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Ideals for Sale:

‘Ideal Portraits’ and the Display of National Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Austrian Empire

Nóra Veszprémi

Introduction

By the 1840s, public exhibitions of contemporary art had become staples of the art world throughout Europe, and the Austrian Empire, the realm ruled by the Habsburgs, was no different. The shows organised by local art associations and academies in various cities featured many works that would, after the fall of the Empire, become central to the national canon in its successor states: heroic history paintings and idealised scenes from the life of the peasantry. The paintings discussed in this article did not belong among them. They were pictures of young women, often scantily clad; they dealt with personal emotions and desires, rather than lofty heroism and morality. Unsurprisingly, they were highly popular with the audience, but – also unsurprisingly – they were often dismissed by more austere critics. A typical response was that of the Austrian Josef Preleuthner who, writing about the 1845 exhibition of the Vienna Art Association, vehemently disparaged ‘a certain non-art [...] which has flooded our exhibitions with its frivolous industrial products. We have in mind,’ he continued, ‘Natale Schiavoni’s supposed “ideal portraits”’; this is not art, not even misguided art;

this is, to be frank, commercial speculation, or even worse. The titles alone, “The Pensive Woman”, “Summer Morning”, “The Lovely Girl”, “The Abstemious Woman”, “The Sleeping Woman”, reveal what spirit they stem from, and to those one must add pale, fashionable faces with luscious necks and arms and barely covered bodies’ (plate 1).¹

‘Ideal portrait’ was an established term in mid-nineteenth century Central European art criticism.² It denoted images that depicted lone human figures – in most cases beautiful young women – as representatives of certain ethnic groups, character traits, or emotions. Despite adhering to some of the formal conventions of portraiture, ideal portraits never claimed to provide the likeness of a specific individual. Nevertheless, they often resembled academic studies made after life, and contemporary critics tended to take the painter’s employment of a real-life sitter for granted.

Images inhabiting the vaguely defined middle ground between portrait and genre painting were not invented in the nineteenth century, and neither were they limited to Central Europe.³ As Mary D. Sheriff has shown in her study of Fragonard’s ‘fantasy portraits’, such images allowed portraitists to elevate their art above the genre of portraiture, the latter often belittled as a slavish imitation of material reality.⁴ Comparable images in early- and mid-nineteenth-century Europe might be explained by similar

artistic ambitions,⁵ but they also assumed new functions in the context of the modern art world, which allowed the transnational dissemination of pictures on an unprecedented scale.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the popularity of mid-century ideal portraits had waned, while the criticism aimed at them continued to resonate. Save for a few exceptions, they were placed at the bottom of art historical canons in the former Habsburg lands, and were rarely subjected to serious analysis. When it came to history paintings, even the most ardent anti-academic, modernist critics of the twentieth century acknowledged that they had once conveyed seminal political and social messages. By contrast, ideal portraits were seen as fashionable crowdpleasers devoid of such meanings, and were consequently relegated to oblivion.

Countering this prevalent view, this article will argue that ideal portraits had at least as much to say about communities, nations, traditions and histories as the loftiest history paintings. Furthermore, what they had to say differed markedly from the emerging discourse of political nationalism: as images that travelled the circuits of the art world, easily transferred from one national context to the next, they embodied the idea that ethnic difference was in the eye of the beholder. Hence, they implied that what nationalists were eager to construe as eternal and organic was in fact flexible and shaped by contemporary discourse. This article will draw on recent studies of nationalism in the Habsburg Empire

to explore the mindset behind this message; one that was widespread in the mid-nineteenth century, but was gradually suppressed by the nationalist model, which achieved a political triumph by the end of the First World War and continues to shape our societies to this day. Therefore, understanding its nineteenth-century alternatives can support the critical analysis of present concepts of ethnicity, nation and nationality.

Ideal portraits were, however, not simply illustrations of a stance on nationalism: they were powerful objects, desirable to some, repulsive to others; they operated on the level of emotions, rather than argument. The musings they prompted on ethnic character or national tradition were essentially attempts at verbalising, and thus rationalising their unvoiceable sensuality. By bringing together art history and the usually text-based discipline of nationalism studies, the examination of ideal portraits can reveal the unique ways in which visual culture shapes, reflects, and interrogates (trans)national identities.

The Empire, national (in)difference, and ideal portraits

The Austrian Empire officially came into being in 1804, following the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, and comprised all the lands ruled by the Habsburg dynasty. In 1867 the Austro-Hungarian Compromise afforded the Kingdom of Hungary special rights within the Empire, which now came to be known as Austria-

Hungary. The Empire finally dissolved in 1918, as a consequence of its defeat in the First World War. Although its geographical area was not especially large compared to other empires and nation states, the political, ethnic and geographical diversity of the Austrian Empire was vast: in the 1840s, the period this article is concerned with, it included areas such as Veneto and Lombardy; Polish Galicia; Czech–German Bohemia; as well as Hungary, itself inhabited by Croats, Slovaks, Germans, and several other ethnic groups besides Hungarians. For many centuries, the only factor holding these lands together was that they had at some point in time passed into the possession of the Habsburgs, most often via the dynasty's proverbially astute marriages. Their reinvention as the Austrian Empire in the early nineteenth century coincided with a historical era when the polity was increasingly conceptualised as an arrangement between state and citizens, rather than ruler and subjects. The immensely diverse Austrian Empire needed to be organised as a more or less unified and centralised modern state.⁶ Despite Vienna's role as the imperial centre, architects of the modernised Empire also had to acknowledge its diversity and inherent multiculturedness.⁷

Natale Schiavoni, the Venetian painter castigated by Preleuthner, was one of many artists who had embarked on a career that spanned the whole of the Empire, traversing regional and national boundaries. In order to gain success, these artists had to

present their works at exhibitions in various locations across the Empire. Moving from one city to the next, artworks had to be general enough to be intelligible and enjoyable to different audiences, while also displaying a certain degree of specificity in order to remain interesting. Artists often achieved this by representing - and to a certain extent exoticising - their own local traditions, while conceptualising them as part of a greater whole. With the rise of nationalism, local traditions often came to be understood as national traditions, leading to subtle nuances in the interpretation of the same artworks.

In Schiavoni's time, nationalist activists throughout the Empire were increasingly promoting the idea that each person should belong to one, and only one nation, and that national affiliation should be a primary cornerstone of identity. That said, nationalist movements were rarely fuelled by outright separatism, and it was not until the twilight years of the Empire that they truly gained mass appeal.⁸ Before that, they were largely elite trends, and a substantial number of the Empire's inhabitants continued to feel a deeper allegiance to their city and region, or even to the Empire, than to a specific nation. To explore this attitude, historians have fruitfully employed 'national indifference' as a category of analysis, arguing that the lack of exclusive identification with a nation was not a relic from a premodern past, but a self-sufficient mindset that presented an alternative to nationalist models.⁹

Between fervent nationalism and total national indifference there lay, however, a broad spectrum of possible positions. A reluctance to embrace the nationalist ideal of the monolithic nation did not preclude a fascination with the concept of nationality. Indeed, by the mid-nineteenth-century, the idea of distinct national cultures with age-old traditions was becoming mainstream; it may have been promoted by a narrow, educated elite, but it impacted wider sections of society.¹⁰ In a multinational land this did not necessarily mean the adoption of the increasingly essentialist ideas of nationalists. For the people of the Empire, the exchangeability and flexibility of ‘national’ culture was a lived experience. They conceptualised their ‘imagined communities’ in different, often diverging ways, and could live with simultaneous, intersecting, entangled definitions of the nation.¹¹ Schiavoni was one of these people, and the next sections will demonstrate how his ideal portraits and their reception were shaped by his trans-imperial career strategy.

Serialised Ideals: Strategies of Display in the Multicentred Empire

Natale Schiavoni was born in Chioggia on 25 April 1777.¹² After receiving initial training there, he enrolled at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice in 1792. From the very beginning, his career path unfolded against a backdrop of turbulent historical events. In

1797, Venice became part of the Austrian Empire; a year later Schiavoni moved to Trieste (part of the Empire since the sixteenth century) and worked there as a miniaturist. In 1808 he settled in Milan and spent the next eight years carrying out commissions both there and in Venice. In 1805 the Republic of Venice was allocated to Napoleonic France in the Treaty of Pressburg; then, following the defeat of Napoleon in 1814, the city and its surroundings became part of the Austrian Empire again, together with the Duchies of Milan and Mantua. The new Austrian crown land was from then on referred to as the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia.¹³ In 1816 Emperor Francis I paid his first visit to the new province and commissioned Schiavoni to paint his portrait in miniature.¹⁴ The portrait was subsequently lithographed and earned great popularity, prompting the Emperor to invite Schiavoni to Vienna in order to portray the entire imperial family in miniatures.

Schiavoni was a skilled painter, but one who built his career with the resourcefulness of a shrewd businessman. He spent five years in Vienna, during which he built connections with aristocratic patrons, including Chancellor Metternich.¹⁵ Returning to Venice in 1821, Schiavoni's next celebrated achievement was to produce an engraving of Titian's *Assumption*.¹⁶ Around this time, he abandoned miniature painting and took up oils instead. He quickly established himself as a painter of Madonnas, fulfilling several church commissions and earning himself the nickname 'Pittore delle

Grazie'. Having settled in Venice for good and taken up a position as a professor at the Venice Academy, he maintained his connections in Vienna, where he became a honorary member of the Academy, regularly spending time there and displaying his paintings at exhibitions both in the imperial capital and in other cities of the Empire. By the 1840s his signature half-length female ideal portraits had become hugely popular. He was also highly sought after as a portraitist and worked for distinguished patrons from all over Europe. His business was no longer a one-man enterprise: several of his children chose their father's profession and collaborated with him on larger commissions. Besides his work as a painter, Schiavoni also ran an art dealership specialising in Venetian Old Masters. Many of the paintings he sold had been 'restored' by his son Felice in a way that verged on forgery.¹⁷ For the Schiavonis, tradition and business were inseparable.

