

Coloniality at Global Scales: Reframing the Nineteenth-Century Exhibition Image

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———— This study advocates for the necessity of writing more lateral art histories across cultures and geographies in the global 19th century by placing two history painters, the Estonian Johann Köler (1826–1899) and the Peruvian Luis Montero (1826–1869), into conversation. Although the role of indigenous actors within local histories of colonial conquest loomed large for both artists, the enduring Eurocentrism of 19th-century art history has limited how we might understand the commensurability of coloniality in the period. This study serves as an experimental roadmap for transcending these historiographical limitations, establishing the 19th century as a significant period of cultural correspondence between Eastern Europe and Latin America.

Keywords: global art history, postcolonialism, coloniality, conquest, indigeneity, history painting, Estonia, Peru.



1.
Johann Köler, *Lorelei Cursed by Monks*, 1887, Art Museum of Estonia, Tallinn

A searing orange light illuminates sinister faces and glistening golden crosses [Fig. 1]. A silver thurible swings in the air, releasing the fragrant smoke of incense that mingles with the scent of lavender bundles. Moonlight shines onto nymphs, whose corporeality is both aqueous and fleshy. One nymph mirrors the form of a monk as they both lunge towards a central nude figure, who twists her body over a precarious peak. Whereas the nymph beckons the woman forward in a welcoming embrace, the monk

thrusts a cross forward to invoke holy intercession against her. Fusing with a diaphanous veil, the woman's sinuous golden locks rise up as if in recoil to the fiery heat emanating from below. Her anxious expression manifests the urgency of her escape from the monks. However, she has not yet escaped. She sits suspended between the domains of fire and water, Christianity and paganism, as well as capture and liberation. Despite her liminal position, the woman knows which path she will take; her right foot placed firmly on the slippery precipice, she is poised to propel herself downwards into the sea.

The Estonian painter Johann Köler (1826–1899) created *Lorelei Cursed by Monks* in Paris in 1887, with its debut showing in Vienna in 1889. Köler adapted the subject of a German myth, wherein the siren Lorelei, seeking to escape bishops who want to confine her to a nunnery, fatally falls into the River Rhine. The myth assumed pictorial form most often in the guise of a single siren seated on a rocky outcrop above a river. By contrast, Köler's painted vision of the myth evaded the expected teleology of Lorelei's death, while making Christian monks appear devilish [Fig. 2]. Despite its centrality to the composition of the painting, this visual transformation of the myth – establishing Lorelei's agency as well as demonising the monks – has received little attention¹. As we will see, an aversion to contend with the politics of coloniality within an Eastern European context and the parochial Eurocentrism of 19th-century art history have limited how we might make meaning from Köler's juxtaposition of ethereal nymphs and fiendish monks.

This article lingers on Lorelei's liminality in Johann Köler's grand canvas as a space to explore the potentials of global art history by foregrounding parallels with Latin American contemporaries. The figure of the malevolent monk serves as a pivotal connective thread between Eastern Europe and Latin America in the 19th century. A rare motif in European art, the fiendish monk was a prominent figure in 19th-century Latin American painting. Grappling with the inherent violence of the *conquista* without wanting to denigrate Catholicism, Latin American history painters

1 It is true that by the 19th century, Estonian and Latvian areas of the Baltic Provinces were majority Protestant, so the notion of a fiendish monk may have been accepted truth. However, the period's visual imagery, largely created by Baltic Germans, connected monk iconography less with Catholicism than with imaginaries of Teutonic missionary history in the region. See Linda Kaljundi, and Tiina-Mall Kreem, *Ajalugu pildis, pilt ajaloo. Rahvustik ja rahvusülene minevik Eesti kunstis*, Tallinn: Eesti Kunstimuuseum, 2018.



2.
Detail of monks from
Johann Köler, *Lorelei
Cursed by Monks*, 1887,
Art Museum of Estonia,
Tallinn

increasingly emphasised the barbarity of the *conquistadores* as a foil to the exploited indigenous body.

By drawing parallels with the Peruvian painter Luis Montero (1826–1869), I posit Johann Köler’s painting as emblematic of a global conversation on coloniality in the 19th century. Both Montero and Köler were concerned with depicting the complications of colonial conquest, while grappling with the 19th century’s limited prescriptions of indigeneity. In this regard, Montero is one of many pertinent examples of Latin American history painters that could have been examined, including the Mexican Felix Parra or the Brazilian Victor Mereilles². Montero is an important foil to Köler due to the specific ways in which Estonians engaged with Andean culture in the 19th century. The correspondences between Köler and Montero help reveal how 19th-century painters from opposite ends of the globe

2 On 19th-century history painting in Mexico, see Stacie Widdifield, *The Embodiment of the Nation in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexican Painting*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998.

could deploy the genre of large-scale history painting in order to contend with what Chilean philosopher Pablo Oyarzún has called the persistence of coloniality's "traumatic history"³. I have two specific aims in exploring such questions. First, I advocate for the necessity of writing more lateral art histories across cultures and geographies in the global 19th century. Second, by extending Oyarzún's observations to specific conditions of coloniality in Eastern Europe, we can chart connections that intertwine Latin America and Eastern Europe in ways that are refreshingly divorced from political narratives of the 20th century. In order to do so, however, we must first confront the spectre of 19th-century art history's Eurocentrism.

