

VIII International Forum for Doctoral Candidates in East European Art History
An Event of the Chair of East European Art History, Faculty of Humanities and
Social Sciences, Humboldt University Berlin

Kacper Radny

International Graduate School for the Study of Culture (GCSC), Justus-Liebig-Universität,
Gießen

**Between Occident and Orient: Reception of the XIX Century Eastern-European
Art in the West**



Józef Brandt, *Return of the triumphant (Ukrainian Cossack with a flag)*,
1907, 155.5 x 98.4cm, oil on canvas, private collection.

The following exposé outlines my intended research into the reception of the Eastern-European art in the West in the second half of the nineteenth century. Focusing on the case study of the so-called Polish Munich School and its depictions of the Ukrainian Steppes, I will apply recent postcolonial discourses to examine the situation of the Eastern European art in the nineteenth century, determine the role it played in asserting the identity of the Eastern Europe at the time and find the roots of its popularity among the Western public.

At the core of my research proposal lies the XIX nineteenth century perception of what made an exotic painting 'exotic'? Polish artists in Munich, most notable of those being Józef Brandt and Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski, were brought up in the environment romanticising and glamorising the rural, far-eastern lands of the bygone Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The use of the Eastern European landscapes in their works was meant to express their national pride and keep the national identity of the lost country alive. Hence, their art could have been perceived as hermetic or meant to be understood only by the Polish-speaking public. However, the omni-present fascination with Orientalism in Germany, France and the US made it very popular and sought after among the art collectors.

This alone raises several questions I wish to investigate during my research. What were the criteria of an artwork to be perceived as oriental/ exotic in Western Europe of the nineteenth century? Were depictions of the Ukrainian steppes orientalised by the painters (intentionally or not) or was the orientalisation imposed on them by the Western public? What are the differences and similarities between the terms orientalism/ exoticism/ romanticism/ Sarmatism/ folklore? What role does the idea of Eastern Europe play in sustaining the disengagement between the Occident and the Orient?

The fundamental work for my paper is Larry Wolff's *'Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment'* (1994) in which he argues that "inventing Eastern Europe was a project of philosophical and geographical synthesis carried out by the men and women of the Enlightenment." The word 'inventing' is crucial here, as it suggests that Eastern Europe, unlike Said's Orient, hasn't been discovered, analysed, and defined, but rather imagined and constructed, predominantly by the French thinkers of the eighteenth century. It was because the West needed an intermediary to set itself apart from the alien East.

In 2005, an Argentinian historian and activist Ezequiel Adamovsky presented his own hypotheses on 'Euro-Orientalism', arguing that by imagining the concept of Eastern

Europe, "the narrative of Western civilisation transferred onto the Slavic nations many of the stereotypes and prejudices traditionally ascribed to the Orient."

A sociologist and social geographer Tomasz Zarycki agrees with the term of Eastern Europe as proposed by Wolff, but criticises his homogenous description of the relationship between it and Western Europe. In 2013 he proposed his hypotheses which argued that the strength of the orientalisng stereotypes affecting Eastern Europe has changed throughout times, as it is dependent on the presence of strong state-economic organisms on its territory, and their ability to generate its own, competitive to the Western, narrations.

While a lot of work have been conducted on depictions of the Ukrainian steppes in Polish literature, poetry, and sociology, the field of art history is certainly lacking critical engagement in this area. I hope to explore the cultural impact of the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on the visual arts and its role in establishing the divide between the Western and the Eastern Europe as we understand it in art history today. I believe that the case study of the Polish Munich school is an excellent starting point to explore the history of Orientalism in Europe in the context of visual arts. Specifically, when it comes to the Ukrainian steppes, culturally trapped between Orient and Occident. A subject that, regrettably, has become very relevant in the recent time.

Selected Bibliography

Anderson, B., 2016 [1983], *'Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism'* (London: Verso Books).

Adamovsky, E., 2005, 'Euro-Orientalism and the Making of the Concept of Eastern Europe in France, 1810–1880', in *Journal of Modern History*, 77 (3).

Christians, S., 1987, *'Studien zum Münchener Kunsthandel der Prinzregentenzeit'* (1886 – 1912) (Munich: u.p.).

Ciciora, B., 2007, 'Malarstwo historyczne profesorów Królewskiej Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Monachium' (Historical Painting of the Professors of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Munich), in Ptaszyńska, E. [ed.], *Malarze Polscy w Monachium: Studia i Szkice* (Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach).

Dogramaci, B., 2015, 'Do München, Monachium, Münih!' (To München, Monachium, Münih), in Ptaszyńska, E. [ed.], *Egzotyczna Europa* (Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach).

Falkiewicz, L., 1858, 'Cornelius i Kaulbach jako szczyt sztuki malarskiej w Niemczech' (Cornelius and Kaulbach as a Pinnacle of Art in Germany) in *Księga Świata*

Hatt, M. & Klonk, C., 2015, 'Art History: A critical introduction to its methods' (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

Hessky, O., 2015, 'Egzotyka w sztuce węgierskiej ostatnich dziesięcioleci XIX wieku' (Exoticism in the Hungarian Art of the Nineteenth Century), in Ptaszyńska, E. [ed.], *Egzotyczna Europa* (Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach).

Jellenta, C., 1897, 'Galerya ostatnich dni : wizerunki, rozbiory, pomysły' (A Gallery of the Final Days: Images, Annexation, Ideas) (Cracow: L. Zwoliński i Sp.).