The situation of Venice within the Empire was complex, and cannot simply be described in terms of colonisation and oppression. In his abundantly researched monograph, David Laven has argued that until the eve of the Revolution in 1848 the people of Venetia had been quite apolitical, and certainly not hostile towards Austria.¹⁸ The reason lay in their dislike of Napoleon's exploitative and militant regime, compared to which Habsburg rule seemed more acceptable. Seeking to qualify this view, Eva Cecchinato has called attention to the rise of patriotic, republican movements from

the mid-1830s, but differentiated between them and the Risorgimento movement, which sought to create a unified Italy.¹⁹ The influence of the latter only became decisive in the revolutionary period. Furthermore, the promotion of Venetian culture was not necessarily connected to Venetian patriotism as a political movement. Local cultural endeavours had their well established place within the framework of the Empire, and were encouraged by Emperor Francis, himself an Italophile.²⁰

To Venetian artists, the Empire offered the possibility of connecting to its transnational networks.²¹ The contemporary art world was mostly focused on individual cities, thanks not only to the exhibitions of the fine art academies in cities like Vienna and Venice, but also to the civic Art Associations (Kunstvereine) that organised annual exhibitions in, for example, Prague (Bohemia, 1822), Milan (1829), Vienna (1830), or Pest (Hungary, 1840).²² At the same time, these organisations were in contact with each other, enabling the flow of artworks from one exhibition to the next. This system mirrored the organisation of the Empire as a whole, which accepted regionalism and even built its imperial identity on the notion of diversity, while fostering connections and safeguarding the status of Vienna as the foremost city in a multcentred system.²³

Schiavoni's strategy was to display his paintings in different cities across the Empire, often executing several copies and variations. For instance, his *Magdalene in a Grotto* was exhibited in

Milan, at the Pinacoteca di Brera in 1831 and in a smaller version in 1834; the composition subsequently turned up in Vienna in 1837 and in 1840, at the Brera again in 1844 and 1850, and finally in Vienna in 1852 (*plate 2*).²⁴ Similarly, his depiction of *Titian and Violante* appeared in Vienna in 1835, then went on to be displayed in Venice in 1836 and in Milan in 1837.²⁵ His *Flora and Pomona*, two pictures shown together as counterparts, seem to have made their first appearance in Vienna in May 1836, and then went on to be exhibited in Venice in the August of the same year as ‘new works’.²⁶

The painter followed the same strategy throughout the 1840s, when he mainly displayed ideal portraits. To name just one example, a *Thinking Girl* was exhibited in Trieste in 1842, in Vienna in 1844, 1845 and 1846, and in Pest in 1844 (where he also showed a *Daydreaming Girl*).²⁷ Natale’s work was complemented by the output of his most successful son, Felice. Affinities between their pictures can not only be noted in the large number of Madonnas and Venuses they produced between them, but also in their engagement with similar or related subject matter, such as Natale’s *Titian and Violante* and Felice’s *Raphael Painting the Fornarina*, which seems to have been the younger painter’s most successful composition (*plate 3*).²⁸

The Schiavonis’ nineteenth-century biographer, Luigi Sernagiotto mentions several cases when Natale’s ‘paintings of rare

and extraordinary beauty' were not sold at the exhibitions, even though he sent them to several cities.²⁹ These occasions do not have to be read as failures. For the paintings, being seen was just as important, or even more so, than being purchased. On certain occasions Schiavoni exhibited pictures he had painted on commission, in order to satisfy patrons who insisted that the paintings receive 'confirmation from the public'.³⁰ Schiavoni had an established clientele among the middle class – doctors, bureaucrats, industrialists – and did not depend on impulse purchases from the audience. In addition, his paintings were often bought by the art associations as prizes for the lotteries they organised for their members.³¹

Besides using exhibitions to earn an Empire-wide reputation, Schiavoni also benefited from aristocratic and royal patronage. In addition to high-ranking patrons in Vienna, he and his son both worked for the Russian Grand Duke Alexander Nikolaevich, to whom he dedicated his engraving of the *Assumption*. The Grand Duke purchased a version of Felice's *Raphael and Fornarina* and commissioned Natale to paint his portrait.³² The production of such stately portraits for various European royal families was one of the artist's chief activities.³³ Hence, it is tempting to characterise his career strategy as operating on two levels, connected to two different social classes: the European royalty with its cosmopolitan court culture on the one hand, and the bourgeois audience of locally

ingrained art society exhibitions on the other. The respective genres Schiavoni worked in were, however, not neatly attached to one or the other of these contexts. His small-scale, ostensibly ‘mass-produced’ works were often sought out by royal patrons: for instance, a version of his *Melancholy* (a composition by then executed several times, see *plate 1*) won a gold medal at the fine art exhibition in Brussels in 1845 and was subsequently purchased by King Leopold I of Belgium.³⁴

Natale Schiavoni’s strategies with regard to selling his work seem to have been extremely successful. Yet when it comes to the critical reception of his work, the situation is more complex. In general, reviews of his work were more favourable in the beginning, with his reputation gradually dwindling from the 1840s. Preleuthner’s review, quoted at the beginning of this article, is typical: Schiavoni’s artistic strategy increasingly came to be seen as commercial speculation. A closer look at some of the texts reveals the intricacies within this larger picture: the often controversial nature of his work and the subtle regional differences in the attitudes of critics.

In the 1830s, Viennese reviews described Schiavoni’s paintings as ‘the most valuable and excellent products of the brush’, his portraits as ‘faithful imitations of nature’, and the painter himself as ‘a gemstone of art who deserves to be admired’.³⁵ His colours and skillful handling of flesh were widely praised. Italian

reviews voiced similar opinions, extolling the harmony of his compositions, the purity of his drawing and the liveliness of his colours.³⁶ Nevertheless, several reviews – even the most positive ones – articulated a concern that these excellent paintings were on the verge of devolving into something no longer worthy of praise. This was most explicitly declared by an Italian critic who, after reiterating the usual accolades for the Schiavonis' singularly correct 'disegno' and graceful colouring, warned that 'merits, pushed beyond certain boundaries, degenerate into vice' and that this could well happen in the case of the Schiavonis' soft nuances and merging of colours.³⁷ In a similar vein in 1841 a Viennese critic, while acknowledging and praising Schiavoni's skills, could not refrain from pointing out the more 'shady side' of his work, something he described as 'a certain voluptuous yearning'.³⁸ Although Natale Schiavoni was usually described as one of the best painters to grace the exhibitions in Vienna, Venice, and Milan, these reservations tinted that general appreciation with darker hues.

In the 1840s the main themes in Schiavoni's critical reception remained the same, but the less celebratory opinions became more vocal. In 1845, the Viennese art historian Eduard Melly described Schiavoni's half-length female figures as 'painted with talent, but belonging to a sickly lewd trend', observing that Schiavoni's aim was not to represent the emotions mentioned in the titles, but simply to paint semi-nude girls.³⁹ By the early 1850s critics were mostly

pointing out the repetitive nature of his ideal figures, if mentioning them at all.⁴⁰ In Italy, however, reviewers remained more appreciative of his work, even though his production of a large number of similar figures was sometimes pointed out.⁴¹

Schiavoni's example suggests that critics throughout the Empire shared certain standards of taste, or at least a rhetoric which allowed them to evaluate the same works in very similar ways. Nevertheless, the fact that his reputation lived on in his homeland even after he was rejected by Viennese critics highlights the significance of local artist-heroes and regional traditions intertwined in a shared Central European culture. The genre of the ideal portrait was forged in the interaction between different critical expectations, bringing together a variety of traditions under the umbrella of a highly versatile genre.

Interpretative Strategies: The Ideal Portrait between Fantasy and Reality

In Ignaz Jeitteles's *Aesthetisches Lexikon*, published in Vienna in 1835, the *Idealbild* was succinctly defined as: 'a picture created solely from the imagination of the artist, as opposed to a portrait of what is given'⁴² – a phrasing that places emphasis on the imaginary aspect, at the expense of verisimilitude. It is, however, fruitful to read this article together with the preceding one. Based on centuries of philosophical tradition, the encyclopedia describes the *Ideal* as

the conceptual essence of something that exists in nature: the ideal itself does not exist, but is still regarded as real, and the objective of art should be to get as close to it as possible.⁴³ The entry concludes with a warning to artists who lose themselves in fantasies. The opposite of the ideal, it says, would be a representation not based on nature and truth, but on the artist's capricious flights of fancy – something to be avoided at all costs. Consequently, the term 'ideal portrait' aptly described a genre that claimed to represent the ideal of certain groups of humans, but sought to create the illusion of reality and truth.

The search for a sheltered middle path between 'vulgar' reality and unrestrained fantasy was crucial to the early- and mid-nineteenth-century Central European artistic culture later described as 'Biedermeier'.⁴⁴ Prone to conflating the aesthetic and moral dimensions of artworks, Biedermeier art criticism construed both extremely 'materialistic' and 'fantastic' works as purveyors of immorality and lewdness, longing for a 'poetic' ideal that would gracefully avoid both extremes.⁴⁵ Ideal portraits such as Schiavoni's were especially suited to become the objects of such musings. Austrian artists such as Johann Ender and Friedrich von Amerling had achieved considerable success with their ideal portraits from the 1820s, years before Schiavoni began experimenting with the genre, and the reception of their work, especially Amerling's,⁴⁶ had already laid out the coordinates – from material to ideal – which

determined the interpretation of these images. The way in which this critical discourse intersected with questions of identity in the Austrian Empire turned Schiavoni's – or Ender's, or Amerling's – ideal portraits into a Central European phenomenon.

The multifocal network of exhibitions stretching across the Empire provided a fertile ground for a genre aimed at diverse audiences. Vienna may have been the most prestigious place to exhibit, but it did not always act as an originator of trends, nor as a hegemonic centre that solely exported its own culture. In Schiavoni's time, Venice was declining as a centre for contemporary art, but its past glories had not been forgotten. By contrast, Milan, the rival centre of Lombardy-Venetia, gave home to a very lively art scene which nurtured several artists who went on to earn a reputation Empire-wide.⁴⁷ As shown by the brief survey of his exhibiting practice, Natale Schiavoni's success hinged on his ability to participate in the art scenes of all three cities more or less equally. Although he seems to have aimed to display his new compositions in Vienna first, he did not always do so. His strategy was to present himself in Vienna as an Italian, and that meant he had to be seen as *bringing* 'Italianness' to the capital. The genre of the ideal portrait amalgamated many different traditions, but one of those traditions Schiavoni could call his own. By building on it, he was able to assert his identity as a Venetian artist.

Pictures of 'Beauties' had been popular in Venetian painting

from the late fifteenth century, a trend epitomised by the work of Palma Vecchio and Titian. Contemporary inventories referred to these pictures as ‘quadri’ representing women, as opposed to ‘ritratti’ of identifiable sitters.⁴⁸ The reason was probably that the ‘quadri’ were portraits of well-known courtesans, whose identities had to be shrouded in anonymity to make the pictures socially acceptable. The boundaries between portrait and ideal were further blurred by authors such as Pietro Aretino, who discussed the ability of portraits to transcend the mere reflection of reality.⁴⁹ The idea that portraits needed to be based on ‘concetti’ in order to convey the ‘essence’ of their sitters gave rise to pictures depicting their subjects as ideal representatives of a certain profession, class, or other group; a genre that was to enjoy a long future not just in Italian, but European art.⁵⁰ The idea that the ‘concetto’ could form a picture on its own, without a sitter, only went one step further.

