

Italian Painters, Critical Studies of their Works: the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden. An overview of Giovanni Morelli's attributions¹

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'This magnificent picture-gallery [of Dresden], unique in its way, owes its existence chiefly to the boundless love of art of August III of Saxony and his eccentric minister, Count Brühl.'² With these words the Italian art connoisseur Giovanni Morelli (Verona 1816–1891 Milan) opened in 1880 the first edition of his critical treatise on the Old Masters Picture Gallery in Dresden (hereafter referred to as 'Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister'). The story of the Saxon collection can be traced back to the 16th century, when Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553) was the court painter to the Albertine Duke George the Bearded (1500–1539). However, Morelli's remark is indubitably correct: it was in fact not until the reign of Augustus III (1696–1763) and his Prime Minister Heinrich von Brühl (1700–1763) that the gallery's most important art purchases took place.³ The year 1745 marks a decisive moment in the

¹ This article is the slightly revised English translation of a text first published in German: Valentina Locatelli, 'Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei: Die Galerie zu Dresden. Ein Überblick zu Giovanni Morellis Zuschreibungen', *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden*, 34, (2008) 2010, 85–106. It is based upon the second, otherwise unpublished section of the author's doctoral dissertation (in Italian): Valentina Locatelli, *Le Opere dei Maestri Italiani nella Gemäldegalerie di Dresda: un itinerario 'frühromantisch' nel pensiero di Giovanni Morelli*, Università degli Studi di Bergamo, 2009 (available online: <https://aisberg.unibg.it/bitstream/10446/69/1/tesidLocatelliV.pdf> (accessed September 9, 2015); from here on referred to as Locatelli 2009/II). The first part of the thesis was published: Valentina Locatelli, *Metamorfosi romantiche. Le teorie del primo Romanticismo tedesco nel pensiero sull'arte di Giovanni Morelli*, Pasian di Prato (Udine): Campanotto Editore, 2011. For suggestions and corrections related to the content of this article, the author would like to thank Dr Andreas Henning (curator of Italian Paintings, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden). The author would like to thank Christopher Duckett for his editing of the English translation. All translations from non-English sources are the author's own unless otherwise indicated.

² Giovanni Morelli, *Italian Masters in German Galleries. A Critical Essay on the Italian Pictures in the Galleries of Munich – Dresden – Berlin*, translated from the German by Mrs. Louise Richter, London: George Bell and Sons, 1883, 100. For the German original text see [Giovanni Morelli], *Die Werke italienischer Meister in den Galerien von München, Dresden und Berlin. Ein kritischer Versuch von Ivan Lermolieff. Aus dem Russischen übersetzt von Dr. Johannes Schwarze*, Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 1880, 121. Both the name of the Russian author Ivan Lermolieff and the name of the German translator Johannes Schwarze are pseudonyms chosen by Giovanni Morelli to conceal his real identity.

³ On the history of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister see Harald Marx, 'Werke unsterblicher Meister aller Zeiten und Schulen'. Die Dresdner Gemäldegalerie im Semperbau', and Harald Marx, 'Bemerkungen und Gedanken zur Geschichte der Dresdner Gemäldegalerie', in: Harald Marx, ed., *Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister Dresden*, 2 vols, Köln: König, Walter, 2005: *Die ausgestellten Werke*, vol. 1, 11–35; *Illustriertes Gesamtverzeichnis*, vol. 2, 11–54.

history of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, as Augustus III acquired one hundred of some of the best artworks from the collection of Francesco III d'Este, Duke of Modena. In addition to this historically important event for the collection, in his introduction Morelli also recalls the purchase of two other paintings to which the Dresden collection owes in large part its fame:

Through the purchase of one hundred of the finest pictures, selected by connoisseurs out of the picture-collection of Modena, and above all by the nearly simultaneous acquisition of two other celebrated pictures, the so-called Sistine Madonna of Raphael from Piacenza and the Holbein Madonna from the Casa Dolfin at Venice, the fame of this collection spread all over the world; and it soon came to be regarded, and is regarded to the present day, as the richest and most brilliant picture-gallery that exists.⁴

If Raphael's (1483–1520) *Sistine Madonna*⁵ had earned the admiration of many art lovers, poets and philosophers since the dawn of Early German Romanticism, the 'Holbein-Madonna'⁶ had become by Morelli's time the symbol of a radical renewal of art criticism. The famous Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543) exhibition which took place in Dresden in 1871 prompted numerous discussions about the authenticity of the Dresden painting of the *Madonna of the Burgomaster of Basel Jakob Meyer zum Hasen*. On this occasion, the Dresden panel hung for the first time next to the Darmstadt version,⁷ providing a unique opportunity for direct comparison of the two paintings. What emerged from this confrontation was that the Dresden version showed to be only a late copy of Holbein's original in Darmstadt realized by the painter Bartholomew Sarburgh (1590–after 1637). The so-called 'Holbein-Dispute' thus became the emblem of a new history of art, which no longer wished to be based on romantic-literary speculations, but aimed instead to achieve objective results by means of scientifically verifiable investigation.⁸

⁴ Morelli, 1883, as note 2, 100. For the German original see [Morelli] 1880, as note 2, 121. On the purchase from the Este collection in Modena see Gregor J.M. Weber, 'Il Nucleo pittorico Estense nella Galleria di Dresda negli anni 1746–1765. Scelta, esposizione e ricezione dei dipinti', in: Jadranka Bentini, ed., *Sovrane passioni. Le raccolte d'arte della Ducale Galleria Estense*, exh. cat. Galleria Estense, Palazzo dei Musei, Modena (1998), Milan: Federico Motta, 1998, 124–137.

⁵ Raphael, *The Sistine Madonna*, canvas, 269 x 201 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, gall. no. 93; see Marx 2005, as note 3, vol. 1, 180–181, vol. 2, cat. no. 1421, 419.

⁶ Bartholomäus Sarburgh (copy after Hans Holbein the Younger), *The Madonna of the Burgomaster of Basel Jakob Meyer zum Hasen*, wood, 159 x 103 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, gall. no. 1892, see Marx 2005, as note 3, vol. 1, 616, vol. 2, cat. no. 1639, 469.

⁷ Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Madonna of the Burgomaster of Basel Jakob Meyer zum Hasen*, so-called 'Darmstadt Madonna', wood, 146.5 x 102 cm, Sammlung Würth, Johannerhalle, Schwäbisch Hall.

⁸ See Udo Kultermann, 'Der Dresdner Holbeinstreit', in: Udo Kultermann, ed., *Geschichte der Kunstgeschichte: der Weg einer Wissenschaft*, Munich: Prestel, 1990, 136–141. See also Oskar Bächtmann, 'Der Holbein-Streit: eine Krise der Kunstgeschichte', in: Thomas W. Gaehtgens,

Giovanni Morelli's 'experimental method'

Giovanni Morelli started early in his career to apply a working method based on comparative vision, scientific proof and evidence. In 1832, the future art connoisseur enrolled in the Department of Comparative Anatomy at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. There, he soon became the assistant of Ignatius Döllinger (1770–1841), one of the 19th century's most respected biologists, and in 1836 he completed his degree presenting the thesis *De Regione inguinali*.⁹ The interest of the young medical student was at the time directed towards Georges Cuvier's (1769–1832) natural sciences research, studies on the morphology of plants and Friedrich W.J. Schelling's (1775–1854) philosophy of nature ('Naturphilosophie'). Of the latter, Morelli even translated a text into Italian.¹⁰ Morelli's numerous encounters and friendship with some of the most important figures of Romanticism¹¹ and of the German artists' community¹² complete the picture of his eclectic education. This multifaceted constellation which combined science and art later had a significant impact on Morelli's methodological approach to art historical research.

