburg and decorated the new palace of Nicholas Konstantinovich, in which he settled his beloved.⁸

The story of the transformation of the statue of Paulina Borghese suggests that Siemiradzki's painting *A French Artist of the Time of Louis XV Paints the Portrait of a Marquise* is something similar – a kind of a “portrait” of the Grand Duke's mistress, an equally gallant manifestation of his feelings.

The plot of the picture is ambiguous, and its title does not quite correspond to what is depicts on it. If you look carefully at the picture on the easel presented on the canvas, a noble art lover poses semi-nude not for a portrait, but for a two-figure composition. A woman with a naked breasts is reclining leaning on her left hand, and the right one is raised up with either a receiving or a dismissing gesture. Draperies in the picture are the same as that of the posing model – pearl around the hips and scarlet next to the ground. There is another figure to the left and behind her, perhaps an angel, or a winged genius – a white paint spot looks like a wing – who either is handing something to the half-naked woman or is putting something on her head. In this

Autocrat of the Hungry Steppe: Grand Duke Nicholas Konstantinovich in the memoirs of Aleksandr Polovtsov. Accessible online: <https://nuz.uz/moi-uzbekistancy/20614-samoderzhec-golodnoy-stepi-velikiy-knyaz-nikolay-konstantinovich-v-vospominaniyah-aleksandra-polovcova.html/> – excerpts from the memoirs of A. A. Polovtsov Jr., stored in Государственный архив Российской Федерации ГАРФ (State Archive of the Russian Federation), Fond 5881, Op.1. D. 118. 226 l.

7] F. LEAR, op. cit., p. 157.

8] The Palace, bought for Grand Duke Nicholas Konstantinovich in October 1873, was rebuilt in 1857-1862 from a two-storey stone mansion of the late 18th century. It was faced with marble during the reconstruction, and it became the second palace in St. Petersburg after the Marble Palace by A. Rinaldi with a similar facade decoration, for which it was called the Small Marble Palace. It is more known by the name of the previous owner – Palace of N. A. Kushelev-Bezborodko (in our days the European University was till recently located in it).

way the painters of the 17th-18th centuries depicted the crowning of Christian martyrs or heroes. Among the works of the late Siemiradzki there is a composition perhaps similar to the motif of "picture inside a picture". This is the central part of *The Judgement of Paris* (fig. IV), where there is an apple received by Aphrodite-the winner, and a wreath over her head, and even the likeness of a wing over the shoulder of the girl holding a wreath, formed by a piece of fluttering drapery.

As for the main action in the picture, it is also ambiguous: the model, tired of posing, lies down, holding in her hand a sanguine drawing or a print (something by François Boucher, for example). And the painter, putting the brush in his left hand, to the palette, and curving in a courtly manner, lifts the edge of the luxurious satin coverlet with his right hand, either intending to cover the nudity, or, on contrary, to remove the last covers.

In this context, the episode from the memoirs of Fanny Lear looks rather eloquent. The Grand Duke brought her to the palace for the first time to show her his new residence. It made a great impression on the young woman. Fanny left a three-page description of the palace's interiors, where she mentioned a wide staircase of pink marble with magnificent vases and bronze figures, and a huge ballroom, white and gold, in the Renaissance style, and a Smoking room in the Moorish style; salon *à la* Louis XIV; another living room, decorated with Louis XV tapestries; boudoir in the style of Marquise of Pompadour, covered with pink silk with lace; dressing room with excellent marble bath-room; large dining room, decorated with Spanish leather; the Grand Duke's office and more. All the rooms were filled with precious things, porcelain, paintings and carpets.⁹ During this tour, in one of the rooms, the Grand Duke suddenly invited her to settle on the couch and play the role of the Marquise. "I didn't force myself to beg and in the best way possible portrayed the funny and stupid expression on the face of this woman; for his part, he showed all the gallantry of the hero-lover, and after that fleeting farce, he told me that this room would always be mine. I insisted he covered this couch, a witness to our love tricks, and he agreed".¹⁰

In Siemiradzki's *oeuvre* there are some drawings that can be associated with the picture of *Marquise*. One of them depicts a nude model

9] L. FANNY, op. cit., pp. 249-252.

10] Ibid., pp. 250-251.

in the pose of the marquise, but in a mirror reflection (Kiev National Museum of Russian Art) (fig. 27).¹¹ The drawing was executed on yellowish paper, which indicates that it belongs to the early period of Siemiradzki's work — later he used grey-blue, grey-green paper. The drawing is well designed with black pencil and chalk, but the facial features are not visible: the profile is barely outlined or erased. If you look carefully — the model's cheek is crossed by a faint trace of another sketch of a female profile. Probably, as in the case of the statue of Fanny Lear – Venus by Solari, the body, executed with a model, was supposed to be supplemented with the head of another model. At the same time, if we compare the drawing with the statue, it is obvious that the woman's pose on the sketch is almost identical to that on the sculptures.

A few more sketches are to be found in albums stored in the Krakow National Museum.¹² One of them (fig. 28) is a sketch not quite clear as to the plot, where a naked woman is reclining on the bed in the left foreground side of the composition in the same position as on the drawing from Kiev. The lady is clearly posing, turning her head slightly to the right, where two more figures are outlined in the depths, one of them is also depicted reclining. A sketch of a man's head wearing a wig is another material for the *Marquise* (fig. 29). The content of the album suggests that Siemiradzki could have worked on the ordered *Marquise* picture while abroad, at the same time when he was thinking about the composition of the *Christ and the Harlot*.

Siemiradzki graduated in 1870, he went to Munich in the autumn of 1871, on the way visiting his father in Warsaw, stopping in Krakow and in Vienna. In Germany he travelled to Dresden, and from May 1872 he settled in Rome. He could have got the order to paint the *Marquise* both while in St. Petersburg or later, abroad, because his routes and the routes of the lovers lay in the same places, and they had an

11] No. inv. Pr – 1180. In the monograph of Karpova dates back to the 1880s (T. KARPOVA, op. cit. p. 78).

12] No. inv. MNK N. I.-318 432. According to the date on the flyleaf of the album, it was started in November 1869, but continued later. A group of the plaster sculpture studies (pp. 2-8) is dating back to 1869. The rest drawings are executed in a slightly different style and, obviously, made later. They include two sketches of mountain landscapes made from nature (pp. 12,16), as well as a picture of a bearded male figure dressed in the spirit of the XVI – early XVII century in a beret and with a knife behind his belt – the image is completely inexplicable in St. Petersburg realities, but possibly related to the Siemiradzki painting *Magdeburg wedding* planned in Germany.

opportunity to meet. For example, in 1873 in Vienna, where the World's Fair was held from May to November. It was visited by Grand Duke and his mistress. In the art section of the exhibition Russian painting was represented by Nikolai Ge (*Peter I Interrogating the Tsar-
evich Aleksei Petrovich*, 1871), Vasily Perov (*Hunters at Rest*, 1871; *Fisherman*, 1871), Ilya Repin (*Barge Haulers on the Volga*, 1873), Aleksei Savrasov (*The Rooks have returned*, 1871). Siemiradzki presented the already completed picture *Christ and the Harlot*, which received a medal "For Art".

Since the face of the statue of Venus by Tommaso Solari has retained the authentic features of the Grand Duke's beloved, it seems appropriate to compare it with the "marquise" profile in the Siemiradzki painting and the preserved photographic images of Fanny Lear. Unfortunately, among her photos which we know there is no one made in profile. All of them relate to the period after her expulsion from Russia (fig. 30, 31). Nevertheless, the result of such a comparison, if not absolutely convincing, does not provoke vehement objections. The only photo presented as a portrait of young Fanny Lear, by the way, the least resembling of both artistic images and later photographs, obviously captured the young wife of Grand Duke Nadezhda Alexandrovna Dreier, whom he married in Orenburg in 1878.¹³

The Palace which Grand Duke built in the center of Tashkent for his residence is one of the most notable sights in the city in our days. It serves as the House of International Receptions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan now. The interior of the palace was made with great luxury. Nicholas Konstantinovich got the furniture from Paris, porcelain from Limoges, glass and crystal from Venice, and managed to get from St. Petersburg a part of his art collection, including a statue by Solari, which he put on the top of the main palace staircase. Obviously he got the picture by Siemiradzki from St. Petersburg too.

13] Nadezhda Alexandrovna Dreier (1861-1929) was a daughter of Orenburg police chief. Grand Duke Nicholas Konstantinovich married her in December 1878. This marriage was dissolved by the Synod and remained civil. Emperor Alexander III legalized it as morganatic in 1899, Nadezhda Dreier received the title of "Duchess Iskander". The Grand Duke had two sons from this marriage.

In 1900 the *Marquise* changed its owner. It was either sold, or presented to Aleksandr Polovtsov Jr. (1867–1944), an official of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, sent in 1896 to Tashkent to study the problems of migration.¹⁴ During his stay in Tashkent, he managed to establish friendly relations with Grand Duke. Visiting the palace, he also had the opportunity to appreciate the Grand Duke's collection of painting, which contained a number of remarkable works of the 18th century, including some portraits by Dmitry Levitsky.¹⁵ Nevertheless, we do not know why and how, but Aleksandr Polovtsov became the owner of the Siemiradzki's picture for 5 years and parted with it, probably in connection with his departure to another place of service – as the Consul General in Bombay.

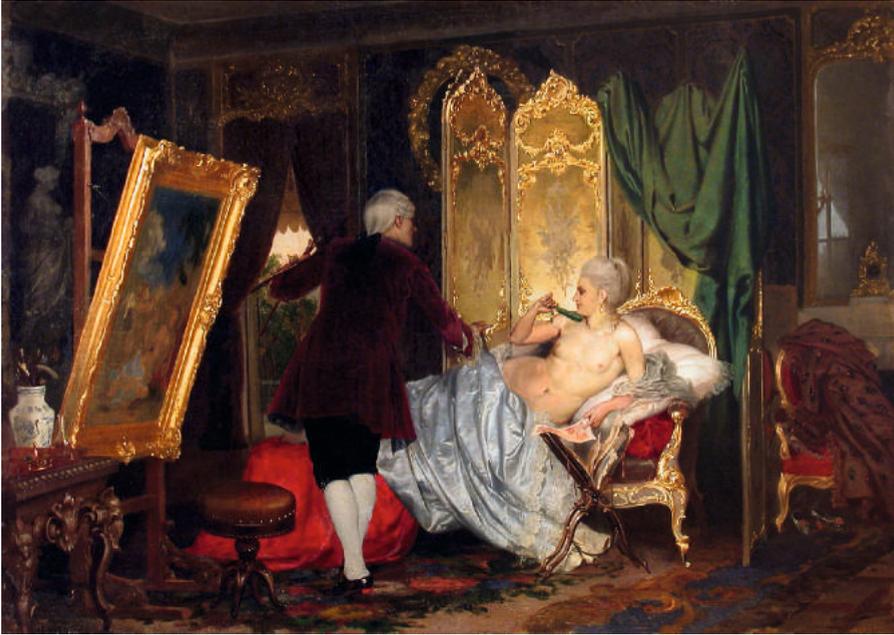
The picture changed its owners several times later¹⁶, but apparently did not lose touch with the name of Grand Duke Nicholas Konstantinovich, because after its acquisition by the state in 1962 from a private person it entered the State Art Museum of Uzbekistan, created in 1918 on the basis of the Grand Duke's art collection from his Tashkent palace. Now the picture by Siemiradzki and the statue by Solari are together again and adorn the museum collection.

The history of the painting *A French Artist of the Time of Louis XV Paints the Portrait of a Marquise* continues to be a mystery. The author is fully aware that the proposed hypothesis has no real justification. At the same time, it is also not so easy to dismiss it: too many indirect circumstances and coincidences make it tempting and believable. Confirm or refute this idea can further researches – a technical and technological study of the picture, a search in the Russian state archives and in the Siemiradzki archive stored in Rome.

14] Aleksandr Polovtsov, Jr. (1867-1944), the eldest son of a millionaire, Secretary of state Aleksandr Polovtsov from marriage to Nadezhda Yuneva, a pupil of Baron A. L. Stieglitz and illegitimate daughter of Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich. Grand-nephew of Emperors Alexander I and Nicholas I. Diplomat, ethnographer, orientalist, historian, and expert on Russian art. Serving in the Ministry of internal Affairs, during his trips to the Transcaucasus, Turkestan and the Transcaspian region, he made many acquisitions for the Eastern collection of the Stieglitz Museum. In 1917 – Director of the Museum and the School of technical drawing founded by Baron A. L. Stieglitz, member of the art Commission of the Gatchina Palace. The first Director of the Pavlovsk Palace Museum. After emigrating in 1918, he settled in Paris, where he created his own antiquarian business.

15] M. БАЦАХАОВ, op. cit.

16] Acquires by State in 1962 from B. V. Kopelevich; earlier – a collection of O. E. Morozovich (1904-1943); A. A. Polovtsev (1900-1904); up to 1900 – a collection of Grand Duke Nicholas Konstantinovich In Tashkent. (Tatiana L. Karpova, H. Semiradzki's catalogue-raisonné, manuscript).



23. Henryk Siemiradzki, *A French Artist of the Time of Louis XV Paints the Portrait of a Marquise (The Studio of a Fashionable Artist of the 18th Century)*, 1871, oil on canvas, 75.5 × 103 cm, State Art Museum of Uzbekistan, Tashkent. Photo Museum.



24. Charles Bergamasco, Photograph of Grand Duke Nicholas Konstantinovich Romanov, 1874. Photo in public domain.



25. The London Stereoscopic Company, Photograph of Fanny Lear, Photo in public domain.



26. Tommaso Solari, *Fanny Lear as Venus Victrix*, 1872-1873, State Art Museum of Uzbekistan, Tashkent. Photo in public domain.



27. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Reclining Nude (the Model)*, sketch, pencil, charcoal, chalk, yellow paper, 35.8 × 44.2 cm, National Museum, Kiev Fine Art Gallery. Photo Museum.



28. Henryk Siemiradzki, sketch for *A French Artist of the Time of Louis XV paints the Portrait of a Marquise*, pencil, paper, 20 × 28.5 cm, National Museum, Krakow, no. inv. MNK III-r.a.- 18401/15. Photo Museum.



29. Henryk Siemiradzki, Sketches for *Christ and the Harlot* and for *French Artist of the Times of Louis XV paints the Portrait of the Marquise*, pencil, paper, 20 × 28.5 cm, National Museum, Krakow, no. inv. MNK III-r.a.-18401/9. Photo Museum.



30. Charles Reutlinger, Photograph of Fanny Lear. Photo in public domain.



31. Charles Reutlinger, Photograph of Fanny Lear. Album. Photo in public domain.

PROGRAMME RELATED CONTENT IN *THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS* BY HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI

The *Judgment of Paris*, also called by Jerzy Miziołek *The Triumph of Venus*, is not only one of the best paintings of this outstanding academic master, but also a work that stands out among rich European painting of that time, inspired by classical beauty, ancient archaeology and literature (fig. IV).¹

- 1] Stanisław LEWANDOWSKI, *Henryk Siemiradzki*, Gebethner & Wolff, Kraków 1904, pp. 106-107, fig. 105; Tadeusz DOBROWOLSKI, *Nowoczesne malarstwo polskie*, vol. 2, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław-Kraków 1960, p. 73; Halina ZAWILSKA, *Henryk Siemiradzki 1843-1902: obrazy i rysunki ze zbiorów polskich*, catalogue Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi 1968-1969, Łódź 1968; Janina ZIELIŃSKA, *Henryk Siemiradzki Sąd Parysa*, in: *Galeria malarstwa polskiego. Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie. Przewodnik*, eds. Elżbieta CHARAZIŃSKA, Ewa MICKE-BRONIAREK, Warszawa 1995, p. 134; Jerzy MIZIOŁEK, „Triumf Wenus” Henryka Hektora Siemiradzkiego w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie, in: Jerzy MIZIOŁEK, *Inspiracje śródziemnomorskie: o wizji antyku w sztuce Warszawy i innych ośrodków kultury dawnej Polski*, Neriton, Warszawa 2004, pp. 232-246; Jerzy MIZIOŁEK, *Henryka Hektora Siemiradzkiego wizja antyku: „Sąd Parysa” w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie*, „Biuletyn Historii Sztuki”, 2004, no.1-2, p. 89; Jerzy MIZIOŁEK, *Muse, Baccanti e Centauri. I capolavori della pittura pompeiana e la loro fortuna in Polonia*, Istituto di Archeologia dell’Universita di Varsavia, Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Varsavia, Varsavia 2010, pp. 73-77; Jerzy MIZIOŁEK, *I due capolavori di Henryk Siemiradzki: “Le torce di Nerone” e “Il Giudizio di Paride” ovvero “Il trionfo di Venere”, “Pegasus”, 2010, vol. 12, pp. 83-119; Ewa MICKE-BRONIAREK, Aneta BŁASZCZYK-BIAŁY, *Henryk Siemiradzki “The Judgement of Paris”*, in: *Gallery of Polish Painting. Guide*, eds. Ewa MICKE-BRONIAREK, transl. Joanna Holzman, National Museum in Warsaw, Warsaw 2006, p. 150; Claude ALBORE LIVADIE, Witold DOBROWOLSKI, *L’antica Baia in un’opera di Henryk Siemiradzki*, “Territori della Cultura” [Centro Universitario per i Beni Culturali Ravello], 2014, no. 14-15, pp. 11-25; Witold DOBROWOLSKI, „Triumf Wenus” Henryka Siemiradzkiego, “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2016, vol. IV, pp. 177-190; Татьяна Л.*

The painting, made in Rome in 1892, despite its high artistic quality, did not attract too much interest of critics and researchers, whose opinions were characterized by superficiality and blatant errors. Stanisław Lewandowski, Siemiradzki's first monographer, acknowledged the scene's tendency towards theatricality. His identification of Paris, although correct, was at the same time allusive, leading over time to the erroneous assumption that he was represented by the figure of a young man in a rose wreath, standing under the tree to the left side of the painting.² The mistake can be explained by the fact that the figure clearly stands out due to the use of light and the pointing gesture of the hand. In fact, the Paris group is visible in the background of the composition, between Venus and the defeated goddesses. The transfer of this group from the foreground allowed it to evoke the action of the preceding event, and added a special meaning to the expression of the whole painting.

In his work published in 2004, written already in the mood of an increased interest in the work of academic artists, Jerzy Miziołek corrected the recurring error.³ Placing Siemiradzki's composition in the context of other works, the Warsaw based researcher drew attention to the originality of the work, which depicts not the moment of making the verdict, but the subsequent triumph of Venus. Having received the golden apple, which was intended for the fairest one, from Paris, the goddess of love held it up and showed it to the onlookers, Graces and Horae surrounded her dancing in a circle and the defeated Juno and Minerva, leaving the stage, bluntly expressed their grief and indignation.

However, the most valuable contribution of this author to the history of research into the work was its connection with the text of *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius (ca. 125-170?).⁴ Even a superficial comparison of Apuleius's description with Siemiradzki's composition proves close interrelation. In the painting we find the wooden elevation with Paris,

Карпова, Фрина Генриха Семирадского – манифестация идеи Красоты в художественной атмосфере 1880-х годов (Tatiana L. KARPOVA, *Inspiration of Rome: genre of "antique idylls" in Henryk Siemiradzki's work*), "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2016, vol. IV, pp. 173, 172, fig. 7.

- 2] "Paris sitting on a platform, among [...] goats" ("Siedzący na podwyższeniu Parys, otoczony [...] kozami"). S. LEWANDOWSKI, op. cit., p. 106.
- 3] J. MIZIOŁEK, *Triumf Wenus...*, p. 235. Identification corrected in: E. MICKE-BRONIAREK, A. BŁASZCZYK-BIAŁY, op. cit., p. 150; Identification error mistakenly attributed to the authors: W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumf Wenus...*, p. 178, footnote 5.
- 4] J. MIZIOŁEK, *Triumf Wenus...*, pp. 241-243. APULEIUS, *Metamorphoseon, libri XI*, ed. Rudolf HELM, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana 1055, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 2008. English translation: APULEIUS, *Metamorphoses (The Golden Ass)*, transl. William Adlington (1566). Accessible online: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1666>.

Mercury and goats, Venus in a windblown blue robe, surrounded by joyful Horae, Graces and Cupids, as well as Castors (the Dioskuri) with stars on their helmets, accompanying the defeated goddesses, who, quoting Apuleius, “angrily, shewing by their gesture, that they would revenge themselves on Paris”⁵ and an attempt to link the performances of the goddesses with a specific type of Greek music.⁶

Nevertheless, the originality of Siemiradzki’s work is not only due to its dependence on the spectacle described by the African writer, organized in the Roman Corinth on the occasion of the festival in honour of Venus-Aphrodite. Siemiradzki transformed this Greek public spectacle into a private performance, through which a Roman patrician added splendour to a feast thrown for his friends in his seaside villa.

The action of Siemiradzki’s painting takes place in the early summer afternoon. A feast was organised for the guests. To accommodate them, beds were placed in the *tablinum* and adjacent parts of the *domus*. A pilaster decorated passage connects the *tablinum* with the portico and the garden (*hortus*), with its trees, bushes of roses and papyruses and a fountain. The garden is situated one step lower and is open to the bay. Lying on their beds, being served by exotic slaves, the guests have just finished eating and at the beginning of the performance a half-nude black girl with a tray and wine crosses the *atrium*, flooded with sunlight, to pour wine to some of the feasters who are still engaged in conversation and drinking. Others get up from their beds and, standing in the airy and shady portico, watch the pantomime organized for them.

The space of the *hortus* was transformed into a kind of *theatrum*, by building in the background a wooden imitation of Mount Ida mentioned by Apuleius and using the wall with steps on the left side of the frame as a substitute for amphitheatre auditorium. Colourful carpets make the seats look like flowery meadows. In order to protect the actors from heat and expand the shaded zone, a large *velum*, was attached to the tree branches, decorated with the silhouette of Neptune with a trident, framed by the motifs of chasing waves and plant threads.⁷ The main decoration of this *theatrum* is still the fountain. Its central element is a niche with a statue of an angler and a conch in the shape of a *rostrum*, i.e. the bow of the ship. On the sides of the niche there are two large

5] APULEIUS, op. cit., Book: X, chapter 46, p. 435.

6] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumpf Wenus...*, pp. 183-184, footnotes 21-24.

7] J. MIZIOLEK, *Triumpf Wenus...*, pp. 247-249; W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumpf Wenus...*, p. 183.

theatrical masks: tragic and comic. Water flows out of their open mouth into a low, round tank. The tank is shaded by a small gable roof supported by two Corinthian columns with shafts similar to candelabra, made partly of bronze and decorated at the bottom with battle scenes and higher with heads of lions (?) and bundles of acanthus.

In the middle of this improvised stage we can see the victorious Venus. The goddess, addressing viewers and admirers, raises her trophy with a wide gesture, and Cupids, Graces, and Charities surround her, dancing to the sounds of sweet Lydian music of the aulos, barbiton and tambourine, played by musician women sitting on the edge of the terrace. One of the Charities is throwing flowers under the goddess's feet. Another is raising a wreath to put it on her lady's head. At the same time the actors, playing a crowd of worshippers, welcome her triumph with joyful faces and enthusiastic gestures.

Looking at the joy of their rival, Juno and Minerva bluntly manifest their dissatisfaction and indignation with their gestures and facial expressions. The costumes and gestures of the goddesses accentuate the diversity of their natures, emphasizing also the differences between the Doric and Ionic orders. Just behind Minerva, and thus shifted from the Juno's procession, there are two Castors in helmets with stars on their heads and in decorative armour. They, too, break away from the general joyful atmosphere. No wonder. The sons of Jupiter (*Dioskuouroi*) and Helena's brothers had already once had to tear her out of the hands of an infatuated Theseus. The case with Paris will have a far worse conclusion – a ten-year-long murderous war.

All the pantomime actors: Paris with Mercury, Venus with the procession of the Graces and the Horae, Juno, Minerva, Castors and members of the "choir" (viewers) are young and beautiful. The audience are wearing white chitons and coloured coats and their heads are decorated with rose wreaths. The Horae and the Graces express enthusiasm with their dancing and the members of the "choir" look with amusement and approval at the goddess and her companions. The musicians, on the other hand, depending on the type of music they practice, respond to the judgment of Paris and the victory of Venus with satisfaction or disapproval.⁸ Despite differences in psychological reactions, they are restrained and their movements are full of distinction and elegance. Venus herself does not seem to triumph, her face is puzzlingly serious and the apple, held high, the gift of the goddess of

8] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumph Venus...*, pp. 183-184.

strife (Discordia) seems more like a warning addressed to the audience in anticipation of future misfortunes, than a sign of her triumph. Also one of the Cupids, the one whose wings are rainbow coloured like those of Psyche, is markedly different because of his sad face.⁹

And how does Paris, the corrupt perpetrator of Venus' victory, behave? Dressed in an ornate eastern outfit, spread like a king on his throne, holding a shepherd's staff like a sceptre in his hand, he seems to be radiating satisfaction and self-confidence.

Focusing mainly on the part of the painting that is connected with the representation of the Greek myth, art critics and historians interested in the painting noticed in it mostly a joyful scene, proclaiming the praise of youthful feminine beauty, a source of love and awe-inspiring art.¹⁰ And indeed, the whole painting seems to emanate the painterly Renaissance admiration of feminine beauty, the Arcadian beauty of the landscape, the richness of architecture, the sophisticated elegance of object.¹¹ Especially the role of the latter in building the artistry of many of Siemiradzki's paintings led some critics to treat some of his works as elaborate still lifes, in which the boundary between people and objects was somehow blurred. Yet, the general situation of classical art and the role of archaeology in the process of creating the image of antiquity, ancient life and man with the help of discovered artefacts and works of art is largely forgotten. And it is those artefacts and works of art from the epoch that to archaeologists were, and still are, the basic and undistorted source of knowledge about the life of man centuries ago, a carrier of internal information about his tastes and feelings.

Even if the artist's concern for the harmony of poses and elegance of gestures strengthened by the appreciation of works of Greek art, treated as an element of the truth of imaging, sometimes influences the opinion of critics about the similarity of people to stone statues, this opinion in

9] Ibid., pp. 186-187.

10] There for example E. MICKE-BRONIAREK, A. BŁASZCZYK-BIAŁY, op. cit., p. 150, for whom this "motif is an excuse for showing exuberant joie de vivre". Т. КАРПОВА (op. cit., p. 168) juxtaposes admiration of the beauty of nature and the materially rich frame of the ancient world visible in Siemiradzki's painting *Pbryne* [and in *The Judgment of Paris* – WD] with the programme "paganism" of I. Repin, understood as the opposite of asceticism.

11] To some researchers the impression of material affluence of imperial Rome emanating from some of Siemiradzki's paintings was a reflection of his love of still lifes: Leila KHASIANOVA, „Siemiradzki z całego serca kochał naturę morte...”, „Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2017, vol. V, pp. 77-91; others considered it to be 'fillers' enhancing *l'effet de réel* of the depicted scene: Agnieszka KLUCZEWSKA-WÓJCIK, *L'effet de réel. Fragmenty rzeczywistości w obrazach Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, „Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2017, vol. V, pp. 45-50.

this case is mitigated not only by the dynamics of the dancing group of Venus and her companions or the basic role of the landscape and sunlight, shining through tree branches and throwing on the ground, the figures of the “choir”, the musicians and the viewers a busy mosaic of irregular, interwoven patches of shadows and light, saturating the canvas with the impression of variable mobility and dynamics.

Professor Miziołek proved the existence of close links between the content of *The Judgment of Paris* and the text of Book X of *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius. But in doing so, he paid attention only to the description of the stage performance that it contained. In order to understand the intentions of the writer, and undoubtedly also those of the painter, it is necessary to take into account the entire content of the book, compliant with the Platonic fascinations of the author of *Metamorphoses*,¹² who is also the author of a beautiful fable about Cupid and Psyche.¹³ Combining the fascination with classical beauty, instilled in him already at the St. Petersburg Academy and perpetuated in Rome, with the condemnation of sensual love characteristic of Apuleius, Siemiradzki bestowed the image of *The Judgement of Paris* or rather *The Triumph of Venus* with a delicately marked ambiguity, which corresponds not only to his erotic restraint or views on the subject of unchangeable beauty, but also to his own views on the civilization of the Roman empire, which he regarded as morally corrupt, decadent and falling, marked in art by the dominance of simplistic realism.¹⁴ An example of this corruption is Cupid – in the words of Apuleius: “rash enough and hardy, who by his evill manners contemning all publique justice and law, armed with fire and arrowes, running up and down in the nights from house to house, and corrupting the lawfull marriages of every person, doth nothing but that which is evill”.¹⁵

The colourful style of Apuleius could make us indulge in the antics of this rascal. However, the content of Book X of *Metamorphoses*, containing descriptions of crimes and degenerations caused by love passion, which is only a small step away from hatred, forces us to take these accusations seriously. And so we listen to a gloomy story about a stepmother, who, unable to win the love of her stepson, decides to poison him and, having mistakenly poisoned her own child instead,

12] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumf Wenus...*, pp. 181-186.

13] APULEIUS, op. cit., Book [V]: *The Marring of Cupid and Psyche*, pp. 177-243.

14] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumf Wenus...*, p. 181, footnote 11; W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Wazy greckie w twórczości Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2017, vol. V, pp. 20-21, 38.

15] APULEIUS, op. cit., Book [V]: *The Marring of Cupid and Psyche*, chapter 22, pp. 181-182.

accuses her would-be victim of murder in front of her husband. The narrator of the story, a young man named Lucius, transformed by his lover into a donkey, adds a perverse account of a rich lady whom he had to satisfy sexually for many nights as a donkey. When the case is discovered, the officials organizing celebrations of the festival of Venus decide to make them more attractive with a public view of the sexual act between a donkey and the criminal, sentenced by the court for poisoning her husband, daughter and the doctor who was her accomplice in crime and his wife. How is it possible not to worry about what love passion can do to, and with, a man!

Apuleius's views on the issues of misfortunes and crimes that can result from impulsive and careless behaviour caused by human sensuality find a subtle, yet straightforward reflection in the psychological diversity of feelings displayed by the Greek actors and musicians participating in the pantomime. Their emotional reticence is motivated by Plato's conviction, taken over by Johann Joachim Winckelmann, that the excessive display of feelings distances beauty from its unchangeable ideal and that is why artistic manifestations of this ideal must come closer together and resemble each other. "Die Stille ist derjenige Zustand, welcher der Schönheit, so wie dem Meere, der eigentlichsste ist" as the father of modern day history of art wrote.¹⁶ Hence, a rational man remains calm and an artist striving for the ideal avoids presenting violent outbursts of anger or grief,¹⁷ believed, following the Greeks, in the strong influence of art on the human psyche and assumed that art depicting evil inclinations of man not only documents his bad character, but can also spoil this character.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that all Greek participants of the pantomime show their feelings in a mitigated way. Our painter, however, shows true mastery in the subtle depiction of these feelings. And so, the actions of Paris, who with his careless desire to win the most beautiful of all women, will doom himself, his loved ones and his hometown, found an unambiguous evaluation not only in Apuleius's work, but also in the work of our painter. On the same wooden platform on which Paris, content with himself, is sitting and Mercury is standing, we can also notice two Horae crowning a ram in the

16] Johann J. WINCKELMANN, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, vol. 1, Walther, Dresden 1764, p. 167. Accessible online: http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/winckelmann_kunstgeschichte01_1764.

17] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Wazy greckie...*, pp. 16-20.

background. A ram among goats? What is it doing there? Being crowned as if it was a winner? The Polish word for ram, *baran*, is commonly used to describe an obtuse, stupid man. We also have a saying: “jak baran prowadzony na rzeź” (like a ram led to a slaughter) to talk about a person who is unaware of the impending danger and so does not react. The knife is hidden from the sacrificial ram’s view, the animal is decorated and stroked so that it approaches the altar without resistance, and is killed there. Paris, spread on his throne, is exactly like this ram, unaware of his fate.¹⁸

The delicately and subtly depicted range of feelings of Greek pantomime participants, who separate Venus worshippers from the musicians and characters accompanying the defeated goddesses, are contrasted with the realistic and psychologically profound characters of the Romans watching the pantomime.¹⁹ Let’s try to describe the painting, drawing attention to those elements that bind it to imperial Rome and Roman society.

The real theme of the composition is a staging, organised by a Roman patrician in his seaside villa, of the triumph of Venus immediately after Paris has made his decision. The buildings of the villa, rising on a hill and opening with a column portico with a fountain to a spacious terrace, separated by a balustrade from the slope that falls steeply towards the bay, constitute the backdrop. Above the railing of the balustrade of the terrace, there are the upper parts of the buildings in the port district of the city, which are clearly visible in the sharp sunrays. Judging by the short southern shadows, the village is situated on the northern or west-northwest shore of the bay, dotted with small sails of ships, with the horizon closed by misty mountains of the opposite shore.

According to Prof. Claude Albore Livadie of the University of Naples, the characteristic appearance of the opposite bank of the bay allows us to identify it, in an approximate way, as the south-eastern coast of the Gulf of Naples, i.e. with the shore of the Sorrentine Peninsula from Capo d’Orlando, through the low terrace of Vico Equense, to Cape Punta Campanella.²⁰

18] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumf Wenus...*, p. 186.

19] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

20] C. ALBORE LIVADIE, W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Wazy greckie...*, p. 22; W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumf Wenus...*, p. 182.

This identification has enabled us to hypothetically locate the villa painted by Siemiradzki in or near Baiae, and is the basis for the currently presented interpretation of the painting.

War-marine and fishing elements appearing in the decoration of the fountain, as well as the presence in the painting of a *velum*, allow us to assume that the owner of the villa may have been some officer serving in the Roman war fleet, stationed in the nearby Misenum. If this assumption were to be accepted, there would be one more parallel, between the text of Apuleius and our painting. Lucius, transformed into a donkey, was, at the beginning of the same Book X of *Metamorphoses*, led by a soldier to the house of an officer, “who had the charge of a thousand men”.²¹ And it was there, in this officer’s house that the gloomy story of the wife, the quadruple poisoner, took place.

The group of Romans looking at the spectacle is presented in a much different way than the actors in the pantomime. The characters of the citizens differ in age and appearance. They were painted much more realistically. One of them – a skinny, frail old man in a tunic and coat, supporting himself against a column of the portico, is observing the performances of the actors, as if sunk in memories from his youth. Another, with an ordinary face of a common fifty-year-old, can be seen almost lying on the protrusion of the wall and, with his mouth open in excitement, is absorbing the sight of beautiful female bodies. Next to him a handsome twenty-year-old with black, curly hair, kneeling on the same wall seems to be almost devouring the naked goddess with his eyes. An old man with a worn-out face of a lecher standing next to him is observing beautiful actresses with a reserve, more interested in the proximity of the handsome young man.²²

This psychological characteristic of Roman patricians, including elements of their negative moral evaluation, corresponds to Siemiradzki’s views on the decadent character of the society of the Roman Empire²³ and provides an additional argument for accepting the hypothesis that the villa from the painting is situated in Baiae, a major spa and holiday resort

21] APULEIUS, op. cit., Book X, chapter 44, p. 392.

22] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumpf Wenus...*, p. 183.

23] On Thomas Couture’s painting *Romans in their Decadence* shown at the Salon in 1847: Théophile GAUTIER, *Salon de 1847* (“La Presse”, 30.03.1847), J. Hetzel, Warnod et Cie, Paris 1847; Albert BOIME, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1980, p. 131; Ekaterini KEPETZIS, *Transformationen der Phryne. Jean-Léon Gérôme’s antikische Gattungshybriden zwischen Missverständnis und Provokation*, in: *Imagination und Evidenz. Transformationen der Antike im ästhetischen Historismus*, eds. Ernst OSTERKAMP, Thorsten VALK, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2011, pp. 291-292.

for rich Romans. According to Pliny no other place in the world could compare with the Baiae in terms of the abundance of thermal waters with healing properties, the beauty of the landscape or the mild climate.²⁴ No wonder that along the waters of the bay full of Homeric references (Baiae derived its name from the helmsman of Odysseus, Baios) between the 2nd and 3rd centuries BC near the golden beach of the blessed Venus²⁵ there were many *villae marittimae* of the late republican rich: Marcus Antonius, Licinius Crassus, Julius Caesar, Lucius Licinius Lucullus. And with the advent of the Empire, August, Tiberius Caligula, Nero and their successors competed with each other in beautifying the residences, making them ever more grandiose and magnificent.²⁶

The one who was particularly strongly associated with Baiae was Nero, the negative hero of two monumental, important for the artist's views, paintings by Siemiradzki: *Nero's Torches* and *Christian Dirce*.²⁷ It was Nero, who having taken over the villas of his mother Agrippina and aunt Domitia Lepidia, murdered there on his order, and

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- 24] PLINY the ELDER, *Natural History* (PLINIUS MAIOR, *Naturalis Historia*), transl. John Bostock (1893), Book II, chapter 106: 15-17. Accessible online <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>; Franciscis, Alfonso de: "Baiae", in: *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica, Supplement*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma 1979, pp. 133-134; Angelika DIERICH, *Am goldenen Strand der Venus*, in: *Luxus und Dekadenz*, eds., Rudolf ASSKAMP, Jörn CHRISTIANSEN et al, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 2007, pp. 31-41.
- 25] "Litus beatae Veneris aureum Baias"; MARTIALIS, *Epigrammata*, Book 11, LXXX. Accessible online: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>
- 26] Beloch JULIUS, *Campania. Storia e topografia della Napoli antica e dei suoi dintorni*, eds. & transl. Claudio FERONE, Franco PUGLIESE CARRATELLI, Bibliopolis, Napoli 1989 (*Campanien. Geschichte und Topographie des antiken Neapel und seiner Umgebung*, Morgenstern, Breslau 1890), pp. 209-211; John H. D'ARMS, *Romans on the Bay of Naples*, Cambridge, Mass Harvard University Press, 1970; *Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei. Catalogo generale, Castello di Baia 3: Liternum, Baia, Miseno*, eds. Paola MINIERO, Fausto ZEVI, Electa, Napoli 2008, pp. 56-171; W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumpf Wenus...*, p. 185.
- 27] Katarzyna NOWAKOWSKA-SITO, *Wokół „Pochodni Nerona” Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, "Rocznik Krakowski", 1992, vol. 58, pp. 105-119; Krzysztof JEŃKI, "Pochodnie Nerona" Henryka Siemiradzkiego, "Modus. Prace z historii sztuki", 2009, no. 8/9, pp. 129-191; J. MIZIOLEK, *Muse, Baccanti e Centauri...*, pp. 83-119; Jerzy MIZIOLEK, *Lux in tenebris. Neronee i primi cristiani nelle opere di Enrico Siemiradzki e Jan Styka* in: *Nerone. Roma – Colosseo, Foro romano, Palatino*, eds. Maria Antonietta TOMEI, Rosella REA, catalogue, Electa, Milano 2011, pp. 44-61; Jerzy MIZIOLEK, "Le Torce di Nerone" e altri capolavori di Henryk Siemiradzki, un pittore polacco a Roma, "Atti dell'Accademia", 2012, vol. I, pp. 135-154; Dorota GORZELANY, *Zabytki rzymskie źródłem inspiracji malarskiej w „Pochodniach Nerona” Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, "Rozprawy Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie", 2013, vol. VI, pp. 165-180; Dominika SARKOWICZ, Marzena SIEKLUCKA, "Pochodnie Nerona" – nowe spojrzenie na dzieło Henryka Siemiradzkiego. *Warsztat malarza akademika*, "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2016, vol. IV, pp. 95-104; Jerzy MIZIOLEK, "Dirke chrześcijańska" i inne tematy all'antica w twórczości Henryka Siemiradzkiego. *Uwagi i rozważania*, "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2016, vol. IV, pp. 21-54.

confiscated the villa of the Piso conspiring against him, extended the city *Palatium* to such an extent that it resembled the capital's *Domus Aurea*. And on Capri, on a rocky promontory protruding towards the Sorrentine Peninsula in the arcadian harmony of the sky and land in the waters of the same bay, the palace of the grim Tiberius, who first moved our painter with his barbaric cruelty²⁸ played out against the backdrop of the most beautiful scenery possible.

In this most fashionable Roman spa located at the 'golden beach of the blessed Venus', various carnal pleasures were sought and great freedom of decency prevailed, causing offence among the capital city moralists. In Martial's epigram it was there that the virtuous like Laevin's Sabine Women of yore, "*Penelope venit ab it Helene*" (arriving as Penelope she left as Helena).²⁹ Varro adds: staying there "*non solum innubae fiunt communis sed etiam veteres repuerascunt et multi pueri puellascunt*" (not only do virgins become a common good, but also the elderly become young, and many boys make themselves similar to girls).³⁰ Siemiradzki seems to remember and echo Varro's words painting an old man by the column and a kneeling ephebe with his old companion, watching the exciting pantomime.

The theme of a young, naked woman, surrounded by a crowd of admirers, being de facto the source or personification of beauty, became the cause of heated polemics when Jean-Léon Gérôme exhibited his *Phryne before the Areopagus* at the Paris Salon in 1861 (fig. 32).³¹ Famous for her beauty, the heterai Phryne, who served as a model for the *Aphrodite of Knidos* by Praxiteles (fig. 33) and Apelles' *Venus Anadyomene*, during the celebrations of the festival of Poseidon in Eleusis, undressed and entered the sea in front of the gathered believers. And then she came out of water, probably playing the role of Aphrodite Anadyomene, born of the sea foam. Accused of godlessness, she was saved from being sentenced to death by the famous orator Hypereides, who unexpectedly took her robe off the heterai. Her beauty, worthy of

28] The painting *Capri at the Time of Tiberius* (1881, State Tretyakov Gallery); S. LEWANDOWSKI, op. cit., p. 48.

29] MARTIALIS, *Epigrammata*, Book 1, LXII. Accessible online : <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.

30] Marcus Terentius, VARRO, *Saturae Menippeae*, Fragmentum XLV, 154. Accessible on line : http://www.intratext.com/IXT/LAT0404/_PB.HTM.

31] Joachim HEUSINGER VON WALDEGG, *Jean-Léon Gérôme "Phryné vor den Richtern"*, "Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen", 1972, vol. 17, pp. 122-142; Laurence DES CARS, Dominique de FONT-RÉAUX, Édouard PAPET, *The spectacular art of Jean-Léon Gérôme: 1824-1904*, catalogue J. Paul Getty Museum, Musée d'Orsay & Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Skira-Flammarion, Paris 2010, no. 45, pp. 104-107; E. KEPETZIS, op. cit., 2011, pp. 291-311.

a goddess, moved the judges so much that they could not deprive the divinely beautiful heterai of her life.³²

Gérôme, whose talent showed evidence of great and original independence, had already a few years earlier, deliberately provoked an opinion of blurring the boundary between historical and genre painting with his painting *The Cock Fight*.³³ He applied the same procedure this time as well. His Phryne was judged in the austere interior of the Areopagus, whose architecture repeated the interior of the Etruscan *Tomb del Cardinale*³⁴ after Smuglewicz's drawing and the walls were decorated with figures taken from a frieze decorating a tomb from Ruvo and from a mosaic from the Pompeian Casa del Fauno, depicting the *Battle of Issos*. Critics and viewers were accustomed to such concern for the truth of the scenery. The outrage and protests were triggered by the fact that the judges, despite old age and classical features, as if taken from vases, surprised by the sight of naked beauty with their poses and gestures show astonishment, admiration, arousal, internal and external erotic excitement, both completely alien to the classical aesthetics. And in addition, the in fact rich, thanks to the impression her body made on men, heterai Phryne, just as surprised as the judges, in an ambiguous gesture of shame, raised her hands up to cover her face, as it was said, the only part of the body that she did not have to cover! *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIX siècle* under the word *Phryne* published in 1874 accused the painter that his Phryne did not correspond to the type of beauty that the Greeks considered to be an ideal, but rather to the type of modern Parisian courtesan.³⁵ The sharpest criticism was that of Emil Zola, who not only accused the painter of flattering the currently popular taste for commercial purposes, but also of a significant historical falsehood. "Mr Gérôme",

32] Craig COOPER, *Hypereides and the Trial of Phryne*, "Phoenix", 1995, 49/4, p. 303-318; Michael WEISSENBERGER, *Hypereides*, in: *Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike*, eds. Hubert CANGIK, Helmuth SCHNEIDER, vol. 5, Verlag J. P. Metzler, Stuttgart 1998, pp. 804-806.

33] Édouard PAPET, *Phryné au XIXe siècle: la plus jolie femme de Paris?* in: *Praxitèle: Un maître de la sculpture antique*, eds. Alain PASQUIER, Jean Luc MARTINEZ, catalogue Musée du Louvre, Louvre Éditions, Paris 2007, no. 101, pp. 384-385; L. DES CARS, D. de FONT-RÉAULX, É. PAPET, op. cit., no. 10, pp. 42-44; E. KEPETZIS, op. cit., pp. 292-294.

34] L. DES CARS, D. de FONT-RÉAULX, É. PAPET, op. cit., p. 104. (Authors quote identification by colleagues from the Louvre).

35] *Dictionnaire* repeats the opinion of Gautier from 1861: Théophile GAUTIER, *Abécédaire du Salon de 1861*, E. Dentu, Paris 1961, pp. 178-179. Gérôme indeed used for his character of Phryne a photograph made by Nadar of a model called Roux (Marie-Christine Leroux), who also posed for other artists as well, and who belonged to the underworld of Parisian courtesans: É. PAPET, *Phryné...*, p. 369, fig. 263.

he wrote in 1867, "travaille pour tout les goûts. [...] pour dissimuler le vide complet de son imagination, il s'est jeté dans l'antiquaille. [...] Phryné devant le trybunale, par exemple. [...] Ce corps de femme, posé gentiment, fera bien au milieu du tableau. Mais cela ne suffit pas, il faut aggraver en quelque sorte cette nudité en donnat à la hétaire un mouvement de pudeur, un geste de petite maîtresse moderne surprise en changeant de chemise. Cela ne suffit pas encore ; le succès sera complet, si le dessinateur parvient à mettre sur les visages des juges des expressions variées d'admiration, d'étonnement, de concupiscence [...]. Dès lors l'oeuvre [...] se vendra cinquante ou soixante mille francs".³⁶

Siemiradzki was of the same opinion as Zola, although he also did not completely resist the typical for the Second Empire sensual alexandrisism of art of that period. And so, in 1886 when he took up work on his *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis*³⁷ (fig. III) starting the obvious polemics with Gérôme's painting, he gave her an obvious charm but deprived her completely of the sexual ambiguity of a woman from the underworld, merging her with the goddess who personifies beauty, to which the heteira was, according to Apelles and Praxiteles, similar, not partly, but with her whole body, a reflection of an ideal immortal beauty. In our painter's work, the harmonious beauty of the heteira, who remains dignified and calm despite the gaze of the surprised and full of admiration crowd of Poseidon's worshippers, is to emphasize the typical, according to the artist, attitude of the Greeks towards beauty – an attitude full of adoration and admiration but natural, without ambiguity and without sexual excitement. A relationship that was abstracted from works of Greek classical art.

In *The Judgment of Paris*, which was realized only a little later, the painter took up the same theme of a naked beautiful woman surrounded by a crowd reacting to her beauty. This time it was not the goddess-like heteira Phryne, but the goddess herself, and was surrounded not by Greeks but by Greeks and Romans, representing two distinct ways of understanding and imagining beauty: Greek – idealistic and rational, and Roman – realistic and sensual (psychological-

36] Émile ZOLA, *Nos peintres au Champ-de-Mars* (1867), in: idem, *Écrits sur l'art*, ed. Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine, Gallimard, Paris 1991, p. 184.

37] S. LEWANDOWSKI, op. cit., pp. 89-95; Katarzyna Anna CZAJKOWSKA, *Wizja antycznej Grecji w obrazie Henryka Hektora Siemiradzkiego „Fryne na święcie Posejдона w Eleuzis”*, "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2016, vol. V, pp. 155-164; T. *Kapnoba*, op. cit., pp. 165-176; W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Wazy greckie...*, pp. 15-20.

optical). Both of these ways of understanding and experiencing beauty are evaluated from the point of view of ethics and morality. The Roman way of portraying reality and perceiving beauty is traditionally condemned for its link with the time of moral decline and decadence, i.e. the period of the empire.

In the end, I would like to touch upon one more aspect that we believe is important for understanding the additional symbolic subtext of the painting. It is known that in the battles for Troy, glorified by Homer, Venus supported the Trojans in their fight against the Greeks. Just as before she decided that Helena, in love with Paris, would abandon her husband, which became the cause of the murderous fighting and extermination of the city. Only the son of Venus, Aeneas, together with his closest family, escaped from the burning *polis* to found the Roman Empire. Caesar and the Emperors of the Julio-Claudian dynasty boasted a kinship with the goddess, who in this way became the great-mother of the Romans. On the other hand, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, equally important to the painter as classical antiquity, Eve (fig. 34) was the great-mother of all people. In both traditions, the apple associated with the great-mothers became a symbol of an act, tragic in effect, which violated the established moral order. However, in our painting, the goddess Venus, in accordance with the intention of the artist, is rather a Platonic personification of beauty, appealing to the reason and instinct of goodness. Showing to her hedonistic and superficial Roman devotees a serious and rather sad face, Venus seems to announce to them the existence of beauty other than sensual. The apple held up, a gift from the goddess of strife (Eris-Discordia), heralds the advent of times in which this symbol would become a symbol of values different from those associated with the biblical Eve and the Homeric Aphrodite. Taking into consideration the dominant in the painting atmosphere of joyful adoration of the goddess – the image of beauty, and the importance of both traditions, Roman and early Christian, to the Polish painter, they seem to anticipate the times of Cupid with colourful heavenly wings and covered genitals, who disapproves of uncontrolled sensual passion in human life. We suppose, therefore, that the gesture of Venus would be a foreshadowing of adoration of a mother other than Venus (fig. 35), also often portrayed with an apple. The cult of Mary freed from original sin by her sacrificial and dedicated love leading to participation in the sacrifice of her Son.



32. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Phryne before the Areopagus*, 1861, oil on canvas, 80.5 × 128 cm, Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle. Photo in public domain.



33. Praxiteles, *Aphrodite of Knidos* (*Aphrodite of Cnidus*), circa 364 – 361 BC. Roman copy called Venus Colonna. Vatican, Museo Pio-Clementino. Photo in public domain.



34. Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Adam and Eve*, 1525 – 1530, tempera and oil on panel, 17 × 27 cm, Warsaw, The Royal Castle. Photo in public domain.



35. Painter from the circle of the Master of Triptych from Warta, *Mary with Child and Saints Felicity and Perpetua*, ca. 1520, tempera on wood, 163 × 132 cm, National Museum, Warsaw. Photo Museum.

GRZEGORZ FIRST

*The Pontifical University of John Paul II, Krakow
Polish Institute of World Art Studies*

INSPIRATION – SELECTION – FUNCTION. AN ANCIENT OBJECT IN HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI'S PAINTINGS

An ancient artefact can play various functions in a work of art. If the theme of the work is embedded in ancient times, the object obviously builds the theme and sometimes it becomes the main motif of the work, or a background for history, myth or genre.¹ However, not always an ancient theme of work forces an artist to place an ancient object in a painting. The artist can focus on people and events, for instance myth, avoiding the artefact and thus reducing the ancient background understood as a set of objects in which the recipient of the work recognizes the ancient time and place.

