



Haralampi Tachev. Composition for “*Sun za shtastie*” [Dream for Happiness] by Pencho Slaveykov. Drawing (Ink, pencil, gouache, cardboard). Part of a non-realized typographically project. National Museum of Literature, Sofia **

Images of Modernity The Experience of City and Nature: Early Examples from the Balkans *

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“[...] The future of Bulgarian art is the future of Sofia,” Ivan Radoslavov forcefully asserted in 1912. Reading the literary critic’s early articles, I was startled at his emphatic claim about the importance of the big city for Bulgarian culture: “Either Sofia will grow as a centre with its own cultural identity and then Bulgarian art will have the chance to develop, or this will not happen and then the first swallows of spring will freeze to death, longing for a splendid and fragrant spring which – alas! – will never come!”¹

Whether Sofia is a centre with its own cultural identity is a question which needs to be asked again and again and which demands an ever renewed and well argued answer: attitudes and the environment change, and so do images of the city.

*This article follows up a project I began work on in the New Europe College, Bucharest, in 2004, on a scholarship from the College, and continued in INHA (Institut National de l’Histoire de l’Art), Paris, in 2005, on a scholarship from the Institute.

At the beginning of the modern age in Bulgaria, around 1910 or 1912, the excitement about the city was clearly visible in poetry. Unlike poetry, however, pictorial arts more generally and painting more specifically were provoked, but not fascinated by the task of representing / expressing the city. Painters had their emotional or practical experience of Sofia; they went for leisurely strolls in the Boris Garden; they dreamed or remembered Paris and Munich, the Tuilleries and the Bodensee. But between the real and the fictional, between the material culture and the poetry, only with difficulty did they achieve an image of “their” city. Images of the city in Bulgarian painting before the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and World War I are rare, and images of the Bulgarian city, Sofia, are even rarer. Still, we do find works which, though marginal by that time’s criteria for artistic prestige, compellingly express modern urban attitudes, including a different, urban attitude to nature.

Modernity² in its representation and expression in images is precisely the focus of interest of the project part of which I would like to offer here.

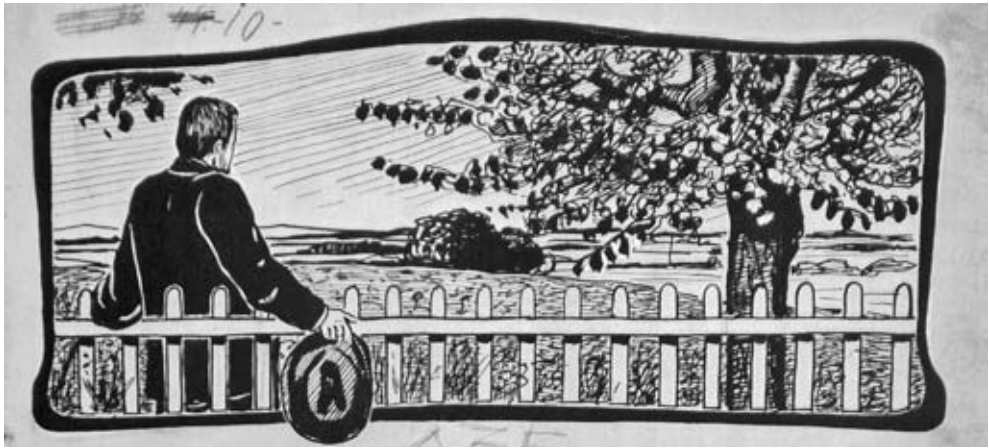
Notions and ideas such as those about “modernity” can be represented / suggested both through representational conventions and through the non-figurative properties of the image, such as colour, light, etc. To what extent is visual representation a matter of conventions within the realm of the figurative, and to what extent is it a matter of suggestion beyond the figurative or even beyond visual experience as isolated from the other senses? This is a question that needs to be considered in each specific case. Also essential is the question of the position from which a given work is considered as related to modernity – is this relation considered with regard to the artist’s intentions, with regard to his or her contemporary spectators / consumers, or with regard to my present-day interpretative position? As a spectator, I choose to adopt the approach of close viewing, and the effect of the works on which I will comment is (inevitably) determined by my present-day experience.

Following Richard Wollheim, I would subscribe to the idea that as far as the artist is concerned, he or she operated at the intersection of more than one intention. In this open relationship, the spectator – whether contemporary with the artist or a present-day one – is expected to be able to interpret (or structure) the work of art in more ways than one – according to the principle of the freedom of perception and understanding. “But this freedom is acceptable only if it is not gained at the expense of the artist: it must, therefore, be congruent with some requirement of his.”³

In conformity with the artist’s intentions, then, as far as this is possible, we will try to approach modernity in images of the city and nature in Bulgaria and in the Balkans.

The concept of “representational modernity” in this study has a situational meaning; that is, it is used to refer to concrete images in a specific context, and is only defined contextually and comparatively. Transitional and situational, the changing essence of “representational modernity” is the central object of this study of Balkan cases.

Just like “modernity”, “the Balkans”, too is a construct with a contextually variable content. My interest here is in the Balkans of the post-Ottoman period – that is, in



Haralampi Tachev. Composition for “Sun za shtastie” [Dream for Happiness] by Pencho Slaveykov.

those newly formed states whose territories had in one way or another depended on the Ottoman Empire. These dependencies also determined the countries’ cultural belonging and subsequently the transition of this cultural belonging towards a “European” identity, in terms of a different set of cultural centres. The images from the Balkans before World War I represent and express this condition / concomitance of multiple cultural identities.

In the cultural situation which I am trying to articulate, the connection between the creator (artist) and the tradition of making and symbolization constitutes an ambiguous relationship between different times and experiences, a relationship that lacks coherence. As far as Balkan artists are concerned, their common interest is Europe (that is, an elsewhere!). The adjective “modern”, in the singular, is used as a synonym of “European”. What is multiple are the cultural centres, the traditions, the notions of modernity / modernities.



Postcard – “Prince Boris” Garden in Sofia.
Published in: Ivan Barnev – Bubi,
Lyubomir Yurukov.



Haralampi Tachev. Composition for “*Sun za shtastie*” [Dream for Happiness] by Pencho Slaveykov.

This situation – of a multiplicity of cases and trends that precludes the possibility of consensual designations, of the construction of a “line of progress” – could be seen as a situation outside modern history (of art), and in this sense, a situation that is still relevant today.

1. Images of modernity: The experience of nature

The approach I suggest we adopt in this study is that of the close viewing / interpretation of specific works.

A small-size painting by Tseno Todorov (1877-1953) in Sofia’s National Art Gallery depicts the artist himself seated in front of an easel in the garden of Luxembourg.⁴ The artist has his back to the spectator and his eyes are turned to the object of his interest. The painting expresses the relationship between the artist and nature. In this case, the artist represents himself as the inhabitant of a modern city⁵, in his relation to nature – with a piece of nature incorporated and staged in the city. The sculpture of a deer in the middle ground suggests the ambiguity between nature / natural and art / artificial; Impressionist lessons and Symbolist dispositions go here hand in hand.

In early 19th-century artistic representation, we witness a different sensibility and attitude to nature – a sensibility and attitude that are determined by the personal and the intimate.