Eurocentrism and the Global 19th Century

At 395 by 345 centimetres, *Lorelei Cursed by Monks* is the largest canvas of the artist's career. Köler's depiction of mythological sirens at such a scale has warranted comparisons with grandiose salon paintings by such European artists as Arnold Böcklin, Ilya Repin, and even Pierre Puvis de Chavannes. Such a reading has encouraged the interpretation of the image as a painting that reacted to the "prevailing winds of European art", to become destined for "a rich gold frame to be enjoyed at a distance in a large, Neo-Baroque decorated space"⁴. This method of locating Köler's painting within a constellation of better-known European artists is symptomatic of what sociologist Johannes Saar has called the "Eurocentrist turn [that] has taken place in Estonian historiography"⁵. In the realm of art history writing, such Eurocentrism manifests in a "certain conformity to the centralist cartography of European culture", a mapping wherein the travels of Johann Köler between Paris, Vienna, Rome, and St. Petersburg, for instance, suggest an aspirational Estonian cosmopolitanism that escapes the supposed provinciality of his homeland. If Saar's postcolonial lens reveals the presence of Eurocentrism, it also contains the tools to transcend it.

Janet Berlo, a historian of Native American art, has rightly noted that one of the most enduring art historical divides is that "between the

3 Pablo Oyarzún, "Memory, Moment, and Tears: A Speculative Approach to the Problem of Latin American Singularities", in: *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 7, No. 3: *Singularities of Latin American Philosophy*, Winter 2007, p. 17.

4 Mai Levin, *Johann Köler (1826–1899)*, Tallinn: Eesti Kunstimuuseum, 2019, p. 279.

5 Johannes Saar, "Cultural imaginaries of the postcolony: A critical discourse analysis of cross-cultural references of Estonian art history through a postcolonial lens", in: *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, 2018, pp. 463–484.

art history that is framed solely within a Eurocentric geographical position and the one that for decades has taken as its purview the whole world and its many peoples and art histories”⁶. Since art history’s global turn is indebted to postcolonial studies, Europeanists often reference that field’s “bracing challenges”, citing Dipesh Chakrabarty’s *Provincializing Europe* or Christopher Pinney’s idea of an always already “creolized Europe”⁷. Rarely do Europeanists engage the ramifications of these provocations. Chakrabarty famously lamented, “A third-world historian is condemned to knowing ‘Europe’ as the original home of the ‘modern’, whereas the ‘European’ historian does not share a comparable predicament with regards to the pasts of the majority of humankind”⁸. Despite the discipline’s global re-orientation and their cognisance of this epistemic imbalance, Europeanists seldom implement any change to their practice, the artists and works they consider, or the contexts in which they functioned. I find solace in the call of cultural historian Gregory Jusdanis to rethink what a postcolonial lens can reveal. Jusdanis emphasises that “we have much to gain by going from Manila to Montevideo without having to pass through Madrid or Miami. Indeed, it would be valuable and liberating to connect Cuzco and Constantinople analytically, even if not a single person had actually travelled between these two cities directly”⁹. From the perspective of 19th-century art, Jusdanis’s point of view also liberates art historians from the necessity of using Paris – or any imperial centre – as a benchmark. Although world fairs did indeed function as “spaces of global knowledge production”, as Sven Schuster has recently argued, the authoritative aura and prestige of these venues need not determine our understanding of these artworks¹⁰.

6 Janet Catherine Berlo, “Anthropologies and Histories of Art: A View from the Terrain of Native North American Art History”, in: *Anthropologies of Art*, ed. Mariet Westermann, Williamstown, MA: The Clark Art Institute, 2005, pp. 183–184.

7 Hollis Clayton and André Dombrowski, eds., *Is Paris Still the Capital of the Nineteenth Century? Essays on Art and Modernity, 1850–1900*, London and New York: Routledge, 2017, p. 110; Christopher Pinney, “Creole Europe: The Reflection of a Reflection”, in: *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 2002, pp. 125–159.

8 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 42.

9 Gregory Jusdanis, “From Cuzco to Constantinople: Rethinking Postcolonialism”, in: *Postcolonialism Cross-Examined. Multidirectional Perspectives on Imperial and Colonial Pasts and the Neocolonial Present*, ed. Monika Albrecht, Routledge: Oxford and New York, 2020, p. 213.

10 Sven Schuster, “The World Fairs as Spaces of Global Knowledge: Latin American Anthropology and Archaeology in the Age of Exhibitions”, in: *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2018, pp. 69–93.

Since the global turn has made scholarship on once marginalised geographies ever more accessible, it is our responsibility to learn from these new art histories – or, conversely, prioritise acquainting ourselves with art histories written by scholars working in these geographies – and change our reference points and modes of analyses accordingly. By putting Johann Köler in dialogue with Luis Montero, I explore how we can develop such comparisons into praxis¹¹.