This issue is a broad, separate research topic, but to visualize the role of an ancient monument in Henryk Siemiradzki's works, we can

1] Katarzyna NOWAKOWSKA-SITO, *Od czasów Winckelmanna do schyłku XIX wieku – przemiany postrzegania antycznego mitu (From times of Winckelmann to the end of the 19th century – changes in ancient myth Deception)*, in: *Ars Mitologica. Wokół zagadnień recepcji mitów greckich. Ceramika i rzeźba starożytna. Grafika europejska oraz Sztuka zdobnicza XVI – XIX wieku*, ed. Joanna A. TOMICKA, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warszawa 1999, pp. 42-51. The research on the role of ancient iconography in post-ancient art are still in progress – cf. latest (May 2019) Thirteenth International Conference of Iconographic Studies in Rijeka *Afterlife of Antiquity. Case studies and New Perspectives in Iconology*.

even compare the convergent works of the inspirer of the classical trend in the French Baroque painter Nicolas Poussin, who lived in Rome.² His works like *Death of Germanicus* (1627-1628), *Apollo and Daphne* (1664) or *Bacchanal* (1624-1625) are dominated by human emotions and landscapes. Architecture or other artefacts are only shown if they seem to be necessary. We can see a similar relationship in the paintings of neoclassical painter – Jacques-Louis David (*The Death of Socrates*, 1787; *The Loves of Paris and Helen*, 1788), or the classicist pupil of David – Antoni Brodowski (*Saul's Anger at David*, 1812-1819; *Oedipus and Antigone*, 1828). It should be noted however, that the role of the ancient detailed artefact is already increased by Jean Auguste-Dominique Ingres (*The Illness of Antiochus*, 1840; *Apotheosis of Homer*, 1827).³

Of course, it is quite simple and even trivial to define the reasons for the gradual change in the role of the detailed shown ancient object in the picture. Undoubtedly, the development of archaeological research from the mid-18th century, discovering the civilization of Greece, Rome with symbolic excavations in Pompeii, Herculaneum and Olympia, penetrations of Hellenistic Anatolia or Ancient Near East, gave impetus and inspiration for artists to refine the ancient theme and to incorporate architectural elements and other objects to the works of art. Additionally, a pioneering vision of ancient times as the epoch of the perfect and original beauty of Johann Joachim Winckelmann with his *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* gave another impetus to the embellishing of the work by including objects of Greek or Roman art (though as we know Winckelmann had the opportunity to study only Roman copies of Greek works).⁴

The focus on the ancient detail is one of the distinguishing features of academic art, although the role of the ancient artefact depends on the artist, time or school.⁵ The accents can be put here differently. For

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- 2] Otto GRAUTOFF, *Nicolas Poussin*, Parkstone Press International, New York 2015, pp. 39-71.
 - 3] Interesting, broader context of ancient myth in modern art on the example of myth of Oedipus and the sphinx is present in: Rosanna LAURIOLA, *Revivals of an Ancient Myth in Modern Art: Oedipus and the Episode of the Sphinx. From Jean Auguste-Dominique Ingres to Michael Merck*, in: "Trends in Classics", 2011, vol. 3, pp. 154-194.
 - 4] Johann J. WINCKELMANN, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, vol. 1, Walther, Dresden 1764, p. 167. Accessible online: http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/winckelmann_kunstgeschichte01_1764; Ranuccio BIANCHI BANDINELLI, *Introduzione all'archeologia classica come storia dell'arte antica*, Editori Laterza, Bari 2005.
 - 5] Maria POPRZEĆKA, *Akademizm*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa 1989, pp. 146-183.

example, *Oedipus in Thebes* (1843) by Eugène Ernest Hillemacher is a picture in which the ancient background – the temple, the silhouette of the city, the altar, the statue are silent participants in the action plan. As we can see, it is obvious that in the case of Siemiradzki we deal with a completely different approach, although of course not isolated in the European painting. Remembering *Bacchanal* by Nicolas Poussin and keeping in mind Siemiradzki's works, we can pay attention to *Bacchanal*, the Croatian academician, pupil of Academy in Munich – Mato Celestin Medović from 1893 (fig. 36).⁶ In the area of ancient artefacts, we can see here many similarities with Siemiradzki's paintings.

Therefore, in the case of academic painting and the works of Henryk Siemiradzki, we deal with an ancient object, which is undoubtedly an important, sometimes leading component of the theme, though not its title motif. However, this relationship cannot be treated as a permanent relation and ahistorically. It seems that Henryk Siemiradzki in his school-works had to pay attention not only to the figure or landscape, but also to architecture. At the end of his artistic path, in the opinion, for instance of Tatiana Karpova, he adapted the Impressionist achievements in the picture *The Riddle* (1896).⁷ In this work there is basically the only ancient quote – a vessel – oinochoe held by a pair of shepherds. The house buildings visible in the background and the architecture of the fountain itself can come from the contemporary for the artist time.

Looking through Siemiradzki's works contextually embedded in antiquity, we can notice a varied intensity of the number and range of ancient artefacts used, taking into account, of course, the subject of the work or the time of its creation. Thus, it is possible to distinguish four thematic bunches in which the presence of ancient artefacts takes on various intensities.

In the first group of paintings related to Christ and geographically with Palestine under the Romans, the presence of monuments and meticulously shown details are extremely reduced (*Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, *Christ and the Woman of Samaria*, *Christ Blessing the Children*). Attention is focused on the person of Christ, his interlocutors and on the landscape. It seems that the author did not see the need to compact the image with unnecessary details, directing attention to

6] Slavko Batušić, *Medović P. Celestin (Mate)*, in: *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815–1950*, Band 6, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien 1975, p. 188.

7] Татьяна КАРПОВА, *Вдохновение Рима: жанр Античных идиллий в творчестве Генрика Ипполитовича Семирадского* (Tatiana L. KARPOVA, *Inspiration of Rome: genre of "antique idylls" in Henryk Siemiradzki's work*), "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2015, vol. III, p. 25.

the person of Christ. Sometimes the scene is accompanied by an ancient vessel, jewellery, architectural detail, but without a specific, readable reference to the time. Thus, the scenes with Christ seem to be timeless, and the ancient object could disturb this transmission in its timelessness.

The second group is genre scenes, idylls usually settled in Greece or assuming after some archaeological suggestions in pre-Roman Italy, where precisely placed ancient artefacts appear as a quote, supplement, citation (*For Water, By the Spring, The Painter of vases*). They are mainly vessels – various types of Greek or Etruscan vases, as well as architectural details and for example fountains.

The third group is a mythological illustration, where a greater number of ancient objects interact with deities and heroes creating an intense action. These are details of robes, jewellery, superb fragments of architecture (*The Judgement of Paris, Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis*).

However, a real conglomerate of monuments, sometimes even visually dominant in the painting, appear in works of the fourth group, thematically and chronologically settled in Roman times (*Nero's Torches, Christian Dirce*). Apart from well-known works from the history of Christians' persecutions, also other Roman works abound in numerous artefacts and their compilations, both of Greek, Roman and sometimes oriental provenance and origin. The architecture and elements of everyday life and the equipment of the Romans of that time are expanded.

Of course, this relations result from the subject of the work, as well as the availability of sources – let us not forget that Siemiradzki lived and created in Rome and he knew many objects from autopsy.

But what determines the choice of Siemiradzki's ancient attributes? It seems that the image of antiquity defined by Winckelmann, confirmed by the reception of classical works and contemporary writers, including Ernest Renan, was very important. Greek times – classical style in Winckelmann's approach (5th – 4th century BC) and beautiful style (4th century BC – 1st century BC) is a time of perfect beauty of man-oriented art – which is reflected even in the scenes of an idyllic style, where ancient monuments do not dominate and do not disturb the beauty of the classical style. This style of Siemiradzki is built mainly by a human and a beautiful sunny landscape.⁸ Also, the figure of Christ

8] Witold DOBROWOLSKI, *Wazy greckie w twórczości Siemiradzkiego*, "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2017, vol. V, pp. 28, 38.

requires the reduction of the ancient subject, the most important is the ethical and Christian message. A completely different picture is drawn by Siemiradzki in the case of works set in Roman times, where, as mentioned, ancient artefacts sometimes create real conglomerates of monuments. For Winckelmann, in accordance with his parabolic model of the development of ancient art, the Roman period is a decadent period, for Renan the times of Roman cruelty, for Siemiradzki a period of contempt, wealth and emotions that contradict Winckelmann's idea of Beauty as restraint and simplicity not falling into pathos.⁹ The selection of numerous and culturally diverse objects, including oriental ones, is a picture of the Empire – a conqueror in which ancient art is only a background for numerous tragedies of human fate.

It is obvious to distinguish three basic phases in the process of placing an ancient object in the work. However, Siemiradzki's inspiration, choice and significance have a special dimension due to the well-known, even archaeological precision in the handing over of ancient monuments, but also an unconventional approach to their creation in works, not only limited to their simple copying.

The phase of inspiration or defining sources, whether textual or visual – archaeological for ancient art in Siemiradzki's paintings, is the subject of in-depth research undertaken mainly by archaeologists.¹⁰ There is, of course, no place to indicate all, or even the main sources, but we should mention a thorough reading of archaeological sources, as evidenced by the artist's library in Rome, museum and travel inspirations (Pompeii) and observations *in situ* in Rome. Also important are studies on objects including original, such as, for example, the ancient vases possessed by the artist, mainly Etruscan ones. What really distinguishes Siemiradzki here, besides faithfully shown objects and sculptures and “crossing” certain elements in various works (such as rhytons, also as fountains, Egyptian harps), is the fact of combining and compiling elements for example of architecture – a kind of intelligent game consisting in creating a new object of art. It is well known that in the field of ancient Roman architecture, Siemiradzki based himself, inter alia, on Luigi Canina's *Indicazione topografica di Roma Antica* and Johannes Overbeck's works on

9] J. J. WINCKELMANN, op. cit., p. 145.

10] Cf. latest: W. DOBROWOLSKI, op. cit., pp. 11-44; Jerzy MIZIOLEK, *Dirke chrześcijańska i inne tematy all'antica w twórczości Henryka Siemiradzkiego. Uwagi i rozważania*, “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2016, vol. IV, pp. 21-54.

Pompeii.¹¹ Research also indicates that in the field of the ancient Near East, he drew on the work of the father of the Assyriology of Austen Henry Layard, but more on his numerous translations.¹² In the end, Egyptian details were transposed, among others, from the work of the German Egyptologist Georg Ebers.¹³

The most important, however, is the intelligent interweaving of inspiration and the creation of eclectic compositions. We can indicate the example of the painting of *The Judgement of Paris*, where, next to ancient works, we also see medieval and later quotes.¹⁴ A compilation with a smaller amplitude of time can also be found in the painting *The Vase or the Woman?*, where the tapestry in the background contains compilations from various scenes from the Assyrian temple reliefs. In this tapestry Siemiradzki compiled and connected a few scenes, creating a new one, with logical consequences and archaeological precision. Thus, in the upper strip we can see a scene of taking fortress or town by using siege machine, warriors on chariots and in battle formation. In the bottom strip we can see a typical scene of combat between a winged daemon and a lion and a scene of feast at a table. At the top, there is a typical and characteristic for religious scenes symbol of Ahuramazda. This composition as a whole makes sense, but it is built from single episodes, and transferred from stone wall to the tapestry, what was original artist's idea. Moreover, Siemiradzki added correct elements of bordure – in the shape of rosettes and a winged bull. Therefore, Siemiradzki created a new, very logical work of Assyrian art in typical lane composition with upper war register and bottom register with a religious message, like ancient artist in a workshop in Niniveh or Nimrud almost three thousand years ago.¹⁵

The artist also skilfully enlarged some objects, such as rhytons, creating architectural elements from them, or sphinx sculptures.¹⁶ It also seems that Siemiradzki had favourite ancient objects like the aforementioned rhyton, Egyptian harp, or the statue of Victoria, painted on different paintings.

11] Dorota GORZELANY, *Zabytki rzymskie źródłem inspiracji malarzkiej w Pochodniach Neron Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, "Rozprawy Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie", 2013, pp. 165-180.

12] Grzegorz FIRST, *Res Orientalis: Works of art from the ancient Near East and Henryk Siemiradzki's "archaeological workshop"*, "World Art Studies", 2018, vol. 18, pp. 55-61.

13] Georg EBERS, *Ägypten in Bild und Wort: dargestellt von unseren ersten Künstlern*, vol. 2, Stuttgart, Leipzig 1880.

14] J. MIZIOŁEK, op. cit., p. 44.

15] G. FIRST, op. cit., p. 56.

16] J. MIZIOŁEK, op. cit., p. 37.

It should be emphasised, however, that the artist himself admitted that in the process of inspiration he did not have a definite or definitive character of the picture. In a letter to his parents from December 1873, reporting on the work on the painting, he writes: “[I have] a head with a future image that it is difficult for me to turn my thoughts to something else. Despite the fact that I am still working, my Nero (or rather the Christians under the rule of Nero have not yet begun.) I am still working on sketches of him and I am reading a lot of material, I am thinking and I’m dreaming about work – what will happen?”¹⁷

How, then, did the process of selection of attributes take place and what criteria did the artist follow here? This is probably the most difficult question and the answer to it is not unambiguous, especially in the case of works with a large number of ancient artefacts, that is, those settled in Roman times. Undoubtedly, the academic workshop forced him to aestheticism of the work and selection of elements to create a perfect whole. The artist took care of the continuity and stability of some elements of the ancient world, as can be demonstrated by the same type of balustrade in Roman buildings and stages in various paintings.¹⁸ Sometimes decorative values decided about the choice of elements, although the effect does not always seem to be expected. In the image *The Martyrdom of St. Timothy and St. Maura, his Wife* (1885, National Museum, Warsaw), a conglomerate of numerous Roman and Egyptian attributes even blows. The overloading with details and objects gives a picture of paganism but distracts too much attention, which should be focused on the drama of the pair of heroes and their oppressors.¹⁹ Undoubtedly the following factor is the erudition of the artist, his reading of the ancient authors and the knowledge of the antiquity that he had to use.²⁰ The indicated criteria seem to be obvious, but can we be tempted to define some others, among which we can see the unobvious motivations of the artist?

For example, let us draw our attention to the thematically coherent image of Christ and women – the Samaritan woman and Mary and

17] Archivio di Pontificio Istituto di Studi Ecclesiastici, Roma (PISE), 22 – Siemiradzki Legacy, file 1, Henryk Siemiradzki, letter to parents, Roma, [December] 1873, f. 398-399v.

18] Cf. balustrades on Siemiradzki's and mentioned Medović's paintings.

19] Grzegorz FIRSI, *Egipt Siemiradzkiego. Scena męczeństwa pierwszych chrześcijan (Męczeństwo św. Tymoteusza i Maury jego małżonki)*, “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2017, vol. 5, pp. 105-114.

20] We can mention here such inspiring for artist ancient authors as Herodotus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Plutarch, Diodorus of Sicily, Apuleius, Ammianus Marcellinus.

Martha (fig. 37 a-c). The first image *Christ and the Woman of Samaria* (fig. V) refers to the Biblical scene from John's Gospel 4, 1-42 in which Jesus meets a woman from Samaria, who gives him water from a well in a jug. Apart from the image of a talk between Jesus and a woman, located in a sunny, green and peaceful background, we have only two ancient artefacts: the jug and the woman's clothes with jewellery. As the action unfolds in Samaria, Siemiradzki takes as an inspiration from Palestinian pottery and copied with precise typical decoration of this jug, stressing that the meeting is taking place in Orient. As has been pointed out, the inspiration for Siemiradzki could be an original jug or its depiction dated for Late Bronze Age I (1550-1400 BC) and belonging to the group of so-called bichrome ware, produced in Canaan and according to latest research also in Cyprus. It differs from Greek or Roman pottery, often visible in Siemiradzki's paintings, so the author chose correctly an artefact from the East to show with archaeological precision the reality of Samaria. Of course, this jug due to its date could not be used in times of Christ, as well, its shape and clay material did not allow it to be used as a scoop. Similar, as it was pointed out the woman's clothes were inspired by 19th century female dress from Rafidiye near Nablus in Palestine.²¹ As an "archaeologist" Siemiradzki decided to paint this Biblical episode with the reality of times and the Palestinian dress and the decorated jug were for him a good opportunity to show advanced workshop based on archaeological and ethnographical data. However, if we compare this scene to the selection of artefacts in the second painting – *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, first of all we will see a similar reduction of artefacts characteristic of Siemiradzki's "Christs" works, which however were here a bit "ragged" from the antiquity. A modest vessel in the foreground, a carpet with a geometric pattern, a modest musical instrument, or house buildings can be read here in a contemporary origin and context. Interestingly, however, it is Mary's dress, which is fundamentally different from what we see in the Samaritan woman. Mary from Bethany probably came from Judea, but undoubtedly her outfit has the association not of Near Eastern origin, but more Slavic even Ukrainian. The red colour, the flower motif and the pattern on the blouse may indicate

21] Joachim ŚLIWA, *Henryka Siemiradzkiego Chrystus u studni rozmawiający z Samarytanką (1890). Komentarz archeologiczny (Christ talking to Samaritan woman by Henryk Siemiradzki. Archaeological comment)*, "Scripta Biblica et Orientalia", 2015-2016, vol. 7-8, pp. 47-56.

that in this case the artist made a different selection, and perhaps turned his attention to the homeland, thus encrypting the ethnic message hidden in the person of a woman who, as we know from the Gospel of Luke 10.41 “has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her”.

It is obvious that Siemiradzki did not create his paintings in the artistic vacuum. His contacts with other painters and artists are even certified in the letters. In one of them he reports on the meeting with Lawrence Alma-Tadema: “Here is the famous Dutch painter Alma-Tadema, known for his generic images from the lives of Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. He was with me and then there was a bigger rapprochement between us, it’s a pity he is leaving these days because he is a very decent person.”²² Undoubtedly, Siemiradzki knew the works of other academicians and orientalists, and probably some of his paintings can also be interpreted as the artist’s dialogue with other perspectives of the theme, including the selection of ancient artefacts. The question arises how much the artist took care of the coherence of the vision of antiquity, including the oriental one, and how he inspired himself, and how he cared to create his own vision by choosing ancient details.

The aforementioned painting *The Vase or the Woman?*, which is an excellent source for multiple searches in the field of invention of Siemiradzki, contains as we mentioned a wonderful tapestry on the wall in an antique shop. This shop is the background and a place of the difficult choice of the Roman patrician who must choose between a beautiful vase (interestingly not Greek), and a beautiful woman. A similar, though somewhat different, dilemma have the rich Babylonian men who choose a wife from women gathered in the Babylonian market of wives in the picture of Edwin Long *The Babylonian Marriage Market* from 1875. This scene inspired by the passage of Herodotus takes place in the background of the Assyrian tapestries and reliefs, slightly different in detail from the one shown in Siemiradzki’s painting.²³

The same British academician and orientalist Edwin Long painted in 1883 the picture *Anno Domini*, in which he combined the simple and seemingly modest world of emerging Christianity in the form of

22] Henryk Siemiradzki, letter to parents, Roma, [first quarter 1876], PI SE, 22, file 1, f. 436 v.

23] HERODOTUS *The Histories with an English translation by A. D. Godley*, Cambridge Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1920, Book I Chapter, p. 196.

a Holy Family escaping from Egypt with the pulsating pagan religious life of Egypt. We see here against the background of a vast temple and looming pyramids, a procession with a statue of Isis and a dark-skinned pedlar of amulets standing out from the crowd. Two years later, Siemiradzki presented his vision of Egypt as a land where the drama of a young Christian couple takes place under Roman rule. In the mentioned *Martyrdom of St. Timothy and St. Maura*, we notice a different emotional charge, although it is necessary to pay attention to the convergence of some details with the statue of Isis, for which the inspiration was the statue from the Louvre drawn in the book of Georges Perrot and Charles Chipiez *Histoire de l'art dans l'Antiquité, Égypte, Assyrie, Perse, Asie mineure, Grèce, Etrurie, Rome* from 1882 (fig. 38).²⁴

However, the figure of an amulet pedlar appears in Siemiradzki's works at least twice in the picture *Sale of Amulets*, and *A Wandering Priest of Isis*. In the Egyptian context, it is also worth to indicate an ambitious but eventually overloaded selection of artefacts in the mentioned *The Martyrdom of St. Timothy and St. Maura*, where the artist, next to the looming temple and a sphinx statue probably inspired by the St. Petersburg sphinxes from the Neva seafront before entering his Alma Mater, did not present the Egyptian symbol in the form of a pyramid or an extensive panoramas of a cruel house of captivity, as we can see even in the monumental painting of Edward Poynter from 1867 *Israel in Egypt*.²⁵

So, what was the significance of the ancient objects for Siemiradzki and what function did they fulfil in his paintings? Undoubtedly, they created the atmosphere of the times, in some cases decorated and embellished the picture. But Siemiradzki was undoubtedly an ambitious artist, and in details, making choices of particular ancient objects, he probably tried to provide more information than just the theme of the work itself. Some researchers suggest here the artist's reference to the home country – native landscapes, which may be indicated by Mary's costume not from Bethany.²⁶ An important factor may also be Siemiradzki's interest in occultism; the artist's participation in spiritual séances is confirmed, and his contacts with, for example, Julian

24] Georges PERROT, Charles CHIPIEZ, *Histoire de l'art dans l'Antiquité, Égypte, Assyrie, Perse, Asie mineure, Grèce, Etrurie, Rome*, vol. 1, Hachette, Paris 1882, p. 87, pl. 55.

25] G. FIRST, *Egipt Siemiradzkiego...*, pp. 105-114.

26] In case of other paintings this idea is expressed by W. DOBROWOLSKI, op. cit., pp. 11-44.

Ochorowicz indicate the proximity of this subject.²⁷ In some of his paintings, amulets, talismans, as well as the person of the diviner, create not only genre scenes, but also talk about people's faith in the world and supernatural activities. Too little is also said about Siemiradzki as an orientalist, but his Orient is not the Orient of events or people but just of objects.²⁸ Besides, the not preserved early works suggest that the artist had to have inspiration in eastern monuments, even though the Biblical subject matter.

To analyse the meaning and context of ancient objects selected by Siemiradzki, as already mentioned, the paintings whose theme was embedded in the times of the Roman Empire are especially important. Particularly, however, two pieces of art work have an important meaning for the analysis of the function of the ancient objects in Siemiradzki's paintings – the already mentioned *The Vase or the Woman?* and in the *Isaurian Pirates Selling their Booty (A Pirates' Cave)*. Both depict scenes from the times of the Roman reign – the first picture is a genre scene, the second refers to the history of the land of Isauria in Asia Minor, where in the times of the Empire, as reported by Ammianus Marcellinus, pirates threatened Roman peace in this part of the Empire.²⁹ Both paintings contain conglomerates of ancient artefacts collected accidentally in confined spaces – an antique shop and a pirate cave. As it was mentioned, this conglomerate of artefacts among which we can see, apart from Greek and Roman things, also Egyptian, Assyrian and Anatolian symbolize probably Roman or simply human power built on power over other nations and cultures. This image differs from images depicting beautiful nature of full sun and greenery, Christ or Greek and Italic idylls. The selection of ancient objects helped the artist to obtain this juxtaposition of worlds, while monuments in Roman times do not lose their beauty, they still have an anthropocentric character, however, they show a man and serve him.

Undoubtedly, in the selection of objects, Siemiradzki resorted to Winckelmann's idea of unchanging Greek Beauty. He appealed to the classical world as an ideal time not only because of the theme or personalities, in which he also copied the poses of ancient sculptures, but also through ancient objects. Objects cannot show passions and

27] Kamilla TWARDOWSKA, *Henryk Siemiradzki and his interest in the paranormal phenomena*, in: *The Henryk Siemiradzki that we do not know*, "World Art Studies", 2018, vol. 18, pp. 103-107.

28] G. FIRST, *Res Orientalis: Works...*, pp. 55-61.

29] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Roman History*, London-Bohn 1862, chapter 14.2.2.

pathos and are immutable, and these are the features of Beauty in art. At the same time, however, the artist used these objects also to show his sensitivity, his painting traditions, and his technique.

Siemiradzki's intelligent approach to the seemingly insignificant elements of the picture filling the background of the work can be confirmed by the choice of the tapestry's theme that hangs in the background of the unfinished painting *Feast of Dionysius I – the Tyrant of Syracuse*. According to the record of Diodorus of Sicily, a tyrant who had literary and artistic ambitions decided to take part in literary competitions organized as part of a feast called the Lenaia that took place in Athens.³⁰ The drama *The Ransom of Hector*, based on a story recorded by Homer in the Iliad, was won there. When the chorister who took part in the Feast in Athens came to Syracuse at the court of Dionysius with joyful news, the tyrant ordered to make a great and delicious feast during which thanking the gods for victory, participants drunk, eaten and entertained without restraint. During this time, the tyrant overdosed alcohol and died. Siemiradzki in his painting presented the moment of tyrant's feasting surrounded by his court, dancers and musicians. However, the seemingly insignificant tapestry that hangs in the background in the central part of the painting may be the key to reading it (fig. 39). Siemiradzki has intelligently encrypted here the drama, thanks to which Dionysius won Lenaia. The theme of the tragedy – an episode from the Trojan War – the ransom by the king of Troy Priam of the body of his son Hector, killed by Achilles in revenge for the death of his friend Patroclus, was probably transferred to the tapestry that we see in the background. He used here perhaps inspiration from vase painting, as evidenced by the schematic way of showing the heroes. So, we see a group of persons probably with Hector's parents: Priam and Hecube, on the right side perhaps the hero's body, on the left a chariot, to which Achilles attached Hector's body. The scene is topped with a shield representing a snake. The theme of ransom of Hector's body has been very popular in vase painting since the Archaic period. It is worth mentioning the hydria with the scene Hector's body being dragged by the Achilles chariot surrounded by other participants of the drama (fig. 40). On this hydria, in the lower right

30] DIODORUS OF SICILY, *Diodorus Siculus. Diodorus of Sicily in Twelve Volumes with an English Translation by C. H. Oldfather*, Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, Ltd. 1989, Book 14, 74. Lenaia – wine festival held annually in January and February, during which comedies and tragedies were staged.

corner, perhaps in the symbolic grave of Patroclus, we can see the serpent, just like on the shield on Siemiradzki's tapestry. The intelligent play testifies here that inspiration, choice and function in Siemiradzki's workshop was not unintended. Even seemingly decorative archaeological detail can have a deep meaning, based on deliberate choice and accurate inspiration.

Concluding we can mention that an interesting picture of his archaeological but also classical personality visible in the works and ancient objects was captured by the critic of *Political, social and literary review* Jan Gnatowski. In 1894 he wrote: "I really do not know whether, apart from Alma-Tadema, anyone of the painters so sensed in an ancient world, so absorbed his creations with his charm, carnal and sensual, but strangely powerful. So many artists recreate it, and thanks to the development of archaeological research and history of ancient culture, every fibula and every pattern of chlamida is most accurately copied from authentic patterns; but to understand the whole external figure of this world, recreate it in its sunny glow, and at the same time tune it to our aesthetic tastes and concepts, not capturing or adding anything, but with a greater dose of poetry and beauty [...] this is what Siemiradzki can do. It is the poetry of the body and the beauty of the senses – probably, other poetry and other beauty this world did not know".³¹ It seems that the opinion from before more than a century is still valid.

31] Jan GNATOWSKI, *Z wystawy dzieł sztuki (III)*, "Przegląd polityczny, społeczny i literacki" (Lwów), 1894, no. 173 (31. VII), p. 1.



36. Mato Celestin Medović, *Bacchanal*, 1893, oil on canvas, 200 × 350 cm, Modern Gallery, Zagreb. Photo in public domain.



37 a. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, 1886, oil on canvas, 191 × 302.5 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo Museum.



37 b. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* – detail [fig. 37 a].

37 c. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Christ and the Woman of Samaria* – detail [fig. V].



38. Edwin Long, *Anno Domini* – detail 1883, oil on canvas, 241.5 × 488 cm, Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth. Photo public domain.

Henryk Siemiardzki, *The Martyrdom of St. Timothy and St. Maura, his Wife* – detail 1885, oil on canvas, 125 × 200 cm, National Museum, Warsaw. Photo Museum.



39. Henryk Siemiradzki, *A Feast of Dionysius I, Tyrant of Syracuse* – detail 1882-1886, oil on canvas, 100 × 180 cm, private collection, Rom. Photo PISnSŚ.



40. Hydria, Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (63.473), Athens 520-510 B.C., (CVA /Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum/ Boston 2, pl. 082). Photo Museum.

MICHAŁ HAAKE

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

REALISM AND FIGURALISM. ON *CHRIST AND THE HARLOT* BY HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI

As we know, Siemiradzki's paintings delighted his contemporaries with faithful reconstruction of nature. This skill was deepened during his stay in Italy, and its first monumental manifestation was the painting *Christ and the Harlot* of 1873 (fig. D). Art critics accepted that realistic impulse with appreciation. They were, however, divided in their evaluation of the characters. With time, voices began to dominate that the artist could not cope with the psychological characteristics of human figures. These accusations had already been made against *Christ and the Harlot*. Eventually, opinion spread that Siemiradzki's scenes – whether religious or mythological – were most frequently a pretext for showing the sun-flooded Italian landscape.

These matters are well known.¹ I will not refer to them any more at this point and I will go straight to the interpretation of the painting.

1] See: Stanisław LEWANDOWSKI, *Henryk Siemiradzki*, Gebethner & Wolff, Warszawa, Kraków 1904; Jan ORŁOWSKI, *Poemat „Grzesznica” Aleksiego Tołstoja i obraz „Jawnogrzesznica” Henryka Siemiradzkiego jako przykład poetyckiej inspiracji w malarstwie*, in: *Intermedialność*, eds. Roman LEWICKI, Ingeborg OHNHEISER, Wydawnictwo UMCS Lublin 2001 pp. 117-124; Jerzy MALINOWSKI, *Malarstwo polskie XIX wieku*, DiG, Warszawa 2003, pp. 197-202; Татьяна Карпова, *ГЕНРИХ СЕМИРАДСКИЙ* (TATIANA L. KARPOVA, *Henryk Siemiradzki*), Золотой век, Санкт-Петербург 2008, pp. 35-44; Dariusz PNIEWSKI, *Jezus i kobiety Siemiradzkiego. Opinie krytyki o „Jawnogrzesznicy”*, „Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2016, vol. IV, pp. 77-85.

Siemiradzki's painting was commissioned by Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich (1817-1875) and was created on the basis of Aleksei Tolstoy's poem *The Sinner* of 1858.² It tells about a feast with the participation of the title heroine, to which Saint John appears later followed by Christ. It was rightly noticed that the painter depicted a scene from the final part of the poem. Then, under the influence of Christ's gaze, the eponymous heroine realises the wickedness of the life she had led until that moment. It was also rightly pointed out that the painter faithfully followed the characteristics of the adulteress as described by the writer.³ It is therefore necessary to ask why the painter depicted that scene in front of a villa, although in the poem the feast is taking place in its courtyard, "at the entrance to the great chamber"? In the picture the scene occurs on the sandy path in front of the entrance to the villa. Is it only to show a beautiful sunny landscape? I think that the artist placed the characters on the road for another reason. Many preserved sketches to the picture, made for many months – from October 1871 to the summer of 1872, show that the artist had worked out the concept of the picture gradually.⁴ First, he was closer to the text, showing the interior of the chamber, where the feast took place, to a greater extent. He considered presenting the other moments of the story as well. In some sketches we see the earlier moment than the one in the picture: the adulteress standing with Saint John and turning herself around to face Christ (fig. 41). In the picture Christ has already joined Saint John. In the other sketches, the last moment that is to be seen is when the adulteress, separated from friends, is cowering alone by the wall "with tears", "falling down on her face in the dust in front of Christ's sanctity" (И пала ниц она, рыдая, Перед святынею

2] This poem was inspired by the Gospel of Luke of the "sinner", whom Christ forgave in the house of the Pharisee (Lk 7; 36-50), but it presents a different narrative for which there is no equivalent in the Bible. Алексей Константинович Толстой, *Грешница* (Aleksei Tolstoy, *The Sinner*), in: idem, *Собрание сочинений*, (Collected Works), vol. I, Москва 1963, pp. 508-512.

3] Т. Карпова, op. cit., p. 35.

4] Drawings – two series of sketches for *Christ and the Harlot* are collected in two sketchbooks from the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw (MNW Rys. Pol. 8962/9-26; MNW Rys. Pol. 8962/42,46,49,50). For allowing me to get acquainted with these sketches, I would like to thank prof. Jerzy Malinowski and dr. Maria Nitka. The history of drawings' creation is thoroughly discussed Aneta Biały i Paulina Adamczyk. However, they do not follow their observations on the evolution of the concept of the image to the impact of artistic tradition. Aneta BIAŁY, Paulina ADAMCZYK, *Monachijski tygiel, włoskie przestrzenie – rok z życia Henryka Siemiradzkiego. Rysunki z pobytu w Monachium, pierwszej podróży do Włoch oraz szkice do obrazu Jawnogrzesznicza w zbiorach Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2016, vol. IV, pp. 55-74.

Христа) (fig. 42).⁵ Eventually, the moment of confrontation of the gazes of Christ and the adulteress was shown. Undoubtedly, it was chosen according to the tradition of academic art because of its attractiveness – as the moment which preceded the culmination of the story. However, the author faced the necessity of its adequate visualisation.

The picture shows Christ who is talking to a person whose life would change because of meeting Him. In the iconographic tradition scenes of this kind were usually composed in such a way that both characters are standing in the foreground and, at the same time, at the front of the groups of accompanying persons if the theme allowed for that (fig. 43). This pattern, based on symmetry, allowed to give the scene a monumental quality. It is represented by Siemiradzki's work as well. Monumentality of *Christ and the Harlot* is enhanced by the fact, that the main persons mark the basic elements of a compositional structure – Christ and the adulteress are placed in an equal distance to the lateral borders of the picture and at the same time divide the composition into three segments. Monumentality of this kind would be more difficult to achieve if – according to the poem – she was among the crowd sitting at the tables and Christ, after coming through the court, stood in the door which leads to the chamber. Placing them on the pathway which extends parallelly to the picture plane conduced this monumentality much more. The sketches also show that the idea of building this scheme around the tree in the centre of the picture appeared during the creation process. The interpretation below explains the goal of this process.

There is no doubt that this traditional pattern served the artist to emphasise the play of glances between Christ and the adulteress. However, the visual reality is more complicated. It is obvious that the adulteress is looking at Christ. However, the clarity as to the direction of Jesus' gaze is weakened; firstly, by presenting his face in profile and, secondly, by shading it. This peculiar situation is complemented by the fact that at the height of Christ's head there is a head of another sinner who is standing behind the main heroine. She is staring at the Saviour with equal intensity. Both women are made similar to each other by their faces being shaded. They also co-create a diagonal that tightens the optical link between them. Moreover, this other sinner is surrounded by two figures with whom she forms a group that is

5] Quotations from A. Tolstoy's text are given in the English version, translated by Agnieszka Gicala, and in brackets in the Russian version.

twinned to the group of Christ, surrounded by two disciples. In conclusion, the painting's design allows the viewer to link Christ's gaze not only with the adulteress in the front but also with her companion. The painter's sophisticated treatment can be seen as a visualisation of the aim of Jesus's mission, which was directed not only to the eponymous figure, but to sinners as a group: "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners" (Mk 2; 17)⁶; "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners" (Mt 9; 13).

Christ directs his gaze at the sinful women. However, there are hints in the painting that this key relationship should be complemented by a number of aspects. Just as the adulteress is visually associated with the figure standing behind her, on her right side, Christ is similarly viewed together with Saint John, standing behind him, on his right. Christ is leading a group of disciples but is formally preceded by the figure of John. The Apostle's frontal silhouette distinguishes him and attracts the viewer's eye. Yet both figures are optically complex. The figure of John "extends" the figure of Jesus. At the same time, the Apostle's grey cloak is optically close to the shaded grooves of the tree trunk. This situation is enclosed in the frame of the high wall, which cascades down towards the massive tree in the centre of the painting. The sunlit wall is an element of significant compositional value. It is a frame for the whole group of the Apostles, who – thanks to their white garments and their silhouettes being shaded in their lower part – are optically integrated with the wall. The group of disciples and the wall create directional tensions that converge in the silhouette of the trunk and add to its optical value. The tree closes the sequence of the figures approaching from the left side of the painting.

The relation described above is used not only to build compositional orderliness but has a symbolic sense. The staff held by Saint John is structurally related to the thin branch that coils round the bottom of the trunk. At the same time this staff is a part of stroboscopic order co-created with the lines of the sticks held by two other disciples. The lean of them extended gradually into right implies the optical movement towards the silhouette of a tree – the movement penetrating the tree and crowned with the verdant twig, directed at the persons on the side of the composition. In this way Siemiradzki – using the old symbol of green vegetation (see *Lamentation for Christ* by Giotto di

6] All Bible quotations accessible online: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_PW4.HTM.

Bondone; *Resurrection of Christ* by Piero della Francesca) – has visualised life-giving impulse directed at the adulteress with the appearance of Christ.

The significant role of the tree in the centre of *Christ and the Harlot* also lies in the fact that it co-creates the “V” configuration, whose other arm is designated by a beam of light falling on some of the feasting people. This structure mediates between the two groups of figures. In accordance with the laws of psychology of perception, the viewer’s eye cannot ignore this mediation because it occurs right in the centre and on the vertical axis of the picture plane. Along with this, the viewer’s attention is directed towards a group of people hidden in deep shade. In this group, the most exposed position is occupied by a half-naked woman, situated in the front. At the same time, in the optical aspect and on the picture plane, this figure is standing on the sculpture of a monster. This particular motif received a special optical rank. It results from the fact that the entire structure that mediates between the two groups is visually rooted in this monstrous figure.

This figure, a part of the ancient throne, shows a winged creature with a lion’s body and a head which is an amalgam of different animals: it has a cat’s face and a goat’s horns. Although Siemiradzki painted griffins many times⁷, this is the only one in his painting which has the head compiled with parts of many creatures. Notice, at the same time, that the painter did not copy the ancient sculpture. The ancient throne from Louvre differs a lot (fig. 44). He modified its muzzle painting monstrously long and pointed ears, extending the horns and the neck of the animal. I think he reached for that or another sculptural model (e.g. the griffins derived from many Roman houses in Pompeii, which were used as basis for big, stone tabletops) and modified it in the way described above to build a connotation with the other iconography as well.

A figure similar to the one depicted by Siemiradzki may be found in the works of a modern naturalist: *Serpentum, et draconum historiae libri Duo* by Ullise Aldrovandi and in *Historiae Naturalis de Serpentina Libri* by John Jonston.⁸ Siemiradzki may have become acquainted with that scholar’s famous multi-volume *Storia Naturale*, and

7] See among others: Елена А. Ржевская, *Мотивы античной архитектуры в творчестве Генриха Селмирадского*, “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, vol. V, 2017 (Co znajduje się w obrazach Henryka Siemiradzkiego?), p. 124.

8] Ullise ALDROVANDI, *Serpentum, et draconum historiae libri Duo*, Bolonia 1640, p. 420; John JONSTON, *Historiae naturalis de serpentibus libri*, Amsterdam 1657, tab. XII.

especially with his work *De animalibus insectis libri septem, cum singulorum iconibus ad vivum expressis*, during the natural studies at the University of Kharkov, which, as we remember, he graduated from with a doctoral thesis on insects. The mentioned winged figure with cat's paws and horned head was named as *Draconis alati figura ex pareo* (a winged dragon) (fig. 45). In addition to that, *Monstrorum historia cum Paralipomenis historiae omnium animalium* by Aldrovandi, apart from descriptions and drawings of a number of mythological creatures, includes two pictures of monsters described as demonic. Admittedly, one of them is a sea creature (*Monstrum Marinum Damoniforme*), but has similar head with pointed ears and long horns (fig. 46). The latter one has almost all anatomical features similar to the figure in Siemiradzki's painting (fig. 47). It is labelled as *Monstrum alatum et cornutum instar cacodemonis*, meaning "A winged monster with horns, depicting an evil spirit" or "a demon". These illustrations were published in many other books as well.⁹ Notice also that the artist changes the silhouette of the ancient sculptures making the wings the horizontal basis for a naked woman with a cup in her right hand.

Due to the listed features, I put forward the thesis that the figure of the naked woman standing on the demonic figure is a reminiscence of the figure of the whore of Babylon, or "the great harlot" (Russian "блудница") (fig. 48). The harlot described in the Apocalypse is sitting on one of several beasts, who received "*his strength, and his throne, and great power*" from the "Dragon" (Rev. 13; 2, 17;3). The apocalyptic harlot is holding in her hand "a gold cup", which also has its analogy in Siemiradzki's painting. Covered by darkness, the figure on the demonic beast appears as the opposite of "a woman clothed with the sun", opposed by the apocalyptic dragon aiming to "devour her child." (Rev. 12; 1-4).

The idea to show an analogy between the adulteress' meeting with Christ and the vision of the Apocalypse may have been prompted to the painter by Tolstoy's text as it contains – in my opinion – a clear comparison of the adulteress with the Whore of Babylon ("блудница"). When the poem mentions the eponymous heroine for the first time, in the fourth verse of the third part, she is referred to with the word "блудница". Also, in Aleksandr Ivanovich Polezhaev's poem *The Adulteress* of 1838, dedicated to the adulteress in the Gospel, the

9] See among others: Kaspar SCHOTT, *Physica curiosa, sive mirabilia naturae et artis libris XII* (1662), vol. III, tab. II, XVII, pp. 401, 712; Johann ZAHN, *Specula Physico-Mathematico-Historica Notabilium ac Mirabilium Sciendorum ...*, Johann Christoph Lochner, Nuremberg 1696, p. 22.

word “блудница” is used in relation to the eponymous heroine. The question is, then, whether in those two literary works the word “блудница” is only a synonym of the Russian word for a female sinner (Russian “грешница”), or whether it is aimed at evoking the reader’s association with the Babylonian “блудница”. The latter possibility may be considered likely due to the fact that in 19th -century Russia women regarded as adulterous were called “Babylonian «блудница»”. This was done, among others, by Aleksandr Pushkin in relation to Anna Petrovna Kern.¹⁰ In Tolstoy’s poem, however, the reference to the biblical harlot seems particularly powerful and multifaceted. Common to both women is the power that no one can resist. The “kings of the Earth” have yielded to the Babylonian harlot’s charm, “all the nations have drunk the wine of her licentious passion.” (Rev. 17; 2). The adulteress in the poem “is lusted for by the young and the old” (Пред силой прелести опасной/ Мужи и старцы устоят), “Her love is to be bought by everyone who wants” (Купить за злато всякий может/ Ее продажную любовь). Both the Babylonian harlot and the heroine of the poem are clad in “gold, precious stones, and pearls.” (Rev. 17; 2) (“Алмазы блещут там и тут [Г] Жемчужной нитью перевиты, Падут роскошные власы”). Both raise a goblet when going to meet holy figures. I suppose that Tolstoy’s idea that Saint John should be the first to meet the adulteress just as in the Book of Revelation, led by an angel, he met the harlot, was aimed to emphasise the analogy between the two women referred to as “блудница”. I also have no doubt that the comparison of Saint John to an Angel, which is made in the poem, is a form of compilation of these two Gospel wanderers.

Let us add another analogy to those between the poem and the Book of Revelation. The biblical harlot was a symbol of wealth and the pursuit of life that disregarded the true God, of individual decisions about what is right and what is wrong: moral autonomy, which had tempted the first parents (Romans 3, 1-7). We find this attitude in the speech of Tolstoy’s adulteress, directed to John, whom the woman mistakes for Christ:

“You are the one that teaches renunciation
I do not believe your teaching
My safer and more accurate!

10] Accessible online: <https://news.rambler.ru/other/37933298-pushkin-i-anna-kern-chto-mezhdu-nimi-bylo/>.

I am not embarrassed by thoughts now
 One wandering in the desert
 In post spent forty days
 I am attracted only by pleasure
 With fasting, with a prayer unfamiliar
 I believe only beauty
 Serving wine and kisses
 Don't care of my spirit
 I laugh at your purity"

“Ты тот, что учит отречению -
 Не верю твоему учению,
 Мое надежней и верней!
 Меня смутить не мысли ныне,
 Один скитавшийся в пустыне,
 В посте прошедший сорок дней!
 Лишь наслажденьем я влекома,
 С постом, с молитвой незнакома,
 Я верю только красоте,
 Служу вину и поцелуям,
 Мой дух тобою не волнуем,
 Твоей смеюсь я чистоте!”

The reference made in Tolstoy's text between the adulteress and the Babylonian prostitute finds its expression in Siemiradzki's painting in the relationship between the woman in the foreground and the woman standing on the beast, in the shadow of the tree. The latter woman emerges in the centre of the painting and precedes the other female sinners. Next to the monster on which she is standing, Siemiradzki places the main figure of his painting. Similarly to the monster reaching the edge of the plinth with its paws, the adulteress is reaching the edge of the parapet, so to say, imitating the beast. The central woman on the dragon embodies a demonic force that enslaves people and manifests itself in their fall.

At the same time, placing the adulteress under the tree evokes an association with the scene of Eve's temptation by Satan in the Garden of Eden. The silhouette of the woman on the demonic beast has a contour that formally matches the shaded profile of the tree – as if she was a part detached from its dark side. She is leaning to the right and protrudes from the trunk like the snake coiling around the tree of Good

and Evil (fig. 49). Strong *chiaroscuro* which models the tree seems to have its source in the symbolic opposition of light and darkness. At the same time, the adulteress standing under the tree shows the awareness of her own fall, awakened by her encounter with Christ. In accordance with the text, the goblet has fallen from her hand and rolled on the ground. In the painting, the cup creates a counterpoint in relation to the cup held by the “harlot” and the cup raised upwards by the figure standing above. Covering her naked body, the harlot is a reminiscence of Eve, who already recognised her own sinfulness: “The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked. They sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves loincloths.” (Gen. 3; 7) (fig. 50).

The idea to compare the sinful woman to the contrite Eve is suggested by the very text of the poem. Tolstoy’s adulteress realises from whom she received the grace of conversion: “Being almost repentant/ She realized with astonishment/ How generously the grace was given to her by the Creator himself” (“Уже на грани сокрушенья,/ Она постигла в изумленья,/ Как много благ, как много сил/ Господь ей щедро подарил”). The poet refers to the one who saved the adulteress with the word “Господь” (“Lord”), which means God, and in relation to which the name “Jesus Christ” is a hyponym. The use of the word “Господь” is a clear indication that the Adulteress recognises God in Jesus. Siemiradzki visualises this recognition by making the meeting of the adulteress and Christ resemble the meeting of the fallen Eve with God by the tree of Good and Evil.

Therefore, it is not accidental that Christ occupies the place on the other side of the tree with respect to the adulteress. This may be related to the reference to a long theological tradition, initiated by the letters of Saint Paul, which defines Christ as the New Adam. Christ was to renew everything that had been corrupted by Adam’s sin, to reconcile people with God as the one who is free from sin: as the second Adam. This imagined analogy to the book of Genesis gives the essence of the mission of Christ. While biblical Eve, tempted by the evil, was banished from paradise together with Adam, the encounter with Christ brings rescue to the sinful woman, and opens the way to eternal happiness for all people.

In conclusion, Siemiradzki’s painting represents the best traditions of academic painting. It depicts a moment of action and at the same time points to its cause (work of Satan) and its effects (recognition of God in Christ). It is also an outstanding example of the tradition of

figuralism in European painting by the fact that a scene from the New Testament is rendered as a reference to a scene from the Old Testament. The tradition of figuralism was still valid in religious paintings in the first half of the 19th century.¹¹

At the same time, I think that *Christ and the Harlot* is a deeply religious picture for reasons other than meeting the expectations of idealists. Because of its realism, it clearly departs from them. It can be understood that for the generation educated on the paintings of Nazarenes and on Hegel's views, only "idealisation" of the form was a guarantee of the effective rooting of an artwork in the sphere of transcendent ideas.¹² In the light of the above interpretation, the idealists' fears of the destructive influence of realism on forming the religious content of artworks should be regarded as unfounded. Today, having a better knowledge of the history of religious painting, this seems obvious to us. In the most outstanding examples of this genre, such as Giotto or Caravaggio, the idea, realism and form of a painting interact in a remarkable way.

I also consider unfounded the opinions that the realism of Siemiradzki's religious scenes is a proof that, in the words of Jadwiga Puciata Pawłowska about *Christ and the Harlot*, the painter succumbed to "a new-fangled naturalistic trend" which consisted in "reducing the divinity of Christ to common activities of everyday life."¹³ Like everyone at that time, Siemiradzki knew Ernest Renan's works, but he never claimed that *The Life of Jesus* was an inspiration for him in presenting that biblical figure. Our painter may have shared the opinion about that book which was expressed by his friend Henryk Sienkiewicz: "whoever lost their faith, he would be able to regain it by seeing how this philistine, albeit wise, wants but is unable to tune himself to the

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- 11] Jan BIAŁOSTOCKI, *Teoria i twórczość. O tradycji inwencji w teorii sztuki i ikonografii*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Poznań 1961; Tibor FABINY, *Figura and Fulfillment. Typology in the Bible, Art, and Literature*, Wipf&Stock, Eugene 1992; Maria NITKA, *Twórczość malarzy polskich w papieskim Rzymie w XIX wieku*, Polski Instytut Studiów nad Sztuką Świata-Wydawnictwo Tako, Warszawa-Toruń 2014, pp. 199-204, 217-235; Michał HAAKE, *Figuralizm Aleksandra Gierymskiego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2015.
- 12] See. Maurycy MOCHNACKI, *O literaturze polskiej w wieku XIX (1830)*, ed. Henryk ŻYCZYŃSKI, Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, Kraków 1923; Lucjan SIEMIENSKI, *Walka realizmu z idealizmem*, in: *ibid.*, *Kilka rysów z literatury i społeczeństwa od roku 1848-1858*, vol. 2, G. Gebethner, Warszawa 1859, pp. 419-439.
- 13] Jadwiga PUCIATA-PAWŁOWSKA, *Henryk Siemiradzki*, in: *Henryk Siemiradzki 1843-1902*, TZSP, Warszawa 1939, p. 7.

object that surpasses him just like e.g. the Alps surpass some geometric tools that measure them.”¹⁴

This does not mean, however, that Siemiradzki disregarded the spiritual situation and the worldview crisis of his time. The scene is presented on a large canvas. Thanks to the realism of the rendering, the painting opens the space by creating a suggestion that the viewer is situated on the same road on which the figures meet. In this way the painting implements one of the variants of reception aesthetics prevalent in the 19th century. The viewer virtually joins the Jews accompanying the adulteress and watching Christ. The realism of the painting puts the viewer in a situation in which Christ presents himself as a human being (he has no halo). This treatment refers the viewer to the reality in which – as in the 19th century – Christ is depicted exclusively as a human being. The analogy between viewers and the Jews in the painting is that all of them have heard about Jesus as “an extraordinary man”, performing miraculous healings, who came to fulfil the law of Moses, proclaiming the idea of forgiveness and mercy. (“Они свободно говорят [...] О их старшин собранье тайном/ Торговле, мире, и войне, / И муже том необычайном,/ Что появился в их стране/ Любовью к ближним пламенея,/ Народ смиренью он учил/ Он все законы Моисея/Любви закону подчинил”). The viewer stands before an answer to the question about the relationship of this knowledge to the doctrine of Christ’s divinity, to the question about what, for himself, is the meaning of the testimony given by the adulteress, who “falls down before the holiness of Christ” (“И пала ниц она, рыдая, Перед святынею Христа”). In this way, the painting refers to the 19th-century worldview in which knowledge and faith enter into a profound dispute with each other.

14] Henryk SIENKIEWICZ, *Notes* (16 June 1892), quote after: Józef SZCZUBLEWSKI, *Sienkiewicz, żywot pisarza*, W.A.B, Warszawa 2006, p. 217.