In this connection, I would like to mention another small-size landscape by Todorov – “The Marne River Outside Paris” (1907), also in the National Art Gallery’s collection.

The various ideas about nature related to different periods after the Enlightenment are discussed in a text by Jacques Leenhardt⁶ in a way that I find useful for the

purposes of my study. According to Leenhardt, after the French Revolution, between the late 18th and the early 19th century, a different approach to nature could be seen in the visual arts. City people started taking walks in the country in the hope of penetrating the depths of “human nature”, concerned about its possible loss in an urban environment. The “sensibility towards nature” became the subject of debate. “It is the attitude towards nature rather than nature as such that concerned the art scene.”⁷ An important aspect of man’s inner world, nature came to be conceived as part of modern culture and to be “regarded” from the point of view of the city. At the same time, in the 19th century, nature, as has already been mentioned, was incorporated in big cities in the form of city parks and gardens, which differed in shape, size, and especially function, from the 17th- and 18th-century parks of the aristocracy.

The 19th century saw the appearance of public gardens and the practice of promenading, and the pioneer in this respect was once again Paris. The Notre Dame garden, which opened in 1844, is considered to be the first garden to have been designed from the very outset as a public space.⁸ Before that, only private parks and gardens had existed, which were occasionally opened to a wider public in accordance with their owners’ wish.

In Bulgaria and Romania, gardens such as Cismigiu Park in Bucharest or the Boris Garden⁹ in Sofia were from the very beginning designed as public spaces.¹⁰ And yet, in the late 19th and the early 20th century, works of art representing these spaces for recreation, entertainment and socializing were a rarity – and these were usually small-size paintings and drawings.

Parks and gardens as a subject were favoured by Impressionism and Post-impressionism. But even though there were some Romanian and Bulgarian painters who were associated with late Impressionism, they usually painted city parks in other countries, such as France, Germany or Italy.

Tseno Todorov assimilated the French artistic experience at a later stage. He studied at the Fine Art Academy in Paris in the first decade of the 20th century, on a scholarship from the Bulgarian state. After his return to Sofia, he became a leading portraitist within the realistic and psychologistic trends, and on account of his contributions in this genre was appointed as professor at the State School of Art.

Plein-air scenes in parks and gardens; representations of the salons of the wealthy middle class, filled with fashionably dressed people; women in moments of deep privacy, reading or daydreaming – these show that we have already reached the moment of the emergence of modernity’s art institutions (art schools, salons, museums, private collections). At the Museum of Modern Romanian Art in Bucharest, such works are more numerous than those in the collections of the National Museum in Sofia. The names of foreign artists – both in Bucharest and in Sofia – were fewer in this period than in the first years of the emergence of an art of a European kind. We can witness a variety of painting genres – portraits, landscapes, still lifes, interiors, genre scenes; and a multitude of small- and medium-size paintings – intended for wealthy homes’ interiors.

In the Zambaccian Collection in Bucharest, the painting “In the Forest of Fontainebleau” by Nicolae Grigorescu (1838-1907) shows two figures – a couple seen from the back, – entering the forest. The woman is wearing a long blue dress, echoing the blue of the sky, and is carrying a white parasol. The man is wearing a loose white shirt and a straw hat. Other figures can be seen farther down the road, vanishing in the trees’ colourful shadows.

Even though the paintings by Todorov and Gregorescu which we discussed were not of particular importance for the artists’ prestige or career, these instances of represented modernity are important for my present-day interest due to the thematic and stylistic models which they assimilated and remoulded, and to their potential to manifest and suggest in the Balkans the West European idea of modernity.

Several years later – that is, in Bulgaria’s case, at the end of the first decade of the 20th century, – images started appearing that suggested a different experience of nature: an experience that was contemplative and intimate. Let us have a closer look at some images where the focus has shifted from representation to expression, where the intimate emerges in images of an individualistic modernity.

A painting by Nikola Petrov (1881-1916) in Plovdiv’s City Art Gallery depicts a woman, seen from the back, sitting on a bench and contemplating the landscape.¹¹ In

Tseno Todorov. *In the Luxemburg Garden*. 1904. Oil on canvas. National Art Gallery, Sofia



the foreground, a little girl is playing with a dog. The plein-air space of the foreground is the cultivated space of a garden, with ornamental urns of shrubs and flowers. This is a garden terrace of the esplanade type, designed to afford a panoramic view of nature in the wild. This theatrical display of nature suggests, through the motif of vast distance, a longing for infinity and freedom.

A similar contemplative attitude to nature is also suggested in a painting by Elena Karamihailova (1875-1961) – “By the Bodensee”.¹² In the foreground, we see the standing figure of a young woman dressed and coiffed according to the city fashion, with a folded parasol, in a moment of contemplation. Her eyes are turned to the depth-ground and so the spectator can see her face in profile and a fragment of what the young woman is contemplating – a lake, some trees, the shore’s vegetation. The composition reminds one of photographic framing.

The framing and fragmentation of the view in plein-air scenes and cityscapes was influenced by photographic images. Most painters associated with Impressionism in France were interested in photography.

This is the reverse of the situation with early photographic portraits, which had borrowed compositional representational conventions from the painted portrait; but at the same time, early photographic landscapes bear witness to an interest in pictorial styles. In the late 19th century, the English photographer Peter Henry Emerson created photographic images borrowing from the paintings of Jean-François Millet and later from the experience of the Impressionists¹³; and his work was not the only example of such a practice.

The central representational motif in Elena Karamihailova’s painting is the contact with nature in its intimacy: it is not the spectator but nature that the young woman communicates with. As far as the spectator is concerned, neither the woman, nor the landscape is fully accessible to his or her look (if the landscape were of central interest, the framing would be horizontal). The contact between the female figure and its surroundings is not only a matter of spatial composition: the light, intensified by the reflections and glimmers of the lake’s surface, seems to suggest through the female figure a sensation of youthfulness and serenity. The image of the woman dressed in white also evokes the idea of youthfulness, innocence, and a taste for simplicity. The shimmering plein-air light and the brilliant whiteness constitute, at the same time, an artistic problem. In the 19th century, the Bodensee was particularly attractive as an artistic motif; we can find it in the works of various artists – works that are similar to Karamihailova’s painting both stylistically and compositionally.¹⁴

This plein-air painting is undoubtedly related to the late Impressionist practice. Karamihailova studied painting in Vienna (1895-1896) and Munich¹⁵, where she lived until 1910. The stylistic characteristics of her painting could easily be related to the late variety of Impressionism practised in Munich’s artistic circles. At the same time, some elusive suggestions, achieved through the visual effects of whiteness and luminosity, recall the Symbolist experience.

In Bulgarian and Romanian art, can we clearly distinguish between the Impressionist enthusiasm in the representation of natural scenery and gardens (both as attractive natural spaces and as places for the mingling of different social strata), and the conservative artistic circles' interest in the representation of genteel socializing in a different environment – one close to nature? In the Bulgarian situation, as far as subject-matter is concerned, such paintings are not Impressionist enough in comparison with the French experience. But this does not mean that in the Balkans the works expressing a new attitude to nature, to light, do not constitute images of modernity or of the new urban experience, even though there were in the Balkans no bourgeoisie, no hired workers, no *déjeuners sur l'herbe*.

