Through the stable door to Prince Albert?  
On Gottfried Semper’s London connections

Dieter Weidmann

Preface

Gottfried Semper’s London connections in general have been explored by Wolfgang Herrmann, Harry Francis Mallgrave, Sonja Hildebrand and others.1 Initiated by a current research and edition project, this article specifically investigates personal relations that inspired or enabled Semper to write and publish texts in his five London years.2 The letters of Semper’s estate, preserved in the archives of the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta) at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zurich, are its most important sources.3


2 This article is an outcome of the workshop ‘Gottfried Semper in London 1850–55’ held at the Accademia di architettura, Università della Svizzera italiana (USI), Mendrisio, on 26 February 2014, as part of the research and edition project ‘Architecture and the Globalization of Knowledge in the 19th Century: Gottfried Semper and the Discipline of Architectural History’ headed by Sonja Hildebrand (USI, responsible) and Philip Ursprung (ETH Zurich, co-responsible) with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). Its author is indebted to Sonja Hildebrand and Elena Chestnova for their assistance in composing and translating it.

3 All letters mentioned and quoted in this article belong to Semper’s estate, gta archives, ETH Zurich, if no other provenance is indicated. The same also applies to the drawing mentioned in the footnote 49 and the manuscripts mentioned in the footnotes 26, 50, 93 and 110. For the
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Figure 1 Emil Braun, letter to Gottfried Semper, 16 September 1850. Ink on paper, 22.4 cm · 13.7 cm. ETH Zurich, gta archives, Semper estate, 20-K-1850-09-16:1.

Purpose of comprehensibility, the punctuation marks and the French accents in the quoted parts of these letters are tacitly adapted to the current conventions.
New York? London!

Semper escaped from Dresden on 9 May 1849 when Prussian and Saxon troops defeated the revolt in which he had participated in support of democratic rights and the unity of the German states.\(^4\) In the first letter written after his escape, he already declared his intention to emigrate to North America.\(^5\) However, he settled in Paris for fifteen months, hoping to find a suitable job in France or some other European country. As his hope turned out to be vain, he decided to emigrate to New York and begin a professional partnership with Karl Gildemeister,\(^6\) the German architect who, ironically, won the competition for the building of the American Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations in 1852 with another partner, the Dane Georg Carstensen.\(^7\) Semper resolved to depart from Le Havre on 19 September 1850.\(^8\) In late August he went to London for a week ‘on business’.\(^9\) He probably consulted Price Pritchard Baly there, the designer of the exemplary Goulston Square Washhouse in Whitechapel, since he intended to establish public bath- and washhouses in New York.\(^10\) On the eve of his definite departure he received an urgent letter which, in spite of its vagueness, made him change his mind and stay in Europe.\(^11\) [Fig. 1.] But until he was permanently employed in the autumn of 1852, he never excluded the possibility of emigrating to North America.\(^12\)


\(^{6}\) Semper’s former student Wilhelm Heine had initiated this partnership. Wilhelm Heine, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 18 May 1850, 20-K-1850-05-18; Karl Gildemeister and Wilhelm Heine, letter to Gottfried Semper, 2 July 1850, 20-K-1850-07-02.


\(^{8}\) Gottfried [Semper], letter to [Johann] Carl (‘Karl’) [Semper], 11 September 1850, 20-K-1850-09-11(S).


\(^{11}\) Compare Julie [Becher], letter to Albrecht Becher, 29 July [18]51, 20-K(DD)-1851-07-29; Wilhelm [Meyer], letter to Adolph and Ludwig Meyer, 19 January 1852, 20-K(DD)-1852-01-
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Emil Braun

The writer of that letter was the German archaeologist Emil Braun, the secretary of the Roman Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica, whom Semper called his ‘former patron and colleague at the Society of Antiquities in Rome’. Yet, the two men had not met at that Institute in 1833, the year of Braun’s travel from Berlin to Rome and Semper’s travel from Rome to Berlin, nor is there any evidence that they had met in Italy or Germany later. Braun, who had guided Prince Albert through Rome in 1839, had family and business connections in England: he was married to an English lady, Anne Thomson, and cooperated with two Birmingham companies, Elkington and Mason, and Peach and Mint. Staying in London for a short time, Braun had been informed about Semper’s intention to emigrate by the English