After his long study-residence in Germany,¹³ in 1839 Morelli moved to Paris before returning, one year later, to Italy. There he became involved in the political events of his homeland: he was appointed four times to the post of government representative of the city of Bergamo to the new Kingdom of Italy and in 1873 he became a Senator of Italy. His real passion, however, was directed towards the art of the Italian old masters, especially the 'primitives', and he soon became an art collector and expert connoisseur. Besides his valuable art collection of old masters, which he later bequeathed to the municipal gallery of Bergamo (Accademia

Peter-Klaus Schuster, eds, *Kennerschaft. Kolloquium zum 150. Geburtstag von Wilhelm von Bode, Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 38 [N.F., Beiheft], Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1996, 87–100.

⁹ [Johann Morell], *De Regione inguinali. Dissertatio anatomica. Auctore Joanne Morell, medicinae et chirurgiae doctore*, Munich: J. Rösl, 1837.

¹⁰ [Friedrich W.J. Schelling], 'Estetica. Sopra la relazione tra l'arti belle e la natura. Discorso tenuto da Schelling nell'academia di Monaco, in occasione del giorno onomastico di s. m. il re Massimiliano di Baviera, tradutto dal tedesco dal dottore G.[iovanni] M.[orelli]', *Lo spettatore industriale*, 1845, 285–320. This Italian translation of Morelli has been reprinted in Locatelli 2011, as note 1, 135–170. For an in-depth analysis of the text see in particular the pages 34–40.

¹¹ For example with Friedrich W.J. Schelling, Bettina von Arnim (1785–1859) and her brother Clemens Brentano (1778–1842), to name a few.

¹² Especially with Peter von Cornelius (1783–1867), Bonaventura Genelli (1798–1868), Wilhelm von Kaulbach (1805–1874), Carl Adolph Mende (1807–1857), Ernst Fröhlich (1810–1882) and Heinrich Ernst Schirmer (1814–1887).

¹³ After completing his degree in Munich, between 1836 and 1837 Morelli attended university in Erlangen. He then spent the following year (1838) in Berlin, where he befriended Bettina von Arnim and was quickly introduced in the higher circles of the Prussian society.

Carrara),¹⁴ Morelli is primarily known for his method for attributing paintings which was admired as much as it was criticized.

The so-called Morellian 'experimental method' is a practice of attribution based on the isolation of details and their subsequent comparison. The basic principle of this method is to identify the hand of a master by observing and studying minor details in a painting, e.g. the shape of the earlobes, fingers, toes and even nails. According to Morelli these elements are constants in the production of an artist. While the palette or the compositional principles might change all along the professional development of a painter, these apparently secondary and negligible signs of his artistic 'calligraphy' are essentially constant and can be considered characteristic marks ('Merkmale') of that very particular artist. The artist in fact develops these basic forms ('Grundformen') early in his career and applies them automatically in all subsequent years, without paying them further conscious consideration. The Morellian method, however, is not a purely formal system. On the contrary, it builds upon the idea of a close relationship between the outer static form of things ('Gestalt') and their living inwardness ('Bildung') – i.e. the mechanisms which determine the evolution of the form. Morelli claimed to be 'daily more and more convinced that it is only through unremitting study of form that one may gradually attain to understanding and recognising the spirit ['Geist'] which gives it life.'¹⁵ The clear influence of Schelling's 'Naturphilosophie' can be observed in this statement. Morelli's assertion prevents any attempt to classify his method as a purely mathematical and positivist paradigm.¹⁶

Morelli's method of attribution is not a systematic science, but – as he himself repeatedly admitted – only an aid tool ('Hilfsmittel'). In 1891, in the preface of the second and revised edition of his *Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei. Die Galerien zu München und Dresden*, Morelli posthumously stood up against the objections of his numerous opponents, who had been claiming his account of the history of art and his method were not adequately scientific in their approach:

¹⁴ On Morelli's art collection see Federico Zeri, Francesco Rossi, eds., *La raccolta Morelli nell'Accademia Carrara*, Bergamo: Silvana Editoriale d'Arte, 1986; see also Matteo Panzeri, 'La raccolta Morelli nell'Accademia Carrara: un'ipotesi ricostruttiva del primo allestimento', *Archivio Storico Bergamasco*, 8, 1985, 55–105.

¹⁵ Giovanni Morelli, *Italian Painters. Critical Studies of Their Works. The Borghese and Doria-Pamfili Galleries in Rome*, translated from the German by Constance Joycelyn Ffoulkes, with an Introduction by The Right Hon. Sir A. H. Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L., London: John Murray [1892], here: 1900 (2nd ed.), 71. For the German original see: [Giovanni Morelli], *Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei. Die Galerien Borghese und Doria Panfili in Rom*, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1890, 93.

¹⁶ See Locatelli 2011, as note 1: This work analyses the influence of the ideas of German Early Romanticism upon both Morelli's methodological and substantive considerations. Tracing Morelli's relations to Romanticism enables one to observe the impact that the Romantic art of conversation, its use of irony and the fragment exerted upon the shaping and definition of his 'experimental method'. At the same time the work also investigates the role played by medicine and morphology for the Morellian method and its definition. The aim of Locatelli 2011 was to study closely the 'romantic' lineage which clearly influences Morelli's theories and writings. This research has cast new light on the Morellian method and contributed towards a reassessment of the otherwise traditionally positivist reading to which it had been previously subjected and reduced.

Now let me ask any unprejudiced reader, who may have glanced at my unpretending writings, whether on one single page of my 'Critical Studies' I have ever claimed for them the rank of a scientific treatise? To have done so would have been simply ludicrous on my part. As it happens, however, I took every opportunity of impressing upon my reader that the experimental method was only to be regarded as an aid in determining the authors of works of art – an aid, that is to say, to connoisseurship – and that in time might come to serve as a more solid basis for that science of art-criticism which we all alike desire to see established.¹⁷

Morelli's method combines theoretical knowledge ('Wissen') and practical ability ('Können') and thus positions itself on the border between science and art. The preconditions for the successful application of the experimental method are therefore a pronounced sensitivity for art and a natural disposition towards its attentive observation, which can be sharpened by training and experience though, as Morelli declared in a letter written in 1886 to his friend and pupil Jean Paul Richter (1847–1937), it cannot be learnt:

To learn the language of form requires time [...]. Probably nobody knows it better than you what a long practice of the eye is required before one is fairly acquainted with the idiosyncratic forms of a master, and besides this also requires bringing an unspoiled eye and a predisposition for observation. It is truly not enough to notice whether the ear is round or elongated, if the hand has long or short, thick or thin, fleshy or bony fingers; one must above all be able to see or to feel in the forms what cannot be expressed by words or with a sketch to anyone who does not see or feel the same. How often I had to notice this about our friend Habich:^[18] the most industrious, incessant study of forms is of no avail when the eye does not have the necessary predisposition to such studies.¹⁹

¹⁷ Giovanni Morelli, *Italian Painters. Critical Studies of Their Works. The Gallery of Munich and Dresden, translated from the German by Constance Jocelyn Ffoulkes*, London: John Murray, 1893, [10]. For the German original see: [Giovanni Morelli], *Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei. Die Galerien zu München und Dresden*, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1891, X–XI.

¹⁸ Edward Habich (1818–1901) was an art collector and connoisseur from Kassel, Germany, and a staunch supporter of Morelli's theories.