It is hardly necessary in this case to try and distinguish between the Impressionist experience and the Symbolist element. Their interpenetration marks a different attitude to nature and to the city.

2. Images of modernity: The experience of the city

Like the representations of parks and gardens, the representations of public spaces in the modern Balkan city are not numerous in Balkan art. The assimilation of artistic experience from elsewhere was not always coherent or simultaneous with the changes in urban space, with the experience of communication and travelling, with common local attitudes. “A Bucharest Boulevard on a Rainy Day” by Nicolae Darascu (1918)¹⁶ shows us a glimpse of the city, alive with cars, carriages and pedestrians carrying umbrellas. The rain motif provides further possibilities for the scenography

Nikola Petrov. *Sofia in Winter*. 1907. Svetlin Rusev's Collection. Pleven Art Gallery





Nikola Petrov. *The National Theatre in Sofia*. 1912. Oil on canvas. Sofia Art gallery

of light and reflection. The painting is reminiscent of compositions by Monet, Pissaro, and Caillebotte – only it dates from a few decades later.

In the Bulgarian context, Nikola Petrov's cityscapes have always been associated with images of modernity in early 20th-century Bulgarian culture, as well as with late Impressionism.

My choice to discuss these rather than other works is, however, determined by the effect these paintings produce today. These are instances in which the interpretation of a work's effect only requires a limited amount of social context.

"Sofia in Winter"¹⁷ offers a bird's-eye view of the city. In the foreground, we see the new boulevards, broad and straight, intersecting one another, with city transport and people walking. The straight lines of the trees in the city garden seem to frame a piece of nature in the midst of the city. In the background, we see the recently built

National Theatre.¹⁸ This is the new urban environment. However, my response to the painting is determined above all by the effect of the silvery light that melts forms and contours and evokes a sensation of snow.

Another painting – an oil sketch – depicts “The Mineral Baths Square in Sofia”.¹⁹ Here, we have a closer and fragmented look at city-dwellers in a specific place in the city with its atmosphere. Light, again, plays a leading role.

Interest in urban life and, at the same time, in the effects of light, is usually associated with the Impressionist practice and with the Paris of the 1870s. In this case, this interest is derived from a hybrid experience – that of Impressionism and of Symbolism simultaneously. Petrov had no direct contact with the Impressionist artistic experience; he never visited Paris. In 1903, he had the chance to go to Rome, and in 1905 he made a trip to Liège, Brussels, Munich, Vienna and Budapest.²⁰ These short trips could hardly have had a decisive influence on him. But some of the works he saw on these trips were probably in tune with his intuitions and with his intellectual environment in Sofia. Petrov was a member of the Modern Art Society and graphic designer of the journal *Hudozhnik* (*Artist*), affiliated with the Society. Both the society and the journal shared and disseminated the ideas of Sezzession and Symbolism, but at the same time covered a far wider range of ideas and artistic practices.

“The National Theatre” is probably the most representative and most popular of Petrov’s images of Sofia. The theatre itself seems to be placed on a stage, illuminated by magical footlights, and the *contre-jour* garden seems to be the proscenium that separates us as spectators.

In another work, “The Church of St. Sophia”, the church gives off a glow that dominates the space of the painting as a whole. Petrov’s intense interest in light and his small, rhythmic brush-strokes have given critics reason to define him as a (belated) Impressionist or as a Post-impressionist (he did not, after all, use pure colours and he even made use of black). But I do not find such analogies sufficient. The light that the theatre seems to radiate is related, in my eyes, also to another kind of artistic



Nikola Petrov. *The Basilica “St. Sophia”*. 1909.
Oil on canvas. National Art Gallery, Sofia

experience – that of Symbolism. What matters here is not so much the illusion of reality, of sensory perception, but rather the suggestion of the idea of Theatre.

Would we be justified to call Petrov's cityscapes – or some of them at any rate – Symbolist works? On the one hand, these paintings are cityscapes, whereas the Symbolists seemed to reject classic genres; nor do we find in Petrov's work mythological, religious, or literary subject-matter.

On the other hand, however, in Symbolism the effect of the objects represented (by means of form – line, light, colour, etc.) predominates over the easily recognizable iconographic conventions, and this is also the case with Petrov's paintings.

Julius Kaplan's entry on Symbolism in *The Dictionary of Art* (1996) notes that it is difficult to give a strict definition of the term. Among the artists associated with this trend, some tend to rely more on narrative, while others rely above all on style. What they share, according to the *Dictionary*, is the desire "to render visible the invisible and to communicate the inexpressible": to communicate what exists in the sphere of the subjective and the irrational – in "dreams, silence, meditation, ecstasy".²¹ According to this relatively new and liberal interpretation of the trend, we could subsume within it both "im-pure" artistic phenomena and some of Petrov's cityscapes. Neo-impressionism, according to the same entry in the *Dictionary*, is considered in French criticism as simultaneously equivalent to Symbolism. We see, thus, how the cultural centres that invented the modern classifications of artistic phenomena are today gradually relinquishing their rigid distinctions, guided by the idea of being adequate to each specific phenomenon. The question to ask about Petrov's cityscapes is not whether they are Post-impressionist or Symbolist (the visual symbol should only be interpreted concretely), but rather how, and why, these works affect me / us today; how it is that the painting of light creates a sense of motion and ephemerality, and a suggestion of beyondness.

Balkan images of modernity also represent the experience of the city as an interior: salons filled with fashionably dressed people; cafés – the intellectuals' milieu; personal spaces with women absorbed in their own occupations – with a new suggestion of emancipation; theatre boxes where the spectators are submerged in the twilight between two realities; cabarets and *cafés-chantan* with female singers and dancers – the city as the liberation of mores, as a feast.

The Bucharest artist Theodor Aman (1831-1891) produced a large number of paintings and sketches offering images of the city in the 1870s and 1880s.

"Masked Ball in the Artist's Studio" ("Soirée", 1878) shows us the salon in the artist's home, crowded with fashionably dressed men and women. The salon is at the same time the place he used for work. A domino mask left on a chair in the painting's foreground acts as a sign of festive entertainment and theatricality, and suggests the

idea of substitution – of the disguise / manifestation / multiplicity of identities. The interest in identity and the anxieties about its (im)possible totality are associated with the time around 1900, with *fin de siècle* artistic occupations. I wonder whether, in using his very studio as the setting of the masked ball as sophisticated entertainment, along with the domino mask detail, Aman could also be suggesting his own role as a participant in this play of identities?

The salon's walls are covered with paintings. The stage / the defined space of the room opens up in the background through the large frame of a door, in a kind of enfilade (a linear arrangement of a series of interior spaces opening up each into the next one). The light, coming from candles – a great number of them, near the walls, surrounding the “scene” of the event – seems to unsettle the space and blur the outlines of the figures, making reflections in the shining floor. The frames in this painting are clear, not blurred: frames of paintings on the walls, frames within the frame of the door in the background, flooded with light. The representation of light coming through a door has a symbolic meaning as well – that of the passage between the here and the beyond.²²

Here, as in the case of Nikola Petrov's paintings, and despite the dissimilarity between the two artists' work and the temporal gap of over three decades, we can ask the same question: is it the experience assimilated from the Impressionists, or is it the interest in symbolization that predominates in Aman's work? But in this early case, again, the choice between these two denotations / associations (or even the combination of both) does not suffice for a discussion of Aman's work.