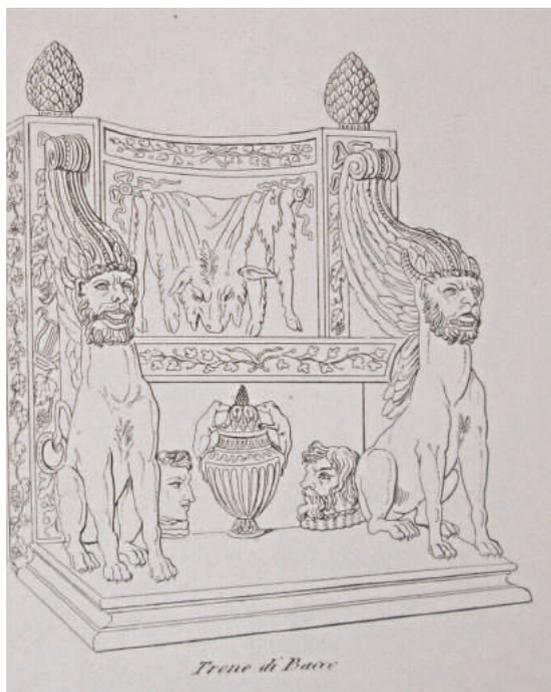
41. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Christ and the Harlot*, ca. 1873, sketch, pencil, paper on cartoon, 34.6 × 55.5 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo Museum.



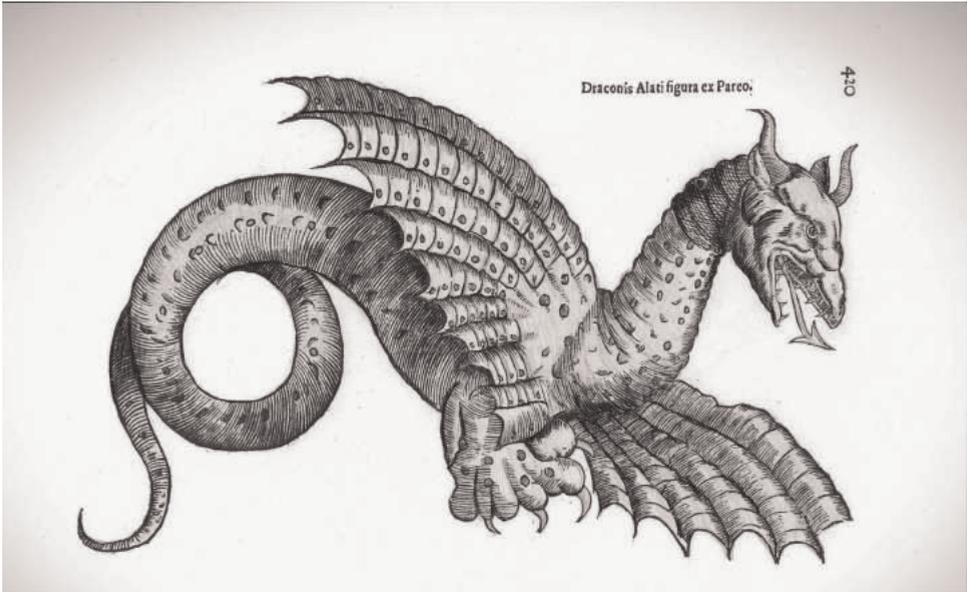
42. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Christ and the Harlot*, ca 1873, sketch, pencil, paper, 10 × 18 cm, National Museum, Krakow, no. inv. MNK III r.a.-17323/4. Photo Museum.



43. *Jesus and the Captain of Capernaum*, Codex Egberti, ca. 980. Photo in public domain.



44. *The Throne of the Priest of Bacchus* (Trono di Bacco), engraving, Fr. Noel, *Dizionario della favola o mitologia greca, latina, egizja, celtica, perianal, siraca, indiana, cinese, maomettana, rabbinica, slava, scandinava, africana, americana, araba, iconologica, cabalistica*, trans. from French G. Pozzoli, Vo. VI, tab. CCLII, Milano 1853.



45. *Draconis alati figura ex parco*, Ullisse Aldrovandi, *Serpentum, et draconum historiae libri Duo*, Bologna 1640, p. 420. Photo in public domain.



46. *Monstrum Marinum Damoniforme*, Ullisse Aldrovandi, *Monstrorum historia cum Paralipomenis historiae omnium animalium*, Bologna 1642, p. 357. Photo in public domain



47. *Monstrum alatum et cornutum instar cacodemonis*, Ullisse Aldrovandi, *Monstrorum historia cum Paralipomenis historiae omnium animalium*, Bologna 1642, p. 364. Photo in public domain.



48. *The Whore of Babylon*, illustration from Martin Luther's 1534 translation of the Bible, 1534. Photo in public domain.



49. Michelangelo, *The Temptation and Expulsion* (Sistine Chapel, 1508-1512), engraved by Antonio Capellan, 1772, Photo in public domain.



50. *Adam and Eve bidding from the presence of God*, San Marco, Venice, XII, Photo in public domain.

MARIA NITKA

*Academy of Fine Arts, Wrocław
Polish Institute of World Art Studies*

NAKED TRUTH AND BEAUTY OF THE NUDE IN HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI'S *PHRYNE*

“**Y**ou artists fancy that when a figure is correctly drawn, and everything in its place according to the rules of anatomy, there is nothing more to be done. You make up the flesh tints beforehand on your palettes according to your formulae, and fill in the outlines with due care that one side of the face shall be darker than the other; and because you look from time to time at a naked woman who stands on the platform before you, you fondly imagine that you have copied nature, think yourselves to be painters, believe that you have wrested His secret from God. Pshaw! [...] Look at your saint, Porbus! At a first glance she is admirable; look at her again, and you see at once that she is glued to the background, and that you could not walk round her. She is a silhouette that turns but one side of her face to all beholders, a figure cut out of canvas, an image with no power to move nor change her position. I feel as if there were no air between that arm and the background, no space, no sense of distance in your canvas. [...] but, in spite of these praiseworthy efforts, I could never bring myself to believe that the warm breath of life comes and goes in that beautiful body. It seems to me that if I laid my hand on the firm, rounded throat, it would be cold as marble to the touch. No, my friend, the blood does not flow beneath that ivory skin, the tide of life does not flush those delicate fibres, the purple veins that trace a network beneath the transparent

amber of her brow and breast. Here the pulse seems to beat, there it is motionless, life and death are at strife in every detail; here you see a woman, there a statue, there again a corpse. Your creation is incomplete. You had only power to breathe a portion of your soul into your beloved work. The fire of Prometheus died out again and again in your hands; many a spot in your picture has not been touched by the divine flame”.¹ These words from *The Unknown Masterpiece* by Honoré Balzac are spoken by the old painter Master Frenhofer to the other painter Porbus, working on the image of a woman. The painter Frenhofer decides to take up the challenge unfulfilled by Porbus and paint a true and beautiful female nude. Ultimately, however, he fails to render the real beauty of the model and suffers an artistic fiasco – the picture remains impossible.

This short story was quoted from by Stanisław Witkiewicz in his critical article on *Phryne at the Feast of Poseidon in Eleusis* by Henryk Siemiradzki (fig. III).² With this remark, he referred the attentive reader to the artistic context of the representation of the female nude in the 19th century art, in which the representation of a naked woman was an attempt at artistic genius. Of course, the concept had a long tradition in European art, where the nude was a theme connoting art *in se*.³ This was particularly true with regard to the image of a naked woman, most often representing Venus, which had been considered to be the quintessence of beauty since ancient times.⁴ The nude became the basis of academic education, even the term *académie* meant precisely the study of the naked model. There can be little wonder, therefore, that numerous nudes, predominantly as representations of the goddess of love, were exhibited at the 19th -century art salons.⁵

Siemiradzki took up the subject of the female nude on many occasions in his work. Yet, in dealing with this task, he never painted Venus, instead depicting naked women in ancient settings. The only deviation from this rule came with personifications, enforced by the

1] Honoré de BALZAC, *The Unknown Masterpiece*, 1 edn. “L’Artiste” 1831, English transl. Ellen Marriage. Accessible online: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23060/23060-h/23060-h.htm>.

2] Stanisław WITKIEWICZ, *Fryne*, “Kurier Warszawski”, 1889, no. 180 (2. 07), pp.1-2; no. 181 (3. 07), pp.1-2.

3] Cf. classic study of the genre: Kenneth CLARK, *The Nude. A Study in Ideal Form*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1956.

4] The popularity of representations of Venus in modern art is evidenced by the study: *The Iconography of Venus*, compiled by K. BENDER, vol. 1 -6, 2007-2018. Accessible online: <https://independent.academia.edu/KBender>.

5] Maria POPRZECKA, *Akt – forma nie idealna*, “Przegląd Historyczny”, 2009, no. 100/3, p. 373.

convention of allegory itself. Thus, in Siemiradzki's historical paintings by, there are naked women who either play the roles of ancient deities, as in *The Judgement of Paris* (fig. IV), or act as slaves, e.g. in the paintings *The Vase or the Woman?* (1874), *Isaurian Pirates Selling their Booty* (1880), martyrs, as in *Christian Dirce* (fig. VI), or are dancers, sometimes in the pose of Aphrodite Kallipygos, as in *A Dance among Swords* (1881, 2nd version, State Tretyakov Gallery), sometimes they are shown as bacchantes, or participants of ancient feasts, e.g. *Bacchanals* (1890, Serpukhov History and Art Museum), *The Era of Tiberius on Capri* (1881, State Tretyakov Gallery). Siemiradzki did not paint unreal, mythological heroines, but women embedded in specific historical realities, inscribed in the probability of scientifically understood reality.

The painting *Phryne at the Feast of Poseidon in Eleusis* is not an exception. It depicts a historical Greek hetaera, who lived in the 4th century BC, playing the role of Aphrodite during the Eleusinian Mysteries, famous in the ancient times as well as later. The figure of Phryne was well known in the 19th century thanks to Jean-Léon Gérôme's painting *Phryne before the Areopagus* of 1861 (fig. 32), which depicts an episode from her life when she stood accused of godlessness and was taken to court.⁶ In order to save her from punishment, her defender Hypereides unveiled her naked body before the judges, who, captivated by her physical beauty, acquitted her. The French painter portrayed the hetaera exactly in the moment when she is covering her face from the audience in shame with a gesture of her hands, after her defender ripped off the robe that covered her body. The popularity of Gérôme's painting contributed to the fact that the pose of Phryne – a naked woman in a light *contrapposto*, covering her eyes with shame – filled the visual culture of the time, becoming a model for other paintings, sculptures and even photographs.⁷

Siemiradzki, however, chose a different moment from the life of the Greek hetaera. In December 1886 he wrote to his friend, and the most important artistic advisor, Piotr F. Iseyev "I am preparing a big painting, bigger than Nero's candlesticks. Its theme is Phryne, who plays the role of Aphrodite during the Poseidon feast in Eleusis". He then added, "I have long dreamt of a theme from the life of the Greeks **that would**

6] Gerald M. ACKERMAN, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme with a Catalogue Raisonné*, Sotheby's Publications, London 1986, cat. no. 132.

7] Édouard PAPET, *Phryné au XIXe siècle: la plus jolie femme de Paris ?* in : *Praxitèle: Un maître de la sculpture antique*, eds. Alain PASQUIER, Jean Luc MARTINEZ, catalogue, Musée du Louvre, Louvre Éditions, Paris 2007, pp. 368-370.

give me the opportunity to present the classical beauty in all its glory”.⁸ And so Siemiradzki portrayed the scene of Phryne playing the role of Aphrodite in the Eleusinian Mysteries, as described by Athenaeus in *Deipnosophistae*. In the text it is stated that Phryne “on the solemn assembly of the Eleusinian festival, and on the feast of the Poseidonia, [...] laid aside her garments in the sight of all the assembled Greeks, and having undone her hair, she went to bathe in the sea; and it was from her that Apelles took his picture of Aphrodite Anadyomene and Praxiteles the sculptor, who was a lover of hers, modelled the Aphrodite of Cnidus from her body”.⁹

Thus, playing the role of a goddess by an earthly beauty was an inspiration to create an image with a female nude as the main theme. This motif had been taken up before Siemiradzki by his two greatest artistic rivals – in 1877 Lawrence Alma-Tadema presented his work *A Sculptor's Model* (fig. 51), and in 1882 Frederic Leighton showed his painting *Phryne*.¹⁰ Both compositions, in the format of a vertical rectangle, focus on the figure of a naked woman alone, portraying her after the model of Aphrodite Anadyomene – that is, according to the message of Athenaeus in the pose, in which Apelles depicted the goddess born of sea foam, inspired by the sight of Phryne emerging from water. This work, famous in antiquity, is not known from any iconographic sources. Its extraordinary popularity is evidenced by the fact that the pose of Aphrodite – standing with her hands raised and squeezing her wet hair – became widespread in other forms of art, especially in ancient sculpture, where it appeared in many variations.¹¹ Because of the surviving ancient statues, this type of female nude also became popular in modern painting. Modern artists created their own artistic visions of the work of Apelles, challenging the ideal, as shown in the print *Triumph of the Art Painting* by Bernard Picart, where the Allegory of Painting is holding a picture of Aphrodite Anadyomene (fig. 52). A perfect realization of this theme in modern painting was the

8] Henryk Siemiradzki, letter to Piotr F. Iseyev, december 1886. Отдел рукописей Российской государственной библиотеки (ОР РГБ), Ф. 489, ед. хр. 17, л. 17. Quote after: Татьяна Л. КАРПОВА, *Генрих Семирадский* (Tatiana L. KARPOVA, *Henryk Siemiradzki*), Золотой век, Санкт-Петербург 2008, p. 163.

9] ATHENAEUS, *The Deipnosophists*, transl. C. D. Yonge (1854), Book XIII, pp. 590-591. Accessible online: <http://www.attalus.org/old/athenaeus13c.html>.

10] Emilia Russell BARRINGTON, *The Life and Letters of Frederic Leighton*, 2 vols, George Allen, London 1906, vol. I, p. 536-540. Accessible online: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/35934>.

11] The different variations of Aphrodite Anadyomene are described in: Witold, DOBROWOLSKI, *Wazy greckie w twórczości Siemiradzkiego*, “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2017, vol. V, p. 18.

work of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres *Venus Anadyomene* (fig. 53), which the artist started painting at the beginning of the 19th century during his stay in Rome, and completed in 1848 and presented to the public at the Exposition Universelle in 1855.¹² Thus, both Alma-Tadema and Leighton directly confronted the ancient tradition, challenging Apelles as well as contemporaneous art, competing with Ingres, the master of the idealistic nude himself, and the artist whose name came to be identified with academic orthodoxy. Smooth, slender female silhouettes in elegant but unnatural poses on the canvases of Alma-Tadema and Leighton resemble a classical sculpture rather than a woman of “flesh and bone”. Such anti-naturalistic idealistic treatment of Phryne’s body by Siemiradzki’s rivals places these works perfectly in the conventions of academic art. They show the “fullness of beauty” being the quintessence of “art for art’s sake”, which for Victorian painters and their spiritual likes was embodied by the figure of Venus.¹³

Siemiradzki’s *Phryne at the Feast of Poseidon in Eleusis* is decidedly different from these works. The very composition is different – the artist presented a multi-figure scene, for which he chose the format of a horizontal rectangle. The characters of this representation are shown almost exclusively in the foreground, like actors on a theatre stage, and are divided into three groups. In the centre, on the axis of the composition there is Phryne, taking off her garments with the help of her servants. She is depicted in the pose of Aphrodite Anadyomene, just like in the paintings of Siemiradzki’s rivals, but she is not alone – there is a crowd of people staring at her both from her right and left. The group to the right of the hetaera, shown gathered around a column crowned with a tripod with flowers, consists of a poet, a singer, a shepherd – all of whom seem to be praising the beauty of Phryne, which finds resemblance in the beauty of the bay in the background. On the left side of the hetaerae, the participants of the mysteries are

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- 12] Ingres. *In Pursuit of Perfection. The Art of J.-A.-D. Ingres*, eds. Patricia CONDON, Marjorie B. COHN, Agnes MORGAN, Louisville The J. B. Speed Art Museum, Indiana University Press, Louisville [Kentucky] 1983, p. 64. The pose of Venus Anadyomene appears in another works of J.-A.-D. Ingres – *The Source* (1856, Paris, Musée d’Orsay), which was widely reproduced as an exemplar of the *figure d’étude*. Cf.: *Exposed. The Victorian Nude*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Britain, ed. Alison SMITH, Tate Publishing Publications, London 2001 p. 90.
- 13] Alison SMITH, *Nature Transformed, Leighton, the Nude and the Model*, in: *Frederic Leighton. Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity*, eds. Tim BARRINGER and Elizabeth PRETTEJOHN, Yale University Press, New Haven, London 1999, pp. 31-38. Cf.: Elizabeth PRETTEJOHN, *Art for Art’s Sake. Aestheticism in Victorian Painting*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London 2007, pp. 130-160.

seen leaving the temple visible in the background. In the multi-coloured crowd, one can see men and women carrying statues of deities, next to them there is a relief depicting the kidnapping of a Nereid, clearly indicating the mythological – and thus religious – context of the representation. Siemiradzki's Phryne is also different from the idealistically portrayed female bodies on the canvases of Alma-Tadema or Leighton. Admittedly, there have been voices praising her beauty among critics. However, the prevailing opinion was one of astonishment at the “somewhat heavy” shapes of the hetaera. Fritz von Ostini writing for *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* even stated that the figure of Phryne by Siemiradzki “is an insult to Aphrodite born of sea foam”, and that her “brownish and not-so-young body would probably attract neither Praxiteles nor Hypereides”.¹⁴ She was accused of being too real, too heavy-set, and even of not being feminine at all. The choice of this type of beauty is all the more puzzling because Siemiradzki was perfectly capable of painting attractive, sensual women, such as the dancer in *A Dance among Swords*, the slender and embarrassed slave from the *The Vase or The Woman?*, *Isaurian Pirates*, or the almost deprived of materiality martyr from *Christian Dirce*. The choice of Phryne's silhouette may be related to Siemiradzki's immediate pattern, as the massive, common shapes of the hetaera fully reflect the figure of Siemiradzki's model Carlattina Dobler (fig. 54).¹⁵ Numerous sketches for the figure of Phryne have also survived, including an oil sketch of her legs (fig. 55), which were so deeply disturbing to critics because of their “realism”.¹⁶ Stanisław Witkiewicz, Siemiradzki's friend and an admirer and propagator of realism did not, however, find realism either in the work or in the beauty of the heroine. Instead, he wrote: “At first impression, as a silhouette, she seems to be a man. Her powerful arms and hands, with such poor, narrow hips and thighs, take away her feminine trait. She is some kind of hermaphrodite, a half-being, whose power of female charm is hard to believe”¹⁷. It is worth considering why Phryne's model of beauty in Siemiradzki's painting also differs from the convention of nudes, defined by such paintings as the already

14] Fritz von OSTINI, “Münchener Neueste Nachrichten” 1890. Quato after: “Przegląd Polityczny, Społeczny i Literacki”, 1890, no. 279 (4. 12), p. 3.

15] See the sketch with Carlitta Dobler from National Museum in Krakow (no. inv. III-r.a-6507). Stanisław LEWANDOWSKI, *Henryk Siemiradzki*, Gebethner & Wolff, Warszawa, Kraków 1904, p. 25.

16] TH., *Prasa rosyjska o Siemiradzki*, “Kraj”, 1889, no. 5 (14.02), pp. 5-6.

17] S. WITKIEWICZ, op. cit., no. 181, p. 1.

mentioned works by Gérôme, Alma-Tadema and Leighton, as well as from other nudes which came out from under the brush of the author of *Nero's Torches* himself. After all, as Witkiewicz boldly observed, "beautiful pose of the woman, pretty flowers, the blue of the sea, the marble, the tiny reflections of sunshine, of which this painting was composed, were completely within the limits of the possibilities of his talent and true preferences", while "[...] Phryne is not womanly enough".¹⁸

In comparison with the canon of the academic female nude, Witkiewicz's statements on the androgenicity of Phryne seem justified. Similar accusations were raised against the female images of the brush or chisel of Michelangelo Buonarroti, which were even called "men with breasts".¹⁹ Michelangelo introduced, or perhaps as others would prefer, revived the genre of the heroic nude, which was supposed to be not so much a source of sensual pleasure, but rather an embodiment of an idea. The women created by Buonarroti were not meant to show sensual beauty at all, but to embody concepts, hence their nudes are far from erotic charm. Similarly, Phryne, placed on the axis of the painting in the pose of the goddess of beauty, embodies the idea of beauty. "What delights us in Phryne is not for the senses; it is an almost abstract beauty as much as the charm of the ancient marble figures of Venus".²⁰ It was even written: "We find [...] in it everything that constitutes the essence of the classical *χαλόν*: a perfect harmony of line, strength, tranquillity, and finally the breath of true poetry, which the ancient world so lovingly fondled in its bosom".²¹ In ancient Greece, the beauty of the body was manifested especially in the presentation of the naked body. Phryne was originally presented "completely uncovered".²² In the collections available to Józef Dużyk, there appeared a photograph of Siemiradzki in front of a painted picture showing naked Phryne.²³ The nudity and carnality of the heroine refers to her purely physical aspect especially that Siemiradzki resigned from showing the gaze of her eyes, the face of the hetaera is turned aside.

18] S. WITKIEWICZ, op. cit., no. 181, pp. 1-2.

19] Seymour HOWARD, *Eros, Empathy, Expectation, Ascription, and Breasts of Michelangelo (A Prolegomenon on Polymorphism and Creativity)*, "Artibus Et Historiae", 2001, vol. 22, no. 44, pp. 94-98. Accessible online: JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1483715.

20] St. R. [Stanisław ROSSOWSKI], *Fryne*, "Gazeta Narodowa", 1890, no. 36 (13. 02), p. 1.

21] Ibid.

22] *Listy Rzymskie*, "Wiek", 1888, no. 61 (17.03), p. 1.

23] Józef DUŻYK, *Siemiradzki. Opowieść biograficzna*, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1986, fig. 98.

The gaze of the depicted protagonist always introduces an element of character psychologization into the representation, the eyes are, after all, the mirror of the soul. This aspect was also highlighted by critics. It was pointed out: "Yes, yes! We want even our Aspasia to have Beatrice's eyes, to have spiritual charm – and Phryne does not have it, and no Greek woman had it".²⁴ Phryne presents not her "spiritual" side, but her body. This direct nudity of the body paradoxically "strips" the performance of the eroticism that shocked the critics in the case of the famous *Phryne* by Gérôme, but also Siemiradzki's *The Vase or the Woman*.²⁵ As Lynda Nead reminds us, "nakedness is a mark of material reality; whereas nudity transcends that historical and social existence, and is a kind of a cultural disguise".²⁶ Although inscribed in the ancient context, Siemiradzki's Phryne breaks the canon of presenting a female nude and appears to be a figure "of flesh and bone".

Similar accusations of the non-canonical, commonplace beauty of the models were made against the female nudes of Gustave Courbet. The "somewhat heavy" proportions of the woman in the painting *The Bathers* (fig. 56), staged at the Paris Salon in 1853, were particularly famous.²⁷ The work was criticized primarily because of the annoying incompatibility of the studied gesture and the model's commonplace posture. This inconsistency of registers further distinguished what is "real" from the "imaginary" or "artistic". The same dualism of forms characterises Siemiradzki's *Phryne*, who combines a statue-like pose with heavy "realistic" shapes of the hetaera. The realism of the living figure is contrasted with the artificiality of her pose, and the same dualism can be observed in the characters around her. The poses of many of them bear references to ancient sculptures, mainly to the works of Praxiteles. The pervasion of the "real" and "artificial" element in *Phryne* was emphasized by critics, who, perplexed at times, called the figures in this composition a ballet.²⁸ The "theatrical" poses of the figures make

24] A-n, *Fryne w Eleusis. Najnowszy obraz mistrza H. Siemiradzkiego*, "Przegląd Polityczny, Społeczny i Literacki", 1890, no. 41, (19. 02), p. 1.

25] These images met with fierce criticism and censorship. See: Matthias KRÜGER, *Jean-Léon Gérômes Phryne vor dem Areopag. Das Ausstellungsbild als Skandalwerk*, in: *Kanon Kunstgeschichte. Einführung in Werke, Methoden und Epochen*, eds. Kristin MAREK und Martin SCHULZ, vol. III: *Moderne*, Wilhelm Fink, München 2015, pp. 57-75.

26] Lynda NEAD, *The Female Nude*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 16.

27] Maria POPRZECKA, "Gest, który nic nie wyraża", in: Maria POPRZECKA, *Pochwała Malarstwa. Studia z historii i teorii sztuki*, Słowo / Obraz Terytoria, Gdańsk 2000, pp. 130-137. Michael FRIED, *Courbet's realism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1992, pp.164-167.

28] Wojciech DZIEDUSZYCKI, *Listy ze usi*, "Gazeta Narodowa", 1890, no. 42 (20.02), p. 1.

the picture become “living art”, which is further amplified by the fact that this work was one of the most frequently staged “living images”.

The theatricality of Siemiradzki's painting was also implied by the manner of its exposition at the St. Petersburg Academy.²⁹ The painting was placed in a room covered with dark curtains, illuminated only by means of electric light, which was supposed to imitate sunlight. Thus, Phryne was meant to appear as a naked woman bathed in sunlight. Let us recall that Cesare Ripa describing the figure of truth, mentions that she is a naked woman holding the sun, which means that its rays must be falling on her. Therefore, Phryne's nakedness can be interpreted allegorically, i.e., shown in full sunlight the hetaera would be an Allegory of Truth – *Verità* or *Nuda Veritas*.³⁰ The idea of truth is also evoked by the figure of Helios, carried by the participants of the procession.³¹ It was, after all, the God of the Sun who revealed to Demeter the secret of Persephone's abduction by Hades. The cult of Helios was also connected with the cult of Apollo, a God of the Sun and light. Thus, again the connection between Beauty and Truth is emphasized, this time by references to mythology.

The combination of two dichotomous elements – nature and art, i.e. the transformation of matter into form – echoes the neoplatonic concept of the duality of the goddess Venus – *Geminae Veneres*. One of the most important representations of the two natures of Venus is the painting *Sacred and Profane Love* by Titian (1514, Borghese Gallery). According to the neoplatonic interpretation it shows two faces of Venus: the heavenly one (*Venere Celeste*) is the undressed woman and the earthly one (*Venere Terrena* or *Venere Volgare*) – the woman in a dress. The semantics of the figures is emphasized by the background, on the one hand referring to religious worship, suggested by the church tower, on the other hand – to earthly power through the

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- 29] “Художественное новости” (“Art News”), 1889, no.4, p. 89-95 See: Татьяна Карпова, *У истоков выставочного и музейного дизайна* (Т. Карпова, *At the origins of exhibition and museum design*), in: *Передвижники и П. М. Третьяков в роли экспозиционеров (Peredvizhniki and P.M. Tretyakov as exhibitors)*, Русская галерея, 2. Москва: Панорама. Наука и практика, 2001, pp. 4-10.
- 30] Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia, ovvero Descrittione di Diverse Imagini Cauate dall'Antichità*, Faerii, Roma 1603, pp. 499-501. See: Kathryn Moore Heleniak, *Naked/ Nude*, in: *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography: Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, ed. Helene E. Roberts, vol. 2, Fitzroy Dearborn, Chicago 1998, p. 644-645.
- 31] Katarzyna Anna Czajkowska, *Wizja antycznej Grecji w obrazie Henryka Hektora Siemiradzkiego „Fryne na święcie Posejdona w Eleusis”*, “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2017, vol. IV, p. 161.

silhouette of a castle.³² Similarly, in *Phryne*, the background of the painting resonates with the double nature of the woman-goddess. It consists of two separate parts: a landscape with a beautiful bay and a hill with a Greek temple and a relief in the foreground, so there is nature on the one hand and art on the other. Phryne is located on the borderline between these two worlds. Her dual nature would therefore connect the Truth of Nature with the Beauty of Art.

In emphasizing the connection between Truth and Beauty, Siemiradzki also entered into a dialogue with painting contemporary to him. Critics attributed the questioning of this connection and the antagonization of these notions to “realism”. The painting *The Painter’s Studio* (1854-1855) by the already mentioned Gustave Courbet was, of course, the flagship work for this artistic movement (fig. 57). Painted in 1855, it was to be displayed at the Exposition Universelle in Paris. It was exactly what it was meant to be – an artistic manifesto of realism.³³ This monumental canvas is composed similarly to *Phryne* – almost all of the figures in the foreground are divided into three groups, gathered around the central one, consisting of a painter and a naked woman. The artist is turned to her with his back, looking at the canvas in front of him, which depicts a landscape from his home region, a boy is also looking at it. The landscape “absorbs” this group, they seem to almost merge with it. The figures become a living image against the background of painted nature. It is nature that constitutes the power of painting, even the naked woman – the muse is real. This scene is observed by those gathered in Courbet’s atelier, who correspond to various historical figures and models of art (religious, historical, landscape), they “add” to the meaning of the event in the centre, like a choir in a Greek tragedy. Although from the beginning this work has been subject to many interpretations, it is certainly a work about the sources of art, especially painting, which, conversely, has its origins in nature but is created in a dark studio.

Similarly, in *Phryne at the Feast of Poseidon in Eleusis*, the theme is also the birth of art, shown through the canonical Balzacian motif of transforming a real woman into a nude. This scene, developed in parallel to the plane of the picture, consists of a central group – the semantic centre, and two groups flanking it, constituting

32] Erwin PANOFSKY, *The Neoplatonic Movement in Florence and Northern Italy (Bandinelli and Titian)*, in: *Studies in Iconology, Naturalistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Oxford, 1939, reprinted 1962, p. 152.

33] See among others: Werner HOFMANN, “*Das Atelier*” *Courbets Jahrhundertbild*, C. H. Beck, München 2010.

a “commentary” to the event. Thus, the composition repeats the rhetorical arrangement of Courbet’s flagship work, indicating that this canvas is also supposed to have a clear, persuasive message. Such an ideological character of the work would fit perfectly into the context of creation of Siemiradzki’s painting, which was originally intended to be shown at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889, as was evident from the artist’s letter to Piotr F. Iseyev.³⁴ Preparing a painting for such an important exhibition, the author of *Nero’s Torches* presented his own artistic programme, which stood in opposition to the Courbet’s postulate of “realism” which breaks the link between Truth and Beauty. He wanted – let us recall once again the words from his letter – to depict “the whole beauty of the ancient world”, but he also did not depart from the Truth, taking up the challenge of representing it. In Greek philosophy, especially that of Plato, these two ideas corresponded with each other, along with the idea of Good.³⁵ They constituted the classical theory, which formed the basis for the definition of art from modernity to any theory of art referring to classicism, becoming the basis of academic teaching.³⁶

These academic rules were also questioned in Russia, as there were calls for realistic, “national” art, breaking with cosmopolitan academism. One of the most important figures of this new trend was Vladimir Stasov, the main theoretician of the Association of Travelling Art Exhibitions, which brought together artists postulating realistic Russian art. Siemiradzki clashed with Stasov, while still a student in St. Petersburg in 1869, in the famous discussion at Mark Antokolski’s house. On that occasion the author of *Nero’s Torches* emphasized that there is something more than just vulgar truth in presenting reality, which at the same time does not contradict it, and that such art was created by the ancient Greeks. Stasov, on the other hand, believed that “the counterfeiting of ancient art, which has already passed, and its continuation, work in its spirit is thoughtless and infertile”, it is only “reanimating the dead”.³⁷ The comments from this discussion, recorded in Ilya

34] See footnote no. 8.

35] Tom ROCKMORE, *Art and Truth after Plato*, Chicago University Press, Chicago and London 2013, pp.1-10.

36] Maria POPRZEĆKA, *Akademizm*, Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa 1989, pp. 20-71.

37] Илья Е. РЕПИН, *Далекое близкое*, (Илья РЕПИН, *Far and Near*), Художник РСФСР, Ленинград 1982, pp. 189-196. Quoted: Veronika BOGDAN, *Henryk Siemiradzki and the Imperial Academy of Arts*, “World Art Studies”, 2018, vol. 18, p. 30.

Repin's book of reminiscences, *Far and Near* persisted for the following decade.³⁸ A certain change of emphasis in artistic stances took place in the 1880s, when the realistic art of Wanderers (Peredvizhniki) found itself in crisis and many of its members, such as Ivan Kramskoy, became fascinated by the physical beauty, which appeared as a diabolical temptation, ambivalent towards Good and Evil. Against the background of this discussion, Siemiradzki's manifesto resounds even more clearly. In *Phryne*, he showed a beautiful, but also real female nude, not taking into account the dichotomy of Beauty and Truth, raised by Wanderers, but by using the repertoire of painting contemporary to him, i.e. realism, he showed how the two ideas combine, according to Plato's concept.

Thus, the Ideal of Beauty – Phryne, is in Siemiradzki's painting synonymous with Truth, and in this union it is revealed to the crowd. The artistic stance expressed in *Phryne* is particularly clear if we juxtapose it with another painting that shows the limits of the representation – *The Appearance of Christ to the People* (1837-1857, State Tretyakov Gallery) by Aleksandr Ivanov (fig. 58). This work, canonical for the Russian artistic thought, the fruit of several dozen years of the painter's work in Italy, is a compressed expression of his reflections on the possibility of rendering in painting that which is not presented, i.e. the figure of Christ, embodying the absolute, and in it the concepts of Truth, Beauty and Good. In his work Ivanov presented in the foreground John the Baptist, announcing the coming of the Messiah and a crowd of people listening to him. Christ is indeed coming, but almost nobody notices him, because his figure in the depths of the picture, a little to the right of the axis, remains almost invisible. Although Ivanov used models from antiquity and nature to paint his figures, they proved to be insufficient to create the most important figure – the incarnate God. And so, ultimately the artist failed, as it proved impossible to present the incarnation of Beauty, Truth and Good. It is different in Siemiradzki's painting – here an ancient goddess of earthly shapes shamelessly, in all (almost) her grandeur, presents herself on the axis of the painting, making herself explicitly visible and turning this visibility into a spectacle. Phryne's carnality appears as an antithesis of the

38] Татьяна Л. КАРПОВА, *Фрина Генриха Семирадского – манифестация идеи Красоты в художественной атмосфере 1880-х годов* (Tatiana L. KARPOVA, "Phryne" by H. Siemiradzki – a manifestation of the idea of Beauty in the artistic atmosphere of the 1880s), "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2016, vol. IV, pp. 165-176.

ideal of the figure of Christ, but while the representation of Jesus proved impossible, Siemiradzki showed Phryne in all her splendour, which also sacralises her. Where Ivanov's painting questioned the possibilities of mimetic rendering of Beauty and Truth, Siemiradzki's work is an ostentatious display of the possibilities of painting.

Phryne appears like a deity, or maybe even divinity in full glory. The sacred character of this appearance is emphasized by the division of the composition into three parts, the adored Phryne and the ministers of art and religion flanking her. The earthly Phryne in a sculptural pose becomes a sculpture of a goddess, an ancient idol in front of the crowd. As a contemporary idol, Paul Valéry described another painting with an image of a naked woman – Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (fig. 59).³⁹ This work, exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1865, aroused a true scandal, primarily because of the way in which the theme of the nude, which is iconic for painting, was treated. Using the convention of reclining Venus, so well known from Venetian painting, Manet presented a contemporary prostitute, accompanied by a black maid holding a bouquet of flowers, an inseparable symbol of the triumph of the goddess of love. However, *Olympia* playing the role of a deity – as T. J. Clark wrote – seems to be a negation of the convention of the nude, almost its caricature, successively breaking academic rules: the rule of decorum by showing not a courtesan, but a prostitute, the social norm of art reception by exposing its sexual, provocative character, but most importantly, the way of building reception through the inability to establish a coherent point of view.⁴⁰ As Clark stressed, the observer does not have a single viewing point of the composition, his gaze wanders through consecutive points of the composition – the body of *Olympia*, not being able to find a point of support, he does not find the fiction of representation, but only the truth of the canvas covered with colours in an appropriate arrangement. Thus, the view, uncovered with a curtain (in the upper left corner), shows an unreal woman who looks at the observer with a “dead gaze”, while at the same time the viewer's gaze is lost. It is a spectacle of fiction, in which there is no longer any unity between the presented and the presenter. Phryne is completely different – here the viewer has a specific vantage

39] Paul VALÉRY, *Degas. Manet. Morisot*, in: *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry*, transl. D. Paul, vol. 12, Pantheon, New York 1964, p. 109. See also: FRANCO RELLA, *Il Segreto di Manet*, Bompiani, Firenze-Milano 2017, pp. 17-24.

40] T. J. [Timothy James] CLARK, *The Painting of Modern Life. Paris in the Art. Of Manet and Followers*, (rev. edn.) Princeton University Press, Princeton 1999, pp. 79-145.

point, although it may be changed, the viewed object is one and the viewer shares it with other characters in the scene. The viewer brings the performance to life with his gaze, although he does not meet the gaze of the hetaera, it is his gaze that brings the heroine to life.

Phryne at the Feast of Poseidon in Eleusis is a spectacle of looking and about looking, its main and only protagonist is revealed in full sight, i.e. in full splendour. Siemiradzki attached great importance to exhibiting the work in sunlight. Light played a key role for him in this work. According to Plato, light constituted the binding force of the idea of Good, Beauty and Truth because, being present in the sensual world, it made a reference to the ideal reality, allowing us to see the Beauty that lifts us towards the Truth and the Good.⁴¹ Light was also the central element of the Eleusinian Mysteries. As Henryk Struve wrote, "Greek people gathered at these celebrations from the furthest reaches, and the pious were initiated by the priests into the Eleusinian Mysteries, into a sacred *drama* that represented, accompanied by cheerless effects of light and music, the emergence of life out of death, joy out of sorrow, light out of darkness".⁴² The celebration of the mysteries emphasized that it is by virtue of light that nature is reborn, that it is stronger than death – darkness. The return of Persephone from the land of darkness heralds vegetation, the rebirth of life. In the myth of Demeter and Persephone, being seen is connected with living, because losing life means going away to the land of darkness, where one becomes but a shadow. Light is therefore also a condition for all visibility. It is in its honour that the Eleusinian feast is held, in honour of its triumph, from which also art is born – poetry, theatre, architecture and sculpture, and above all, painting, and each of these disciplines is represented in the work of Siemiradzki.

Art, according to Greek anthropology, can also bring back from the land of shadows. It was, after all, initiated by a girl from Corinth drawing her beloved, who was leaving for war to die for his homeland. Thus, art defeats death, leads out of the land of shadows, makes existence visible and alive. Therefore, if Manet's *Olympia* – according to Clark – was a painting about "lack", it was a negative work, then *Phryne* seems to be an affirmative work, ostentatiously showing the spectacle of visibility, and thus the possibilities of painting.

41] Paulina TENDERA, *Światło – Piękno. Platona dwie drogi mądrości*, "Kwartalnik Filozoficzny", 2010, no. 38/ 4, p. 23.

42] Henryk STRUVE, „Fryne”. *Obraz Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, "Kłosy", 1889, no. 1249, p. 359.

Therefore, through *Phryne at the Feast of Poseidon in Eleusis* Siemiradzki took the floor in his contemporary dispute about the possibilities and limits of painting. For this purpose, he used the ancient and contemporary art, clearly proving that painting is possible. He did so in a clear way, confronting what Balzac, but also his predecessors and successors, believed was impossible, i.e. showing the Real Beauty contained in the transformation of a living woman into an image. In this interpretation, Siemiradzki's work appears to be another painter's *paragone* – a rivalry of arts, in which the painter proves his artistic efficiency, since only the painting can show the light, and through it the image.



51. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *A Sculptor's Model*, 1877, oil on canvas, 195,5 × 86 cm, private collections. Photo in public domain.



52. Bernard Picart, *Triumph of the Art Painting*, 1725, etching on paper, 26 × 17.6 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Photo in public domain.



53. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Venus Anadyomene*, 1848, oil on canvas, 164 × 82 cm, Musée Condé, Chantilly. Photo in public domain.



54. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Carlattina Döbler*, sketch, pencil, paper, 44 × 29.5 cm, National Museum, Krakow, no. inv. MNK III-r.a-6507. Photo Museum.



55. Henryk Siemiradzki, Sketch to *Phryne*, oil on canvas, 43 × 23.8 cm, National Museum, Krakow, no. inv. MNK II-a-1049 (310 454). Photo Museum.



56. Gustave Courbet, *The Bathers*, 1853, oil on canvas, 227 × 193 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier. Photo in public domain.



57. Gustave Courbet, *The Painter's Studio*, 1854-1855, oil on canvas, 361 × 598 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Photo in public domain.



58. Aleksandr Ivanov, *The Appearance of Christ to the People*, 1837-1857, oil on canvas, 540 × 770 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Photo in public domain.



59. Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas, 130.5 × 190 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Photo in public domain.

TATIANA KARPOVA

State Tretyakov Gallery

HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI. IN MONASTIC SILENCE

Henryk Siemiradzki's name is usually associated with motifs from the history of ancient Greece and Rome. Meanwhile, the horizon of his spiritual world was much wider. In the second half of the 1880s, he produced a series of works where he developed themes of solitary life in the mountains. He was inspired by harmony of nature and the architecture of Italy's Roman Catholic monasteries and convents, the beauty of majestic vistas that open up from the height of monastic walls.

After he had settled in Rome, Siemiradzki was constantly travelling to the suburbs and to other cities across Italy. He usually tended to leave Rome in May or June, when heat enveloped the Eternal City. Siemiradzki tried to find refuge from the sizzling sunshine of the Roman summer on the seaside or in small mountainous villages of Lazio. During those summer travels, the artist made multiple sketches of the views and architecture in his albums, painted small-sized landscapes and portraits of villagers (fig. 60-61).

In the late 1880s, those impressions ultimately generated a whole series that can be named after one of the paintings that constituted part of it – *In the Silence of the Cloister* (1885-1887). The series also includes other works, such as *With Consolation and Relief (With Comfort and Assistance)* (ca. 1885), *With the Viaticum* (1889, National Museum, Warsaw), *Procession* (1880s), *On a Convent Terrace* (ca. 1890).

The scenes in those canvases take place in old Roman Catholic convents and monasteries in the mountains.

The picture *With the Viaticum* (fig. IX) seems to have been the first in that series. “Maybe, if we had searched more carefully the nearest suburbs of Rome, we would have found that landscape, because surely Siemiradzki had painted it from nature,” writes Józef Dużyk, one of Siemiradzki’s biographers.¹

No doubt, Siemiradzki relied on his impressions of nature. One can assume that the setting of Siemiradzki’s monastic series is Subiaco. However, the painter was trying to avoid any distinctive features that would point to a specific location or to a particular monastery. He freely combined various details. For instance, in the picture *On a Convent Terrace* (fig. 62), there is a baroque sculptured relief featuring the Madonna with the Child, which is supported by two winged angels. The National Museum in Kraków has a drawing (ca. 1886) of a similar detail on which the author made an inscription in his own hand: “Piazza del orologio”. Siemiradzki had drawn that detail in the Piazza dell’Orologio in Rome.

The picture *With Consolation and Relief (With Comfort and Assistance)* (fig. 63) could be regarded as a continuation of the topic. “Somewhere outside Rome, [we see] ruins of some monastery or palazzo with the entrance gate and a shabby-looking decrepit wall that has a small wicket in it. Misery and poverty must be permanent dwellers of that place. A nun stands by the wicket. She is knocking on it, as she has brought relief – a large amount of staples carried by the donkeys. I remember, that picture, very expertly painted, drew our attention in Kraków, and we, young people, who had recently seen *Phryne*, could not quite fathom that sudden but brilliant leap to a contemporary realistic theme,” recalled sculptor Stanisław Lewandowski, the artist’s friend.²

The paintings *On a Convent Terrace* and *In the Silence of the Cloister* (fig. 64) depict a convent. “In one of those pictures, we can see a garden or the courtyard of a convent,” writes Lewandowski about the painting *On a Convent Terrace*. “Two nuns stand by a stone table, dressing a little orphaned girl. One of them is making plaits with her hair, and the other shows and explains pictures in a book. Silence

1) Józef DUŻYK, *Siemiradzki. Opowieść biograficzna*, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1986, pp. 445-446.

2) Stanisław LEWANDOWSKI, *Henryk Siemiradzki*, Gebethner & Wolff, Kraków 1904, p. 104.

reigns around them, but it is a free, quiet and happy silence” (S. Lewandowski).³ The girl is sitting on a stone table that rests on a Corinthian capital, a vestige of some ancient building. Details hailing from the Antiquity were initially used at the Convent of St. Scholastica in Subiaco. “And deep below, the arches of Nero’s Villa – with demons no doubt galore,” Vernon Lee, who visited Subiaco in 1897, wrote in her book *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves from a Diary* (1906).⁴

“In the other picture, entitled *On a Convent Terrace*, two women in monastic garments stand leaning on a balustrade railing,” writes Lewandowski. “The younger looks away from the book and rosary in her hand, and lets her eyes travel far beyond the convent walls, contemplating the city stretching below. Beside her stands an age-bent old lady who mumbles a prayer with her eyes half-closed. For her, the future is of no significance anymore, and she does not recall the past. In front of them, a young postulant lights a lamp before the Madonna’s statue.” (S. Lewandowski)⁵

Procession (fig. 65), a small-sized study for a composition that was never produced, is also related to the monastic series. One such procession was observed by Pavel Muratov (1881-1950), a Russian art historian, who visited Subiaco in 1908: “The St. Trinity Day found us in that ancient church town. One by one, processions of Sabina residents were walking along its streets on the way to the Santuario della Santissima Trinità (Shrine of the Most Holy Trinity) near Vallepietra. [...] A choir’s plangent signing resounded far and wide in the clear mountain air, even drowning the incessant roaring of the Aniene.”⁶

As we have mentioned above, it is not worth looking for precise matches of architectural details in the paintings constituting Siemiradzki’s monastic series with real monuments, because he painted those details from memory or from cursory sketches, synthesizing diverse *plein air* impressions. The scenery depicted by Siemiradzki is the closest match to the views of Subiaco, where a Benedictine cloister is situated in the Aniene River valley. Like a swallow’s nest, it is perched on a precipitous cliff among the green Sabine Hills. The Benedictine monastery in Subiaco is a special place. This unique monument

3] Ibid.

4] Vernon LEE, *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves from a Diary*, (1.edn. 1906) Floating Press, Auckland 2013, p. 22.

5] S. LEWANDOWSKI, op. cit., p. 104.

6] Павел П. МУРАТОВ, *ОБРАЗЫ ИТАЛИИ* (PAVEL MURATOV, *Images of Italy*), издательство Республика, Москва, 1994, p. 302.

of spiritual and artistic legacy of Christian culture is the birthplace of the entire Western monasticism. The cave Monastery of St. Benedict is situated in Lazio, 80 km from Rome on the way to Naples. To reach the Monastery of St. Benedict, one should climb from the Abbey of St. Scholastica up a narrow path running along the cliffs hanging over the rapid stream of the Aniene. The monastery consists of two cave churches cut inside a rock, one above the other, and a few chapels connected to each other by numerous galleries.⁷ The name “Subiaco” stems from the suburban villa of *Sublaqueum* (meaning “under the lake” in Latin) built by Emperor Nero (54-68) on the shores of three artificial lakes.⁸

“Nero was once attracted by that lucid and rapid stream, that freshness of summer in the mountains, and he built a villa of his here”, writes Pavel Muratov. “Nero was very clever in selecting locations for his palaces. In the Middle Ages, that aesthetics of nature was inherited by monks and nuns. In the East and West, in Russia and in Italy, a great deal of monasteries and convents were built with a deep respect of and affection for the view that opens up from the windows of monastic cells or the refectory. That view was the only luxury that even the most austere hermits let in their lives. St. Benedict, who founded the first Western monastery here, in Subiaco, preserved the tradition of his Oriental predecessors. The Aniene narrow valley that winds at the foot of the hill on which his *holy cave* is perched is no less stunning than the broad Umbrian valley seen from the heights of Assisi.”⁹

St. Benedict, together with his sister St. Scholastica, founded 12 small fraternities in the vicinity of Subiaco, and became their common abbot. Of all coenobitic abodes founded by St. Benedict, only the Abbey of St. Scholastica, which is located lower than the Abbey of St. Benedict, still exists.¹⁰ The Abbey of St. Scholastica used to be a convent, but later was converted into a monastery, when it was forbidden for convents to be situated outside cities.¹¹ St. Scholastica is believed to

7] Архимандрит Августин (Никитин), *Субиако – колыбель западного монашества* (Augustin ARCHIMANDRITE (Nikitin), *Subiaco: The Cradle of Western Monasticism*) in: “Нева” (Neva), 2011, No. 2. Accessible online: <http://magazines.russ.ru/neva/2011/2/aa15.html>

8] Ibid.

9] П. МУРАТОВ, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

10] А. АВГУСТИН, *op. cit.*

11] С.П. ШЕВЫРЕВ, *Итальянские впечатления*, (S. P. SHEVYREV, *Italian Impressions*), Академический Проект, Санкт-Петербург 2006, p. 480.

have founded the first convent in Western Europe. In the early 19th century, that area was much loved by the artists who were part of Rome's international colony. Joseph Anton Koch, Carl (Karl) Blechen and Aleksandr Ivanov all painted their landscapes there.

It is a well-known fact that St. Benedict was the founder of the monastery as an institution that had a clear-cut structure and rules. St. Benedict had authored the famous Rule, which was destined to regulate the life of most monasteries of the Western Church for many centuries. The words of the Rule, "We believe that the Divine Presence is everywhere", were sure to resonate with what Siemiradzki had in his heart. The Rule emphasizes the importance of nurturing humility, which, according to St. Benedict, is more essential than austerity. Let us recall some of the 72 provisions of St. Benedict's Rule: "To love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; To love thy neighbour as thyself; To honour all men; To chastise the body; Not to seek after luxuries; To refresh the poor; To visit the sick; To bury the dead; To console the sorrowing; Not to forsake charity; Not to be proud; Not to be slothful; Not to be a murmurer; To attribute any good one sees in oneself to God and not to oneself; To desire everlasting life with all spiritual longing; To keep death daily before one's eyes; To know for certain that God sees one in every place; To dash upon Christ one's evil thoughts the instant they come to one's heart; To fulfil the commandments of God daily by one's deeds; To love chastity; To reverence one's seniors; To love one's juniors; Never to despair of God's mercy."¹² St. Benedict sought and achieved harmony between manual or intellectual labour and the divine worship in monastic life. He was especially insistent on monks having "discretion, the mother of virtue". "*Ora et labora*" ("pray and work") was St. Benedict's golden rule. Full abandonment of one's own free will, emancipation from reflection on what should or should not be done, possibility of having complete peace and quiet in one's soul without any exertion or wavering of mind, just strictly following the Rule, are the key ideas of the Benedictine Rule.

The pictures of Siemiradzki's monastic series seem to illustrate the Rule of St. Benedict. Siemiradzki's world is hierarchically built. Its pinnacles are crowned by monasteries built in the hills, and there is nothing above them but mountain tops, heaven and the Creator of all

12] Accessible online https://www.solesmes.com/sites/default/files/upload/pdf/rule_of_st_benedict.pdf, pp. 5-6.

things. The characters in the pictures of the series either live within the walls of mountainous monasteries, contemplating the hustle and bustle of the worldly life in the valley, or go down below to bring “consolation and relief” to the laymen. However, there is no insuperable boundary between the worlds of the sacred and the profane. The openness and mutual permeability of the two worlds is very important. The monastery (or the convent) and the monks (or nuns) do not live in isolation, always immersed in devotional contemplation. They educate and teach an orphaned girl, they go down to the village to administer the viaticum to a dying person, they visit the sick and the poor, they bring food on the back of their donkeys – not only words of consolation. Siemiradzki’s characters are proponents of active goodness.