Conquest and Coloniality

Circa 1200, the area of Livonia, today's Estonia and Latvia, was among the last bastions of paganism in a Christianising Europe¹². Arriving under the banner of the Crusades, Teutonic knights conquered the region, leaving indigenous pagans, as Joep Leerssen has succinctly narrated, to become “either enslaved and forcibly converted to Christianity or else exterminated”¹³. Medievalists studying the Baltic conquest have long emphasised its global ramifications. As the historian James Brundage argued as early as 1972, “the Livonian crusade was the first significantly successful effort to couple missionary activity with crusading conquest <...> only in the sixteenth century do we find a parallel strategy successfully employed again – this time by the *conquistadores* in America. The missionary conquests of the Spaniards in the New World employed a remarkable number of ideas and techniques which were first worked out successfully in thirteenth-century Livonia”¹⁴. Walter Mignolo has argued that globalisation can trace its roots to the birth of a Eurocentric capitalism in the 16th century, one dependent on perpetuating and codifying inequalities between

11 Natalia Majluf has recently noted that the boom in scholarship on 19th-century Latin American art remains mostly in Spanish, limiting its international access. Natalia Majluf, “Book Review: *Mexican Costumbrismo*”, in: *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2020, pp. 130–131. An important change is the July 2020 edition of the Colombian art history journal H-ART Revista de historia, teoría, y crítica de arte. A special issue edited by Véronica Uribe Hanabergh on 19th-century Colombian art, “Dossier Colombia, siglo XIX: viajes, intercambios y otras formas de circulación”, includes essays in English by Maya Jiménez, Juanita Solano Roa, and Véronica Uribe Hanabergh.

12 The area of Sápmi is an important outlier here.

13 Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006, p. 28.

14 James Brundage, “The Thirteenth-Century Livonian Crusade: Henricus de Lettis and the First Legatine Mission of Bishop William of Modena”, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Neue Folge, Vol. 20, No. 1, March 1972, pp. 8–9.

Amerindians, Africans, and Europeans¹⁵. Aníbal Quijano similarly argues that race emerged as an invention in this period to categorise and normalise these colonial inequalities, what he has famously termed the “coloniality of power”¹⁶.

If the Livonian crusades provided a blueprint for the Iberian colonisation of the Americas, the racialised social stratifications of the Americas proved an important model of social segregation to the elite of early modern Livonia¹⁷. By the 15th and 16th centuries, linguistic and ethnic difference became inextricable from social class in Livonia, rendering indigenous Latvians and Estonians as an enserfed peasantry under Baltic German feudal lords. There is now wide scholarly consensus that the Baltic region operated within a colonial framework dependent on a strict racialised social hierarchy of power until the fall of the Russian Empire¹⁸.

Coloniality is at stake in Johann Köler’s painting for a specific reason: when a private collector brought the image to the fledgling Republic of Estonia, he debuted the work in 1920 under the title *The Arrival of Christianity to Livonia*¹⁹. This new name sutured the painting to the medieval Teutonic conquest of Livonia. Under this schema, the image becomes an allegory of the primordial clash of civilisations between Teutonic monks and the indigenous forbearers of the Estonians. Aníbal Quijano has

15 Walter Dignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.

16 Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America”, in: *Nepantla: Views from the South*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2000, pp. 533–580.

17 Linda Kaljundi, “Pagans into Peasants; Ethnic and Social Boundaries in Early Modern Livonia”, in: *Re-forming Texts, Music, and Church Art in the Early Modern North*, eds. Tuomas Lehtonen, and Linda Kaljundi, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018, p. 387.

18 Violeta Kelertas, ed., *Baltic Postcolonialism*, Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi, 2006, p. 47; Jaan Undusk, “Kolm võimalust kirjutada eestlaste ajalugu. Merkel, Jakobson, Hurt”, in: *Keel ja Kirjandus*, No. 11, 2007, pp. 721–734; No. 12, 2007, pp. 797–811; Ulrike Plath, *Esten und Deutsche in den baltischen Provinzen Russlands. Fremdheitskonstruktionen, Lebenswelten, Kolonialphantasien 1750–1850*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011; Ivars Ijabs, “Another Baltic Postcolonialism: Young Latvians, Baltic Germans, and the Emergence of the Latvian National Movement”, in: *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2014, pp. 88–107.