The tradition of nameless ‘Beauties’ persevered in Venetian painting in the next centuries, building equally on the authority of the great masters and the titillating stereotype of the Venetian courtesan. The pictures were often made for foreign consumption. In the mid-eighteenth century Rosalba Carriera produced a large number of pastels representing female figures, selling them to Northern European princes through a network of agents and collectors no less transnational than the modern system of exhibitions Schiavoni relied upon.⁵¹ Carriera’s pastels were praised

in words of passionate love and desire that conflated the exquisitely made, valuable objects with the beautiful women they represented. As Shearer West has shown, these responses stemmed from a highly charged, emotional mode of reception inherently connected to the genre.⁵² This involved a playful search for the 'real' woman behind the painting: Carriera's enraptured clients begged her to facilitate meetings with her model.

Like Carriera before him, Schiavoni transplanted Venetian imagery into a Northern environment that approached it with a well-polished aesthetic-emotional arsenal. Viewers of Schiavoni's paintings reacted to them in ways reminiscent of Rosalba's clients: they wondered about the identity of the woman in the picture, scrutinising her skin, her makeup and her demeanour as if she was real. The difference was that Schiavoni's work drew an increasing amount of negative criticism from viewers who were predisposed to the absorbed, emotional, flirtatious mode of reception the paintings required, but whose absorption was impeded by Schiavoni's artistic strategy. The enjoyment of these images depended on a tongue-in-cheek assumption that the painting as a material object was just as unique and desirable as the real woman behind it; hence, any reminder that it was an object serially produced for consumption could hinder the viewer in satisfyingly engaging with it.

The painter's handling of human flesh was crucial in this regard. Although Schiavoni was much praised as a master of this

aspect of art, several reviewers revealed their discomfort. One Viennese critic, who otherwise liked Schiavoni's *Sybil*, noted that her 'flesh is somewhat dirty and unwashed in the shadowy parts',⁵³ another talked of Schiavoni's 'wonderful flesh and ice-cold shadows',⁵⁴ while yet another bemoaned the ideal portraits' lack of character and expression, calling the faces 'schöne Larven'⁵⁵ – an expression that could mean both pretty masks and pretty larvae. Another Viennese review from the year 1836, while less evocative, made further important points: 'Schiavoni veils too much and keeps [his figures] too soft.'⁵⁶ It seems that, for all the praise awarded to Schiavoni as a colourist, there was something about his way of handling human skin and its chiaroscuro that obstructed the 'reality effect' of his figures, triggering unease, even repulsion in their beholders. Looking at the images today, this is not hard to understand: the figures do have a certain doll-like quality, an artificial smoothness, which was perceived as a sign of something going fundamentally wrong in that mysterious area of artistic creation where real-life human bodies were transformed into painted ones. The illusion of real human matter was obstructed by the material reality of the production of the painting.

Rosalba Carriera and Natale Schiavoni were both Italian artists working for a Northern audience, but their situations were markedly different: while Carriera's artistic production was determined by a premodern system of patronage, Schiavoni had to

display his paintings on the modern art market. The reappearance of his compositions at exhibitions year after year made it blatantly obvious that they were not exquisite masterpieces, but objects of mass consumption designed to appeal to the public. This was what critics were alluding to when they pointed out the artificiality of the skin and flesh of Schiavoni's female figures. It is important to note that such accusations seem to have been formulated most consistently in Vienna. In Venice and Milan, Schiavoni's adherence to the Northern Italian workshop tradition of 'beauties' must have appeared as a self-evident creative pathway rather than as a conscious market strategy; a unique local point of view that probably influenced the more positive reception of his paintings. Nevertheless, even in his hometown Schiavoni was not completely safe from such complaints. When one of his Italian critics wrote that the complexions of his *Flora* and *Pomona* were 'not true: one could say Flora and Pomona used carmine on their cheeks,'⁵⁷ he was not only suggesting that Schiavoni's rendering of skin hues was as artificial and false as make-up, but also that the paintings were unabashedly trying to draw attention to themselves, like flirtatious women. 'They really are two coquettish goddesses,' he concluded.⁵⁸

There is, of course, a simpler interpretation of these comments. Schiavoni's ideal portraits represented female figures, often in titillating ways, and this was enough to make them immoral in the eyes of more conservative critics. The disgruntled Melly, for

instance, discussed in detail how Schiavoni's half-(un)dressed female figures were more sexually arousing, and thus more obscene, than properly undressed classical nudes would have been.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, even these remarks point to an analysis of the painting as product: the problem was not simply that the subject matter was immoral, but that the images had obviously been devised and serialised with the intention to provoke 'vulgar' lust. Setting aside accusations of immorality, what most critics focused on was the emphatical objecthood of Schiavoni's paintings. One particularly interesting observation was made by the Austrian critic Hermann Meynert, who remarked that Schiavoni's technique made his pictures look like very old paintings, instead of new ones.⁶⁰ What Meynert had in mind was probably the brownish hue or 'veiling' pointed out by several critics, but the way he expressed it draws attention to a more fascinating aspect: these paintings made a show of the fact that they were imitations not of nature, but of other paintings, and not simply in their compositions, but in their very being.

Schiavoni's ideal portraits were objects made for consumption, but what they offered was not merely titillation. They packaged titillation into the venerable conventions of high art by providing their mostly middle-class buyers with physically and intellectually accessible simulacra of the authoritative compositions of the Old Masters. Indeed, the conscious reiteration of art historical

models is an essential characteristic of the genre of the ideal portrait. In this respect Schiavoni's strategy was rather sophisticated. His paintings were not copies or even variations of works by Titian or Palma Vecchio; they were original compositions whose contemporaneity was emphasised by details such as the Biedermeier chair in *A Lady at Her Toilette* (plate 4) or by the employment of typical early-nineteenth-century visual tropes such as the emotionally charged motif of a figure mourning by a grave (see plate 1). At the same time, Schiavoni borrowed several visual cues from the Old Masters which conjured up their compositions in the viewer's mind. It was not just that he returned to themes such as the woman in front of the mirror. It was the way his female figures' hair flowed, the way they touched their locks, the way their robes left their shoulders bare, the suggestive nature of their white blouses – unspecific and timeless, unlike the Biedermeier chair – that recalled the paintings of the Old Masters.⁶¹ Schiavoni used these references to endow his images with an erotic immediacy; he used the art historical past to give them life.

This artistic strategy could not expect much praise from those who thought the past was dead. No wonder some of the most vigorous challenges to Schiavoni's art came from the burgeoning anti-academicism of the 1840s. It was from such a position that the Hungarian critic Imre Henszlmann formulated his biting assessment of Schiavoni's ideal portraits in his review of the 1842 exhibition in

Pest: ‘Schiavoni has been wearing out the same female model for years, having gained such insightful knowledge of her features and body parts that he is able to paint them by heart, even without looking. I cannot fathom how anyone could expect his female figures to display life and character when they are almost like stereotypes; how could imagination work freely if it is bound to reiterate the well-rehearsed features, even if involuntarily?’

Consequently, Schiavoni has to achieve effect by other means, such as exciting the viewer’s senses through contrived, frivolous scenes, semi-nudity, together with a strong suggestion of what is hidden.

[...] When painting flesh, he shades these grayish colours with a chocolate brown, which will become clear to anyone who takes the time to compare the tint of the person standing beside him to the flesh painted by Schiavoni. This kind of comparison is usually the most practical way of determining whether a painting’s colours are correct, but – unfortunately – today it is more fashionable to compare paintings to each other, than to nature.’⁶²

Acknowledged today as the first professional Hungarian art historian, Henszlmann was a more ambitious and systematic thinker than most of the critics quoted here.⁶³ As a young man, he belonged to the circle of Joseph Daniel Böhm, the Viennese medalist and collector who also mentored Rudolf Eitelberger, the future founder of the Vienna school of art history.⁶⁴ Böhm’s teachings, which can only be reconstructed from the reminiscences of his pupils, included

the careful analysis of individual artworks as an antidote to the generalised application of lofty theories. Having associated with the Nazarenes in Rome in his youth, Böhm promoted the appreciation of medieval art and rejected the academic concept of a universal ideal of beauty derived from antiquity and the Renaissance.

Henszlmann's programmatic essay, entitled *Parallel between Artistic Views and Education in Ancient and Modern Times* and published in 1841, owed much to Böhm, while also employing the ideas of Romantics such as the Schlegel brothers.⁶⁵ Arguing that art is shaped by material conditions (the time and place of its creation and the very material of which it is made), as well as by the national identity and individual talent of its artist, Henszlmann envisioned the history of art as a system of national schools. In this respect, as well as in his historical-critical outlook and attention to material, Henszlmann was intellectually related to contemporary German pioneers of the scholarly discipline of art history, most notably Karl Friedrich Rumohr and Gustav Waagen, whom he cited in his essay as exponents of novel ideas whose influence it is still too early to assess.⁶⁶

One of the key concepts in Henszlmann's *Parallel* was that of *character* (jellemzet), which he defined as the golden middle ground between the particular/individual and the general/ideal. Henszlmann may have borrowed the term from the German art historian Aloys Hirt, but while the latter only applied the term to

characteristic representation as the opposite of idealisation, Henszlmann used it in a broader sense.⁶⁷ A characteristic artwork should, to his mind, express the material, temporal and national conditions of its creation, and it should do so by displaying three types of character: that of its artist, that of its subject matter, and that of the national school to which it belongs. According to Henszlmann, art academies obstructed the emergence of characteristic art by promoting an ‘anemic ideal’ instead. A late romantic who extolled the ‘organic’ structure of medieval guilds, Henszlmann believed that national schools would evolve naturally as soon as the damaging influence of academies was curbed and characteristic art won the day.

In Henszlmann’s opinion characteristic art could only be achieved if artists drew inspiration directly from nature in their homeland. Within such a theoretical framework paintings that referenced other paintings had no hope. In the review quoted above, Henszlmann assumed the presence of reality behind Schiavoni’s paintings, but that reality was not nature observed in its unmediated state; instead, it was an artificial setup required by academic methods. Most of the time Henszlmann derided that setup by describing the painter’s constant reliance on the same model and her ensuing miserable boredom, but sometimes he went further by comparing Schiavoni’s female figures to corpses; most poignantly in his description of the Venetian painter’s Venus: ‘this Venus has

not stepped out of the waters on her own accord, as the ancients told the story, but drowned herself in the Seine maybe out of sorrow over her lost god, and has been pulled out of the water and put on display for everyone to see so that an acquaintance might recognise her [...]. Someone might counter this by saying that the roses on her cheeks contradict her being dead, but in that case we will point to her livid legs and ask whether they are worth 800 forints, the price demanded by Schiavoni.’⁶⁸ Through the image of the corpse Henszlmann formulated an ultimate condemnation of the characterless materiality of Schiavoni’s paintings. If Rosalba Carriera’s enamoured clients constituted one end of the spectrum, then Henszlmann surely occupied the other, but for all his scathing criticism he was still playing the game: trying to find the real woman behind the ideal portrait. What he hinted at was that even if she was found, her presence would not endow the painting with life and save it from its status as mere commodity.