Taking up Siemiradzki’s monastic series as a subject of study, we need to explain his attitude to religion and the Church. The Siemiradzki remained Roman Catholic and cherished Polish national traditions. When he found himself far away from home, in St. Petersburg, during his first years at the Academy of Arts, the painter was very homesick, longing for the atmosphere of his ancestral home. In letters to his relatives he recalled, with sadness and fondness, the Easter table with the blessed Easter cake and pudding, painted eggs, the fragrance of almonds and lemons pervading the house. At the same time, we know that in the 1890s the artist took interest in the occult, and organized spiritualistic séances at his place. A. Wysocki quotes Siemiradzki as saying: “I’m a believer and I go to church. [...] But I admit there are certain forces in the universe that are concealed and have not been studied yet, forces that exist by God’s will and could reveal deep-seated mysteries of past life and afterlife for us, if they were properly explained and researched.”¹³

Siemiradzki created a lot of works commissioned by the Church. Here we are going to mention just a few of them. In 1870, he painted a composition called *Crucifix* for the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Kharkiv (the cathedral still exists, but Siemiradzki’s work perished). He worked at the Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow (1875-1879); his most important work there, *The Last Supper* (1879), an altarpiece, deserves a special mention. In 1882, the artist painted another altarpiece, *Christ Calming the Storm*, for the

13] Quoted in: ВИТА В. СУСАК, *ФЕНОМЕН СЕМИРАДСКОГО* (VITA.V. SUSAK, *Siemiradzki's Phenomenon*), in: *XIX век, Целостность и процесс. Вопросы взаимодействия искусств* (*The 19th Century. Integrity and Process. Issues of Interaction Between Arts*), Москва 2002, p. 254.

Church of St. Martin in Kraków. He also produced the *The Resurrection* image for the All Saints Church in Warsaw (1880s, not extant), and, in 1891, he created a composition called *The Ascension of Our Lord* for the main altar of the church of the Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Rome. In 1887, the artist was planning to go to Palestine to collect material for *Carrying the Cross*, a painting he wanted to produce, but the journey never materialized.

Siemiradzki saw the emotional appeal of a temptation as a topic for his artistic endeavours, and he also addressed the ambivalence of human nature. In 1886 (at about the same time when he started to work on the monastic series), the artist painted *The Temptation of St. Jerome* (private collection). Unlike many of his predecessors in the history of European art who had painted St. Jerome as a gaunt old man with a white beard, Siemiradzki followed the facts of the saint's life as they are described in hagiography: In reality, the saint retired for a time to the desert of Chalcis when he was 33. Siemiradzki seems to illustrate St. Jerome's words known from one of his letters to Eustochium: "How often, when I was living in the desert, in the vast solitude which gives to hermits a savage dwelling-place [...], did I fancy myself among the pleasures of Rome [...] Now, although in my fear of hell I had consigned myself to this prison, where I had no companions but scorpions and wild beasts, I often found myself amid beavies of girls. My face was pale and my frame chilled with fasting; yet my mind was burning with desire [...]. I cast myself at the feet of Jesus, I watered them with my tears, I wiped them with my hair: and then I subdued my rebellious body with weeks of abstinence."¹⁴

In the paintings of the "old monasteries" series and related canvases, the key theme that excited Siemiradzki was continued: The meeting of, and dialogue between, ancient Rome, with the Colosseum and the ruins of the fora, and Rome as the capital of the Roman Catholic world, with the Papal Basilica of St. Peter. Subiaco monasteries are situated in Lazio, a region of Italy that is first and foremost associated with Rome,¹⁵ the capital of Christianity, the Eternal City, which had been the capital of the entire Western world for ages.

Quite often, peculiarities of this or that phenomenon can be understood by comparing them to their likes. I would like to draw

14] St. Jerome, *Letter XXII. To Eustochium*, 7. *Select Works and Letters*. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series II. vol. 6. The Early Church Fathers.

Quoted after: <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206.v.XXII.html>

15] Rome is the capital of Lazio.

a comparison between Siemiradzki's series featuring old Roman Catholic monasteries in Italian mountains on the one hand, and the Russian situation on the other; he could not help associating himself with Russia, because he had a Russian passport and regularly contributed his works to art shows in Russia, frequently came to Moscow and St. Petersburg.

When Siemiradzki's aesthetic *credo* was taking shape in the 1860s, the Russian art of democratic vein was dominated by anticlerical trends. First of all, I suggest that we recall in this connection some of the works of Vasily Perov (1833-1882), the leader of Russian art of the 1860s: *Easter Procession in a Village* (1861, State Tretyakov Gallery), *Tea-Drinking in Mytishchi near Moscow* (1862, State Tretyakov Gallery), *The Meal* (1865-1876, State Russian Museum), *Dividing the Inheritance in a Monastery (Death of a Monk)* (1868, State Tretyakov Gallery). Perov denounced the vices of the clergy: gluttony, excessive drinking, greed, hypocrisy, indifference to the poor and subservience to the wealthy classes of society, absence of sincere and deep belief in God.

In Perov's best-known work among those listed above, *Easter Procession in a Village*, a disorderly drunk procession walks against a cheerless and gloomy rural landscape after a festive Easter service, carrying their icons and holy banners. With harsh realism does Perov render not so much the physical but the spiritual squalor and bareness of those people. The picture produces a frightening impression – frightening by that depiction of life where humans have nearly degenerated to the state of brutes.

Spiritual values are represented in the picture as shattered, perverse, distorted. The image of Christ turned upside down, a chipped icon held by the singing woman in the foreground symbolize the neglect of the “divine image” by the people inside themselves, the loss of guiding landmarks in their lives, disbelief reigning both amongst the people and the clergy alike, helplessness of the Church when it faces moral poverty and genuine, appalling penury of its flock. Although the holy banner features The Eye of the Omniscience and The Raising of Lazarus, which Perov scholars interpreted as a hope for the future revival of the people,¹⁶ the imagery of the canvas does not inspire any optimistic hopes. Landscape plays an important part in instilling the

16] Василий Г. ПЕРОВ, *Творческий путь художника* (Vasily PEROV, *The Artist's Creative Career*), Moscow 1997, p. 58.

melancholy and despair coming from the painting. Its elements – the barren tree swaying in the bitter wind, the overcast low sky, the swampy mud on the ground – seem to echo the general mood of the picture.

Ilya Repin interpreted his character in the same anticlerical spirit: His *The Archdeacon* (1877, State Tretyakov Gallery) is a portrait of a clergyman, i.e. a person administering spiritual guidance, but essentially a very materialistic individual. In the tableau *Religious Procession in the Kursk Province* (1881-1883, State Tretyakov Gallery), the people's procession depicted by Repin in that monumental multi-figure composition transforms into a generalized image of Russia trudging along her Way of the Cross and “always waiting for God's grace.”¹⁷

In conclusion to this rather sketchy review, we can say that between the 1860s and the 1880s, the Russian art of Democratic Realism did not seek spiritual values under the vaults of churches or inside monastic walls. It either criticized Church office as an institution that was ridden by the same vices as other institutions of the society, or treated monasticism and various unofficial religious movements as a form of escapism and protest against the existing social order. For Perov, one and the same pole of society is represented by monks, *Khlysts* (Хлысты, “Whips”) and revolutionaries “dead branches of the people's tree” (using a metaphor of Gleb Pospelov, a renowned historian of Russian art).¹⁸ In other paintings and drawings, such as *The Wanderer* (1870, State Tretyakov Gallery), *A Female Itinerant in a Field (On the Way to Eternal Bliss)* (1878, Nizhny Novgorod State Museum of Arts), *A Holy Fool (God's Man)* (1875, Kiev National Museum of Russian Art), *A Female Holy Fool Surrounded by Itinerant Women* (1872), *Ecstatic Ritual of Khlysts* (1879-1880), *Before Taking the Veil* (1879, State Tretyakov Gallery), Perov was mesmerized by people who found themselves isolated from the society, be it voluntarily or reluctantly. They are no longer under society's control and are therefore free, but their freedom came at a price; it is both a challenge to, and a judgement of, social order, which is so profligate and cruel as it looks with disdain on a weak, poor, sick person, or a person too vulnerable or too emotional. The artist wants to approach those

17] Григорий Ю. СТЕРНИН, Елена В. КИРИЛЛИНА, *Илья Репин, 1844-1930* (Grigory STERNIN, Elena KIRILINA, *Ilya Repin. 1844-1930*), Аврора, Санкт-Петербург 1996, p. 24.

18] See: Глеб Г. ПОСПЕЛОВ, *Боярыня Морозова. Перспектива* (Gleb POSPELOV, *Boyarina Morozova. A Perspective*), in: Василий СУРИКОВ, *Близкое бытие* (Vasily SURIKOV, *Close Past*), Москва 2009, p. 38.

people, to understand what they get from their life experience that is so unconventional and weird for the common man. Across his entire career, Perov seemed to be painting the Purgatory (he most likely understood earthly existence as one), and he showed the trials and tribulations that humans are going through in their lives. His *Female Itinerant* and *Holy Fool*, who had drunk a full cup of suffering, look like they are about to enter another state – “eternal life.” But there is not an ounce of serene optimism in those pictures; instead, they show a painful grimace of Perov’s doubt and disbelief in the future “eternal bliss.”

In Perov’s graphic sheet *Dispute About Faith. A Scene in a Railway Car. Students Talk to a Monk* (1880, State Tretyaykov Gallery), we do not find anyone the author sympathizes with, as he is equally aloof to the trivial Nihilism of the enthusiastically arguing students and to the impenetrable detachment of the elderly monk. But, at the same time, Perov has in his legacy a series of heartfelt works (some of them were made for churches) based on Evangelic themes: *Christ and the Virgin from the Sea of Life* (1867, State Tretyakov Gallery), *The Savior* (second half of the 1860s, State Tretyakov Gallery), *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane* (1878, State Tretyakov Gallery), *Descent from the Cross* (1878, State Tretyakov Gallery), *First Christians in Kiev* (1880, Kiev Picture Gallery National Museum). Like many members of the *intelligentsia* in his time, Perov probably distinguished between faith and church, and he saw the calling of a true believer in good deeds, in solicitous care about one’s neighbour, rather than in following church rituals; he thought it was possible to believe in God and pray to God without the mediation of the Church.¹⁹

We will not find that obvious contrast and opposition between religion and Church in Siemiradzki’s *oeuvre*; he was not averse to the ritualistic side of church life. On the contrary, he was peering into that world – with respect, awe, sympathy, soulful immersion into the silence, quiet, harmony, severe tenor of monastic life, its canon adjusted by ages. In that respect, he was close to the Russian artist of another generation – Mikhail Nesterov (1862-1942), Vasily Perov’s disciple.

In a series of paintings about monastic life – *The Hermit* (1888-1889, State Tretyakov Gallery), *By the Ringing of Church Bells* (1895, State Russian Museum), *The Great Taking the Veil* (1898, State Russian

19] Perov’s father, Baron Kridener, was a member of the Key to Virtue Masonic lodge. There are reasons to believe that he introduced his natural son to the concepts and ideas of the Russian Freemasonry. See: B. ПЕРОВ, op. cit., pp. 19-22.

Museum), *Silence* (1903), *A Little Fox* (1914), and many others – Nesterov managed to achieve “what nobody did in secular painting – to capture a prayer born in human soul.”²⁰ Interestingly, Nesterov began to work on his series of pictures “from monastic life” in the late 1880s, at about the same time as Siemiradzki. Nesterov’s picture *The Hermit* (1888-1889) was first exhibited at the 7th art show of the Society for Travelling Art Exhibitions (1889-1890) and was purchased by Pavel Tretyakov. “My little old man revealed to me some secrets of his life. He talked to me, opened up the mysterious world of hermitage, where he, happy and content, delighted me with his simplicity, his acceptability to God,” the artist recalled.²¹ The paintings *Silence* (1903) and *A Little Fox* (1914) were created under the impressions received during a journey to the Solovetsky Monastery in 1901: “in the North, by a Freezing Sea, there live God’s people, holy elders. [...] They live in peace and quiet, they are in no hurry. [...] They are surrounded by forests where birds are singing and wild beasts are carousing. [...] That earthly paradise is so beautifully created.”²²

Nesterov and Siemiradzki are painters of two different generations, but they are similar in their willingness to capture the harmony of silence and seclusion of monastic life, special “devotional sentiment.” Nesterov’s characters are represented in the state of contemplation or prayer, their impeccable kindness is emphasized, as even wild beasts are not afraid of leaving forest thickets and approaching them. Siemiradzki was more interested in other aspects – not mystic revelations or devotional epiphanies, but active or proactive charity nurtured by Roman Catholic faith and monasticism.

Stanisław Lewandowski, Siemiradzki’s friend and the author of the first monograph about him, hinted that the artist had first tackled “monastic theme” under the influence of some intimate emotional experience. He stressed pre-eminence of those paintings in the artist’s *oeuvre*. But, irrespective of particular facts of biography, the monastic

20] Ольга Д. АТРОШЕНКО, *Преподобный Сергей Радонежский и тема святости в живописи М.В. Нестерова* (Olga D. ATROSHENKO, *Venerable Sergius of Radonezh and the Theme of Holiness in M.V. Nesterov’s Paintings*), in: Михаил Нестеров. В поисках своей России. К 150-летию со дня рождения (Mikhail Nesterov. In Search of His Own Russia. To the 150th anniversary of His Birth), eds. Галина С. Чурак et al, Государственная Третьяковская галерея, Москва 2013, pp. 49-62.

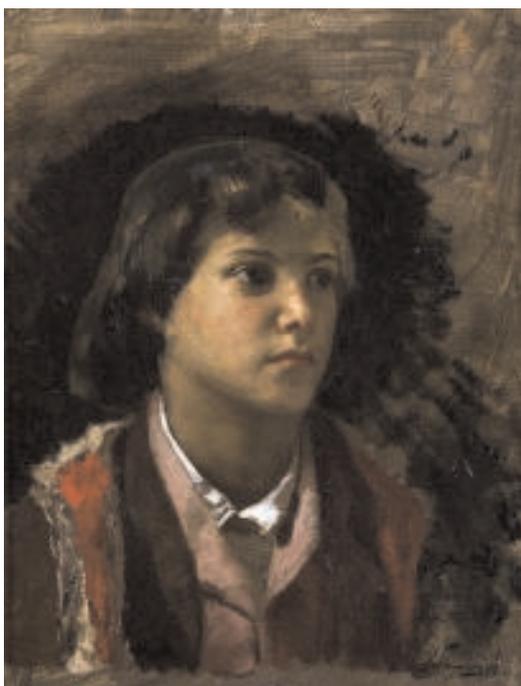
21] Михаил В. НЕСТЕРОВ, *Воспоминания* (Mikhail V. NESTEROV, *Memoirs*), Советский художник, Москва 1989, p. 104.

22] Михаил В. НЕСТЕРОВ, *Письма* (Mikhail V. NESTEROV, *Letters: A Selection*), Искусство, Ленинград 1988, p. 261.

series is perceived as an integral part of Siemiradzki's legacy. The pictures of Siemiradzki's monastic series are also idylls in their own way, only they are not from Antiquity but belong to the Christian universe. Developing that series of pictures, Siemiradzki discovered his ideal in monastic life regulated by a strict canon and in everyday good deeds of charity. This series is like a natural counterpart to Siemiradzki's other series, "idylls of the Antiquity," and another important stage in his spiritual life.



60. Henryk Siemiradzki, *An Italian Landscape with a Donkey on a Road*, 1880s, oil on wood, 26.6 × 36 cm, National Museum, Warsaw. Photo Museum.



61. Henryk Siemiradzki, *A Mountain Dweller from the Sabine Hills*, ca. 1889, oil on canvas, 41.3 × 31.5 cm, private collection. Photo Polswiss Art.



62. Henryk Siemiradzki, *On a Convent Terrace*, 1886, oil on canvas, lost. Photo in: Stanisław, Lewandowski, Henryk Siemiradzki, Gebethner & Wolff, Warszawa, Kraków 1904, fig. 71.



63. Henryk Siemiradzki, *With Consolation and Relief (With Comfort and Assistance)*, ca. 1885, oil on canvas. 57 × 118.7 cm, private collection. Photo Agra-Art, Warsaw



64. Henryk Siemiradzki, *In the Silence of the Cloister*, before 1891, oil on canvas, 60 × 130 cm, private collection.



65. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Procession*, 1880s, a sketch for an unproduced composition, oil on canvas, 24 × 42 cm, private collection. Photo Tatiana Karpova.

AGNIESZKA ROSALES RODRÍGUEZ

*University of Warsaw
The National Museum in Warsaw*

VISUALITY ON DISPLAY. HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI'S “FETISHIZATION OF SIGHT”

Henryk Siemiradzki appears on the map of Polish 19th-century painting and art history as an extraordinary phenomenon – a celebrity enjoying international success, garnering favorable comparisons to members of the European academic elite. Well-rounded, educated and recognized, abreast of the latest archeological discoveries and up to date on the trends for orientalism and plein-air painting, he also unwittingly exemplified all of the complexes of Polish art at that time. Ever since Romanticism, Polish painting was charged with the trauma of national wounds and distinguished as the domain of the spirit. Writing on the “Polish spirit” stripped of a body was the writer Julian Klaczko,¹ who saw in the vessel-less life of the nation a wealth of ideas for which great Romantic literature was the vehicle. Consequently, the critic articulated a distrust of fine art, it being the domain of the visual. In fact, the visual is always more universal than literature because of the latter’s reliance on language, a tool that is ethnically restrictive.

In the era of Poland’s partitions, performing a consoling and integrating function in Polish art were the Sarmatian myth and reminiscences on the Polish Republic of yore, with its tradition of noble

1] Julian KLACZKO, *Sztuka polska. Przedruk z „Wiadomości Polskich”* [1857], L. Martinet, Paris, 1858, p. 19. Quoted after: <https://polona.pl/item/sztuka-polska,NjM4NjU/0/#info:metadata>.

democracy, military triumphs, and cultural successes. The Romantic notion of the “sacred struggle” found worthy illustrators in Jan Matejko and Józef Brandt, who furthered the chivalric and noble image of Polish national identity. The agenda promoted by domestic critics maintained that the artist must draw from the resources of national history, from the colorful palette of the Polish peasantry and domestic landscapes to fortify the national identity, which, in the socially, ethnically, religiously and linguistically diverse Republic, was rather a fabrication than a category reflective of the reality. Siemiradzki defies the homogenous model of Polish national art like he defies the identity stereotype founded on strictly defined boundaries – in terms of language, his intellectual and visual connections, his professional ties, and, ultimately, his subject matter, inspired by the universal canon. He eludes the firm divisions of cultural geography being a sort of European identity “on the move”. Though already in the 19th century historians labored to find a meta-language camouflaging patriotic undertones in his antique themes,² Siemiradzki remained an artist in the European fashion and he respected the rules of the public taste. In antiquity, he saw not only the Greek ideal of classical beauty, a humanist cultural template or a paragon of southern landscapes and light, but also decadence and its pitfalls, violence consorting with eroticism – the dark element of human nature explored by Friedrich Nietzsche.

The period’s arguments against Siemiradzki (arising in defense of the sublime content in painting) paradoxically expose a number of unexpected strengths in the artist’s work, revealing him as not only a revivalist and erudite who grasped the essence of Hellenism or Roman decadence, but also as a modern painter capable of satisfying the needs of his contemporary audience.³ As I try to argue, this was part of a deliberate strategy of an artist cognizant of not only archeological findings and new Christian research,⁴ but also of the viewing habits of his day. Sensationally attracting throngs of viewers, his academic

2] See: Katarzyna NOWAKOWSKA-SITO, *Wokół Pochodni Nerona Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, “Rocznik Krakowski”, 1992, vol. LVIII, pp. 103-119.

3] To the aesthetics of reception has already referred Agnieszka Kluczevska-Wójcik who wrote about the “implied viewer” in Siemiradzki’s paintings – Agnieszka KLUCZEWSKA-WÓJCIK, „L’effet de réel”. *Fragments of reality in Henryk Siemiradzki’s works* / *Effet de réel. Fragments of reality in Henryk Siemiradzki’s works*, “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2017, vol. V, pp. 45-52.

4] See: Jerzy MIZIOLEK, *Dirke chrześcijańska i inne tematy all’antica w twórczości Henryka Siemiradzkiego. Uwagi i rozważania*, „Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2016, vol. IV, p. 23; Dorota GORZELANY, *Zabytki rzymskie źródłem inspiracji malarskiej w Pochodniach Nerona Henryka*

tours-de-force like *Christ and the Harlot* (1873, State Russian Museum), *Nero's Torches* (1876, National Museum, Krakow), *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis* (1889, State Russian Museum), *A Dance among Swords* (1881, 2nd version, State Tretyakov Gallery), or *A Christian Dirce* (1897, National Museum, Warsaw), conceptualize the act of observation. They reflect the 19th-century predilections and the modern praxis of viewing which became a social ritual in the 19th century. Visuality, the look and the eye – as noticed Øystein Sjøstad – are crucial in the that century.⁵ According to Stanisław Witkiewicz a crowd flocking to a painting or sculpture for an experience seeks in the artwork “an emotional jolt” and “an illustration of one’s own notions”.⁶ It seems that, in spite of the critic’s objections, Siemiradzki perfectly understood this social function of art as he set the stage for the specific viewing process and wooed a sensual reception of the things he painted, which seem to reflect the refined and eclectic taste of 19th-century esthetes. In these objects painted in the antique *trompe l’oeil* fashion, the public was inclined to see the realest of jewels pasted into a painting. “Siemiradzki the painter sees in the world only the gleaming surfaces of metals, rays of light diffracted in crystals of topaz and ruby, the sheen of silk, the smoothness of ivory, the iridescence of mother of pearl, and the heft of marble or granite, mustering all his might to reap an illusion of these materials from his paints,” writes Witkiewicz.⁷ In his visual descriptive language, the critic created something of an equivalent to the painter’s illusionistic finesse, virtuosity, the new role of beautiful things, details presented as the collection of precious objects; paradoxically, by evoking visual, tactile and even olfactory sensations, he highlights the sensual and seductive force of the paintings – the power of images. His famous description of a fire as “barely adequate to fry a piece of tenderloin on” indeed conjures some macabre associations.⁸ Though Witkiewicz criticized Siemiradzki’s

Siemiradzkiego, accessible online: https://www.academia.edu/8513258/Zabytki_rzymskie_źródłem_inspiracji_malarskiej_w_Pochodniach_Nerona_Henryka_Siemiradzkiego.

- 5] Øystein SJÅSTAD, *A Theory of the Tache in the Nineteenth-Century Painting*, Taylor & Francis Ltd, London 2016, accessible online: <https://books.google.pl/books?id=aikxDwAAQ-BAJ&pg=PT18&dq=Visuality+in+19th+century+painting&hl=pl&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi2kYmox-TbAhXHZ1AKHVphB64Q6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q=Visuality%20in%2019th%20century%20painting&f=false>.
- 6] Stanisław WITKIEWICZ, Henryk Siemiradzki, in: idem, *Wybór pism estetycznych*, introduction and selection by Józef TARNOWSKI, Universitas, Kraków 2009, p. 165.
- 7] S. WITKIEWICZ, op. cit.
- 8] S. WITKIEWICZ, op. cit., p. 166.

work as aimless and relying on technical trickery, his reviews hit on those traits in Siemiradzki's vision which ultimately attest to the model of reception the artist had anticipated. According to Barbara Ciciora, the artist realized a wide spectrum of emotions that can be shown and evoked by the image during his Munich years, while working on the *Roman Orgy from the Imperial Era* (1872, State Russian Museum). Imitating the „effect of suspense” present in the painting of the admired Paul Delaroche Siemiradzki began to look for new ways of showing “action”.⁹

Siemiradzki's *Nero's Torches* (fig. II) was denounced as illegible, devoid of tension and narratively stagnant – the viewer must search for the scene's subject, with difficulty locating the pillars on which hang the bodies of martyrs because the composition is littered with “material glut, the entire expanse overflowing with Nero and his courtiers”.¹⁰ The critics accused the work of missing a crucial point, composition's center: the viewer's attention had to wander around dozens of painted square meters.¹¹ It is true that the crowd of spectators takes center stage as Siemiradzki eschews the romantic convention of the suffering protagonist dominating the composition and puts in question the “romantic agony” and expression. He chooses to focus on portraying the observers awaiting the spectacle's savage finale – he captures not the action itself but its perception; not the heroism of doing but the passivity of looking on. This “most fiendish error”, as Vladimir Stasov called it,¹² did little to curtail the popularity of the canvas, which by all accounts attracted masses of viewers. The Roman audience in this picture reflects the voyeuristic and hedonistic public arena hungry for sensation, for “a sight of others in torment” as a source of entertainment, seen from a distance. Becoming apparent here is a fascination with theatre, set design, choreography and even public space – a gallery in which a sort of performance unfolds, with the observers becoming the observed. We participate in that juxtaposition of sights. Here, the observer who becomes a new kind of figure in the second

9] Barbara CICIORA, *Wpływ malarstwa monachijskiego na twórczość Jana Matejki i Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, in: *Ateny nad Izarą. Malarstwo monachijskie. Studia i szkice*, ed. Eliza PTASZYŃSKA, Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach, Suwałki 2012, pp. 237-238.

10] S. WITKIEWICZ, op. cit., p. 166.

11] NEMO [Kazimierz Waliszewski], “Kraj”, 1891, no. 20, p. 6, quoted after: Waldemar OKOŃ, *Stygńska planeta. Polska krytyka artystyczna wobec malarstwa historycznego i historii*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2012, p. 145.

12] Quoted after: Józef DUŻYK, *Siemiradzki. Opowieść biograficzna*, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1986, p. 59.

half of the 19th century (whom Charles Baudelaire calls "a convalescent enjoying the sight of the passing crowd", „a prince enjoying his incognito wherever he goes")¹³ acquires subjectivity and is given a monumental scale. The gaze became a subject of naturalists and impressionists, who discovered the bourgeois in his world,¹⁴ the man of leisure, who enjoyed free time. He was usually depicted as a spectator at the opera, in the museum, at the races. The corruption of Rome, a subject depicted, among others by Karl Theodor von Piloty, became a frame for the allegories of modern times, as the *Romans of the Decadence* by Thomas Couture (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), the success of the Salon of 1847, represented the degenerate France of Louis Philippe.

Siemiradzki's canvases appeal to the senses and sensibilities of the contemporary viewer versed in the power of photographs, panoramas and dioramas, stimulated by paintings from past eras circulating in the public sphere through reproductions, historic novels and stage works whose authors tried to outdo each other in creating a "fiction of authenticity" and literary slight-of-hand. They corresponded with the works of contemporary artists, such as Jean-Léon Gérôme, Karl Theodor von Piloty, Lawrence Alma-Tadema. He painted the 19th-century fantasy of ancient Greece and Rome in a living, tangible form through his virtuosity with light, masterful placement of flares, and material sensuality, all of which are evidence of his adopting certain premises of naturalism.¹⁵ In naturalism, we may also seek a justification for the reluctance Siemiradzki manifests toward dramaticism in a scene, his avoidance of psychoanalyzing and his expressive restraint. These, in fact, were criticisms flung not only at the so-called "marble painters" but also at Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier, Édouard Manet and Edgar Degas. The same „negation of expected significance",¹⁶ neutralization of the expressive focus characterizes the controversial painting by Édouard Manet: *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* (1868-69, third version, Kunsthalle, Mannheim). The picture shows – although in a radically different idiom – the same motif of the horrors of suffering, violence, execution observed by the crowd of onlookers; here also the

13] Charles BAUDELAIRE, *A Painter of Modern Life*, [in:] idem, *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, transl. P. E. Charvet, Penguin Books, London, 1972, p. 400.

14] Werner HOFMANN, *Degas. The Dialogue of Difference*, Thames & Hudson, London and New York 2007, p. 119

15] See: Piotr SZUBERT, *Akademik zmodernizowany. Kilka uwag o Henryku Siemiradzkim*, "Sztuka", 1979, no. 4/6, pp. 49-54.

16] Georges BATAILLE, *Manet*, Skira, Geneva 1983, pp. 73-76.

victims are situated farther from the viewers than the firing squad, on the edge of the composition in an inexpressive „indifferent” way, missing drama.¹⁷ In *Nero's Torches*, as one of the critics wrote, we feel almost on the side of the executioners,¹⁸ and even – we smell the burnt human body.¹⁹ Susan Sontag, analyzing the photograph, noticed that the appetite for images depicting the tormented bodies is almost as strong as for the images of naked bodies.²⁰ The same rules of consumption concerned paintings depicting death and nudity. They were to attract attention, to surprise and amaze, sometimes arouse voluptuous curiosity, though, as writes Maria Poprzęcka, there was no place for a female nude in a Polish painting meant to be “national” or “home-grown”.²¹ Siemiradzki, meanwhile, makes it an epitome of antique culture, under the noble “costume” of mythology making way for sexual (male) viewing pleasure²² – as the object of delectation becomes the youthful and attractive female body, being a work of art, a “fashionable mannequin,” a commodity and object of oppression. A critic for *Prawda* had this to say about *Phryne*: “the handmaid of salacious passions, the poisonous flower, servant of debauchery, promiscuous hetaera continues to remain the subject of art because she is... beautiful.”²³ A “crypto-pornographic” angle can be attributed to any image of nudity, but in Siemiradzki’s visions this exhibition of sexuality, to use Foucault’s term,²⁴ is subjected to public discourse and judgement; the act of peeping is revealed by the presence of the viewers. This subject has already appeared in Gérôme’s painting *Phryne before the Areopagus* (fig. 32), which depicted a stylized beauty, an undressed obscene „doll” in front of the lecheries, as condemned the

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- 17] Cf. the interpretations of the painting in: Michael FRIED, *Manet's Modernism or, The face of Painting in the 1860s*, The University of Chicago Press, London 1996, p. 354.
- 18] Tadeusz PRUSZKOWSKI, *Wystawa H. Siemiradzkiego w Zachęcie*, “Gazeta Polska” 14 Aug. 1939, quoted after: K. NOWAKOWSKA-SITO, op. cit., p. 111.
- 19] W. GARSZYN, *Nowaja kartina Siemiradzkiego „Świętoci christianstwa”*, “Nowosti” 1877, no. 72, p. 18-19, quoted after: Dariusz KONSTANTYNÓW, *Wystawy „Pochodni Nerona” Henryka Siemiradzkiego w Petersburgu (1877) i Moskwie (1879)*, “Biuletyn Historii Sztuki”, 2000, vol. LXII, no. 3/4, p. 443.
- 20] Susan SONTAG, *Widok cudzego cierpienia*, transl. Sławomir Magala, Wydawnictwo Karakter, Kraków 2010, p. 52.
- 21] Maria POPRZĘCKA, *Akt polski*, Edipresse Polska, Warszawa 2006, p. 21.
- 22] Griselda POLLOCK, *Modernity and the spaces of femininity*, in: *Vision and Difference: femininity, feminism and histories of art*, Routledge Classcis, London 1988, p. 71.
- 23] *Fryne Siemiradzkiego*, “Prawda”, 1889, no. 23, p. 274.
- 24] Michel FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality*, transl. Robert Hurley, New York, Pantheon, 1978, p. 71.

critics.²⁵ The ambiguity of the female act, which is a figuration of physical and moral beauty, was fully revealed by the photography of that time. „Les daguerréotypes de nu inventaient un oxymorone esthétique, celui d'une chair réelle et vraie, image d'un corps vivant mais aussi reflet d'un fantasma chimérique, reproduction d'un corps existant soumis aux canons académiques.”²⁶

Phryne and the triumphant Venus dancing between swords are aware of this game of glances because the figures have a role to play: Phryne takes on the role of Aphrodite, being both a model for Praxiteles and the object of the crowd's desires, while Venus takes part in a re-enactment of the judgement of Paris and, dancing between the swords, she performs a display of acting and dance for the crowd of onlookers. Yet, they both play roles imposed on them by the 19th-century gender hierarchy: of beautiful objects to be admired by men. It is no wonder then that the author of *Sztuka i krytyka u nas* (*Our Art and Criticism*) responded caustically to Phryne's impersonation of a hetaira and her androgynous features: “her massive shoulders and arms, next to her frail and narrow hips and thighs, deprive her of femininity. She is some sort of hermaphrodite, a half-way being, the power of whose feminine allure is unconvincing.”²⁷ Sexual ambiguity was a source of anxiety. This was true not only in the figurative sense – in Siemiradzki's *The Vase or the Woman?* (1879, private collection) the woman beset by men's stares becomes a mere upscale bauble. To witness how closely this situation mirrors the 19th century reality, one needs only to look back at a clever experiment conducted once by Linda Nochlin (focusing on *The Painter's Studio* by G. Courbet, [fig. 57]), in which she rearranged the gender roles, placing a nude man as the object of female attention.²⁸ The Christian martyr woman playing the role of the mythological Dirce (fig. VI) in the Roman circus brings to mind not only the ancient sculptural group Toro Farnese and Ernest Renan's *The Antichrist* (1873), relying on the accounts of ancient authors in chronicling Nero's theatrical games, but it also

- 25] Maria POPRZECKA, *Akademizm*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa, 1977, pp. 180-181.
- 26] Dominique de FONT-RÉAULX, *Peinture et photographie. Les enjeux d'une rencontre, 1839-1914*, Flammarion, Paris 2012, p. 223.
- 27] Stanisław WITKIEWICZ, *Sztuka i krytyka u nas*, introduction Maria Olszaniecka, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1971, p. 409.
- 28] Linda NOCHLIN, *Courbet's Real Allegory. Rereading "The Painter's Studio"*, in: Sarah FAUNCE, Linda NOCHLIN, *Courbet Reconsidered*, exhibition catalogue, Brooklyn Museum, New York 1988, p. 37.

stimulates comparisons with 19th-century quasi-pornographic photography showing nude models reposed on animal skin rugs. Quite striking in confrontation with the naturalistically rendered bull's carcass is the artificiality of the smooth-skin and sculptural body of the dead Dirce, reminiscent of a wax figure. She reminds of many naked women – usually unaware of their erotic attributes, painted by academic painters, like Paul Baudry, Alexandre Cabanel, Henri Gérvex (fig. 66), Jean-Léon Gérôme (fig. 32). Women in the guises of Venus, Diana or Odalisque were represented as young bodies, the representations of nature.

Ernest Renan wrote in his *Antichrist*, that also old *matronas* “suffered their last agonies” during the displays of cruelty on the Roman circus, disguised as the mythological protagonists.²⁹ Siemiradzki chose for his Dirce a young girl to emphasize the innocence and Angelique character of the Christian martyr. Is she really the model of virtue? Here, in fact, she is a model – admired by the prurient artist Nero, who “sizes up” the girl with his eyes. Interestingly, a similar contrast was devised some decades earlier by Gérôme at the 1847 Salon with his *The Cock Fight* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris): “The young Greeks are of marble, the cocks of blood and bone; the human figures are painted in the manner of Gleyre, the birds from nature,” writes Jules Champfleury.³⁰ In both cases the cruelty of the game deconstructs the myth of the “beautiful human being” and exposes a vision of the barbarity of antiquity.³¹ In Siemiradzki's painting, the body of blond innocence slung over the massive wild animal has the potential to be perverse and dreadful. It invites a two-fold interpretation, as a figure evidently incurring suffering and as the object of sadistic delectation for a far-away decadent excited by the sexual allure of the moment of death. Faint, sick and murdered women remained, after all, the aesthetic objects. The white body of the Christian virgin looked attractive against a black bull. The confrontation of the naked martyr and imperial ruler unknowingly reflects a gender hierarchy of that time: women are represented as bodies (opposed to male culture) – that is passive, available, possessable, powerless. Men are in the position of dominance.

29] Ernest RENAN, *Renan's Antichrist*, transl. and introduction by William G. Hutchison, Walter Scott, Ltd., London 1900, accessible online: <https://archive.org/details/renansantichrist00renaiala/page/94>.

30] Quote after: M. POPRZEĆKA, op. cit., pp. 187-188.

31] Cf. Emily BENNY, *Blood spectacle. Gérôme in the arena*, in: *Reconsidering Gérôme*, ed. Scott ALLAN and Mary MORTON, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles 2010, pp. 40-53.

"The images reproduce on the ideological level of art the relations of power between men and women."³²

In case of Siemiradzki the viewer is drawn into the space of the painting and offered a vantage point like that of the spectators thanks to the structure of the space. The scene's cropped perspective and its oblique structure – as in *Dirce* – seem to be the means of transposing the subjective view and suggest the viewer's presence. This kind of angles is typical for the impressionist painting (e.g.: Gustave Caillebotte, *The Pont de l'Europe*, 1876, Petit Palais, Geneva), especially that depicting the theatre and public space, in which one observes the alteration between „being seen” and „seeing”, but also for the naturalist mode of academic painters, like Gérôme (e.g.: *Pollice Verso*, 1872, Phoenix Art Museum) or Sándor Wagner (e.g.: *The Chariot Race*, 1882, Art Gallery, Manchester).

Though the primacy of ideology over form, of moral discourse over visual aspects, is an immanent component of the Polish thinking on art in the 19th century, Siemiradzki-*Ausstellungskünstler*, to use Oskar Bätschmann's term, understood the rules of perception and exposition.³³ His painting manifested the 19th -century attitude to art within the system of public exhibitions, provoking the bourgeois morality with his seductive visions. As reported by Siemiradzki's critics, he had a strong impact on the masses, the crowds lined up in front of his paintings that evoked emotions, people were staring at them in order to sympathize and suffer with his heroes.³⁴

Siemiradzki's illusionist painting, appealing to the sense of sight of its beholder, represented the climax point of the 19th century, when art had concealed its medium. The famous term „fetishisation of sight”, used by Rosalind Krauss to describe the pure visuality of modernist painting (which acknowledged its limitations), paradoxically, can be applied to an academic painter.³⁵ Independently of moral, social or national notions, discussed in his paintings, Siemiradzki exposes the peculiar pleasure of perception, the act of perception itself. This artistic strategy coincided with the new standards of representation and artistic innovations of modern naturalist painting, defined by Baudelaire in

32] Rozsika PARKER, Linda NOCHLIN, *Old Mistresses. Women, Art and Ideology*, I.B. Tauris, London, New York 2013, p. 116.

33] Oskar BÄTSCHMANN, *Ausstellungskünstler. Kult und Karriere im modernen Kunstsystem*, DuMont, Köln 1997.

34] D. KONSTANTYNÓW, op. cit., pp. 440-444.

35] Rosalind KRAUSS, *Antivision*, "October", 1986, vol. 36, p. 147.

his essay *The Painter of Modern Life* as the passionate experiencing the world in optical terms.³⁶

Siemiradzki reflected in his works the predilections of the 19th century „society of spectacle” (its religion of art, boredom, fascination with sex, naked body and cruelty), the desire of the bourgeois salon audience for entertainment, leisure and display. From this perspective also the concentration on the non-discursive, but visual effects and sensual beauty of the material world, is a part of a „game” – a model of communications with the gallery spectators. Even in his small genre-painting he depicts the free time. Antiquity is a kind of decoration – *fête galante à l'antique*, depicting the attitudes of haute-bourgeoisie: the predilections for beautiful things, boredom and private time. Siemiradzki successfully satisfies the „desire of show” in the „visual age”,³⁷ constructing a new model of narrativeness.



66. Henri Gervex, *Rolla*, 1878, oil on canvas, 176.2 × 221.3 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux. Photo in public domain.

36] Ch. BAUDELAIRE, op. cit.

37] W. HOFMANN, op. cit., p. 120.

THE LIMITS OF PAINTING: THEATRICAL CURTAINS BY HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI

Henryk Siemiradzki is the author of two theatrical curtains painted for the city theatres in Krakow (1894) (fig. VII) and Lwów (Lemberg, Lviv, 1900) (fig. VIII). These huge paintings (approximately 9 by 12 metres) sum up the epoch of mimetic painting. They push illusion to extremes. Anachronistic from the start, they resemble dinosaurs – but in this case the great beasts miraculously survive the period of great extinction.¹ They are intriguing and disquieting – even more so, when we realize the conceptual complications caused by the idea of ascribing a function of a veil to a painting.

In this paper, I suggest using Siemiradzki's curtains as a case study focused on the problems of representation and a symbolic system. It allows for recognizing their position in the history of painting – the point where painting loses its identity.

In spite of the obvious similarities, painted curtains are distinct from the rest of Siemiradzki's *oeuvre*. Their function amplifies the aporia, not so evident elsewhere. They seem to be a dead end, but if we treat them as a medium, as understood by Hans Belting, not in the ordinary sense, but in the sense of “the agent by which images are transmitted”,² we

1] Agnieszka KUCZYŃSKA, *Malowane kurtyny teatralne Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, TN KUL, Lublin 2006, pp. 17-36.

2] Hans BELTING, *Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology*, “Critical Inquiry”, 2005, no. 31/2, p. 302.

can realize that in a continuing history of images they constitute a moment of transition, the last moment of materiality. The next step is light and shadow of the cinema and, later, the pixels of digital images. The terms from the world of new media, such as “intermediality”, “invisibility of interface”, “immersive character” seem to describe old problems in a new way. Like academic painting, technologically sophisticated media search for maximum illusion, meet the limits of their possibilities and after a while – return as new avatars.

Siemiradzki eagerly used new technical devices and scientific discoveries to enhance the illusion created in his pictures. The first show of his allegorical painting *Light and Dark* was also the first presentation of the dynamo-electrical machine in Warsaw and the first presentation of electric light applied in displaying paintings. Electrical light had very practical and, at the same time, symbolic value in this instance. The triumphant Enlightenment and Progress personified in the picture by the procession of allegorical figures of Sciences, Arts and Inventions lead to the triumph of idealized Wealth, sitting on the throne in heavens – not even the old-fashioned extravagant Richness, but sensible, conscientious Wealth, defined by this image as the highest idea.

The goal of Siemiradzki was a rationally constructed, professionally made painting utilizing the newest technologies in a way that allowed achieving illusion as close to perfection as possible. Three-dimensional literality, enhanced by the use of photography, although extraordinarily suggestive, had nothing in common with real life. The point was an eye-catching simulation, in which constructs made with the help of photography, were applied onto a strictly measured visual field – a materialized phantasmagoria. A group of over 50 albumin prints, preserved in the National Museum in Krakow, which were used as a reference by the artist allows us to take a look behind the scenes.³ These photographs, from the point of view of Siemiradzki, were only half-finished products (fig.67), helping to construct a scene that never existed in reality. They are not “living images” reconstructed subsequently on the canvas. Their unfinished character is clearly visible. They recorded the scaffoldings, on which the figural groups were

3] Wanda MOSSAKOWSKA, *Pomoce fotograficzne Michela Manga do obrazów Henryka Siemiradzkiego (1872-ok.1884)*, “Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej”, 1984, no. 2, pp. 213-221; Светлана Л. КАПЫРИНА, *Путь к картине. Фотография в творческом методе Г. И. Семирадского (Svetlana L. Kapyrina, The Path to the Picture. photography in Henryk Siemiradzki's creative method by)*, “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2016, vol. IV, pp. 199-209.

placed, the supports helping the models keep their intended poses, imperfections of real faces and bodies. For practical reasons only fragments of scenes, chosen characters, sometimes a gesture, or a fragment of drapery were photographed. They helped the painter achieve maximum illusion, materialize his vision. Photographs were engaged in the process that in a specific way exploited their indexical relationship with reality – the process leading to the destruction of trust in the visual image. The process, which is obvious today, begun much earlier than digital technology. Photography used as technical help by academic painters enhanced the illusionistic value, “materiality” of their works, but by no means their authenticity, truthfulness to real life. Siemiradzki was not interested in such qualities. He sought to create a fascinating spectacle.

Siemiradzki, always trying to be *au courant* with the latest discoveries potentially applicable to his art, was also very interested in X-rays discovered by Wilhelm Rentgen in 1895. The early popular displays of X-rays had a character of a technological attraction. Not only their application in medical practice was interesting. Spectators connected X-rays to spiritistic experiences. Like electricity, X-rays were perceived as half scientific, half mystical invisible forces.⁴ A printmaker Jan Wysocki described a meeting organized in Rome by Siemiradzki, during which the painter made a speech about X-rays, titled *Radiation of radiating bodies*.⁵ The painter who obtained a scientific degree before enrolling at St. Petersburg Academy, was really interested in the newest scientific developments. Together with Julian Ochorowicz (Polish scientist, a pioneer of psychology and i.a. the author of a prototype of television) Siemiradzki organized spiritistic seances with the famous medium Eusapia Palladino.⁶ He tried to record photographically the invisible forces and make them available for scientific examination. The seances took place in Rome and in Warsaw and coincided with work on the Krakow curtain.⁷

Opening a curtain is one of the epistemological metaphors: it is a metaphor of an epiphany, of truth that is learnt not through reasoning, but face to face, through an image. The reality which it suggests is an analogical reality. The curtain, which is also an image, is a paradox:

4] Simone NATALE, *The Invisible Made Visible*, “Media History”, 2011, no. 17/4, pp. 345-358.

5] Edward WICHURA-ZAJDEL, *Śląski medalier Jan Wysocki*, RSW Prasa, Katowice 1961, p. 21.

6] A. KUCZYŃSKA, op. cit., pp. 88-91.

7] Julian OCHOTOWICZ, *Zjawiska medyumiczne*, Biblioteka Dzieł Wyborowych, Warszawa 1893, p. 13.

it makes us think of the image as an epiphany and, at the same time, the only epiphany provided by the image-curtain is a disclosure of its own illusory character. While the problem of the nature of reality is suspended.

A curtain is also associated with an anecdote from Pliny's *Natural History*, an anecdote about a contest of painters won by Parrhasius, who presented the curtain on his picture so cleverly that his rival, Zeuxis believed the illusion: he was fooled by the lie of a painting, he tried to move the curtain away.⁸ Only touch convinced him that the picture was a fraud. There was no other image behind the curtain. There was only the image of the curtain. The reality to which he reached out his hand was material reality: this applies both to the board he actually touched and the curtain which he intended to touch.

Siemiradzki's curtains revert the order from Pliny's anecdote. The picture by Parrhasius was an illusionistic representation of the curtain. This time, the illusionistic painting and at the same time the curtain, moving up, reveals its illusory character. Reality is multi-layered and ambiguous. The more so that with the shattered illusion, a theatrical scene appears and the next performance begins.

Siemiradzki used the *tableau vivant* convention that is, he created the image of a fictional show, where actors imitate a hypothetical painting which, in turn, also remained in some relation to reality. There seems to be no way out of this mirror cabinet. The ontological status of the image constructed in this way is extremely uncertain. Confrontation of illusion and truth loses its sharpness.

This uncertainty is accompanied by a perfect illusion of materiality, literalness of presented figures and objects. The Krakow curtain, in particular, is an excellent example in this respect. The space is determined clearly and distinctly. The image is perfectly composed – with vanishing point in the centre, an emphasized axis, two symmetrical, antithetically contrasted groups on both sides and a portico closing the view. Such a construction gives the impression of total control. Uncertainty as to the ontological status of the image together with exceptionally clearly defined spatial relations cause cognitive dissonance and anxiety.

“The simulacrum is never what hides the truth – it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true.” Jean Baudrillard

8] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book XXXV, chapter 36, line 6251. Accessible online: <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=PerseusLatinTexts&query=Plin.%20Nat.&getid=1>.

uses this fictional quote from Ecclesiastes, at the beginning of his book *Simulacra and Simulation*.⁹ The difference between imitation and simulation consists in the fact that imitation repeats the previously existing model taken from real life. While simulation generates the appearance of a non-existent reality, it simulates something that does not exist and retroactively “denaturalises” reality itself, revealing the mechanism responsible for its own creation. Baudrillard recalls Borges’s “Map and territory” and writes about illusion brought to the level of absurd – a map that was so precise that it covered the entire territory, and then about the remains of the map under which the territory disappeared, and with it the whole metaphysics became a thing of the past.¹⁰

In both curtains Siemiradzki used allegories. In the painter’s entire *oeuvre* there are only a few allegorical paintings. Apart from curtains – plafonds in the palaces of Zawisza in Warsaw and Nechaev-Maltsov in St. Petersburg, the *Apotheosis of Copernicus* for the University of Warsaw Library and the decorative *panneaux* for the Warsaw Philharmonic. Like most of his contemporaries, Siemiradzki tolerated allegories only as a decoration, especially architectural decoration.¹¹ In Pierre Larousse’s *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX siècle* from 1866, we read that allegory “gave way to works inspired by the spirit of our, in fact realistic era”.¹² As it can be deduced from the further part of the extensive entry, realism means here basically a certain attitude combining rationalism, materialism and pragmatism with a conviction about fundamental importance of science and progress.

Siemiradzki had a lot of freedom both in the choice of the theme as well as its elaboration. The choice was dictated probably by decorative qualities of allegorical compositions and the tradition of placing such representations on theatrical curtains. However, the “realistic epoch” in confrontation with allegory caused serious problems. He chose the convention of a living picture, which seemed obvious in the theatre, and at the same time built a distance to the “ideal” meaning of

9] Jean BAUDRILLARD, *Simulacra and Simulations*, in: *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark POSTERP, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto 1988, p. 1.

10] J. BAUDRILLARD, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

11] Monika WAGNER, *Allegorie und Geschichte. Ausstattungsprogramme öffentlicher Gebäude des 19. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland. Von der Cornelius-Schule zur Malerei der Wilhelminischen Ära*, Ernst Wasmuth, Tübingen 1989, p. 77.

12] *Allégorie*, in: Pierre LAROUSSE, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX siècle*, vol. 1, Paris 1866, p. 209. Accessible online <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k205356p>.

allegory. He made every effort to make the image as rational and clear as possible. He translated the image into words: in Krakow and Lwów before the performance during which the curtain was first shown, printed explanations were handed out (in the case of the Lwów curtain they were funded by the painter himself). The explanations were also published in the local press.

These explanations constitute a very conventional, reasonably arranged lecture on the academic theory of art composed by means of allegories. Although, as the analysis points out, the starting point for both compositions was the most obvious theme in the context of the theatre, namely the Olympians – Apollo and the Muses, the explanation enumerates only allegories.

In principle, Siemiradzki did not depict the ancient gods. On the other hand, he often showed them indirectly, in quotation marks: as antique statues or heroes of theatrical performances depicted in the painting, or as allegories. He treated traditional iconography very freely and mechanically. Sometimes deities and personifications exchange attributes (for example, on the Lwów curtain the personification of Reason was presented in the costume of Minerva and with the scales of Justice). Sometimes the same figure appears twice in one picture for example, on the Krakow curtain Eros is crying in the foreground on the left side of the painting, and also appears behind the personification of Beauty in the central part of the picture).

Siemiradzki consciously avoided literal repetitions of traditional iconographic formulae. He created new compilations using the 6 volumes of the mythological dictionary *Dizionario d'ogni mitologia e antichità* (1819-1824).¹³ In the explanation prepared by Siemiradzki one can find the description of the allegory of Opera: a woman in the scarlet mantle, leaning upon the harp and looking at the figure of Inspiration. Poetry (with a lyre and a wreath on her temple) and Music depicted as a Siren: half-bird, half-woman. It seems that looking through the dictionary and searching for inspiration, Siemiradzki stopped at the entry "Siren", where we can read: "According to the Ancients, Sirens have a head and the upper part of a body of woman and the lower part took the shape of a bird."¹⁴ There is also a picture with this kind of Siren (fig. 68). We can read also that there are usually

13] Girolamo POZZOLI, *Dizionario d'ogni mitologia e antichità* (1819-1824) vol. I-VI, Batelli, Milano, 1819-1824.

14] A. KUCZYŃSKA, op. cit., p. 99.

three Sirens and that their attributes are a double flute, a lyre and a scroll. On the curtain there are three figures personifying Opera: two of them carry exactly the same attributes as described in the dictionary. Allegories created by Siemiradzki were only seemingly new. It was like making up rebuses, arbitrary combination of conventional elements.

In the National Museum in Krakow there are three sketchbooks with rebuses drawn by the artist (no. inv. MNK III-r.a. 318 428/1-32, MNK III-r.a 318 430/1-36, MNK III-r.a 318 434/1-32). It was apparently one of his favourite pastimes. Thanks to the abundance of material we may become familiar with how they were construed. The matter is not easy: one rebus often used words in different languages (Polish, Italian, French, occasionally Latin) (fig.69); sometimes the picture is deciphered with a word in one language, its sound constitutes a part of an encrypted word in another language, its notation must be changed and an ending must be added already in this new language. Letters are sometimes treated like objects while maintaining the status of letters, sometimes letters are created from other letters and together gain additional meaning. *Signifiants* and *signifiés* interchange freely.

