

Raising Friedrich Rehberg: the artist behind *Cain*

at the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum



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**BILBOKO ARTE
EDERREN MUSEOA
MUSEO DE BELLAS
ARTES DE BILBAO**

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Discredited at the end of his life, surpassed and disparaged by the upcoming generation of young painters, abandoned, in artistic terms, on the day he died and condemned to oblivion after his death, German artist Friedrich Rehberg, author of the painting entitled *Cain* now in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum [fig. 1], may be held up today as a singularly powerful example of the volatile nature of artistic glory. A faithful disciple of the painterly classicism that, in accordance with the tenets of scholar and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), had taken root in late 18th-century Rome, Rehberg's artistic fortunes would last as long as the post-Rococo trend held its ground.

Rehberg's artistic afterlife was not much helped by his haughty ways and arrogant manner, or by the overweening pride he took in public in his connections with the most select cultural circles. Another stalling block was his rather suspect market-oriented creativity, to which he would accommodate himself in the early 19th century. The long period in the shade has been accentuated by the shortage of portraits of the artist (the only one located to date being a self-portrait in charcoal [fig. 2]¹) and the scattering of the main body of his oeuvre. Another major blow was the loss in Germany, during World War II, of nigh on one hundred of his works.

Additionally, art scholars today show almost no interest in Rehberg. With the exception of a very few general essays on larger groups or schools, where he is dispatched in a few lines together with a bunch of other artists, references to the painter are partial and short on information and documents, and tend to cast doubts on his general cultural standing². The present essay is an attempt to shed some light on Rehberg's life, his relations with the intellectual circles of the day and his artistic output, taking *Cain*, owned by the Museum since 1914, as the link between these objectives and the dominant artistic spirit of late 18th- and early 19th-century Europe.

1 Dated Dresden 6 September 1813, the self-portrait is included, along with other portraits of artists, in the famous album of friendship put together in the city by the Seydelmanns in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Called the *Carus-Album* after Carl Gustav Carus, who acquired it in 1856, it is now in Dresden's Städtische Galerie. We do know that Rehberg lithographed his own portrait in 1825, after a drawing made by the Italian Filippo Benucci (1779-1848). Although no copy has come to light, it is possible that this self-portrait was produced in the context of the lithographs Rehberg produced in the 1820s.

2 Sedlarz 2005 is one of the few recent publications to focus on Rehberg. Pfeifer 2006, on one of the artist's works, is also of some interest.



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1. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Cain, c. 1791-1795
Oil on canvas, 257.5 x 201 cm
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 69/200



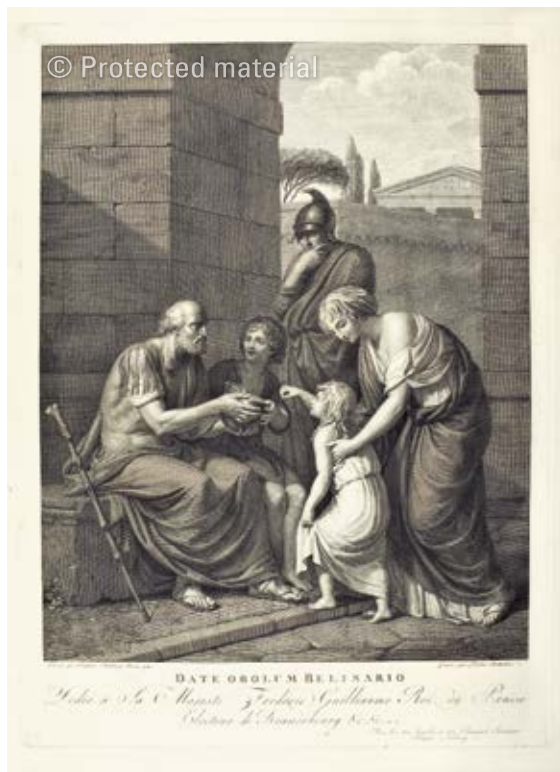
2. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Self-Portrait, 1813
White and black chalk on paper, 24.2 x 19 cm
Städtische Galerie Dresden. Kunstsammlung,
Museen der Stadt Dresden, Germany
Inv. no. 1978/k 181

Notes towards a life³

Son of a respected civil servant, Friedrich Christian Rehberg was born in Hanover on 22 October 1758, the younger brother of August Wilhelm Rehberg, renowned publicist, writer and behind-the-scenes adviser to the inner circle at the Hanover court, and brother to the artist Caroline Rehberg. Originally studying for a legal career, he soon switched to concentrate on his artistic vocation, which took him to the school of Adam Friedrich Oeser (1717-1799) in Leipzig to train in drawing. However, finding the maestro's classes disappointing, he subsequently moved to the Academy at Dresden, where he studied under Giovanni Battista Casanova (1730-1795), brother of the famous Giacomo, and Johann Eleazar Schenau (1737-1806). At the same time, Rehberg painted copies of the artworks in the Prince Elector of Saxony's gallery, where reproductions of paintings like Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* (current whereabouts unknown) awakened him to the attractions of the works of the Italian masters. This discovery was what encouraged him during the summer of 1777 to complete his art education in Italy.

Helped by his social and economic position, Rehberg arrived in Rome on 24 November 1777. He brought with him recommendations to study with the highly regarded painter Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-1779), one of the leading exponents of Neoclassicism in Europe. He also got to know two other influential figures in the city: procurator-general and future Spanish ambassador, collector and patron of art José Nicolás de Azara, and leading German diplomat, *cicerone* and antique dealer Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein. Both drummed into him the painterly supremacy of Mengs, and between them, these three figures, with whom he became intimate friends, helped Rehberg to consolidate his reputation, while also encouraging him to study the masterworks of Antiquity and the Italian Renaissance. Reiffenstein, whom Rehberg would portray in a

3 The three basic references for Rehberg's life are Nagler 1836; Nagler 1842, pp. 373-376; Andresen 1867, vol. II, pp. 61-88.



3. Pietro Bettelini (1763-1829) after Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Date obolum Belisario, 1791-1801
Burin and etching on paper, 50.5 x 36.3 cm (paper); 42.9 x 34 cm
(print)
Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen
Inv. no. E370

drawing (Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar, Schlossmuseum, Weimar), advised him to shun the French school of painting, which was then beginning to flourish. Despite the injunction, Rehberg frequented the French Academy established in Rome, where he met several of the grant holders, including the painter Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825).

Some major commissions were forthcoming on his return to Hanover in 1783, including the portraits (current whereabouts unknown) of Prince Friedrich August of Hanover, Bishop of Osnabrück and Duke of York and of Albany, and of Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Hanover. A year later he was called to Dessau to work as a drawing master at one of Prussia's most respected institutes, the Philantropinum, where he taught the young prince duke of the city. Despite the high wages he was paid, his time there was brief, mainly because he found teaching unsatisfying. He moved on to Berlin, then the Prussian capital, where on 8 June 1786 he became a full member of the city's Fine Arts Academy. A year later he was made a professor. Through the Academy, the King of Prussia Friedrich Wilhelm II paid him a sum of money to return to Rome as "specific director" of the art studies of the Prussian grant holders studying there. Although there was no Prussian Academy of the Arts as such, it is possible that his work as instructor became bound up with what the group of other German artists then in the city, including Schültz, Büry, Müller and Tischbein, were doing. All of them lived at the Palazzo Rondanini (today the Palazzo Sanseverino), at number 20 on the Via Corso. It is certainly no surprise to find Swiss artist Angelica Kauffman dubbing the group the "German Academy in Rondanini"⁴.

Rehberg continued to paint while in Rome and in 1790 he produced *Belisarius* (lost in World War II), which he exhibited in 1791 at the Academy in Berlin, where he obtained first prize; shortly afterwards, an engraving was made of the painting [fig. 3]. His success clearly had more than a little to do with his connection to the

4 Hauteceur 1912, 53. or.



4. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
 Landscape with Bacchus, Love and Bathylus treading grapes, c. 1791-1793
 Oil on canvas, 45 x 37 cm
 Current whereabouts unknown

Academy and few eyebrows would have been raised when, a year later, the painting was acquired by King Friedrich Wilhelm II, a purchase that could only have strengthened his already well-grounded position.

Indeed, up until the King's death in 1797, the Hohenzollern bought a number of Rehberg's paintings for the royal Prussian collection: *Landscape with Bacchus, Love and Bathylus treading grapes* (c. 1791-1793, also lost during the World War II) [fig. 4], a rather different version of *Cain* from the one in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum (1791, another casualty of the war), *Oedipus and Antigone* (1792), [fig. 5] and *Julius Sabinus* (c. 1793, yet another was victim) [fig. 6]. During this prolific and artistically successful period, he also produced two major paintings: *Aeneas Addressing Dido in the Elysian Fields* (c. 1795-1800, current whereabouts unknown) and *The Death of Niobe's Children* (1801) [fig. 7]⁵, neither of which he ever managed to sell, despite being on the crest of the wave and the ease with which he could have expected to place them.

During his time in Rome, Rehberg also worked on engravings, in which, towards the end of his life, he would become expert, particularly as a lithographer. In 1793 he executed a series of six etchings featuring Italian characters and groups (sailors, peasants and children) called *Figures from the life engraved by Friedrich Rehberg* (*Figure prese dal vero ed incise da Federico Rehberg*, version in the British Museum, London), which he extended to a second *suite* of seven engravings that same year. In 1794 he prepared forty prints for a new

5 Also known as *Niobe*, the work was one of Rehberg's favourites. However, it never found a purchaser in his lifetime, despite him sending it to Spain (see Feist 1986, p. 107), England (displayed for sale at the Royal Academy, London, no. 480, in 1815) and the United States (displayed for sale on Rhode Island, no. 202, on 1 August 1829). In 1810, as a sort of marketing ploy, Bartolomeo Pinelli (1781-1835) made an etching with a legend stating Rehberg had produced the work for the viceroy of Milan, who turned down the purchase option. The engraving was based on a preliminary drawing, so there must have been some variation from the original. A small sketch in oils on panel was on the Munich art market in 2007, as were three drawings of details (see Hardtwig 1978, vol. 3, p. 324). In addition, Bartolomeo Pinelli made an engraving of *Aeneas Addressing Dido in the Elysian Fields*, also known as *Dido*.



5. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Oedipus and Antigone, 1792
Oil on canvas, 116 x 93 cm
Marmorpalais, Potsdam, Germany
Inv. no. SKI5924



6. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Julius Sabinus, c. 1793
Oil on canvas, 137 x 186 cm
Current whereabouts unknown



7. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
The death of Niobe's Children, 1801
Oil on canvas, 293.5 x 408 cm
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen,
Neue Pinakothek, Munich, Germany

edition of the series *Poetic and pictorial jokes (Scherzi poetici et pittorici)*, the images of which, like those in the first edition, also from 1794 and which had illustrations by Portuguese artist José Teixeira Barreto (known as Giuseppe Tekeira, 1763-1810), accompanied the verses of Gherardo da Rossi. Some time around 1794 Johann Rudolph Schellenberg (1740-1806) based his popular engraving "*Marriage Grotto*" on the *Island of Capri* on a drawing by Rehberg⁶.

With his artistic reputation assured and an enviable social position firmly in his grasp, Rehberg returned to Berlin in 1803, sidestepping the Napoleonic wars and with the purpose of presenting himself to the new King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm III. He exhibited his work in the rooms of the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts in January 1804⁷, where the monarch acquired the artist's *Metabus, king of the Volsci, teaching his daughter to use the bow*, together with a drawing showing the Bilbao *Cain* (both works lost in World War II). The King also honoured Rehberg with important commissions, making him one of the favourite painters of the Prussian and Bavarian aristocracy, including the Queen of Prussia, Louise of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and the future Queen of Bavaria, Caroline of Baden⁸.

At that point, the Academy's new secretary, the minister of Foreign Affairs and future State chancellor, Karl August von Hardenberg, "distinguished him", as Nagler puts it, "with his friendship and asked Rehberg if he would be interested in managing the affairs of an academy planned for Rome, where he would occupy the post of secretary. Rehberg accepted the proposal with satisfaction and, in order to perform his duties with the dignity required of the post, visited France, England and Germany, returning finally to Rome from Vienna. During his absence, the plans for the academy had been shelved, and Rehberg's situation remained as it was before. He worked hard to face up to the adverse circumstances that affect artists in any war, particularly as, greatly to his surprise, no buyer could be found in court circles for his two large-scale paintings, *Niobe* and *Dido*. Rehberg felt he had been humiliated by the king, and left unprotected and dispossessed of the monarch's favour; hurt, he decided to leave Rome and try to improve his situation in England."⁹

As Nagler notes, just a few years after 1810, Rehberg's fame and the acceptance of his painting greatly declined. This reversal of his artistic fortunes occurred after his return to Berlin in 1813, where he held a new exhibition, which was a failure and made him feel scorned by the Prussian monarchy. This painful turn of events prompted Rehberg to try his luck in England, taking advantage of links with the British aristocracy: since George I's reign, the British monarchs had been closely related to the royal family in Hanover.

Settled at 30 St. James' Street, London, he met Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, prince of Wahlstaff, whose portrait he engraved (a copy is in the Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen), and had some success with his works. This was the case of an evidently propagandistic engraving published in 1813 entitled *Arrival and Reception in Hanover of HRH the Duke of Cambridge* (copy in Hampton Court, Royal Collection). He also did a portrait (present whereabouts unknown) of Adolphus Frederick, Duke of Cambridge, a work engraved by James Godby (active between 1790 and 1815) in 1814 (copy in the National Portrait Gallery, London).

6 Subsequently, in 1809, he made the lithograph *Neptune's grotto, Tivoli*, which continued his interest in grottoes and caves, in line with the idealist painting of the Romantic period. On Rehberg's engravings, see Andresen 1867, vol. II, pp. 71-88; Le Blanc 1971, pp. 293-294; Nebahay/Wagner 1983, vol. III, p. 15.

7 Rehberg presented the following pictures at the 1804 Berlin Academy exhibition (in his biography of Rehberg, Andresen mistakes the date and the works involved): *Landscape with Bacchus, Love and Bathylus Treading Grapes; Venus and Love; Metabus, King of the Volsci, Teaching his Daughter to Use the Bow; Narcissus; Orpheus and Eurydice; Oedipus and Antigone and Homer Guided by the Muse*. He also showed five drawings: *Julius Sabinus; Cain; Niobe; Endymion and Ossian and Malvina*. See "Il Kunste" 1804, pp. 219-220.

8 In 1803 Rehberg managed to lithograph the portrait of Elise, Princess of Bavaria and crown princess of Prussia (copy in the Universitätsbibliothek, Regensburg).

9 Nagler 1836, 254. or.



8. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Bonaparte Resigning the Crown and Sceptre to the British Lion & the High Allied Powers. Victory, Peace, Plenty, 1815
 Etching on paper, 15.2 x 19 cm
 The British Museum, London
 Inv. no. Ee. 2.145

Aware of the commercial importance of the British market, in 1814 he produced *The Dethroning of Napoleon* (current whereabouts unknown), an allegorical painting clearly designed to massage British pride. The painting showed the French Emperor half-kneeling in surrender as he offers crown and sceptre to the British lion. A year later, this work was engraved and dedicated to the Duke of Wellington, with the title *Bonaparte Resigning the Crown and Sceptre to the British lion. The High Allied Powers: Victory, Peace, Plenty* [fig. 8].

In 1814, during his time in London, Rehberg also portrayed the member of the Royal Society Sir William Herschel (current whereabouts unknown), of which Godby also made an engraving (copy in the National Portrait Gallery, London) as did, subsequently, Friedrich Müller and William Tassie. His relations and successes undoubtedly encouraged him to present, in 1815, six works at the Royal Academy¹⁰. However, the paintings, including the *Cain* now in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum and his famous *Aeneas Addressing Dido in the Elysian Fields* and *The Death of Niobe's Children*, were not the resounding commercial success he hoped for.

¹⁰ He exhibited *Aeneas Addressing Dido in the Elysian Fields* (no. 398, current whereabouts unknown), *The British Hebe* (no. 448, current whereabouts unknown), *Cupid and Psyche* (no. 474, current whereabouts unknown), *Niobe* (no. 480, Neue Pinakothek, Munich), *A Laundress* (no. 483, current whereabouts unknown) and *Cain* (no. 507, Bilbao Fine Arts Museum). See London 1815, pp. 20, 22, 24 and 26. My sincere thanks to Xavier Bray for this information and for his unstintingly generous help. See also Graves 1970, vol. 3, p. 253.



9. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Portrait of Antonio Canova, 1818
Lithograph, 49.5 x 34.5 cm (paper); 28.5 x 21 cm (print)
Fürst Thurn und Taxis Zentralarchiv-Hofbibliothek, Regensburg, Germany
Inv. no. 9994/PoS MF Nr. 2362

After passing through Munich and the Tyrol, where he produced a series of landscapes, Rehberg returned to Rome in 1818. There he made engravings of the portraits of famed sculptors Antonio Canova (1757-1822) [fig. 9] and Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844) (copy in the Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen), with whom he was on cordial terms at this time; in 1819, he entered some drawings for an exhibition of German artists in the Palazzo Caffarelli on the Capitoline Hill. The exhibition was organized in honour of Austrian Emperor Franz I, who commissioned him, for a substantial sum of money, to produce a view of the city of Innsbruck over five large lithographic sheets, plus a topographical representation: *Panoramic View of Innsbruck* (*Das Panorama von Innsbruck*, 1819-1820, copy in the Universitätsbibliothek, Salzburg). In 1819, he was also appointed member of Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

He finally settled in Munich on a permanent basis in 1821, where, at the behest of Minister of State and secretary to the Berlin Academy of the Fine Arts Baron Karl Siegmund von Stein of Altenstein, he began to work on studies of lithography. The idea was to set up a lithographic institution in the city similar to the one in Berlin, to which he would devote the rest of his career.

At the end of his life, the decline in his fame and the radical shift in dominant artistic styles prompted him to concentrate largely on the lithograph. He produced some important portraits, like the ones of musicians

Antonio Salieri (1821, copy in the Beethoven-Haus, Bonn), Theobald Böhm (c. 1825, copy in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris) and Ferdinand Fränzl (c. 1820-1830, current whereabouts unknown), and of the actress Auguste Stich-During in 1820 (current whereabouts unknown).

At this time, he also produced some major lithographic publications, such as the essay (Munich 1824) entitled *Raphael Sanzio of Urbino (Raphael Sanzio aus Urbino)*, two volumes of text and two more containing thirty-eight lithographs, dedicated to Baron Karl Siegmund von Stein of Altenstein. When the Baron presented the work to the King on the author's behalf in 1825, the King commissioned a book from Rehberg on the basics of drawing. This appeared, after much hard work, in Munich in 1828 with the title *Elements of the Art of Drawing (Anfangsgründe der Zeichenkunst)*, a single volume with thirteen lithographs.

Despite receiving recognition for his achievements in 1825, when he was appointed member of the Circle of Artists of Munich, and despite the success of his lithographic works, Rehberg, wild with frustration and depressed by his complete artistic isolation, destroyed all his lithographic stones. However, although at the end of his days serious illness confined him almost entirely to his bed, he refused to part with his drawings, a move that, as his biographers point out, would have greatly eased his situation¹¹. Rehberg died in Munich on 20 August 1835.

From success to oblivion

A year after his death, an obituary of the painter summed up his artistic circumstances thus:

Rehberg began his career in art at a time when the wig and ponytail still played a major role and when affectation had such a tight grip on common sense that it impeded people from recognising true beauty. Finally, some sharper minds began to realize that they were going down the wrong path; even so, there was still a long way to go before anyone saw the need to find a better way. In the meantime, they believed they had reached the heights when they managed to capture some parts of the body with the maximum precision, using models and articulated mannequins. However, apart from a few exceptions, it is still not possible to find in these artists the living, authentic expression, the transcendental interpretation that constitutes the poetry of art. So it becomes all the more necessary not to skimp praise when we come across an artist with a more noble purpose, a purpose we find in very few contemporaries, and which led him to the conviction that it was vital to set out in a worthier direction for art than the one he had travelled up to that point. Rehberg's nobility of purpose is undeniable, although he was not destined to cross the threshold of glory. Even so, he did some very important things in his life¹².