The rigour with which Henszlmann employed his organic concept of national schools was unusual among contemporary critics, but by the 1840s popularised notions of national culture as determined by an unchanging national character were often invoked in public discourse. Schiavoni’s ideal portraits, which essentially operated by commodifying his national tradition, did not live up to Henszlmann’s idea of organicity, but they did embody ‘Italianness’ and ‘Venetianness’ in a less rigorous framework. The concept of

national character was in practice a collection of stereotypes, which, as the next section will show, pervaded Viennese criticism of Schiavoni's pictures. The rub was, however, that although ideal portraits promoted national traditions, they conceptualised national identity as something that was ultimately non-organic, easily commodified, and highly susceptible to change.

Nations on Display

In the Austrian Empire of the mid-nineteenth-century the significance of regional and ethnic identities gradually increased with the emergence of nationalisms, but this did not mean imperial identity was not a force to be reckoned with, even if it was rather fluid and hard to define. Imagined communities were, as already indicated, envisioned in varied, often intersecting ways. These complexities were reflected in the art exhibitions of the time: when artists displayed their works outside their native provinces, they were sometimes classified as compatriots, at other times as foreign artists; a classification that was somewhat arbitrary, but did not lack an overall logic. Natale Schiavoni was usually described as a 'waterländischer' artist by Viennese newspapers,⁶⁹ while Hungarian reviewers described him as definitely foreign. Vienna, the centre of the Empire, could incorporate all provinces into its imperial identity, while regional centres sought to distinguish themselves from one another.

Whilst Schiavoni was considered an Austrian artist in an imperial sense, imperial identity encompassed a wide range of ethnic identities whose ‘Otherness’ was rarely left unremarked. Conceptions of Schiavoni’s ethnic difference often informed reviews of his paintings outside his native province: the painter’s skilful handling of colours was described as a Venetian characteristic, both when it was praised and when it was denounced as superficiality.⁷⁰ Sometimes the painter’s Otherness was pointed out through the Othering and objectification of the women he painted. One critic, for instance, scrutinised the tint of his *Venus*’s skin: ‘The Inkarnat does not have the same rose-red whiteness of bulging flesh that we could admire in Schrotzberg’s Leda last year, but this is probably due to the climatic circumstances of the original [the model], as what is tinted pale by the North is tinted brown by the hotter South’.⁷¹ The implications of categorising the painter and his models as ‘Southerners’ are made clear by one of the less enthusiastic reviewers whose description of the ‘shady side’ of Schiavoni’s work has already been quoted above: ‘a sickly attitude snuck into the colouring, smuggled into the drawing, a Southern idleness, a painted dolce far niente bothers us in all his paintings’.⁷² The decadence of both painter and model is ascribed to their Southern origin: nonchalant idleness, often described as ‘dolce far niente’, was a stereotype widely associated with Venetians by their Austrian compatriots, sometimes even shaping official policy.⁷³

Without a doubt, these stereotypes echo orientalist tropes. The way they were visualised in the form of highly sensualised female bodies may suggest an essentialist conflation of culture and biology; nevertheless, the opposite will be argued here. As Suzanne L. Marchand has shown, despite the advent of racist biological determinism in the latter part of the century, early-nineteenth-century orientalism in the Germanic lands was still largely motivated by religious and cultural considerations.⁷⁴ Hence, while the critics quoted above undoubtedly made essentialist claims, their assertions were destabilised by the paintings themselves, which still left enough space for alternative interpretations. This was because their constructed nature was so obvious: assembled from instantly recognisable visual clichés, transferable from one image to the next regardless of their specific subject matter, ideal portraits created an interplay between stereotypes and self-stereotypes that negated the realness of the image and consequently of the stereotypes behind it.

‘Ethnic’ ideals – the ‘Italian Woman’, the ‘Greek Woman’, the ‘Girl from Tyrol’, the ‘Oriental Woman’ – were so prevalent among ideal portraits that they can be seen as a subgroup of their own. Notably, the subgroup was not characteristic of Schiavoni’s output which – apart from some examples of Oriental women – mainly consisted of personifications of mental states. Nevertheless, as the reviews quoted above show, these images were still, by default, identified as Italian women. This was not simply due to the

ethnic origin of the artist. While not specifically designating his female figures as Venetian or Italian, Schiavoni identified them as such by reaching back to the Renaissance tradition. Furthermore, his employment of the imagery connected to Venetian courtesans (the mirror, the touching of long, silky hair) evoked the old and widespread image of Venice as the city of sexual deviancy.⁷⁵

Critics' references to *dolce far niente* relied on their own preconceptions, but Schiavoni was not innocent: his images played on the stereotypes outsiders associated with his homeland in order to assert his own identity on a shared imperial stage. Luigi Sernaggiotto, his Venetian monographer, later proudly claimed that Schiavoni's female figures represented a true Venetian type.⁷⁶

This interplay of Othering and self-Othering was characteristic of an environment where various groups were eager to promote their identities while still being conscious of belonging to a greater whole. Self-assertion always happened under the watchful gaze of others, and while proclamations of identity were most often aimed at the in-group, strengthening bonds within a community, ideal portraits bear witness to how identities were formulated with outsider audiences in mind. Moreover, they show how different identities and their articulations overlapped, problematising the simple model of clearly defined, separate and competing nationalisms within the Empire. In order to understand this better, it is worth examining one painting in more detail: a

Greek Woman painted by Schiavoni's Venetian pupil, Giacomo Marastoni (1804–1860).

Marastoni's career was shaped by the transnational opportunities provided by the Empire just like his master's. Having studied under Schiavoni at the Accademia in Venice in the early 1820s, he worked there and in Rome until 1833, when he travelled to Vienna and subsequently to Pozsony, Hungary (in German Pressburg, today Bratislava, Slovakia), following the invitation of Archduke Joseph Habsburg, Palatine of Hungary.⁷⁷ He spent three years in the region working as a portraitist. In 1836 he moved to Pest, the emerging new capital of Hungary, and settled there for good. While regularly exhibiting his work in Vienna as well as in Pest, Marastoni was essentially a local artist whose career never reached the multinational scope of his master's. Hungarianising his first name to Jakab, he soon became an ingrained member of the Pest art world, his most important contribution being the foundation of an art school, the 'First Hungarian Academy of Art' in 1846. At the time, the city of Pest was experiencing rapid development, attracting artists from across the country and beyond. The Transylvanian-born Miklós Barabás, who was to become the century's most successful and prolific Hungarian portraitist, settled there in the same year as Marastoni. The two painters specialised in the same genre and shared an ambition to shape the new institutions of the Pest art world. Soon a rivalry emerged between them.

Marastoni was not simply a pupil of Schiavoni's, he was also his follower, which is evident from a short list of the titles of Marastoni's exhibited works.⁷⁸ In 1840, at the first exhibition in Pest, he showed a *Sleeping Woman*. In 1844, his second exhibition, he exhibited *Mother and Child*, a copy of which he subsequently included at an exhibition in Trieste. In 1845, he displayed a picture of *Melancholy* – a subject directly borrowed from Schiavoni – and the *Greek Woman*, whose connection to Schiavoni will be discussed below. One of his best surviving works, *Woman in front of a Mirror* also reiterates Schiavoni's subject matter (*plate 5*). Besides these compositions and his portraits, Marastoni also painted religious scenes, emulating his master in this respect as well. The connection between the two artists did not escape the attention of contemporary critics,⁷⁹ and Marastoni's reputation oscillated between two extremes, similarly to Schiavoni's. Reviews of his paintings were often favourable, even celebratory; the German-language newspaper of Pest, *Der Ungar* was especially fond of his work. At other times, however, his pictures were chastised as lewd and superficial. For example, his 1847 version of the *Good Mother* was praised by the magazine *Pesti Divatlap*, whose reviewer nevertheless remarked that the painting did not fit its title as the woman's eyes were filled with 'vulgar lust'.⁸⁰

In 1845, a scandal shook the Hungarian art world. At the annual exhibition of the Pest Art Society, Marastoni exhibited a

female ideal portrait entitled *Greek Woman* (plate 6). At the same show, Barabás displayed a large-scale genre painting depicting a *Romanian Family on Their Way to the Fair* (plate 7). Both pictures were popular with the audience, but the latter work evoked additional meanings that Marastoni's did not. Barabás's picture, which showed a Romanian family in the Transylvanian hills dressed in a traditional costume, was widely regarded as a long-awaited triumph of Hungarian art: a large-scale painting by a Hungarian artist depicting a subject from a region that had once been part of Hungary. Hence, several magazines expressed deep disappointment when the Art Society – which purchased one painting each year for the National Museum – bought Marastoni's picture and not Barabás's, a decision that fuelled accusations, directed against the Society, of unpatriotism. Following the uproar, the Civic Militia of Pest purchased the *Romanian Family* for the museum.⁸¹

In the controversy surrounding the two paintings, personal interests became almost unrecognisably entangled with broader ideas, and today it is difficult to tell whether specific opinions were motivated by bias towards Marastoni's or Barabás's person or by more general principles. Nevertheless, the core of the debate was whether Marastoni's picture could be regarded as a significant product of Hungarian national art, worthy of admission into the picture gallery. One rather typical opinion was put forward by the journalist Ferenc Ney, who argued that, having arrived in Hungary

fully armed with artistic skills acquired in a land that had a long, unbroken tradition of artistic education, Marastoni had a huge advantage over Hungarian-born artists. Ney opposed the acquisition of the *Greek Woman* by the Art Society because, according to his reasoning, the purpose of such institutions should be to support Hungarian artists in overcoming that gulf, instead of widening it further.⁸² A similar view was expressed in the more conservative magazine *Honderü*, whose critic ‘Szelesy’ praised Marastoni’s painting but still would have voted for Barabás’s.⁸³ While Ney emphasised the Society’s role in supporting emerging Hungarian artists, Szelesy’s argument was based on museological principles: Barabás’s *Romanian Family* was not only a painting of a local subject by a Hungarian artist, but also a very good and typical example of the work of an excellent Hungarian painter and consequently of the emerging Hungarian school – and thus an object worthy of acquisition.

What is interesting here is the way in which an ideal portrait became the focus of a debate about national art. At first sight, the genre of the picture does not seem to have played a part in the controversy, which revolved less around aesthetic questions and more around whether the acquisition of the painting would be beneficial to Hungarian art life in a practical sense. Nevertheless, ideal portraits problematised national identity and the concept of ‘national art’ in a particular way, and this was inseparable from

their status as transnationally circulated commodities.