19 The painting was first seen by Estonian audiences in Tartu at an exhibition of the private collection of Mihkel Ulemann. Writing on the exhibition, the influential art critic August Alle referred to the painting solely as *The Arrival of Christianity to Estonia* and analysed the image at length, writing, “Köler’s giant allegorical painting *The Arrival of Christianity to Estonia* hangs on the southeast back wall of the Pallas room. As far as I know, not a single word has been written about this work by the esteemed Estonian artist: arriving into a private collection, it had disappeared like a candle under a bushel”. August Alle, “Kunstinäitus”, in: *Postimees*, 6 November 1920. From this date, other newspapers refer to the painting by this second name.

stressed that we cannot see the enserfment of indigenous Americans under Iberian colonialism as commensurate with European serfdom, but his point of reference is decidedly Western European²⁰. Serfdom endured much longer in parts of Eastern Europe, and in the Baltic region in particular, it served as a tool of enduring ethnic segregation²¹. As we will see, the cultural production of 19th-century Estonians in the wake of abolition make explicit reference to aligning histories of conquest between Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Estonians in the Andes

In 1866, a new novella set in colonial Peru warranted the first book review ever penned in the Estonian language. Lydia Koidula's *The Last Inca of Peru* (*Peruamaa wiimne inka*) explores indigenous resilience to foment political justice through the character of Huáscar, despite his trials and tribulations with Spanish colonial structures. A writer for the newspaper *Perno Postimees* recommended Koidula's book because it "forces one to mull over and deeply consider one's own self and the conditions of our own time"²². As Piret Peiker has made clear, Koidula peppered *The Last Inca* with Estonian peasant sayings in order to connect it to everyday Estonian life. Peiker has also demonstrated how *The Last Inca* is "obsessed with information and explanation", casting education as a source of social strength and power²³. Koidula legitimised historical change as possible and contests Spanish/Baltic German rule as a natural phenomenon, beseeching her kinsfolk to galvanise for social change²⁴.

There is another element that brought Latin America more directly to the art scene of the Baltic Provinces. Julie Hagen Schwarz (1824–1902), one of the most renowned Baltic painters of the 19th century, trained with Johann Moritz Rugendas (1802–1858), the German painter famous for his images of 19th-century Latin America, especially lithographs depicting

20 Anibal Quijano, *op. cit.*, p. 537.

21 Serfdom was abolished on different dates in each of the Baltic Provinces: 1816 in Estland, 1817 in Kurland, and 1819 in Livland. See Linda Kaljundi, and Ulrike Plath, "Serfdom as Entanglement: Narratives of a Social Phenomenon in Baltic History Writing", in: *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 3, 2020, pp. 349–372.

22 "Sõbrra sowiminne", in: *Perno Postimees*, 2 February 1866.

23 Piret Peiker, "Postcolonial Change: Power, Peru, and Estonian Literature", in: *Baltic Postcolonialism*, ed. Violeta Kelertas, p. 125.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 126.

the contemporary life of enslaved Black Brazilians. The German art historian Christin Conrad has recently attributed to Hagen Schwarz a portrait of Johann Moritz Rugendas in Brazilian dress beside an unidentified indigenous figure, currently in the collection of Tallinn's Kadriorg Art Museum²⁵. The artist had exhibited it at least once in Tartu in the 1850s. The Kadriorg Art Museum also holds a large oil portrait of an indigenous man from the Americas by Rugendas, suggesting some degree of circulation of Latin American imagery by European painters in the Baltic Provinces in the 1850s and 1860s²⁶.

Latin American culture and history informed the representation of the Baltic Provinces as a colonial space in text as well as image in the 19th century. However, if we follow Jusdanis's encouragement, then we also have much to gain from shifting our focus from Peruvians as cultural metaphors for Europeans to 19th-century Peruvians as independent cultural makers in their own right.

Colonial Conflict on an International Stage

In 1867, the Peruvian painter Luis Montero completed *The Funerals of Atahualpa*, a grand canvas that would inaugurate the tradition of history painting in South America [Fig. 3]. Distraught in their anguish and grief, Andean women burst onto the scene at the left, interrupting the rites administered by Spanish monks and soldiers in the heart of an Incan temple. Still in chains, the corpse of Atahualpa, the last Sapa Inca of Tawantsiyu – divine ruler of the Incan Empire – is swaddled in an *uncu* (Andean tunic) and a crimson red cape. Together with his two-feathered headdress known as a *maskaypacha*, these textiles communicated Andean notions of kingship, power, and authority. The bright reds of Atahualpa's sumptuous fabrics dazzle against the green cloth embroidered with golden thread in the shapes of llamas and zig-zag designs, distinguishing the fallen Incan ruler from the austerity of Spanish soldiers and monks draped in blacks and creams.

²⁵ Christin Conrad, "Das Bild hat einigen historischen Werth und deshalb wird es vielleicht ausgestellt...". Zum Ausstellungsdebüt Julie Hagens in München: Das Porträt des Freundes und Mentors Moritz Rugendas", in: *Baltic Journal of Art History*, Vol. 12, Autumn 2016, pp. 29–58.

²⁶ See the painting labeled *Indiaanlane* (Indian) in the collection of foreign painting of the Art Museum of Estonia under the accession number EKM j 24369 VM 894.