Beyond his painting, we need to be aware that Rehberg also did some solid academic work in Rome. As noted above, the painter had to return to the city a second time in 1787, where he had been commissioned by the Berlin Academy to help with and supervise the work of Prussian artists enjoying official grants in Rome. Rehberg used specific methodology and standards proper to a Prussian Academy of Art, even though it did not physically exist as such in Rome. However, to ensure things worked smoothly, the artist frequented

11 "For this reason, many of them [drawings] are still to be found in his bequest, most large format and of high artistic quality. Highly detailed sketches and many studies from the life, done in preparation for almost all his paintings, survive. Some are landscapes in pen and others are painted with black chalk, but as a whole they make a really fine collection that demonstrates what an extraordinary draughtsman this artist was and how each brushstroke was thought out and how he placed them carefully in the right place." Nagler 1836, p. 255. Some of Rehberg's drawings are now in the Stiftung Preussische Schlösser und Gärten collection in Potsdam and the Kupferstichkabinett del Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

12 Ibid., 253. or.

academies of the same type in the city. He also ensured that grant holders attended, so that, amongst other activities, they would have access to the museums and galleries where they could make copies. He also produced models for study from masterworks of Antiquity and the Renaissance, as well as being entrusted with the task of regularly supervising and evaluating the progress of the budding artists in his charge. Nor should it be forgotten that he was also responsible for acquiring objets d'art, such as plaster casts, engravings or books that would improve the way students trained and their eventual results¹³.

All this work, so closely bound up with the tenets of the Enlightenment, undoubtedly confirmed Rehberg's standing as an essential figure in the development of a German school in Italy. And despite the fact that a Prussian Academy of Art was never actually set up, either then or when Rehberg received the formal proposal to do so in 1804, the truth is that he took on the responsibility of training a later generation of artists, many of whom made names for themselves in the 19th century. However, his conception of art and teaching was a long way from what the young artists in the avant-garde espoused and defended.

Besides the kudos accruing to him as the person ultimately responsible for the grant holders in Rome, Rehberg also earned prestige through his own paintings. As noted above, his earliest major success came in 1790, when his artistic career went into orbit after he finished *Belisarius* in Rome. In 1791 the painting was awarded first prize at the Berlin Academy and immediately became the property of Friedrich Wilhelm II. This came at a time when the acquisition of a work of art by a leading member of the royalty in most cases substantially increased the cachet of the artist thus favoured.

In the 1790s, Rehberg painted some of his finest works. His paintings continued to be successful and were regularly bought by the Hohenzollern dynasty. Among the works that brought him a measure of fame, and were acquired by the King of Prussia were *Cain* (discussed later) and the great canvas entitled *Julius Sabinus* [fig. 6]. In a letter from Berlin to his friend Julius Eduard Hitzig, dated 15 October 1794 and collected in the edition of the *Posthumous Tales of Hoffmann*, a young E.T.A. Hoffmann recommends the painting, then in an exhibition at the Berlin Academy:

At the moment we have the exhibitions at the Academy of the arts; you shall come with me to admire the gallery of our artists [...] but the finest piece is the incredibly natural work in oils of the family of Julius Sabinus, by professor Rehberg, of Rome, painted in oils, of great presence. Julius Sabinus, fleeing from the persecutions of Vespasian, is hiding out in a cave: wracked with pain, he is shown lying on the floor of the cave, supporting his head in both hands; his son stands before him and cries out for food. His wife, seated on the floor, with tears in her eyes, gives him a piece of bread, while holding her young son to her breast. The piece is couched in an admirably grandiose and beautiful style; painted in masterly fashion, after the Italian mode¹⁴.

Rehberg's social standing improved as the successes continued. A good example of his connections can be found in one of his most famous and most often reproduced works (at least it was the one that most caught the public's attention), inspired by a journey the artist made to Naples in 1791. There, Rehberg was a regular guest of the English ambassador Sir William Hamilton, for whom he produced a series of drawings of his wife Emma, famed for her beauty and her acting abilities. Popularly known as Lady Hamilton, her talent for "representing, using the arts of pantomime, the most varied states of mind with remarkable daring and vividness, captivated all who came into contact with her circle"¹⁵. At her private *salons*, she would often use her

13 Concerning this singular project, see Sedlarz 2005.

14 Champfleury 1856, pp. 89-90.

15 Nagler 1842, pp. 374-375.



10 and 11. Tommaso Piroli (1754-1824) after Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Plates IV and VIII from the book *The Attitudes of Lady Hamilton*, 1794
Etching on paper, 26.4 x 20.6 cm; 27 x 20.8 cm
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London

theatrical skills to take on attitudes inspired by classical statuary¹⁶. Twelve of these postures were drawn by Rehberg, engraved by Tommaso Piroli (1754-1824) and published in Rome in 1794. Popularly known by the title *The Attitudes of Lady Hamilton*, the works were in fact entitled *Outlines Faithfully Copied from the Life in Naples and, with his Permission, Dedicated to the Right Honourable W. Hamilton* [figs. 10 and 11]¹⁷.

Rehberg's habit of incorporating into his works his connections with a number of leading figures of the time extended to his portraits of writer Karl Phillip Moritz (Akademie der Künste, Berlin), of philosopher, theologian and literary critic Johann Gottfried Herder (c. 1794, Goethe-Nationalmuseum, Weimar), subsequently engraved by Moritz Steinla (1791-1858), and another, subsequently lithographed, of the singer Angelica Catalani (Kestner-Museum, Hanover), (copy in the Universitätsbibliothek, Regensburg); there is also a small portrait (current whereabouts unknown) Rehberg executed of the famed Swedish ambassadress in Paris, Anne Louise Germaine, Baroness of Staël-Hollstein, popularly known as Madame De Staël. The portrait was probably made during the Baroness's sojourn in Frankfurt in 1803, where she had been obliged to move

16 On witnessing one of Lady Hamilton's pantomime, Marianne Kraus described how her performances affected her "public": "Angelica [Kauffmann] sighed and wailed so audibly that one thought the very stones would have been moved by it. Poor Rehberg was like a boy who withstands the schoolmaster's blows as best he can; Herr Reifenstein cried so delicately that one could actually count the tears that slid down his cheeks [...]" and so on with others present: the countess Solms-Baruth, antiques agent Thomas Jenkins and Prince Schwarzenberg's tutor. See Brosch 1996, p. 97.

17 The original edition of this work, which does not mention Lady Hamilton by name, is very rare. Copies found are more usually the ones appearing in Leipzig, which, unlike the originals, are entitled *The Attitudes of Lady Hamilton (Attitüden der Lady Hamilton)*. In 1840, Auguste Perl, heir to Rehberg's goods and assets by succession, asked H. Dragendorf to make lithograph copies of the originals and published these second copies in a new edition entitled *Attitudes of Lady Hamilton. Drawings from the life by Friedrich Rehberg, on 12 sheets lithographed by H. Dragendorf, etc. (Attitüden der Lady Hamilton. Nach dem Leben gezeichnet von Friedrich Rehberg, in 12 Blättern lithographirt von H. Dragendorf, etc. Munich: A. Perl, 1840)*. The popularity of the work prompted George Townley Stubbs (1756-1815) to publish a satirical edition of the drawings on 29 August 1798, featuring an obese version of Lady Hamilton in the same attitudes captured by Rehberg. Further, in 1801, Rehberg added twelve plates to the work, which he titled *Outlines of figures and drapery collected with great care from antient [sic] statues, monuments basreliefs [sic] &c. representing the principle [sic] characters in the plays of Racine*, copy at The National Trust, London).

from Paris by the French Revolution. There, Rehberg and De Staël argued about the choice of themes in painting and Rehberg showed her the composition of *Aeneas Addressing Dido in the Elysian Fields*. Deeply impressed by the work, De Staël subsequently included it in the gallery of art works owned by Corinne, the popular character in the Baroness's famous romantic novel of the same title published in 1807. In the novel, Corinne's thoughts on art hark directly back to the writer's conversations with the German painter¹⁸. The De Staël portrait was engraved by James Godby in 1814 [fig. 12] and by Rosmaler in 1817 (current whereabouts unknown).



12. James Godby (active between 1790 and 1815) after Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835) *Anne Louise Germaine, Madame Stael-Hollstein*, 1814
Line and stipple engraving,
35.4 x 24 cm (paper); 27.9 x 20.3 cm (print)
National Portrait Gallery, London
Inv. no. NPG D15397

Rehberg's successes in the 1790s won for him an enviable social and artistic standing. As Andresen notes, in those years Rehberg "lived the grand life in Rome, residing in a dwelling that, for the time, was not only spacious but also splendid, richly decorated with plaster casts and paintings, he was a guest welcomed by respected Roman families and host to many foreigners passing through the city. One of the visitors he found most attractive was Goethe, whose manner and disposition Rehberg remembered with pleasure years afterwards"¹⁹.

Luckily for him, Rehberg was almost certainly unaware of what Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, with whom he corresponded particularly in the late 1780s, thought of his artistic powers. When Rehberg finished *Belisarius*, which we know only from an engraving [fig. 3], Goethe said of Rehberg that "he neither draws well nor shows a special talent for capturing forms, [although] some of the heads of his characters are notable for

18 Paris 1966, p. 62.

19 Andresen 1867, pp. 64-65.

their lively, powerful expression or for their correct nature; the illumination is effective, but the figures are too weak and the concept servile in the majority of cases"²⁰.

Although criticism during this period could be both favourable and unfavourable, his artistic arrogance and the kind of social petulance he displayed in public clearly didn't help his popularity ratings. His character was a subject of heated debate in artistic circles, and was often used to question the quality of his work. For instance, Polish painter and engraver Daniel Chodowiecki (1726-1801) mocked his choice of themes and the quality of his drawing in the Roman period²¹.

We need to remember that, when Rehberg's career peaked, the new trend in painting that artists in the vanguard like Carstens, Koch and Reinhart espoused and would eventually popularise had yet to gather the momentum that in time would end the hegemony of the more academic painters such as Mengs and Hackert. Being a follower of Mengs, Rehberg's painting had nothing in common with the work of the Carstens of the art world, as man of letters Friedrich von Schiller made clear in a comment to Goethe on 30 November 1803. Writing to Goethe about Rehberg after a chance meeting in the city of Weimar, Schiller says:

[Rehberg] strikes me as being full of affection and esteem for all things German, although I don't know that he is endowed with the capacity required to appreciate an idealistic mode of thinking²².

Schiller clearly questions Rehberg's ability to conceive of an idealistic art, an art dubbed German idealism that took shape in literature, painting and music and which was diametrically opposed to the kind of Italianate Neoclassicism to which Rehberg stubbornly adhered.

This opposition caused him no end of enmities and confrontations, permanently fuelled by Rehberg's conceited enjoyment of his privileged position. One dispute of note he maintained involved Asmus Jakob Carstens (1754-1798), who arrived in Rome in 1792. Rehberg, we remember, was there acting as a supervisor to the King's grant holders and his character and ideas concerning proper surveillance, control and art practices led to tension between him and the new arrival, which would eventually damage Rehberg's image²³.