In order to understand this, we have to return to Henszlmann, who did not tone down his criticism as he added his opinions to the *Greek Woman* controversy. In his view, Marastoni's picture did not 'exhibit any qualities, either in invention or execution, that would make it worthy of being displayed at the national museum; to the contrary, the badly disguised frivolous attitude, the arousal through the half-concealed bust [...] reminds us of Schiavoni's wetnurse-like, untidy models with whom the unmanly Italian painter dazzles the Pest audience each year, seducing the Society yet again to buy one of them. Diligent merging of colours and flirtation with the viewer's sensuality [...], however, do not amount to art. It would almost be better to simply accept the utterly poor and languid engraving after an oil painting by Georg van Haanen, which was exhibited last year and chosen as this year's gift to shareholders, than to win one of Schiavoni's grisettes'.⁸⁴

Henszlmann's description of an 'unmanly' and overly sensuous Italian painter is yet another instance of ethnic stereotyping in art criticism, but in its predictability it is much less interesting than the last sentence, which needs some explanation. The Pest Art Society functioned in the form of a shareholder's society and offered certain perks to its members, the shareholders. One of these was a free gift each year: a steel engraving (later lithograph) made after one of the paintings from the previous

exhibition. Shareholders also had the opportunity to take part in a lottery where they could win one of the paintings purchased by the Society for this purpose.⁸⁵ In his review, Henszlmann claimed that as a shareholder he would be happier with simply receiving the free gift offered to all members – regardless of the poor quality of the print – than with winning a painting by Schiavoni. But there is more to the contrast he set up between the two objects. Georg van Haanen was a member of an artist's family of Dutch origin who were often present at exhibitions in Vienna in the 1830s and 1840s. Georg's brother, Remigius had settled in the city in 1836, and they both painted landscapes and genre scenes in the manner of the Netherlandish Golden Age (*plate 8*).⁸⁶ Henszlmann was a great admirer of their art, which was based, he believed, on the observation of nature filtered through a uniquely Netherlandish mindset. When encouraging Hungarian artists to represent Hungarian subject matter – especially the Hungarian plains, the 'puszta', which he regarded as the ultimately Hungarian landscape –, his reasoning was that if painting Netherlandish landscapes could give rise to a characteristically national art in the low countries, a similar thing could happen in Hungary: *puszta* paintings could set off a tradition that was similarly organic and lively, but recognisably and uniquely Hungarian.

Henszlmann may have admired the Van Haanens' work and rejected the Schiavonis', but the artistic strategies employed by the

two painter's families were quite similar: both were deliberately preserving and displaying the characteristics of their national schools in order to build their own distinct brands. This was not a clean-cut case of the 'invention of tradition':⁸⁷ the Venetian and Netherlandish art traditions were indeed based on centuries-old knowledge handed down continuously from workshop to workshop. Nevertheless, in the nineteenth century they were reframed as two of the main lineages in the newly constructed art historical framework of national schools. Expressing adherence to them was now a conscious, performative act.

A student and then professor at the centuries-old Academy of Venice, Schiavoni's adherence to the local tradition was not only manifested in his revival of the genre of the Venetian 'Beauty', but also in some of the important milestones in his career, such as his celebrated engraving of Titian's *Assumption* or his popular composition showing *Titian and Violante*. But besides drawing on the Venetian *couleur locale*, the Schiavonis also built on the Italian tradition in a wider sense. Natale chose the Venetian Titian as his artist-hero, copying his work and painting a mythical scene from his life, but his son Felice decided for Raphael, creating his most successful composition that earned him fame both within and outside the Empire. The Schiavonis' cultural references transcended the borders of the Austrian Empire, pointing towards an organic unity of Italian culture. It would be far-fetched to interpret this as a

political statement: Austrian official policy did not regard expressions of the unity of Italian culture as politically dangerous, and in fact, such endeavours in Lombardy-Venetia were often encouraged, rather than suppressed.⁸⁸ The reasons behind this were partly political, but the laxity of the policy must also have been motivated by the romanticised concept of ‘Italianness’ prevalent in European culture at the time. Italy, as a whole, was thought of as the land of artists and of culture, as well as of romantic passion – the two often interlinked. To deny its unity would have meant denying this beautiful myth. Instead, the Austrian Empire was proud of its own segments of Italy, and sought to incorporate their cultural identity into its own.⁸⁹

The strong connection between the genre of the ideal portrait and the myth of artistic Italy is manifested in the fact that one of the most frequent themes was the ‘Italian woman’ (*plate 9*). Artists from all over Europe came to Italy in order to find inspiration in what was seen as the land of art, painting its cultural heritage, its landscapes, but also its people – most often, of course, young women, objectified and exoticized for the purpose of the artists’ aesthetic self-expression and not so aesthetic pleasure. The most famous example was a winegrower’s daughter from Albano, Vittoria Caldoni, who was painted numerous times wearing the costume of her region by artists of the Nazarene circle in the 1820s (*plate 10*).⁹⁰ With her delicate features, Vittoria resembled

Raphael's Madonnas, and in seeking her out and extolling her beauty in words as well as pictures the Nazarenes were consciously emulating the Renaissance master, whose love story with the Fornarina captured Romantic imagination in the early nineteenth century. Raphael's Madonnas, supposedly modelled on his legendary lover, represented the possibility of the unity of sensual and spiritual inspiration – something that seemed to be most attainable in the framework of 'Italianness'.⁹¹

Foreign artists touring Italy in a quest for artistic impulses and earthly adventures expressed this in paintings that Othered and exoticized Italian culture. Italian-born artists such as the Schiavonis drew on the same stereotypes to express (and export) their own Italianness, conceptualised as a harmonic union between religious or aesthetic devotion and passionate love. It is no wonder the Schiavonis chose Raphael as one of their mascots. The pathway between religious – or in any other sense 'meaningful' – painting and images of sensuality may have been a slippery one, but Raphael could be held up as an example of mastering it. By concentrating their artistic production on Madonnas on the one hand, and secular, romanticised depictions of pretty young women on the other, the Schiavonis were fashioning themselves as his late disciples.

The adoption of the stereotype of Italianness seems like a natural strategy for Italian painters building their brands. It did not, however, completely define their artistic output – and this is where

identities could intersect. In addition to his unnamed – and hence Italian – girls, Natale Schiavoni also painted several Oriental women. For his masterpiece, Giacomo Marastoni chose not the ‘Italian’, but the ‘Greek’ woman as subject matter. Nineteenth-century exoticism tended to merge together all ‘Othered’ subjects, regardless of their specific geographical location, and to exoticise them in similar ways using the visual vocabulary of orientalism. Yet this alone does not explain the intriguing mixture of stereotypes and self-stereotypes, of distantiation and identification, that lay behind the production of these images. It is more fruitful to regard it as a feature of the genre of the ideal portrait. The ‘ideal’ in the name of the genre was supposed to refer to how these images represented the ideal form of certain types or categories, but at the same time the word was invested with a meaning that it never lost: it referred to the general ideal of all humanity.

The twofold nature of the ideal is beautifully manifested in ideal portraits that shed their accessories and don new ones, corresponding to the new type they are supposed to stand for. Marastoni’s *Greek Woman* is a revelatory example: identified by its title as the representation of a specific ethnicity, the picture is in fact a variation of Natale Schiavoni’s 1840 *Odalisque* (plate 11): the faces and poses are eerily similar, only the costumes differ.⁹² In both cases, ethnicity is indicated by the headwear: the *Odalisque*’s turban and the *Greek Woman*’s fez, part of the Greek national

costume known as the Amalia Dress.⁹³ Incidentally, the Amalia Dress was itself an invention: created by Queen Amalia, Duchess of Oldenburg and consort of Otto, the Bavarian-born king of newly independent Greece, it was embraced by the Greek population who would nevertheless soon depose the royals themselves. Marastoni used one element from this constructed tradition to create a new construction. Apart from the headwear, the *Greek Woman*'s dress is rather general: she wears a simple, transparent white blouse and a cashmere shawl fashionable throughout Europe.⁹⁴ In this regard too, the painting resembles Schiavoni's *Odalisque*, whose dress is also hard to distinguish from European wear.

The imitation of Schiavoni's painting was not simple plagiarism on Marastoni's part: it has more to do with the conventions of the genre. It is revealing to note that the *Greek Woman*'s rival, Barabás's *Romanian Family* – whose central female figure is essentially an ideal portrait – was fashioned in a very similar way: Barabás employed the same Fornarina-like facial type in all his ideal portraits and genre paintings, whether depicting Romanian, Hungarian or Romani women.⁹⁵ Far from displaying national character in content and form, ethnic identity in these pictures was merely a costume, worn by the model more as a performance than as an inherent part of her self.

When building his own identity as an Italian painter in Hungary, Giacomo Marastoni made good use of the tropes

associated with Italianness, and the *Greek Woman* was part of this strategy. His conscious emulation of his master was one of his signifiers of Italianness – of his adherence to the Venetian school. Another sign was his collaboration with his wife, Giovanna Bianchi, who not only sat for him as his model, but also supervised the female students at his art school. This was well known to the Pest public, and probably entrenched Marastoni's reputation as a true Italian artist who, inspired by love, had brought his Fornarina with him to a far away land.

Marastoni's Italianness may have been reason to dispute the acquisition of his painting for the National Museum, but in the end, the acquisition did happen. His foreignness was probably just as much an advantage, as an obstacle to his career: his strategy was to fuse foreign and local both in work and life. The *Greek Woman*, his masterpiece, was conceived in the manner of an orientalist fantasy. It was an exoticized picture of a mediterranean beauty, created by an Italian painter in a foreign context where he himself was exoticized. Thus, the painting can be seen as an act of distantiating, but one that only goes half way. Unlike Schiavoni's *Odalisque*, who would obviously have conjured up far away lands in the minds of the Hungarian public, a Greek woman was not an inconceivable sight in Pest: the Hungarian city had a lively Greek community mainly consisting of merchants.⁹⁶ In addition, the fez was a headdress worn not just by Greeks, but also by Turks, as well as

other nations formerly or still living under Ottoman rule: Serbs, Cypriots, Romanians.⁹⁷ In fact, without the title, it would have been difficult to identify the *Greek Woman* as Greek – her general ‘foreignness’ consisted of both familiar and exotic elements and denied the viewer easy categorisation. Marastoni’s orientalism exoticised and objectified, but at the same time destabilised the objectifying viewpoint. After all, in a multicultural setting, one person’s exotic is another’s everyday, and vice versa. In this sense, the *Greek Woman* is a depiction of the exotic within: an unusual kind of self-portrait.