¹⁹ Giovanni Morelli to Jean Paul Richter, letter of 14 November, 1886 in: Irma Richter, Gisela Richter, eds, *Italienische Malerei der Renaissance im Briefwechsel von Giovanni Morelli und Jean Paul Richter*, Baden-Baden: Bruno Grimm, 1961, 495–496: 'Mit der Erlernung der Formensprache geht es übrigens doch nicht so schnell [...]. Keiner weiß es wohl besser als Sie selbst, welche eine lange Übung des Auges es erfordert, bis man nur einigermaßen mit den eigentümlichen Formen der Meister sich vertraut gemacht hat, und dies noch dazu, wenn man ein unverdorbenes Auge mitbringt und überdies Anlage zum Sehen hat. Es genügt wahrlich doch nicht, zu merken, ob das Ohr rund oder länglich ist, ob die Hand lange oder kurze, dicke oder dünne, fleischige oder knöcherne Finger hat; man muß in den Formen vor allem das sehen oder durchfühlen lernen, was man nicht mit Worten oder Strichen einem anderen begreiflich machen kann, falls derselbe es nicht selbst einsieht und fühlt. Wie oft habe ich es nicht bei Freund Habich wahrnehmen können, dass das fleißigste,

The art becomes science and, in turn, science is defined as art. An assertion which not only was a dominant *leitmotif* during the whole epoch of German Romanticism, but whose effects also lingered until the end of the 19th century. The survival of romantic ideas into the age of Positivism had its first and most obvious consequence in the fact that science – in this case, the science of art – acquired elements of the so-called ‘circumstantial paradigm’,²⁰ i.e. not just in quantitative but also in qualitative terms. Behind this relationship it is hidden, on a deeper level, the natural-philosophical question of the bond between body (‘Körper’) and spirit (‘Geist’). Morelli’s method is an exemplary result of this complexity.

Morelli’s *Critical Studies* and the catalogues of the *Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister* in Dresden

Between 1874 and 1876 Morelli, under the Russian pseudonym Ivan Lermolieff, published in the art periodical *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* a series of critical articles devoted to the collections of the Borghese Gallery and the Doria Pamphili Gallery in Rome.²¹ The critic’s attention drawn by these first contributions convinced him later to write down and reunite in one single volume the rest of his art historical observations, knowledge which he had accumulated during many travel expeditions in Germany, from visits to private and public art collections. The result was the first German edition of his book devoted to the works of the Italian old master painters conserved in the galleries of Munich, Dresden and Berlin (1880), translated into English only three years later by Louise Richter.²² The second, revised and expanded German edition in two-volumes was to be published

unausgesetzte Studium der Formen nichts fruchtet, wenn das Auge nicht die nötige Anlage zu dergleichen Studien besitzt.’

²⁰ The term ‘circumstantial paradigm’ refers here to the epistemological model of the human sciences that Carlo Ginzburg examined in the late 1970s in a meanwhile famous essay: Carlo Ginzburg, ‘Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method’ [1979], in: Umberto Eco, Thomas A. Sebeok, eds, *The Sign of Three: Dupin, Holmes, Peirce*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, 81–118. For a further analysis of Morelli’s application of the ‘circumstantial paradigm’ see also Locatelli 2011, as note 1, 51–58.

²¹ [Giovanni Morelli], ‘Die Galerien Roms. Ein kritischer Versuch von Ivan Lermolieff. I. Die Galerie Borghese. Aus dem Russischen übersetzt von Dr. Johannes Schwarze mit Illustrationen’, *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* 9, 1874, 1–11, 73–81, 171–178, 249–253; *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* 10, 1875, 97–106, 206–211, 264–273, 329–334; *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* 11, 1876, 132–137, 168–173. These articles were later reworked by Morelli and republished in book form: [Morelli] 1890, as note 15 and Morelli 1892, as note 15. The German edition was posthumously translated into Italian by Gustavo Frizzoni and edited with a biographical note: [Giovanni Morelli], *Della pittura italiana. Studi storico-critici di Giovanni Morelli (Ivan Lermolieff). Le Gallerie Borghese e Doria Pamphili in Roma. Prima edizione italiana preceduta dalla biografia e dal ritratto dell’autore, e illustrata da 81 incisioni*, Milano: Fratelli Treves, 1897; see also the critical edition by Jaynie Anderson, ed., [Giovanni Morelli], *Della pittura italiana. Studi storico-critici. Le Gallerie Borghese e Doria Pamphili in Roma*, Milano: Adelphi, 1991.

²² [Morelli] 1880, as note 2. For the translation: [Morelli] 1883, as note 2.

posthumously between 1891 and 1893. It was shortly thereafter translated into English, this time by Constance Jocelyn Ffoulkes.²³

Morelli's decision to write his polemical studies in German was based on his conviction that the revolutionary ideas of the science of art ('Kunstwissenschaft') would lead to fruitful debate only north of the Alps.²⁴ It is in this context, informed by the traditions of Classicism and Romanticism, that Morelli presented for the first time his ground-breaking conception of art history and became thereafter famous for being the father of a new scientific approach to art connoisseurship. While on the one hand he had many adepts, including the so called 'Morellians' represented by art lovers and amateurs, but also well-known art historian such as Moritz Thausing (1835–1884), Gustavo Frizzoni (1840–1919) and Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), on the other hand he had fierce opponents, including most notably Wilhelm von Bode (1845–1929) and Max Friedländer (1867–1958).

Figuring among Morelli's supporters was the Hamburger art historian Karl Woermann (1844–1933), who between 1882 and 1910 was the director of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden and until 1896 was also in charge of the collection of prints, drawings and photographs ('Kupferstich-Kabinett'). In Dresden, Woermann was the successor of the Academy professor and history painter Julius Hübner (1806–1882),²⁵ whose *Verzeichnis der Königlichen Gemälde-Galerie zu Dresden* (Register of the Royal Pictures Gallery in Dresden)²⁶ had become one of Morelli's most important working tools and the basis for his critical review of the collection. Hübner's catalogue was not strictly a catalogue raisonné.²⁷ Karl Woermann had to correct much of the information it provided.²⁸ The revolutionary application of comparative observation to the study of art, an approach which had led to its first striking positive results a few years before with the aforementioned 'Holbein-Dispute', and the need for a scientific approach to connoisseurship had ushered in a new era of art historical research. From this moment on, any vestige of romantic and literary approaches to art history were banished: only with the help of evidence and critical experiments was it considered possible to achieve positive and objective results. Further, in 1887 Karl Woermann wrote in the preface to his first *Katalog der*

²³ For the first volume: [Morelli] 1891, as note 17. For the second volume: [Giovanni Morelli], *Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei. Die Galerie zu Berlin. Von Ivan Lermolieff. Nebst einem Lebensbilde Giovanni Morelli's hg. v. Dr. Gustav Frizzoni. Mit Porträt und 66 Abbildungen*, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1893. For the English translation: [Morelli] 1893, as note 17.

²⁴ See Gustavo Frizzoni, 'Cenni biografici', in: Anderson, 1991, as note 21, 339–373, 358–359.

²⁵ Hübner was the director of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden between 1871 and 1882.

²⁶ Julius Hübner, ed., *Verzeichnis der königlichen Gemälde-Galerie zu Dresden. Mit einer historischen Einleitung und Notizen über die Erwerbung der einzelnen Bilder*, Dresden: Lipsch & Reichardt, 1856. Hübner's catalogue was published in several revised editions, the last of which was posthumously published in 1884 with an addendum by Karl Woermann. For his studies, Morelli referred mainly to the 1867 and 1876 editions.

²⁷ Hübner's greatest achievement was the detailed introduction to the history of the beginning and development of the collection, see [Morelli] 1880, see note 2, 121.