In fact, Rehberg became so unpopular that he was the constant butt of mockery and nicknames. In the list of nicknames Goethe drew up in Rome, Rehberg figures as *Nasuriccio* (nosey) and the painter Joseph Anton Koch (1768-1839) called him *Spitznäschen* (sharp nose). His striking nose was the obvious target for most of the jokes, so much so that even the painter's friend Marianne Krauss commented in her diary: "If only Rehberg had a different nose!"²⁴

Things got ostensibly worse for Rehberg after his 1813 visit to Germany, which was by no means as fruitful as he might have wished. Furthermore, as Andresen says, during the 1790s "his fame had not been well served by his close relationship with the rich, malevolent and licentious Lord Bristol, who in Rome played out his role as fervent patron of the arts and had gathered around him a group of young and talented people"²⁵. One of these was Rehberg and during this time Lord Bristol was, besides being a good friend, the most important collector of his works. One of the works acquired by Lord Bristol was the *Cain* now in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum. About Lord Bristol, painter Joseph Anton Koch said:

20 Goethe 1969, p. 179.

21 Hardtwig 1978, vol. 3, p. 321.

22 Schiller/Goethe 1883, vol. II, pp. 331-332.

23 Fernow 1806, pp. 127, 149 and 199.

24 Brosch 1996, p. 70.

25 Andresen 1867, vol. II, p. 65.

How the artists fawn on him, how they make their wives flatter him, how they happily submit to the vulgarity and coarseness of the noble Briton, solely to avail themselves of his generosity²⁶.

In his work on Rehberg, Andresen adds about Lord Bristol:

We already know him from the biography of Reinhart; in which he appears under the name of Lord Plumpsack, the target of Koch's bitter, perhaps slightly exaggerated mockery, in his work *Rumfordsche Suppe* [*Rumford's Soup*]. Old "sharp nose" [Spitznäschen], whom we see in the circle of this Lord Plumpsack is none other than our own Rehberg, "his figure (says Koch about *sharp nose*) as mean, pinched and lacking in character as his art works, although he had the ability to fashion himself the tone of a personage, i.e. he obtained all he desired in wit, taste and comportment from his peers. He makes a home in the best tone, organizes evenings in the Italian style, called *Conversazioni*, in all the places where boredom occupies the seat of honour. Cardinals and ambassadors flocked to his evenings, because he always made sure there were plenty of buns, cakes, ice creams and tea available. He took advantage of the occasion to open the rooms where his works were displayed by torchlight. The finest reproductions of Antiquity were on show beside his own works, acting as a scale for measuring or comparing the imaginary excellence of his own paintings and this provoked the admiration of the distinguished cretins." The barbs Koch reserves for his relations with his charming *donna*, madame and lover Benedetta Santocchia are less than edifying and very nearly raise a laugh, when he states: 'His style achieves perfection when he appears standing with his charming *donna* and lady in a two-horse racing chariot pulled by two *Isabelas*, as if he wished to compete in the olympic games; ahead of the chariot run two greyhounds adorned with scarlet red cloakings and silver collars²⁷.

Gradually his fame burned out, to the point where, in 1808, artist Johann Georg von Dillis (1759-1841), who had met Rehberg in Rome, addressed a letter to the crown prince Ludwig I of Bavaria in which he advised against acquiring paintings by Rehberg²⁸. In complete isolation, convinced of his imminent death, Rehberg wrote in 1830 to Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, who had sat for a portrait in a drawing in 1818 in Rome [fig. 13], which he subsequently lithographed²⁹. In the correspondence, the German painter told Thorvaldsen that he was seriously ill, poor and hungry, adding that he felt the Prussian crown had rejected him. Wondering whom he might have wounded and whom he might have refused help in his life, in his letters Rehberg made a veiled plea for attention and a little dignity³⁰.

Rehberg spent his last years ill, without money or friends. Andresen describes this time as "dark years plagued with worries; the man who had lived in carefree abundance ended his days surrounded by pressing problems, full of afflictions, sorrows and troubles, humiliated, isolated and abandoned by all"³¹.

Rehberg's works: *Cain*

In the 1790s, Rehberg cemented his reputation in Rome with some of his most significant works. It is also true, however, that his compositions were heavily criticized by subsequent generations. Criticism that was

26 Jaffé 2009, p. 73.

27 Andresen 1867, vol. II, pp. 65-66.

28 Hardtwig 1978, vol. 3, p. 321.

29 Previously, Rehberg had made a lithograph of the bust of *Ludwig I of Bavaria* sculpted by Thorvaldsen in 1826 (copy in the Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen).

30 Archive of Thorvaldsen's correspondence. Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen. Reference number: m15 1830, nr. 16 and m26 I, nr. 86.

31 Andresen 1867, vol. II, p. 69.



13. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Portrait of Bertel Thorvaldsen, 1818
 Charcoal on paper, 20.8 x 16.5 cm
 Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen
 Inv. no. D1668



14. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Orpheus and Eurydice, c. 1800-1803
 Oil on canvas, 115 x 94 cm
 Residenz München, Munich, Germany
 Inv. no. G0316

ultimately based on what was seen as a lack of creative freedom in his painting, the strict adherence to the purist precepts of Neoclassicism, and on his overly commercial eye for what the market wanted. The success of some of his paintings led to many others being engraved; he was even frequently obliged to produce repeats.

Cain was, of course, one of these. But (previously mentioned works apart), two versions or engravings are also known to have been made of the following paintings³²: *Belisarius*, acquired by the Prussian Crown, which was repeated once and also engraved by Pietro Bettelini (1763-1829) with the title *Date obolum Belisario* in 1801 [fig. 3] and by J. Steinhilber in 1818; *Julius Sabinus* [fig. 6] also acquired by the Prussian monarch, another version of which was acquired by Lord Bristol, being engraved by Peschke; *Oedipus and Antigone* [fig. 5], also acquired by the Prussian monarch and which had a second version owned by the Empress Maria of Russia, of which Rehberg also made a lithograph; *The Rape of Psyche* (sent to England and with a second version acquired by the Prince of Thurn and Taxis³³; *Orpheus and Eurydice* [fig. 14] acquired by the Duke of Leuchtenberg, another version belonging to the Duke of Cambridge; *Jupiter with Venus*, sent to England, whose second version was acquired by the Empress Josephine; *Venus and Love* [fig. 15], sent to

32 The information provided by Andresen 1867, vol. II, pp. 61-88 and by Champlin/Perkins 1927, p. 19 is basic in this regard.

33 "Frederich Rehberg has executed a painting showing *The Rape of Psyche*, after the tale told by Proclus. In the background is a slightly nebulous sky. The two lovers, balancing on their wings, hold each other up in an embrace. The wings of love are large; they have the greatest effect. Psyche is only kept up by her butterfly wings. The painting is graceful and charming." Millin 1807, vol. VI, p. 405. On this work, see also the long review collected in Guattani 1806, vol. II, pp. 23-24. Rehberg lithographed the two portraits of Karl Alexander and Teresa Matilde Amalie, Prince of Thurn and Taxis (copies of both in the Universitätsbibliothek, Regensburg).



15. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Venus and Love, 1808
 Oil on canvas, 83 x 64 cm
 Residenz München, Munich, Germany
 Inv. no. G0315



16. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Homer Guided by the Muse, 1790s
 Oil on canvas, 84 x 66 cm
 Residenz München, Munich, Germany
 Inv. no. G0314

England and repeated and also engraved by Antonio Ricciani (1775-1836) and *Homer Guided by the Muse* [fig. 16], which was sent to Germany, and a version acquired by Lord Bristol³⁴.

He also made no less than eight versions, with many variations, of *Landscape with Bacchus, Love and Bathylus Treading Grapes*, one of the best being the original version, which was acquired by the Prussian Crown in the 1790s and which, left in the Marmorpalais in Potsdam, Germany, disappeared during World War II [fig. 4], together with the one that belonged from 1802 to Ludwig I of Bavaria, who hung it in his bedroom at Wörlitz Castle [fig. 17], and the one in the National Gallery of Hanover (oil on canvas, 64 x 56 cm). Another version is also known to have been in the art market through Peter Kunsthandel Muehlbauer, in Pocking, Germany (oil on canvas, 116.7 x 92.2 cm). The last, done in 1806, was entered in the Art Exhibition of Munich in 1832 (oil on canvas, 65 x 95 cm)³⁵. One of these versions was engraved in Berlin in 1803 by Haller von Hallerstein (1771-1839) for the *Tablettes d'un Amateur des Arts* [fig. 18]; an engraving of another version appeared as a reproduction in *Landons Nouvelle des Arts* in 1804 and another, different version was engraved by Godby in 1815 [fig. 19].

34 The first version of *Belisarius* disappeared during World War II and the smaller copy, possibly a Rehberg *Belisarius*, was auctioned in Neumeister, Munich, on 11 March 1987. Both versions of *Julius Sabinus* are now missing. One version of *Oedipus and Antigone* is in the Marmorpalais, Potsdam, and the other has disappeared. Like *Orpheus and Eurydice*, a version of the *Rape of Psyche* is in the Residenz München, Munich; the other is missing. Both versions of *Jupiter with Venus* are missing. One version of *Venus and Love*, dated 1808, is in the Residenz München, Munich, and another was auctioned at Christie's London on 25 April 2008. Finally, one version of *Homer guided by the Muse* is in the Residenz München, Munich, and the other appeared at an auction in Franco Semenzato, Marcerata, Italy, on 24 February 1991.

35 Hardtwig 1978, vol. 3, p. 321. This one is currently in the Residenz München, Munich.



17. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Landscape with Bacchus, Love and Bathylus treading grapes, 1797
 Oil on canvas, 119.5 x 94 cm
 Wörlitz Castle, Germany
 Inv. no. I-310



18. Freiherr Haller von Hallerstein (1771-1839)
 after Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Landscape with Bacchus, Love and Bathylus treading grapes, 1803
 Etching on paper, 19.3 x 15 cm
 Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen
 Inv. no. E626



19. James Godby (active between 1790 and 1815) after Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Landscape with Bacchus, Love and Bathylus treading grapes, 1815
 Etching on paper, 34.2 x 38.9 cm
 National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London. Herschel Collection
 Inv. no. PAH6104

However, no mention has been found of any version or engraving of the painting *Narcissus*, which went to an English collection (now in the Residenz München, Munich)³⁶, of *Metabus, King of the Volsci, Teaching his Daughter to Use the Bow* (lost in World War II), of the *Rape of Hylas* (formerly in the Akademie der Künste, Berlin)³⁷, of the *Achilles Taught by Chiron* (lost in World War II), nor of his *Endymion* (c. 1800, current whereabouts unknown).