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The genre of the ideal portrait interrogated the relationship between real and imaginary in several subtle ways. Its audience played along, searching for the real woman behind the painting and reflecting on how the materiality of the image related to the ethereal ideas to which it gave form. This was often articulated through a language of desire: wishing to lose themselves in their charms, viewers caressed the soft and ‘wonderful’ flesh of the painted women with their eyes, but admonished them if the artificiality of the seductive powers became too obvious (‘calculated half-undress’ or excessive make-up). The reception of Schiavoni’s female figures oscillated between two poles: on one end a total capitulation to the reality effect, and on the other a disgust, or even horror, evoked by the paintings’ artificiality and

expressed through metaphors of the abject.⁹⁸

Another way in which ideal portraits problematised reality and its artistic construction was through their engagement with art historical traditions. Their obvious reliance on other images reminded the viewer that the Italian, Greek, or Oriental woman was not real, but an artistically composed fantasy, no matter how seductive she looked in her softly painted materiality. Furthermore, the way painters like Schiavoni consciously attached themselves to local traditions as a marketing strategy pointed to the fact that those traditions themselves, with all the connotations, stereotypes, preconceptions and value judgments attached to them, were not pre-given, but constructed in narratives retold many times throughout the centuries.

If national traditions are constructed, what does that say about national identity? Ideal portraits with their interchangeable costumes offered an iconoclastic answer to that question. In doing so, they highlighted the tension that lay at the heart of Romantic nationalism. National identity had something in common with these images of ideally beautiful women: it was something desired to be real but at the same time experienced every day as a construction. After all, if it had been a given, why would it have been necessary to campaign for it, to urge people to wear national garb, learn the national language, support national culture? That something conceptualised as natural and organic had to be consciously

revived, promoted and cultured was an immutable paradox, but one with which Romantic nationalists coped quite casually in their everyday politics. The growing prevalence of nationalist rhetoric notwithstanding, the boundaries defining identities were in practice still rather flexible: they could be widened, moved and transgressed. Imre (Emmerich) Henszlmann was himself the child of a German family in Northern Hungary, who only learnt to speak Hungarian in his teenage years. He argued for organically evolving national schools, but he knew from personal experience that costumes could be changed.

The idea of 'national schools' was a typical product of romantic nationalism: desired to be real and organic, these schools had to be constructed by gleaning scraps of knowledge from the past and connecting them to artistic phenomena of the present. As an art historian, Henszlmann knew that tracing the lineage of schools required reflection and effort; it was a product of work. His example is revealing because it displays his essentially Romantic standpoint: he longed for a mythic organicity, while knowing that his age was hopelessly disconnected from the past. All Romantics could do was to call for the conscious revival of something that was supposed to be natural, and late Romantic scholars such as Henszlmann reaped the consequences by turning this dreamy longing into a rigorous framework for the scholarly and critical appreciation of art.

In order to work, however, this system needed art that effaced its constructed nature, covering up its beams and joints. The Van Haanens' landscapes were well suited to this purpose. Conforming to contemporary ideas of realism, they claimed to represent reality itself, but through a national lens. Ideal portraits such as Schiavoni's or Marastoni's, by contrast, suggested that images of both real and ideal were constructed by artists, that national schools were chosen and consciously built, and that national identities were, essentially, colourful costumes.

The Tears of Things

Natale Schiavoni died in 1858. In 1859, Austria lost the battle of Solferino against France and was forced to give up Lombardy; a few years later, in 1866, the disastrous Austro-Prussian War led to the loss of Venetia. Lombardy-Venetia ceased to exist as an Austrian crown land and both provinces became part of the newly minted Kingdom of Italy. Borders were redrawn, affiliations reconsidered; the Italo-Austrian networks Natale Schiavoni had navigated with such proficiency were no more. Besides changes in taste, the dwindling of Schiavoni's reputation after his death must have been at least partly due to the dissolution of the imperial framework that had made his career possible. The paintings had been distributed via these networks, and Schiavoni's status as an artist who was both 'vaterländisch' and exotic, local and

internationally renowned, played a large part in their appeal. Today, Schiavoni is most appreciated in his native region, where his works are kept in local collections such as the Museo Civico Revoltella in Trieste. The works came into the museum in 1872 with the bequest of its founder, Pasquale Revoltella, a successful businessman and one of Schiavoni's enthusiastic buyers.⁹⁹ Once internationally acclaimed masterpieces, sought out by upcoming entrepreneurs in pursuit of aristocratic status (Revoltella received a baronhood in 1867), the passage of time has transformed the paintings into objects of civic pride.

Having lost their transnational reach, these artworks resemble birds with broken wings. They have lived through almost two hundred years, a period that saw constant and often dramatic changes in how concepts of the nation and nationality were understood. Is the nation an organic entity with historical roots buried in the distant past, or is it entirely a nineteenth-century construction, upheld by invented traditions and national branding? These are not just theoretical questions preoccupying historians – they are ideas that have shaped the history of those two hundred years in decisive ways, affecting the lives of several millions of people. It was, after all, the dramatic shift, occurring during the First World War, in how constituent nations understood themselves, that led to the ultimate decline of Austria-Hungary. When that happened, the last traces of the geographical context of Schiavoni's

artistic trajectories were obliterated, giving way to a redesigned Europe with new power relations.

Is the relative obscurity of ideal portraits in art historical canons a consequence of these shifts? Certainly, in most of the successor states of the Habsburg Empire, they are overshadowed by nineteenth-century artworks that express national identity in a more straightforward and definitive way, such as history paintings or genre scenes featuring local peasants. Within these national narratives, lone ideal portraits may appear as examples of an exoticist essentialism. It is worthwhile to examine them in relation to each other, in the context of their transnational trajectories, revealing the playful relativism behind their visualisations of ethnicity. These pictures satisfied the audience's desire for images of ethnic difference, while pointing out the superficial, constructed nature of the concept. Conjuring up a time before public discourse was dominated by exclusive models of the nation, these humble commodities hold poignant lessons for our hectic present.

Notes

¹ 'Wir können diese Bemerkung nicht aussprechen, ohne hier nicht zugleich einer Afterkunst nach Kräften in den Weg zu treten, welche mit fabriksmäßigen Erzeugnissen der Frivolität die Ausstellungen überschwemmt. Wir meinen Natale Schiavoni's sein sollende Idealporträte; das ist keine Kunst, auch keine

irregeleitete Kunst, das ist, gerade herausgesagt, kaufmännische Spekulation oder noch schlimmeres. Schon die Namen: “die Gedankenvolle”, “der Sommermorgen”, “die Liebliche”, “die Entsagende”, “die Schlafende” bezeichnen, welchem Geiste sie ihren Ursprung verdanken, und dazu denke man sich verblasene Modegesichtchen mit üppigen Nacken und Armen, und schlechtverhüllten Leibern.” – Josef Preleuthner, ‘Wiener Kunstausstellung im Jahre 1845’, *Österreichische Blätter für Literatur und Kunst*, 27 May 1845, 493. Translation mine.

² The genre had two names in the contemporary Viennese press: *Idealporträt* and *Idealbild*. The former term stressed its similarity to portraits, while the latter described it more generally, as a picture. As this article will show, a special kind of tension between the real and imaginary was inherent to the genre and its reception, and the translation ‘ideal portrait’ instead of ‘ideal picture’ has been chosen because it better conveys this ambivalence.

³ For earlier examples see Melissa Percival et al., *Figures de fantaisie dans la peinture européenne du XVIe au XVIIIe siècles*, Paris, 2015.

⁴ Mary D. Sheriff, ‘Invention, Resemblance, and Fragonard’s Portraits de Fantaisie’, *The Art Bulletin*, 69.1, 1987, 77–87. Further see Melissa Percival, *Fragonard and the Fantasy Figure: Painting the Imagination*, Farnham, 2012.

⁵ For a similar interpretation of some Hungarian ideal portraits see Nóra Veszprémi, *Fölfújó pipere és költői mámor: Romantika és művészeti közlés a reformkori Magyarországon [Overblown makeup and poetic frenzy: Romanticism and Popular Taste in Hungary 1820–1850]*, Budapest, 2015, pp. 140–169.

⁶ For a new, comprehensive account of this process throughout the nineteenth century see Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*, Cambridge and London, 2016.

⁷ For a succinct discussion of the cultural history of the Empire in terms of centralisation and regionalism see Elizabeth Clegg, *Art, Design and Architecture*

in Central Europe, 1890–1920, New Haven, 2006, 9–47. Matthew Rampley's *The Vienna School of Art History: Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847–1918* (University Park, PA, 2013) discusses the emergence of the discipline of art history and its institutions in the framework of multiculturedness.

⁸ For a recent synthesis of research supporting this conclusion see Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*.

⁹ For an overview see Tara Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis', *Slavic Review* 69.1 (2010), 93–119.

¹⁰ On this intellectual process see R. J. W. Evans, 'Nationality in East-Central Europe: Perception and Definition before 1848', in *Austria, Hungary and the Habsburgs: Essays on Central Europe, c. 1683–1867*, Oxford, 2006, 101–113.

¹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London, 2006. On different conceptions of the nation in the Austrian Empire see Judson, *The Austrian Empire*, 83–84, 145–154, 200–201. See also Eric Hobsbawm on 'popular proto-nationalism', in *Nations and nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge, 1990, 46–79.

¹² Scholarly literature on Natale Schiavoni is rather scarce. The basic works are still the two monographs by Luigi Sernaggiotto, *Natale e Felice Schiavoni: Vita, opere e tempi*, Venice, 1881 and *'Il pittore delle grazie' e le sue opera*, Venice, 1885. See also Agostino Mario Comanducci, *I pittori italiani dell'Ottocento*, Milan, 1934, 658–659, as well as two more recent articles: Lucia Ievolella, 'La collezione di dipinti antichi del pittore veneziano Natale Schiavoni', *Venezia Arti* 15–16, 2001–2002, 49–54; Denise-Chloe Alevizou, 'Evidence Regarding 19th-Century Greek Interest in the work of Natale Schiavoni', *Studi Veneziani*, 54, 2007, 383–390. The brief biography provided here is based on these works and a biographical article published in Schiavoni's lifetime: 'Künstlerbiografien: II. Natale Schiavoni', *Beilage zu den Sonntags-Blättern*, 26 June 1842, 466–467.

¹³ See David Laven, *Venice and Venetia under the Habsburgs: 1815–1835*, Oxford, 2002.

¹⁴ ‘Künstlerbiografien’ 466; Sernagiotto, *Natale e Felice Schiavoni*, 264–268.

¹⁵ Sernagiotto, *Natale e Felice Schiavoni*, 421, 474.

¹⁶ Ibid. The print can be found in the British Museum’s Prints and Drawings collection, Inv. No 1851,0712.18.