Educated in Paris, Aman was obviously interested in the experience of the Barbizon painters, and probably also in Courbet and Manet.²³ Not only this thematic choice, but also the formal and stylistic features of his work could be considered “modern”. Aman came into contact with and assimilated experience from this “tradition of making”, to use Svetlana Alpers' phrase.²⁴ Aman's fine society – in its parks and gardens, in its interiors, in the artist's studio; with its images of women engrossed in reading, or in some private mood or state of mind, with a cigarette in hand, sometimes looking directly at the spectator – is painted with a quick, dynamic brush, with light playing a determining role. His small-size paintings have the character of painterly sketches. The importance of the subjective (of reverie, of meditation), as well as the character of the relation between abstract properties (colour / light) and representation relates these works to one symbolist inclination in the term's broader meaning.

If we are interested to learn more about this artist, the Aman Museum (near the National Museum of Art) offers us the chance to enjoy a collection of paintings, drawings and graphic works – and in the very same interiors, too, that are depicted in these works. Along with representations of fine society and manners, we can also discover a mixture of different themes, genres and styles: historical compositions and odalisques, paintings of Romanian villages and genre scenes, a variety of characters. This mixture and lack of consistency in the artist's choice would appear puzzling if we ignored its concrete cultural situation.

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The only example in a similar cultural context of a large-size painting depicting the intellectual milieu in a café – the city’s space for communication – is, to the best of my knowledge, “On the Terrace Oteteleshanu” (1912) by the Bucharest artist Camil Ressu.²⁵ The painting shows a group of artists and writers in a popular Bucharest café. Unlike group portraits in the European tradition, which depict professional guilds or artistic circles involved in a common behaviour or activity²⁶, in this case the individual state or activity of each of the figures depicted is equally important with regard to the general scene. In the early 20th century, pictorial modernity was also presented as the urban experience of the pleasure derived from an atmosphere of togetherness – time was spent in public space, but the latter was also experienced as a personal environment. (The café is just such an environment.) Some of Ressu’s numerous drawings and sketches for this painting are particularly effective in this respect.²⁷

Despite the importance of this painting, it is the only one of its kind in Ressu’s oeuvre. In the same period in which he produced this painting, he was above all interested in rural life and culture. In a manifesto article of 1910, he declared himself for the traditions of pre-academic and folk art and against foreign models and prescriptions.²⁸

“In the Theatre Box” – a small-size painting sketch by Sirak Skitnik – was made in St. Petersburg around 1910. The space of the theatre, the spectators – contrasting outlines in a staged-light setting – the suggestion of “artificiality”, of festivity are reminiscent of the interest both Russian Modern (the Mir Iskusstva [World of Art] Society) and French Impressionism had in the peculiar space of the theatre. In the case of French Impressionism, the theatre was to a much greater degree a dimension of the new city, of urban society. In the work of Sirak Skitnik, the interest in the space of the theatre is not directed towards the Bulgarian city, towards Sofia, and the reasons for this are not merely biographical. Although the first building in Bulgaria that was intended as a theatre, the National Theatre in Sofia, was built in 1907, pictorial representation of the theatre in Bulgaria, similarly sketchy and marginal, only appeared much later, after World War I, when interest in the city became much more pronounced in both art and art criticism.

Two paintings of the same title, “The Dancer” (1914), by Goshka Datsov suggest ideas and evoke phantasms of another city, of an elsewhere. The dancers, sharing the stylistic features of Art Nouveau / Sezession, are reminiscent of images in the work of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele. The stylized outlines of the bodies (flexed in a chiasm), the beauty of the line (tautly drawn in the dancer’s painfully arched neck), the ornaments, the bright colours – all these position the spectator’s look near the figure: this is such a close view that it does not contain the whole figure. Space is greatly reduced and the outlines fill it up. But these images also produce the effect of a peculiar synecdoche: they evoke the imaginary city of festivities, of cabarets and *cafés-chantan* – the different space of the liberation of fantasy and of mores.



Nikola Petrov. *Woman on a bench*. 1914. Oil on canvas. Plovdiv Art gallery

Along with the aestheticizing principle, some of Goshka Datsov's works, such as "Bitter Coffee" (1914), also compel us with their Expressionist experience. The morbid figure, the eyes dilated with an inner unease, the suggestion of loneliness, of anxiety – these are reminiscent of images in the work of Egon Schiele.

In these works by Goshka Datsov, of a not particularly large size, even if we are unfamiliar with the artist's biography (his studies in Rome, his trips to Paris and Belgium), we will hardly be able to recognize images of a Bulgarian city, images of Sofia. Such an image of the city, an image of a fantastic, "artificial" festivity and, at the same time, of inner anxiety and loneliness, was to appear in visual representation in Bulgaria (if it appeared at all) much later.

A digression: Representing the village – realism and modernity

This brief digression is prompted by an article by Simeon Radev from 1909 (which he had earlier presented as a lecture at Alliance Française in Sofia) dealing with "The Bulgarian Peasant According to Some Bulgarian Authors".²⁹ Unlike works of art depicting the city – of which there were only a few and which were more often only marginally representative of their times, – works depicting the village were more significant and enjoyed greater prestige. It was usually these works that criticism associated with the realistic devices that were considered of such great value, with the power of observation, with the "typically Bulgarian" (as opposed to the foreign).

According to Radev, the period of "rustic romanticism" in the European novel, with its artificial décors and made-up characters, was followed by the Balzac period,



Elena Karamihaylova. *By the Bodensee*. 1914.
Oil on canvas. National Art Gallery, Sofia

when observation and realistic devices triumphed and “the real peasant came into the open”. In Bulgarian literature, however, traces of numerous influences were to be found – influences, at that, as Radev remarked, that did not follow any historical order. “From this motley literature, in which contradictory influences have become concentrated as if in a retrospective pageant of all literary periods and the formulae of all schools, it is not easy to extract any essential characteristics [...]”.³⁰ It was thus difficult to discuss the novelistic realism contemporary with European / French literature in connection with Bulgarian literature – whose representative part dealt with the village, – unless a number of characteristic features were refined and qualified. (Radev’s major examples are the works of Petko Todorov and Elin Pelin, but we do not need to go into these here.)

I am attracted here by the idea of an analogy – albeit a passing one – with 19th-century realism in painting: let us remember Jean-François Millet and the case of Courbet, who opposed academism. This European / French Realism had its moment of nonrecognition, of nonacceptance in the salons. Thematically, it was to a large degree connected with the village and with nature. But, similarly to what Radev says about literature, we can also say about visual images, about painting in Bulgaria that we can find in it the traces of numerous influences – influences, at that, that do not follow any historical order. The Realist experience is associated with “rustic romanticism”, but also with the interest of European Orientalists in the exotic, with the academic construction of composition, and, at the same time, with the use of the photographic image.