Worth quoting on the subject of his oeuvre is a chronicle that appeared in 1806 in Giuseppe Antonio Guattani's review in the *Memorie enciclopediche romane*. There, Guattani describes most of the works by Rehberg mentioned above, many of which are currently missing, and which were among the artist's most popular compositions:

Owing to the universal modesty of the Gentlemen Artists (a modesty most unfortunate for us) which prevents them from informing interested parties like us of their works, we are obliged to do the rounds of the Sanctuaries of Painting to produce these pages; not without great pleasure have we crossed the threshold of the sanctuary of Mr. Friedrich Rehberg, a Prussian domiciled in Rome for these past several years. On visiting the many rooms of his residence, all transformed into studios for his art, we found many airily delicate themes, both as regards the choice of subject and their valiant execution. In a painting taken from Anacreon, we saw Love aggrieved and showing Venus the bee-sting that afflicts him. From the grassy floor the child uses his wings to fly to his mother, while she descends on clouds to console him. The green of the meadow and the blue of the sky highlight the fine triumphant flesh of the two divinities, neither of which lack grace or expression: two white doves kiss in the dark clouds to complete this graceful, pleasing episode.

There followed another theme from Anacreon, with a child Bacchus, Love and Bathylus, busy with the grape harvest. In a pleasant landscape, the two young gods Bacchus and Love are inside a fine marble vat, while poor Bathylus, being a mere mortal, is condemned to carry the large earthenware jar on his back, and fill the vat: a highly amusing painting.

Underneath are smaller figures from the life, representing a Muse guiding Homer, and she inspires him to song with her lyre: the divine singer, blind, follows, supporting himself on her, in a scene that does not have the appearance of being idealized, but rather offers a lively portrait of a woman, passionate and illuminated by inspiration, as is right and fitting for the muse of the inspiration of that sublime father of the Seers.

Next to this painting is a small canvas representing the unhappy Narcissus, who lies at the edge of a spring contemplating himself.

Another, Orpheus brings Eurydice from Hades. He holds her firmly by the hand at the mouth of a cave, which is a large dark mass: she follows him veiled, fearful that her husband should decide to turn around, and lose her for ever, which is exactly how it was.

Finally, an Endymion asleep at the foot of thick shrubbery, watched over by Love, who leaves a torch on the ground and fusses around him. On the other side of the painting the Moon emerges, emitting rays of light that illuminate the waters of a lake or river, producing the most beautiful effects of reflection and refraction: most agreeable to the eye as the line in which they unite silvers, leaving the man from Latmo in the dark, but in placid horror³⁸.

36 It may well be linked to *The Origin of the Hermaphrodite*, by Rehberg, sold on 25 February 1809, lot 65, at Mr. H. Phillip's of London. Fredericksen 1990, part 1, p. 23; part 2, p. 781.

37 Parthey 1864, vol. 2 (L-Z), pp. 324-325.

38 Guattani 1806, vol. I, pp. 84-86.



20. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
The Death of Abel, 1801
Gouache, sepia ink and charcoal on paper stuck to canvas,
119.4 x 91.5 cm
The Royal Collection, London
Inv. no. RCIN 406013

Clearly, there was no lack of favourable criticism or buyers for Rehberg's works. Foremost amongst the buyers and lovers of his art were the Prussian Crown and Lord Bristol, who together accounted for the two versions Rehberg made of *Cain*, also known as *Fratricide of Cain* and *Cain Struck by Lightning*. One of the versions was owned by the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II, and in 1823 was hanging as decoration in the rooms of Charlottenburg palace in Berlin; later, in 1836 or thereabouts, it was hung in the chambers of the Neues Palais in Potsdam, subsequently being moved to another palace in Berlin, probably Bellevue, and again to Charlottenburg. Finally it disappeared during World War II³⁹. The other is the version now in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, and was acquired by Frederick Augustus Hervey, Lord Bristol, being moved from place to place and passing through a number of hands (details of the painting's travels before arriving in Bilbao are given later). Although deciding which of the two paintings is the original remains an almost impossible task, everything points to Lord Bristol—not for the first time when works by Rehberg were involved—buying a signed replica of the work previously acquired by the King of Prussia.

A large drawing of *Cain* on canvas from 1801 has also survived, having been acquired by the British Crown in 1872 [fig. 20]. During World War II another drawing of *Cain* disappeared; this one had been displayed in the Berlin Academy in 1804, where it was acquired by the Prussian Crown. Finally, there is evidence of a large-scale lithograph entitled *The Fratricide of Cain* by H. Dragendorff⁴⁰, possibly made from one of these drawings. No copies of the lithograph have been located.

The original painting was executed in 1791 during Rehberg's second Roman sojourn, which had begun in 1788 thanks to a grant from the King of Prussia. Criticism of the work was soon forthcoming, the first exam-

39 See Bartoschek/Vogtherr 2004, pp. 386-387. My grateful thanks are due to Alexandra Bauer for her cooperation regarding the works of Rehberg that disappeared during World War II.

40 Nagler 1842, p. 376.

ple being a favourable reference noted by Marianne Krauss in the diary she kept during her journey to Italy in 1791. On 15 February, Krauss wrote:

I went to visit the Countess of Solms, who was unwell [...]. I found her in the studio of Herr Rehberg, who was then working on a large painting showing Cain in despair after murdering his brother. In the far distance Adam and Eve are standing by Abel's lifeless body, surprised by the first death in the history of mankind, where the deepest sorrow merges with the most piercing pain. Although undoubtedly secondary figures, they match and complement the general idea perfectly. This is the first Cain of a certain beauty I have seen captured on canvas [...]⁴¹.

However, shortly afterwards, a rather less favourable criticism appeared in the Danish publication *Minerva*, associated with an avant-garde current of thought. The comment was part of a chronicle of recent art-related events and developments in Rome published on 7 May 1791:

Rehberg shows Cain walking in despair through a desert, covering his face with both arms. In the distance Adam and Eve, stunned by his death, stand over Abel's corpse. Thus the painter saves himself the trouble of actually expressing passions in detail; nor is there any thing in the work worthy of praise: no drawing, no colouring, no perspective; it appears more a sketch than a painting⁴².

True enough, the figure of Cain is very much the centre of attention, the murder weapon and the symbolic serpent of sin at his feet, while the background landscape, where his murdered brother Abel and grieving parents Adam and Eve are placed, is seen as the idyllic frame for man, being for the Neoclassicals the centre of the universe. Visually, the way the painting is conceived can be related to the dogmatic character of the "literary painting" of Neoclassicism, which, through theorists like Winckelmann, had taken from the Renaissance and the ancient world the concept of the purity of art, achieved by clarity and simplicity of form. Considered more elevated than other potential subject matter, mythology and the historical affairs of the ancient world were conscientiously mined for themes for this type of painting; in Rehberg's case, Ovid and Anacreon were two favourite sources. The representation of this Old Testament passage is by no means typical of Rehberg's output or of Neoclassicism, although, as in this case, it is used as a pretext for displaying the standard Classical references.

The painting certainly fits Andreas Andresen's description of the style Rehberg employed at the height of his fame, adhering closely to the artistic tenets of Neoclassicism. Andresen argued that the painter's aspirations were "completely noble, his eyes forever on the most exalted and sublime in art; he was possessed of a remarkable ease of invention and composition and tried to bring together and match smooth, agreeable forms with the most striking illumination; but the non-natural kept a hold on pure feeling, models and structured man took the place of the immediate contemplation of nature, as he considered that the ideal of beauty resided in hollow, empty forms, lacking a vigorous internal life and without spiritual or temperamental depth"⁴³.

It is hard to deny a certain coldness about the figure of Cain, deriving from the intentionally marbled look of the body: the cold smoothness comes from the sculptural models of Antiquity. This was a standard feature of the time, as artists frequently tried in their paintings to give the figures the look of statues in motion⁴⁴.

41 Brosch 1996, p. 64.

42 "Rom d. 7 Mai..." 1798, p. 142.

43 Andresen 1867, vol. II, p. 64.

44 Rehberg's works abound in references to classical sculptures and examples from the Italian Renaissance, particularly in *Landscape with Bacchus, Love and Bathylus Treading Grapes* and *The Death of Niobe's Children*.

Indeed, in 1777, when Rehberg was in Rome, besides training at the studio of the *pittore filosofo*, Anton Raphael Mengs, where he worked on drawing and painting, and studying the great masters of the Renaissance in the Vatican rooms, where he familiarized himself mostly with Raphael, although without neglecting the work of the Carracci brothers, Michelangelo, Domenichino or Salvator Rosa, Rehberg also took a profound interest in the models of classical Antiquity, whose remnants were deserving of the age's maximum consideration (specifically the Laocoön, the Torso and the Apollo of the Belvedere, the Borghese Gladiator and the Farnese Hercules). Rehberg studied and made a huge number of drawings done directly from the Graeco–Roman sculptures housed in the city's museums and galleries, as well as drawing copies of the replicas in the French Academy in Rome, which had the advantage of better lighting than the originals⁴⁵.

A decisive factor in his knowledge of these models was the Berlin Academy's commission by which Rehberg was entrusted with acquiring in Rome major works from the ancient world for the royal Prussian collections. Prince Leopold Franz Friedrich von Anhalt-Dessau added an extra dimension to this work in 1794 when he asked Rehberg to buy sculptures and plaster replicas of Graeco-Roman works in Rome for his palace at Wörlitz⁴⁶.

With these objectives in view, Rehberg entered into contact with the prestigious English dealer Thomas Jenkins, who, among other major works, had traded with the *Discobolus* of Myron. With regard to this activity, which converted him into an antiques agent and sporadic collector, Rehberg is known to have handled, at least, the work known as *Torso of Diadomenus* (Glyptothek, Munich)⁴⁷, the sarcophagus called *Sacrifice to Priapus* (Glyptothek, Munich), another dubbed the *Sarcophagus of Cassius Galens* (Glyptothek, Munich) and the group known as *Two women* (Musei Vaticani, Rome). The *Sarcophagus of Pelops and Oenomaus* (Musei Vaticani, Rome) was also reported as being in his collection⁴⁸.

Casting a critical eye on *Cain*

For a greater insight into Rehberg's artistic practice and his painting entitled *Cain*, we may do worse than quoting some of the criticism received by a work that is paradigmatic of his oeuvre.