The elements of iconography are treated in a similar way. An example which is very complicated and very simple at the same time is a bearded old man in a warm hat on his head with a trident in his hand, leaning against an overturned pitcher, from which water spills out and which, in addition, entertains human legs. The solution is: “*Ob je nogi*” (The Ob river eats legs) which phonetically is equal to “*obie nogi*” (both legs). The old man is a combination of a river god, Neptune with a trident and Saturn devouring his own children. The inscription and warm cap informs that it is a river flowing in the north. We guess that it is the Ob river (here needed as a syllable); next syllable “*je*” (eats, the spelling must be changed into “*-ie*”) and legs at the end (as can be seen). It is pretty difficult to guess. Fortunately, a very unobvious answer has been preserved. The solution to the whole puzzle is “if you’re to hang, hang by your both legs” (*Kiedy wisieć, to za obie nogi*).

It was made for fun. But the three sketchbooks filled with such rebuses are food for thought. It seems that the way of thinking about symbolic tradition, here in the amplified and much more pronounced version, resembles the way in which Siemiradzki worked on his serious allegories.

Rebuses were often too difficult, while allegories, whose goal was clarity and unambiguity, are painfully simple – so simple that they bring allegory to an absurd. The example being the allegory of Mathematics from the plafond *Light and Dark*: a female figure with a $2+2 = 4$ plate. Again, we may recall times which are much closer to us and postmodernism's poetics, "where allegory offers itself as a tool for exploring ontological structure and foregrounding ontological themes".¹⁵ Postmodern artists, literary as well as visual, find in allegory's overdetermined signs and overburdened artifice a way to undermine and destabilize rather than reinforce universal truths. "At times, postmodern allegory mocks its own form by setting up overly simple correspondences only to reveal greater complexities than can be sustained by the superficial artifice, and the allegory collapses on itself."¹⁶

Siemiradzki's allegories – overdetermined, overburdened and at times much too simple – worked inadvertently in a similar way. They unconsciously pointed to the problems recognized and theorized quite recently.

15] Brian McHALE, *Postmodernist Fiction*, Methuen, London and New York 1987, p. 141.

16] *Ibid.*



67. Model to the Allegory of Dance for Curtain of Theatre in Lwów, Photography, National Museum, Krakow no. inv. MNK-f-26918. Photo Museum.



68. Siren in: *Dizionario d'ogni mitologia et antichità*, Batelli e Fanfani, Milano 1809-1827.



69. Henryk Siemiradzki, Rebus from the sketchbook, National Museum, Krakow, no. inv. MNK 318 428. Photo Museum.

HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI'S DECORATIVE PAINTINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF EARLY- -MODERN ART IN ROME AND VENICE

In 1904 Stanisław Lewandowski, the author of the first monographic study on Siemiradzki's output, wrote: "The truest side of Siemiradzki's talent shone out in his decorative plafonds, which he executed at that time in the palace of Count Zawisza in Warsaw and for Mr. Nechaev-Maltsov in St. Petersburg (*Spring* and *Aurora*)".¹ This essay, which is intended as an introduction to the problem of Siemiradzki's plafond paintings, presents an analysis of those three compositions.

The earliest of them was the plafond entitled *Light and Dark* (1880–1883), which was painted for the interior of the palace owned by Jan Kazimierz Zawisza, known as the Przebendowski Palace, in Warsaw, which had been restructured in 1863 by the architect Wojciech Bobiński. Its vestibule was decorated with a large oval painting, ca. 8m in diameter, installed there in 1884 and destroyed during the Second World War (fig. X).² It had been painted by Siemiradzki, in Rome; soon after it was finished, in January 1883, it was presented in *Esposizione Internazionale di Belle Arti*. In the autumn of the same year

1] Stanisław LEWANDOWSKI, *Henryk Siemiradzki*, Gebethner & Wolff, Warszawa, Kraków 1904, p. 78.

2] Anna SARATOWICZ, *Pałac Przebendowskich*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1990.

it was delivered to Warsaw, where prior to its installation in the vestibule of the Przebendowski Palace it was presented at the *Resursa Obywatelska*, home to the Merchant's Resource Association.³

This painting is known to us only from descriptions, from old photographs and prints, as well as from a number of drawings. A preparatory cartoon for it and a colour sketch in oils showing one of the preparatory versions are also extant. According to those period sources, the lower part of the composition featured the Altar of Destiny with the personification of Despair sitting on its steps, with a chalice of poison in her hand, and a male personification of Hopelessness. On the right-hand side there was Sphinx seated on a plinth, Pandora with her box, and behind them a figure representing Evil with a scroll bearing the word *Humanitas*. Below, there were figures symbolising Ignorance and Fraud bound with a chain. Hovering above Despair was Psyche with butterfly wings, with Hope (seen in an unusual perspective) to her right. On the altar stood the three Fates (Moirae). A "progressive march of humanity" was featured over their heads, with the personifications of the Arts, Inspiration riding the Pegasus above them, as well as Fame, Truth hand in hand with Science and Competence; above, in the clouds, there were allegories of various human abilities. The composition was topped with winged personifications of Justice and Peace. The powers of Darkness could be seen at the top edge.⁴ Not much is known regarding the artistic idea which made Siemiradzki focus on such a subject.

The composition of the plafond features a foreshortened perspective, an artistic tool that can be traced back to the famous fresco by Pietro da Cortona *Glorification of the Reign of Pope Urban VIII* (1633-1639) in the Salone Grande of the Palazzo Barberini (fig. 70) (for example the poses of the Satyr there and Siemiradzki's personification of Hopelessness are similar) and to the notions of perspective as described Andrea Pozzo. The general composition of the Warsaw plafond can also be compared to the *Adoration of the Name of Jesus* (1674-1679), a fresco by Giovanni Battista Gaulli (1639-1709) on the ceiling of the Il Gesù church in Rome.⁵

3] Ibid., p. 101.

4] An analysis of the painting's composition is possible because a preparatory cartoon for it had been found in Rome; see: Marzena KRÓLIKOWSKA-DZIUBECKA, *Dzieje pewnej kompozycji. Plafon Henryka Siemiradzkiego w Pałacu Przebendowskich w Warszawie*, "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2016, vol. IV, pp. 129-141.

5] Rudolf WITTKOWER, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750*, revised by Joseph Connors and

A comparative study of the allegories in the art of early-modern Rome and in the paintings by Siemiradzki is faced with the necessity to take under consideration the change in iconography resulting from the ongoing “crisis of the systems of allegories, its rejection, its uselessness and insufficiency in expressing new, current subjects, and the impetuous search for new formulas”.⁶ Thus, the Warsaw plafond by Siemiradzki shows a combination of artistic forms rooted in the tradition of the frescoes seen in the palaces and churches of 17th and 18th century Rome, yet at the same time it demonstrates the process of looking for new symbolic imagery, better suited to the 19th century audience.

The analysis of Siemiradzki's still-extant plafond in the palace of Yury Nechaev-Maltsov in St. Petersburg, entitled *Aurora* (fig. 71), provides another example of the same problem. Information on the artistic intentions regarding the subject of this work is, unfortunately, scarce. The Nechaev-Maltsov Palace itself is an example of an eclectic style. The architectonic articulation of the exterior facade is related to the Florentine Renaissance, reminiscent of the Medici-Riccardi Palace by Michelozzo, although in the St. Petersburg palace the portal is within the central projection. The lower storey is similarly rusticated, and the windows of the upper storeys have the same shape as those in Florence. However, the interior design is in the Rococo style, consisting of rich, glittering ornamentation on white-painted walls and mirror frames. The theme of the plafond was thus most probably requested by the owner, who could have been inspired by the early-modern stylistic features of his palace. Work on the *Aurora* plafond, according to the articles in period newspapers, had started in 1884 and was completed in 1888: “Furthermore, the plafond entitled *Aurora* was sent directly from the artist's studio in Rome to the banks of the Neva River, to St. Petersburg, to Mr. Nechaev-Maltsov, the famous connoisseur and art lover, who commissioned it from H. Siemiradzki for his palace”.⁷

There are very few notices in newspapers that could possibly provide us with information regarding composition or symbols of the subject. The subject itself was not clear to the contemporary viewers, as indicated by a short note published in “Tygodnik Ilustrowany” of 21 May 1892 together with a wood-engraving reproduction of

Jennifer Montagu, vol. 2: *The High Baroque 1625–1675*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1999, p. 141, fig. 175.

6] Maria POPRZEĆKA, *Akademizm*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa 1989, p. 94.

7] (*Editor's Note*), “Świat. Dwutygodnik Ilustrowany”, 1888, no. 7, p. 327.

the painting.⁸ In the plafond, Aurora is “personified as a winged virgin” (which is at odds with the iconographic tradition), with a burning torch in her right hand, holding the horses’ reins in her left. Apollo’s quadriga is surrounded in a rosy and golden glow. Below, there is, as the author of the note put it, “a lovely group of a sleeping Maenad and a young man wearing a wreath, as well as a formidable woman who awakens the lions harnessed to the chariot”, and above, “a group of putti scattering heavenly roses besprinkled with refreshing dew-drops”.⁹ Here, again, any interpretation – obviously not quite clear to the author of this description – faces the difficulties which, as mentioned above, are not unusual in the case of Academic painting. However, some formal similarities between Siemiradzki’s painting and the Roman tradition can be traced. Affinity with the quadriga in the fresco *Aurora* by Guercino in Casino dell’Aurora Ludovisi seems obvious. Some 19th century art critics, on the other hand, compared Siemiradzki’s *Aurora* to that by Guido Reni in Casino Rospigliosi (1613–1614), but in this case, the affinity is in the subject, not in the composition itself.¹⁰

Several art critics, for instance Henryk Struve or the already-mentioned Lewandowski, compared paintings of this type to Correggio (mainly to his *Assumption* in the dome of the cathedral in Parma, 1526–1530, which was considered “a prototype of innumerable Baroque domes”)¹¹ or to Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, “that Venetian painter possessed of blazing colours and a wild decorative temperament”,¹² whom Siemiradzki was assumed to resemble. However, no-one mentioned direct analogies to the early-modern painting in Rome, perhaps with the exception of Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel.

The question arises whether the composition of the *Aurora* plafond could have been influenced by the paintings of Stefano Torelli (1712–1780), who was invited to Russia in 1762. In 1766–1768 he painted an oil on canvas entitled *The Triumph of Venus and the Three Graces* for the Salon of the Muses in the Chinese Palace in Oranienbaum (now Lomonosov) near St. Petersburg, which was erected in 1762–1768 for

8] “Tygodnik Ilustrowany”, 1892, vol. V, no. 125, pp. 328–329.

9] *Nasze ryciny*, “Tygodnik Ilustrowany”, 1892, vol. V, no. 125, p. 334.

10] *Ibid.*, pp. 333–334.

11] Frederick HARTT, David G. WILKINS, *History of Italian Renaissance Art*, Pearson, Upper Saddle River 2007, p. 583, 585.

12] S. LEWANDOWSKI, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

Catherine the Great and her son Pavel by the architect Antonio Rinaldi (1709 – ca. 1794).¹³

Another Italian artist, who according to 18th century sources worked in Russia, was Jacopo Guarana (1720–1808), who allegedly painted plafonds in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg and Oranienbaum.¹⁴ Guarana was also active in Venice, where he painted, among others, *Le Virtù* in Ca'Rezzonico (fig. 72) and *Allegory of the Virtues Mocenigo* (now in the collection of Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice) (fig. 73); he also decorated a number of villas in the Veneto, e.g. Villa Pisani in Stra. He was considered a follower of Tiepolo.¹⁵

Siemiradzki's other commission for Nechaev-Maltsov was the plafond *Spring* (fig. 74), also extant in his palace, with the artist's signature and the date 1890. Showing "the spring sky of Rome, with its light, fragrant clouds", which gave the painting its "vitality, lightness and naturalness", it was considered a masterpiece.¹⁶ Some critics, however, noticed a lack of uniformity in it, because the composition being divided into two groups, with an empty central part. It seems that the author of the above description saw the painting still in Siemiradzki's studio, but was not sure of his interpretation. In fact, the basic composition of the picture consists of three groups: in the upper part, there is Zephyr and the nymph Chloris (whose story was described by Ovid in *Fasti*). Its central figure is Flora, the goddess of flowers and of spring, carried by swans. Beside her, there is a putto holding burning torches in its hands, and below – a putto with a syrinx, holding a bird in its left hand. The bottom right part of the composition is filled with a group of a naked female figure scattering flowers, accompanied by a Cupid with a bow, arrow and quiver, surrounded with hovering birds and putti. This figure may represent the goddess Venus or be another personification of Spring. In this work, Siemiradzki – as was the prevailing practice in the 19th century art – created his personal iconography.

The three plafonds by Siemiradzki had a form of decorative *panneaux* painted on canvas and placed in architectural frames. Apart from the preparatory drawings, the artist made oil sketches on paper

13] Claudia SOLACINI, *Stefano Torelli alla corte di Caterina II*, "Ricerche di storia dell'arte" Rivista quadrimestrale, 2013, no. 110–111, pp. 161–164.

14] Simone GUERRIERO, *Guarana, Giacomo (Jacopo)*, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 2003, vol. 60 [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giacomo-guarana_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giacomo-guarana_(Dizionario-Biografico)/), 15-10-2018

15] R. WITTKOWER, op. cit., vol. 3: *Late Baroque and Rococo 1675–1750*, p. 121, no. 93.

16] *Nasze ryciny*, "Tygodnik Ilustrowany", 1891, vol. IV, no. 92, p. 222.

or canvas, smaller in scale, which presented general concept of the painting. This agrees with the Italian practice: not all plafonds in Rome were effected as frescoes, some were painted on canvas, for example those by Corrado Giaquinto (1703–1765), a Neapolitan painter active in Rome in 1723–1753. His work *Minerva Presenting Spain to Jupiter and Juno*, ca. 1751, was placed on the ceiling of Palazzo Rondinini at Via del Corso in Rome, where the artist applied the light and clear colour typical for the Rococo style.¹⁷

Three plafonds by Henryk Siemiradzki under discussion here evince a clearly noticeable inspiration with early-modern painting in Rome. As it has been stated above, the layout, with darker figures in the lower sections of the composition and lighter ones in the upper ones, recall the works of Andrea Pozzo, for example frescoes on the ceiling in San Ignazio (1685) (fig. 75), where the perspective foreshortening is close to that in Siemiradzki's *Light and Dark*. A question arises whether Siemiradzki made use of the principles of perspective as described in Pozzo's *Perspectiva Pictorum et Architectorum (Perspective in Architecture and Painting)*, applying them in his art.¹⁸

In the three examples of the plafonds by Siemiradzki analysed above (which should be treated as introductory outline of the problem of his plafond paintings), the artist was using allegories – a mode that was under criticism in his times – trying to create new symbols appropriate to the new requirements of communication with the public, who was faced with the necessity of deconstructing the early-modern iconography. On the other hand, it can be assumed that Siemiradzki's paintings, as those of many artists of the past, were deeply rooted in tradition, especially one which he had been able to behold with his own eyes, that is the tradition of the great masters active in Rome and Venice in the 17th and 18th centuries.

17] R. WITTKOWER, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 75.

18] Andrea Pozzo, *Perspectiva Pictorum et Architectorum Andreae Putei*, Joannis Jacobi Komarek, Rome 1693.



70. Pietro da Cortona, *Glorification of the Reign of Pope Urban VIII*, 1633-1639, fresco, Gran Salone, Palazzo Barberini, Rome. Photo M. Królikowska-Dziubecka.



71. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Aurora*, 1884-1888, oil on canvas, former residence of Yury Nechaev-Maltsov, St. Petersburg. Photo J. Czop.



72. Jacopo Guarana, *Le Virtù*, 1757-1758, fresco, Tapestry Room, Ca'Rezzonico, Venice. Photo in public domain.



73. Jacopo Guarana, *Allegory of the Virtues Mocenigo*, 1787, oil on canvas, 33cm x 50.5 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice. Photo in public domain.



74. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Spring*, 1890, oil on canvas, former residence of Yury Nechaev-Maltsov, St. Petersburg. Photo J. Czop.



75. Andrea Pozzo, *Allegory of the Missionary Work of the Jesuits*, 1691-1694, fresco, ceiling of the nave in S. Ignazio, Rome. Photo M. Królikowska-Dziubecka.

MARIA POPRZEĆKA

University of Warsaw

AN ACADEMICIAN IN A ROMAN SLAUGHTERHOUSE

*L'homme d'imagination, dans son travail pour élever
le modèle jusqu'à l'idéal qu'il a conçu, fait aussi,
malgré lui, des pas vers la vulgarité qui le presse et qu'il
a sous l'œil.*

Eugène Delacroix¹

The time when art historians marginalized the use of photography by artists as a technical aid has long gone. The whole issue of photography – its history, theory, aesthetics, and the specifics of that medium – currently constitutes one of the most dynamically developing areas of research into the visual arts. The scope of this research is extremely extensive. Beginning with basic analyses of photographic image ontology, such issues as the photograph as a reflection of reality, the role of photography as a document and a “prosthetic memory device” are considered, as well as photography as a way of recognizing and appropriating reality, a tool for power, control and censorship and finally, photography related to symbolic and magical practices. From the art history angle, the question of photography’s participation in the art being created in the new mediums is particularly important. Research also looks at such phenomena as amateur photography and its mass consumption thanks to digitalisation, means of persuasion that are used in photography, and manipulation by means of press and journalistic photography, etc.

The tension between photography and traditional methods of reflecting visible reality arose almost as soon as its invention. Physicist

1] Eugène DELACROIX, *Journal*, vol.1: 1823–1850, ed. Paul FLAT, Paris 1926, pp. 267-268 (19 février 1847).

Joseph Gay-Lussac, presenting daguerreotypes to French parliamentarians in 1839, assured them that this new medium could depict still life with a perfection unattainable by ordinary methods, such as drawing and painting, with a perfection equal to nature itself and that the image drawn by hand is no match for truth and faithfulness.² However, this praise soon turned out to be ambivalent. Considered particularly alarming was what today's reflection on photography describes as "*Sichtbarkeit jenseits der Intention*" (visibility beyond intention).³ Excessive quantities of unselected optical data constituted an argument in favour of rejecting the new medium's artistic pretensions. There was also considerable conflict between the "truth of nature" offered by photography and the requirement that had been imposed on artists for several centuries that they "choose from nature". This requirement was particularly important for artists from the academic formation, such as Henryk Siemiradzki.

Regardless of the contradictory opinions that have arisen ever since the beginnings of the invention – whether photography is the "death of painting" or an inspiring challenge – painters, graphic artists and sculptors, along with scholars, were one of the first groups to become involved in photography, making it an instant and universal tool. An invention enabling one to retain and perpetuate fleeting images of the world proved to be a new, cheap and convenient "model", a perfect sketch, iconographic source, aide memoire, inspiration for the imagination, tool for discovering reality and a means of reconstructing the formal language of art. Photography helped artists remember landscapes that had faded in their memories,⁴ freed them from the lengthy sittings that portraits required, but above all enabled them to simplify and reduce one of the basic stages of the painting *curriculum*, the study of the nude or costumed model.⁵

In recent decades, research and discoveries of new sources, in particular, previously unknown photographic archives of painters and

2] See: Wolfgang KEMP, *Geschichte der Fotografie: von Daguerre bis Gursky*, C. H. Beck, München 2019, p. 21.

3] Sigrid WEIGEL, *Literatur als Voraussetzung der Kulturgeschichte*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München 2004, p. 49. See: W. KEMP op. cit., p. 15.

4] See letters of Franciszek Kostrzewski and Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski written in Munich in: *W tej pracowni zamknąłem me życie. Pracownie malarzy polskich XIX i pocz. XX wieku*, ed. Marta ERTMAN, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź 1991, [p. 19].

5] The pictorial aspect of using photography in the 19th century is brought by the exhibition catalogue: *L'Art du nu au XIXe siècle. Le photographe et son modele*, ed. Bruno FOUCART, Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris 1998.

sculptors, confirm that photography constituted a significant element of the work of many artists in the second half of the 19th century, including both modernists and traditionalists. It also played a significant and sometimes surprising role in the work of Henryk Siemiradzki.

In 1871, Henryk Siemiradzki left the St. Petersburg Academy as a fully-fledged artist with well-established views on art. Earning a commensurate number of awards for work on set topics and graduating from the Academy with a gold medal for his diploma thesis, the young artist obtained a six-year international scholarship involving a stay in Rome, still considered a necessary complement to one's artistic education. Already in the painting that was actually to be his public debut: *Christ and the Harlot*, painted in Rome in 1872, Siemiradzki applied a procedure that was to become a special feature of his painting. This consisted in adopting plein-air effects for his academic painting. The imagined evangelical scene is played out against the background of a broad landscape flooded with intense southern sunlight. Placing a massive plane tree in the centre of the composition, the painter applied an artifice that was to be repeated in countless other pictures – sunlight seeping through the leaves to cast flickering patches of light and shadow on the whole scene. With its brightness and luminosity, the picture so differed from contemporary, generally dark-toned religious paintings, that some critics saw it as a violation of *decorum* – the principle of propriety. The work, however, brought the painter his first international success. It was exhibited in various European cities, was awarded the Kunst Medaille in Vienna, and finally ensured the artist the sought after title of academician.

On the other hand, his conservatism and traditionalism meant that for several decades Siemiradzki's art failed to undergo any significant changes. It is hard to point to any internal caesuras in his works, just as there were no sudden turns in his life. What is interesting, however, is that while remaining faithful to the principles of academic art throughout his life, the artist made various modifications to it. Siemiradzki's "trademark", already introduced in the aforementioned *Christ and the Harlot*, became the sunlit "impressionistic" illumination of his paintings, an aspect distinguishing them from the late-academic, brown "sauces" of that period and ensuring he is considered by today's history of art as a "modernized academician".⁶ His painting, as well as the technical

6] PIOTR SZUBERT, *Akademik zmodernizowany. Kilka uwag o Henryku Siemiradzkim*, "Sztuka", 1979, no. 4/6, pp. 52-54.

procedures he used, constitutes an ideal way of tracing how academic artistic practice became infiltrated by new tendencies and methods.

In 1979, the National Museum in Krakow received from Henryk Siemiradzki's family a gift consisting of personal items, documents, manuscripts, decorations and materials from the artist's studio: studies and sketches, both oil and cartoons, portfolios of loose drawings, sketch-books and finally, photographs. This gift was shown at an exhibition organized in Krakow's Cloth Hall, the most appropriate of locations, since the painting *Nero's Torches*, donated by the artist in 1879, became the nucleus of that city's National Museum.⁷ The exhibition was a private, if not intimate affair. Not only because it showed such personal items as his "ordinary and tinted pince nez spectacles", "linen tobacco pouch", "silver case holding his honorary membership of the Municipal Casino in Lwów (Lemberg, Lviv) dated 1880", or even "the initials H.S. made of dry flowers held by a ribbon".⁸ Regardless of these everyday objects, always very moving as having been touched by the original owner, the exhibition revealed an unofficial aspect of the artist's creativity, one that in the 19th century was carefully screened from unauthorized view. Siemiradzki maintained this clear division between the revealed and concealed areas of his painting activities by building his own house on Rome's via Gaeta. Enchanted journalists and correspondents describing the artist's villa in national magazines always noted: "On the first floor, a studio come salon for displaying paintings, beautifully furnished; on the second floor – the studio proper, where the master painted and, disliking the presence of strangers while at work, only invited guests on extremely rare occasions."⁹

The working materials obtained by the Krakow museum meant that more than a hundred years after the artist's death, the studio "proper" was made available to viewers that had not been invited by the painter.¹⁰ It is hard to imagine a greater contrast than that between the

7] *Henryk Siemiradzki jakiego nie znamy. Wystawa daru otrzymanego od Rodziny artysty*, Muzeum Narodowe, exhibition catalogue, Sukiennice Gallery, June-August 1980, Kraków 1980.

8] *Ibid.*, Personal objects, no. 8, 10, 16, 20.

9] Aleksander RAJCHMAN, *Mistrz z via Gaeta*, "Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne", 1888, no. 266, p. 490.

10] Two exhibitions at the Museum of Art in Łódź were devoted to the workshops of Polish artists: *W tej pracowni zamknęłam me życie. Pracownie malarzy polskich XIX i pocz. XX wieku*, ed. Marta ERTMAN, part I, Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, Łódź 1991 and *Ogień niestrzeżony. Pracownie malarzy polskich XIX i początku XX wieku*, ed. Marta ERTMAN, part II, Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, Łódź 1995. At the first exhibition Siemiradzki's studio was shown according to a drawing by Miłosz Kotarbiński (Cat. no. 75).

sumptuously decorated “artistic apartment”, visited by crowned heads that we know from photographs of the period, and the now revealed sphere of “things unmentioned”. This penetration into the most delicate matter – the material of artistic creation, inspiration and its materialization, the impetus and methods used to give it a real existence – is one of the most compelling and at the same time most dangerous challenges to the art historian. In the case of Siemiradzki, the temptation is all the more powerful, because no artist of his calibre has ever in any form manifested this “creative passion”, preferring to protect his personal and artistic privacy behind the blameless public image of someone refined and reserved. Just as Siemiradzki’s two studios were completely different spaces: public and private, so too his completed, exhibited canvases and the “working aids” he used in their creation belonged to completely different worlds. As in theatrical productions, paintings given up for public viewing are like the gala show as compared to the backstage area so devoid of effects. After all, it was not just painters that kept concealed behind the scenes the “dreadful workings of their creative act”.¹¹ These were only to be revealed by the art of the 20th century, ostentatiously bringing out what had previously been concealed and thrust into oblivion...

It was long ago noted that Siemiradzki’s sketches, especially his small landscape studies in oil, infused, glowing, surprisingly fresh, reveal unexpected charms. On the occasion of the Krakow exhibition, the words of the painter’s first monographer, Stanisław Lewandowski, were recalled: “It is necessary to show people studies, colour tests and experiments conducted in the sun, in the air, in the basement or wherever, as the *first flashes of brilliant brush strokes*. Such flashes, such impressions of feelings are *modernism*, because they truly reveal the artist’s bare soul. Such studies by Siemiradzki, once exhibited alone, unaccompanied by any finished works, reveal his naked soul and tell us many things about him that we did not previously know.”¹²

What Siemiradzki’s technique shows is not only the first flashes of brilliant brush strokes” and not just another example of the 19th century problem with the “aesthetics of the sketch” – the dissonance between the spontaneity of the *breve ricordo* and the *fini* that blurs the

11] Andrzej PIEŃKOS, *Okropny warsztat tworzenia. O aurze pracowni artysty po romantyzmie*, in: *Ogień niestrzeżony*, op. cit., pp. 39-47.

12] Stanisław LEWANDOWSKI, *Henryk Siemiradzki*, Gebethner & Wolff, Warszawa, Kraków 1904, p. 87. P. Szubert drew attention to this aspect of Siemiradzki’s output. P. SZUBERT, op. cit., pp. 52-54.

same.¹³ The materials extracted from the corners of his studio do not so much reveal the artist's "naked soul" as the secrets of his craft. Above all, they show what work, procedures and treatments lie behind the decorative flourish, the free brush strokes and academic virtuosity. So here we see the addresses of his models with brief descriptions ("black eyes, poorly built"), tedious and not always well-executed anatomical studies, and scrupulously collected props. However, the most interesting are the photographs. These add another layer to the complicated history of mutual relations between photography and 19th-century painting.¹⁴ The photos from Siemiradzki's studio fall into two categories (fig. 76-77). The first of these are "live images" fixed by photographic techniques, variants of ideas typical of the artist, transferred to another medium. Alongside them are things best described as entirely rough copies of an auxiliary nature. Like many of his contemporaries, Siemiradzki modernized his work methods by using photographs of his models and even purchased ready-made stills specially produced for the needs of painters. Almost all the pictures preserved from his studio were made by the Rome based photographer Michel Mang in the studio or the small adjoining garden.¹⁵ The services of this photographer were also used by Aleksander Gierymski, who too was working in Rome in the 1870's, his photographs even being taken in the same backyard surroundings.¹⁶ The vast majority of photographs made for Siemiradzki were identified as posing models or mannequins dressed in costumes for the paintings *Christ and the Harlot*, *Nero's Torches*, *The Funeral of a Rus' in Bulgar* and finally *Sale of Amulets*.¹⁷

Here, photography is revealed to us as "*die Prosa der Bildwelt*" (the prose of the world of images), quoting David E. Wellbery.¹⁸ Any

13] A. Boime analyzes the sketch-finish conflict as basic for the evolution of painting in the 19th century. Albert BOIME, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, Phaidon, London 1971, pp. 166-181.

14] A basic study for that subject remains Aaron SCHARF, *Art and Photography*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1974. Many detailed information regarding the relationship between art and photography in the nineteenth century brings the exhibition catalog: *L'Art du nu au XIXe siècle*, op. cit.

15] Wanda MOSSAKOWSKA, *Pomoce fotograficzne Michela Manga do obrazów Henryka Siemiradzkiego (1872 – około 1884)*, "Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej", 1984, vol. XXXII, no. 2, pp. 211-221.

16] Anna MASŁOWSKA, *Aleksander Gierymski i fotografia*, in: *Aleksander Gierymski 1850-1901*, exhibition catalogue, National Museum in Warsaw, ed. Ewa MICKE-BRONIAREK, Warszawa 2014, pp. 53 -61.

17] That identification was discovered by W. MOSSAKOWSKA, op. cit.

18] Quotation after: W. KEMP op. cit., p. 13.

comparison of photographs – recording the commonness and triviality of models, the mediocrity of their costumes, the shoddiness of tattered mannequins that do little to conceal the various supports, scaffolding and ladders used to prop up and maintain the desired poses – with their transformations into paintings illustrates exceptionally well the essence of that requirement imposed on artists for several centuries, which ultimately reached a crisis and died out in 19th-century academism, namely the raising of reality to an ideal.

Among the photographic aids Siemiradzki made use of are two exceptional prints clearly showing that essence of academic creation – photographs taken for the picture *Christian Dirce* (fig. VI). This late canvas, completed in 1897, shows the martyrdom of a young Christian who dies in the Roman arena in a bloody spectacle staged by the Emperor Nero, wishing to recreate the death of the mythological Dirce. Any association with the martyrdom scene of Ligia – the heroine of Sienkiewicz's novel *Quo Vadis* – were strongly repudiated by Siemiradzki himself, arguing that the first sketch for the painting, dated 1885, was made many years before the novel appeared.¹⁹ As an aside to these considerations, it may be noted that this earlier sketch (fig. 78), on the same theme, has a completely different composition, one not found in any other of Siemiradzki's paintings. The scene it presents is as if viewed from behind the audience, from a high loge, is a collision of foreground and background, featuring a bull, a bound girl and the figure of a gladiator. The contrast between the two is enhanced by a strong chiaroscuro effect, with the loge and part of the arena sunk in deep shadow, while the opposite side of the amphitheatre is flooded with bright sunlight. This composition, with its similarity to those of Edgar Degas, and its sharp chiaroscuro, comes as a surprise when compared with the highly conventional arrangement of the later picture: one that is composed on almost a single plane, devoid of any spatial complications, and modelled in diffuse, uniform light.

After ten years, preparing to paint the final version of the large (263 × 530 cm) *Dirce* painting, the artist (reversing the image) used a photograph taken in a Roman slaughterhouse. In a 1962 interview the artist's son gave the correspondent of a popular weekly, Leon Siemiradzki recalled: "Father hailed a hansom cab and we went to

19] The issue of relation between Siemiradzki's pictures and Sienkiewicz's novel is detailed discussed by Józef DUŻYK, *Siemiradzki. Opowieść biograficzna*, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1986, pp. 465-481.

a butcher's in Trastevere. My father photographed the animal from several angles, and examined it for a long time. It was the same bull that later, in the painting, Nero and his retinue of praetorians can be seen observing."²⁰ Evidence of the unreliability of this reminiscence, not devoid of other errors, is the company seal of the photographic studio located at Via Borgo San Rocco, in Frascati. The photograph was taken by Augusto Arrighi (fig. 79), offering *Ritratti e reproduzioni d'ogni genere* (Portraits and reproductions of all kinds). It can only be added that a worldly and dignified man such as Siemiradzki, would probably not have taken photographs himself in a city slaughterhouse, and certainly would not have taken a child on such an errand. So may this reminiscence stand as a warning against an uncritical approach by art historians to the testimony of artists' relatives and friends.

Arrighi's photograph is not reportage. It is in the nature of a festive souvenir. The slaughterhouse staff – a group of men in blood-stained aprons – solemnly pose around the great fallen bull. The arrangement of the scene is ennobled by its resemblance to the photographs taken on hunting trips at that time, thanks to which the slaughtered bull is presented like a trophy. The tightly pressed group hardly fits in the frame. We can see that two women are trying to squeeze in between the men.

However, the picture from the slaughterhouse turns out to be different from the kind routinely used by painters as an aid to handling some fragment of a painting. On another copy of the same photo, stuck on cardboard, Siemiradzki painted a sketch for the future image with oil paint (fig. 80). With a sharp contour he emphasized the animal's spine, added an outline of the female body bound to it, and attached a strip of paper to indicate the figures of Nero and Tigellinus, the accompanying prefect of the Praetorian Guard. He casually painted in the background. The gouache tinted paints – pinks, umbers and ochres – in places laid on thick, in others thinned, do not fully conceal the photographic backing, which, like synopia, can be seen beneath the brush strokes, so that the butchers seem to hover like ghosts over the body of the bull. The image is suspended halfway between reality and pictorial fiction. Between the actual appearance of the thing mechanically captured by the lens, and the *breve ricordo* executed by the artist's quick hand. Though still a photograph, it is already a sketch for a picture. We are still in the slaughterhouse, but also already in the ancient arena.

20] Jerzy JANICKI, *Tu Siemiradzki! Pronto...*, "Przekrój", 1962, no. 909 (9. 09). Interview in: J. Dużyk, op. cit., p. 477.

The photograph from the slaughterhouse transformed into a sketch for the painting shows how much Siemiradzki combined the disconnected in order to create his picture. Oil paint applied to photosensitive paper can also be seen as various opposing orders being imposed on one another: “life” and “art”, things given visually and “as in the mind”, the mundane and sublime, and finally technique and creativity. The action of the lens is here combined with the work of the human hand, and pigments – with the result of the chemical processes taking place during laboratory processing. The mechanism of a photographic recording – with the artist’s imagination. The everyday reality of animals butchered in a Roman slaughterhouse – with the extraordinary cruelty of Nero’s Roman games as immortalised by Suetonius in *The Lives of the Caesars*. Modern times – with history. And – most importantly – common, visible reality with the ideal created by the artist. We see how the work is born from this meeting of opposites.

Further phases of the picture’s formation, completely in accordance with the then generally accepted technical order, had a more uniform character and were also a gradual accumulation and melding of studied fragments into a single image. A good example is the repeated oil study of a naked woman, separately executed from the model, which at some point became garlands of flowers combined with the body of the bull.

Christian Dirce was Siemiradzki’s last big painting. After this the only large format work was his curtain for the Lwów (Lemberg, Lviv) theatre. “Siemiradzki’s last picture” was critically received what indicated the end of whole epoch in the understanding of art. Back in the 1990s, it had actually already come to a close, but this belated picture from a late academician more sharply marks that caesura. And being able to look into the process of its creation, we see this with particular clarity.

Siemiradzki, with his convictions and his entire *oeuvre*, advocated a set of rules referred to as academic that for several centuries had defined the foundations of artistic creation. The first and the chief among them was that the artist’s task was to sublimate reality, to ensure it was transcended by art. Giovanni Pietro Bellori claimed that the painter’s and sculptor’s idea is this ideal, exquisite model created in the mind, and by means of imitation he makes things that meet the eye resemble this imaginary form.²¹ His ideas were repeated by dozens of later

21] Giovan Pietro BELLORI, *The Idea of the Painter, the Sculptor and the Architect*, in: *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, eds. Alice S. WOHL, Helmut WOHL, transl. TOMASO MONTANARI, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005, pp. 55-68. See also: *Teoretycy*,

theoreticians. This view, of Aristotelian genesis, was of “long duration”, becoming the lasting basis of artistic principles. Siemiradzki however, was active at a time when this was questioned and demolished by realism and naturalism in all its varieties. Seen in this context, his hastily made sketch over a photographic print becomes a veritable “manifesto of anti-naturalism.” This one-of-a-kind idea arrests the “moment of creation”. The transformation of reality into art is shown to us visually. Siemiradzki, “a man with his imagination, trying to raise the model to the ideal” took many a step towards the mundane that bore down on him. Using not only imperfect models and photos revealing their imperfections. It would be hard to find a place as repellent as a city slaughterhouse. However – to quote Eugene Delacroix – « *En vérité, qu'un homme de génie se serve du daguerréotype comme il faut s'en servir, et il s'élèvera à une hauteur que nous ne connaissons pas* » (if a genius uses the daguerreotype as it should be used, he will achieve heights unknown to us).²² By painting over a photograph, the artist not only performs a “transformation into art”. Starting from the most trivial and – what’s worse – mechanically fixed image of reality, thanks to it and at the same time in spite of it, he creates his vision. “By means of imitation, he makes things that meet the eye resemble” the idea of a work born in the mind.

In 1897, the year in which *Christian Dirce* was completed, Siemiradzki’s painting was an anachronism, even against the background of contemporary Polish painting, for which that “happy hour” of the Young Poland movement had just struck. Even if it exudes a mood of decadent melancholy,²³ it is a work belonging to a bygone era. And as such – regardless of its variable critical fortunes – it is a farewell to « *les principes qui enseignent à voir les choses, non seulement ainsi qu’elles sont en elles-mêmes, mais encore selon qu’elles doivent ester figurées* ».²⁴

historiografowie i artyści o sztuce 1600-1700, eds. Jan BIAŁOSTOCKI, Maria POPRZECKA, Antoni ZIEMBA, Warszawa 1994, p. 219.

- 22] E. DELACROIX, op. cit., vol. 2: 1850–1853, p. 207 (21 mai 1853). In this very interesting note Delacroix contrasts the daguerreotypes of the nudes with the drawings of Marcantonio Raimondi, which had served as templates for painters for centuries.
- 23] The authors of the excellent, comprehensive catalogue note point to these and other features that break out of academic conventions, see note 16.
- 24] Roland FRÉART DE CHAMBRAY, *Idée de la perfection de la peinture démontrée par les principes de l'art...*, Jacques Ysambart, Mans 1662, [5. Partie] p. 20. – R. FRÉART DE CHAMBRAY, *An idea of the perfection of painting: demonstrated from the principles of art, and by examples conformable to the observations...* rendered English by J. Elvelyn], London 1668.



76. Michel Mang, Siemiradzki's male models, National Museum, Krakow, no. inv. MNK-f-26958. Photo Museum.



77. Michel Mang, Henryk Siemiradzki and a mannequin, National Museum, Krakow, no. inv. MNK XX-f-26991. Photo Museum.



78. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Christian Dirce*, 1885, oil on board, 30.8 × 50.2 cm, The Upper Silesian Museum, Bytom. Photo Museum.



79. Augusto Arrighi, Roman slaughterhouse, National Museum, Krakow, no. inv. MNK XX-f-27030. Photo Museum.



80. Henryk Siemiradzki, oil sketch for *Christian Dirce* made on the Augusto Arrighi's photograph, National Museum, Krakow, no. inv. MNK II-a-1189. Photo Museum.

WALDEMAR OKOŃ

University of Wrocław

SIEMIRADZKI AND THE THREE BARDS

In old Polish, the word “*wieszcz*” (soothsayer, bard) was not present at all, appearing only in the 15th and 16th centuries in a somewhat changed form (“*wieszczec*”, “*wieszcznik*”), meaning an augur, the one who can foretell the future. In the consciousness of educated Poles, there was also the Latin word “*vates*,” which held a double meaning of a foreteller and a poet. We can find the form “*wieszcz*,” used to this day, in the poetry of Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski from the second half of the 17th century, where it simply referred to the men of pen, contemporaries of Lubomirski. The 18th century solidifies this meaning, indicating a “poet” without any additional implications; only in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, simultaneously with the loss of independence and the appearance of preromantic themes in Polish literature, a situation arose that “Among the words from the synonymic set of ‘poet’, the word ‘wieszcz’ proved the most usable in the context reflecting the uniqueness of their gifts – psychological or flowing from divine inspiration, playing the role of prophets and leaders of the nation.”¹

Naturally, I don’t intend to present here in detail the entire, rather complex genealogy and affiliation of meanings of this word. It’s enough to state that, in the mid-19th century, there was a common belief

1] Henryk MARKIEWICZ, *Rodowód i losy mitu trzech wieszczów*, in: *Badania nad krytyką literacką*. Seria druga, eds. Michał GŁOWIŃSKI, Krzysztof DYBCIAK, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1984, p. 40.

that, as Seweryn Goszczyński wrote to poets: “For ages you had the gift of singing what the ears could not hear and revealing what the eyes could not see – for ages you have been prophets and miracle makers.”² And here, in the context of my speech, there is a very interesting later note of Goszczyński: “From this it does not follow that poets must necessarily be prophets, men foretelling the future, revealers of all secrets. Thus, they are also faithful to their calling **when they draw their themes from the past or reveal malicious facets of the present – they do it to give testimony to their ideal**: ‘He who works like that, even in the field of the past, is he who builds the future, never ceasing to be a true soothsayer, a true creator’.”³

Therefore, we have here quite a paradoxical situation – a soothsayer can mean not just the one who “soothsays,” but also the one who investigates the past to reveal errors resulting therefrom, being repeated in the future, the remedy of which in the present will lead us to a happy – not just individual but national as well – future. No wonder then that, thanks to such an amalgamation of beliefs and convictions, the authors that worked with historical themes could be seen in Poland as soothsayers, and this is true of both poets and painters. Nonetheless, poetry was the first and the most important, and its coryphaei were first awarded the honourable title of artistic soothsayers. In his seminars on Slavic literature, Adam Mickiewicz, the greatest Polish poet of the period, directly indicated that: “Art [...] is a kind of a conjuration of spirits; art is a secret and sacred activity [...] it is not and cannot be anything else than the recreation of a vision,”⁴ and, beginning with 1840s, there will be a lot of similar statements in the Polish literature and critique. Interestingly, the three poets that were perceived as soothsayers of our national poetry: Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki and Zygmunt Krasiński, did not call themselves “soothsayers” in the prophetic sense, although Mickiewicz was called a “soothsayer” even in the 1830s, and they called each other that in many declarations and opinions. However, there was unrest and instability in determining the final hierarchy. Back then, on the “literary market,” if we can call it that, other well-known and acknowledged poets of the time were called “soothsayers” as well.

2] Seweryn GOSZCZYŃSKI, *Nowa epoka poezji polskiej*, in: idem, *Podróże i rozprawy literackie*, ed. Zygmunt WASILEWSKI, H. Altenberg, Lwów 1911, p. 263.

3] Ibid.

4] Adam MICKIEWICZ, *Literatura słowiańska. Kurs trzeci i czwarty*, eds. Julian KRZYŻANOWSKI et al., transl. Leon Płoszewski, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1955, p. 384.

In addition to the aforementioned trio, they typically included Bohdan Zaleski and Seweryn Goszczyński; nonetheless, the classical trio ultimately prevailed: Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński, although the order of the last two was constantly shifting depending on the tastes of individual critics or trends in our literature during subsequent decades.

As the old Russian saying goes, “*Бог троицу любит*” (God likes trinity), and the predilection for threes was prevalent in the 19th century philosophy and literature mainly due to the Hegelian dialectic, which in Poland was being transformed into the image and likeness of our historical and political needs. According to Karol Edmund Chojecki: “The number three, so mysteriously powerful in the dreams of old and new Utopians, was also such for Poland when it came to the enlightenment of the nation’s genius and directing it toward the difficult fight for its independence.”⁵ And in this moment, in particular after the failure of the January Uprising (1864) and the death of the three soothsayers of poetry, there was a need to take over their command over Polish souls by artists who used images instead of words. People still believed in the power of poetry but the poets who materialized back then in the literary field could not match – in the perception of the people – Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Krasiński with the power of their poetry. Cyprian Kamil Norwid was also unable to compete with them; his “dark” poetry, incomprehensible for his contemporaries, found its readers only among the generations that followed. The trinity of soothsayers was therefore being built anew, sometimes in a quite indecisive and arduous manner. The role and function of Mickiewicz was taken over quite early by Jan Matejko after painting *Skarga’s Sermon* (National Museum, Warsaw, 1864). The second position in the trinity was awarded to Artur Grottger who died in 1867 and did not live to witness the height of the appreciation for his body of work consisting mainly of patriotic drawings. The third position remained vacant and, like with the literary trinity, various artists were nominated. However, two names appeared incessantly: Józef Brandt and Henryk Siemiradzki. Jan Bołoz-Antoniewicz wrote about this directly in 1894: “When the Three Bards died, art became a national necessity – the nation’s spirit must be manifested in it. [...] By appearing, [Matejko and Grottger] relieve [...] the great poets, take over their care over the nation’s spirit, their mission, they pick up what fell over,

5] Karol Edmund CHOJECKI, *La Pologne captive*, F. H. Brockhaus, Leipzig 1864, p. 116.

carry from the past what risked being forgotten, spiritually unite what is politically torn.”⁶

The “triadicity” of the period was also visible in returning to old genealogical traditions and searching for equivalents of the ancient division into the epic, lyric and dramatic in genres and types of paintings or drawings. In this hierarchy, Matejko was seen as the epicist, Grottger as the lyricist, while the dramatist was, according to the beliefs of the time, primarily Brandt, with Siemiradzki as the runner-up. According to Jerzy Mycielski, comparing Polish painters in 1890: “The supreme [painters], with the wonderful themes of their enormous paintings, were masters heretofore unrivalled in Poland, the powerful epicist Matejko and genius lyricist Grottger.”⁷

In this race for fame and success, such painters as, for instance, the battle painter January Suchodolski and other “minorum gentium” painters specializing in genre painting were rejected relatively quickly. Interestingly, people did not mention Juliusz Kossak in this context, a very popular painter known for folksy and national, but still parochial, “*szlachta gawęda*” (stories of nobility), not in the vein of Mickiewicz or Słowacki but rather Wincenty Pol. Therefore, the general dispute concerning the third soothsayer of Polish painting took place over the line of Munich – St. Petersburg, which predetermined a series of overtones which weren’t just artistic. Two models of academic education clashed here, with a noticeable overall aversion to academicism in the Polish critique of the period. This aversion resulted from the conviction that a truly national soothsayer of poetry or painting should not, as it was believed, “live in foreign lands,” which were associated with foreign academies, and should be a self-generated talent whose artistic abilities should flow from the Polish soil, climate and customs. It was also obvious that they should be a native Pole, and here arose certain issues of a critical nature with our soothsayers. Only Siemiradzki had a name with a Polish suffix, while Matejko, Grottger and Brandt did not. Thus, they had to prove their Polishness with other means in addition to their works of art. Brandt emphasized that, despite his German sounding name, he was a painter “from Warsaw.” Grottger wasn’t associated with his grandfather from Hungary, and Matejko was

6] *Katalog ilustrowany Wystawy Sztuki Polskiej od roku 1764-1886*, ed. Jan BOŁOZ-ANTONIEWICZ, Dyrekcja Powszechnej Wystawy Krajowej, Lwów 1894, p. 19.

7] Jerzy MYCIELSKI, *Sto lat dziejów malarstwa w Polsce 1760- 1860. Z okazji wystawy retrospektywnej malarstwa polskiego we Lwowie 1894*, edn. 3, Spółka Wydawnicza Polska, Kraków 1902, p. 393.

conditionally accepted with the explanation that it is perhaps a Lithuanian name, like Domejko or Dowejko, as popularized in *Pan Tadeusz* (*Master Thaddeus*, an epic poem by Adam Mickiewicz). Matejko himself, despite having a Bohemian father, declared he was a Pole very early on, and a particularly important moment in this matter was his rejection of the position of the director of the Academy in Prague in 1874. In his letter to the committee of the Academy in Prague, he wrote: “I can have friendship for Czechs, like I have a cordial friendship today, but to my land, Poland, my love belongs [...] it is the sign of the limitless attachment to one’s own, even if meagre, home, moving it above all abundances, even so similar and related like yours.”⁸

Nonetheless, the situation of Henryk Siemiradzki, despite his Polish name, was distinctive. I don’t want to delve in detail into the issue of his nationality here, which was analyzed many times from various perspectives.⁹ It’s enough to state that he was a Pole for the Poles and often a Russian for the Russians, although there was a certain veiled hesitation and uncertainty here, and there were attempts to reconcile this in the spirit of “Slavic solidarity,” which was impossible from the political perspective, yet still postulated. For example, the obituaries published after the painter’s death in 1902 emphasized that the president of Warsaw Sokrates Starynkiewicz died in the same year, and he was very good for the city despite being a Russian.¹⁰ The sharp riposte in the Polish language press to Vladimir Stasov’s view that Siemiradzki was a representative of the “Polish school of painting,” postulated by this critic, gives much to think about,¹¹ although the discussions here rather concerned the assignment of this “school” to the academic and antique approach of the 19th century painting than declarations

8] Quoted after: Maria SZYPOWSKA, *Jan Matejko wszystkim znany*, Agrotechnika, Warszawa 1988, p. 235. Author doesn’t provide addressee nor the date.

9] There are numerous publication dedicated to Siemiradzki, starting from the book by Józef DUZYK, *Siemiradzki. Opowieść biograficzna* (Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1986), to very extensive materials published by the Polish Institute of World Art Studies in the series “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2016, vol. IV. Earlier, detailed comments on this topic had been included in the book Waldemar OKOŃ, *Henryk Siemiradzki – alegoria żywa*, in: idem, *Alegorie narodowe. Studia z dziejów sztuki polskiej XIX wieku*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 1992, pp. 147-166.

10] An article about Starynkiewicz was published “St. Petersburg Viennese” (1902, no. 224, p. 17, the statement signed under the pseudonym “Poljak”) to commemorate his burial in Warsaw on 13 August 1902. We read that “Poles and Russians are fighting for his soul” and that among the Poles there were chauvinists who “did not give the Russians the right to call Siemiradzki a Russian artist”.

11] “Kraj”, 1892, no. 16, p. 287.

concerning the artist's nationality.¹² There were also difficulties concerning the nature and type of paintings made by the author of *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis* (1889). Even with the sincerest intentions, it was difficult to classify the majority of Siemiradzki's paintings as Polish national paintings, and this was the type of painting that a third soothsayer should do. Naturally, it was easier to classify Józef Brandt's paintings as such; they were perceived not just as purely exceptional paintings but primarily as values that described the spirit of the Polish nation, such as zest and vibrancy, and – most of all – the direct connection with our heroic “Eastern Borderland” history, continuously alive and present in the Polish culture of the 19th century. All disputes, however, were interrupted by Siemiradzki's donation of *Nero's Torches* in 1879 to Kraków, for 50th anniversary of artistic work of Józef Ignacy Kraszewski. This gift was provided by the artist “for the purpose of placing it in the Kraków Cloth Hall,” and it was accepted with the highest admiration and praise. Thus, the second great donor after Matejko revealed himself, who – with no heed to the difficulties linked with making such a large painting – selflessly gifted it to Poland and Poles; perhaps they were Poles from Galicia, but they indirectly represented the entire Polish Nation. This unexpected gift started the collection of the National Museum, and Siemiradzki's generosity encouraged other notable Polish artists to donate their works to the Museum's collection. At that moment, everyone forgot the unfavourable reviews of another painting of the Master: *Chopin playing the Piano in Prince Radziwiłł's Salon*, where the topic chosen by the painter, more intimate than antique scenes of Polish history, did not meet the very high requirements posed for pieces made by soothsayers of painting¹³ *Nero's Torches* redeemed all of the artist's “sins”, drawing upon the tradition of viewing the history of ancient Rome and its fall as analogous to the history of imperial Russia, as popularized mainly in *Irydion* by Krasieński (1836), but also upon the allegorical presentation of spiritual strength opposing an external overwhelming violence. The character

12] Fragments of V. Stasov's statement from his article *From the trip around the Europe* published in Северный Вестник (North Herald) are quoted by Władysława JAWORSKA, *Poglądy Stasowa na malarstwo polskie XIX wieku*, “Materiały do Studiów i Dyskusji z Zakresu Teorii i Historii sztuki, Krytyki Artystycznej oraz Metodologii Badań nas Sztuką”, 1952, no. 2/3. See also Waldemar OKOŃ, *Stygnaąca planeta. Polska krytyka artystyczna wobec malarstwa historycznego i historii*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2002, p. 143.