Jooss, B., 2007, 'Akademia Sztuk Pięknych i Kunstverein w Monachium w XIX wieku' (Academy of Fine Arts and Kunstverein in Munich in the 19th Century), in Ptaszyńska, E. [ed.], *Malarze Polscy w Monachium: Studia i Szkice* (Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach).

Klaputh, E., 2012, 'Zrzeszenie Artystek w Monachium' (The Association of Femal Artists in Munich), in Ptaszyńska, E. [ed.], *Ateny nad Izarą* (Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach).

Klarecki, M., 2012, 'Józef Brandt – fotografia w malarstwie, malarstwo w fotografii' (Józef Brandt - photography in painting, painting in photography), in Ptaszyńska, E. [ed.], *Ateny nad Izarą* (Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach).

Konstantynów, D., 2012, 'Najpierwszy i największy mistrz Niemiec w XIX wieku' (The First and Greatest German Master in the 19th Century), in Ptaszyńska, E. [ed.], *Ateny nad Izarą* (Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach).

Kozakiewicz, S., 1962, 'Sztuka warszawska od średniowiecza do połowy XX wieku' (Warsaw Art from the Middle Ages to the XX-th Century), in *Katalog wystawy jubileuszowej zorganizowanej w stulecie powstania Muzeum 1862 – 1962* (Warsaw: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie).

Kozakowska-Zaucha, U., 2009, 'Kresy w Sztuce Polskiej' (The Borderlands in Polish Art) (Bosz: Cracow).

Krempel, L., 2012, 'Wie international war die Münchner Kunstakademie?' (How International was the Munich Academy of Arts?), in Ptaszyńska, E. [ed.], *Ateny nad Izarą* (Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach).

- Litwinowicz, M., 2015, 'Orient, dezOrientacje, reOrientacje. Wokół wschodniej podróży Adama Mickiewicza', in Ptaszyńska, E. [ed.], *Egzotyczna Europa* (Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach).
- Litwinowicz, M., 2020, 'Wędrujący horyzont. Spostrzeżenia o miejscu Orientu w nowoczesnej kulturze polskiej' (Wandering Horizon. Observations about the Place of the Orient in Modern Polish Culture), in Eliza Ptaszyńska [ed.], *Wokół Malarstwa Monachijskiego*.
- Matuszczak T., 2020, 'Egzotyka już się nie sprzedaje' (Exoticism Does not Sell Anymore), in Eliza Ptaszyńska [ed.], *Wokół Malarstwa Monachijskiego*.
- Matuszczak, T., 2004, 'Chełmoński w księgach handlowych Goupil & Cie' (Chełmoński in the Trading Books of Goupil & Cie), in *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 4.
- Micińska, M., 2015, 'At the Crossroads: 1865–1918', in Jedlicki, J. [ed.], *A History of the Polish Intelligentsia* (Bern: Peter Lang).
- Nabrdalik, B., 2007, 'How a Nation Outlived its State – Polish Partitions and their Impact on the Citizens of the Former Commonwealth', in *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 20 (4).
- Nochlin, L., 1983, 'The Imaginary Orient', in *Art in America*.
- Nowaczyński, A., 1938, 'U Olgi Boznańskiej w Paryżu' (At Olga Boznańska's in Paris), in *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, 42.
- Olchowska-Schmidt, I., 1996, *Józef Brandt* (Warsaw: Kluszczyński).
- Olchowska-Schmidt, I., 2007, 'Samotny wilk – Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski (1849 – 1915)' (A Lonely Wolf – Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski (1849 – 1915)), in Ptaszyńska, E. [ed.], *Malarze Polscy w Monachium: Studia i Szkice* (Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach).
- Ptaszyńska, E., 2015, *Egzotyczna Europa* (Exotic Europe) (Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe w Suwałkach).
- Ptaszyńska, E., 2015, *Wierusz-Kowalski: Painting* (Olszanica: BOSZ).
- Ptaszyńska, E., 2020, 'Galeria Wimmer i polscy malarze' (The Wimmer Gallery and Polish Painters), in Eliza Ptaszyńska [ed.], *Wokół Malarstwa Monachijskiego*.
- Said, E., 2003 (1978), *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books).
- Starzyński, J., 1973, *Maksymilian i Aleksander Gierymscy – Listy i notatki* (Maksymilian and Aleksander Gierymski – Letters and Notes) (Wrocław: Ossolineum).

Stępień, H. [ed.], 1973, '*Maksymilian Gierymski: Listy*' (Maksymilian Gierymski: Letters) (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich).

Szpakowski, A., 1964, 'Józef Brandt a środowisko polskich artystów w Monachium' (Józef Brandt and the Milieu of the Polish Artists in Munich), in *Rocznik Muzeum Świętokrzyskiego*, nr. 2.

Tetmajer, K., 1896, 'Z polskich pracowni w Monachium' (From the Polish Studios in Munich), in *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, 27.

Twarowska, M., 1960, '*Leon Wyczółkowski: Listy i wspomnienia*' (Leon Wyczółkowski: Letters and Memories) (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich).

Witkiewicz, S., 1899, '*Sztuka i krytyka u nas*' (Art and Criticism) (Lwów: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze we Lwowie).

Wolff, L., 1994, '*Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*' (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

Zarycki, T., 2013, 'Polskie Dyskursy o "Wschodzie" Wewnętrzny i Zewnętrzny - Próba Analizy Krytycznej' (Polish Discourses on the Inner and the Outer "East" - Attempting a Critical Analysis), in Zarycki, T. [ed.], *Polska Wschodnia i Orientalim* (Warsaw: Scholar).