19; [Gottfried Semper], fragmentary letter to Bertha [Semper], [August 1852], 20-K-1852-08(S).
13 [Gottfried] Semper, letter to [Johann Carl Semper], 30 September and 1 October 1850, 20-K-1850-10-01(S). – Herrmann has erroneously referred this expression to Christian Carl Josias von Bunsen. Herrmann, Gottfried Semper im Exil, 30. – Semper had been included ‘in the list of the corresponding members’ of the Roman Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica in December 1833; and on 2 February 1834 the directors of this institute had announced: ‘The directors, for the purpose of relieving the duties imposed on the vice secretary Mr. Kellermann, have appointed the member Emilio BRAUN as librarian and subarchivist.’ (‘La Direzione, ad effetto di alleviare le cure adossate [!] al pro-secretario sig. Kellermann, ha nominato a bibliotecario e sottoarchivist il socio sig. Emilio BRAUN.’) [Christian Carl Josias von] Bunsen, letter to [Gottfried] Semper, 26 December 1833, 20-K-1833-12-26; [Christian Carl Josias von Bunsen and others] (‘La Direzione’), ‘Avvisi della Direzione’ (2 February 1834),Bullettino dell’Instituto di corrispondenza archeologica 6, no. 1a, January 1834, 16.
architect Edward Falkener, and trying to dissuade Semper from leaving Europe, he explained to him:

As an admirer of your beautiful talent and your superb works, I wish to provide everything to keep you among us. I believe myself to be in a position to offer or at least to indicate to you a field of activity for your artistic practice that promises to become no less glamorous than the one you left behind.

Braun described this field on 22 September 1850. He told Semper that the General Board of Health had resolved to construct several huge cemeteries about which he had been consulted, and he asked Semper to transform them ‘into antique cities of the dead’. At first Semper wanted to reject Braun’s offer. In a fragmentary letter draft he wrote:

After careful consideration, long indecision and the unanimous opinion of my local friends (of Mister Hittorff, Gau and others whom I had to tell the matter of our negotiations […] I am determined not to accept your kind invitation, but to really undertake the postponed journey to New York on the 29th of this month.

Reflecting on his wife’s and his six children’s misery, he changed his mind. On 28 September he moved to London, and two days later he wrote to his eldest brother, Johann Carl: ‘Were I alone in this world, I would have ignored the letter and followed the impulse that seemed to have been giving a westward direction to the course of my life.’

On Braun’s initiative, Semper could run his office from Falkener’s house, but in spite of Braun’s proposal he did not choose Falkener as a professional partner since he feared his ‘frostiness’ and ‘despotism’. Nevertheless, he assisted him in the first London weeks and published an extract from *Die vier Elemente der Baukunst* in the *Museum of Classical Antiquities*, a journal edited by Falkener, in July 1851. Eight months later a short, anonymous review of Friedrich Thiersch’s *Ueber das Erechtheum auf der Akropolis zu Athen* and Carl Bötticher’s *Der Poliastempel als Wohnhaus des Königs Erechtheus nach der Annahme von Fr. Thiersch* appeared in the *Museum of Classical Antiquities*. Possibly, Semper was its author, as these books inspired him to write an essay which would have been printed in the June issue of that journal, were he to finish it in time.

26 This essay was not published in a later issue, either. The French manuscript of it is preserved in Zurich. In December 1852 Semper sent a German adaptation of it to his Dresden friend Johann Carl Bähr who proposed to publish it in the journal *Deutsches Kunstblatt*. [Gottfried Semper], ‘Aucun reste d’antiquité...’ (manuscript), [1852], 20-Ms-99; Johann Carl Bähr, letter to Gottfried Semper, 8 and 9 January 1853, 20-K-1853-01-09. Compare Wolfgang Herrmann, *Gottfried Semper. Theoretischer Nachlass an der ETH Zürich. Katalog und Kommentare (= Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur an der Eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschule Zürich 15)*, Basel, Boston and Stuttgart: Birkhäuser, 1981, 106.
Edwin Chadwick

On 29 September 1850 Braun introduced Semper to the English sanitary reformer Edwin Chadwick, the initiator of the cemetery project, whom Wolfgang Herrmann has called ‘member, but in reality leader of the Board of Health appointed under the Public Health Act’. One day later Semper reported to his eldest brother:

I was told about a huge cemetery of 600 acres in expanse to be constructed thirty miles off London, with a round chapel where funeral rites for a hundred corpses per day shall be celebrated in three sessions, thus 30 to 35 corpses simultaneously. […] One really seems to have the intention to assign to me, at first, the preliminary studies, and then probably also the realization of these ideas (to which, by the way, I have already admixed some of mine during the conference). The only question is how far the authority and the reliability of these gentlemen, who pretend to have found their man in me, reaches and whether demurs and difficulties unknown to me do not preclude at least the sudden or the quick realization of such expansive plans.