13] See: J. K. [?] *Chopin u Radziwiłła – nowy obraz Siemiradzkiego*, “Przegląd Literacki”, suplement to „Kraj”, 1888, no. 1, p. 14.

of the gladiator painted by Siemiradzki, feeling compassion for the victims of Nero's tyranny, is a clear reflection of the warrior present in Polish art who hails the emperor and Roman citizens while going to die, as well as the sculpture of *Dying Gaul* (Musei Capitolini, Rome) who suffers far from his fatherland, giving testimony to the courage in the face of his people's doom.¹⁴

In 1863, Aleksander Kraushar saw in Mickiewicz the poet of the present Poland, in Krasiński – of the old nobles' Poland, while in Słowacki – the poet of Poland reborn under the slogans of progress, freedom of thought and action, and anticlericalism.¹⁵ I don't know which of these areas can be assigned to Siemiradzki. He certainly wasn't a genre painter of contemporary or nobles' Poland. However, can he be compared to the author who didn't avoid the slogans of progress, freedom and anticlericalism? I hope that this will come to light in the following part of the discussion.

Finally, wishing to extend my paper no further, I want to present two scenes from the lives of our soothsayers of painting. We know that they were – as celebrities of the time – closely observed by the domestic public, not just the cultural one. Their steps were closely followed, letters noted when they came to and left the capital and other important cities in the country, banquets, receptions and formal academies were organized for them. In 1877, according to *Biesiada Literacka*, a reception was organized for Siemiradzki in Warsaw where the author of *Nero's Torches* made a toast to Jan Matejko and the entire event was honoured by Józef Brandt who sent a congratulatory letter in which he acknowledged the man of the evening himself.¹⁶ After the death of Siemiradzki, he was perceived as a glorifier of the highest aesthetic beauty, sacrificing his entire life and creative output for the Fatherland which needed him in the times of bondage, an artistic and patriotic “flower that grows on a volcano”. The cult of the Three Bards penetrating the way people thought about art at the time made Jan Matejko, during his trip to France in 1867, visited Artur Grottger, already gravely ill, and he wrote to his wife: “I was at Montmartre and visited Juliusz's grave, I cried when I saw him buried in a foreign land. He smiled at me from the medallion – that is how I felt

14] Waldemar OKOŃ, *Wizerunek gladiatora*, in: idem, *Alegorie narodowe...*, pp. 28-45.

15] Aleksander KRAUSHAR, *Kartki z pamiętnika Alkara*, vol. 2: 1858-1865, Gebethner & Wolff, Kraków 1913, p. 84.

16] See: “Biesiada Literacka”, 1877, no. 71, p. 288.

[...] I felt small and miserable by the shadow of his ghost – yet I placed my hands against his grave, asking for brotherly spiritual help. He did not repulse me. I felt.”¹⁷

This symbolic meeting of two Spirit Kings of painting and of poetry could end my paper, but I would like to mention one more text demonstrating that the presence of genius soothsayers in the 19th century Polish art resulted in the fact that other artists suddenly became smaller and the role of stalwart epigones was all that remained for them, or perhaps at most dexterous imitators of the best Masters of words and images.

Wiktór Gomulicki wrote about this in 1886: “Oh you! The grave that rose over classicism / The trinity of soothsayers like the trinity of cathedral towers! / To the soil you corral us with the strength of thunder? – Such are the mournful whimpering complaints / Of small bushes covered by the shadow of great oaks”.¹⁸

Only Stanisław Wyspiański, especially after the première of *The Wedding*, was seen as, according to Wincenty Lutosławski, “the heir to our soothsayers.”¹⁹ Nonetheless, could another soothsayer painter appear in a similar vein, complementing the old trinity, and, for example, could Piotr Michałowski, rediscovered after many years of being forgotten, play such a role in less Romantic times? I’m not so sure of that.

17] Quoted after: M. SZYPOWSKA, op. cit., p. 158. The author does not provide the exact date of the letter.

18] Witold GOMULICKI, *Poezje*, Warszawa 1886, Quoted after: H. MARKIEWICZ, op. cit., p. 62.

19] Wincenty LUTOSŁAWSKI, *Wesele*, “Słowo Polskie”, 1901, no. 207, p. 13. W. OKOŃ, *Stygńska planeta...*, pp. 154-185.

LEONÉE ORMOND

King's College

FREDERIC LEIGHTON AND THE POETS

The British painter Frederic Leighton was born in Scarborough in Yorkshire in the North of England in December 1830. His father was a doctor, and the family lived for a time in London where Frederic attended University College School. He showed a talent for drawing from an early age, and took inspiration from the travels through Germany, Switzerland and Italy which his father organised. On his first visit to Rome, Frederic and his sister Alexandra took lessons in Latin from a priest, and he was given art lessons. The boy drew the sights of Rome and remained fascinated by the models standing in the Piazza di Spagna, all hoping to find work. During their travels, Leighton's father, an amateur philosopher, directed him towards the books of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, while also introducing his son to the work of his own favourite poet, George Gordon Lord Byron. His father probably had a part to play in the young Leighton's appreciation of Thomas Percy's collection of *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, an anthology of late medieval poetry and traditional ballads, first published in 1765.

On later journeys the family travelled to Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt and then, in the winter of 1845-1846, they were back in Italy, where Leighton, now aged fifteen to sixteen, enrolled as a student at the Academy in Florence, before returning to Frankfurt in the following summer. Here, in Frankfurt, he received his most important training as an art student at the Städelsches Kunstinstitut. The Städel helped

to promote his knowledge of literature, directing him towards the works of Dante Alighieri, William Shakespeare, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Heinrich Heine and the Italian poets of the Renaissance. Later, he would talk of “the atmosphere of Faust and the Niebelungen Lied [...] in which, as a German student, I lived for many years.”¹ He would tell of his liking, in his early days as a painter, for the work of the Italian fourteenth century writer, Giovanni Boccaccio, “partly by the example of my master Steinle, for whom I had, and have retained, a great reverence, and who was fervently medieval. For a long time, I treated none but subjects from the Italian Middle Ages – going to history, Dante, Boccaccio, and preferring in Shakespeare the Italian plays.”² It is significant, and another indication of the breadth of his reading, that, a few years later, Leighton sent a German translation of the works of Geoffrey Chaucer to Edward Steinle, as a thank you for his teaching and as an introduction to a poet whom Leighton himself admired.

In 1850, he met another student, Count Enrico Gamba from Piedmont. They became great friends, and their teacher, Steinle, drew them together. Partly under Gamba’s influence, Leighton became increasingly interested in Italian art and literature. The most important painting of his Frankfurt period, *The Death of Brunelleschi*, of 1852, now in Leighton House in London, takes the great Florentine architect of the 15th century as its subject.

In August 1852, Leighton, then twenty one, set out for Rome, the leading training ground in Europe for artists. As he neared Italy, he wrote “Italy rises before my mind. Sunny Italy! [...] I am about again to tread the soil of that beloved country, the daydream of long years is to become a reality. I am enraptured!”³ He met Gamba in Verona, and they travelled on through Venice and Florence. In Venice Leighton particularly remembered Shakespeare and *The Merchant of Venice*: “you think of Shakespeare’s exquisite verses on what he never saw but with the eye of his boundless fancy; you are sitting with Jessica and Lorenzo (that is his name, I think) on a bank of violets.”⁴

On 19 November 1852 they reached Rome, a hive of foreign art students. Initially, the city, which he had not seen since childhood, disappointed Leighton. “First, I expected to find an *atmosphere* of high art

1] Joseph COMYNS CARR, *Some Eminent Victorians*, Duckworth, London 1908, p. 98.

2] J. COMYNS CARR, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

3] Emilia Russell BARRINGTON, *The Life and Letters of Frederic Leighton*, 2 vols, George Allen, London 1906, vol. I, p. 62.

4] E. R. BARRINGTON, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 79-80.

[...] in this I have been completely disappointed; of the numberless artists here, scarcely any can call themselves historical painters, and Gamba and I, who hoped for emulation, are thrown completely on ourselves.”⁵ He could only find a small studio in the Via della Purificazione, near Palazzo Barberini. His eyesight was troubling him, and he knew very few people. “I suffer with my eyes [...] my wings are clipped [...] I feel as if blighted”, he wrote in early 1853, in a letter to his former master, Edward Steinle.⁶ The winter weather did not help.

Things began to improve when he made friends and started going to parties. He would breakfast, with other artists, at the Caffè Greco and the Trattoria Lepre. One friend, probably Hamilton Aidé, remarked that, while most artists were shy, Leighton’s “evenings were passed in the best society.”⁷ The crucial change in Leighton’s mood came in February 1853, when he was twenty-two, and met the former opera singer, Adelaide Sartoris, who sang under her maiden name, Adelaide Kemble, and her husband, Edward Sartoris. Adelaide Kemble had gained fame for her performance in the title role of Vincenzo Bellini’s *Norma*. She gave up her theatrical career on marriage but continued to sing at social events.

This was the start of a deep and long lasting friendship. In the first seven weeks after their meeting Leighton saw the couple at least three times a week and dined with them “*en famille* four times”.⁸ Lord Forde, later Lord Cowper, said that Leighton “is inseparable from Mrs Sartoris (without scandal)”.⁹ Adelaide Sartoris’s sister, the actress Fanny Kemble, was also in Rome with them in the winter of 1853 and Leighton particularly enjoyed hearing her read from Shakespeare’s plays. Among other friends were the Laing family, whom Leighton already knew, and with whose daughter, Isabel, he toured the city.

Leighton met the young Italian artist Giovanni Costa, soon to be an intimate friend, at the artists’ festival in May 1853, when a donkey kicked over a beehive. Costa went to rescue the small donkey which could not escape from the bees, but, as he reports: “a young man with fair, curly hair, dressed in velvet, who, slipping on gloves and tying a handkerchief over his face, ran to liberate the poor

5] Ibid. p. 96.

6] Ibid. pp. 130-132.

7] *One who knew him well*, “The Times”, 28 January 1896, p. 7.

8] E. R. BARRINGTON, op. cit., vol. I, p. 124.

9] [Katrine Cecilia] COUNTESS COWPER, *Earl Cowper K. G. A Memoir* (privately printed, 1913), p. 54.

little beast. I started to do the same, but less resolutely, having no gloves; so I met him as he came back, and congratulated him, asking him his name. And in this way I first made the acquaintance of Frederick Leighton.”¹⁰

The second artist whom Leighton encountered in Rome was an English landscapist of thirty four, George Mason. Both Mason and Costa had been involved with the republicans in the revolutions of 1848-1849.

Leighton spent the latter part of the summer of 1853 in Germany, before travelling on to Vienna for treatment to his eyes. From there, he went to Venice and Florence, before coming back to Rome in January 1854. He took a studio in the Via Felice and worked on his painting of *Cimabue's Celebrated Madonna is Carried in Procession through the Streets of Florence* (fig. 81). This had been on his easel in the previous summer and he now returned to work on it as well as beginning a new picture, *The Reconciliation of the Montagues and Capulets over the Dead Bodies of Romeo and Juliet* (now in the Agnes Scott College in Decatur). Juliet was one of Fanny Kemble's most admired roles, and her recitations from the play may have been an inspiration to him.

The subject of the Cimabue painting comes from Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters* and shows the artist's *Rucellai Madonna* being carried from Cimabue's house to the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. At the center of the composition are the figures of Cimabue and his pupil Giotto, and, at the far right, with his back to us watching the procession, is Dante. Leighton had collected material for the painting during his time in Florence in the winter of 1853-1854.

Among the guests at Adelaide Sartoris's celebrated receptions and picnics, were the poets Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, soon to become good friends of the young painter. Adelaide Sartoris recited several Browning poems at one of these parties. Leighton found Browning “a never-failing fountain of quaint stories and funny sayings”.¹¹ Browning took to the young artist, while Elizabeth initially viewed him as a member of a smart, and superficial, circle.

During his time in Rome, the Brownings invited Leighton, with an American sculptress, Harriet Hosmer, for a weekend holiday in the hill town of Albano, south-east of Rome. The group devised stories about the ruins which they passed on their way. The Brownings described

10] Giovanni COSTA, *Notes on Lord Leighton*, “Cornhill”, vol. LXXV, March 1897, p. 374.

11] E. R. BARRINGTON, *op. cit.* vol. I, p. 146.

the difficulties facing poets as they worked with words, while Harriet Hosmer spoke about the “rigid substances of bronze and marble”. Leighton explained the problems in art of “distribution of color, foreshortening, and the like”.¹² Leighton escaped the summer heat of 1854 by going to Bagni di Lucca before returning to work in Rome all winter.

Leighton returned to London for the opening of the 1855 Royal Academy exhibition, where his paintings, and *Cimabue's Madonna* in particular, scored a triumph (fig. 81). It was purchased by Queen Victoria and remains in the Royal Collection (currently on loan to the National Gallery, London).

After a spell of two years in Italy, Leighton moved to Paris in the autumn of 1855. He told Edward Steinle: “My stay in Italy will always remain a charming memory to me; a beautiful, irrecoverable time; the young, careless, independent time! I have also made some friends here who will always be dear to me, and to whom I particularly attribute my attachment to Rome.”¹³

His friendship with the Brownings must have been one of those in his mind. We know that the poets admired *Cimabue* which, like two of Robert Browning's most famous poems, *Fra Lippo Lippi* and *Andrea del Sarto*, draws on the same history of Italian painting, by the Renaissance author and painter, Giorgio Vasari. The approach of the poet and the painter was not the same, however. Browning responded to the life story of the artists, while Leighton became absorbed by his own aesthetic creation. Friend as he was to so many painters and poets, Browning must have been fully aware of the parallels between the two arts.

The Brownings were also in Paris in the winter of 1855-1856. Browning, who had greatly admired *Cimabue's Madonna*, took his son, Pen, to see Leighton's painting of Orpheus rescuing Eurydice from Hades, *The Triumph of Music, Orpheus by the Power of his Art, Redeems his Wife from Hades*, which was exhibited in the 1856 Royal Academy exhibition. (untraced, sketch in Leighton House) Pen, then six years old, was inspired to write a short poem about the picture. Leighton asked for a copy to send to his mother.

12] Harriet HOSMER, *Letters and Memories*, ed. Cornelia CARR, Moffat Yard and Co., New York 1913, p. 109.

13] E. R. BARRINGTON, op. cit. vol. I, p. 191.

Browning told Harriet Hosmer that “There is great merit in it, the expressions are true, the composition simple”.¹⁴ Nevertheless, he explained to her privately that he thought that the general public would ask for a more poetic treatment of such a famous subject. Browning was sorry that John Ruskin did not defend Leighton when the critics attacked the painting, but his wife, Elizabeth, believed that Ruskin’s silence was a gesture of kindness. She wrote, with little enthusiasm, about a painting, which, by then, had aroused negative reports from the reviewers in London: “Poor Leighton – it has been a dreadful overthrow, the reception of his work, after the inordinate success, as I still think, of last year – I was sure he could not succeed this time – a poetical subject handled so unpoetically was beyond the conditions of success; but he is undeniably clever, if not highly imaginative, & cannot have deserved all the mud – pelting of all the newspapers.”¹⁵

Robert Browning admired two smaller paintings by Leighton which reflect the artist’s residence in Paris and which were also exhibited in 1856. In January 1856, Browning wrote to Harriet Hosmer, telling her: “He has a capital Pan enjoying himself in a dell, from a superb Italian model here, (the perfection of a man,) and a Venus, very clever too; and designs for perhaps a dozen delicious pagan figures; a sudden taste that has possessed him”.¹⁶ When these paintings, both sensuous nudes, were shown at the Royal Manchester Institution in 1856, they were accompanied by a quotation from John Keats’ poem *Endymion*:

“[...] O thou, to whom
Broad-leaved fig-trees even now foredoom
Their ripen’d fruitage [...]”.¹⁷

The paintings then travelled to America, in an exhibition of contemporary British art organized by William Michael Rossetti, but were removed on the west coast, after being seen as an offence to public decency.

Leighton remained in Paris, with breaks elsewhere, between 1855 and 1858. While there he painted a number of works with literary

14] H. HOSMER, op. cit., p. 66.

15] *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her Sister Arabella*, ed. Scott LEWIS, Wedgstone Press, Winfield, Kansas 2002, vol. II, p. 235.

16] H. HOSMER, op. cit., p. 60.

17] John KEATS, *Endymion: A Poetic Romance*, in: *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of John Keats*, introduction by Edward Hirsch, noted by Jim Pollock, Modern Library, New York 2001, p. 70 (251-253).

subjects. *The Fisherman and the Syren – from a Ballad by Goethe*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1858, shows the Syren pulling the young man into the water where he drowns. Leighton accompanied the painting with a translation of the final lines of Goethe’s poem *The Fisherman*: “Half drew she him, Half sunk he in, And never more was seen”.¹⁸

Both Leighton and the Brownings were in Rome for the winter of 1858-1859 (fig. 82), and in a letter of 8th December, to her sister, Henrietta, Elizabeth reported that “Robert is to submit to Mr Leighton – but this is a secret”.¹⁹ In fact, Leighton did indeed draw Browning, on March 28th 1859, and Elizabeth described it as “an exquisite pencil drawing”.²⁰ He also drew Elizabeth herself.

After his return to England, Leighton drew another Pan, as an illustration for one of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poems *A Musical Instrument*, published in the *Cornhill Magazine* for July 1860. This Pan is less human, and older, than the god of the earlier oil painting, displaying furry legs and the “hoofs of a goat”, as Elizabeth Browning describes it. His hair is set in ringlets and, as described in the poem, he plays a reed pipe he has just made on the riverbank.

“This is the way,’ laughed the great god Pan,
 (Laughed while he sat by the river!)
 ‘The only way since gods began
 To make sweet music they could succeed.’
 Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
 He blew in power by the river.”²¹

After Elizabeth’s death in 1861, Browning approached Leighton to design his wife’s tomb in the Protestant Cemetery in Florence. Leighton agreed, although he was not in Florence to supervise the work. A friend of Browning, Henry Cottrell, critical of Leighton’s design, wanted to make changes. Leighton responded to what Cottrell had done in 1864, telling Browning that the “execution was *impudently*

18] Johann Wolfgang GOETHE, *The Fisherman*, 1779, trans. Edgar A. Bowring, 1853. Accessible online: https://germanstories.vcu.edu/goethe/fischer_e.html.

19] *Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Letters to her Sister, 1846-1859*, eds. Leonard HUXLEY, John MURRAY, London 1929, p. 301.

20] *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her Sister Arabella*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 401.

21] Elizabeth BARRETT BROWNING, *A Musical Instrument*, in: *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*, eds Thomas J. COLLINS & Vivienne J. RUNDLE, Broadview Press, Peterborough 2005, p. 81.

bad”.²² Browning sided with the artist and the elegant neo-renaissance tomb, with the sarcophagus standing on six pillars, as designed by Leighton, is there in the Protestant Cemetery in Florence today.

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice (fig. 83), was once again the subject of a painting by Leighton in 1864, on this occasion accompanied in the catalogue by a Browning poem. This was originally published in prose, as *A Fragment*, but the poet eventually gave it the title *Orpheus to Eurydice*.

“But give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow!
 Let them once more absorb me! One look now
 Will lap me round for ever, not to pass
 Out of its light, though darkness lie beyond:
 Hold me but safe again within the bond
 Of one immortal look! All woe that was,
 Forgotten, and all terror that may be
 Defied, – no past is mine, no future: look at me!”²³

The painting is now in the artist’s former home, in Leighton House in Kensington.

In *Balaustion’s Adventure* of 1871, a version of the myth of Alcestis, Browning wrote a short passage praising another painting by Leighton, *Hercules wrestling with Death for the body of Alcestis*, (now in the Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Connecticut). This, as Browning notes, is a highly dramatic picture. Hercules, seen from behind on the right, fights with the almost hidden figure of Death, surrounded by grieving mourners:

“I know, too, a great Kaunian painter, strong
 As Herakles, though rosy with a robe
 Of grace that softens down the sinewy strength,
 And he has made a picture of it all.”

Browning ends this passage in the poem on a high note of praise:

22] *Letters of Robert Browning*, eds. Thomas J. WISE AND Thurman L. HOOD, John MURRAY, London 1933, p. 80.

23] The title of this poem is also given as *Orpheus and Eurydice* in some references. Robert BROWNING, *Orpheus to Eurydice*. Accessible online: <https://www.telelib.com/authors/B/BrowningRobert/verse/dramatispersonae/eurydiceorpheus.html#foot1>

“[...] I pronounce that piece
Worthy to set up in our Poikilé!”²⁴

We know that Browning, who had studied sculpture with William Wetmore Story in Rome, often modelled pieces in Leighton’s studio while the artist was working on the picture, and that they went together to a performance of an opera on the same subject, Christophe Willibald von Gluck’s *Alceste*, in 1871. It is clear from Leighton’s original thank you letter to Browning, written after receiving a copy of the poem, that he had not yet read the whole poem. When he did, he wrote again, on 16 August 1871, to say: “Last night I finished it & saw in the last lines what, if Vanity does not deceive me is a description of my poor picture. I should like to say something – but not a platitude. I shall say simply and sincerely “Thank you”. I know the value of the pen which has painted over again, and bettered in repainting, my insufficient work – and of the page in which you have given it a lasting home and an added dignity.”²⁵

Browning said of Leighton’s *Wedded*, shown at the Royal Academy in 1882 (Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney), that “I find a poetry in that man’s work I can find in no other”.²⁶ In the painting a couple stands clasped together under an archway against a background taken from the famous amphitheatre of Taormina in Sicily.

A few years later, in 1887, Browning wrote a poem for a painting by Leighton which was given the poem’s first line, *Yellow and Pale as Ripened Corn*, as a title. This untraced work was a portrait of Lena Dene, one of the sisters of the artist’s favorite model, Dorothy Dene. The poem was printed in the Academy catalogue.

[Picture of a little girl with golden hair and pale blue eyes]

“Yellow and pale as ripened corn
Which Autumn’s kiss frees – grain from sheath, –
Such was her hair, while her eyes beneath
Showed Spring’s faint violets freshly born.”²⁷

24] Robert BROWNING, *Balaustion’s Adventure*, 1871, p. 2672-2675, 2696-1697. Accessible online: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Balaustion%27s_Adventure/V

25] Frederic Leighton, letter to Robert Browning, 16 August 1871, Armstrong-Browning Library, Baylor University, Texas, L2 – 117.

26] E. R. BARRINGTON, op. cit., vol. II, p. 29.

27] Robert BROWNING, [*Picture of a little girl with golden hair and pale blue eyes*], Quoted after: Ernest RYHS, *Frederic Lord Leighton: Late President of the Royal Academy of Arts*, George Bell & Sons, London 1900, p. 129.

Browning sent the poem anonymously to Leighton, who realized the identity of the sender from the envelope.

Browning suggested other subjects to Leighton. In 1870 he recommended an idea from the *Odyssey* Book Four, describing how Menelaus and three companions held down Proteus, the old man of the sea, to ensure their escape. Leighton never carried it out. He was, above all, a compositionalist, responding to a subject aesthetically rather than concentrating on the narrative. He told Browning, "I have misgivings pictorially, about the men huddled, if *sufficiently*, in the skins of the beasts – but it is full of elements & I will hang it, for the present, gratefully in my memory which you have more than once helped to furnish."²⁸ Browning also suggested another subject from Homer, the killing of the Trojan Thyrsis by Turnus. Leighton told him "I often think of the Thyrsis subject which is so grand and to which I shall one day embolden myself – it is *horribly* difficult".²⁹

Leighton, then President of the Royal Academy, was among the pallbearers at Browning's funeral in Westminster Abbey in 1891, and, in the same year, Leighton's sister, Alexandra Sutherland Orr, published a biography of the poet.

Although Greek literature and legends are features of Leighton's work, he does not show any great enthusiasm for Latin literature, apart from his painting *Acme and Septimius* (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), painted in the late 1860s, and illustrating a sonnet by Catullus (fig. 84).

Towards the end of Leighton's life, he painted his sensuous, colour-rich picture of *The Garden of the Hesperides* (fig. 84), exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1892 and now in the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight. The three daughters of the evening god Hesperus are shown languorously guarding the sacred apples given to the earth by the goddess Hera. The art critic Frederic George Stephens records Leighton saying that the subject had been inspired by a passage from *Comus*, a 17th century poem by John Milton.³⁰ In the poem, the Attendant Spirit speaks of his return to "happy climes" and to

28] Leonée and Richard ORMOND, *Lord Leighton*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1975, p. 77.

29] L. and R. ORMOND, op. cit. p. 77.

30] *Frederic*, *Lord Leighton: Eminent Victorian Artist*, eds. Stephen JONES, Christopher NEWALL, Leonée ORMOND, Richard ORMOND, Benedict READ, Royal Academy of Arts, London 1996, p. 232.

“the liquid ayr
 All amid the Gardens fair
 Of Hesperus and his daughters three
 That sing about the golden tree.”³¹

We know that John Milton was one of Leighton’s favourite poets, and that his earlier painting *Samson and Delilah* (untraced) of 1858 took its subject from Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*. Milton’s *Comus*, dating from 1634, was a pastoral performance, presented at Ludlow Castle, describing the pagan god Comus’ unsuccessful attempt to capture a woman.

The Polish painter Henryk Siemiradzki was thirteen years younger than Leighton, so they would not have met in Rome, and it is not clear whether they did in fact ever meet. There are, however, certain parallels between them in their choice of subjects. Both painted glamorous women from literature and legends, often against landscape backgrounds, or set before the sea. Both painted the courtesan Phryne, the mistress of the Greek sculptor Praxiteles. In an untraced painting, *Phryne at Eleusis*, shown at the Royal Academy in 1882, Leighton painted Phryne nude against the background of sea and archway, with a distant landscape behind her. In 1889, Siemiradzki painted *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis*.

Among Leighton’s later Italian-inspired paintings is *Cymon and Iphigenia* of 1884, a subject taken from Giovanni Boccaccio, reminding us of his early enthusiasm for the author. Here the innocent Cymon is seen transfixed on discovering the sleeping form of Iphigenia in a woodland background, with the setting sun glimpsed behind. Again, there is a parallel here with Siemiradzki’s liking for background sea views in his paintings. Leighton’s picture captured the public imagination, and he regarded it as one of his finest works.

In a memoir of Leighton, published in 1906, Edgcumbe Staley notes that “In Boccaccio’s rendering of the story springtime is the season; Leighton has chosen the late summer”. Leighton himself felt that the painting of *Cymon and Iphigenia*, now in the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, represented “both my Art and my style [...] better than anything else I have done”.³²

31] John MILTON, *A MASK PRESENTED AT LUDLOW-CASTLE, 1634*, IN: JOHN MILTON, *COMPLETE SHORTER POEMS* ED. STELLA P. REVARD, WILEY-BLACKWELL, OXFORD 2009, p. 119.

32] Edgcumbe STALEY, *Lord Leighton of Stretton*, Walter Scott, Charles Scribner’s, London – New York, 1906, p. 127.

This is indicative of Leighton's later approach to the literary subject and represents his final position. Another statement of this, making clear some differences in his approach from that of either the Pre-Raphaelites in Britain or the Nazarenes in Germany, is outlined in a much earlier letter written to Steinle in December 1867. Leighton was responding to his former master's suggestion that they work together on an illustrated volume of Shakespeare's plays.

"I cannot agree about a complete illustration of the Shakespearian plays, those masterpieces already in existence as exhaustively finished works of art; it seems to me that in literature only those subjects lend themselves to pictorial representation which stand in the written word more as suggestion. Subjects perhaps which are provided in the Bible or in mythology and tradition in great variety, or are not already generally in possession of the minds of the spectators of living plays (e.g. the Greek Tragedies). It is for the most part a struggle with the incomparable, already existing complete – which is quite intimidating to my capabilities."³³

33] E. R. BARRINGTON, *op. cit.*, vol. II, 113.



81. Frederic Leighton, *Cimabue's Celebrated Madonna is Carried in Procession through the Streets of Florence*, 1855, oil on canvas, 231.7 × 520.9 cm, Royal Collection, on loan to the National Gallery, London. Photo in public domain.



82. Frederic Leighton, *Robert Browning*, 1859, pencil on paper, reproduced as the frontispiece to *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, Bell, London 1891. Photo in public domain.



83. Frederic Leighton, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, 1864, oil on canvas, 127 × 109.3 cm, Leighton House, London. Photo in public domain.



84. Frederic Leighton, *The Garden of the Hesperides*, 1892, oil on canvas, 169.5 cm, circular, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight. Photo in public domain.

MARKETING ACADEMISM? HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI'S STRATEGIES OF DISPLAY

“An artist can no longer work without public presentation, without the assertiveness and skill of an art dealer and without publicity in the daily press or propaganda publications financed by galleries” – writes Oskar Bätschmann in *Ausstellungskünstler. Kult und Karriere im modernen Kunstsystem*.¹ In his book he retraces the conversion of the artist, which had already started by the 18th century, from a “court” or “commissioned” artist (*Auftragskünstler*) to an “exhibition” artist (*Ausstellungskünstler*). This change would not have been possible were it not for the institutionalization of the public exhibition – the new medium that became “*sujet du délire du XIXe siècle*” (the subject of the XIX century’s frenzy), as stated, not without irony, by Gustave Flaubert (*Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, 1913).²

In fact, if in the first half of the century the artist’s status was reliant on official recognition and the means to symbolic and financial consecration were the Academy and the Salon, in its’ second half the “visibility” and position on the art market became of greater importance than

1] “Ohne die öffentliche Präsentation, ohne die Durchsetzungskraft und das Geschick von Kunsthändlern und ohne die Publizität in der Tagespresse oder den durch Galerien finanzierten Propagandaschriften kann ein Künstler nicht mehr arbeiten”. Oskar BÄTSCHMANN, *Ausstellungskünstler: Kult und Karriere in moderne Kunstsystem*, Dumont, Köln 1997, p. 123.

2] Accessible online: <https://dicocitations.lemonde.fr/citations/citation-104108.php>.

the official path.³ Contemporary art displays, not only world exhibitions, but also locally organised expositions of art lover societies and artistic associations, as well as public museums and art galleries became the place where hierarchy was defined. This evolution is clearly apparent in the marketing strategy of Henryk Siemiradzki, the most outstanding representative of Polish – and Russian – academism, connected to the Roman milieu throughout a considerable part of his career.

The market's gradual evolution and the accompanying modification of the main actors' actions, first and foremost those of the dealers and collectors, contributed to permanent changes in the "Arts Worlds".⁴ The Salon and the Academies retained part of their prestige, still playing an important role in building the career of a majority of artists, though they were subjected to a gradual evolution forced by the progressive artistic milieu's contestation of aesthetic norms and spheres of action. National and world exhibitions, dealers and artist's societies promoted works created in opposition to the old structures. The exponentially growing number of artists brought about the need to define original promotion strategies, both group and individual. Those ventures were actively supported by critics – artistic critique became a fully legitimate field of professional activity.

New artistic propositions catered to a new class of consumers, mostly the bourgeoisie. Responding to their needs the previous hierarchy was questioned, historical painting (*grand genre*) lost its dominating position to genre painting, portraiture, landscape and its spectacular dimension to panorama. Contemporary paintings started being seen as a capital investment and an artist's "standing-quotation" (*la cote*) became one of the important factors for the definition of a painting's value. They were shaped mostly by auction sales with spectacular increases in price.⁵ The public, including Salon regulars, was looking for novelties and turning their attention towards debutants. Crowds visited painters' ateliers, both those of established

3] See among others: Anne-Marie FUGIER, *La vie d'artiste au XIXe siècle*, Hachette, Paris 2007; Patricia MAINARDI, *The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993; Gérard MONNIER, *L'art et ses institutions en France*, Gallimard, Paris 1995; Raymonde MOULIN, *L'Artiste, l'institution et le marché*, Flammarion, Paris 1997 (1. edn.1992).

4] Howard S. BECKER, *Arts Worlds*, The University of California Press, Berkeley 1982.

5] The multiple sale of Jean-François Millet's *Angelus* being the most famous example of such an operation.

masters and those of ones only starting their careers, to buy paintings at an affordable price with hopes for future profits. The increasing demand started to shape supply, not only of artworks but also of „multiplied paintings” – reproductions and photographs.

Following initial resistance from the artists connected to the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture who saw public exhibition of their works as disparaging act of merchandising, the Paris and subsequently other European academies recognised the value of such exhibitions modelled after the Salon as a tool of confirmation of the reigning views on art and started using it to manifest their artistic monopoly.⁶ During the French revolution “independent” artists demanded the “opening” of the exhibitions to all interested and finally the dissolution of the Academy itself.⁷ Roman *Pontificia Insigne Accademia di Belle Arti e Letteratura dei Virtuosi al Pantheon* organised yearly contests and exhibitions of sacral art, and the Académie de France – showings of resident’s works (from 1809) but artists in the Eternal City also lacked exhibition space.⁸

The actions of Societies for the Encouragement of Arts (ger. *Kunstverein*, *Société des amis des arts* was formed in 1790 in Paris) and artists’ societies (*Künstlerverein*) since 1820 had a significant impact on the increase of temporary exhibitions that contributed to the introduction of contemporary art to public circulation, especially in German-speaking countries.⁹ Most of them such as *Verein der Kunstfreunde im Preussischen Staate*, founded in 1825 in Berlin, were formed in close relations, personal and ideological, with the Academic milieu. In Rome the expositions of the *Società degli Amatori e Cultori delle Belle Arti* (1829) at the Piazza del Popolo, the first of such institutions in Italy, were an alternative to popular expositions at the artists’ studios and single displays accompanying frequent diplomatic visits.¹⁰

6] The Académie Royale, protecting the Salon’s monopoly, held regularly since 1725, obtained a ban in 1776 on competing exhibitions organised by the Paris guild of painters and sculptors.

7] O. BÄTSCHMANN, op. cit., pp. 13, 58.

8] *Maestà di Roma, da Napoleone all’Unità d’Italia*, I: *Universale ed Eterna*; II: *Capitale delle Arti*, Roma, Scuderie Papali del Quirinale, Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna, ed. Stefano SUSINNO Electa, Milan 2003.

9] Walter GRASSKAMP, *Die unbewältigte Moderne. Kunst und Öffentlichkeit*, C. H. Beck, München 1989.

10] Rosanna MAGGIO SERRA, *I sistemi dell’arte nell’Ottocento*, in: *La Pittura in Italia. L’Ottocento*, ed. Enrico Castelnuovo, vol. II, Electa, Milan 1991, pp. 629-652; Giovanna MONTANI, *La Società degli Amatori e Cultori delle Belle Arti in Roma. 1829-1883*, PhD thesis, Università Roma Tre, 2007.

Mid-century with the establishment of the Second Empire in France, the greatest competition for artistic institutions, mostly the Salon was an increasingly powerful art market: auction houses and art galleries. Visits at the dealers on rue Laffite “the paintings street”,¹¹ or more so the Hôtel Drouot (opened in 1852) became an important part of social life for the Parisian bourgeoisie.¹² Art exhibitions started being organised in retail spaces (*Bonne-Nouvelle* grand store) or theatres (Odéon). Artists with established renown attempted to reach the audience without the intermediary in the form of official institutions – following Jacques Louis David’s example – the *The Sabine Women* exhibition in his atelier with paid admissions (1779). It was not only the domain of “innovators” like Gustave Courbet or Édouard Manet but also representatives of Academic circles or members of the *juste milieu* such as Henri Gervex or Félix Ziem.¹³ One must, however, remember that till the “era” of impressionism (the 1880s)¹⁴ the dealer’s support was dependant on an artist’s success at the Salon.¹⁵

Model cooperation from as early as 1820 between Adolphe Goupil, graphics publisher and dealer, and academic painter Paul Delaroche, showed how a dealer and an artist can work together to achieve international success,¹⁶ repeated in even greater scale in the case of Jean-Léon Gérôme (fig. 85).¹⁷ Since 1840 Goupil founded subsidiaries in London, New York, Berlin, Hague, Brussels and Vienna. He also supported the Paris and then international careers of Giovanni Boldini, Giuseppe

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- 11] Léa SAINT-RAYMOND, Félicie de MAUPEOU et Julien CAVERO, *Les rues des tableaux. Géographie du marché de l'art parisien, 1815-1955*, “ARTL@S Bulletin”, 2015 (4), no. 1. Accessible online.
- 12] Manuel CHARPY, *Le théâtre des objets. Espaces privés, culture matérielle et identité bourgeoise, Paris, 1830-1914*, PhD thesis, Université François Rabelais de Tours, 2010, pp. 1007-1084.
- 13] *Henri Gervex, 1825-1929*, Jean-François de CANCHY, Jean-Christophe COURVENNEC, Nice, 1992-1993, Paris-Musées, Paris, Bordeaux 1992. Léa SAINT-RAYMOND, *How to Get Rich as an Artist. The Case of Félix Ziem. Evidence from His Account Book from 1850 through 1883*, “Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide”, 2016, Spring, vol. 15, no. 1. Accessible online.
- 14] Harrison and Cynthia White date the new „dealer-critic” system’s birth to the beginning of the 1880: Harrison and Cynthia WHITE, *Canvases and careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1965.
- 15] Linda WHITELEY, *Art et commerce d'art en France avant l'époque impressionniste*, “Romantisme”, 1983, 40, pp. 65-76.
- 16] Pierre-Lin RENIÉ, *Delaroche par Goupil: portrait du peintre en artiste populaire*, in: *Paul Delaroche, un peintre dans l'histoire*, eds. Claude ALLEMAND-COSNEAU, Isabelle JULIA, exhibition catalogue Nantes/Paris/Montpellier, Musée des Beaux-Arts/RMN/Musée Fabre, Paris 1999, pp. 173-199.
- 17] *Gérôme & Goupil: art et entreprise*, ed. Hélène LAFONT-COUTURIER, exhibition catalogue, Paris/ Bordeaux, RMN/Musée Goupil, Paris 2000.

de Nittis and Mariano Fortuny. *Goupil & Cie* was the first enterprise that based its strategy on the turnover of high quality graphic reproductions and photographs of contemporary painting and sculpture.

An increase in international trade strengthened the role of Paris and London as market epicentres. Simultaneously other centres appeared: Berlin, Munich, Vienna which were joined in the 70s by New York. Dynamisation and dispersion of this new market was encouraged by World Exhibitions (London 1851), whose integral part were since 1855 (Paris) arts sections, as well as national exhibitions (*The Art Treasures of the United Kingdom*, Manchester, 1857). Great canvases by the masters of the historical school, from Hans Makart and Jan Matejko to Emanuel Leutze, had triumphant *tournées* around the metropolises of Europe and America. All those manifestations were of even greater importance, since opinions of the public visiting in crowds, professional critique, popular articles appearing in the press and, most importantly, the diffusion of paintings on postal cards and in albums increased the symbolic value of presented works.

In 1818 Louis XVIII inaugurated the *Musée des artistes vivants* at the Luxembourg Palace, which became the model for all such museum institutions in Europe and America. It was but a “temporary” museum – the works of “living artists” were to be in a quarantine of sorts before permanently making it to the Louvre collection, and only Ludwig I of Bavaria decided to fund the Neue Pinakothek a museum “für Gemälde aus disen und aus künftigen Jahrhunderten” (for paintings from this and future centuries) inaugurated in 1853.¹⁸ Starting from 1869 Munich was also home to international art exhibitions organised by artists connected with the “Isar Athens”. Rome had its *Regia Galeria d'Arte Moderna* (*Galeria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna*) funded in 1881, preceded by contemporary art galleries in Turin (1860) and Florence (1867).¹⁹ It was situated at the first floor of the new *Palazzo delle Esposizioni* erected in the fashionable Via Nazionale for the first international exhibition: the *Mostra Internazionale di Belli Arti* of 1883. The Venice Biennale of art (*Esposizione internazionale d'arte di Venezia*) taking place since 1895 strengthened Italy's position on the world art stage.

Thus in the last two decades of the century, societies of artists supported by patrons and critics created around Europe, in opposition to

18] Volker PLAGEMANN, *Das Deutsche Kunstmuseum, 1790-1870*, Prestel Verlag, München 1967, pp. 217-130.

19] J. Pedro LORENTE, *Les musées d'art moderne et contemporain: une exploration conceptuelle et historique*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2009, pp. 67-68.

official institutions of artistic life – les XX in Brussels, the *Secessions* in Munich, Vienna, Berlin, the *Nemzeti Salon* in Budapest, *Sztuka* in Krakow or Prague's *Mânes*, became the most important promotion centres for the “new art”.²⁰ Those new structures supported the development of artistic genres that were easier to commercialise: portrait, genre painting and landscapes. Artists modified their “offer” consciously. French painters offered to European (German and English) and American spectators mostly landscapes, whilst painting primarily portraits for their domestic market. Works for Paris exhibitions were more avant-garde than those destined to be exported, as exemplified by the output of Courbet for the German and Austrian market or Fantin-Latour's work for the British customer.²¹ The rivalry between *Secessions* influenced the homogenisation of the system of exhibitions and the means of constructing artistic careers on an international scale.

Henryk Siemiradzki pursued the same path as other members of the European “artistic elite” for the whole of his career.²² An academic painter and a sophisticated man of the world he was a member of the official milieu. His position on the cultural scene was best exemplified by his consecutive academic decorations, the position of professor at the Academy of Art in St. Petersburg, memberships of the Academies in Rome, Paris, Berlin, Turin, and Stockholm, the French *Légion d'Honneur*, Italian distinctions, double Probus Barczewski's prizes (1889 for *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis*, 1894 for the curtain of Słowacki Theatre in Krakow),²³ and, last but not least, medals at world exhibitions (Russian sections): in Vienna (1873, *Christ and the Harlot*), Philadelphia (1876, *Sale of Amulets*) and Paris (1878, *Nero's Torches*, *Shipwrecked Man [The Roman Beggar]*, *The Vase or the*

20] Béatrice JOYEUX-PRUNEL, *Les avant-gardes artistique 1948-1918*, Gallimard, Paris 2015.

21] Christian HUEMER, “*Une exposition (in)complète*”. *Courbet in Vienna, 1873*, “Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide”, 2012, Summer vol. 11, no. 2. Accessible online; *Fantin-Latour, à fleur de peau*, ed. Laure DALON, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Musée du Luxembourg, Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble, Flammarion, Paris 2016.

22] In the second half of the 19th century public recognition makes artists a new social elite group unconnected to the *Ancien Régime*, whose status is built on work, artistic calling and excellence in accordance with rules of promotion in a democratic system. Nathalie HEINICH, *L'Élite artiste. Excellence et singularité en régime démocratique*, Gallimard, Paris 2005. Publications in German refer to the most talented German and Austrian painters as *Künstlerfürsten: Liebermann. Lenbach. Stuck*, eds. Anke DAEMGEN, Janet ALVARO, exhibition catalogue, Stiftung Brandenburger Tor, Berlin 2009.

23] The only artistic prize on Polish soil, awarded from Probus Barczewski's foundation since 1886 by the Academy of Sciences and Letters [*Akademia Umiejętności*] in Krakow. It was destined for painters and authors of works on Polish history.

Woman?) – he also took part in the 1893 Chicago Exhibition (*Phryne, Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*). In 1880 in Melbourne he was the only artist in the Italian section to receive a medal for an oil painting (*Isaurian Pirates Selling their Booty*), despite Italy being represented by, among others, Vito D'Ancona, Giovanni Fattori and Silvestro Lega (fig. 86). A medal at the Paris exhibition in 1878 was an exceptional success which established Siemiradzki's position as a prominent figure in the international artistic circles. To the public he remained forever the author of *Nero's Torches* (or, as the author preferred to call it, *Candlesticks of Christianity*) – one might say that this was one of the most popular works of painting of its time.

Siemiradzki began his career as *Auftragskünstler*. He received his first imperial commission shortly after graduating St. Petersburg's Academy of Arts and being awarded a scholarship for a trip to Rome:²⁴ Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich Romanov (son of Alexander II), future President of the Academy (1876-1909), commissioned *Christ and the Harlot* – the painting was acquired by Alexander Alexandrovich (future tsar Alexander III) after the Vienna World's Fair in 1873 to be included in the imperial collection. Grand Duke Alexander bought the painting *A Roman Orgy from the Imperial Era* presented at the academic exhibition in St. Petersburg in 1872. Grand Duke Nicholas Konstantinovich (Grand Duke Constantine's son, nephew of Alexander II) acquired the – made on commission? – painting *The Studio of a Fashionable Artist of the 18th Century (A French Artist of the Time of Louis XV Paints the Portrait of a Marquise)* for his collection.²⁵ Siemiradzki also completed smaller works for other members of the imperial family and members of St. Petersburg's bourgeoisie (Great Princess and future Empress Mary Sophie Frederica Dagmar or entrepreneurs Alexander Wagulin and Yury Nechaev-Maltsov). Despite protests, he was also officially commissioned for wall decorations at the orthodox cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, between 1876-1877, and for paintings for the local Historical Museum in 1882.²⁶

24] The painting *Alexander of Macedon and his Doctor Philip (Alexander of Macedon's Trust in his Doctor Philip)*, for which Siemiradzki received a gold medal and a scholarship, was incorporated into the collection of the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts.

25] See Nina MARKOWA, *Some Ideas about French Artist of the Time of Louis XV Painting a Portrait of a Marquise by Henryk Siemiradzki* in this volume.

26] Earlier in 1871 Siemiradzki was commissioned for a painting of Saint Luke the evangelist according to F. Briullov's draft for the Isakievski Sobor in St. Petersburg.

Siemiradzki's future position in the Russian artistic world was most shaped by tsar Alexander III purchase of *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis* from the artist's exhibition at the Imperial Academy of Arts in January of 1889.²⁷ *Phryne* was shown separately in the so called Raphael Room and its' presentation becoming the most important event of the capitals cultural season.²⁸ Alexander III used the occasion to announce his intention of forming a museum for contemporary Russian art open to artists of all nationalities inhabiting his state.²⁹ This new museum would in its' announced shape be in opposition to the actions of "new school" collectors of Russian painting connected with Moscow, foremost Pavel Tretyakov founder of the Tretyakovska Gallery, whilst fitting within the broad "unification" cultural policy of the emperor. *Phryne*, first painting destined for the future collection, initially shown at the Ermitage made its way to the newly opened "Museum of Alexander III" in 1897 finally cementing Siemiradzki's position as one of or the most important academic painter of the Russian Empire (fig. 87).

Siemiradzki settled in Rome in 1872 considerably expanding the circle of his artistic and social contacts. The former included not only members of the Eternal City's international colony, with Poles and Russians at the helm, but also passing eminent figures from the world of art. The artist's atelier, on Via Margutta, then moved to Via Gaeta since 1883, served as a "business card", opened to visitors – Wednesday was the visiting day (fig. 88). Here took place first showings of new works, enjoying great interest from the public and critics. Among visitors were Queen Margaret (Margherita Maria Teresa Giovanna di Savoia), members of Rome's political and intellectual milieu. The artists had close ties with representatives of official Russian circles – Grand Duke Nicholas paid a visit to the workshop as early as 1872, and so did in 1891 Grand Duke Pavel Alexandrovich (brother of Alexander III), Siemiradzki was a common guest of the embassy, and the ambassador was often at his studio. All the while he maintained contacts with the St. Petersburg academic sphere, where his new paintings were presented and where he went through the ranks of his artistic career.

27] Aleksander III also purchased *After the Example of the Gods* (4th version) from the exhibition.

28] The exhibition enjoyed great interest from the public having more almost 30 600 visitors in the span of two months; "Художественные новости", 1889, 5, p. 123.

29] Павел КИМОВ, Г. И. *Семирадский и Александр III*, „Вісник Харківської державної академії дизайну і мистецтв” (Pavel КИМОВ, Г. И. *Siemiradzki and Alexander III*, "Bulletin of the Kharkiv State Academy of Arts and Design"), 2002, vol. 9, pp. 65-72.

The decision to stay in Rome was motivated mainly on artistic grounds but formed Siemiradzki's new exposition strategy. The "commissions artist" had to become an "exhibition artist" as well, intentionally utilising the cultural infrastructure of Europe's greatest cities without forgetting Poland. He made use of all aforementioned possibilities taking part in international exhibitions organised by the Academies of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, Berlin or Rome, by artistic and artists' societies, particularly the *Kunstverein* in Munich (in *Glaspalast*) and Vienna (in *Künstlerhaus*), Berlin and the *Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych* (the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts) in Warsaw (including the 1900 exhibition marking the opening of its' new seat), the *Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych* (the Society of Friends of Fine Arts) in Krakow and Lwów (Lemberg, Lviv). Siemiradzki also collaborated with commercial art galleries such as Charles Sedelmeyer in Paris, Hugo Othmar Miethke in Vienna, E. A. Fleischmann Hofkunsthändler in Munich, Arthur Lichtenberg in Breslau, Gracjan Unger and Aleksander Krywult in Warsaw. The success of consecutive presentations brought commissions for author's "copies" or versions of the paintings. The artist took an active part in the preparation of those ventures. Similar to all painters specializing in large format compositions, he was in possession of his own equipment for rolling canvases, which aided work in the atelier and the transportation of paintings. He oversaw the publication as well as the diffusion of photographic documentation and graphic reproductions, attentively followed reactions of critics and opinions published in popular newspapers.³⁰

The history of Siemiradzki's presence in European artistic centres begins with the presentations of *A Roman Orgy from the Imperial Era* at the January 1872 *Münchener Kunstverein* exhibition at Königlicher Glaspalast. He became a household name a year later following the success of his *Christ and the Harlot* at the Vienna World's Fair. Before sending it to Vienna from St. Petersburg he showed the canvas to the public in Warsaw. The artist showed the *Sale of Amulets* at the St. Petersburg academic exhibition in 1875, it would find its way to the Russian section of the World Exhibition in Philadelphia the following year to be shown even later in Vienna's *Kunstverein* and Warsaw's *Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych*. Such would be the case of several subsequent paintings, their presentations strengthening the artist's

30] Anna MASŁOWSKA, *Henryk Siemiradzki's Painting on the European Market of Photographic Reproductions of Works of Art*, in this volume.

international position and bringing in considerable revenue.³¹ Limits on this paper's length render it impossible to account the history of exhibitions of Siemiradzki's every work – for the sake of example we should therefore recount the reception of his two most important masterpieces *Nero's Torches* and *Christian Dirce*.

Nero's Torches sparked interest even before its completion in 1876. It was seen in the atelier, among others by painters Domenico Morelli, Hans Makart and Lawrence Alma-Tadema, and when finished, by the Russian ambassador as well as future Queen Margarita.³² Then followed a triumphant *tournée* of the painting: from Rome, through Munich, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Warsaw, Krakow, Lwów, Breslau, the Paris World Exhibition of 1878, Poznań, Berlin, Prague, Moscow (1878-1879), London, Dresden, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Zurich, again to Krakow in 1881 where it would remain forever – donated by the artist in 1879 (marking the jubilee of the writer Józef Ignacy Kraszewski's) to the future National Museum.³³

His last great canvas *Christian Dirce* (conceptualised in 1882) was also presented for the first time in the painter's atelier in march 1897, with Queen Margarita again among guests, and then at the *Seconda Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte* (Biennale) in Venice (Russian section), from April to October of the same year.³⁴ It arrived to St. Petersburg in early 1898, but – *signum temporis* – for an exhibition at the St. Petersburg Artists Association (*Петербургское общество художников*) rather than at the Imperial Academy. It was designated number one in the exposition's catalogue and Siemiradzki was accepted as a member of the society, which was regarded as an honour for the organization.