In the images of the village, as in the experience of the city and of nature, it is not easy to identify the essential characteristics of representation and expression. Still, with the village as a theme before the Balkan Wars and World War I, there was a common interpretation of images – and hence a common set of expectations, – in the direction of some form of realism. Impressionism, symbolization, the stylistic characteristics of Sezession / Art Nouveau were at that time only in rare, isolated cases associated with representations of the village. Today, however, realism in the representation of the village needs to be discussed separately in the case of each specific work.

3. The absent city and the omnipresent “nature” in early art criticism

At the beginning of this text, I quoted Ivan Radoslavov and his idea of the discrepancy between the image of the city in poetry and in painting. The art criticism of the time gave almost no attention at all to the absent city; the problem of “nature”, in contrast, was in one way or another present in nearly every critical text.

In the first years of institutionalized artistic life in Bulgaria, the “assimilation of nature” or, alternatively, Realism, were regarded as indisputable artistic virtues.

The art movement that Bulgarian artists seem to have had the closest affinity with is the one that began in France in the 1830s and continued until the end of the 19th century. In the Bulgarian context, the orientation towards observation, towards nature and the human image, towards (more rarely) scenes from everyday life, was thought to have the advantage of accessibility and intelligibility. In France, this trend was opposed to the academic practice, to the ancient and religious subject-matters of the paintings presented in the salons of the time. The key figures of this movement include Millet, Courbet and the Barbizon painters.



Robert Weise. *By the Bodensee*. 1904.
Wessenberg Gallery, Germany

As far as the idea of 19th-century German landscape is concerned, it was promoted in Bulgarian journals through figures whose names we can today only with difficulty find in specialized encyclopaedias. More than a few of the works of these German painters, especially those presented in the earliest specialized journal *Izkustvo* (*Art*) and in *Hudozhnik* (*Artist*), are characterized by a sentimentalist tinge.

Bulgarian critical texts of the time tried to convince readers of the prestige of “realism” and “truthfulness to nature”.

In an article about the Fourth Art Exhibition in Sofia, Dr Krustyo Krustev wrote: “Only about the works of Mr. Berberov will we say that, due to their author’s aspiration to convey mood through colour, they are the sole works in this exhibition which constitute an attempt at painting in a modern manner. However, Mr. Berberov still needs to study nature somewhat more carefully, unless he is content to attempt merely its recreation.”³¹

Thus we can see that the modern manner, which in Dr Krustev’s mind was probably associated with Impressionism (note his references to “colour” and “mood”), was considered as a consequence solely of the study of nature.

The assimilation of nature seems to have been painting’s highest virtue also for Andrey Protich. This is what he says about artist Petar Morozov, writing about a joint exhibition by Morozov and Alexander Bozhinov: “His apprenticeship with nature has only just begun.”³² In another article, Simeon Radev reproaches Bulgarian artists for their lack of “in-depth knowledge of the old masters and passionate observation of nature.”³³

In academic education, observation of nature and drawing from nature were practised in parallel with the study, through the making of copies, of the models of old art. But, perhaps because the old masters were inaccessible for study in Bulgaria, the main measure of value in the majority of critical texts – on both Bulgarian and foreign and both modern and earlier artists – remained, for two decades, “truthfulness to nature”. The Russian artists presented in *Hudozhnik*, for example, were singled out precisely because they were considered to be models for following nature.³⁴ This, for example, is what the journal says about Vasily Vereshchagin: “His education in art lacks both order and system, unless we consider as such his unswerving and unflagging work with nature”. The suggestion is clear that work “with nature” compensates for – and what is more, is superior to – any didactic system for acquiring knowledge and skills in art.

In the later journal *Hudozhestvena kultura* (*Artistic Culture*), too, which differed from *Hudozhnik* in a number of respects, “truthfulness to nature” and “the realist trend” – along with the contradictorily used “Modernism” and, much more rarely, “Impressionism” and “Symbolism” – were the only two terms which were consistently used in a positive sense.

Vasil Dimov, editor-and-chief and author of nearly all of the major critical texts published in *Hudozhestvena kultura*, wrote in connection with Atanas Mihov’s

landscapes that the artist was in perpetual contact with “the greatest of the old masters’ friends, the greatest of all teachers in art: nature”.³⁵ The lack of a comprehensive and long-established artistic environment, the lack of tradition, Dimov suggests, can be compensated for through an orientation towards and assimilation of nature. For him, Modernism, which was “so characteristic of contemporary art”, was “nervous”, but the good thing was that Mihov was far from Modernism. His work with nature was seen in terms of truthfulness and durability – “Mihov”, the critic writes, “observes nature with visible serenity”.

In the same article, however, Dimov also discusses works by Nikola Petrov. The difficulty the critic has in choosing an appropriate tone and in formulating a clear opinion is obvious. On the one hand, Dimov claims that “Nikola Petrov is a great champion of Modernism. What for him is of greater importance is the Modernist representation of form, even if this should be achieved at the expense of its verisimilitude”. As far as Dimov is concerned, this is obviously no cause for admiration. And yet, despite his rational judgement, he still likes Petrov’s paintings: “There is something very important about Nikola Petrov and his art, and this is the fact that he uses the technique peculiar to him not with hesitation or apprehension, but with solid certainty in his rightness. And this quality, we do not doubt, will help him achieve great perfection in art”.³⁶ Dimov seems to lack here the support of critical discourse; a familiarity on the part of Bulgarian critics at the time with foreign writing on Modernism and Post-impressionism would probably have facilitated the discussion of the specific Bulgarian situation and would have provided opportunities for the drawing of parallels.

In Vasil Dimov’s article of 1912 which we already discussed³⁷, all praise for Boris Denev is based on the artist’s communication with and observation of nature. The following phrases, which Dimov uses to describe Denev’s landscapes, can give us a good idea of the kind of realism Dimov prizes: “a spontaneous inclination towards the beauties of nature” which does not need the counsel of scholars and connoisseurs of art; “he has grasped the importance which the artist’s – especially the beginning artist’s – communication with mother nature can have”; “nature – artists’ greatest teacher”. The only artistic possibility the critic allows for is that of reference to the visible: “As we know, [Denev] spent some time in Munich, a major centre of art, but one in which Modernism is at the crossroads of transient artistic vogues coming from Paris and Vienna, and which is so dangerous for young foreigners who lack a native artistic tradition. [...] He returned with important acquisitions for his art, but undoubtedly the most important of these is his uncorruptedness by the dazzle of Modernism”. In this way, the critic suggests the idea of “observation of nature” as unmediated artistry, as a resistance to Modernist models. In fact, phrases like “a modern taste”³⁸, “a modern situation”³⁹ or “a modern technique” fail to give us information about any models; and external references are avoided.

The European Modernist trends of the time (like Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism and collage, and Futurism) appeared alien, incomprehensible, and lacking in the power to affect; and, at the same time, threatening – from the considerable cultural distance – in their topicality. Nature and the effort concentrated on its realistic representation – that was what seemed close to the Bulgarian context and having the power to affect. This project offered simultaneously the support of the European artistic experience and a protected position outside the all-absorbing European history.