²⁸ See Elisabeth Hipp, 'Julius Hübners Katalog der Gemäldegalerie im Semperbau von 1856', *Dresdener Kunstblätter*, 49, 4, 2005, 229–234, here 229.

königlichen Gemäldegalerie zu Dresden (Catalogue of the Royal Pictures Gallery in Dresden):

Following the publication of Julius Hübner's first edition of his *Verzeichniss der Königlichen Gemäldegalerie zu Dresden* in 1856 [...] art history has become an independent science. Thanks to archival research, art history has shed new light on the biographies of a relevant number, probably even of the majority of artists; by means of a documentary research and of the comparative study of paintings it has achieved surprising results in the determination of the author of many old master works held in European collections; it has extended the sphere of its investigation to the work of cataloguing and tried to regulate it by applying strict principles.²⁹

Woermann's catalogue is a thoroughly scientific work. It not only presented to the art expert or the connoisseur-amateur the latest results of art historical research, but it also managed to explain and substantiate them methodically. The catalogue, which had seven editions till 1908, actually provides to this day a benchmark for any study of the inventory of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden. Woermann maintained the structural arrangement adopted by Hübner's catalogue and ordered the paintings historically, 'by schools and with a chronological distribution of the single artists'.³⁰ His most relevant formal amendment concerns the numbering of the paintings, since the old system was no longer viable because of the many new attributions. Woermann, however, was not only seeking to determine the new attributions that by then had gradually become 'common property of the European science of art'.³¹ What he really wanted was to demonstrate that the new attributions suggested for those 'questionable paintings' also corresponded to his own art-historical and scientific convictions.³² On the basis of careful study of the specialized literature available, Woermann sought to build his own opinion and to compare it with the 'views of reliable connoisseurs and researchers already published in books or articles'.³³ For this purpose, it was necessary to conduct a comparative study between those works which, in Dresden,

²⁹ Karl Woermann, ed., *Katalog der königlichen Gemäldegalerie zu Dresden, Große Ausgabe*, Dresden: W. Hoffmann, 1887, III: 'In dem Menschenalter, welches verflossen, seit Julius Hübner im Jahre 1856 die erste Auflage seines [...] *Verzeichnisses der Königlichen Gemäldegalerie zu Dresden* herausgab, hat die Kunstgeschichte, zur selbstständigen Wissenschaft geworden, durch archivalische Studien ein neues Licht über die Lebensgeschichte einer großen Anzahl von Künstlern, vielleicht ihrer Mehrzahl, verbreitet, ist sie durch die Urkundenforschung und das vergleichende Bilderstudium zu neuen, oft überraschenden Ergebnissen in Bezug auf die Urheber einer großen Anzahl alter Bilder aller europäischen Sammlungen gekommen, hat die Katalogisierungsarbeiten selbst in den Bereich ihrer Untersuchungen gezogen und nach festen Grundsätzen zu regeln versucht.'

³⁰ Woermann 1887, as note 29, VI: 'nach Schulen mit chronologischer Einreihung der einzelnen Meister'.

³¹ Woermann 1887, as note 29, X: 'allmählich Gemeingut der europäischen Kunstwissenschaft'.

³² Woermann 1887, as note 29, X: 'zweifelhafter Bilder'.

³³ Woermann 1887, as note 29, X: 'in bereits gedruckten Werken oder Aufsätzen ausgesprochenen Ansichten der berufenen Kenner und Forscher'.

were questionably attributed and those paintings conserved in other art collections whose authorship were considered indisputable. Thus, Woermann repeatedly undertook many trips throughout Europe and systematically used photographic material as reference. Either 'by personal or epistolary discussion',³⁴ he was in regular dialogue with the most famous European art connoisseurs, exchanging ideas and testing the validity of his opinions about the attribution of paintings whose authorship was still uncertain.

Although there is no evidence of a correspondence between Woermann and Morelli,³⁵ they were certainly on friendly terms, as several passages from Woermann's *Lebenserinnerungen eines Achtzigjährigen* (Memories of an Octogenarian) make clear.³⁶ In addition, Morelli was at regular intervals in Dresden to examine in person the holdings of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister and the Kupferstich-Kabinett. His fondness for the Saxon city of Dresden and for its collections had emerged very soon, as Morelli himself reports in several letters to his friend Niccolò Antinori (1817–1882):

[...] in these wonderful days of autumn [...] to wonder around in good company either on the Brühl's Terrace – my meditation spot – or in the pleasant royal garden, with its rich zoological garden [...]. For ten days I have not done anything else but occupy myself with this famous picture Gallery – painting by painting – and now I have really digested it [...].³⁷

And a few years later, he reiterated: 'Dresden, when one is on the Brühl's Terrace along the Elbe, is a city that vaguely reminds Florence – and among all German cities I would give this one the preference to spend here a long residence!'³⁸

³⁴ Woermann 1887, as note 29, XI: 'durch persönliche Aussprache oder durch Briefwechsel'.

³⁵ In his memoirs, Woermann reports that he had 'exchanged enough letters with connoisseurs such as Morelli in Milan or Abraham Bredius (1855–1946) in Amsterdam', Karl Woermann, ed., *Lebenserinnerungen eines Achtzigjährigen*, 2 vols, Leipzig, 1924, vol. 2, 18. Unfortunately, this correspondence between Morelli and Woermann is conserved neither in the archives of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD) nor in the manuscript collection of the Sächsischen Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek (SLUB) in Dresden. Dr Jaynie Anderson of the University of Melbourne, who was given permission to study the private archive of Morelli's heirs in Bergamo, the Zavaritt family, confirmed there is no correspondence between Morelli and Woermann there (information kindly provided to the author by Dr Andreas Henning).

³⁶ See Woermann 1924, as note 35, vol. 2, 71, 74.

³⁷ Giovanni Morelli to Niccolò Antinori, letter of September 12, 1869 quoted in: Giacomo Agosti, 'Giovanni Morelli corrispondente di Niccolò Antinori', *Studi e ricerche di collezionismo e museografia, Firenze 1820-1920* (= *Quaderni del seminario di storia della critica d'arte* 2), Pisa, 1985, 1–83, here 49: '[...] in queste bellissime giornate d'autunno [...] passeggiare in compagnia sia sulla terrazza del Brühl – mio luogo di meditazione – sia nell'amenissimo giardino reale, dove c'è un ricco giardino zoologico [...]. Da dieci giorni non feci altro che occuparmi – quadro per quadro – di questa famosa Galleria di quadri ed ora l'ho proprio digerita [...]'.

³⁸ Giovanni Morelli to Niccolò Antinori, letter of August 29, 1877 quoted in: Agosti 1985, as note 37, 68: 'Dresda è città che sulla terrazza di Brühl lungo l'Elba rammenta alla lontana Firenze – e fra tutte le città di Germania darei a questa la preferenza per farvi un lungo soggiorno!'.

The 'Florence on the Elbe' drew the interest of the art connoisseur the most. Over the years, Morelli collected