Such demurs and difficulties existed indeed. Semper worked on the cemetery project, especially on the design of a reception house, for several months. To his disappointment, this design was rejected in June 1851, and the whole project was suspended about half a year later.

Chadwick and his wife Rachel supplied Semper with other connections. Firstly, they introduced him to two members of the London Jewish community, Moses Montefiore and Lionel Nathan de Rothschild, by whom he apparently expected to be entrusted with architectural designs. Though he was even supported

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28 ‘Man sprach mir von einem ungeheuren Gottesacker von 600 Äckern Flächenraum, der dreissig Meilen von London errichtet werden solle, mit einer runden Kapelle, in welcher täglich hundert Leichen in drei Abtheilungen, also stets 30 bis 35 Leichen zugleich, eingeweiht werden sollen. […] Man scheint wirklich die Absicht zu haben, mir zuerst die Vorarbeiten und sodann auch wohl die Ausführung dieser Ideen, (denen ich übrigens schon Etwas von dem Meinigen während der Conferenz beigemischst habe,) zu übertragen. Fragt sich nur, wie weit die Autorität und die Zuverlässigkeit dieser Herren, die in mir ihren Mann gefunden zu haben vorgeben, reicht, und ob nicht mir unbekannte Bedenken und Schwierigkeiten wenigstens der sofortigen oder baldigen Realisirung so ausgedehnter Pläne entgegenstehen.’ Gottfried Semper, letter to [Johann Carl Semper], 30 September and 1 October 1850, 20-K-1850-10-01(S).

29 Herrmann, Gottfried Semper im Exil, 34–42, 54–56.
by the Paris Jewish community, Montefiore and Rothschild did not commission him.\textsuperscript{30}

The second connection involved Joseph Paxton whose Crystal Palace design for the Great Exhibition had been accepted in the summer of 1850. On 13 November of that year, Semper asked Chadwick to recommend him to Paxton for the decoration of the Crystal Palace.\textsuperscript{31} In late November Chadwick arranged a common dinner,\textsuperscript{32} but before it took place, Semper learned that the decoration had already been promised to Owen Jones.\textsuperscript{33} After the dinner he wrote to his eldest brother that he would probably be employed by Paxton.\textsuperscript{34} About three months later, on 4 March 1851, Chadwick reported to him:

Last night Mr Paxton made enquiries as to whether you had yet obtained any practise in London. [...] He states to me that, if for the subsistence and during the time you were waiting for opportunities in England or to get into English views and tastes you would accept the place of an assistant to him, he could provide a place for you at Chatsworth, but that he could not offer to pay you more than at the rate of £200 per annum.\textsuperscript{35}

Meanwhile, Semper had revived his eighteen-months-old intention to establish a private school for architects.\textsuperscript{36} In January 1851 Braun had encouraged him to realize it by involving Falkener and by employing the artist George Scharf Junior, the son of a native German, as a ‘famulus’.\textsuperscript{37} In February Semper had busily drafted a school programme including lessons for engineers, as well as architects. Thus he replied to Chadwick on 8 March:

\textsuperscript{30} [Gottfried Semper], letter draft to [Edwin Chadwick], [13 November 1850], 20-K-1850-11-13(S); Edwin Chadwick, letter to Gottfried Semper, 26 November 1850, 20-K-1850-11-26; Gottfried Semper, letter to [Johann Carl Semper], 30 November 1850, 20-K-1850-11-30(S):2.

\textsuperscript{31} [Gottfried Semper], letter draft to [Edwin Chadwick], [13 November 1850], 20-K-1850-11-13(S).


\textsuperscript{33} Edwin Chadwick, letter to Gottfried Semper, 26 November 1850, 20-K-1850-11-26.

\textsuperscript{34} Gottfried Semper, letter to [Johann Carl Semper], 30 November 1850, 20-K-1850-11-30(2).

\textsuperscript{35} Edwin Chadwick, letter to Gottfried Semper, 4 March 1851, 20-K-1851-03-04.