¹⁷ Ievolella, ‘La collezione’.

¹⁸ Laven, *Venice and Venetia*.

¹⁹ Eva Cecchinato, ‘Searching for a Role: Austrian Rule, National Perspectives and Memories of the “Serenissima” in Venice’, in Laurence Cole ed., *Different Paths to the Nation: Regional and National Identities in Central Europe and Italy, 1830–70*, Houndmills and New York, 2007, 122–143.

²⁰ Laven, *Venice and Venetia*, 171; David Laven and Laura Parker, ‘Foreign rule? Transnational, national, and local perspectives on Venice and Venetia within the “multinational” empire’, *Modern Italy*, 19:1, 2004, 5–19

²¹ For a recent overview of the art scene in Venetia-Lombardy see Fernando Mazzocca, ‘Painting in the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia 1820–1860: The Long Period of Romanticism’, in Agnes Husslein-Arco and Sabine Grabner eds, *Is that Biedermeier? Amerling, Waldmüller and more*, Vienna, 2016, 49–59.

²² See Gabriella Szvoboda Dománszky, *A Pesti Műegylet története [History of the Pest Art Society]*, Miskolc, 2007, 48–56. The dates in brackets show the year of the first exhibition. The Kunstverein in Vienna was somewhat different from the other civic associations because, instead of organising its own exhibitions, it selected and reexhibited works from the exhibitions of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts.

²³ On the dynamics of regionalism and centralisation throughout the Empire see Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*. The status of Vienna as the main cultural centre

was always contested, and decisively declined by the end of the century; see Clegg, *Art, Design and Architecture in Central Europe*, 26–47.

²⁴ ‘Le Sale di Brera (Articolo IV)’, *L’Eco*, 19 September 1831, 447; I. F., ‘Esposizione degli oggetti di Belle Arti nell’I. R. Palazzo di Brera’, *Biblioteca italiana ossia giornale di letteratura*, August 1834, 330–331; Braun v. Braunthal, ‘Die Wiener Kunstausstellung von 1837’, *Kunst- und Industrie-Ausstellung, wöchentliches Beiblatt zum Humoristen*, 24 April 1837, 65; Φιλοτεχνος, ‘Die Eröffnung des Wiener Kunstsalons 1840’, *Der Humorist*, 27 April 1840, 337 and 11 June 1840, 466; Richard, ‘Ausstellung von Kunstwerken im k. k. polytechnischen Institute,’ *Der österreichische Zuschauer*, 22 May 1840, 625; F. Regli, ‘Pubblica Esposizione di Belle Arti nell’I. R. Palazzo di Brera’, *Il Pirata*, 23 September 1844, 102; P. Cominassi, ‘Esposizione delle Operi di Belle Arti nelle Gallerie dell’I. R. Accademia in Milano’, *La Fama del 1850*, 26 September 1850, 297; ‘Gestern eröffnete...’, *Die Presse*, 11 July 1852, s. p. A version painted in 1846 is now in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan (Inv. No 491); for one painted in 1852, see *plate 2*.

²⁵ ‘Die Kunstausstellung zu St.-Anna’, *Wiener Theater-Zeitung*, 6 July 1835, 531; ‘Venezia – Pubblica mostra dell’I. R. Accademia’, *Glissons, n’appuyons pas*, 27 August 1836, 410; ‘Pubblica mostra degli Oggetti di Belle Arti nel Palazzo di Brera in Milano’, *Glissons, n’appuyons pas*, 29 May 1837, 254.

²⁶ J. F. A. Gschlady, ‘Zweygespräche über die akademische Kunst-Ausstellung von 1836’, *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunst, Literatur, Theater und Mode*, 21 May 1836, 482, 484; ‘Venezia – Pubblica mostra dell’I. R. Accademia’, *Glissons, n’appuyons pas*, 31 August 1836, 417.

²⁷ P. V., ‘Terza esposizione della Società Filotecnica Triestina’, *La Favilla*, 15 November 1842, 5 (Fanciulla che medita); L. Fürstedler, ‘Die Kunstausstellung vom Jahre 1844’, *Der Österreichische Zuschauer*, 12 June 1844, 750 (Die Nachdenkende); F. C. Weidmann, ‘Die Wiener Kunstausstellung des Jahres

1845', *Der Wanderer*, 7 June 1845, 542 (Die Gedankenvolle); Ernst Rose, 'Die Wiener-Kunstaussstellung im Jahre 1846', *Der Wanderer*, 16 June 1846, 566 (Die Nachdenkende); Imre Henszlmann, "Hölgy-vezető a pesti múkiállításban 1844 [Ladies' guide in the Pest art exhibition of 1844]," in *Válogatott képzőművészeti írások [I. H.'s selected art criticism]*, ed. Árpád Tímár, Budapest, 1990, 181.

²⁸ On Felice's painting, see: G., 'Raffaello che fa il ritratto della Fornarina, dipinto da Felice Schiavoni per commissione del Principe Reale di Baviera', *Il Pirata*, 5 May 1837, 354–355. Following the 1837 version commissioned by the Crown Prince of Bavaria, Felice repeated the painting for the Russian Tsarevich, who visited his studio in 1838, see: 'Lombardisch-Venezianisches Königreich', *Wiener Zeitung*, 10 December 1838, 1699. A further, undated version can be found in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, Inv. No. 89.B

²⁹ Sernagiotto, *Natale e Felice Schiavoni*, 439–442.

³⁰ Sernagiotto, *Natale e Felice Schiavoni*, 491–493.

³¹ E. g., his Venus was purchased by the Art Association of Milan in 1844. See Sernagiotto, *Natale e Felice Schiavoni*, 486.

³² Today in the Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, Inv. No. ЭРЖ-632.

³³ For further examples see Comanducci, *I pittori*, 658–659; Alevizou, 'Evidence Regarding'.

³⁴ Sernagiotto, *Natale e Felice Schiavoni*, 426–428.

³⁵ Sigmund, 'Aus der Kunstwelt', *Wiener Theater-Zeitung*, 11 August 1832, 640; Gschladt, 'Zweygespräche', 482; 'Die Kunstaussstellung zu St. Anna 1835', 531.

³⁶ 'La Sale di Brera (Articolo IV)', 447; 'Esposizione in Brera', *Glissons n'appuyons pas*, 27 September 1834, 149; 'Pubblica Mostra degli Oggetti di Belle Arti nel Palazzo di Brera in Milano (Articolo VII)', 29 May 1837, 254.

³⁷ A., 'Rivista delle Sale di Brera', *L'Eco*, 5 October 1832, 478.

³⁸ [Heinrich von] Levitschnigg, 'Der Wiener Kunstsalon 1841', *Der Humorist*, 24 April 1841, 334.

³⁹ Eduard Melly, 'Die Kunstausstellung im Jahre 1845', *Beilage zu dem Sonntagsblättern*, 8 June 1845, 547. On Melly see Rampley, *The Vienna School*, 187–188.

⁴⁰ 'Gestern eröffnete...', s. p. The critic calls Natale's Magdalene 'one of his oft-seen female figures in effect-chasing lighting', but praises one of his portraits.

⁴¹ P. Cominassi, 'Esposizione delle Operi', 297.

⁴² Ignaz Jeitteles, *Aesthetisches Lexicon*, Vol. 1, Vienna, 1835, 372.

⁴³ Jeitteles, *Aesthetisches Lexikon*, 371–372.

⁴⁴ The scope of this article does not permit a longer discussion of the Biedermeier as a concept, hence it will only highlight one of its characteristics: its search for a sober middle ground between realism and idealism. For somewhat different further definitions see e. g. Husslein-Arco and Grabner eds, *Is that Biedermeier?*; Hans Ottomeyer, Klaus Albrecht Schröder and Laurie Winters eds, *Biedermeier: The Invention of Simplicity*, Milwaukee, Vienna and Berlin, 2007; Robert Waissenberger ed., *Bürgersinn und Aufbegehren: Biedermeier und Vormärz in Wien 1815–1848*, Vienna, 1987.

⁴⁵ Nóra Veszprémi, 'The Emptiness behind the Mask: Rococo Revival in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Austrian and Hungarian Painting,' in *The Art Bulletin* 96:4, 2014, 449.

⁴⁶ On Amerling and his reputation see Sabine Grabner, 'Der "fashionabelste" Maler in Wien,' in Grabner ed., *Friedrich von Amerling 1803–1887*, Vienna, 2003, 12–17.

⁴⁷ Mazzocca, 'Painting in the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia.'

⁴⁸ Cathy Santore, 'Picture versus Portrait', *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, 19:3, 2000, 16–21. See also Santore, 'The Tools of Venus', *Renaissance Studies*, 11:3, 1997, 179–207.

⁴⁹ See e. g. Luba Freedman, *Titian's Portraits through Aretino's Lens*, University Park, Pa., 1995. The significance of the 'concetto', the conveying of the essence

of the sitter in portraiture was first articulated in the 16th century, starting off a long tradition in Venetian, and in a broader sense Italian art.

⁵⁰ See Freedman, *Titian's Portraits*. For examples from 18th-century Rome see Sabrina Norlander Eliasson, *Portraiture and Social Identity in Eighteenth-Century Rome*, Manchester, 2009. It is worth mentioning here that Titianesque, animated portraits that conveyed their sitter's character through typical attributes and gestures also enjoyed popularity in mid-nineteenth-century Vienna, most notably in the work of Friedrich von Amerling and his circle.

⁵¹ Shearer West, 'Gender and Internationalism: The Case of Rosalba Carriera', in West ed., *Italian culture in northern Europe in the eighteenth century*, Cambridge, 1998, 46–66; West, 'Secrets and Desires: Pastel Collecting in the Early Eighteenth-Century Dresden Court', *Oxford Art Journal* 28:2, 2015, 209–223.

⁵² West, 'Secrets and Desires', 216. For similar modes of reception in eighteenth-century France, see Sheriff, 'Invention'.

⁵³ Φιλοτεχνος, 'Die Eröffnung', 10 June 1840, 461.

⁵⁴ 'Die diesjährige Wiener Salon', *Wiener Bazar, ein wöchentliches Beiblatt zur Zeitschrift: "Der Humorist,"* 19 April 1845, 65.

⁵⁵ F. Pusch, 'Die diesjährige Kunstausstellung in Wien', *Beilage zu den Sonntagsblättern*, 15 May 1842, 363.

⁵⁶ Braun v. Braunthal, "Die Wiener Kunstausstellung 1836," *Der Österreichische Zuschauer*, 13 June 1836, 706.

⁵⁷ 'Venezia – Pubblica mostra,' 31 August 1836, 417.