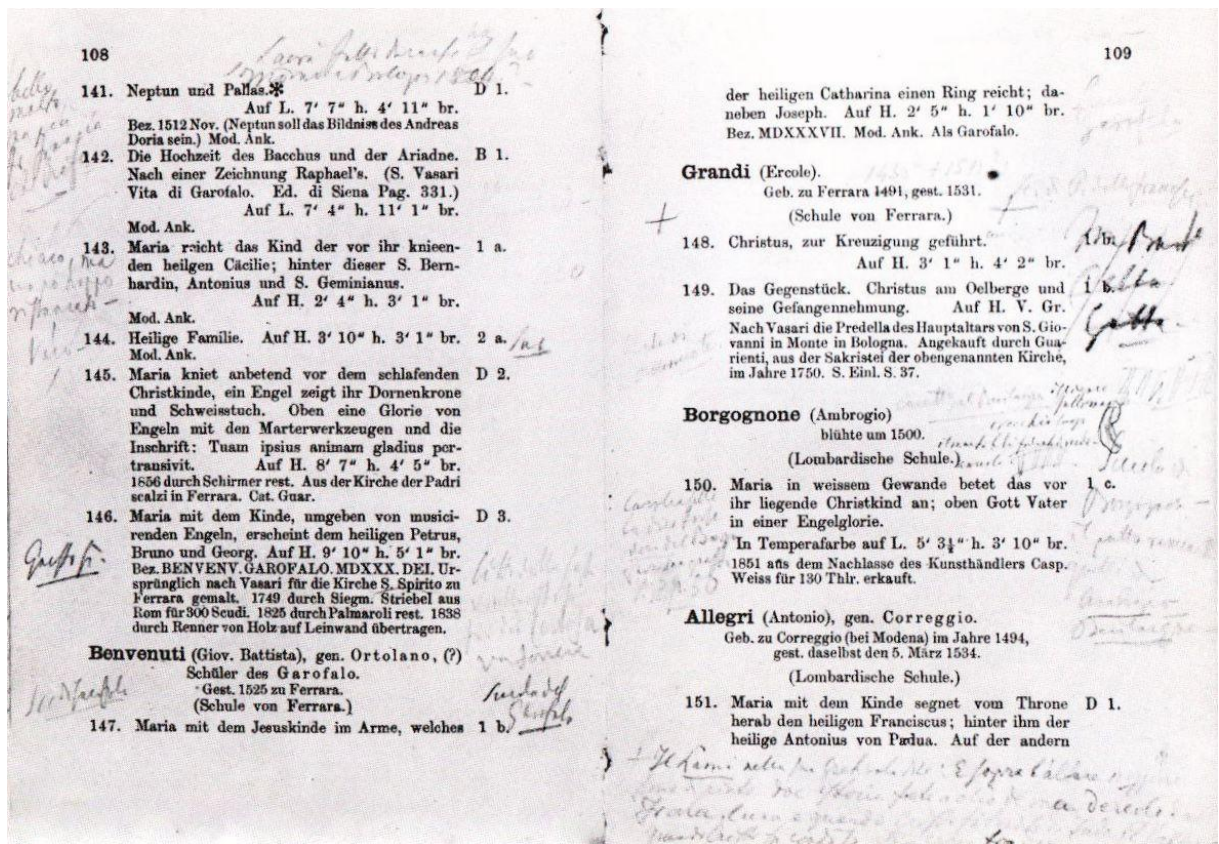


Figure 1 Two pages with handwritten annotations from Giovanni Morelli's personal copy of Julius Hübner's catalogue (1867). Milan: Library of the Accademia di Brera. Credit: Enrico De Pascale and Maria Cristina Rodeschini Galati (1987).

numerous catalogues of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, which are now conserved in the art-historical library that he bequeathed to the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera (Milan). On the margins of his books, Morelli had the habit to annotate his views on the paintings described in the catalogue entries.³⁹ Two editions of Hübner's catalogue (1867 and 1876)⁴⁰ are the most heavily annotated – both in German and in Italian – and give evidence of Morelli's careful examination of the gallery's holdings (fig. 1). In these notes Morelli not only records his new attribution proposals and gives some details about the artists' biographies, but he also provides information on the conditions of conservation and on the provenance of the works. Clearly, the year of publication of Hübner's catalogues only provides a *terminus post*

³⁹ See Enrico De Pascale, Maria Cristina Rodeschini Galati, 'Le annotazioni di Morelli ai cataloghi della Galleria degli Uffizi di Firenze e Gemäldegalerie di Dresda', in: Matteo Panzeri, Giulio Orazio Bravi, eds, *La figura e l'opera di Giovanni Morelli: materiali di ricerca*, Bergamo, 1987, 205–347.

⁴⁰ Julius Hübner, ed., *Verzeichnis der königlichen Gemälde-Gallerie zu Dresden. Mit einer historischen Einleitung, Notizen über die Erwerbung und Angabe der Bezeichnung der einzelnen Bilder*, Dresden: E. Blochmann & Sohn, 1867 (3rd edition), 1876 (4th expanded edition).

quem for dating Morelli's handwritten notes. Over the years, he in fact used the text as a working tool and repeatedly corrected the opinion that he had previously written down – a fact proved by his many and clearly visible amendments – before publishing them first in 1880 and again in 1891.

Next to Hübner's books, Morelli also owned a copy of the first edition of Woermann's extensive catalogue (1887). On its front page he annotated in pencil in Italian: '40 proposals approved, 10 rejected'.⁴¹ Here, Morelli was unquestionably referring to the number of new attributions adopted by the director of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister among the many suggested in 1880 by his alter ego Lermolieff. The art critical revolution introduced by Morelli's work had actually found the extensive agreement of Karl Woermann. Therefore, it is no wonder if, in the preface to the second edition to his treatise on the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Morelli expressed his admiration for the methodical research of the art historian from Hamburg:

The post of director of the Dresden gallery, formerly occupied by Professor Hübner, is now held by Dr. Karl Woermann, a gentleman who is much respected in his own country and has rendered good services as an art-historian. In a comparatively short space of time he has achieved many radical reforms, not only in the arrangement but more especially in the attribution of the pictures.⁴²

In addition to the 'historical and chronological classification' of the catalogue and the innovative arrangement of the pictures, Morelli especially praised Woermann's determination to produce a catalogue based 'upon logical and scientific principles'.⁴³ To Morelli's 'great satisfaction', Woermann 'publicly expressed his conviction that the changes proposed by me [Morelli] in the naming of the pictures are, for the most part, worthy of acceptance. In thus setting aside all prejudice and personal considerations, and making himself responsible for these opinions [...].'⁴⁴ Nearly at the end of his life, Morelli could replace the note scribbled on his personal copy of Woermann's catalogue by a far more precise count:

If I am not mistaken, he has accepted forty-six out of fifty-six of my suggestions. Of the remaining ten, he has reserved a part for further consideration, and the rest he has rejected. Unprejudiced observers might be led to infer from this that either Lermolieff was wiser than other students of art, or that the method pursued by him was superior to theirs. The first assumption would, of course, be ridiculous on my part, and in this even my bitterest opponents will agree with me. We are, therefore, driven to the conclusion that these highly satisfactory results are due to the

⁴¹ Quoted from De Pascale, Rodeschini Galati 1987, as note 39, 270: '40 proposte accolte, 10 rigettate'.

⁴² Morelli, 1893, as note 17, 119. For the German original see: [Morelli] 1891, as note 17, 157.

⁴³ Morelli, 1893, as note 17, 119. For the German original see: [Morelli] 1891, as note 17, 157.

⁴⁴ Morelli, 1893, as note 17, 120. For the German original see: [Morelli] 1891, as note 17, 158.

experimental method, which at present is still regarded by many with suspicion.⁴⁵

Morelli addresses here his many opponents and sees the effectiveness of his method proven by the example of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden. According to Morelli, not only had Woermann accurately examined more than eighty percent of Lermolieff's new attributions, but he had also included them in his catalogue. Moreover, the remaining twenty percent of the attributions proposed by Lermolieff in 1880 had not been categorically rejected, so that one could even hope for a future revision on the part of the gallery director. One of Morelli's fundamental principles of connoisseurship was his firm conviction that the science of art could only be understood as a progressive science. Therefore, not only should one not be afraid to make any mistake, but – in view of the acquired knowledge – even admit it. A tough examination, to which in 1891 Morelli tested the opinions that he had expressed ten years earlier: 'This conviction has emboldened me to express my opinion about some of the pictures in the Dresden gallery for the second time. I hope on this occasion to be able to correct some mistakes which I committed ten years ago, for my motto is, and ever will be, "One day telleth another."' ⁴⁶

Recognising the temporary nature of any scientific result was an attitude that had been embraced also by Woermann. In the preface to his *Katalog der königlichen Gemäldegalerie zu Dresden* he pointed out that he did not want to claim 'to have spoken the last word on all the paintings conserved in the Dresden Gallery'.⁴⁷ At that time the science of art was taking its first steps and it would have been 'counterproductive for it to believe to have already spoken the last word on all singular cases [...]'.⁴⁸

Morelli's new attributions in Dresden

In 1880 Morelli expressed his opinion on a total of 127 paintings exhibited in Dresden at that time. Eleven years later, this number had increased to 138, with some relevant changes of attribution. These figures, however, do not only include the works that Morelli reattributed, but all the paintings that he cited, even only briefly, in his treatise on the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister. In the above-mentioned preface to the 1891 edition, Morelli speaks of 'about fifty-six' new attributions he proposed and among these of 'approximately forty-six' were endorsed by Woermann. Unfortunately, he does not clarify anywhere in the text to which fifty-six works he is actually referring to in this summary of his merits. Even the characteristic symbol of the cross in brackets – a sign that Morelli habitually uses in his books to mark the paternity of his most important reattributions – does not help with the identification. The cross can be found only ten and not fifty-six times in the

⁴⁵ Morelli, 1893, as note 17, 120. For the German original see: [Morelli] 1891, as note 17, 158.