\textsuperscript{36} Wilhelm Heine in New York had written to his former teacher Semper in the autumn of 1849: ‘In my opinion your idea to establish a school for architects could also be very promising, there is none here at all.’ (‘Nach meiner Ansicht dürfte auch sehr glücklich Ihre Idee sein, eine Architektenschule zu bilden, daran fehlt es hier gänzlich.’) W[ilhelm] Heine, letter to Gottfried Semper, 24 September [184]9, 20-K-1849-09-24.

The offer which you have just made to me on Mr. Paxton’s behalf is as
generous as it is delicate, and my hesitation to engage in it immediately and
without reserve is only due to minor works and engagements that I have
made prior to the receipt of the offer in question and that I would have to
abandon in the case of my departure to Chatsworth being urgent. With respect
to this I would have wanted to come to terms with Mr. Paxton, likewise with
respect to a step I have just made by publishing in the newspapers of
Germany and Switzerland my intention to establish a school for architects in
London according to the one I have left in Dresden and the appeal to the
young architects to support this project through their participation. [...] Would I not be allowed, for instance, to have students in Chatsworth who
could at the same time be useful and help Mr. Paxton with his works?\footnote{38}

Chadwick answered one day later:

I do not think that an architectural class could soon be got together in
England, and I should imagine that for its success more knowledge of the
habits & wants of the class of architectural students would be required than
you would be likely to obtain readily. I have no doubt that it would be entirely
impracticable to carry on such a school at Chatsworth or in connexion with it,
and without having conversed with Mr. Paxton I conceive that it would not
meet with his views.\footnote{39}

An advertisement of the ‘German school for architects and engineers in London’
was published by Semper’s friend Richard Wagner in the *Eidgenössische Zeitung* on
28 March 1851. It announced that ‘an adroit and adept engineer’ would be engaged
for the engineer’s part of the school.\footnote{40} Did Semper mean Paxton by this engineer? In
any case, he finally rejected Paxton’s offer and attempted to establish the school,\textsuperscript{41} but he did not succeed: in the following months he only mentioned a single student,\textsuperscript{42} probably the American Charles Follen Junior, the son of a German refugee.\textsuperscript{43} However, Paxton consigned ‘the design and execution of the Court for the exhibition of Textile fabrics in the Crystal Palace’ in Sydenham to Semper on 4 February 1854.\textsuperscript{44}

The third connection supplied by Edwin and Rachel Chadwick involved Henry Cole who substantially contributed to the Great Exhibition and to the British design education reform. In late November 1850 Edwin Chadwick informed Cole about Semper’s intention to communicate his conception of antique polychromy to the British public.\textsuperscript{45} At that time his wife Rachel had already begun to translate Semper’s ‘paper on Polychrome decoration’ into English,\textsuperscript{46} and on 1 December she wrote to him: ‘I send you the name and the address of a gentleman who much wishes to make your acquaintance. Mr Cole is a leading member of the commission which directs the works of the “crystal palace”, and he says that he thinks the Society of Arts might be got to publish your view of the restored acropolis and your paper on Polychromie.’\textsuperscript{47} Four days later Semper met Cole,\textsuperscript{48} and thus began his most important professional relation of the London years.

\textsuperscript{41} Julie Becher regretted in June 1851 that Semper had ‘not accepted’ Paxton’s offer whereas Semper asserted in July: ‘Mr Paxton to whom Mrs Chadwick, at Ms Bonham Carter’s instance I think, had addressed a letter and to whom I also wrote later by placing myself at his disposal with heart and soul did not answer me.’ (‘Herr Paxton, an den sich Missis Chadwick, auf Veranlassung der Fräulein Bonham Carter, glaube ich, brieflich gewendet hatte, dem ich später selbst schrieb, indem ich mich Ihm mit Leib und Seele zur Disposition stelle, liess mich ohne Antwort.’) Julie Becher, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 23 June [1851], 20-K-1851-06-23; [Gottfried Semper], fragmentary letter draft to [Julie] Becher, [July 1851], 20-K-1851-07(S).

\textsuperscript{42} [Gottfried Semper], letter to [Johann Carl Semper], 5 May 1851, 20-K-1851-05-05(S):1.