The earliest criticism dates from the summer of 1805, when Rehberg was absent from Rome. From there, critic and philologist August Wilhelm von Schlegel published the following letter to Goethe:

Rehberg was still absent, as he took with him most of his works when he went on his travels. I visited the exhibition that was held approximately a year and a half ago in Berlin, where the public showed itself to be very favourably disposed towards his art, although the reception, not of the person, but of his works, was not exactly enthusiastic. Rehberg's drawing lacks force; it is as if his lines were too timid to follow a particular path. His forms are often

45 In 1787 Rehberg sent four large drawings, almost the size of the originals, to the Berlin Academy, which document this activity: *The Laocoön group*, *The Borghese Gladiator*, *The Venus de' Medici* and *A Colossal Head of the Apollo of the Belvedere*. He also made copies of the works of Renaissance painters, which he also presented to the Academy in 1788: *Copy of the Polyphemus by Annibale Carracci in the Palazzo Farnese* and *Copy of a group from Michelangelo Buonarroti's Last Judgement*. For more about the works Rehberg presented in the Berlin Academy exhibitions, see Hägele/Schmidt/Schneider 2005, pp. 65, 102-104.

46 Rehberg's selection of statues and the Prince's approval took until 1797; furthermore, the political situation prevented the works from being exported until 1802. These included the group of sculptures known as *The Muses or Apollo and the Nine Muses*, the quality of which inspired a poem by Friedrich von Matthisson. In October of that year, the group was installed in the rotunda of the Pantheon in the park at Wörlitz. Another of the works the Prince received was Rehberg's own *Landscape with Bacchus, Love and Bathylus Treading Grapes*, which was hung in the Prince's bedroom at the palace of Wörlitz. See Pfeifer 2006, p. 97.

47 From Rome, in 1811, Thorvaldsen recommended the acquisition of this torso to Ludwig I of Bavaria. Bayerische Hauptstaatsarchiv, Geheimes Hausarchiv München, Nachlass König Ludwig I, I A 40 IV.

48 Helbig 1895, vol. 1, p. 242.

vulgar: despite the head taken from Antiquity, his Homer could be mistaken for an old woman, not to mention that the head itself is too short; the Muse who inspires him by playing the lyre has a turned-up nose, big, blubbery lips and a peasant woman's arms. The expression is, almost without exception, glacial or utterly wrong. In Rome, in the collection of the late Lord Bristol, there is a *Cain* by Rehberg, in which the storm blows Cain's hair over his forehead, while he covers his face with both arms, so we see not a single fragment of it. In fact, he exceeds even Timantes of Sicyon, who did not content himself with so easy a solution; Timantes did not cover Agamemnon's face with a veil until he had exhausted the different degrees of pain and sorrow. However, in the painting under discussion, Cain is the only figure. Apparently, a lady wept before the picture. As I do not succumb easily to tears when faced with a painting, unless of course it is really bad, I always assume that this is the unconscious reason that induces others to shed tears before a work. Rehberg's best work is possibly a *Belisarius* he painted many years ago and which is now in the Royal Palace in Berlin. Some of his landscapes are, likewise, worthy of mention. His compositions are, generally speaking, anodyne and lacking in content, such that if all painting were like his, I would be hard put to respond to the question of whether it was worth practising this art and why⁴⁹.

Schlegel's resentment of Rehberg is rather puzzling, particularly if we remember that the artist's painter sister, Caroline Rehberg, was the first love of the critic's brother, the popular Friedrich Schlegel. Nonetheless, everything points to the critic slavishly following the arguments of his friend, the painter Joseph Anton Koch, whose antipathy towards Rehberg was examined earlier. In his biography of Koch, Ernst Jaffé summarizes Koch's first surviving written work, unpublished, which the painter titled *Der Ruhm ein Traumgesicht (Fame, a face in a dream)*. The manuscript figured in the bequest of Baron Von Uexkuell, whom Koch usually informed of his views and opinions on art recorded in his travel diary, in which he included an allegorical dialogue:

The artist slips into sleep as he considers the fame that awaits; then the goddess Fame appears to him with her attendants: Luck, palatial Favour, Ductility, Intrigue, Envy, Bombast, Boastfulness, Brazenness, Fashion, Deceit, False Appearance and Obfuscation. All of these the artist must invoke if he wishes to find favour and fame. The artist is not happy with this; the goddess, however, reminds him how far her protégés have gone in the world. The artist cannot deny it, but he talks to her of the contortions such people have had to perform before their patrons and of the works of theirs that he has had occasion to view: of Rehberg, his *Cain*, who has to cover his face with his arms because the painter has not known how to endow him with the right expression [...] a painting that prompted floods of tears from a lady of a certain age (Friederike Brun?) [...] ⁵⁰.

Schlegel's comments, however, got short shrift from the literary critic of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*:

As is only natural, Herr Schlegel talks of German painters with the interest proper to someone who shares that nationality. One recent article of his is striking for the unusual vehemence of the terms in which it is couched. I am unaware of any personal circumstances that might have unleashed the fury with which Herr Schlegel attacks his fellow countryman Friedrich Rehberg. In any case, there is little point in speculating about the misfortunes underlying the enmities between men of letters. Nonetheless, when those who presume to instruct the public about works that can only be seen by a small group of readers alter the state of things with the sole purpose of satisfying their own overweening vanity or other passions, it is right and fitting, for the good of art, to put them in their proper place. Rehberg's muse, on which Herr Schlegel issues so negative a judgement because it does not resemble any ideal, is the portrait of a poor woman who died in Rome in the first flush of life and whose obvious talents had earned the admiration of many. Anyone there could have informed Herr Schlegel of this. The fact that

49 Böcking 1846, pp. 252-253.

50 Jaffé 2009, p. 73. Friederike Brun was a German-Danish writer, intimate friend of Madame de Staël, noted mainly for her poetic writings. She also wrote on travel, so much a part of the spirit of the times.

he never met her in person does not justify a preconceived opinion on his vision of art. Herr Schlegel passes an even more negative judgement on the *Cain* in Lord Bristol's collection (now in the private offices of the viceroy of Italy). Others, however, consider this painting to be the artist's best work. On this point, each must decide, after having seen it, according to his criterion. Unfortunately, Herr Schlegel's criticism is the product of a motivation that requires a somewhat more detailed explanation. If the emotion or admiration inspired by the contemplation of a painting has never brought a single tear to his eye, it is fair to think that nature has deprived him of that sensibility proper to painters and poets and which makes other people receptive to the emotions their works generate. Such deprivation is no obstacle to someone composing verses of great beauty or demonstrating an enthusiasm for nature, art, religion or whatever it may be, *oriented towards the external appearance*. But saying that a picture is so bad that it made one cry is, on the other hand, perfectly ridiculous, unless the fortunes of the painter affect us personally. As far as Rehberg's *Cain* is concerned, Herr Schlegel reproaches him to begin with for having the central character cover his face with his arms. If his judgement were valid, one would have to assume that the face was the only part of the body where emotion, passion or action is manifested. Keen and generous connoisseur of painting, of the fine arts in general, of the dramatic art, he who would dare to make such a statement! Has he really never been touched by a movement of the hands, or of the knees, by the stance or posture as a whole, of a good actor? Leaving politeness and good manners aside, as well as the kind of social convention that can hide any number of defects, has he never seen a statue that speaks? Has he never seen in a painting a posture or attitude full of expression with the face turned away? [...].

Any intense emotion is usually expressed more through movements of the body than by expressions of the face. Someone who suddenly becomes conscious of his own guilt or of a blunder committed, raises a hand to smack his forehead. The usual gesture for shame or embarrassment is to cover one's face with both hands. Desperation provoked by a guilty conscience is expressed by a similar gesture, only more violent. The guilty person uses his arms to protect himself so that no one can read in his face the dreadful signs of his acknowledgement of guilt. He squeezes his face against his arms to contain the violent outbreak of his emotions and keep them inside. This is what Cain is doing here. In painting, any interesting situation becomes inexhaustible, because the slightest change in the object itself or in what surrounds it offers an opportunity for a new interpretation. For example, the figure of Cain fleeing from his brother's body could be represented in many different ways. His answer "I am not my brother's keeper" produces a totally different painting from the one of him as he hears the curse he has drawn down upon himself. The moment when Cain becomes aware of the magnitude of his guilt cannot be represented through a more expressive gesture than this, where he covers his face with his arms. At the same time, we are saved the sight of an expression that, if true to the circumstances, would have provoked a high degree of revulsion. The surprising accuracy of the figures moved Lord Bristol, who had a sixth sense for spotting this essential requirement of a good painting, to ask the artist: "Did you ever kill a man?" and keep the painting. It must have caused the same impression in Milan, as this work was selected from out of all the artist's paintings. That a painting which has caused such a bad impression in Herr Schlegel has had such a fine reception might well be another reason for him to shed bitter tears⁵¹.

A short while before this resounding reply, in 1806, Giuseppe Antonio Guattani, uninvolved in the sniping, ended his chronicle in the *Memorie enciclopediche romane* (in which he compiled a guide to Rehberg's works) thus:

51 "Literarische analekten" 1809.

As we walked through the rooms, decorated with pleasant themes from fable and myth, the obvious assumption was that Herr Rehberg would be exclusively devoted to a delicate, poetic genre of painting; our surprise, then, may readily be imagined when, as the door of the last room opened, we were confronted with the most terrible and tragic event in the Sacred History!

On a large canvas measuring 12 by 9, we contemplated the stormiest, most threatening sky imaginable, full of dark clouds, pierced by a flash of lightning; this points the way to the most fertile and agreeable countryside, washed by the waters of a lake. At a considerable distance, two altar stones can be made out ready for the sacrifice, one of which sends to the heavens above a dense, interminable column of smoke; from the other pours forth smoke that falls to earth almost as soon as it lifts away from the origin. On the ground between the two altars lies the body of a poor murdered man, surrounded by two figures that shed the vainest of tears. Standing in the fore, the solitary, slightly larger-than-life figure of a man who flees, naked and desperate, pursued by the righteous bolt, as he covers his face not with his hands but with his arms: the broadest of hints to identify him as the assassin, the malicious fratricide Cain, condemned for his crime to wander *vagus et profugus super terram*.