But the moment we think that the use of the terms “Realism” and “nature” allowed for a certain differentiation in critical discourse, we are confronted with statements like Vasil Dimov’s that the Swedish artist “Zorn is a realist and ultra-modernist”.⁴⁰ It turns out, that is, that from the realist position, in a situation “outside history”, the Modernist disposition (and even the “ultra”-modernist one!) could be seen as simultaneous and compatible with it.

Despite the awareness in the Bulgarian context that the assimilation of (earlier) experience in artistic representation and expression was inevitable, this experience was invariably perceived as “foreign” and thus led to discrepancies. Around 1910, alongside the persistent advice about the “observation of nature”, the idea of the value of “folk subject-matter” and “local” history also came to be insistently voiced. In a critical article about the Sixth Art Exhibition of the Modern Art Society, Vasil Dimov declared his belief in the progress made by Bulgarian art: “We can see that [...] in the place of the previous, though weak, cosmopolitan art, the pure image of indigenus, local art is becoming discernible. [...] We can see the manifestation of this sobering-up in art above all in the fact that today many more artists are working on folk subject-matter than before. [...] For several years now we have been witnesses to the production of larger-scale genre and ritual paintings and paintings on historical themes”.⁴¹ Local history and folk subject-matter were thus implicitly opposed to the cosmopolitan city and its representation in art.

With respect to the foreign artists, too, that Bulgarian art journals chose to introduce to the Bulgarian public, “truthfulness to nature” continued to be considered a supreme achievement and value – and that despite the differences between these artists and the variety of trends and cultures they represented. “Nature” was considered as what was “most important” both in discussions of 19th-century Realism and in discussions of Impressionism’s “light and colour”, and even in discussions of Symbolism. Debate involved not so much the characteristics of and distinctions between these trends, but, rather, “passionate observation” and “truthfulness to nature”. Bulgarian critics obviously relied on foreign critical texts about contemporary artists, even though they seldom quoted from these texts, but they also included in their writing personal observations and comments relevant to the Bulgarian artistic environment.

For Pavel Genadiev, for instance, the impact of the paintings of the English artist

Sirak Skitnik. *In the Loge*. 1910's.
Oil on cardboard.
National Art Gallery, Sofia



James Whistler (1834-1903), considered to belong to Impressionism, was due, above all, to Whistler's extraordinary powers of observation: "His art can be defined as the treatment of themes offered to him by the circumstances; as the faithful conveying of impressions of the environment which surrounded him", and his greatest merit are "his wondrous, exceptional powers of observation".⁴² Although Genadiev mentions various artistic traditions – "the chief formative influence on Whistler's style was that of Velásquez and the skilful Japanese draughtsmen"⁴³ – he was not concerned with their assimilation and transformation, or, alternatively, he considered them to be incommensurably less important than "observation".

Simeon Radev, too, evaluated the French Impressionist experience above all with regard to the representation of nature: "It seems to me that one of the great artistic feats of the Impressionist school of Monet, Degas, Manet, etc. was to take painting back to its natural task, which is, so to speak, purely "chromatic" – that is, it has to do primarily with conveying the colours and shapes of nature, – and not philosophical".⁴⁴

The interest which European culture showed from the early 19th-century onwards in the physiological and psychological characteristics of eyesight, the experiments on the interaction between colour and light (e.g., Goethe's treatise on colour; Philipp Otto Runge's colour spheres; the analogies made between chromatic and musical harmonies) were directed at colour's effects beyond verisimilitude. Painting's "chromatic task", which Radev referred to, developed in European art in various versions of disregard for the reality represented (one of these versions was Impressionism), and did not renounce – on the contrary, it amplified – the philosophical aspect. Bulgarian art criticism, however, did not produce any interpretations within this perspective. It perceived the philosophical and the mystical aspects of the image as having a pernicious effect on the interest in nature, and, thus, as undesirable. As Simeon Radev put it, "the romantic and mystical tendency of Böcklin, Stuck, etc. is still rife" in Germany; while standing before Bukovac's "Celestial Spirits", "one deeply regrets that such astounding skillfulness should be wasted in vain" in mystical follies.⁴⁵

Whereas with regard to poetic art the idea of the autonomy of language, of figures and images, was not contested but, in connection with the Symbolist trend, became the subject of lively discussion, in painting the idea of an art that is born from art (whether pictorial or verbal) found critical expression only with difficulty.

According to one Bulgarian critic, the impact of the work of the realist artist Ilya Repin (1844-1930) was to be found “in the real representation of life and not in an interpretation of mystical or religious ideals”.⁴⁶ At the same time, however, “Monet is a great realist”. In an article on Claude Monet, Simeon Radev insists: “Nature was Monet’s only school, and observation was his real teacher. The impulse to use new technical means, the study of the secrets of light, the lyrical quality of the landscape: everything that constitutes Monet’s work was acquired through his careful observation [...]”.⁴⁷ Why does Radev – who in the same article mentions the Impressionist school, named after a painting by Monet⁴⁸ – refuse to discuss modern painting’s references to another kind of pictorial experience, to highlight “inter-visual” connections between images, rather than solely the experience of nature? How are we to reconcile his assertion that successful improvisation in literature is impossible without literary models⁴⁹ and his claim that nature was Monet’s sole education and observation was his real teacher?

In an enthusiastic article on Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901), “the most contemporary of all new painters”⁵⁰, Hristo Stanchev describes the impact of his paintings in terms of their believability: “He comes so close to the actual that the incredible, which only exists in his fantasy, springs up before us as something real: a living creation of God’s”. And also: “Böcklin’s paintings and landscapes recreate everything that is dear and heroic in nature [...]”. It appears thus that even fantasy only stands a chance as imitation of nature.

According to Vasil Dimov, the Serbian artist Uroš Predić, a “church painter or genre painter” is “a realist in the word’s true meaning”.⁵¹

Hudozhnik presented to the Bulgarian audience Realists, Romantics, Symbolists, and Impressionists, in both word and image; it published translations of Nietzsche and Baudelaire. Simeon Radev enthused over Impressionism: “Impressionism, so vehemently rejected in its early manifestations, has now definitively acquired the prestige of a great moment in the history of French art”.⁵² At the same time, however, Radev championed Realism; consider the broad generalizations he made about (invariably European!) models in a discussion about the art of rhetoric in Bulgaria: “This is the great advantage of our art in all its manifestations: it is able to develop in some ways in defiance of society’s low level of development, following the European artistic influence and the impulse provided by foreign models”.⁵³ Radev was referring to the short story, poetry, and theatre, but made no mention of visual arts. It appears that where these were concerned, reference to artistic models was unacceptable, and the only value pictorial images could have was their reference to nature.

To sum up, Bulgarian art criticism of the early decades of the 20th century used the word “nature” above all to designate visible reality. The relation to nature was discussed as a relation to visibility, in terms of the choice of object or subject-matter, the powers of observation, the degree of mastery of the respective painting technique (skillfulness in the use of colour, in brushwork, in conveying light and atmosphere).

