

“Woman with Straw Hat”.

The Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen, owns a beautiful portrait (fig. 1) by C. W. Eckersberg, which according to tradition in the painter's family is supposed to represent Anna Maria von Uhden, with whom Thorvaldsen had two children. This supposition was repudiated several years ago by Th. Oppermann, former director of Thorvaldsen's Museum, who drew attention to the fact that at the time when Eckersberg was in Rome, Anna Maria von Uhden was over 40 years old, whereas the woman portrayed is clearly younger. He furthermore asserted that according to a reliable contemporary source, Anna Maria von Uhden's eyes were black and not grey as they are in the portrait. A drawing of Anna Maria von Uhden when older shows no physiognomical likeness (fig. 2).

Since Oppermann's arguments are considered to be unanswerable, attention then focusses on the question of whom the painting in that case could represent, with the hope of also finding a hitherto lacking definite date for the portrait. It has been suggested that it represents Emélie, a model whom Eckersberg used in Paris, but a comparison with another

portrait (fig. 3) which with certainty can be said to represent this model proves that they cannot possibly be the same person.

Instead, attention should be drawn to some notes from Eckersberg's Roman diary, which were overlooked by his first biographers. They mention a portrait of "N", painted about September 1st, 1815. On the face of it there is reason to believe that this note refers to the portrait in question, and a closer examination proves that this is in fact so.

"N" is mentioned several times in the Roman diary and she seems to have been a model as well as a friend. He gives her money, clothes, and various other things, visits her and takes her for walks in the woods. Furthermore the diary mentions one "Nena" who is probably identical with Maddalena, a model referred to occasionally in the diary. "Nena" is the diminutive of Maddalena. The diary tells us that in February 1814 Maddalena and her brother posed for a group, and no doubt this indicates a painting picturing "Papius and his Mother". The mother in this painting (fig. 4) must then have been painted after Maddalena, and if we compare this head to the portrait of the hitherto unknown woman, it seems evident that it is the same person: the same large eyes, the same drooping nose, the same thick-lipped mouth.

Thus two things can be proved: "N" and "Maddalena" and "Nena" are the same person, and consequently the portrait represents Eckersberg's Roman model and friend, and was painted about September 1st, 1815.

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