⁵⁸ In conflating the painted surface with the painted woman's make-up, and the moral character of artist and model, he was reiterating a long-standing trope. For examples from different periods see Melissa Hyde, *Making up the Rococo: François Boucher and His Critics*, Los Angeles, 2006, 83–105; Caroline Palmer, 'Brazen Cheek: Face-Painters in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Oxford Art*

Journal, 31.2, 2008, 195–213; Tamar Garb, *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France, 1814–1914*, New Haven and London, 2007, 1–15.

⁵⁹ Melly, 'Die Kunstaussstellung', 547.

⁶⁰ H[ermann] Meynert, 'Über die diesjährige Wiener Kunstaussstellung', *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung (Wiener Theaterzeitung)*, 30 May 1837, 429.

⁶¹ E. g. Titian's *Woman with a Mirror* (c. 1515, Paris: Louvre) or Palma Vecchio's *Blonde Woman* (London: National Gallery).

⁶² Imre Henszlmann, 'Az 1842-ki műkiállítás Pesten [The art exhibition of 1842 in Pest]', in *Válogatott képzőművészeti írások*, 165–166.

⁶³ On Henszlmann in English see Ernő Marosi, 'The origins of art history in Hungary,' *Journal of Art Historiography* 8, June 2013, 8-EM/1, <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/marosi.pdf> (translated by Matthew Rampley; originally published in Marosi ed., *Die Ungarische Kunstgeschichte und die Wiener Schule 1846–1930*, Vienna, 1983); Rampley, *The Vienna School*, 57–58. In Hungarian see also the special issue on Henszlmann of the journal *Ars Hungarica* (18:1, 1990); Klára Széles, *Henszlmann Imre művészetelmélete és kritikusi gyakorlata [I. H. 's theory of art and practice of art criticism]*, Budapest, 1992; János Korompay H., *A jellemzetes irodalom jegyében: Az 1840-es évek irodalomkritikai gondolkodása [Literary criticism in 1840s Hungary]*, Budapest, 1998, 95–189.

⁶⁴ On Böhm see Edit Szentesi, 'Josef Daniel Böhm Parthenón-fríze: A Fejérváry-gyűjtemény az eperjesi Pulszky-házban [J. D. B.'s Parthenon frieze: the Fejérváry collection in the Pulszky house in Eperjes]', in Ernő Marosi et al. eds, *Pulszky Ferenc emlékére / In memoriam Ferenc Pulszky*, Budapest, 1997, 56–69; Rampley, *The Vienna School*, 11–13.

⁶⁵ Imre Henszlmann, 'Párhuzam az ó és újkor művészeti nézetek és nevelések közt, különös tekintettel a művészi fejlődésre Magyarországon [Parallel between Artistic Views and Education in Ancient and Modern Times, with Special

Attention to Artistic Developments in Hungary]’, in *Válogatott képzőművészeti írások*, 7–146. On Henszlmann and the Romantics see György Széphelyi F., ‘Felzárkózás vagy elzárkózás? Henszlmann *Párhuzamának* eszmetörténeti összefüggéseihez’, in *Sub Minervae Nationis Praesidio*, Budapest, 1989, 92–101.

⁶⁶ Henszlmann, ‘Párhuzam’, 16–17.

⁶⁷ As he explains in Henszlmann, ‘Párhuzam’, 16.

⁶⁸ Henszlmann, *Hölgy-vezető*, 181.

⁶⁹ For instance, in 1838 the *Wiener Zeitung* calls the artists of Lombardy-Venetia (the Schiavonis among them) ‘unsere Künstler’ (‘Lombardisch-Venezianisches Königreich’, *Wiener Zeitung*, 1838, 10 December, 1699); the same paper, when reporting from the industrial exhibition in New York, mentioned Schiavoni among the Austrian artists (‘Die bildenden Künste in der Neu-Yorker Industrie-Ausstellung’, *Wiener Zeitung*, 8 May 1854, 415); he was classified as “heimischer Künstler” in an article in 1856 (‘Die September-Ausstellung...’, *Blätter für Musik, Theater und Kunst*, 19 September 1856, 304).

⁷⁰ Meynert, ‘Über die diesjährige’, 27 May 1837, 422; Weidmann, ‘Die Gemäldesammlung’, 669.

⁷¹ Φιλοτεχνος, ‘Die Eröffnung’, 27 April, 337. Franz Schrotzberg (1811–1889) was an Austrian painter working in Vienna.

⁷² Levitschnigg, ‘Der Wiener Kunstsalon’, 334.

⁷³ See Laven, *Venice and Venetia*, 86, 118–119.

⁷⁴ Suzanne L. Marchand, *German orientalism in the age of empire: Religion, race, and scholarship*, Washington, D. C. and Cambridge, 2009.

⁷⁵ On this stereotype see Nigel Llewellyn, ‘Those Loose and Immodest Pieces: Italian Art and the British Point of View’, in West ed., *Italian culture*, 80–85. On the imagery see Santore, ‘The Tools of Venus’.

⁷⁶ Sernagiotto, *Natale e Felice Schiavoni*, 344.

⁷⁷ The most comprehensive monograph on Marastoni is still Kornélia Péter, *Marastoni Jakab 1804–1860*, Budapest, 1936.

⁷⁸ For the works and their reception see Péter, *Marastoni*, 11–22.

⁷⁹ In 1852, for instance, a Viennese reviewer claimed that Marastoni's *Good Mother* was 'kept in the manner of Schiavoni, without coming close to him.' – 'Die Ausstellung des österreichischen (neuen) Kunstvereins im Monate Juni', *Die Presse*, 10 June 1852, s. p.

⁸⁰ Péter, *Marastoni*, 22.

⁸¹ On the controversy see S. K. [Katalin Sinkó], 'Vásárra menni szándékozó erdélyi bérci oláhok [Romanian Family on Their Way to the Fair]', in Sinkó ed., *Aranyérmek, ezüstkoszorúk: Művészkultusz és műpártolás Magyarországon a 19. században* [Gold Medals, Silver Wreaths: The Cult and Patronage of Artists in Hungary in the 19th Century], Budapest, 1995, 227–228.

⁸² N. F. [Ferenc Ney], 'Pesti műkiállítás 1845-ben [The Pest art exhibition in 1845]', *Életképek*, 1845, 2, 181–182.

⁸³ Szelesy, 'Pesti műkiállítás 1845 [Pest art exhibition 1845]', *Honderü*, 1845, 137–138.

⁸⁴ Imre Henszlmann, 'Az 1845. évi pesti műkiállítás [The Pest art exhibition of 1845]', in *Válogatott képzőművészeti írások*, 190.

⁸⁵ On the Art Society see Szvoboda Dománszky, *A Pesti Műegylet*.

⁸⁶ Georg (Gillis) van Haanen was born in Utrecht in 1807 and died in 1879 or 1881 in Bilsen or Aachen; Remigius was born in 1812 in Oosterhout and died in 1894 in Bad Aussee. See S. van der Maarel, 'Haanen', in Saur – De Gruyter *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon*, Vol. 66, Munich, 2010, 528–530.

⁸⁷ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983.

⁸⁸ Laven and Parker, 'Foreign Rule?'

⁸⁹ At the 1855 Paris World Fair, Venetian and Lombardian painters were overrepresented in the Austrian pavilion compared to the other nations of the Empire. The show included works by the elderly Natale Schiavoni. See Mazzocca, 'Painting in the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia', 56.

⁹⁰ Hermann Mildener, "Vittoria Caldoni und der Kult des Modells im 19. Jahrhundert" in Ursula Peters ed., *Künstlerleben in Rom: Bertel Thorvaldsen – Der dänischer Bildhauer und seine deutschen Freunde*, Nürnberg, 1991, 95–103.

⁹¹ Ingres's famous picture of the lovers (1814, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum) – an image popularised by several reproductions in the Biedermeier era – shows Raphael holding his mistress while turning towards the easel, a gesture that stresses the sensual element in his inspiration. On this interpretation of the painting and its significance in relation to nineteenth-century portrait painting see Garb, *The Painted Face*, 39, 48–49. On Raphael in Biedermeier popular culture see Beate Reifenscheid, *Raffaël im Almanach: Zur Raffaelrezeption in Almanachen und Taschenbüchern der Romantik und des Biedermeier*, Frankfurt am Main, 1991.

⁹² This was first pointed out by Gabriella Szvoboda Dománszky, *A magyar biedermeier [Hungarian Biedermeier]*, Budapest, 2011, 70.

⁹³ Nadia Macha-Bizoumi, 'Amalia Dress: The Invention of a New Costume Tradition in the Service of Greek National Identity', *Catwalk* 1.1, 2012, 65–90.

⁹⁴ On the cashmere shawl see Therese Dolan, 'Fringe Benefits: Manet's Olympia and Her Shawl', *The Art Bulletin* 97:4, 2015, 409–429. On the *Greek Woman's* costume see also Ágnes Fülemile, 'Gondolatok az orientalizmusról Marastoni Jakab Görög nő című képe kapcsán [Some thoughts on Orientalism in connection with Jakab Marastoni's Greek Woman]', *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 54:1–2, 2005, 115, 118.

⁹⁵ On the Rphaelesque ideal in Barabás's work see Nóra Veszprémi, 'On Past, Present and Future Lovers: Interpreting Biedermeier Ideal Portraits', in Katarína

Beňová ed., *Domáce a európske súvislosti biedermeiera*, Bratislava, 2015, 33–39.

Henszlmann, predictably, took issue with this and admonished Barabás for adhering to the same academic ideal in all his works and refraining from showing true national character in facial features. See Henszlmann, ‘Az 1845. évi’, 189.

⁹⁶ Krisztina Szabó ed., *Görög örökség: A görög-ortodox diaszpóra Magyarországon a XVII–XIX. században [Greek heritage: The Greek-Orthodox diaspora in Hungary in the 17–19th centuries]*, Budapest, 2009.

⁹⁷ Macha-Bizoumi, ‘Amalia Dress’, 76–77.

⁹⁸ In this regard, criticism of Schiavoni resembles mid-nineteenth-century criticism of Jean-Dominique Ingres’s female nudes. Carol Ockman’s discussion of these critiques in relation to the notion of the abject (*Ingres’s Eroticized Bodies: Retracing the Serpentine Line*, New Haven – London, 1995) has shaped this article’s interpretation of criticism of Schiavoni.

⁹⁹ Franco Firmiani and Sergio Moles eds, *Catalogo della Galleria d’Arte Moderna del Civico Museo Revoltella*, Trieste, 1970, 134; Maria Masau Dan ed., *Pasquale Revoltella 1795–1869: Sogno e consapevolezza del cosmopolitismo Triestino*, Trieste, 1996; Maria Masau Dan, *Il Museo Revoltella di Trieste*, Treviso, 2004, 58, Cat. No 12;