\textsuperscript{43} Two letter drafts prove that Semper met Charles Follen in 1851 and called him a ‘friend and student’ probably in the same year. Possibly, he owed this student to Rachel Chadwick, for she had written to him in early 1851: ‘A young acquaintance of mine is very desirous to have lessons in architectural drawing, and hearing of your fame in architecture he has much wished to receive instruction from you. He however is not very wealthy and therefore cannot offer a high remuneration to you.’ Rachel Chadwick, letter to [Gottfried] Semper, [February or March 1851], 20-K-1851:5; [Gottfried Semper], fragmentary letter draft to [Edward] Falkener, [1851 (?)], 20-K-1851(S):1; [Gottfried S[emper], letter draft to [Charles] Follen, [1851], 20-K-1851(S):2.


\textsuperscript{45} Rachel Chadwick, letter to [Gottfried] Semper, 1 December [1850], 20-K-1850-12-01.


But what did Rachel Chadwick mean by Semper’s ‘view of the restored acropolis’ and ‘paper on Polychromie’? By the ‘view’ she possibly meant a coloured drawing produced around 1832 and now preserved in Zurich, whereas by the ‘paper’ she certainly meant a part of the draft of *Die vier Elemente der Baukunst*. Semper had drafted this book in Paris for the English public since he had hoped to be able to animate and influence the discussion on polychromy in England. There is no evidence that the Society of Arts presided by Prince Albert published Semper’s view or paper. However, Cole himself published an extract of the mentioned extract from *Die vier Elemente der Baukunst*, namely of the one printed by Falkener, in the *Journal of Design and Manufactures* in December 1851.

The fact that Semper even contributed an essay ‘On the Origin of Polychromy in Architecture’ to Owen Jones’ *Apology for the Colouring of the Greek Court in the Crystal Palace* in 1854 is strange, for he apparently was not particularly close to Jones. The latter had explored Egyptian, Turkish and Spanish architecture with Semper’s friend Jules Goury in the early 1830s. In 1851 Semper had implicitly assigned the responsibility for the disappearance of Goury’s polychrome drawings to ‘Owen Jones’ – nomen est omen!

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49 Gottfried (‘Goffredo’) Semper, reconstruction drawing of the Athenian Acropolis, [1832 (?)], 20-0215-2.
55 Gottfried Semper, *Die vier Elemente der Baukunst*, 3–4 (fn. *).
Probably also through Edwin or Rachel Chadwick, Semper was connected with Joanna Maria Bonham Carter and her children before June 1851. Some months later this family introduced him to William Bingham Baring who asked him to design an extension of ‘The Grange’ in Hampshire. However, Charles Robert Cockerell extended this mansion after his own design in 1852. Possibly as a sort of compensation, he consulted Semper about the arrangement of a ‘music room’ in 1853.

Semper was invited for several trips to the countryside by Joanna Maria Bonham Carter and her eldest daughter, Joanna Hilary, whom he sometimes taught perspective. Joanna Hilary probably acquainted him with Julie Becher, a German lady living in England for unknown reasons. When he again considered to emigrate to North America in the summer of 1851, Julie Becher recommended him to her brother Albrecht who worked as an architect in New York. In her recommendation letter she wrote that Semper had begged her for a copy of Albrecht’s interesting ‘notes on American architecture’. Did Semper mean these notes when he integrated a ‘German technician’s lively description of the state of civil architecture in the United States’ into his book *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst* a few months later?

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61 Compare J[oanna] Hilary Bonham Carter, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 24 May [1851], 20-K-1851-05-24:1; Julie Becher, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 1 June [1851], 20-K-1851-06-01. – One of Julie Becher’s brothers, August, had belonged to the democratic German ‘Rumpfparlament’ and ‘Reichsregentschaft’ in 1849 and was imprisoned because of his political activities in 1851 and 1852. Compare Julie Becher, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 29 July [1851], 20-K-1851-07-29; Julie Becher, letter to G[ottfried] Semper, 5 October [1851], 20-K-1851-10-05; J[oanna] Hilary Bonham Carter, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 11 February [1852], 20-K-1852-02-11.