31] Siemiradzki wrote about the financial side of his exhibitions in his letter to S. Sokołowski: "Browsing through accounts from 89-90 I found the following numbers expressing pure income that flowed into cash box from the exhibition of *Fryne in Eleusis* in three cities encompassed by today's program as well Krakow = 600 zł. r./ so approximately- 1400 Francs/ Bucharest – 2000 Fr./ Pest – 2600 Fr./ summa – Fr. 6000." Henryk Siemiradzki to Stanisław Sokołowski, Roma, via Gaeta 1, villino Siemiradzki, 30 November 1898, manuscript Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, rkps 7490, f. 44- 45.

32] Archivio di Pontificio Istituto di Studi Ecclesiastici, Roma (PISE), 22 – Siemiradzki Legacy, file 1-Henryk Siemiradzki, letters to parents: Roma [first quarter 1876], f. 431v-432; Roma, [first quarter 1876], f. 436v; Roma [second quarter 1876], f. 441-442v.

33] Siemiradzki's gesture encouraged other artists to donate works to the future museum belonging to the city of Krakow but considered to be the first National museum in Poland.

34] Maria НІТКА, *Organizacja i recepcja wystaw Dirce chrześcijańskiej H. Siemiradzkiego w Europie Zachodniej i Środkowej: z Rzymu do Wenecji i dalej – do Lwowa, Krakowa, Bukaresztu, Budapesztu i Wrocławia*. Paper held at International Conference *Sztuka ponad granicami. Instytucje i artyści: austriacy, czescy, polscy i węgierscy w XIX i XX wieku*. KUL Lublin 01.03-02.03 2018.

After the exhibition was moved to Moscow, the painting was its' closing accent. *Dirce* was shown in St. Petersburg once more, during the People's Exhibition, organised by the St. Petersburg Artists Association for a less wealthy crowd. Despite high turnout, higher in St. Petersburg – a city more favourable to the artist than Moscow – the exhibitions didn't match the success of earlier displays of *Nero's Torches*.³⁵ The painting was also shown to the public in Warsaw, Lviv, Krakow, Bucarest, Budapest and Breslau – presentations were held in the *Kunstvereine*, except in Breslau where they were at the commercial Lichtenberg Gallery. Stanisław Sokołowski, secretary of Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych in Lwów (Lemberg, Lviv), the artist's agent served as intermediary for their organisation. The symbolic success of those showings failed to translate into a financial one. *Dirce*, Siemiradzki's last programme work, did not find a buyer, even in Moscow, Russia's new centre of art collecting.³⁶ Donated by the artist to the Warsaw Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, it was transferred by his wife Maria in 1903 to Zachęta's collection (today at the National Museum in Warsaw).

An "exhibition painter" needed support of a Europe-famous dealer in gaining the interest of art collectors. Following success at the Paris World Exhibition – despite his failure at the Salon a year later, where he displayed *A Dance among Swords*³⁷ – Siemiradzki attempted cooperation in 1880 with Charles Sedelmeyer, a dealer from Vienna who operated out of Paris since the 1860s and directed the careers of Mihály Munkácsy as well as Václav Brožík. He organised European *tourneés* for their most famous canvases. His Paris gallery was a true "Salon of artists from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy" such as Eugen Jettel, August Pettenkofen, Franz Rumpler or Eduard Charlemont.³⁸ Sedelmeyer skilfully played on the rivalry between trading and exhibiting

35] Dariusz KONSTANTYNOW, „*Dirce chrześcijańska*” w Petersburgu i Moskwie (1898), „Biuletyn Historii Sztuki”, 2016, vol. LXXVIII/4, pp. 591-621.

36] St. Petersburg was still the centre of aristocratic collecting while Moscow after 1860 was home to a new generation of collectors of new (including Russian) art: Pavel Tretyakov, the Bachrushynov brothers, Savva Mamontov, and from the beginning of the century the brothers Morozov and Sergei Shchukin. The moving of Nikolai Petrovich's and Sergei Rumiancev's collections from St. Petersburg to Moscow (opened in 1831, renamed to Moscow Public Museum of Rumiancev in 1862) can be seen as symptomatic.

37] Paul MANTZ, *Le Salon IV*, „Le Temps”, 20.06.1879, p. 1.

38] Christian HUEMER, *Charles Sedelmeyer (1837-1925): Kunst und Spekulation am Kunstmarkt in Paris*, „Belvedere: Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst”, 1999, vol. 2 (Fall), pp. 4-19. Idem, *Paris-Vienna, Modern Arts Markets and the Transmission of the Culture 1873-1937*, PhD thesis, The City University of New York, New York 2013, pp. 38-60. Accessible online.

institutions in Europe. In 1888 he held at the Crystal Palace a presentation of paintings from authors connected to his gallery from “Germany, France, Belgium, England, & c., arranged according to countries, [and] a special cabinet of old or specially famous living masters – [David] Teniers, Gerard Dou, Hans Makart, Munkácsy. Here is the great canvas by Siemiradzki, entitled *The Living Torches of Nero*, which was shown in the Russian section and obtained the medal of honour at the Paris Exhibition of 1878” as reported by *The Times*.³⁹ *Nero’s Torches*, and *Shipwrecked Man (The Roman Beggar)* were presented at the Victoria Gallery with paid admissions in contrast to The Long Gallery’s free exhibition.⁴⁰

Siemiradzki did however not further cooperate with Sedelmeyer or any other dealer in Paris that could support his career in western Europe or introduce him to the growing American market. *After the Example of the Gods* and a draft of the Krakow’s Słowacki Theatre’s curtain were his last works presented in Paris at the Gallery Georges Petit in 1900 during the *Exposition rétrospective d’oeuvres des Peintres Polonais (1800-1900)*, organised of the occasion of the World Exhibition by Cyprian Godebski. He did not take Paul Mantz’s advice, written in his review of 1879’s Salon, to withdraw from the “toxic entourage” of “Rome’s school of mannerists with false tones that seem to wish the return of decadence”.⁴¹ Neither did he choose the career of a member of the international *juste milieu*, its stylistic eclecticism and sometimes superficial *modernité élégante*.⁴² Its painters knew how to skilfully combine official recognition by the Academy and the Salon with the benefits of a growing art market.⁴³ Though the Polish painter did not follow in Munkácsy’s and Brožík’s “international” steps he could not avoid similar criticism in his own country.⁴⁴

39] “The Morning Post” (London), 31 May 1880, no. 33, 675, p. 6; “The Times” (London), 18 May 1880, no. 29, 884, p. 10.

40] “The Standard” (London), 13 May 1880, no. 17, 414, p. 1.

41] P. MANTZ, *OP. CIT.*, p. 1.

42] *Giuseppe de Nittis. La modernité élégante*, eds. Dominique MOREL, Emanuela ANGIULI et al., exhibition catalogue, Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, Paris Musées, Paris 2010.

43] Robert JENSEN, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, pp. 138-166.

44] Judit BOROS, *A Hungarian Painter in Paris. Mibály Munkácsy career between 1870 and 1896*, in: *Munkácsy a nagyvilágban / Munkácsy in the World*, ed. Ferenc GOSZTONYI Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest 2005, p. 33-86. Marketa THEINHARDTOVA, *Vaclav Brožík – Czech Painter of Histories in Paris*, in: *Vaclav Brožík (1851-1901)*, ed. Nadezda BLAZICKOVA-HOROVA, Národní galerie, Prague 2003, pp. 111-129.

Siemiradzki's paintings, though present on the European artistic stage and suggestively shaping the public's imagination, didn't conquer the new art market. They could not have as they were part of the surpassed *grand genre*. They failed for a use of themes and formats which missed the expectations of the contemporary art "consumer", and because of the academic-museum scale of the artistic project which the painter carried out since his debut at the St. Petersburg's Academy of Arts and his first official commissions in the Empire's capital. A project whose embodiment were manifesto canvases *Phryne*, *Nero's Torches* and *Dirce*, presented to this day in the National Museums of Warsaw and Krakow as well as at the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg.



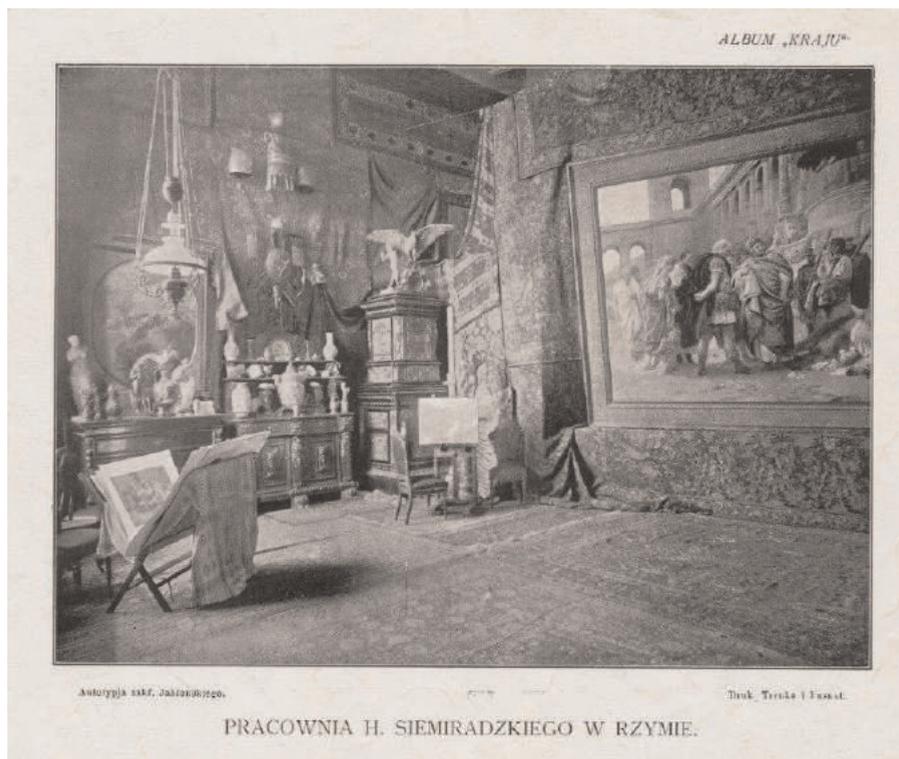
85. Goupil & Cie eds., Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Cléopâtre devant César* (Cleopatra and Caesar, 1866), before 1909. Photo in public domain.



86. Ludovico Hart, *Scene in Italian Fine Arts Gallery*, Melbourne International Exhibition, 1880. Photo in public domain.



87. SW, *Visitors at the Alexander III Russian Museum, Gallery XXV, Academic Paintings*, 1914. Photo in public domain.



88. Jabłoński i Ska eds., *Henryk Siemiradzki's atelier Rome*, Portfolio “Kraj”.

VERONICA-IRINA BOGDAN

Museum of Russian Academy of Arts, St. Petersburg

HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI ON THE WORLD AND INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

The organization of the Russian department at world exhibitions was a matter of importance not only from the economic, but also from the political point of view. It symbolized the prestige of a country, its place in the world. Although for the European powers the economic aspect was the main one, the art department played a significant role. The organization of the art department in Russia was entrusted to the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg. All expenses were covered by the Russian government.

The invitations for Vienna World's Fair (*Weltausstellung*) in 1873 were sent to venerable professors and artists Ivan Aivazovsky, Aleksei Bogoliubov, Fyodor Bronnikov, Konstantin Makovsky, Vasily Perov, but also to Academy pensioners Vasily Polenov, Ilya Repin, Pavel Kovalovsky and Henryk Siemiradzki.

Being encouraged by the invitation Siemiradzki wrote to Piotr F. Iseyev, Academy of Arts conference secretary, that the heir's acquisition of the painting *A Roman Orgy from the Imperial Era* had given him the opportunity to tackle the *Christ and the Harlot* (*Christ and Sinner*), which he had been painting for Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich. It was the *Christ and the Harlot* that the artist was going to show in Vienna.¹

1] Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg (= RGIA). Российский государственный исторический архив, Санкт-Петербург, ф. 789, Академия художеств, оп. 8 (1872), д. 55, ч. 2, л. 44. (Fond 789, ser. 8 [1872], rec. 55, 2, f. 44).

Many artists did not have enough time to send paintings to St. Petersburg, as required by the rules. Aivazovsky, working in Florence, asked for a postponement for some artists who were at that time in Italy. He mentioned that “Siemiradzki is painting a beautiful picture”, but it could not be finished by the end of January.²

Only on 10th March 1873, Siemiradzki notified the Board that the picture had been sent to St. Petersburg, asking for permission to be present during unpacking. He asked for the box to be opened only in his presence.³

Christ and the Harlot was the first picture painted in Italy. Compared with the *Roman Orgy from the Imperial Era* – his first picture as an artist, still stylistically sustained in an academic manner – I mean first of all a dark background, *Christ and the Harlot* (fig. 1) was a big step forward. Italy changed Siemiradzki – his palette lightened, which was the result of work in the open air.

Before sending the works abroad, the Academy of Arts decided to make an exhibition in its halls on the Neva embankment and to present the pictures of contemporary Russian art to the Russian public that would be seen by the European audience. Although the *Christ and the Harlot*, both in Russia and later in Europe, was not accepted without reservation, it was highly appreciated. It is indicative that Ivan Kramskoi, an antagonist of Siemiradzki, wrote about *Christ and the Harlot*: “The impression that the picture produces is overwhelming, it extends human capacity of mind, it is painted in a bold and colorful way. One can go mad.”⁴

I want to focus on three points of view to give an idea of the diversity of opinions. Art historian and writer Piotr Petrov in his review wrote that the exhibition in the Academy for the Vienna World’s Fair, did not produce a favorable impression but it changed when two pictures arrived – Siemiradzki’s *Christ and the Harlot* and Ilya Repin’s *Barge Haulers on the Volga (Burlaki)* (1870-1873, State Russian Museum) – “works of fresh, mighty talents”.⁵ This caused an influx of

2] RGIA. Fond 789, ser 8. 1872, rec. 55, 2, f. 106-107 inverse side.

3] RGIA. Fond 789, ser. 8. 1872, rec. 55, 2, f. 166 and inverse side.

4] *Переписка И.И. Крамского. Т.2. Переписка с художниками* (*Correspondence of I.N. Kramskoy, vol. 2: Correspondence with artists*), Искусство, Москва 1954, p. 216.

5] Питер Н. ПЕТРОВ, *Листки на выдержку из портфеля пишущего. Сборник статей П.Н. Петрова из периодических изданий «Биржевые ведомости» и «Нива» 1873 и 1874 г.*, ([yotf]. N. PETROV, *Sheets of clippings from the writer's briefcase. A collection of small newspaper articles by P. N. Petrov from the periodicals “Brizhevye novosti” and “Niva” 1873 and 1874*), Типография В. Полетики. Санкт-Петербург 1875.

spectators, which was the first encouraging symptom of “improving circumstances in the world of Russian art”.⁶ Lively conversations and discussions between experts began – this also gave hope of increasing the chances of attracting public attention to the Russian department.

Petrov presumed that for the Viennese connoisseurs color played the main role, and Siemiradzki proved to be the best master of color. The most convinced opponents of the artist acknowledged that he, as a colorist, had no equal among other living painters. One could not but be impressed by the courage, freedom and strength of execution, brush technique, which was amazing. The whole scene is very realistic, “brilliant execution” conquers. Petrov recalls that this was the work of a young artist, who had recently graduated from the Academy of Arts. He expressed hope that the audience would go again to the Academy to see these works. Petrov’s conclusion was: “Siemiradzki’s picture would enrich our historical painting”, real connoisseurs would recognize his picture as a part of European art.⁷

As to the audience, it was unanimous in recognizing the painter’s talent. *Christ and the Harlot* brought the author the title of academicians of the Imperial Academy of Arts.

The works of contemporary artists produced over the past 10 years were admitted for the Vienna World’s Fair. The attendance of this World’s Fair was enormous. The Russian pavilion was cramped because of a very large number of sculptures, and it was necessary to change the plan of the exhibition. Siemiradzki’s picture was transferred to the Central Hall. In Vienna Repin discovered that the Russian Department was difficult to find, and Siemiradzki’s picture looked unrecognizable – small, insignificant and even dry (maybe, Carl von Piloty’s influence).⁸ In Repin’s opinion two paintings of Jan Matejko were the best and produced an amazing impression. These words should not be surprising – his friendship with Siemiradzki in the first years at the Academy broke down, they became not only rivals, but also antagonists.

Apollon Matushinsky, another Russian critic, wrote that our department in Vienna was less successful than in London. However, our exhibition caused a great interest and made to respect the Russian school. Our hall, due to the poor placement of paintings and even

6] И. ПЕТРОВ, op. cit. p.70.

7] И. ПЕТРОВ, op. cit., p. 81.

8] RGIA, Fond 789, ser 8. 1872, rec. 55. A 1, f. 384 and inverse side, 385.

worse selection, did not produce a particularly favorable impression. Surprisingly, our collection of paintings, which seemed very good in the halls of the Academy of Arts, in Vienna suddenly lost almost half of its artistic value. “What seemed a model of perfection in St. Petersburg, in Vienna turned colorless and lifeless.”⁹

We see a completely different assessment from Vladimir Stasov. Definitely considering that the choice of works for the Russian Department was good, he still worried. He knew that at home, Russian art was insured against competition. When there is an opportunity to compare with stronger rivals – we become smaller, our achievements did not look obvious. In Vienna, among the tremendously talented pieces of art like Henri Regnault’s *General Prim* (1869, Musée d’Orsay, Paris), strong in historical spirit works by Matejko, he had a feeling of fear. But in the hall of the Russian art fear left him – what looked significant at home the same remained in Vienna. The best and most talented picture, in his opinion was Repin’s *Burlaki*. Of course, this bright representative of the democratic critic, positively evaluated only those works that raised social problems and reflected national identity. Stasov never shared admiration for the classical past, which imbued the work of Siemiradzki, whose aesthetic ideals were deeply alien to him. Moreover, he considered Siemiradzki’s canvases to be even harmful to the Russian public. Therefore, his opinion about the *Christ and the Harlot* should not be surprising: “This a completely external, but still to a certain extent a talented work suffered at the exhibition more than all the other of our paintings. It hanged in the Central Hall too high, together with the paintings too large in size and rather strong in color. Among them, *Christ and the Harlot* suddenly turned completely pale and was enmeshed, and even its good qualities (for example, brilliant though artificial color) disappeared to such an extent that it could not attract attention at all.”¹⁰ As for me, writes Stasov, “Siemiradzki could not belong to the Russian national school, for him it is natural and profitable to join any of the new European schools, for example, Krakow. To belong to it, together with Matejko, Gierymski, Rodakowski and others – is not inglorious. This school has a great future.

9] АПОЛЛОН МАТУШИНСКИЙ, *Отдел искусств на Венской всемирной выставке. «Русский вестник». 1873* (Apollon MATUSHINSKY, *Art Department on Viennese World exhibition*), “Русский вестник” (“Russian Bulletin”), 1873, vol. 108. November, p. 521.

10] Владимир В. Стасов, *Избранные сочинения в трех томах. Живопись. Скульптура. Музыка* (Vladimir V. STASOV, *Selected works in three volumes. Painting. Sculpture. Musik*), vol. 1, Москва 1952, p. 594.

Perhaps, then Siemiradzki, under the powerful and involuntary influence of strong comrades, will create a really remarkable picture.”¹¹

Naturally, at the world exhibitions the artists attracted the attention of critics from different countries. Curious judgment about the Russian department and Siemiradzki had Friedrich Pecht, former Baden historical painter, recognized as the best German art critic. Preferring Repin’s *Burlaki*, he wrote about *Christ and the Harlot* that the picture is made with great skill, but the setting was borrowed from the biblical paintings by Horace Vernet. In his opinion the artist understood his task frivolously and naturalistically. The painting was only a talented study of sunlight effects on architecture and people. In another article, entitled *The Ideals of Modern Art*, he mentioned that one could often find caricature of the most sacred topics, among them *Christ and the Harlot* by the Russian painter Siemiradzki.¹²

I’d like to explain his complaints: the Vienna World’s Fair was distinguished by the fact that it completely lacked paintings related to biblical and evangelical subjects, previously so highly revered by European artists.

Ernst Lehmann, another critic was benevolent – “As far as we know, Siemiradzki, a young Russian artist, in his *Christ and the Harlot* has proven to be a great colorist; moreover, his way of interpreting biblical material is absolutely new and, perhaps, the only way suitable for religious paintings. Siemiradzki is completely removed from usual monotonous simplicity. His interpretation of the subject has demonstrated that he possessed the historic depth of the sacred legend. Judging by this picture, Siemiradzki will have a great future”.¹³

For Siemiradzki, who had just entered the thorny path of the artist, it was very important to see his works among the paintings of other artists from different countries. Despite the fact that his painting, indeed, was unfortunately hanged, his international debut was a success – his work was noticed, critics wrote about it, the painter was awarded a gold medal “for art”. He was allowed to show *Christ and the Harlot* in Warsaw.

The next international event attended by the artist, was the The Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, in honor of the Declaration of Independence of the United States. There

11] Ibid., p. 595.

12] Ibid., p. 247.

13] Ibid., p. 246.

Siemiradzki showed *Sale of Amulets*, for which he was also awarded a gold medal.

Later, he participated in Melbourne International Exhibition in 1883, where he was awarded a gold medal for the *Isaurian Pirates Selling their Booty*. *Christian Dirce* was shown in 1897 at Venice Biennale in (*Seconda Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte*).

But I want to mark two world exhibitions, which were decisive for him. It was the Vienna World's Fair in 1873 and in Paris in 1878 – *Exposition universelle de Paris*. While the fair in Vienna was his international debut, in Paris it summed up the end of his pension trip period and became an apotheosis. I'd like to underline that Siemiradzki never presented for the world exhibitions the same works, unlike some other artists. Symptomatic that he asked the Petersburg Commission not to send any of his previous works, which are in St. Petersburg in private collections, because “none of them expresses my current views on art.”¹⁴

He showed in Paris three new pieces, among them the most monumental was the *Nero's Torches*. The painting became widely known even in his Roman studio, where a lot of people flocked to see it, especially the artists who were in Rome, among them famous Domenico Morelli and Lawrence Alma-Tadema. The first public display of the work took place in May 1876 at the Academy of Saint Luke in Rome and it was triumphant. Siemiradzki was awarded the laurel wreath. Then the picture was shown in Munich and Vienna. In the Spring of 1877 the canvas was finally seen in St. Petersburg, where Siemiradzki was elected Professor. The Council of the Academy noted that all his artistic activity had brought honor to the Academy and Russian art. The picture was on display at the second exhibition of Society of Exhibitions of Art Works, held in the Academy and it was allocated a separate room, which caused a reaction from some artists. So, Paris saw the already famous European painting. What did the French press write?

Émile Blavet believed that the painter was clearly inspired by Victor Hugo's *Nero's Incendiary Song* (“*Amis! Ennui nous tue*”).¹⁵ Another critic, Maurice Vachon, regretted that Siemiradzki had chosen a terrible plot that made him unwittingly unfair to the artist.¹⁶ Referring to the unfortunate places in the painting he criticized the composition.

14] RGIA. Fond 789, ser.10.1876, rec. 225. B, f. 281.

15] RGIA, Fond 789, ser.10.1876, rec. 225.B, f. 406.

16] RGIA. Fond 789, ser.10.1876, rec. 225.B, f. 404 (Feuilleton du Journal des Debats du 13 Juin 1878. Exposition Universelle Beaux-Arts).

In his opinion the main group was not selected, the figure of Nero did not dominate, there were a lot of unnecessary details. He gave preference to two other paintings – *The Vase or the Woman?* and *Shipwrecked Man (The Roman Beggar)*. The critic noted that *Nero's Torches* for the Russian Department was the same as for the Austrians the work of Hans Makart *Entry of Charles V in Antwerp* (1878, Kunsthalle Hamburg). Nevertheless, Vachon was forced to admit he regretted that the two most powerful paintings of the exhibition belonged to the brush of foreigners.

Siemiradzki was awarded the Grand Prix and the order of the Legion of Honor along with a Sèvres porcelain vase from the French government.¹⁷ The artist achieved international recognition: he was elected a member of the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris, Rome, Berlin, Stockholm. The Uffizi Gallery ordered his self-portrait. Meantime *Nero's Torches* continued the triumphal procession through European exhibitions.

Having achieved fame most painters could not even dream of, Siemiradzki went on to search for new ideas. “He was a keen observer of colorful effects and a great worker. This educated, proud, reticent man, with a great character and intelligence, did not only rely on his talent, he lived in Rome, working hard” these are words of Mikhail Nesterov.¹⁸

His last big picture, *Christian Dirce*, also provoked fierce debates and attacks by the press in the same way as in his younger years. But in Venice and St. Petersburg, this work gathered crowds of fans and admirers of the artist's talent.

In subsequent years, the artist participated widely in various exhibitions, he held personal exhibitions in Rome and St. Petersburg. The role of World exhibitions in the formation of Siemiradzki as an artist was significant.

17] RGIA. Fond. 789, ser.10.1876, rec. 225.B, f. 533.

18] Михаил В. Нестеров, *Воспоминания* (Mikhail V. Nesterov, *Memories*), Советский художник, Москва 1989, p. 188.

LIDIA GERC

*Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, University Library
Polish Institut of World Art Studies*

”THINKS LIKE DANTE,
HANDLES PAINTS LIKE BOCCACCIO”.
ABOUT HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI IN VIENNA¹

The arrival of Henryk Siemiradzki in Vienna in the 19th century was not a surprise to anyone. Worldwide exhibitions were held in the Austro-Hungarian capital on the Danube. There were many famous galleries and any artist who wanted to become well-known ought to make an appearance in Vienna.

Many artists appeared and stayed in Vienna for some time, usually leaving no trace in Vienna’s written history. It was completely different with the visits of Henryk Siemiradzki to the city upon the Danube. Most of the articles written about Siemiradzki’s concerned his artwork. This does not mean, of course, that the artist’s life was not considered, but the stable family situation of the painter did not provide nutrients to the press, and therefore most of the reports concentrated on his art. His paintings were lauded far and wide as they were often exhibited in the cultural centres of Europe and beyond.² Siemiradzki’s name³ appears in Viennese literature and in world art publications

1] Eduard DUBSKY VON WITTENAU, *Kunst-Brief, Prag, 20 Oktob.*, “Österreichische Kunst-Chronik“, 27. 10. 1888, p. 1077.

2] Siemiradzki exhibited his works in the most important European cities. He often travelled with his works and Vienna was almost always on the artistic route of his works.

3] Sometimes written as Semiradzki or Simradsky.

many times.⁴ His name is mentioned in nearly five hundred articles. This publication presents a selection of contemporary Viennese media arranged chronologically.

The number of publications reflects the scale of interest which Siemiradzki's work inspired in the second half of the 19th century. He was one of the most popular artists in the world for about 20 years after 1876.

In 1873, for the first time Siemiradzki's artwork was presented in Vienna at the World Exhibition. As we can read in the *Officieller Kunst-Catalog*⁵ it was displayed in the central hall of the Art Hall.⁶ In the work presented at that time, *Christ and the Harlot*, a new and fresh view of the biblical subjects was displayed.⁷ This work made him renowned. However, it was incomparable to the fame that he achieved three years later due to his next work: *Nero's Torches*. Thanks to it, the name of Siemiradzki became famous all over the world. Even before *Nero's Torches* was shown in Vienna, *Illustrierte Zeitung* wrote: "A great movement happened in the art circles of Munich. It was caused by a picture abundant in great figures painted by a painter Siemiradzki who lives in Rome. It is 5m high and 7m wide [...] it shows a group of Christian martyrs wrapped in flammable material atop raised pyres, while the emperor and his entourage watch on, enjoying their suffering."⁸

The painting made an equally powerful impression when it was exhibited in Rome, which was noticed by the Vienna press informing its readers about the distinction Siemiradzki received there – the Golden Laurel Wreath presented by King Victor Emmanuel II.

The *Nero's Torches*⁹ was presented in the Viennese Künstlerhaus at Lothringerstrasse no 9 and a ceremonial unveiling took place on

4) The main research is based on the collection of the Austrian National Library <http://anno.onb.ac.at>. Siemiradzki is mostly known through the Russian and Italian literature. His artistic presence in the capital of the Habsburg monarchy was not taken into account before.

5) *Offizieller Kunst-Catalog. Welt-Ausstellung 1873 in Wien*, Verlag der Genral Direction, Wien 1873, p. 186.

6) Ernst LEHMANN, *Bildende Kunst in der Gegenwart. Gedenkbuch an die Kunstballe der Wiener Weltausstellung*, Wien 1873, 2. Aufl., p. 152 "da lobe ich mir den Russen Semiradzki. [...] noch junge russische Maler hat in seiner *Sünderin* nicht nur eine Arbeit geliefert, welcher uns großen Coloristen verraeth, sondern die Art und Weise, in welcher er den biblischen Stoff behandelt, ist in jeder Beziehung neu und vielleicht heut zu Tage die für Heiligenbilder einzig angemessene."

7) Ernst LEHMANN, *Bildende Kunst in der Gegenwart. Gedenkbuch an die Kunstballe der Wiener Weltausstellung*, Wien 1873, 2. Aufl., op. cit., p. 152.

8) *Malerei und vervielfältigende Künste*, "Illustrierte Zeitung", 23. 09. 1876, p. 11.

9) The painting was known also as "Nero's Alive Torches" or "Christian Candlesticks".

1 November 1876.¹⁰ Despite the presence of artwork of other contemporary artists, the *Nero's Torches* worked like a magnet, attracting crowds to the exhibition.¹¹ The number of articles on Siemiradzki, and reproductions of his paintings (obviously mostly *Nero's Torches*), was growing. In Enio Ranzoni's article dedicated to art, Siemiradzki's canvas almost completely dominated its content: "When looking at the work of *Nero's Torches*, it is impossible to believe that its creator worked on it only two rather than ten years. We must admit the creator has a great talent."¹²

The front page of the opinion-forming *Die Presse* contained a column entitled "Siemiradzki's Nero" which highlighted the struggles of German and French artists on the subject of Nero. It compares them with the "young Pole Siemiradzki" who – as we read further – "entered the cosmopolitan world of art and won him a high position".¹³ The author critically analysed the picture, stating at the end that the painter's technical abilities are particularly admirable: "Who can paint marble and gold, relief or green shade on the fountain [...] and all kinds of clothes like him, nothing is impossible. [...] It must be also added that no other picture of Nero has attracted so much attention and admiration as Siemiradzki's *Nero's Torches*."¹⁴

Just a few days later another article was published. This time on the pages of *Welt Blatt*, who wrote: "In the large gallery in the

10] Accessible online: <http://www.wladimir-aichelburg.at/?s=Siemiradzki&submit=Search>, the list of exhibitions states the dates: 1.11.1876-31.12.1876 *Kunst-Ausstellung im Künstlerhaue. Heinrich von Siemiradzki: „Die lebenden Fackeln Nero's."*, Veranstalter: Genossenschaft. Eröffnung: 1.11.1876. Großer Saal im ersten Stock. Katalog: 22 x 14 cm, 16 Seiten. Monumentalgemälde. Gleichzeitig mit der Permanenten Ausstellung und der Kollektion J. Holzer. Jedoch im Katalog der Permanenten-Ausstellung vom 1.11.1876: (Permanent Exhibition catalogue, a list of presented work) Siemiradzki Heinrich von, in Rom: Ölgemälde. Die lebenden Fackeln Nero's. Ohne Kat. No., mit Begleittext nach Tacitus. Kolossalgemälde im grossen Saal (Permanente 1.11.1876, 16.11.1876). Kat. No. 1 (Permanente 1.12.1876, 15.12.1876).

11] It does not mean that previously Henryk Siemiradzki was an unknown artist and without any success. He was the recipient of many awards, including a scholarship, which allowed him to make an artistic journey around Europe. More on this topic in: Jerzy MIZIOŁEK, *Dirke chrześcijańska i inne tematy all'antica w twórczości Henryka Siemiradzkiego. Uwagi i rozważania*, "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", vol. IV, 2016, p. 23 and following pages; Татьяна Л. КАРПОВА, *Генрих Семирадский*, Золотой век, Санкт-Петербург 2008, (Tatiana L. Karpova, *Henryk Siemiradzki*).

12] Emmerich RANZONI, *Kunstblatt*, "Neue Freie Presse", 2. 11. 1876, p. 4.

13] *H.Gr. Siemiradzki's Nero. Aus dem Künstlerhaus*, "Die Presse", 4. 11. 1876, (29 Jhr.), cover page and following pages.

14] *Ibid.* cover page and the following pages.

Künstlerhaus in Vienna, there is a large full-wall painting which was previously presented with great success at the exhibition in Munich. *Nero's Torches* (this is the name of the painting) painted by a young Polish artist named Henryk Siemiradzki".¹⁵

In turn, Karl von Vincenti wrote on the pages of *Wiener Zeitung*: "The Picture Hall on Lothringenstrasse, displays a painting that the whole of Vienna wants to see: Henryk von Simiradzki [!] *Nero's Torches*."¹⁶ In the article the author delineates Siemiradzki's biography, originally from Kharkiv, a graduate of the Petersburg Academy where he received a medal and a scholarship for further education. Vicenti also reminds readers that *Nero's Torches* was preceded by other paintings, including the *Beautiful Sinner*¹⁷ and the *Roman Orgy from the Imperial Era* (which was acquired by the successor to the Russian throne).¹⁸ During the exhibition in the Künstlerhaus, Siemiradzki's *Torches* continuously aroused great interest and reigned supreme at the Vienna exhibition.¹⁹ In the press, the artist's subsequent achievements were reported. Amongst other news, it was announced that his latest *Elegia* painting²⁰ would be displayed at the Warsaw Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts.²¹ In *Neue Illustrierte Zeitung* (a magazine devoted to art), an article about Siemiradzki's work was published. It was titled, of course, *Nero's Torches*. Siemiradzki was rated higher than the extremely popular in Vienna Hans Makart or Jan Matejko.²²

The painting *Nero's Torches* was mentioned long after it left Vienna.²³ A side effect of the extraordinary popularity of the painting was the popularisation of the subject of Nero's reign – this then spread into other branches of art. Back in Vienna, the theatre played "great tragedies with the motif of mass murder," showing Nero still hungry for new victims.²⁴ Even at the beginning of the following year, when discussing artistic events in Vienna, the success and the impression *Nero's Torches*

15] *Theater, Kunst, Musik, Liteatur*, "(Neuigkeits) Welt Blatt", 15. 11. 1876, p. 9.

16] Karl v. VINCENTI, *Bildende Kunst*, „Wiener Zeitung“, 21. 11. 1876 (17).

17] This is, of course, the *Christ and Harlot* painting.

18] "Wiener Zeitung", 21. 11. 1876 (17).

19] Among others: "Die Presse", 24. 11. 1876, p. 2.

20] This painting was gifted to Henryk Sienkiewicz.

21] "Neue Freie Presse", 10. 12. 1876, p. 6.

22] "Neue Illustrierte Zeitung", 1. 01 1877, pp. 6-7, images pp. 8-9.

23] Among others: "Neues Wiener Tagblatt (Tages-Ausgabe)", 15. 01. 1877, p. 11. It informed that the painting was currently on display in Berlin.

24] "Das Vaterland", 23. 01. 1877, p. 3.

made on the local audience was still remembered.²⁵ Announcements for planned future exhibitions mentioned new Siemiradzki's artwork as one of the highlights.²⁶ Particular interest was paid to a painting which had just returned from Philadelphia and was to be presented at the Austrian Society of Art, entitled: *Sale of Amulets*.²⁷

Reviews of the subsequent works of Siemiradzki were more mixed than those for *Nero's Torches*. *Neue Freie Presse* wrote about the undoubted talent of Siemiradzki, but it also pointed out some flaws.²⁸ Just a few days earlier, *Die Presse* published a press note where the journalist felt slightly disappointed: "Three paintings by Siemiradzki, including two female head studies on a coloured background are, after *Nero's Torches*, like weak wine after a strong one."²⁹ *Morgen-Post* offered a different opinion and wrote: "From Henryk Siemiradzki from Rome, we have two studies of women's heads and a genre scene picture: *A Rest at the Well*. They attract even more attention than *Nero's Torches* that we still have in our memory."³⁰

In a similar tone, Karl Vincenti wrote a review of the exhibition in the Austrian Art Society,³¹ whereas *Die Presse* described it as "a valuable collection of the most distinguished painters",³² listing Siemiradzki's works in the first line.³³ In addition, the *Morgen-Post* described the *Sale of Amulets* as a worthy successor of *Nero's Torches* on its front page.³⁴

25] "Wiener Sonn- und Montags-Zeitung", 29. 01. 1877, title page.

26] *Ausstellung des Österreichischen Kunstvereins*, "Neue Freie Presse", 31. 01. 1877, p. 6.

27] "Neue Freie Presse", 31. 01. 1877, p. 6; *Theater, Kunst und Literatur*, "Neues Wiener Tagblatt (Tages-Ausgabe)", 31. 01. 1877, pp. 4-5; "(Neuigkeits) Welt Blatt", 2. 02.1877, p.5; "Die Presse", 9. 02. 1877, p. 11 "Also Henri Siemieradzki from Rome, known through his "Nero's Torches" is represented at the Austrian Society of Art by three pictures and one more large painting *Sale of Amulets*, which just came back from Philadelphia so it can be presented during this exhibition."

28] *Kunstblatt, Oesterreichischer Kunstverein*, "Die Presse", 11. 02. 1877, pp.13-14.

29] "Die Presse", 11. 02. 1877, pp.13-14.

30] *Kunstverein*, "Morgen-Post", 21. 02. 1877, title page.

31] Karl VINCENTI, *Schoene Kunste*, "Wiener Zeitung", 27. 02. 1877, p. 23 : "Siemiradzki's Heads are subjected to the beautiful effect of light but the wallpapers in the background could be skipped".

32] "Die Presse", 14. 04. 1877, p. 8.

33] "Die Presse", 14. 04. 1877, op. cit., p. 8, similarly in Cafehaus Plauderei column, "Wiener Sonn- und Montags-Zeitung", 15. 04. 1877, p. 2; In newspapers' advertisements promoting the exhibition, Siemiradzki's work *Sale of Amulets* was mentioned in the first place; between others: "Neues Wiener Tagblatt (Tages-Ausgabe)", 15 . 05. 1877, p. 16.

34] "Morgen-Post", 28. 07. 1877, front cover. „*Dead season*. [...] A great merit of the Society of Art is their current exhibition [...] where you can admire a huge picture of Siemiradzki, *Sale of*

Still under the influence of *Nero's Torches*, and thanks to the picture of *Sale of Amulets* presented in Vienna, the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* published an extensive article entitled *New Siemiradzki* by Viktor Karl Schembera on its front page. The author refers to the popularity earned by Siemiradzki as growing "from day to day" thanks to *Nero's Torches*. The author goes on to say: "He is also known in places in Europe where his paintings during his travels have not yet arrived, his fame extends from Vienna and Berlin to all sides, where the impact of his work here and there are expressed by great and righteous admiration."³⁵

Schembera also reminds of Siemiradzki's previous work, presented at the 1873 Vienna World's Fair – *Christ and the Harlot*.³⁶ The following lines are full of admiration for the artist's skills in projecting objects, architecture, marbles and costumes. He compares Siemiradzki to Alma-Tadema.³⁷

In the second half of 1878, the attention of media was drawn by the painting called *A Dance among Swords* which was compared on the pages of *Deutsche Musik-Zeitung* with Matejko's paintings. Both painters were accused of accumulating too many figures. At the same time, the look of the dancer's naked body was admired. The beautiful composition, the landscape and the well observed group of revellers watching the dancer were also mentioned.³⁸

1879 was the year of Kraszewski's jubilee and it was celebrated with great solemnity.³⁹ Preparations for various exhibitions and Siemiradzki's participation in them overshadowed those celebrations.⁴⁰ This was, at least in part, thanks to Siemiradzki gifting possibly the most

Amulets, through which you can see his great talent. [...] it is a worthy successor of the *Nero's Torches*, which was exhibited earlier by the Society."

35] Viktor K. SCHEMBERA, *Neues Siemiradzki*, "Neues Wiener Tagblatt (Tages-Ausgabe)", No. 135, 18. 05. 1877, (11 JHr.), cover page and following pages

36] *Ibid.*, cover page.

37] *Ibid.*

38] J [...]. PROSL, *Die Weihnachtsausstellung im Kunstverein*, "Deutsche Kunst & Musik-Zeitung. Central-Organ für Musik Theater, Bildende Künste & Literatur", 1879, (VI Jahr.), no. 45, 24. 11, p.193.

39] Józef Ignacy KRASZEWSKI (1812-1887). In 1879 with a great fanfare it was celebrated Kraszewski's 50th anniversary of creative work. The celebrations spread throughout many cities of then Europe, including Dresden, Vienna, Berlin, Altuna Goeksbo (Sweden), but the most important ceremonies took place in Krakow, of which was widely reported by the press. Among others: *Kraszewski Feier*, "Die Presse", 4. 10. 1879, p.4; "Neue Freie Presse", 6. 10. 1879, p. 7.

40] The newspapers were writing about the celebrations in great detail, including information on guests. Above others: "Neue Freie Presse", 6. 10. 1879, p. 7.

popular painting at that time in Europe⁴¹ to the Cloth Hall in Krakow. This had the unintended consequence of planting the idea of creating the National Museum there. It was said that his gift became an inspiration to other Polish artists who also donated their work to the future museum in the Cloth Hall.⁴² This sensation aroused a wave of worship for Siemiradzki. In his honour, a special procession with torches was organised which passed by his apartment in a Krakow hotel. During the march, a band from Wieliczka sang Polish songs. Thousands of people took part in the procession. When Siemiradzki appeared on the balcony, he was greeted with ovations, *Die Presse* reported.⁴³

After this event, *Die Presse* reported that: "Staying here [in Vienna], the Polish writer [Józef Ignacy] Kraszewski and the painter Siemiradzki have been invited for an audience with His Majesty the Emperor at 10am tomorrow."⁴⁴ *Koło Polskie* (The Polish Circle)⁴⁵ in Vienna organised a ceremonial banquet in honour of Kraszewski and Siemiradzki.⁴⁶ It did not escape the attention of the press that Lwów (Lemberg, Lviv) did not want to "be worse than Krakow" and also organised a large fete in honour of Siemiradzki, which also included a procession with torches.⁴⁷ It was often emphasised in the press that Siemiradzki had, thanks to his gift, "laid a cornerstone for the construction of the National Museum."⁴⁸

41] According to the Viennese press, this painting evoked a wave of interest in the subject of Nero and the martyrdom of Christians, it was transferred to a theatrical stage, to a circus and the picture itself was one of the most often reproduced, published, etc.

42] *Gründung eines National-Museum*, "(Neuigkeits) Welt Blatt", 9. 10. 1879, No 233, p. 3.

43] "Die Presse", 7. 10. 1879, p. 16.

44] *Kleine Chronik, Wien, 12. Oktober*, "Die Presse", 13. 10. 1879, front cover.

45] Koło Polskie – was a political group of Polish deputies in the Austrian parliament. At that time, Poles held high positions, reaching even the positions of prime minister and ministers. Among others: *Polacy w austriackim parlamencie. W 130. rocznice, Koła Polskiego*, ed. Władysław S. KUCHARSKI, Multico, Lublin 1997.

46] *Kleine Chronik*, "Neue Freie Presse", 14. 10. 1879 (Bandblatt), front page ; "Das Vaterland", 15. 10. 1879, p. 3.

47] *Lemberg*, "Die Presse", 14. 10. 1879, p. 4; *National Museum*, "Die Presse", 14. 10. 1879, p. 9; "(Neuigkeits) Welt Blatt", 15. 10. 1879, p. 4. "All members of the Club turned up. Apart from Polish councillors, there was also Minister Ziemiałkowski [Florian], the Galician marshal Count Louis Wodzicki and several representatives of the Polish press. The honoured place was taken by Kraszewski and next to him sat Siemiradzki, on the right sat dr Grocholski, on the left, min. Ziemiałkowski, in front of the guests of honour, Prince Jerzy Czartoryski, Dr. [Franciszek] Smolka and Dr. Euzebiusz Czerkawski." An equally detailed description is given in the column: *Kleine Chronik, Wien, 20. Oktober*, "Neue Freie Presse", 21 X 1879, p. 5 and in: *Siemiradzki in Lemberg, Lemberg 18. Oktober*, "Das Vaterland", 21. 10. 1879, p. 3, "(Neuigkeits) Welt Blatt", 22. 10. 1879, p. 4.

48] Above others: "(Neuigkeits) Welt Blatt", 15. 10. 1879, p. 4, "Neue Freie Presse", 23. 10. 1879, p. 3.

In 1879 his painting *A Dance among Swords* was presented at an exhibition by the Austrian Society of Art. It was exhibited alongside other paintings but, as the organizers noted, *A Dance among Swords* attracted the most attention of the public.⁴⁹

The *Neue Freie Presse* paintings expert devoted a lot of attention to *The Dance*, writing: “this picture is seducing with its beauty, [...] and it has been enthusiastically received in the north and in the south. It is also a big improvement in comparison to *Nero’s Torches*.”⁵⁰

Equally enthusiastic was the columnist in *Die Presse* where we can read that the *Dance* shows the ancient world of entertainment.⁵¹ Siemiradzki’s picture attracted crowds of visitors to the Vienna exhibition, which resulted in him sending over for the exhibition another picture – *Shipwrecked Man (The Roman Beggar)*.⁵²

One of the cultural events correspondents in Vienna noticed that *A Dance among Swords* picture by Siemiradzki is worthy of attention, and particularly the figure of a naked dancer in it. He speculated on her origin in the review he wrote.⁵³

Mentioned above and presented a bit later at the exhibition, the painting *Shipwrecked Man* also attracted the attention of critics. The realism of the piece was noted in the *Notes on Art* and yet, at the same time, the painting was criticised for lack of depth in comparison with the works of such masters as Titian, Leonardo or Veronese.⁵⁴

Austrian art critic and journalist Carl Erasmus Kleinert,⁵⁵ in an article in *Illustrierte Sport-Zeitung*,⁵⁶ dedicated a lot of column inches to the “young Polish artist Henryk Siemiradzki”,⁵⁷ who, after huge worldwide success of *Nero’s Torches*, deserves even more attention for his

49] Among others: [Advertisement], “Die Presse“, 11. 12. 1879, p. 11 and later issues.

50] *Kunstblatt. Malerei*, “Neue Freie Presse“, 12. 12 1879, p. 20.

51] *Feuilleton*, Aus Schönsbrunnenhause, “Die Presse“, 13. 12. 1879, front page.

52] “Die Presse“, 13 XII 1879, p. 11; “Das Vaterland“, 13. 12. 1879, p. 5; “Wiener Zeitung“, 13. 12. 1879, p. 4; “Neue Illustrierte Zeitung“, 21.12. 1879, p. 15.

53] *Wiener Spaziergänge*, “Neue Freie Presse“, 14. 12 1879, p. 6.

54] Just comparing Siemiradzki’s work to such excellent artists proves how highly valued he was at that time; *Kunstnotizen*, “Neue Freie Presse“, 13. 01. 1880, p. 20.

55] Carl Erasm Kleiner (1857-1933) Born in Vienna, a writer, journalist, educated art historian Among others: *Das Jahrbuch der Wiener Gesellschaft. Biographische Beiträge zur Wiener Zeitgeschichte*, ed. Franz PLANER, Wien 1929; *Österreichisches biographisches Lexikon 1815–1950*, edn. der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Wien: 1954, ed. Maria STONA, *Ein Alt-Oesterreicher. Karl Erasmus Kleinert: sein Leben und Werke*, Troppau 1933.

56] Carl Erasmus KLEINERT, *Wiener Kunstbriefe*, “Illustrierte Sport-Zeitung“, 25. 01. 1880, p. 10.

57] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

latest (at the time) artwork. Kleinert refers to the works shown at the Exhibition at the Austrian Society of Art, namely to *A Dance among Swords* and *Shipwrecked Man*. The critic considers the former as "the best of work the artist has created so far"⁵⁸ and that it gave him great pleasure when he was in its presence. It is worth noting that these works were shown among the artwork of other contemporary artists, such as Carl von Piloty, Moritz von Schwind⁵⁹ or Jan Matejko, and despite such competition, Siemiradzki's work was in the forefront and aroused widespread interest.

The following year (1880) brought more reports on the artist's subsequent works. *Das Vaterland* informs us of a portrait ordered by Count Ludwik Wodzicki⁶⁰ who went to Rome specifically to commission the piece. At the same time, *Die Presse* reported on the artist working on a painting *The Era of Tiberius on Capri*.⁶¹

Particular attention was drawn to the picture *He and She* presented at the exhibition organised by Miethke at Neue Markt 13. *Neue Freie Presse* focused heavily on this work, praising, among other things, rich colors and accomplished craft.⁶² Carl Erasmus Kleinert devoted a whole article to this painting on the pages of *Illustrierte Sport-Zeitung*.⁶³ He was delighted by the story of lovers and how it was presented in a charming way.⁶⁴

In his next article, Kleinert saw distinct reminiscences of Siemiradzki's *Dancer* in Adrien Moreau's *Spanish Dancer*,⁶⁵ which was on display at the next exhibition by the Art Society.

In April 1880, *Die Presse* reported on a huge, recently completed picture by Siemiradzki – *Isaurian Pirates Selling their Booty*.

58] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

59] Moritz von Schwind (1804-1871) Austrian painter and draftsman. Among others: Michael DIRRIGL, *Moritz von Schwind. Maler in München*, Lectura-Verlag, Nürnberg 2001.

60] Ludwik Wodzicki (1834-1894) graduated in law and economics in Vienna, then in England, participant of the January Uprising 1863, a conservative Galician politician, a member of the Galician Parliament, in 1877 he became a member of the Austrian House of Lords. [Wodzicki Ludwik] *S. Orgelbranda Encyklopedia powszechna z ilustracjami i mapami*, vol. 15, Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Akcyjnego Odlewni Czcionek i Drukarni S. Orgelbranda Synów, Warszawa 1903, p. 452.

61] *Theater – und Kunstnachrichten*, "Die Presse", 18. 03. 1880, p. 14.

62] "Neue Freie Presse", 24 III 1880, p. 6, "Neue Illustrierte Zeitung", 4 IV 1880, p. 14.

63] Carl Erasmus KLEINERT, *Wiener Kunstbriefe*, "Illustrierte Sport-Zeitung", 11. 04. 1880, p. 235-238.

64] *Ibid.*, p. 235-238.

65] *Ibid.*, pp. 235-238.

In November 1880, the press reported on Siemiradzki's membership appointment to "The Ancient Academy of Fine Arts of St. Luke in Rome".⁶⁶ It also informed its readers about a reproduction of Siemiradzki's painting *He and She* in the popular *Heimat* magazine, which became almost as popular as his earlier works *Nero's Torches* and *A Dance among Swords*.⁶⁷

The year 1881 brought news on another picture by Siemiradzki – *In Pursuit of a Butterfly*,⁶⁸ which was praised for its use of colour.⁶⁹ However, this work was quickly forgotten when talks on *Nero's Torches* began to appear. As was reported by *Morgen-Post*, the painting, due to its huge popularity, needs to be conserved.⁷⁰

Interest in Siemiradzki's work didn't fade. *Morgen Post* reposted reports from Rome that Siemiradzki was working simultaneously on two paintings. One of these paintings was a picture showing Christ by the sea which was intended for the Evangelical church in Krakow. The special composition of the picture and the unprecedented approach in depicting the face of the Saviour were highlighted. The second painting was described as "very unusual" – it was the image of *Christian Dirce*.⁷¹

The Austrian Society of Art opened their next exhibition on 23 May [1882] where another work by Siemiradzki, *Isaurian Pirates Selling their Booty*, was exhibited. It also met with great interest and, once again, Siemiradzki's painting became a magnet attracting crowds.⁷² The *Neue Freie Presse* devoted an entire article to praise for the painting.⁷³ Despite some minor negative remarks, this work was generally considered wonderful.⁷⁴ The picture did not hang alone – it was accompanied by one hundred and sixty other artworks but the *Isaurian Pirates* was called "a pearl among them."⁷⁵

66] Apart from Siemiradzki, the nomination was given to Italian Cesare Maccasi and Gustav Müller, in: *Aus der Kunstwelt*, "Österreichische Kunst-Chronik", 11. 11. 1880, front page.