There is certainly no lack of effect in the painting: the atmosphere of the sky and the earth provides a suitable setting for a truly horrific scene: the figure of the fratricide, with his face covered, could not better express the shame and repentance that assaults him: his stumbling progress evidences the fear of divine vengeance, which, to judge by the bolt of lightning that crackles at his back, is imminent: the flesh tones are those of a farmer, which according to the Book is what the first-born of our Father was: the movement studied; together with the figure; and the details diligent, the muscles showing the kind of strain that only an orgasm is capable of producing in a case such as this. Above all we found most ingenious the act of expressing the divine curse in the snaking bolt and the device of the two columns, ascending and descending; the *respexit Dominus* Abel obtains for his offering, and the *non respexit* in answer to Cain; for which: *iratus est vehementer, et concidit vultus ejus*⁵².

It is striking that a work so controversial in the artist's lifetime should have slowly fallen into a long lethargy, the result, to a great extent, of the decline in the artist's reputation. Another problem was the constant change of owners. Frederick Augustus Hervey, Lord Bristol, was the first in a long line of these.

Provenance of *Cain*

Born on 1 August 1730, Frederick Augustus Hervey was Bishop of Derry and, from 1779, 4th Earl of Bristol [fig. 21]⁵³. Considered one of the great English travellers, from 1765 to his death on 8 July 1803 Lord Bristol spent long periods in Italy, where he built up a brilliant collection of artworks, including objects from the ancient world (mosaics, sculptures, columns and so on) and Renaissance and Baroque art from Italy and the rest of Europe, as well as works by his contemporaries. He organized the collection in line with the very latest criteria, involving schools, themes, media and so forth. Forerunners of the ideas and concepts used today, such criteria shed some light on his profound scientific interests.

We have already seen some significant features of Lord Bristol's personality: he was a *bon vivant*, a lover of art and leisure, a fervent traveller and a man endowed with a highly controversial character. Lord Bristol may have met Rehberg, with whom he struck up a lasting friendship, during the time both spent in Naples in 1791, the year in which Rehberg, back in Rome, finished his painting *Cain*. Although the picture immediately awoke the collector's interest, surprisingly we don't know exactly when he acquired it. Everything

52 Guattani 1806, vol. I, pp. 86-87.

53 Concerning the life of Lord Bristol see, among others, Noack 1919; Childe-Pemberton 1924; Figgis 1993.

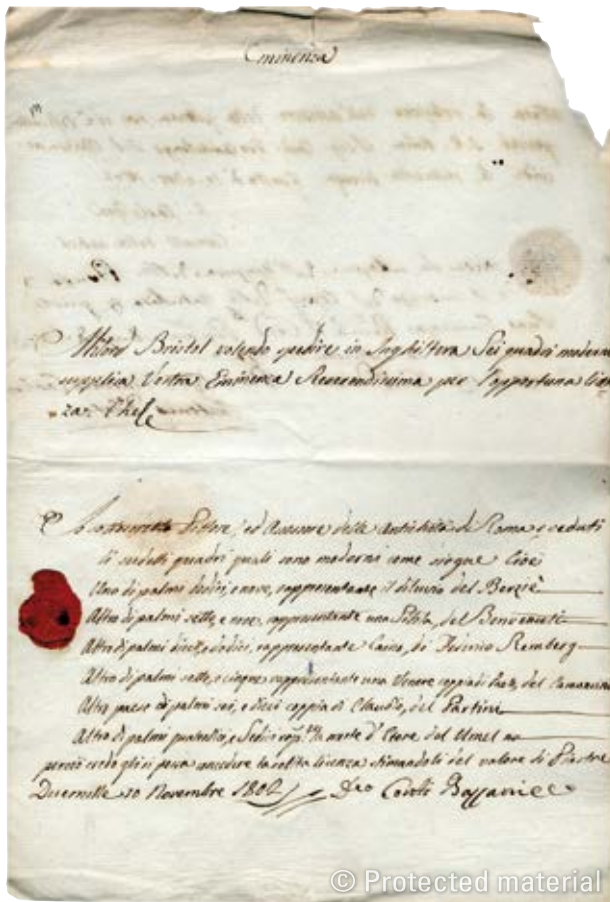


21. Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808)
Frederick Hervey, Bishop of Derry and Fourth Earl of Bristol (1730-1803), with his Granddaughter Lady Caroline Crichton (1779-1856), in the Gardens of the Villa Borghese, Rome, c. 1790
 Oil on canvas, 223.5 x 199 cm
 National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin

points to Lord Bristol commissioning Rehberg to produce a second version of the work, after being apprised of the fact that King Friedrich Wilhelm II had acquired the original for the Hohenzollern collection. At some time between approximately 1791 and 1795, Rehberg obliged. This also happened with *Julius Sabinus* and *Aeneas Addressing Dido in the Elysian Fields*, versions of which duly found their way into Lord Bristol's collection, after the King of Prussia had acquired the originals⁵⁴. This would seem to tie in with the suggestion that the King of Prussia's lover and adviser on art Wilhelmine von Lichtenau acted as intermediary for Lord Bristol's acquisitions. Von Lichtenau's advice and judgement had been decisive in the Prussian Crown acquiring Rehberg's *Julius Sabinus* and *Oedipus and Antigone*⁵⁵; furthermore, Lord Bristol was hopelessly infatuated with her.

54 It should nevertheless be remembered that the motifs of *Aeneas Addressing Dido in the Elysian Fields* are different from the ones in the picture painted previously. "In the painting that belonged to Lord Bristol, also known from a print engraved by Pinelli, Aeneas swears by the gods that only the divine mandate had caused him to abandon the Queen, the obedient hero wrings his hands in desperation as he pleads with his loved one to at least bestow one look upon him, but Dido, in the words of the poet, moves away from the traitor and flees", (Nagler 1836, p. 254).

55 Sedlarz 2005, vol. II, p. 264.



22. Document for the exportation of the artworks of Lord Bristol, 10 November 1802
Archivio di Stato, Rome

Lord Bristol's placid existence was interrupted in 1798, after Napoleon's successful campaign in Italy. The French army confiscated his prestigious collection, which of course included the *Cain* now in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum. The sheer size of the collection and the prestige of its rightful owner prompted 343 artists from many different countries to petition Swiss banker Emmanuel Haller, financial administrator of the French army in Italy, to ensure Lord Bristol's collection was kept intact and returned immediately. But, like the formal request to General Berthier, the French commander in chief in Italy, the petition cut no ice⁵⁶. Shortly afterwards, in April 1798, Lord Bristol was accused of spying and passing military information to the English ambassador Sir William Hamilton and arrested by the French, Bristol spent nine months as a captive in Milan castle. On his release, his collection was returned, although the threat of a new confiscation hung permanently over it; eventually Lord Bristol decided to send it to England. However, he only had time to send a group of six works, including Rehberg's *Cain*, on 10 November 1802, just seven months before his death in the Italian town of Albano. The exportation document for the six works [fig. 22] states:

Altro di palmi dieci, e dodici, rappresentante Caino, di Federico Rembger [sic]⁵⁷.

56 Figgis 1993, p. 80.

57 Archivio di Stato, Rome. Camerale II, Antichita e Belle Arti 113/6, Busta 14, Fasc. 300. Reproduced in *ibid.*, fig. 56.

In 1880, Bertolotti published a list of works exported to England from Rome, including Lord Bristol's six:

10 9bre [November] 1802. My Lord Bristol sends the following paintings to England. *The Flood*, by Berziè. *A Sibyl*, by Benvenuti. *Cain*, by Federigo Rehberg. *A Venus*, copy by Paolo del Camuccini; *A Landscape*, copy by Claudio del Partini. *The Death of Hector*, by Umel. Estimated 2000 piasters⁵⁸.

The names of the artists are not entirely correct, which may be because some are written interpretations of the oral pronunciations of the time.

On Lord Bristol's death, the entire collection was sold publicly in Rome, where Rehberg's *Cain* was once again to be found, presumably returned for inclusion in the sale. Fortunately, the entire collection was placed on record in the sale catalogue, which has only recently resurfaced⁵⁹. The collection contained 534 pieces and an addenda containing a further 35 *objets d'art*. Thanks to the document (dated 1804, although the sale must have taken place some time around 1806⁶⁰), we know that Rehberg's *Julius Sabinus*, *Cain*, *Homer Guided by the Muse*, *Aeneas Addressing Dido in the Elysian Fields* and a copy of Correggio's *Giocatore* were all owned by Lord Bristol⁶¹.

Except for the Correggio copy, Rehberg produced two versions of all of them. As we have seen, the owner of the original versions of the first two and the fourth was the King of Prussia. The original of the third was sent to Germany and is now in the Residenz München in Munich [fig. 16]. Of the second versions, which belonged to Lord Bristol, the only one located is *Cain*, in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, although *Homer Guided by the Muse* is known to have been auctioned by Franco Semenzazo, in Marcerata, Italy, on 24 February 1991. Unfortunately, the current whereabouts of the others is unknown.

Rehberg's connections with the Hervey family were not entirely focused on Lord Bristol. After the latter's death, the artist struck up a close friendship with his son Frederick William (1769-1859), 5th Earl and 1st Marquis of Bristol. A travel journal and sketch book dated 1818 bears witness to this connection: in it Rehberg made a number of drawings from the life of the Austrian Tyrol (The National Trust, London). When a second volume was added in 1827, the album was dedicated to Frederick William and was a souvenir of the tour the two made together on the road to Rome in 1818. On that journey, they visited the Tyrolese family Speckbacher, of whom Rehberg made a portrait⁶².

Also in 1818, back in Rome, Rehberg drew the double portraits of some of Frederick William's children, Lord Bristol's grandchildren: *Portrait of Lord Arthur Hervey and Lady Sophia Windham* and *Portrait of Lord George and Lord William Hervey* (both at Ickworth Castle, National Trust); he also drew the splendid *Portrait of Frederick William Hervey, 2nd Marquis of Bristol* (also at Ickworth Castle) [fig. 23]. In this image of Frederick William's son, (Lord Bristol's grandson), Rehberg once again proves himself to be a great portrait artist and an expert in the typology of the Romantic portrait, by setting the somewhat dream-like figure of the Marquis against ancient Roman ruins⁶³.

58 Bertolotti 1880.

59 *Elenco di oggetti d'arte in pitture, mosaico, scultura, ed architettura appartenenti al patrimonio del defonto Lord Conte di Bristol Esposti alla pubblica vendita in Roma. In Roma nella stamperia di Luigi Perego Salvioni M.DCCC.IV*. The catalogue is given in its entirety in Figgis 1993, pp. 89-103.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 84.