⁴⁶ Morelli, 1893, as note 17, 121. For the German original see: [Morelli] 1891, as note 17, 159.

⁴⁷ Woermann 1887, as note 29, XII: 'Dass er aber nicht beansprucht, in diesem Kataloge über alle Bilder der Dresdener Galerie bereits das letzte Wort gesprochen zu haben [...]'.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Woermann 1887, as note 29, XII: 'stünde schlecht um sie [die Kunstwissenschaft], wenn sie jetzt schon ihr letztes Wort in allen Einzelfällen gesprochen zu haben wähnte [...]'.⁴⁸

book, namely when Morelli discusses the inventory numbers 59 A, 66, 124, 139, 142, 144, 154, 162, 166 and 185. Nevertheless, it is still possible to reconstruct with a degree of certainty which paintings Morelli reattributed in 1880 and 1891 and to what extent his opinion was supported by the direction of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister. It would go beyond the scope of this work to record here in detail all of the works examined by Morelli in Dresden and analyse their critical reception.⁴⁹ Yet, in order to demonstrate Morelli's important role in the attribution history of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, [the attributions chart reproduced in the annex of this article](#) recapitulates Morelli's aforementioned balance statement and helps to clarify the inconsistencies between the two editions of his treatise.⁵⁰

The majority of Morelli's attributions were destined to stand the test of time. In 1922, Woermann remarked in his *Geschichte der Kunst aller Zeiten und Völker* (History of Art of All Times and Peoples) that, although some results of Morelli's investigations had been



Figure 2 Giorgione and Titian, *Sleeping Venus*, ca. 1508/10, canvas. Dresden: Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, gall. no. 185. Credit: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Fotowerkstatt Elke Estel, Ursula-Maria Hoffmann, Hans-Peter Klut, Heinz Pfauder.

⁴⁹ For a detailed study of the attribution history of all the paintings and drawings examined by Morelli in the section of his *Critical Studies of Italian Painters* devoted to the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden (1891) see Locatelli 2009/II, as note 1. Morelli's investigation of the Italian drawings held by the Kupferstich-Kabinett in Dresden ([Morelli] 1880, as note 2, 252–266; Morelli, 1891, as note 17, 363–379; see Locatelli 2009/II, as note 1, 209–236) would also be worthy of a new reading and further study. For an in-depth examination of the Italian drawings of the Quattrocento in Dresden see: Lorenza Melli, ed., *I disegni italiani del Quattrocento nel Kupferstich-Kabinett di Dresda*, exh. catalogue, Istituto Universitario Olandese di Storia dell'Arte, Florence: Centro Di, 2006.

⁵⁰ Very often such incongruities between the two editions of Morelli's *Critical Studies of Italian Painters* have not been highlighted in past art historical research, a fact which has led to significant inaccuracies in the consideration of Morelli's achievements. The juxtaposition of Morelli's suggested attribution from both 1880 and 1891 allows one for the first time to systematically follow the development of his critical thinking.

disproved, at least as many were found to be indisputable.⁵¹ Today, nearly one hundred years later, this statement is still as valid as it was then. Morelli's renown remains indelibly associated with certain sensational discoveries in Dresden. A few relevant examples will be given here in brief to demonstrate this assertion. The best known one is the attribution of the *Sleeping Venus* by Giorgione (ca. 1478–1510),⁵² a painting of outstanding quality that in his catalogue Hübner had only listed as a copy by Sassoferrato (1609–1685) after a lost work by Titian (1488/90–1576) (fig. 2).⁵³ In 1837, the pictorial remains of a Cupid sitting at the feet of

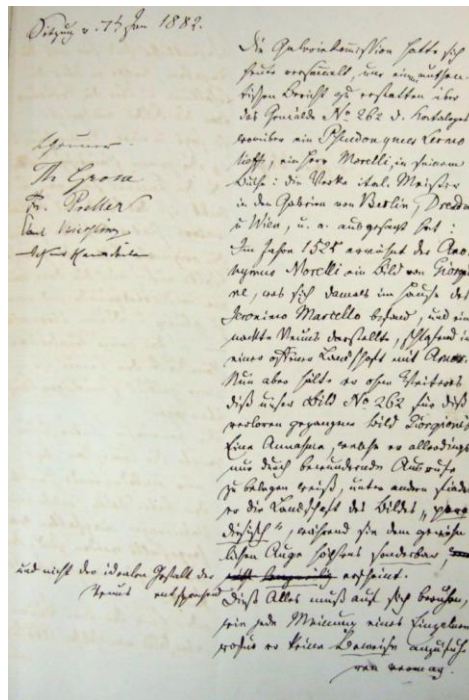


Figure 3 One page from the minutes of the meeting of the Commission of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (June 17, 1882) which records the discussion on Morelli's re-attribution of the *Sleeping Venus*. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden Archive (*Akte Gemäldegalerie*, no. 8, vol. 5, *Protokolle und Verhandlungen der Galerie-Kommission betreff.*, folio 26–28v). Photo: Valentina Locatelli.

Venus were concealed by a repaint. Less than ten years later, in 1843, the restorer Martin Schirmer brought anew to light what was still left of the Cupid but, because of its poor conservation condition, he immediately decided to recover it with a new layer of paint.⁵⁴ Over time, a relevant part of the subject of the painting and therefore its identity were lost. Morelli was the first one to recognise in the Dresden

⁵¹ See Karl Woermann, ed., *Geschichte der Kunst aller Zeiten und Völker*, vol. IV: *Die Kunst der älteren Neuzeit von 1400 bis 1550 (Renaissancezeit)*, Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1920, 212.

⁵² Giorgione and Titian, *Sleeping Venus*, 1508/10, canvas, 108.5 x 175 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, gall. no. 185; see Marx 2005, as note 3, vol. 1, 130–131, vol. 2, cat. no. 792, 271.

⁵³ See Hübner 1876, as note 40, gall. no. 236, 136–137.

⁵⁴ See Marlies Giebe, 'Die *Schlummernde Venus* von Giorgione und Tizian. Bestandsaufnahme und Konservierung – neue Ergebnisse der Röntgenanalyse', *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden*, 23, 1992, 93–110.

picture the same work that Marcantonio Michiel had seen in 1525 in the house of Gerolamo Marcello in Venice and thereupon described with following words: 'The canvas with the nude figure of Venus sleeping in a landscape, with Cupid, was by the hand of Giorgio da Castelfranco; the landscape and the Cupid were, however, finished by Titian.'⁵⁵ This Venus, without a doubt 'the most successful of Giorgione's pictorial inventions',⁵⁶ has in the meantime become a symbol of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden. That Morelli's discovery was of extraordinary importance for the collection was immediately understood also by the Commission of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister. Although the documentary material on Morelli conserved in the archive of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections) is very poor, as this could be a consequence of wartime losses, a document found in the archive provides an interesting insight into the debate. In the minutes of a board meeting which took place on June 17, 1882⁵⁷ the opinion of the Commission concerning Morelli's reattribution of the *Sleeping Venus* was noted (fig. 3). Although in the minutes the title of Morelli's treatise is reported incorrectly, namely as *Die Werke italienischer Meister in den Galerien von Berlin, Dresden und Wien* (Italian Painters. Their Works in the Gallery of Berlin, Dresden and Vienna), this document testifies to the great attention that Morelli's art connoisseurship had awakened in Dresden already during Julius Hübner's directorship. Paradoxically, the Commission had accepted the attribution of the painting to Giorgione, but also vehemently refuted Morelli's critical remark about its poor state of preservation, 'the dirt and the repaints',⁵⁸ which in Morelli's opinion had disfigured the painting.