67] Reproduction was published in "Heimat"[Die Heimat: illustriertes Familienblatt] in VI Jahr., in 1881. *Theater und Kunstmachrichten*, "Neue Freie Presse", 12. 11. 1880, p. 7.

68] This painting fits into so called idyllic trend in Siemiradzki's *oeuvre*.

69] *Kunstblatt. Oesterrische kunst Verein*, "Neue Freie Presse", 23. 04. 1881, p. 20.

70] *Theater, Kunst und Literatur*, "Morgen-Post", 19. 09. 1881, p. 4.

71] *Theater, Kunst, Literatur*, "Morgen-Post", 16 Mai 1882, p. 4.

72] All advertisements of the exhibition published in newspapers depicted *Isaurian Pirates* by Siemiradzki as the most important painting to be seen. Among others: "Die Presse", from 20 May to 27 July 1882 and "Neue Freie Presse" during the same time.

73] *Kunstblatt*, "Neue Freie Presse", 2. 07. 1882, p. 20.

74] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

75] *Theater und Kunst*, "Das Vaterland", 27. 07. 1882, p. 5.

A great exhibition of Russian art of the latest 30 years⁷⁶ did not escape the attention of Viennese critics. As Leo von Fialka told us, you can see a wealth of artwork here: "of not only great talents but also great artists" and he added "it's hard to draw all the details from about 600 great pictures [...]. Siemiradzki's [*Christ and the Harlot*] painting in its form is known to all; it established his reputation as an artist in Europe, everyone knows it from numerous reproductions. [...] This is the work of a true independent talent, who [...] paints freely, according to his own soul, and copies natural, physical beauty from nature."⁷⁷

In January 1883, Viennese newspapers began reposting information from the *Moniteur de Rome* which was reporting on Siemiradzki's new works – *The Funeral of a Rus' in Bulgar*, and *Aurora*⁷⁸ (commissioned for Yury Nechaev-Maltsov's Palace). These new works were painted at his villa on Via Gaeta in Rome.⁷⁹ *Montags-Revue* dedicated a whole article to a visit to the master's studio and to both paintings.⁸⁰

Die Presse also wrote about the *Burial* on its pages. According to the author of the article, Siemiradzki painted the work following a description left by Ibn Fozzlan.⁸¹ "Siemiradzki, with great craftsmanship, presented the whole "Arsenal of death" associated with a burial: gifts, swords, a pyre and fire. On the large [...] barge pulled ashore [...], the body of a Moscow hero lies on the top, dressed in a gala dress made in yellow brocade". The artist made reference to the old masters duplicating a shortcut in presenting a body so that only feet and face can be

76] *All-Russian Exhibition in Moscow in 1882* – The aftermath of the exhibition was a catalogue released in several parts, Иллюстрированный каталог Художественного отдела Всероссийской выставки в Москве, 1882, Part 1, The catalogue on pages 98 and 99 shows two works by Siemiradzki: *Alexander the Great and his Physician Philip* and *Nero's Torches*.

77] Leo von FIALKA, *Die Moskauer Ausstellung. II. Erste Gruppe: Bildende Künste*, "Neue Illustrierte Zeitung", 23. 06. 1882, p. 3.

78] *Aurora* was a project of a ceiling in a palace which belonged to Yury Nechaev-Maltsov. in St Petersburg in: *Theater und Kunstnachrichten*, "Neue Freie Presse", 18. 01. 1884, p. 7.

79] A detailed press release from the master's studio is not unique, nor should arise any surprise. His atelier in Rome, on via Gaeta, was open to visitors (at least once a week) and it was even marked in visitor guides of that time like *Baedeker*, as a sight that must be visited during a visit to Rome.

80] *Theater und Kunst*, "Montags-Revue aus Böhmen", 28. 01. 1884, p. 7.

81] Known also as Ibn-Fadlān, (Ahmad Ibn Fadlan lub Ibn Fozzlan) – a 10th-century Arab traveller who wrote travel journals which were popularised thanks to the translation made by Martin Christian FRÄHN, *Ibn-Fozzlan's und anderer Araber Berichte über die Russen älterer Zeit. Text und Übersetzung mit kritisch-philologischen Anmerkungen nebst drei Beilagen über sogenannte Russen-Stämme und Kiew, die Warenger und das Warenger-Meer, und das Land Wisu, ebenfalls nach arabischen Schriftstellern*, Kaiserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften, St. Petersburg, 1823.

seen.⁸² As was highlighted by the journalist, Siemiradzki managed to make the event more atmospheric by shrouding the whole scene in fog.⁸³ Schoenthan expressed his appreciation for the artist's ability to present a whole story so distant from the contemporary to author's time and culture, and making all efforts "to build a bridge between his art and understanding his artistry."⁸⁴ Later on, the painting's purchase by the History Museum in Moscow was covered in detail.⁸⁵

At the end of April 1885, the newspapers were briefing readers about a new painting: "The famous Polish painter Henryk Siemiradzki, [...] completed a new painting commissioned by Count Aleksander Przeździecki.⁸⁶ The painting depicts the death of the martyrs Saint Timothy and Saint Maura [*Martyrdom of St. Timothy and St. Maura, his Wife*]." ⁸⁷

The completion of another monumental work was reported by *Neue Freie Presse* at the end of February 1886: "Siemiradzki has just completed his latest large-size painting, on which Christ is depicted in Maria's house. This colossal painting will go to Berlin and will also be presented in Vienna."⁸⁸

Siemiradzki was heavily name-dropped in an article about Rome in the *Österreichische Kunst-Chronik*, where his picture of *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* was positively reviewed.⁸⁹

During a visit to Krakow in connection with the national exhibition organised there, the *Wiener Zeitung* correspondent offered a description of the city and reports from the exhibition. He remembers the ideological creator of the Krakow collection: "the art exhibition, which has got valuable artwork, owes its creation a few years ago to the generosity of the Polish artist. [...] Siemiradzki's *Nero's Torches* – it's a monument of patriotic thinking and it will always be like that."⁹⁰

82] Paul v. SCHOENTHAN, *Neues von Siemiradzki und Böcklin*, "Die Presse", 6. 04. 1884, front page.

83] Ibid.

84] Ibid.

85] Ibid.

86] Aleksander Narcyz Przeździecki (1814-1871) historian, writer, publisher, traveller, an author of *Podole, Wołyń, Ukraina. Obrazy miejsc i czasów* (Wilno 1841 I-II), in: Andrzej BIERNACKI, Aleksander Narcyz Karol Przeździecki. Accessible online: <http://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/aleksander-narczyk-karol-przezdziecki>.

87] *Theater, Kunst und Musik*, "(Neuigkeits) Welt Blatt", 30. 04. 1885, p. not numbered.

88] *Vereins und Kunstnachrichten*, "Neue Freie Presse", 25. 02. 1886, p.5; The canvas was very popular for a long time and joined the group of Siemiradzki's most often reproduced paintings.

89] *Die Jubilaums-Ausstellung in Berlin*, "Österreichische Kunst-Chronik", 31. 06. 1886, p. 4.

90] *Die Landesausstellung in Krakau*, "Wiener Zeitung", 10 IX 1887, p. 19.

Moritz Nierenstein from *Neue Freie Presse* also wrote about the exhibition in Krakow and mentioned Siemiradzki alongside Matejko and Rodakowski when he said they must be considered as "world works of art".⁹¹ Wilhelm Erner, joined the group of admirers by writing "Cloth Hall is showing an exhibition of paintings. There are masterpieces of Polish art exhibited; masters such as Matejko [and his] *Prussian Homage* and Siemiradzki with his *Nero's Torches*."⁹²

The International Jubilee Art Exhibition (Künstlerhaus, Lothringerstrasse 9, Wien) was opened in March 1888 and various press articles were published about the exhibition. One of the more extensive was published in *Die Presse*. Its author writes: "in one of the filled rooms, which could be a cornerstone of good-neighbourly relations, partly Italian, partly other countries [...], where Siemiradzki's work is the most significant *Night in Pompeii (Firefly)*. [It presents] a serious scene on an ancient street, where a couple in love flees from death, accompanied only by a glow-worm which brightens the deep darkness. This composition is full of ambience and poetry; the festive landscape together with the outlines of ancient monuments create a strong composition, but free from all sentimentality. The picture allows us to regret that so few works in our proximity come from this genius master."⁹³

Firefly was very well received and later welcomed at the exhibition in Munich. A Viennese press reporter, Ludwig Ganghofer, noted "[here is] an extremely poetic *Firefly* by Siemiradzki."⁹⁴ The same author was, at the same time, very critical of Matejko's picture of *The Maid of Orleans*.

The International Exhibition in Prague provided another positive platform for Siemiradzki: "An artist who could perform equally well solo, the creator of *Nero's Torches*, Siemiradzki. His last work determines that he thinks like Dante and handle paints like Boccaccio. He is Anacreon among painters".⁹⁵

The columnist from *Letters on Art*, when describing the works by Siemiradzki focused on *After the Example of the Gods*, when he said

91] Moritz NIERENSTEIN, *Kunst-Brief. Erste große polnische Kunstausstellung*, "Österreichische Kunst-Chronik", 8. 10. 1887, p. 3.

92] Wilhelm ERNER, *Feuilleton. Ausstellungen in Bregenz, Bozen und Krakau 1887*, "Wiener Zeitung", 10. 01. 1888, pp. 2-4.

93] *I. Feuilleton. Jubiläums-Kunst-Ausstellung. IV. Italien-England-Belgien*, "Die Presse", 7. 04. 1888, pp. 1-4.

94] Ludwig GANGHOFER, *Die internationale Kunstausstellung in München*, "Neue Illustrierte Zeitung", 23 IX 1888, p. 5.

95] *Kunst-Brief; Prag, 20 Oktob.*, "Österreichische Kunst-Chronik", 27. 10. 1888, p. 1077.

“both the drawing and the entire composition, as well as the colour is so good, so delicate and so full of charm that, if it was an illustrated newspaper, it would not be a shame to show it as illustrated verses.”⁹⁶

At the end of 1888, another large painting by Siemiradzki was presented at the Austrian Art Society in Vienna: *Chopin Playing Piano in Prince Radziwill's Salon*.⁹⁷ As reported by the Viennese press: The Christmas Exhibition of the Society is very popular and so *Young Chopin in the Berlin's Salon of Prince Radziwill* was presented in the first gallery of the exhibition alongside other important paintings.⁹⁸

1889 began very successfully for Siemiradzki. *Die Presse* wrote that “the well-known Russian painter Siemiradzki”⁹⁹ completed a huge painting in his atelier on Via Gaeta 1 during the Christmas period. The painting is already on its way to St. Petersburg and it is thought it will tour through the most important European cities. The painting shows *Phryne in Eleusis* [*Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis*]. The article offered a detailed description of the scene, highlighting the dynamics of its composition and the applied colours in extremely bright tones. The beauty of the main character, who was being undressed at the shore for a swim in the sea, was admired.¹⁰⁰

Phryne in Eleusis was exhibited in Vienna in 1890. Whole press columns were again devoted to the artist. Siemiradzki was described as a poet, creating new paths of art and breaking boundaries. An anonymous columnist wrote: “There is a so-called *poetic* shape in him that stands far from *rational*; he combines, in a beautiful and brilliant way, the latest techniques with antique scenes and his works have gained a truly artistic life.”¹⁰¹ The painting achieved great success. Despite this, words of criticism and accusations of being academic appeared for the first time: “how similar are these academic, not without beauty

96] *Ibid.*, p. 1077.

97] Jacek Malczewski's *Poles Sent to Siberia (Rest at the Mine)* and *The death of Polish Woman Sent to Siberia (Ellenai)* were also presented at the same exhibition; “Neue Freie Presse”, 2 XII 1888, p. 12; “Die Presse”, 5. 12. 1888, p. 12.

98] *Die Weinachts-Ausstellung des Österreichischen Kunstvereines*, “Wiener Presse”, 17. 12. 1888, p. 3.

99] Although Siemiradzki declared himself as a Polish painter, he was often described as a Russian painter. Such information repeatedly appeared in the press, even press correction did not make any change: “Answering your wish, we hereby print a correction that the painter Siemiradzki is not a Russian, but a Pole.” in: “Die Presse”, 19. 01. 1889, p. 12.

100] *Ein neues Bild von Siemiradzki*, “Die Presse”, 11 I 1889, p. 9 and “Deutsches Volksblatt”, 23. 01. 1889, p. 7.

101] *Kunstbriefe. Bartels, Siemiradzki und Andere*, “Österreichische Kunst-Chronik”, 15. 04. 1890, p. 245.

[scenes]" – wrote Emmerich Ranzoni.¹⁰² For the first time, Siemiradzki's academism was reproached.

In December 1891, the press reported on the completion of another work by Siemiradzki. We read: "As of yesterday, the entire intelligentsia of Rome's pilgrims to Villini, where the well-known painter Siemiradzki has presented his latest – a huge religious picture of the *The Ascension of Our Lord*. The painting is intended for the church of the Resurrectionists."¹⁰³ "This work will tour around Europe. The Roman press is full of praise for this work of art."¹⁰⁴

One piece of rarer information that became public, and caused sensation, was not connected with art but rather with Siemiradzki's personal interests. It was his connections with Eusapia Palladino – a world famous Italian medium. She was a frequent visitor to Siemiradzki's villa in Rome. She also visited him in Krakow, where she held a special séance. The Viennese public was kept informed in great detail by well-known Polonia activist Dr Henryk Monat who also reported on her meetings with Dr Julian Ochorowicz in 1893.¹⁰⁵

This was soon to be forgotten, as publicists focused their interests on a new work being created in the master's atelier – canvasses for the great stage curtains. The curtains designed for the theatre in Krakow were shown in 1894 for the first time. A detailed report recorded its reception and admiration expressed by crowds of pilgrims flocking to see them: "The stage curtains for the Krakow theatre, which were painted by the Polish painter Henryk Siemiradzki in Rome, [...] attracted thousands of people to the eternal city's Aquario Romano. The opening of the exhibition was attended by Margaret¹⁰⁶, the queen of Italy and an admirer of Siemiradzki's talent. [...] She not only visited the exhibition, she also called in to the artist's workshop, where she spent an hour looking at other paintings and praising the artist."¹⁰⁷

When the stage curtains were finally installed, they became a visitor attraction for Viennese residents staying in Krakow. The visits of

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- 102] Emmerich RANZONI, *Münchener Jahresausstellung*, "Neue Freie Presse", 5. 08. 1890, pp. 1, 2-3
- 103] Jerzy MIZIOLEK, "Wniebowstąpienie Chrystusa" Henryka H. Siemiradzkiego w kościele przy *via San Sebastianello* w Rzymie: kilka uwag o Zgromadzeniu Zmartwychwstańców i Mikołaju Gogolu, "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki", 2007, (Year 69), no. 3/4, pp. 249-258.
- 104] *Theater, Kunst, Literatur*, "Wiener Montags-Journal", 14. 12. 1891, p. 6.
- 105] Henryk MONAT, *Aus der Welt der Wunder*, "Neues Wiener Journal", 19. 12. 1893, pp.1-3.
- 106] Margherita Maria Teresa Giovanna di Savoia (1851-1926), Queen of Italy between 1878 and 1900, wife of Umberto I of Italy.
- 107] *Der Vorhang für das Krakauer Theater*, "(Neuigkeits) Welt Blatt", 14. 03. 1894, p. 7 and p. 15.

well-known personalities were reported at length. Austrian's Finance Minister, Ignaz von Plener, travelled to Krakow in 1894. The visit was summarised in the magazine *Architect*: "Without doubt, the main stage curtains painted by Polish painter Henryk Siemiradzki in Rome was a great attraction [of the theatre]. The stage curtains are actually a huge wonderful painting of around 100sqm and is wholly a result of the individual work of the master; it arouses great interest among both art connoisseurs and laymen. No visitor should miss the visit to the theatre so as not to lose the opportunity to admire this Polish work of art."¹⁰⁸

At the beginning of 1900, the presence of Siemiradzki's work was reported on at the Jubilee Exhibition in Frankfurt and, although there were no paintings on display, photographs made by the Society of Photography in Vienna were. Among other works, *Nouvelle-Statue* was displayed.

Another monumental stage curtain was being produced around this time. The recipient was to be Lviv theatre. *Neue Freie Presse* wrote: "H. Siemiradzki has completed another commission – a curtain for the Lviv theatre. Before he sent it off to its destination, it was displayed in a great room in Acquario Romano so fans of art could admire it there."¹⁰⁹ It was praised for its "Roman wealth" and for being "full of symbolism in a classic style"¹¹⁰. The newspaper continued "Siemiradzki explained to us, that with the help of the Hellenistic landscape, he built a delightful composition with a temple". After a detailed description, including the human figures, we read "the landscape presents a suitable background for the groups of people."¹¹¹

Reviews were more mixed than with the Krakow curtains – "The work influences by its own decorativeness, but openly speaking, as a theatrical decoration does not seem to be a successful work" – reviewed a columnist known as RDF in *Freie Presse*.¹¹²

The ink had not dried on many of the reviews of Lviv's curtains when the world of art was shaken by the news of the artist's death. The *Wiener Zeitung* was one of the first magazines to publish

108] *Das Stadttheater in Krakau vom Architekten k.k. Prof. Jan Zawiejski*, "Der Architekt", 1898, p. 9.

109] R.d.F., *Theater- und Kunstnachrichten*, "Neue Freie Presse", 20. 06. 1900, p. 10.

110] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

111] R.d.F., *Theater- und Kunstnachrichten*, "Neue Freie Presse", 20. 06. 1900, p. 10, The Lviv's stage curtain is now considered to be more favourable to the rather extremely well received stage curtain from Krakow those days. This criticism is probably a result of general dislike of academic art and lively critique of Siemiradzki's work in the country.

112] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

information on the artist's death. The gazette contained an extensive obituary of Siemiradzki, including a biography and a short dossier.¹¹³ It gave an overview of the artist's best works, according to the then Viennese press. A similar obituary was published on the same day by *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*¹¹⁴ and *Neues Wiener Journal*.¹¹⁵ Newspapers wrote, among other things: "With him, the personality (or individuality) of modern Polish art, which was easily recognizable elsewhere in Europe and in America, has disappeared. His artistic name had a good undertone and, apart from Matejko, no other Polish artist is so well known." It included his biography and a synopsis of his most well-known artworks. It particularly mentioned *Nero...*, which opened the doors to the international fame. It also listed what it felt were Siemiradzki's most important pictures: including *Christ and the Harlot*, *The Vase or the Woman?* (which it said was the second most popular painting), *A Dance among Swords*, *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis*, *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, *The Last Supper* (in the church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow), *Christ Calming the Storm* (in the Evangelical church in Krakow), the ceiling paintings of the *Aurora*, *The Spring* (in the Nechaev-Maltsov), palace in St. Petersburg) and, finally, the main stage curtains in the theatres in Krakow and Lviv. He was called a Polish Piloty, although it was emphasised that he was never a student of Karl Theodor Piloty (professor and director of the Academy of Arts in Munich). Often, Siemiradzki was compared to Lawrence Alma-Tadema.

After Siemiradzki's death, articles on his work were not published so often. During World War I, there was an exhibition of Polish paintings in Vienna organised by the Galician Committee for Refugees. The adverts announced that works by Jan Matejko, Artur Grottger and "the world renowned" Henryk Siemiradzki would be on display. Despite this, he was represented only by some small sketches for his picture *The Vase or the Woman?*. Nevertheless, these were well received.¹¹⁶ At the same time, the Polonia newspaper (published in Vienna)

113] (*Henryk von Siemiradzki †*), "Wiener Zeitung", 25 VIII 1902, "Wiener Post", 25. 08. 1902, No. 195, p. 6

114] "Neues Wiener Tagblatt (Tages-Ausgabe)", 26. 08. 1902, p. 5.

115] "Neues Wiener Journal", 7. 08. 1902, p. 10-11 – Here, the last hours of Siemiradzki's life were given in detail. "At 11pm he demanded a piece of paper and wrote down as follow: "I do not demand anything from the world anymore ... I feel a physical wish to die I would still like to live for my family... I am asking for forgiveness for my mistakes." After he wrote it, he fell asleep for few minutes, then agony began, and at 2am he died".

116] *Polnische Malerei. Die Ausstellung im Künstlerbale*, "Neues Wiener Journal", 13. 04. 1915, p. 9.

published a tragic article titled *Destruction of Polish properties in Ukraine*: “A castle in the country estate of count Adam Orłowski in Kuryłówka (district Lityn, Podolia) has been destroyed along with its extremely valuable collection. A famous picture *Sword Dance* [*A Dance among Swords*] by Henryk Siemiradzki, which was displayed in the palace has been saved by Ukrainian commissioner Stepuja and has been transported to Kamieniec Podolski (Kamianets-Podilskyi).”¹¹⁷

In more recent times, the Viennese press has reported information from the Dorotheum Auction House¹¹⁸ where his artworks, or even copies of his artwork, were reaching prices higher than expected.

Siemiradzki's name is deeply ingrained in Austria's art community and this can be seen in the article by Edwin Baumgartner of 8 October 2018, published in the *Wiener Zeitung* under the title *Defamation (Rufmord! Vor 1950 Jahren beging Kaiser Nero Suizid – sein Beispiel lehrt den Umgang mit Fakten und Fake News)*, which talks about history from Nero's time and was illustrated with Siemiradzki's painting *Nero's Torches*. Baumgartner mentioned that Henryk Siemiradzki established the stereotypical perception of those times in European minds.¹¹⁹

In this paper, I wanted to focus mainly on articles published by Viennese press during Siemiradzki's life. The statistical review outlines the years when most articles and information on Siemiradzki's art and life was published. He was a regular guest in the Viennese press from 1876 to the mid-80s of the 19th century. Articles about him appeared most frequently in *Neue Freie Presse*, and less frequently in *Die Presse* and *Wiener Zeitung*. His name appeared regularly in *Österreichische Kunst-Chronik* from 1879 to 1911. Occasionally, articles on Siemiradzki were published in other magazines such as *Das Vaterland*, *Illustrirte Sport Zeitung* or *Neues Wiener Journal*. 34 press companies in Vienna wrote about him and his name appeared there nearly 500 times. From the huge success which *Nero's Torches* brought him in 1876 and, until his death, his name didn't disappear from the newspapers' pages.

Transl. Anna Cudnowska

117] *Vernichtete polnische Güter in der Ukraine*, “Polen – Wochenschrift für polnische Interessen“, 1918, vol. 2, p. 224.

118] Dorotheum – Auction house founded in 1707 by Emperor Joseph I and until now it remains the largest, German-speaking auction house in the world.

119] Accessible online: https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/kultur/mehr_kultur/969757_Rufmord.html;

ANNA MASŁOWSKA

National Museum in Warsaw

HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI'S PAINTING ON THE EUROPEAN MARKET OF PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTIONS OF WORKS OF ART

The invention of photography in 1839 caused a revolution in fine art publishing, and consequently in art promotion and distribution. None of the graphic techniques used in the 19th century to reproduce works of art could provide such faithful copies as the new medium. Photography was quickly accepted as a tool for obtaining perfect reproductions of works of art thanks to the great, previously unknown faithfulness of the photographic image to the original. The main advantage of photography and photomechanical printing processes (developed on the basis of photography from the early 1880s) was that they allowed for the rapid production of a large number of high-quality prints at a relatively low price, much lower than the price of traditional graphic reproductions.¹ Photography – as a mass medium – has democratised access to art that has become available to the broad public through it. The new medium has also become an important tool for professionals – collectors, researchers and art critics.

When Henryk Siemiradzki was beginning his painting career, photographic reproduction had already established itself and became a very important element of the art market. He came into contact with

1] See Anthony J. HAMBER, "A Higher Branch of the Art". *Photographing the Fine Arts in England, 1839–1880*, Gordon and Breach Pubs., Amsterdam 1996.

photography as a means of promoting artistic work during his studies at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. Then, for the first time, a professional photographer took pictures of his paintings intended for public distribution. These were photos of two academic sketches: *The Christ Descending into Hell* and *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* taken during the presentation of these works at the annual exhibition of the Academy in the autumn of 1869. The photographer was Ivan Brandenburg who had the exclusive right to issue photographic copies from this exposition. Ivan Brandenburg (1841–1870) was a painter, graduate of the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. He ran his photographic studio in Petersburg from 1868. He took photographs for the Academy, and in early 1870 (shortly before his death) he obtained the official title of the photographer of the Imperial Academy of Arts.²

The photos for sale were mounted on cardboard with printed titles,³ information about the author of the work as a student of the Academy, the prizes he received for his work, and the photographer's signature.⁴

The introduction of the reproductions of his paintings into the market must have been an important event for Siemiradzki – a student. In a letter to his parents, he proudly wrote that the photographs were sold at the exhibition and “in the stores”,⁵ which meant that his works would go to a wider audience than just professors, students and visitors to the exhibition.

Of course, the distribution scale of prints was still local. Neither the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts nor the photographer had a wider distribution system. Beyond the borders of St. Petersburg, these photographs circulated primarily thanks to social contacts, being sent privately to family and friends.

The next stage in the process of promoting Siemiradzki's work with the use of photography took place shortly after he left school, and it was at once a jump to the highest level of the European market of reproductions. In early 1872, the artist made contact with one of the most important fine art publishers – the Munich publishing house

2] Accessible online: <https://stereoscop.ru/photograph/> Бранденбург-Иван-Иванович.

3] In Russian: *Сочинение Иисуса Христа въ Аду; Разрушение Содома и Гоморра.*

4] Examples of these photographs have been preserved in the legacy of Henryk Siemiradzki kept in the collections of the National Museum in Kraków, Department of Old Photography, inv. nos.: XX-f-27023, XX-f-31920.

5] Henryk Siemiradzki, letter to parents, St. Petersburg, September 1869, Archivio di Pontificio Istituto di Studi Ecclesiastici, Roma (PISE), 22 – Siemiradzki Legacy, file 1, f. 211-213.

Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag, which decided to take a photograph of the painting *A Roman Orgy from the Imperial Era* exhibited at Munich Kunstverein in January of that year. The photograph was published in the series *Galerie Moderner Meister*, including reproductions of paintings of the most popular contemporary artists. It was available in two formats: the smallest, i.e. cabinet card (cardboard size – ca. 11 x 17 cm) for the price of 1 mark (fig. 89) and the average, so-called Royal-Format (cardboard size – 65 x 46 cm) for the price of 7 marks 50 pfennigs.⁶

The young artist could be proud that the copy of his canvas was included in the offer of the major European publishing company, the more that it was the first work that he made and showed in public after graduation. He wrote to his parents in January 1872 that he received a letter from the best of Munich photographers asking for permission to take and publish photographs of *Orgy*, for which he would receive “dozens of prints and the pleasure of seeing his painting in commerce, alongside the most beautiful works of Munich painters”.⁷

The presence in Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag's catalogue introduced the name of Henryk Siemiradzki into international circulation. However, this contract did not immediately develop into permanent cooperation. Further works by Siemiradzki appeared in Hanfstaengl's catalogue only in the second half of the 1880s, a dozen or so years after their first contact.

None of the West European art publishers decided to print the next important work by Siemiradzki – *Christ and the Harlot* (1873). For the first time, the canvas was photographed in St. Petersburg when it was exhibited at the Academy of Arts in the spring of 1873. From the reviews published in the local press, we learn that the art reproduction market in Russia was very poorly developed at that time. Art critics lamented that the Russian public quickly and completely forgot about the paintings after the exhibitions. Abroad the situation was different

6] *Franz Hanfstaengl's Kunstverlag in München, Maximiliansstrasse 7*, in: Adolph RUSSELL, *Gesamt-Verlags-Katalog des Deutschen Buchhandels. Ein Bild deutscher Geistesarbeit und Cultur. Vollständig bis Ende 1880. Buch- und Kunst-Katalog*, vol. 8: *Leisnig – Nürnberg*, Adolph Russell's Verlag, Münster i. W. 1881, columns: 545, 586. The picture was published under the German title: *Aus der Blüthezeit des römischen Cäsarismus*. A sample photograph (in a cabinet card format) has been preserved in the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw, Iconography and Photography Collection, inv. no: DI 109478 MNW.

7] Henryk Siemiradzki, letter to parents, Munich, January 1872, PISE, 22, file 1, f. 296-299; as cited in: Józef DUZYK, *Siemiradzki. Opowieść biograficzna*, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1986, p. 124.

because good and cheap (in contrast to Russian prints) photographs of exhibited works appeared very quickly.⁸ Given such unfavourable opinion on the Russian art reproduction market, one can assume that the photo of *Christ and the Harlot* taken in St. Petersburg did not have a large market, and the number of its buyers was also limited due to the high price of prints. We do not have any information suggesting that the prints made in Russia were distributed in Western Europe, for example during the exhibition of the painting at the World Exhibition in Vienna in the same year.

For the second time *Christ and the Harlot* was photographed in Warsaw by a famous local photographer Jan Mieczkowski (1830–1889), during a display at the Town Hall in December 1873.⁹ However, this reproduction was never published. As the press informed, “Mr Mieczkowski [...] did not find any advantage for himself in letting it out for public view”.¹⁰ In Warsaw, the distribution of the reproduction of *Christ and the Harlot* was taken by another well-known photographer Konrad Brandel (1838–1920), who in 1874 – with the permission of Siemiradzki – made a copy of a photo taken in St. Petersburg. As it was emphasized, the prints made by Brandel were sold “at a very affordable price”.¹¹

The painting was photographed again – for the third time – in Moscow, in connection with its display at the All-Russia Art Exhibition in 1882. The author of the photograph was Ivan Diagovchenko, one of the most famous Moscow photographers. Ivan Diagovchenko (1835–1887) opened the atelier in Moscow in 1867. In the 1870s he used the title of the photographer of His Imperial Highness the Successor Tsesarevich and Moscow Imperial Theaters, and from 1881 the title of photographer of the Court of His Imperial Majesty. Diagovchenko was known primarily for portrait photography – he was the favourite portraitist of poets, artists, dignitaries, but he also photographed Moscow’s architecture, documented important events in the court and country life. He gained recognition as a producer of photographic copies of

8] *Выставка в Академии художеств 1873 г. Грецизма, картина Генриха Семирадского, (An exhibition at the Academy of Arts 1873. Sinner [Christ and the Harlot], a painting by Henryk Siemiradzki)*, “Всемирная иллюстрация” (“World Illustration”), 1873, no. 243, pp. 136-138.

9] “Kurier Warszawski”, 1873, no. 270, p. 2.

10] “Kurier Codzienny”, 1874, no. 28, p. 2.

11] Ibid. A sample photograph (in a cabinet card format) has been preserved in the collections of the Museum in Nieborów and Arkadia, branch of the National Museum in Warsaw, inv. nos.: NB Bibl.2173/1 MNW.

paintings. From the mid-1870s, he took photos of works by Russian painters commissioned by Pavel Tretyakov.¹²

The National Museum in Krakow preserves the print of *Christ and the Harlot* made by Diagovchenko in a large format with an inscription in French.¹³ This indicates that the photographer had the ambition to reach foreign clients as well. However, he didn't have his own distribution network on a European scale. He could not compete with West European photography publishing companies that had their own catalogues and branches in the largest cities in Europe and in the United States, such as Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag and Friedrich Bruckmann from Munich, Photographische Gesellschaft from Berlin, Adolf Braun from Dornach, Fratelli Allinari from Florence, Anderson in Rome, or Maison Goupil in Paris.

For the Polish market, photographic copies of Siemiradzki's works were published by the Warsaw publishing house of Herman Altenberg and Maurycy Robiczek (from the end of 1879, the company operated under the name of Robiczek only). In their series issued from 1876 called *Album of Photographs from Paintings of Polish Artists*, 14 of Siemiradzki's paintings were printed until the end of 1882. As the first, in 1877, *Elegy* appeared (fig. 90); then in the same year *Christ and the Harlot* and *Nero's Torches*, and in subsequent years: *View of Sorrento* (fig. 91), *Sale of Amulets*, *Shipwrecked Man (The Roman Beggar)*, *The Vase or the Woman?*, *A Dance among Swords*, *After the Example of the Gods*, *A Roman Orgy from the Imperial Era*, *He and She*, *The Era of Tiberius on Capri*, *A Patrician's Rest* and *The Vue*.¹⁴ Photographs from Siemiradzki's paintings were taken in Warsaw by Konrad Brandel, partly from original canvases, partly from earlier prints made by other photographers.

The publishing project of Altenberg and Robiczek, although it didn't register on a European scale, was very important for the Polish audience. It was the first cyclic native photographic publication presenting works by Polish artists. Until then, the Polish market of art

12] Елена Бархатова, *Русская светопись. Первый век фотокunstства* (Yelena Barkhatova, *Russian svetopis' [photography]. The first century of the photographic art*), Альянс – Лики России, Санкт Петербург 2009, p. 365.

13] *Le Christ et la femme adultère*; National Museum in Krakow, Department of Old Photography, inv. no.: XX-f-31940.

14] Polish titles of prints: *Elegia*, *Jawnogrzesznicza*, *Pochodnie Nerona*, *Widok Sorrenty*, *Sprzedaż amuletów*, *Rozbitek żebrzący*, *Wazon czy kobietę?*, *Taniec wśród mieczów*, *Za przykładem Bogów*, *Epizod z czasów Cezaryzmu*, *On i Ona*, *Na Kaprei za Tyberjusza*, *Odpoczymek Patrycjusza*, *Widoczek*.

reproductions, just like Russian, was very poor. The columnist of *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* wrote in 1877 with envy: “A wonderful way to disseminate works of art through photographic reproductions has long been invented abroad. These prints spread in hundreds of thousands of copies, and they are often performed in a masterly way and [...] they are extremely cheap.”¹⁵ Altenberg and Robiczek, in addition to photographs from this series, published in the so-called cabinet format, also offered photos of Siemiradzki’s paintings in other sizes, also in large luxury formats Royal, Imperial and Extra and prints made in the photogravure technique.

Thanks to cooperation with the Warsaw publishing house, Henryk Siemiradzki was assured of the constant presence of his art among Polish audiences, who in turn eagerly awaited further photos of the works of the famous compatriot. Unfortunately, the artist’s collaboration with the Altenberg and Robiczek publishing house ended in an unpleasant way. In the middle of 1883, Robiczek announced the publication of five new, still unknown works by Siemiradzki, including a painting depicting the martyrdom of a Christian virgin in the circus of Nero. The artist reacted violently to this news, informing through the press that the publisher wasn’t authorized to disseminate any of the announced pictures, and especially the scene from the circus of Nero, which was only in the sketch stage. The painter accused the publisher not only of dis-respecting his artistic property rights, but also of obtaining photographs of works in an illegal manner.¹⁶

Despite such a nasty finale, Robiczek had great merits in promoting Siemiradzki’s art on the Polish market. The publisher not only issued his own series of reproductions, but also brought to Warsaw photographs taken abroad. In this way, the Polish public in December 1876 received a photo of *Nero’s Torches* taken in Rome by Gioacchino Altobelli (fig. 92).¹⁷ The Roman photographer photographed the canvas in the spring of 1876 in connection with its display at the Academy of Saint Luke. Gioacchino Altobelli (1814-1878) was a well-known and respected photographer in Rome in the sixties and seventies of the 19th century. He was a painter by education. He started his photographic activity around 1858 together with a friend, a painter of Spanish origin Pompeo Molins. In 1865, he founded a new photographic studio

15] “Tygodnik Ilustrowany”, 1877, no. 59, p. 82.

16] “Czas” [Kraków], 1883, no. 184, p. 2.

17] “Przegląd Tygodniowy”, 1876, no. 53, p. 592.

under the name Stabilimento fotografico Altobelli & C. Altobelli was valued above all as a portraitist and author of magnificent views of Rome, its architecture and landscapes. He also experimented in the field of photographic technology.¹⁸ For Henryk Siemiradzki, he also made a photograph of *Shipwrecked Man* of 1878. However, the reproduction of works of art wasn't the speciality of Altobelli. Also the distribution range of the photographer's works, although he was popular in Italy, can be described as a local one. Altobelli couldn't provide the painter with a notable presence at the very demanding and crowded fine art market in Europe. Of course, the prints of *Nero's Torches* made in Rome and bought there by art lovers and critics circulated around Europe. But it was still rather sociable than a professional distribution network.

Only constant cooperation with a large publishing and photographic company made it possible to be taken seriously on the European market. Contact established in 1872 with the Munich Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag on the occasion of the publication of the reproduction of *Roman Orgy* turned out to be, as of now, episodic. Admittedly, in August 1876 Siemiradzki informed his family that the photo of *Nero's Torches*, with reproduction rights for Germany and whole Europe, was to be taken in Munich,¹⁹ but it didn't happen. Photographic copy of *Nero's Torches* was released in Germany only three years later, in 1879 by the Photographische Gesellschaft in Berlin in connection with the presentation of the painting at the annual exhibition organized by the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts. Siemiradzki's painting was among thirty works selected for a special album of reproductions from this exhibition. Reproduction was available in three formats offered by the publisher (Folio, Imperial and Extra), with prices ranging from 3 to 45 marks.²⁰

Photographische Gesellschaft from Berlin was one of the tycoons on the European fine art reproduction market.²¹ The company was founded in 1862 by an engineer and chemist, and art lover Albert

18] Piero BECCHETTI, *Gioacchino Altobelli, fotografo*, "Rivista di storia e critica della fotografia", vol. III, 1981, no. 2, pp. 24-43.

19] Henryk Siemiradzki's letter to his family, 9 August 1876, PISE, 22, file 1, f. 461-462v.

20] Advertisement in: *53ste Ausstellung der Königl. Akademie der Künste in Berlin*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 1879.

21] See Dorothea PETERS, *Vom Visitenkarten-Album zum fotografischen "Galeriewerk". Die Kunstproduktionen der Berliner Photographischen Gesellschaft*, in: *Fotografien vom Alltag – Fotografien als Alltag*, eds. Ulrich Hägele, Irene Ziehe, Lit, Münster 2004.

Werckmeister, and was then run by his brothers Friedrich, a painter and engraver, and Emil, a merchant. From the beginning, the venture was of a business nature, and thanks to the perfect combination of commercial sense and artistic taste of its owners, the company quickly achieved great success. Initially, they published reproductions of old masters, made not from originals, but from engravings. These were prints in a cheap, small format called *carte de visite*. This production was very successful. Over 17 million prints of this type were sold. From about 1865 the company, as one of the first in Europe, began publishing – on a commercial scale – reproductions of oil paintings by old masters photographed directly from the originals. Collections of photocopies of works from the Berlin and Dresden Painting Galleries, from the National Gallery in London or from Italian collections, received enthusiastic reception. Critics wrote very flattering reviews about their quality and significance. The reputation of the company is evidenced by the fact that in 1869 she received permission to photograph paintings in the Louvre, in spite of the binding ban on taking photographs in this institution. In the mid-1860s Photographische Gesellschaft added modern painting to its catalogue. The company had an ambition to provide the audience, through photography, with a continuous review of the development of contemporary art. The company's success consisted in the fact that its offer was created with a view to different types of recipients. It was intended both for artists (as a kind of pattern), for connoisseurs of art, art historians and critics as well as for the general public. The headquarters of the company was located in a prestigious place – on the Museum Island in Berlin. Cooperation with such a publisher was, of course, also very beneficial for artists – not only because of the advertising that gave the opportunity to exist on the international art market, but also for financial reasons.

Contract for the publication of *Nero's Torches* in 1879 began the long-term cooperation of Henryk Siemiradzki with Photographische Gesellschaft in Berlin. In the catalogue from 1881 there were already five works by the painter, besides *The Nero's Torches* also: *A Dance among Swords*, *Shipwrecked Man* (fig. 93), *He and She* (fig. 94) and *The Era of Tiberius on Capri*.²²

22] *Catalog des Kunst-Verlags der Photographischen Gesellschaft*, Photographische Gesellschaft, Berlin 1881, p. 18; as: *Die lebenden Fackeln des Nero*, *La danse des glaives (Schwertertanz)*, *Le mendiant naufragé (Der bettelnde Schiffbrüchige)*, *Elle et lui (Er und Sie)*, *Le rocher de Tibère à Caprée*.

The catalogue from 1896²³ offered copies of 16 paintings, apart from those mentioned above, also: *A Wandering Priest of Isis, The Funeral of a Rus' in Bulgar, Night in Pompeii (Firefly)*,²⁴ *The Victims of Svyatoslav after the Battle of Dorostolan in the year 971, The Song of the Slave, Rural Scene, At the Fountain, After the Example of the Gods*²⁵ (and also an enlargement of a fragment of this picture), *Phryne in Eleusis, The Vase or the Woman?, The Judgement of Paris*.²⁶

In the following years one more painting was printed *A Game of Dice*,²⁷ so Photographische Gesellschaft published a total of 17 paintings by Siemiradzki. It was a comparable number, for example, with the number of reproductions of Lawrence Alma-Tadema issued by this company at that time. In the catalogue from 1896 there were 21 works by Alma-Tadema.²⁸

Photographische Gesellschaft must have appreciated having Siemiradzki's works on offer, since his painting *The Vase or the Woman?* represented its production in the company's advertisement placed in the catalogue of the international exhibition in Berlin in 1891.²⁹

In a special illustrated catalogue published by Photographische Gesellschaft in 1903, showing 900 works selected from thousands of copies of the company's offering, Siemiradzki also gained an important place. His paintings were placed in the section entitled "Allegorical and mythological paintings. Ancient genre scenes", and there were six of them: *The Song of the Slave, He and She, The Vase or the Woman?, Phryne in Eleusis, A Dance among Swords, After the Example of the Gods* and, separately, a fragment of the latter.³⁰ Of the artists representing a similar style and theme, only Lawrence Alma-Tadema was more widely represented (as many as 17 paintings).³¹ The criterion for

23] *Catalogue of the Berlin Photographic Company Fine Art Publisher*, Photographische Gesellschaft, New York 1896, p. 56.

24] As: *Summer Night in Old Pompeii*.

25] As: *Follow a Good Example*.

26] As: *Representation Mimique du Jugement de Paris*.

27] *Catalogue of the Berlin Photographic Company Fine Art Publisher*, Photographische Gesellschaft, New York 1905, p. 189.

28] *Catalogue of the Berlin Photographic Company Fine Art Publisher*, Photographische Gesellschaft, New York 1896, p. 21.

29] *Internationale Kunst-Ausstellung veranstaltet vom Verein Berliner Künstler anlässlich seiner fünfzigjährigen Bestehens 1841–1891. Katalog. Zweite Auflage*, Verlag des Vereins Berliner Künstler, Berlin 1891, p. 3 in the part containing advertisements.

30] *Bilderkatalog der Photographischen Gesellschaft Kunstverlag, begründet in 1862*, Photographische Gesellschaft, Berlin 1903, pp. 123-125, 145.

31] *Ibid.*, pp. 129-135.

choosing paintings for this part of the catalogue from 1903 was their decorative character, corresponding to the tastes of a wide audience. The relatively large number of Siemiradzki's paintings placed here proves the popularity of his work in the circles of mass recipients.

Thanks to cooperation with Photographische Gesellschaft of Berlin, Henryk Siemiradzki's name became known in a wide European and American art market. The company had a very well-developed network of international distribution, branches in Paris, London, Vienna and New York. It published extensive catalogues with the offer. English-language versions of catalogues were also published in London and New York. Some of Siemiradzki's paintings were also published as large-format photogravures, specially designed for wall decoration: *A Dance among Swords*, *The Song of the Slave*, *Phryne in Eleusis*, *The Vase or the Woman?*, *The Judgment of Paris* and *A Game of Dice*.³² Prints could also be ordered by post, which significantly increased the number of recipients.

In the second half of the 1880s, after a break of a dozen or so years, Siemiradzki again got in touch with the Munich publishing house Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag. The company was founded in 1833 as a lithographic workshop by the highly regarded German artist Franz Hanfstaengl (1804-1877). In the early 1850s, Hanfstaengl expanded his business by opening an art printing house and photography studio. He specialized in lithographic and photographic portraits and reproductions of works of art. In 1868, the son of Franz, Edgar, took over the company. He developed on a large scale and commercialized the production of photographic copies, first of all from paintings. During his leadership, the company joined the group of leading European fine art publishers. The company flourished the most at the turn of the 1880s and 1890s. The Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag's offer included reproductions of old masters' paintings from great European galleries, prints from contemporary painters' works and a collection of portraits of contemporary personalities. In the catalogue from 1889, in the section called Galerie Moderner Meister [Gallery of Contemporary Masters], there were 6,000 works, 4 years later – already 8,000 items. From 1889 Hanfstaengl published his own magazine on art *Die Kunst unserer Zeit*, also illustrated with reproductions of paintings. The company exported his production to the whole world. In 1892, branches

32] *Catalogue of the Berlin Photographic Company Fine Art Publisher*, Photographische Gesellschaft, New York 1905, p. 189.

were established in New York and London (from where prints were also exported to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa).³³ Cooperation with such a tycoon in the field of art reproductions had to be beneficial for every artist.

In 1886, Siemiradzki published with Hanfstaengl a painting *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* painted in the same year. Until January 1892 the Munich publisher issued another 7 prints from the artist's paintings: *Bacchanals*, *Temptation of St. Jerome*, *Greek Vase Seller*, *With the Viaticum* (fig. 95), *Christ and the Woman of Samaria*, *Art Wins the Heart*, *Greek Idyll*.³⁴ In the following years he got the copyrights to next 5 paintings: *Consolation and Relief*, *The Careless Lovers*, *An Itinerant Art Dealer*, *The Little Argonaut* and *Curtain for the Krakow Theatre*.³⁵ Until 1897 Hanfstaengl issued a total of 14 paintings by Henryk Siemiradzki.³⁶

At the beginning of 1895, Siemiradzki wrote to Stanisław Sokołowski, secretary of the Society of the Friends of Fine Arts in Lwów (Lemberg, Lviv), that he couldn't authorize him to reproduce any of his paintings, because the rights did not belong to him as almost all of his more significant works were reproduced by Hanfstaengl from Munich, or Photographische Gesellschaft from Berlin.³⁷

On the American market, European reproductions were distributed among others by The Soule Art Company from Boston. In the catalogue of this company from 1902 there were 32 paintings by Henryk Siemiradzki – 13 published by Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag,³⁸ 16 published by Photographische Gesellschaft³⁹ and three others that I could

33] Helmut HEß, *Der Kunstverlag Franz Hanfstaengl und die frühe fotografische Kunstproduktion. Das Kunstwerke und sein Abbild*, Akademischer Verlag München, München 1999.

34] *Verlags-Katalog von Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag A.G. München. I. Theil*, Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag, München Januar 1892, p. 113; as: *Bacchanale*, *Die Versuchung des heil. Hieronymus*, *Griechischer Vasenverkäufer*, *Die Wegzebrung*, *Christus und die Samariterin*, *Kunst bringt Gunst*, *Griechische Idylle*.

35] *Trost und Hilfe*, *Die Unvorsichtigen*, *Ein Hausirer*, *Der kleine Argonaut*, *Theatervorhang in Krakau*.

36] *Franz Hanfstaengl Kunst-Verlag A.-G. in München*, in: Adolph RUSSELL, *Gesamt-Verlags-Katalog des Deutschen Buchhandels und des mit ihm im direkten Verkehr stehenden Auslandes*. 16. Ergänzungsband 3,1: *Leisnig – Rybnik*, Adolph Russell's Verlag, Münster i. W. 1894, columns 699-700; Franz Hermann MEISSNER, *Henri de Siemiradzki. Ein polnisches Künstlerleben*, "Die Kunst unserer Zeit", vol. VIII, 1897, pp. 93-112.

37] Henryk Siemiradzki's letter to Stanisław Sokołowski, Rome, February 17, 1895, manuscript, in the collection of The Stanisław Fischer Museum in Bochnia, inv. no. MB-H/3010.

38] All previously mentioned except *Curtain of the Krakow theatre*.

39] All previously mentioned except *A Game of Dice*.

not identify with the titles: *Waiting and Watching*, *In Arcadia* and *A Grecian House*.⁴⁰

We can conclude that constant cooperation with the two leading German fine art publishers – Photographische Gesellschaft and Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag, lasting from the end of the 1870s, provided Henryk Siemiradzki with the comfort of a permanent presence on the artistic market, not only European, but also global. The number of reproduced works of the artist also shows that Siemiradzki's painting was an attractive commodity for producers and distributors of photographic reproductions. The benefit was mutual. The photography supported the artistic success of the painter. The more artist's paintings were reproduced, the more recognizable he was. The growing reputation of the painter, in turn, caused an increase in the demand for reproductions of his works. The art market and the photographic industry influenced each other, benefiting publishers as well as artists and the public.

40] *Complete Art Reference Catalogue*, Soule Art Company, Boston 1902, pp. 1166–1167.



89. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Blütbezeit des römischen Cäsarismus* [A Roman Orgy from the Imperial Era], photograph from the series *Galerie Moderner Meister*, ed. Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag, München, 1872, National Museum, Warsaw (© Copyright by Ligier Piotr/Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie).



90. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Elegia*, photograph by Konrad Brandel, from the series *Album of Photographs from Paintings of Polish Artists*, eds. Hermann Altenberg & Maurycy Robiczek, Warsaw, 1877, National Museum, Warsaw (© Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie).



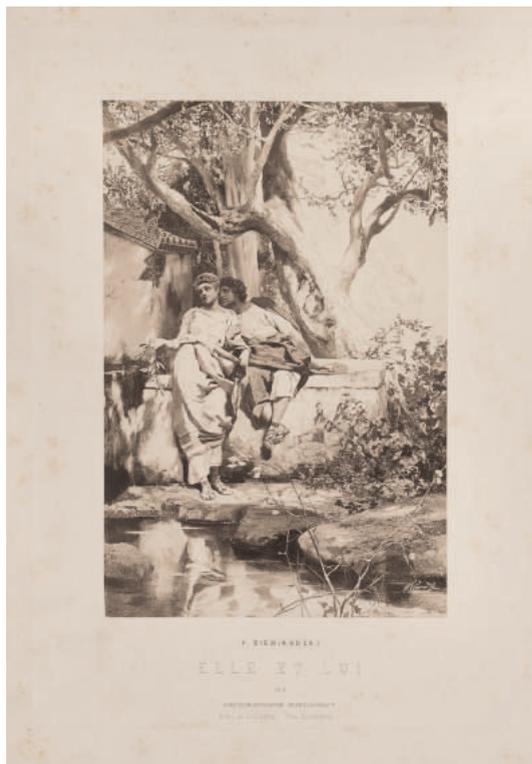
91. Henryk Siemiradzki, *View of Sorrento*, photograph by Konrad Brandel, from the series *Album of Photographs from Paintings of Polish Artists*, eds. Hermann Altenberg & Maurycy Robiczek, Warsaw, 1878, National Museum, Warsaw (© Copyright by Ligier Piotr/Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie).



92. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Le Luminarie di Nerone* [*Nero's Torches*], photograph by Gioacchino Altobelli, Rome, 1876, National Museum, Warsaw (© Copyright by Ligier Piotr/Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie).



93. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Der Bettler* [*Shipwrecked Man*], photograph, ed. Photographische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1880, National Museum, Warsaw (© Copyright by Ligier Piotr/Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie).



94. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Elle et lui* [*He and She*], photograph, ed. Photographische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1880, National Museum, Warsaw (© Copyright by Ligier Piotr/Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie).



95. Henryk Siemiradzki, *Die Wegzebrung* [*With the Viaticum*], photograph from the series *Galerie Moderner Meister*, ed. Franz Hanfstaengl Kunstverlag, München, ca 1890, National Museum, Kraków.