As far as literary criticism is concerned, the position “against realism” was declared before the Balkan Wars and World War I, in an article entitled “A Small Occasion for the Raising of Big Issues”, written by the literary critic Ivan Radoslavov in connection with a collection of short stories by Mihail Kremen. The article is an expression of Radoslavov’s conviction that “Historical realism is truly an anachronism, it is at the least an imperfect form of expression for the modern creative personality”. From his point of view, realism in literature was not to be thought of in relation to links inherent to literary creation, in relation to other literary trends, but to “the sweeping advance of positivism” in the 19th century.⁵⁴ In another article, “Baudelaire or Turgenev” (originally published under the title “On Turgenev”), Radoslavov wrote: “But from now on art, as we understand it, cannot be merely a reflection of our immediate perceptions [...]. For us, art is something more. And this is what, in our view, makes it universally significant, turning it from an applied science into a *revelation*”.⁵⁵

Pre-war Bulgarian art criticism did not oppose to each other Realism and anti-Realism. The image as a revelation, phantasm, or mystique; experience and imagination beyond the visible were not discussed at all, or, if they were mentioned in reference to foreign works of art, this reference was accompanied by vagueness, perplexity, and often disapproval.

The primordial, mystical aspect of the impact of the image – of light, space and form regardless of their mimetic functions – obsessed European artists in a variety of artistic environments at the beginning of the 20th century, and brought about the idea of an image without a referent, beyond visibility, of the abstract image.

These ideas found certain expression in Bulgaria after World War I in the critical articles of Geo Milev, Sirak Skitnik and Chavdar Mutafov. The first article to question Realism in painting – even though the latter is only briefly mentioned amidst literary examples – was Geo Milev’s “Against Realism”. Milev is disappointed but also in some ways defiant when he observes that “[...] this aesthetics, the aesthetics of every true art, the aesthetics of anti-Realism, is something unpopular and even unfamiliar in Bulgaria”. For Milev, the theme of “true, absolute art” is “life, which is a blend of eternity’s cosmic elements”.⁵⁶ After World War I, the visual images of the city and nature, as well as of a traditional rural culture, came to be perceived and to exert their effects in a different, non-mimetic pictorial paradigm.

Let us go back now to the problem of the absent city. A solitary article from 1910 by Alexander Bozhinov⁵⁷ discusses the lack of artistic presence in the urban environment: “Sofia, where so many large edifices have been built and are being



Goshka Datsov. *The Dance*. 1914.
Oil on cardboard. Studio – Collection
Svetlin Rusev, Sofia

built, lacks the decorative complement of modern sculpture and painting”. Bozhinov supplements his article with pictures of buildings in Paris, Munich and Dresden, which are to serve as inspiration, and asks why Bulgarian architects do not use foreign artistic models. We see how in urban art the assimilation of foreign experience was recommended and encouraged (the urban models came from elsewhere!), while in painting the European / the modern / the foreign and their stylistic features provoked anxiety and gave rise to conflicting interpretations. Artists’ travelogues, letters and memoirs reveal the same longing for the city – such as artists saw it elsewhere in Europe; but this image of the longed-for city only very rarely appeared as an image of Sofia.

Around 1910, as far as the representation / expression of modernity is concerned, neither in Bulgaria, nor in its neighbouring Balkan countries (like elsewhere in Europe) was painting visually the most representative of the arts. It is time we left the imaginary museum of visual representations / expressions of early modernity in Sofia and Bucharest.

We can see in Western Europe the playful exchange between the visual perception and the imaginative power of the city in the city itself - build like an image. Artistic activity and presence – e.g., architecture, urbanism, typographic products, advertising, etc. – in the urban environment itself became particularly important and visually effective around 1900. The “alliance” between art and industry presented a particular challenge in the big European cities.

The effort to assimilate artistic experience into everyday urban life in the Balkans, however important, did not achieve the same measure of success, due to the lack of progressive economic development.

Goshka Datsov. *Bitter Coffee*. 1914.
Published in the catalogue of Datsov's
exhibition in 1914 (N 39 in the list)



The articles by Bulgarian critics we considered, like the works which they discuss, are combinations of various conventions and cultural practices of signification / expression, and do not allow for a consistent, complex and comprehensive interpretation. The threads of experience seem to break and cannot be traced over a longer period of time. Later works of art, too, cannot sustain interpretation within a traceable artistic continuity; and it is as if, under the pressure of external circumstances, this kind of context were continuously reformulated into an eternal present.

This characteristic – the heterogeneous visual conventions, the hybrid models of signification and modes of formal and stylistic expression – is common to pictorial modernity in the Balkans in general, as well as to any cultural situation of active and unsystematic assimilation. The very multiplicity of images – a peculiar mosaic of heterogeneous artistic experience – presupposes the highlighting of the “elusive” elements of pictorial modernity in the weave of various kinds of suggestion.

The absence of a consistent artistic outlook made early Bulgarian art journals eclectic. Their use of stylistic designations and concepts whose meaning had been determined elsewhere resulted in a displacement in the interpretation of works of art in this kind of context. In its indeterminacy, which paralleled the works' elusive stylistic features, the language of criticism and the attempts at a historical narrative proved insufficiently effective; while the method of close viewing and description seems to have been textually the most successful.

The images of modernity in the early manifestations of the experience of the city and nature, images situated between the real and the fictional, are characterized by eclecticism⁵⁸, by “impurity”⁵⁹ – the condition of a (visual) culture outside history.

Translated by Maria Dimitrova

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Notes:

1 “The City”. *Nash zivot (Our Life)*, 1912, vol. 5, no. 7, pp. 255-63. Qtd. in *Wandering Aesthetics: Bulgarian Symbolists on Symbolism*, compilation and introduction by Stoyan Iliev, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Publishing House, Sofia, 1993, p. 174.

2 For various uses of the terms “modernism” and “modernity” see Charles Harrison, “Modernism”, in *Critical Terms for Art History*, eds. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1996, pp. 142-55; Irina Genova, “Introduction”, in *Modernisms and Modernity: The (Im)Possibility of Historicizing*, Ida – Krasimir Gandev, Sofia, 2004, pp. 9-12.

3 Richard Wollheim, *Art and its Objects*, 1968, p. 139. Wollheim claims that the essence of art is to be understood simultaneously from the artist’s and from the spectator’s point of view: “We need to see the positive side to the indeterminacy possessed by art: more specifically, how this indeterminacy accommodates, or brings to a convergence [a concentration at a single point – I.G.] demands characteristically made of art by the spectator and demands characteristically made of art by the artist.”

4 Tseno Todorov, “The Garden of Luxembourg”, 1904.

5 In 1903-1904, Todorov lived and studied in Paris.

6 “Manifeste pour l’environnement au XXI siècle” (“Manifesto for the Environment in the 21st Century”), Laville et Jacques Leenhardt, *Villette Amazone*, 1996, pp. 21-51.

7 Leenhardt, *ibid.*, p. 43.

8 See Dominique Jarrassé, *L’art des jardins parisiens*, Parigramme, Paris, 2002, pp. 9-12.

9 Named after Crown Prince Boris of Turnovo.

10 It is interesting to note that Bucharest’s and Sofia’s city parks were originally designed by the same landscape gardener, the Swiss Daniel Neff. See Yulia Radoslavova, “Sofia’s Gardens”, in *The Anniversary Book: Sofia – 120 Years as a Capital*, Professor Marin Drinov Publishing House, Sofia, 2000, pp. 508-14.