3.
Luis Montero, *The Funerals of Atahualpa*, 1867, Art Museum of Lima

The image monumentalises a stinging irony at the foundation of Peruvian as well as Latin American history more broadly. Despite their culpability in the assassination of the Sapa Inca, the Spaniards perform Catholic funeral rites over his body, because Atahualpa had converted to Christianity before his death. As Nanda Leonardini has argued, the presence of thirty-three distinct figures in the painting may allude to the fact that both Atahualpa and Jesus Christ died at the age of thirty-three, casting Atahualpa as a martyr whose death was the foundation of the Peruvian nation²⁷. Atahualpa's sinking face sits on a secondary picture plane to Francisco Pizarro, who appears directly above him. Atahualpa and Pizarro therefore become, in the words of Natalia Majluf, "visually linked"²⁸, revealing how the death of one actor is intertwined with the rise of another. For Leonardini, the image is not only an icon of Peruvian nationalism, but also a "fine critique of Spain and the clergy"²⁹.

27 Nanda Leonardini, "Acercamiento plástico a la historia del Perú contemporáneo: Los Funerales de Atahualpa", in: *NORBA, Revista de Arte*, No. 32-33, 2012-2013, pp. 238-239.

28 Natalia Majluf, "El rostro del Inca. Raza y representación en Los funerales de Atahualpa de Luis Montero", in: *Illapa Mana Tukukuq*, No. 1, December 2004, pp. 11-28.

29 Nanda Leonardini, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

It is hardly surprising that the anticolonial ethos of independence would later assume pictorial form as moments of tense colonial conflict. In Montero's picture, the conflict is not just a divide between Andeans and Spaniards, but also between women and men. Entangled in violence, Spanish soldiers tackle, grab, and shove the indigenous women and yank their hair. A central monk raises his palm to the woman closest to reaching Atahualpa, while other monks sneer and raise their eyebrows. At the extreme right of the picture, Pizarro appears solemn, even statuesque, but also indifferent to the violence enacted before him.

Important to the power of Montero's painting is its scale. At 400 by 620 centimetres, *The Funerals of Atahualpa* was destined to be an exhibition picture. As Majluf rightly notes, "Montero's painting had everything that the public could expect from a grand history picture: violence and eroticism, spectacle and drama. It was clear, ambitious, and local all at once"³⁰. Montero laboured on the painting for over two years while living in Florence, hoping to display it at the Paris world's fair of 1867. Although Montero was unable to bring his canvas to Paris, his potential aims for wanting to do so warrant brief consideration, since his Estonian contemporary Johann Köler would display two paintings at the same fair³¹.

Initially, the participation of Latin American artists at world fairs appeared negligible. Out of some 2,000 artworks on display at the 1855 Paris world's fair, only six were from Latin America by three artists, the Peruvians Francisco Laso and Ignacio Merino, and the Mexican painter Juan Cordero. Though Laso had painted a stinging commentary on the oppression and exclusion of indigenous people in Peruvian society, French critics erroneously found a quaint image of an Incan artisan, celebrating exoticism while denying the ability of the Latin American painter to make prescient political commentary. In her incisive 1997 critique of the writing of 19th century art histories, Natalia Majluf complicates the "failure" of Francisco Laso's debut in Paris, denouncing the structural biases that made international success for Latin American artists impossible on their own terms, structures that continue to keep them out of new art histories today³².

³⁰ Natalia Majluf, "El rostro del Inca", p. 13.

³¹ Mai Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 465.

³² Natalia Majluf, "Ce n'est pas le Pérou', or, the Failure of Authenticity: Marginal Cosmopolitans at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855", in: *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23, No. 4, Summer 1997, pp. 868–893.

This initial Peruvian “failure” in 1855 no doubt influenced Luis Montero, whose 1867 *The Funerals of Atahualpa* adapted to European demands for alterity in subject matter, while deploying the conventions of academic history painting – that most esteemed genre of the 19th century – to garner prestige and demonstrate Peru’s intellectual and cultural equity with the other nations of the world. Though Montero did not exhibit his artwork in Paris, the work’s calculated celebratory press coverage as it toured Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires before arriving in Lima demonstrated a similar mode of reckoning with diverse transnational audiences.

Lorelei’s Maskaypacha

The coloniality of Peru is uncontested, and to explore how a Peruvian painter depicted conquest and indigeneity does not raise any eyebrows. Thinking through coloniality and conquest in Johann Köler’s painting, by contrast, has not always been welcome. Before Violeta Kelertas published her pioneering edited volume *Baltic Postcolonialism* in 2006, scholars were reluctant to use postcolonial theory to consider the power relations embedded in the history and culture of the Baltic States. In 2001, for instance, art historian Anu Allas denounced the potential for Köler’s Lorelei *Cursed by Monks* to embody any “between-the-lines meaning” about Estonian history³³. Her critique hinged on the new title that the painting gained in the interwar period, *The Arrival of Christianity to Livonia (Ristiusu tulek Liivimaale)*³⁴. In the 1920s and 1930s, Estonian history writing assumed distinctly nationalist valences, providing a proud patriotic past that 19th-century observers had deemed impossible. Upon seeing Köler’s painting for the first time in 1920, the art critic August Alle noted that, “Even the critic of our time would have much to say, not only about the artwork’s technical perfection, but also its sweet and romantic patriotic tones”³⁵. For the first time, Estonians were writing their own histories on a large scale, injecting pride and resolve into narratives that Baltic Germans had long described as savage and degenerate. In this environment, Köler’s painting actually

³³ Anu Allas, “Kõrge kunsti kaitseks”, in: *Sirp*, 27 April 2001.