62 Julie [Becher], letter to Albrecht Becher, 29 July [1851], 20-K(DD)-1851-07-29.

Henry Cole

In the early spring of 1851 Henry Cole achieved Semper’s employment for the arrangement of four departments of the Great Exhibition.\(^\text{64}\) If Elizabeth Bonython’s and Anthony Burton’s assumption is right, Cole, too, remarked in May of that year in the *Journal of Design and Manufactures*: ‘The show from Canada is nearly in order, having been arranged by Mr. Semper, the architect of the Dresden Theatre, who is called the “Barry” of Germany.’\(^\text{65}\) When Cole published the mentioned extract of an extract from *Die vier Elemente der Baukunst* he even praised Semper as a potential art teacher: ‘Mr. Semper it was who so skilfully arranged the Canadian Court in the Great Exhibition. His knowledge both of architecture, and generally of decoration, is profound, and his taste excellent. It is men of his acquirements from whom our manufacturers would be likely to obtain great help.’\(^\text{66}\) On 29 January 1852 Semper dared to ask Cole whether he could obtain a job at the London School of Design being reformed at that time.\(^\text{67}\) In spring Cole began to prepare Semper for an employment by asking him to visit Herbert Minton’s china factory and write a catalogue of metal art.\(^\text{68}\) On 1 September Semper was employed ‘to afford instruction in the principles and practice of Ornamental Art applied to Metal Manufactures’.\(^\text{69}\) Three paragraphs of his contract obliged him to give lectures and write reports:

> You will be required to give demonstrations to your Class and occasional public lectures on the uses to be made of the objects in the Museum, the

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\(^{64}\) Semper’s estate in the gta archives of the ETH Zurich contains one single letter draft proving this fact. The four departments were the Canadian, the Danish, the Swedish and the Turkish one. Gottfried Semper, letter draft to [Henry Cole], [October 1854], 20-K-1854-10(S). Compare Heidrun Laudel, ‘Ausstattungen auf der Weltausstellung 1851 im Crystal Palace’, in: Winfried Nerdinger and Werner Oechslin, eds, *Gottfried Semper 1803–1879*, 275–278.

\(^{65}\) [Henry Cole], ‘The Aspect of the Exhibition at the Queen’s Visit, on the 15th April’, *Journal of Design and Manufactures* 3, vol. 5, no. 27, May 1851, 57–60, here 59. – Bonython and Burton have remarked: ‘We can assume that Cole wrote most of the unsigned articles and paragraphs in the *Journal of design*.’ Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*, 114. Compare Herrmann, *Gottfried Semper im Exil*, 62 (fn. 220).


collection of casts, books, prints, drawings &c. in the Library. […] You will have to visit and report on Collections when required, and upon the state of the Museum, Collection of Casts, and Library of the Department so far as respects Metal Manufactures, and to inform the Superintendents of any examples which it may appear desirable that the Museum should possess. […] You will report annually on the progress of your Class before the 31st of December in each year.70

Many of Semper’s writings of the London years can be traced back to these requirements. In mid September Bertha Semper and her six children relocated from the continent to London.71

Thomas Leverton Donaldson

In December 1838, on a trip to London, Semper had met Thomas Leverton Donaldson, one of the founders and the secretaries of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).72 In October 1850, shortly after he had settled in London, he visited Donaldson again who then was the secretary for foreign correspondence of the RIBA and soon received ‘the Royal Gold Medal for the year 1850’ for his manifold merits.73 In the same month the secretaries of the RIBA invited Semper, certainly on Donaldson’s initiative, ‘to the Ordinary Meetings of the ensuing Session 1850–51’ starting on 4 November. Moreover, they explained to him: ‘We are directed by the Council […] to express the hope that the Members may be frequently favored with your Company. They would also be much gratified by any information that you might be able occasionally to communicate on those subjects which occupy the

71 The day of Bertha Semper’s and her children’s arrival cannot be ascertained. Probably, it was 15 September 1852. Compare Bertha [Semper], letter to Gottfried Semper, 27 [August 1852], 20-K-1852-08-27; G[ottfried] Semper, letter to Bertha [Semper], [4 September 1852], 20-K-1852-09-04(S).
attention of this Institute.’ Semper answered: ‘Gentlemen, I [...] beg to assure you that I shall feel it an honor to put myself in communication with so distinguished a body, whenever I can be of service.’ On 2 December, when Matthew Digby Wyatt presented his Observations on Polychromatic Decoration in Italy, from the 12th to the 16th Century, the audience learned that Semper had donated his book Das Königliche Hoftheater zu Dresden to the RIBA – obviously with the intention of proving his architectural competence. And on 13 January 1851 it heard that Semper had donated another book to the RIBA: Vorläufige Bemerkungen über bemalte Architectur und Plastik bei den Alten which had strongly influenced the polychromy debate in 1834.