61 To be precise: *Sabino con Moglie, e Figli* (no. 245, 8 x 6 Roman Palms) [Converted, 134.04 x 178.2 cm]; *Caino* (no. 246, 12 x 8 ½ R.P.) [268.8 x 189.9 cm]; *Omero con Musa* (no. 247, 7 ½ x 6 R.P.) [167.5 x 134.04 cm]; *Didone agli Elisi* (no. 248, no measurements given) and *Giocatore del Correggio* (no. 249, 6 x 4 R.P.) [134.04 x 89.36 cm].

62 *Portrait of Joseph and Maria Speckbacher*, 1818. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.

63 Lord Bristol sat for portraits by, among others, Johan Joseph Zoffany (1733-1810), Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808), Angelica Kauffmann (1741-1807), Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842) and Christopher Hewetson (1737-1803) is also known to have sculpted a bust. Besides works by Rehberg, his children were portrayed on many occasions, including the portrait Sir Joshua Reynolds painted in 1787 of Lady Elizabeth Foster, known as "Bess", Lord Bristol's daughter.



23. Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
Portrait of Frederick William Hervey,
2nd Marquis of Bristol, 1818
 Charcoal on paper, 33 x 24.5 cm
 Ickworth Castle, The National Trust

Given his close connections with the Hervey family, Rehberg may well have recovered some of the works he painted that Lord Bristol held in his collection, or it may be that the painter simply acted as intermediary to resell them. The fact is that by 1806, records Guattani, both *Cain* and *Homer guided by the Muse* were in the painter's Rome studio⁶⁴. Not long afterwards, probably in or around 1809, as the critic of *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* comments, Rehberg tried to sell *Cain* to Eugène De Beauharnais (viceroy of Milan since 1806), in whose palazzo the painting was temporarily lodged⁶⁵. However, De Beauharnais declined the option to acquire, a decision corroborated by the fact that in the many catalogues of his collection, and those of his successors, no mention is made of any work by Friedrich Rehberg. This was not, in all probability, the only work rejected by the viceroy, as Rehberg journeyed to Milan in 1810 to sell him *The Death of Niobe's Children* [fig. 7]. Despite Rehberg producing an engraving of the work with a legend stating that the painting had been done expressly for him (*Quadro dipinto per Sua Altezza Imperiale il Principe Eugenio Napoleone Vice re d'Italia*) [fig. 24] and his efforts to "mythologize" the work with a story illustrating the origin of its creation⁶⁶, the work did not awaken Eugène de Beauharnais's interest.

64 Guattani 1806, vol. II, pp. 86-87.

65 "Literarische analekten" 1809, p. 146.

66 During his first stay in Rome, "Rehberg met [in the French academy] several French grant holders who would later become leading artists, including Jacques Louis David, who struck up a close friendship with the young German, with whom he shared his most intimate thoughts. On one occasion, David confided the following to Rehberg: 'Je veux faire un tableau qui fasse trembler et frémir' [I want to paint a picture capable of shocking and making people shudder]. Shortly afterwards, he completed his *Oath of the Horatii*. Rehberg was also toying with the idea of painting a large picture, and he told David that he was going to paint a work 'qui fasse pleurer' [that would make people cry]" (Nagler 1836, p. 254). As Barbara Hardtwig notes, this conversation is apocryphal and it was Rehberg himself who later put the story about in a bid to ensure that *The Death of Niobe's Children* matched the success of the *Oath of the Horatii*. See Hardtwig 1978, vol. 3, p. 323.



24. Bartolomeo Pinelli (1781-1835) after Friedrich Rehberg (1758-1835)
The Death of Niobe's Children, 1810
 Etching on paper, 39.2 x 51.1 cm
 Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen
 Inv. no. E931

So, in 1811 the work was once again in the painter's studio, as Mario Pieri recorded from Rome on 15 October 1811:

Afterwards I went to Federico Rehberg's [studio], where I saw his *Homer led to Mt. Parnassus by Poetry*, a painting that strikes me as being somewhat mean; and the large painting of *Niobe with her family*, which has some merit, but only just passes mediocrity. His *Cain* is, to my mind, the best of all and some designs, which seem to me well done, such as *Love*, *Bathylus and Bacchus in a fine landscape*; *Love stung by a bee, who seeks succour from Venus*, etc. etc. and the odd view of Tivoli. I went to this painter as a favour to Signora Dionigi, who protects him⁶⁷.

Rehberg subsequently took the work to London, where, together with five other paintings, it was placed for sale in the exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1815. From here on, *Cain* effectively goes missing, although it almost certainly continued to change hands until it entered the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum collection in 1914⁶⁸.

Moving into the 20th century, it was Lord Bristol's *Cain* that the as yet unidentified Baron of Quinto, to which I shall refer briefly in conclusion, donated to the Bilbao museum in 1914 [fig. 25]. Today virtually nothing is known of the Baron, despite the fact that the Museum acquired a number of works from him and that he

⁶⁷ Pieri 2003, p. 396.

⁶⁸ Clearly the work was moved regularly during the artist's life, and the effect of its comings and goings can be seen in the cracking affecting the paint surface, appreciable in a specific analysis. The cracking shows the painting was rolled up during Rehberg's frequent journeys, and repeatedly reframed, which may have made the painting, executed on linen, shrink several centimetres from its original measurements. In the document for exportation to England in 1802 it is described as measuring 10 x 12 Roman palms, equivalent to 268.8 x 223.4 cm (1 Roman palm = 22.34 cm); the measurements given in the catalogue for the sale of Lord Bristol's collection in 1804 were 12 x 8 ½ Roman palms (268.8 x 189.9 cm, the second measurement possibly erroneous). During his visit to Rehberg's studio in 1806, Guattani gives the measurements as 12 by 9 Roman palms (268.8 x 201.6 cm), which is the last reference we have and fairly close to the present measurements of 257.5 x 201 cm. Nevertheless, the variations in the work's size may even be due to a simple lack of accuracy in measuring. The *Cain* in the Prussian collection measured roughly 260.3 x 201.4 cm. See Bartoschek/Vogtherr 2004, pp. 386-387.



25. Galleries, Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, Atxuri, Bilbao, c. 1930

donated others⁶⁹. From his correspondence with the Museum we only know that his name was J. Muñoz and that he lived, at least in the decade after 1910, at number 6, calle San Martín, San Sebastián. An additional curiosity is that the title of Baron of Quinto does not exist as such, the nearest being the Barony of Fuente de Quinto⁷⁰, linked in the decade after 1910 to the Valdelomar family. With all due caution, it may be that J. Muñoz was in effect José Muñoz, son of the person known in San Sebastián as Baron of Quinto⁷¹, and that this latter was in turn connected to the Valdelomar family. There was a Muñoz Valdelomar family in San Sebastián, which in the early decades of the 19th century took an active part in the city's San Telmo Museum, where it deposited a good number of old paintings⁷².

The little we know for certain about the self-styled Baron of Quinto is that he was a collector who occasionally acted as a dealer, exhibiting his collection in the decade after 1910 at a number of venues. In late 1916 and early 1917, he showed part of the collection in the Ateneo Montañés in Santander (which suggests that he probably did the same in other Athenaeums, like the one in Bilbao⁷³). We know of the exhibition through

69 Besides Rehberg's *Cain*, the Baron of Quinto donated Antonio del Castillo's *Saint Bonaventure* (inv. no. 69/57) to the Bilbao Museum of Fine Arts in 1913 and in 1915 added the *Lady and Sighthound* by Alfred Stevens (inv. no. 82/415). In 1914 he sold a *Triton* of the Flemish school, then attributed to Jacob Jordaens (inv. no. 69/138). In 1916, the Bilbao Museum acquired *Architectural capriccio with a palace* by Bernardo Belloto, then attributed to Hubert Robert (inv. no. 69/354), and *Self-Portrait in His Studio* by Antonio Gisbert (inv. no. 69/108) from the Baron.

70 Title awarded by Royal despatch on 14 February 1790 to Juan de Fábregas y Boixar, governor of Tortosa. The barony of Quinto is not strictly a title of the Kingdom, but was an ancient jurisdictional domain in Aragon used by the Funes de Villalpando and which eventually passed to the house of the Count of Montijo. The title of Baron of Fuente de Quinto was probably given in abbreviated form in press items or in other places, with the holder being referred to as the Baron of Quinto. My thanks to José María San Martín for this information.

71 When the winning ticket of a lottery prize was announced, the *La Voz* newspaper gave the name of the Baron of Quinto, José Muñoz: "The lottery ticket is in the possession of a son of the Baron of Quinto, called José Muñoz." See "El 'gordo' correspondió a un guipuzcoano residente en la Argentina" [Main lottery prize goes to man from Guipúzcoa now living in Argentina] in *La Voz*, year I, no. 150, 22 December 1920, p. 1.

72 My thanks to Arantza Barandiaran for this information. The Baron of Quinto also sold some works to the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

73 The correspondence between the Baron of Quinto and the Bilbao museum about the acquisition or donation of works generally bears the letterhead of the Bilbao Circle of Fine Arts and Athenaeum. The correspondence concerning Rehberg's *Cain* also bears the same letterhead, which points to the Baron having displayed his collection there in late 1913.

a most unfortunate incident. While the exhibition was on, the Santander Athenaeum was destroyed by fire. One José Francés described it as an "Exhibition of retrospective Art. Though of doubtful authenticity, the paintings displayed at the Ateneo Montañés were attributed to the most eminent artists of other centuries, with no guarantees but the claims made in the catalogue." Curiously, it is only due to the fire that we know some of the works in the collection, although the attributions of authorship were pretty arbitrary, "it being an exhibition for sale at relatively low prices, the dealers obliged by the lack of an art market abroad"⁷⁴. Among the names in the collection were Van Dyck, Titian, Velázquez, Goya, Zurbarán, Murillo, Leonardo da Vinci, Constable and Rembrandt.

Although some works were salvaged from another exhibition held at the same time, not a single work belonging to the Baron of Quinto was rescued. Contemporary press items noted that the exhibition was on the point of travelling to the United States and there were even veiled suggestions that the fire may have been started deliberately to collect the insurance. The Baron himself explained that the insurance had just matured and was in need of renewal, so he would receive nothing for his loss⁷⁵.

Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing whether any of the work destroyed in Santander would have been selected by the management at the incipient Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, which at that time was working to create a permanent collection, or if they would have gone into local private collections. Apart from the paintings the Baron donated and sold to the Museum, it is worth speculating about whether some of the works subsequently acquired from a number of local collectors for the Museum had at some time or another belonged to the collection of the mysterious, shadowy Baron.

⁷⁴ Francés 1918, p. 48.

⁷⁵ Córdoba 1917, p. 2.

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