³⁴ Elsewhere, this title is also written as *Ristiusu tulek Eestimaale, The Arrival of Christianity to Estonia*. The “Livonia” title is what accompanies the painting’s record in its current location at the Art Museum of Estonia in Tallinn.

³⁵ August Alle, “Kunstinäitus”, in: *Postimees*, 6 November 1920.

became the subject of periodical debate, with some advocating that the image should decorate the new parliament building of the young republic³⁶.

Nevertheless, Allas has suggested that this later interwar title created “entrancing presumptions about a nascent Estonian national consciousness, which eagerly adopted the figure of the weak, innocent, suffering young maiden, even if a foolish farm girl with magical powers had deformed into a flippant maiden awaiting her capture”³⁷. Her critique is therefore not so concerned with coloniality, but rather with the gendered violence inherent therein. By suggesting that Köler’s painting was not an allegory of colonial conquest, Allas encourages viewers to reject the visual trope of the nude woman as the embodiment of the nation. In so doing, she ensures that we temper any assumptions that one of the largest paintings on display in the Art Museum of Estonia is an allegory of violent sexual conquest.

In an earlier completed oil sketch for *Lorelei Cursed by Monks* (Fig. 4), Johann Köler painted Lorelei alone on the edge of the rock, conforming to the more typical pictorial representations of the myth. In this painted world of Lorelei, however, furrowed brows suggest determination and resolve instead of the anguish or terror of the final version. Viewers familiar with the myth must instead imagine the malice of men beyond the picture plane. The most important distinction is the golden crown encrusted with a blue jewel that sits upon her head, absent in all other representations of the Lorelei myth. Instead of pagan nymphs of the River Rhine, the crown raises questions of sovereignty, making it possible that Lorelei embodies an indigenous female sovereign. The crown therefore offers the potential to explore other literary sources beyond the German myth of Lorelei that might have influenced Köler’s endeavours.

The topos of the crowned Estonian recalled certain modes of myth-making that surrounded the St. George’s Night Uprising (*Jüriöö ülestõus*) of 1343–1345, when, over a century after conquest, indigenous insurgents strove to reassert sovereignty over native lands variously controlled by the Teutonic Order and Denmark. Initially successful, a key turning point occurred when four elected Estonian kings travelled to the castle at Paide to negotiate with Teutonic forces. Upon arrival, foreign armies

³⁶ Or, “Riigikogu uue hoone kaunistamiest”, in: *Tallinna Teataja*, 14 April 1921.

³⁷ Anu Allas, *op. cit.*



4.
Johann Köler, Early
oil sketch of Lorelei,
ca. 1887, Art Museum of
Estonia, Tallinn

overwhelmed indigenous forces and executed the new native kings, securing Teutonic power in the region for centuries. A paucity of sources, however, has made the rebellion a malleable myth-making tool in Estonian historiography. In the 16th century, German-authored narratives presented the St. George's Night Uprising as a radical effort at inverting the established social order³⁸. Johann Rander's rendition in his *Liflandische historia* of the 1570s is especially telling:

They elected four Estonian peasants as kings; these adorned themselves with golden spurs and many-colored coats, on their heads they put virgin crowns (that were in fashion in those days and golden), which they had stolen, they bound golden belts around their bodies; this was their royal insignia. Those women and children who had escaped from men were killed by the non-German women; they burned

38 Linda Kaljundi, "Pagans into Peasants", p. 379.



5.
Detail of Atahualpa's *maskaypacha*, from Luis Montero,
The Funerals of Atahualpa, 1867, Art Museum of Lima

down the churches and the huts [of the monks]. When this had happened, the kings proceeded together with the Estonians and they besieged Reval with ten thousand men. There they accoladed the knights.³⁹

Estonian cultural historian Linda Kaljundi has made clear how this reading is typical of “representing peasant warfare that emphasise [the peasants’] irrationality as warriors and incompetence as rulers”⁴⁰. Render mocks Estonians by casting their sartorial expressions of power as an absurd mode of colonial mimicry. We can also understand the indigenous use of golden royal insignia, even if “stolen” from a foreign elite, as an important kind of pageantry. It is in this vein that it is important to return to Luis Montero’s depiction of Atahualpa.

Natalia Majluf has detailed how critics ascribed the veracity of Montero’s painting to the depiction of the face of the Sapa Inca, an aspect critics described “with an almost morbid fascination” [Fig. 5]⁴¹. Palemón Tinajeros, an aspiring Peruvian artist from Arequipa, had succumbed to a lung infection in Florence, precisely at the moment Montero was preparing his grand canvas. Through his death, Tinajeros became a visual source of racial type that Montero deployed to assert the physiognomic authenticity of his portrait of the fallen Atahualpa.