⁵⁵ The quote from Marcantonio Michiel is from the English translation by Constance Jocelyn Ffoulkes in Morelli 1893, as note 17, 220. For the original text see: [Marcantonio Michiel], *Notizia d'Opere di disegno nella prima metà del secolo XVI. Esistenti in Padova, Cremona, Milano, Pavia, Bergamo e Venezia. Scritta da un anonimo di quel tempo, pubblicata e illustrata da D. Iacopo Morelli*, Bassano, 1800, 66: 'La tela della Venere nuda, che dorme in uno paese, con Cupidine, fo de mano de Zorzo da Castelfranco; ma lo paese e Cupidine forono finiti da Tiziano'.

⁵⁶ Andreas Henning, [catalogue entry without title], in: Marx 2005, as note 3, vol. 1, 130: 'die erfolgreichste Bildfindung Giorgiones'.

⁵⁷ Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD), archive, documents ('Akte') Gemäldegalerie, no. 8, vol. 5: *Protokolle und Verhandlungen der Galerie-Kommission betreff.*, from 1880 to 1887, folio 26–28v.

⁵⁸ Morelli, 1893, see note 17, 222. In the German original text Morelli refers directly to the intervention of the restorers ('die Farbenmaske des Restaurators'): [Morelli] 1880 see note 2, 195; also [Morelli] 1891, see note 17, 285.



Figure 4 Francesco del Cossa, *The Annunciation*, tempera on poplar wood, 139 x 113.5 cm, and Francesco del Cossa, *Nativity*, tempera on poplar wood, 26.4 x 115 cm. Dresden: Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, gall. nos 43 and 44. Credit: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Fotowerkstatt Elke Estel, Ursula-Maria Hoffmann, Hans-Peter Klut, Heinz Pfauder.

It is also to Morelli's credit that the panel with the *Annunciation* (fig. 4), which had been acquired for the Dresden collection in 1750 as an original executed by Andrea Mantegna (ca. 1431–1506) for the Church of Observation ('Chiesa dell'Osservanza') in Bologna, can be admired today as a work by Francesco del Cossa (1436–1478).⁵⁹ Morelli was also the first to recognise the hand of Palma il

⁵⁹ Francesco del Cossa, *The Annunciation*, tempera on poplar wood, 139 x 113.5 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, gall. no. 43, see Marx 2005, as note 3, vol. 1, 92–93, vol. 2, cat. no. 365, 168.

Vecchio (1480?–1528) in the painting *Jacob and Rachel*,⁶⁰ until then ascribed to Giorgione (fig. 5). He also successfully attributed to Francesco Caroto (1480–1555) the *Madonna and Child Between Two Angels*,⁶¹ a painting that Hübner⁶² had listed as ‘anonymous’. Morelli’s observations have likewise proven to be fundamental for the study of the group of works by Dosso Dossi (ca. 1486–1542) and his school held in Dresden.⁶³



Figure 5 Palma il Vecchio, *Jacob and Rachel*, ca. 1524/25, canvas, 146 x 250 cm. Dresden: Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, gall. no. 192. Credit: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Fotowerkstatt Elke Estel, Ursula-Maria Hoffmann, Hans-Peter Klut, Heinz Pfaunder.

On the other hand, by suggesting less important artists’ names than the ones traditionally accepted, Morelli helped to diminish the standing of a large number of

⁶⁰ Palma il Vecchio, *Jacob and Rachel*, canvas, 146 x 250 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, gall. no. 192, see Marx 2005, as note 3, vol. I, 166, vol. II, cat. no. 1329, 398.

⁶¹ Giovanni Francesco Caroto, *Madonna and Child Between Two Angels*, poplar wood, 74 x 60 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, gall. no. 66, see Marx 2005, as note 3, vol. 2, cat. no. 295, 152.

⁶² See Hübner 1876, as note 40, gall. no. 33, 104.

⁶³ See the attribution chart in the appendix, nos 54–61, 68–73 and 83.



Figure 6 Correggio (copy), *Reading Magdalene*, copper, 29 x 39 cm. Dresden: Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, gall. no. 154 (war loss, 1939–1945). Credit: SLUB Dresden / Deutsche Fotothek.

paintings in Dresden, too. A prominent example of this second group of works is the *Reading Magdalene* 'by Correggio' (fig. 6).⁶⁴ The small-sized oil on copper painting, which has been missing since the 1939–45 war, was among the one hundred works that Augustus III had acquired in 1745 from the ducal collection in Modena. Before Morelli called it a mere Dutch copy and suggested to recognise its creator in Adrien van der Werff (1659–1722), in Dresden the *Reading Magdalene* had been unanimously considered a masterpiece by the late Antonio Allegri da Correggio (1489–1534).⁶⁵ This painting's enormous fame and literary resonance was comparable only to Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*. It is probably not a coincidence if, in order to argue against the authenticity of the painting, Morelli chose to adopt in his book the form of a fictional conversation between his alter ego Ivan Lermolieff and a young German aristocrat named Elise von Blasewitz of Plauen, who in Morelli's plot is visiting the famous Saxon museum accompanied by her father.⁶⁶ The platonic dialogue was indeed Morelli's recurrent and preferred method to express his art historical opinion in a clear and, at the same time, ironic manner. Undoubtedly, the tradition of the romantic dialogue ('Gespräch') was decisive for his choice. It should be recalled briefly that it was just in front the pictures of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden that the first seeds of the romantic 'Symphilosophie' were planted in the spring of 1798, when the brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich

⁶⁴ Correggio (copy after), *The Reading Magdalene*, copper, 29 x 39 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, gall. no. 154 (missing), see Marx 2005, as note 3, vol. 2, cat. no. 76 (loss), 699.

⁶⁵ See Hübner 1876, as note 40, gall. no. 153, 123.

⁶⁶ See [Morelli] 1891, as note 17, 209–215. Morelli, 1893, as note 17, 158–163.

Schlegel, Novalis (1772–1801), Friedrich W.J. Schelling and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) met there in order to jointly create the foundations of a new aesthetic. The most significant result of this exchange is A.W. Schlegel's *Die Gemälde. Ein Gespräch* (The Paintings. A Dialogue; 1799). The Elise of the Morellian conversation refers directly to this work and her role in Morelli's plot can only be understood within this framework.⁶⁷



Figure 7 Lorenzo di Credi, *Madonna with the Christ Child and St John the Baptist*, poplar wood, 37 x 27 cm. Dresden: Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, gall. no. 13. Credit: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Fotowerkstatt Elke Estel, Ursula-Maria Hoffmann, Hans-Peter Klut, Heinz Pfauder.

In Dresden, Morelli also made some glaring missteps. For example, this is the case of the painting by Lorenzo di Credi (1458–1537)⁶⁸ inventoried with ‘the unlucky number 13’,⁶⁹ in which Morelli recognized initially a Dutch imitation after a

⁶⁷ See [Morelli] 1891, as note 17, 212; Morelli, 1893, as note 17, 162. For a critical analysis of this dialogue in the context of German Romanticism see Locatelli 2009, as note 1, 69–77.