11 Nikola Petrov, “Woman on a bench”, 1914, oil on canvas, 51 x 80 cm., City Art Gallery, Plovdiv.

12 Elena Karamihailova, “By the Bodensee”, 1914, oil on canvas, National Art Gallery, Sofia.

13 See Françoise Heilbrun, *Landscapes and Nature*, Musée d’Orsay, Paris, 2004, p.16.

14 See, for example, Robert Weise’s (1870-1923) “By the Bodensee” (1904), which depicts the figure of a young woman in white in a natural summer setting. I am indebted for this parallel to A. V. Angelov, who provided me with a reproduction of the painting.

15 In Munich, she studied at a private art academy for women.

16 Nicolae Darascu, “A Bucharest Boulevard on a Rainy Day”, 1918, National Museum of Art, Bucharest.

17 Nikola Petrov, “Sofia in Winter”, 1907, 64 x 120 cm., City Art Gallery, Pleven.

18 The National Theatre opened in January 1907.

- 19 Nikola Petrov, "The Mineral Baths Square in Sofia", 1911, 26 x 40 cm., National Art Gallery, Sofia.
- 20 For more information on this trip see Bozhana Balteva, *Nikola Petrov*, Balgarski Hudozhnik, Sofia, 1989, p. 45.
- 21 *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, in thirty-four volumes, Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1996, vol. 30, p.169.
- 22 See *Encyclopaedia of Comparative Iconography*, ed. Helene E. Roberts, Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, Chicago & London, 1998, p. 502.
- 23 See *Centenar Theodor Aman 1991*, Coordinatorul volumului Adrian & Silvan Ionescu, Editura Venus, București, 1991.
- 24 See Svetlana Alpers, "Style Is What You Make It: The Visual Arts Once Again", in *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang, Cornell University, 1987 [1979].
- 25 Camil Ressu, "On the Terrace Oteteleshanu", 1912, 200 x 255 cm., National Museum of Art, Bucharest.
- 26 As in 17th-century Dutch group portraits or 18th- and 19th-century French homage scenes.
- 27 See Theodor Enescu, *Camil Ressu*, Meridiana, Bucharest, 1984.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 227-28.
- 29 Simeon Radev, "The Bulgarian Peasant According to Some Bulgarian Authors", *Hudozhnik*, vol. 3, 1909, no. 3, pp. 19-27.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 31 Krustyu Krustev, "The Fourth Art Exhibition", in *Misal (Thought)*, vol. 9, 1899, no. 5, p. 529.
- 32 Andrey Protich, "The Bozhinov – Morozov Exhibition", in *Hudozhnik*, vol. 1, 1905-1906, no. 12, p. 10.
- 33 Simeon Radev, "The Second Yugoslavian Art Exhibition: Impressions", in *Hudozhnik*, vol. 2, 1906-1907, no. 1, p. 13.
- 34 Konstantin Velichkov, "I.E. Repin", in *Hudozhnik*, vol. 1, 1905-1906, nos. 3 and 4, pp. 13-15; and Elisaveta Konsulova-Vazova, "Vasily Vereshchagin", in *Hudozhnik*, vol. 3, 1909, no. 7, pp. 14-18.
- 35 Vasil Dimov, "The Sixth Art Exhibition of the Modern Art Society" (cntd.), in *Hudozhestvena Kultura*, 1910, no. 5, p. 68.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- 37 Vasil Dimov, "Two Winter Art Exhibitions in Sofia", in *Hudozhestvena Kultura*, 1912, no. 25, March, pp. 35-40.
- 38 Vasil Dimov, "The Sixth Art Exhibition of the Modern Art Society" (cntd.), in *Hudozhestvena Kultura*, 1910, no. 5, p. 70: "Kozakova's work shows a modern taste".
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 72. This is a reference to the Church of St. Sophia, which is "situated in a modern manner" in the upper part of a painting by Yosef Peter.
- 40 Vasil Dimov, "Anders Zorn", in *Hudozhestvena Kultura*, 1911, no. 13, p. 39.
- 41 Vasil Dimov, "The Sixth Art Exhibition of the Modern Art Society", in *Hudozhestvena Kultura*, 1910, no. 4, p. 54.
- 42 Paolo [Pavel Genadiev], "James McNeill Whistler", in *Hudozhnik*, vol. 1, 1905-1906, no. 5, p. 10.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 44 Simeon Radev, "The Second Yugoslavian Art Exhibition: Impressions", in *Hudozhnik*, vol. 2, 1906-1907, no. 1, pp. 7, 9.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 46 Konstantin Velichkov, "I.E. Repin", in *Hudozhnik*, vol. 1, 1905-1906, nos. 3 and 4, p. 14.
- 47 Simeon Radev, "Claude Monet", in *Hudozhnik*, vol. 3, 1909, no. 3, p. 14.
- 48 "Impression. Soleil Levant" ("Impression. Rising Sun"), 1872, which was shown in the group's first exhibition in 1874.
- 49 Simeon Radev, "Political Eloquence in Bulgaria", in *Hudozhnik*, vol. 3, 1909, nos. 1 and 2, p. 14.
- 50 Hristo Stanchev, "Arnold Böcklin", in *Hudozhnik*, vol. 1, 1905-1906, nos. 15 and 16, p. 14.

- 51 Vasil Dimov, "Uroš Predić", in *Hudozhestvena Kultura*, 1912, no. 23, p. 20.
- 52 Simeon Radev, "Albert Besnard", in *Hudozhnik*, vol. 2, 1906-1907, nos. 7 and 8, p. 38.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 54 The article was published in the journal *Zveno*, 1914, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 52-55. Qtd. after Ivan Radoslavov, "A Small Occasion for the Raising of Big Issues", in *Wandering Aesthetics: Bulgarian Symbolists on Symbolism*, compilation and introduction by Stoyan Iliev, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Publishing House, Sofia, 1993, p. 174-75.
- 55 The article was published in *Nash zivot*, 1912, vol. 5, no. 5, pp. 276-79. Qtd. after Ivan Radoslavov, "A Small Occasion for the Raising of Big Issues", in *Wandering Aesthetics: Bulgarian Symbolists on Symbolism*, compilation and introduction by Stoyan Iliev, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Publishing House, Sofia, 1993, p. 165.
- 56 Geo Milev, "Against Realism", in *Slunce (Sun)*, 1919, vol. 1, no. 5, pp. 139-43. Qtd. after Ivan Radoslavov, "A Small Occasion for the Raising of Big Issues", in *Wandering Aesthetics: Bulgarian Symbolists on Symbolism*, compilation and introduction by Stoyan Iliev, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Publishing House, Sofia, 1993, pp. 318-23.
- 57 Alexander Bozhinov, "Architects at the Service of Painting and Sculpture", in *Prosveta (Enlightenment)*, 1910, no. 3, pp. 55-56.
- 58 On the eclecticism of *Hudozhnik's* literary choices see Yordan Vasilev, in *Periodika i literatura (Periodicals and Literature)*, vol. 3, 1994, pp. 215-32.
- 59 "Impurity" is here used in the sense in which it is used by Mary Douglas – see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1996.