While Majluf has rightly called attention to the discourses of racial thinking and exploitation that informed the production and reception of

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Natalia Majluf, “El rostro del Inca”, p. 14.



6.
Unidentified artist, *Portrait of Don Marcos Chiguan Topa*,
ca. 1740–1745, Museo Inka, Cuzco, Peru

Montero’s portrayal of Tinajeros, let us also consider that the public emphasis on the face of the Inca also highlighted his headdress, a *maskaypacha*. Initially reserved for the Sapa Inca, the *maskaypacha* became a pivotal aspect of self-fashioning for those Indigenous elite in colonial Peru who claimed royal descent by tracing their bloodlines to Atahualpa and Huáscar, therefore assuming social privileges unavailable to other Andeans [Fig. 6]. As the colonial *maskaypacha* transformed to incorporate European royal insignia, it became, as Carolyn Dean explains, “an affirmation of mediativity which asserted an Andean appreciation of the in-between. Rather than being the shameful product of cultural miscegenation, the colonial *maskaypacha* celebrates the interstices”⁴². That the *maskaypacha* became a symbol of Indigenous adaptation and survival throughout Peruvian history may not have mattered to Montero, who in 1867 sought to monumentalise a selective vision of the “authentic” Incan past for diverse audiences. For Andean viewers of Montero’s image, however, the significance that the headdress had slowly accrued throughout the colonial period would have still been redolent with meaning.

Painting Lorelei as crowned endows her with a type of colonial *maskaypacha*, insofar as that – at least according to Baltic German historiography of the St. George’s Night Uprising – Estonians repurposed the

⁴² Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco*, Peru, Durham: Duke University Press, 1999, p. 161.

golden crown from the colonial elite and adapted it towards indigenous ends of reclamation and survival. The uprising had assumed new relevance among Estonians after 1880 when it became the subject of Eduard Bornhöhe's *The Avenger* (*Tasuja*), the first historical novel in the Estonian language. Literary scholar Eneken Laanes has remarked how *The Avenger* introduced the uprising to Estonian readers, having otherwise been "an event virtually unknown in the Estonian historical narrative at this time"⁴³. An Estonian reinterpretation of the uprising was therefore topical, shrouded here in myth and allegory at a time when imperial powers heavily policed expressions of indigenous identity in the Baltic Provinces.

Yet, the crown never materialized in Köler's final version, reflecting the reality that political independence was far from the minds of most Estonians in the 1880s⁴⁴. Let us remember that in colonial Peru, the *maskaypacha* harkened back to historical hegemony, and not political sovereignty in the present. By reading Lorelei's crown as a colonial *maskaypacha*, we can understand its visual erasure in the final version as Köler's attempt to endow Lorelei with what Mark Rifkin has called "temporal sovereignty"⁴⁵. As Rifkin explains, "What does not provide a set pattern, like a mold, for what *will* or *could be*. Rather, the exertion of temporal sovereignty in the face of a history of settler violence and displacement consists in an ongoing *re-creation* oriented by an engagement with the historical density – the 'pieces' – of collective identity and experience"⁴⁶. Depicting the height of Teutonic conquest, as Christian monks strive to eradicate pagan nymphs, *Lorelei Pursued by Monks* refuses to concede to colonial triumph. By lingering in this liminality, Köler questions the finality of indigenous death, and raises the possibilities of other futures.

⁴³ Eneken Laanes, "Cultural Memory, Travelling Forms and the Boundaries of the Nation: The Free Man in Eduard Bornhöhe's *The Avenger*", in: *Novels, Histories, Novel Nations: Historical Fiction and Cultural Memory in Finland and Estonia*, eds. Linda Kaljundi, Eneken Laanes and Ilona Pikkanen, Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2015, p. 121.

⁴⁴ Toivo Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, pp. 66–67.

⁴⁵ Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

⁴⁶ Mark Rifkin, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Conclusion

“I am not interested in tracing the European intellectual origins of the works and texts I present in this book insomuch as I want to acknowledge them and move onto more pressing issues”⁴⁷. Thus writes Harper Montgomery in the introduction to her 2017 book on Latin American modernism of the 1920s. In a separate 2015 study on the notions of “artist” and “artwork” in colonial Latin America, Barbara Mundy and Aaron Hyman similarly emphasise that “resemblance to European prototypes is an essential *historical* reality, it need and should not be a *historiographic* one”⁴⁸. Despite the centuries between these fields of inquiry, their shared geography demands consistent refusal of Eurocentrism even in the wake of art history’s global reorientation. The issue, of course, is the assumption of unidirectional influence in a hierarchical relationship between European and Latin American aesthetic modes.

Here I have striven to chart a mode of engaging with resemblance that upends traditional power relations assumed in art historical narratives of the relationship between Latin America and Europe. My aim has not been to demonstrate some unsung Latin American influence on 19th-century Baltic artists, but instead provoke new ways of contending with the commensurability of coloniality at global scales in the 19th century. Doing so changes how we look at 19th-century Latin American art, a subfield that, at least in Anglophone scholarship, has received markedly less attention in art history’s global turn than the colonial era or post-war abstraction and conceptualism. From the perspective of Eastern Europe, and the Baltic in particular, I intend for such a proposal to be equally provocative and encourage widening the contexts and modes of analysis of Baltic art that transcend Saar’s “centralist cartography of European culture”.