⁶⁸ Lorenzo di Credi, *Madonna with the Christ Child and St John the Baptist*, poplar wood, 37 x 27 cm, gall. no. 13, see Marx 2005, as note 3, vol. 1, 146, vol. 2, cat. no. 1072, 336.

⁶⁹ Morelli 1893, as note 17, 263. For the German original see [Morelli] 1891, as note 17, 341.

lost archetype by the master (1880) and later only a work of the Nordic school (1891) (fig. 7).⁷⁰ Moreover, a number of amendments can be found between the first and the second edition of Morelli's treatise on the *Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister*. It was only in 1891, for instance, that Morelli identified Francesco del Cossa as the author of the predella⁷¹ of the Altarpiece of Observation (fig. 4), to which also belongs the already mentioned *Annunciation*.⁷² Furthermore, following Gustavo Frizzoni's opinion,⁷³ in 1891 he no longer attributed the *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist*⁷⁴ (fig. 8) to Gimignani Giacinto (1606–1681) but to Lorenzo Lotto instead (1480–1556).



Figure 8 Lorenzo Lotto, *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist*, poplar wood, 52 x 39 cm. Dresden: Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, gall. no. 194 A. Credit: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Fotowerkstatt Elke Estel, Ursula-Maria Hoffmann, Hans-Peter Klut, Heinz Pfauder.

The attributions chart reproduced in the annex of this essay* summarizes the key moments in the attribution history of those paintings which Morelli discussed

⁷⁰ In 1880, Morelli commented sharply on Hübner's attribution. On this occasion he expressed in a long polemical outburst his indignation towards German art historians (see [Morelli] 1880, as note 2, 239–243). In the second edition of his book, Morelli then decided to partially censor this passage and thereby to mitigate the accusatory tones of his writing (see [Morelli] 1891, as note 17, 341–342; Morelli 1893, as note 17, 263–265).

⁷¹ Francesco del Cossa, *Nativity*, tempera on poplar wood, 26.4 x 115 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, gall. no. 44, see Marx 2005, as note 3, vol. 1, 92–93, vol. 2, cat. no. 366, 168.

⁷² See note 59.

⁷³ See Gustavo Frizzoni, 'Lorenzo Lotto: Im städtischen Museum zu Mailand und in der Dresdner Galerie', *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, 1 [N.F.], 1890, 16–19.

⁷⁴ Lorenzo Lotto, *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist*, poplar wood, 52 x 39 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, gall. no. 194 A, see Marx 2005, as note 3, vol. 1, 147, vol. 2, cat. no. 1078, 338.

in his books about the collection of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden. The first column from the left is numbered in ascending order from 1 to 138 and has the essential function of orienting the readers during the consultation of this chart or when referring to it. The second column provides information about the authors, the titles of the paintings, the corresponding inventory numbers currently in use at the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister and as they are listed in the last comprehensive catalogue of the collection.⁷⁵ The most relevant divergent opinions concerning these official attributions are summarized in the corresponding footnotes. The abbreviation 'KV' ('Kriegsverlust', war loss) refers to the works destroyed or lost during the 1939–45 war,⁷⁶ while a short note is given if the whereabouts of a painting no longer conserved in Dresden are known. The third column cites the attributions of each work and the old inventory numbers according to Hübner's catalogue (1876). The fourth and sixth columns are devoted to Morelli's attribution as suggested respectively in the 1880 and 1891 editions of his treatise. They are interposed, in the fifth and seventh column, with Woermann's attributions as suggested in the first (1887)⁷⁷ and last (1908)⁷⁸ edition of his catalogue. At this point it should also be noted that, for the sake of simplicity and readability, the artists' names have been simplified according to modern spelling most commonly in use. This also applies to the names of those artists who, over the past decades, were the object of a biographical revision: for example, neither Ercole de' Roberti (1455–1496)⁷⁹ nor Bonifazio de' Pitati (1487–1553)⁸⁰ were known as individual artistic personalities at the time when Morelli was writing.

* Because of its format, the annex is available as a separate pdf. [Click here for it.](#) (ed.)

⁷⁵ Marx 2005, as note 3.

⁷⁶ See Hans Ebert, ed., *Kriegsverluste der Dresdner Gemäldegalerie. Vernichtete und vermisste Werke*, Dresden: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, 1963.

⁷⁷ Woermann 1887, as note 29.

⁷⁸ Karl Woermann, ed., *Katalog der königlichen Gemäldegalerie zu Dresden, Große Ausgabe, 7. verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage mit zweiundneunzig Abbildungen*, Dresden: W. Hoffmann, 1908.

⁷⁹ Between 1850 and 1917, the art historical community was convinced that two artists named Ercole had existed: Ercole de' Roberti Grandi, also called Ercole da Ferrara, (1450–1496) and Ercole Grandi (1470–1531). See Joseph Manca, 'Roberti's Biography and Critical Fortune', in: Joseph Manca, *The Art of Ercole de' Roberti*, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992, 1–25, 19–25; Monica Molteni, *Ercole de' Roberti*, Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 1995, herein especially the chapter 'Ercole de' Roberti ed Ercole Grandi: la ricostruzione di una vicenda critica', 15–25.

⁸⁰ On the basis of an apocryphal document, in 1859 Cesare Bernasconi developed and diffused the thesis that three painters named Bonifazio had lived at the same time: see Cesare Bernasconi, ed., *Studj del chiarissimo Signor Dottore Cesare Bernasconi sopra alcuni punti storici della pittura italiana*, Verona, 1859, 28). Supporting this assumption, Morelli believed he could recognize the hand of three different artists in the work of de' Pitati: Bonifazio I (or Veneziano the Elder), Bonifazio II (or Veneziano the Younger), and Bonifazio III (or Veronese). Gustav Ludwig was the first to correct this biographical mistake: 'Bonifazio di Pitati da Verona, eine archivalische Untersuchung', *Jahrbuch der Preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, XXII, 22, 1901, 62–65. For a reconstruction of the biography of Bonifazio de' Pitati see: Dorothee Westphal, *Bonifazio Veronese (Bonifazio dei Pitati)*, Munich:

For the first time the chart provides an overview of the history of attributions of the old master Italian paintings in Dresden, including the progressive steps, convergences and divergences between Morelli's opinions and the ones defended by the direction of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister. On the one hand, it enables the reader to establish Morelli's fundamental impact on Woermann's revision of the catalogue and, on the other hand, it unfolds and points out cases in which Morelli revised his judgment between 1880 and 1891. Furthermore, the chart provides the opportunity to compare Morelli's attributions with the ones lately validated by the museum (Marx 2005). In 1880, Morelli questioned approximately half of Hübner's catalogue entries among the ones which he quotes in his book. Of Morelli's suggested attributions – some of which were his own discoveries, while others were merely reinforcing the opinions of other art historians – in 1887 Woermann accepted fifty without raising much objection.⁸¹ Moreover, between the second edition of Morelli's *Critical Studies* and Woermann's last catalogue the rate of agreement between the two authors remained basically unchanged, despite the fact Morelli includes additional works in his revised edition.

In conclusion, there is an even more interesting observation which can be drawn from the chart: Morelli's attributions in Dresden have found not only Woermann's approval, but in most cases they prove to be well-founded according to the latest results achieved by art historical research. Morelli's attributions document a crucial moment in the history of art history and their importance is fundamental for any critical debate regarding the collection of Italian paintings conserved in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden.

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Annex: Attribution chart ([click here](#))



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Bruckmann, 1931, 9; Simonetta Simonetti, 'Profilo di Bonifacio de' Pitati', *Saggi e Memorie di Storia dell'Arte*, 15, 1986, 84–134, 85–89.

⁸¹ This figure further improves Morelli's own count reported in the second edition of his *Critical Studies of Italian Painters* (1891), according to which Woermann had accepted forty-six out of fifty-six of Morelli's suggestions (see quote at note 45).