The work of Luis Montero lends itself as careful comparanda with that of Johann Köler because of their shared formats as large-scale history paintings destined for international exhibition venues. Tying such 19th-century exhibition pictures too closely to their specific histories of display reifies the centres that hosted such exhibitions, places whose audiences

⁴⁷ Harper Montgomery, *The Mobility of Modernism: Art and Criticism in 1920s Latin America*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017, p. 3.

⁴⁸ Barbara Mundy and Aaron Hyman, “Out of the Shadow of Vasari: Towards a New Model of the ‘Artist’ in Colonial Latin America”, in: *Colonial Latin American Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 2015, p. 292. Emphasis in original.

routinely misunderstood the aims of these artists. Rather than deriving the value of these works from the locations where these artists exhibited, or the accolades they did or did not receive, it is equally significant to tease out the pragmatic factors that motivated their contemporaneous creation.

The Funerals of Atahualpa and *Lorelei Cursed by Monks* grapple with how to visualise indigeneity in the midst of colonial conquest. Although both acknowledge the violence and destruction of their respective Teutonic and Iberian campaigns, their ideas on the finality of conquest diverge. Montero's artwork demands indigenous death as a necessary casualty in the foundation of Peru, capitalising on the actual death of the artist's colleague Palemón Tinajeros in order to coat his painting with the veneer of racial veracity. Montero therefore contributes to what Peruvian philosopher Omar Rivera describes as "aesthetic forms that aspire to constitute a national imaginary on the basis of a neat, episodic, historical progression that would leave the present intact and univocal in its closure"⁴⁹. By contrast, Köler's painting invites the viewer to dwell in the interstices, conceding neither to Teutonic control nor to Lorelei's absolute salvation. The onset of settler colonialism in the Baltic appears as radically unsettled. From this perspective, Köler's true contemporary was not the pale-skinned Montero, but instead the brown-skinned Tinajeros, who would never have the privilege to paint Peruvian history on a grand scale, succumbing to the fate that mythology had once destined for Lorelei.

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⁴⁹ Omar Rivera, "Approaching Racial Embodiment, Aesthetics, and Liberation in José Carlos Mariátegui's *Seven Essays*", in: *APA Newsletter for Hispanic / Latino Issues in Philosophy*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Fall 2019, p. 31.

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Santrauka

Globalus kolonialumas: XIX a. istorinių paveikslų permąstymas

Bart Pushaw

Reikšminiai žodžiai: globali dailės istorija, postkolonializmas, kolonialumas, nukariavimai, autochtoniškumas, istorinio žanro tapyba, Estija, Peru.

Straipsnyje gretinami du XIX a. istorinio žanro tapytojai: estas Johannas Köleris (1826–1899) ir perujietis Luisas Montero (1826–1869). Nors meno istorijoje nuo XX a. paskutiniojo dešimtmečio persiorientuojama globalios perspektyvos link, XIX a. meno istorijos tyrimuose Lotynų Amerika ir Rytų Europa vis dar traktuojamos kaip menkavertės provincijos. Iš dalies dėl to kaltas tyrėjų polinkis susitaikyti su tuo, ką Johannesas Saaras vadina „europocentriška kultūros kartografija“. Kolonialumo (angl. *coloniality*) tyrimai šioje vietoje gali padėti išryškinti XX a. politinį kontekstą peržengiančias sąsajas tarp Lotynų Amerikos ir Rytų Europos. Nagrinėjant sąsajas tarp Kölerio ir Montero, straipsnyje atskleidžiama, kaip paminėtų regionų menininkai, pasitelkdami prestižiškiausią to meto dailės žanrą – stambaus mastelio akademinę istorinę tapybą, kvestionavo autochtoniškumo (angl. *indigeneity*) vaidmenį kolonijinių nukariavimų kontekste.

Montero drobėje *Laidotuvės Atahualpoje* (1867) ir Kölerio paveiksle *Vienuolių prakeiktoji Lorelei* (1887) pripažįstamas iberiškosios ir teutoniškosios kolonijinių kampanijų smurtingumas, tačiau skiriasi dailininkų pozicijos kolonializmo pasekmių atžvilgiu. Montero kūrinyje indigenų mirtys pateikiamos kaip neišvengiama Peru valstybingumo prielaida. Tuo tarpu Kölerio darbas kviečia žiūrovą atkreipti dėmesį į neapibrėžtumus – jame nepripažįstama nei Vokiečių ordino viršenybė, nei absoliutus pačios Lorelei išganymas, taip akcentuojant kolonizatoriaus padėties nestabilumą. Kritiškai sugretinti, šie kūriniai nurodo į kol kas neparašytą platesnę ir įvairiapusiškesnę XIX a. dailės istoriją.