On 12 January 1852, when Donaldson reviewed Jakob Ignaz Hittorff’s book Restitution du temple d’Empédocle à Sélinonte, ou L’architecture polychrôme chez les Grecs, Semper attended a meeting of the RIBA for the first verifiable time. He had prepared himself by three means for this evening. Firstly, he had donated his

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75 [Gottfried Semper], letter draft to [Charles Charnock Nelson and Joseph John Scoles], [November 1850], 20-K-1850-11(S):1.

76 C[harles] C[harnock] Nelson and J[oseph] J[ohn] Scoles, Royal Institute of British Architects, Incorporated 7th William IV. Session 1850–51. Ordinary General Meeting, 2 December 1850 (9 December 1850), [London: Royal Institute of British Architects, 1850], 2. – In the discussion on Wyatt’s lecture, Charles Fowler remarked ‘that he had seen, some years ago, an attempt made by some Italian artists at Hamburgh, to revive the art of sgraffito decoration, which appeared to be very ingenious, and not at all difficult, and which might, he thought, prove suitable to the climate of England’. Was he not wrong? Had he not seen the sgraffiti designed by Semper for a pharmacy? Probably, Semper did not hear Fowler’s remark since he felt bad on that day. M[atthew] Digby Wyatt and anonymous writer, Observations on Polychromatic Decoration in Italy, from the 12th to the 16th Century. By M. Digby Wyatt, Associate. Made at the Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Institute of British Architects, December 2nd, 1850, [London: Royal Institute of British Architects, 1850], 8. Compare R[achel] Chadwick, letter to [Gottfried] Semper, [2 December 1850], 20-K-1850-12-02:4.


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recently published book *Die vier Elemente der Baukunst* to the RIBA.79 Secondly, he had donated five coloured lithographs of his unfinished book *Die Anwendung der Farben in der Architecutur und Plastik* to it.80 Thirdly, he had pinned several own drawings, among them ‘restorations of a part of the Parthenon, a building at Pompeii, an Etruscan tomb, and a representation of the remains of colour visible on the Temple of Theseus’, onto the walls of the meeting room.81 Donaldson affirmed that the subject of polychromy had been ‘forcibly brought before the attention of learned Europe’ by Semper’s lithographs,82 and he tried to persuade the audience of Hittorff’s and Semper’s conceptions of antique polychromy, but was hardly successful. In the intensive discussion extending over the next two meetings, he and Semper alone confronted all those who believed in partial polychromy only.83

In his lecture, Donaldson alluded to Francis Cranmer Penrose’s recently published book *An Investigation of the Principles of Athenian Architecture*, too.84 On 13


83 Anonymous writer, *On Polychromatic Embellishments in Greek Architecture*, Being a Discussion on the Explanation given by T. L. Donaldson, Honorary Secretary for Foreign Correspondence, at the Meeting of January 12, 1852, Held at the Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Institute of British Architects, January 26, 1852, [London: Royal Institute of British Architects, 1852]; anonymous writer, *On Polychromatic Embellishments in Greek Architecture*, Being a Discussion in continuation of that which took place at the previous Meeting, Held at the Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Institute of British Architects, February 9, 1852, [London: Royal Institute of British Architects, 1852].

March 1852 an anonymous review of this book appeared in the London art and science journal Athenæum. Three letters preserved in Zurich prove that in February Henry Cole had asked an editor of the Athenæum to print a ‘paper’ by Semper. Was his German protégé the reviewer? There is not enough evidence to answer this question in the affirmative. Semper could have written another review printed one week later, the one of the programme of a Cyclopædia of Architecture, and even the possibility that his ‘paper’ was not published at all cannot be excluded.

Semper attended the meetings of the RIBA for one more verifiable time only: on 7 February 1853, when Penrose read David Ramsay Hay’s paper Attempt to Develope the Principle which Governs the Proportions and Curves of the Parthenon of Athens. This reading inspired him to write the study Ueber die bleiernen Schleudergeschosse der Alten. Around December of that year, he told the journalist Julius Faucher about it. Since he afterwards feared that its results could be published in Germany by Faucher he let the Saxon mathematician Benjamin...
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Witzschel review them in the *Annalen der Physik und Chemie* in September 1854.\(^{91}\)

The whole study was finally printed five years later.

Semper hardly achieved any professional advantage by the RIBA. He alleged that all English architects tried to exclude him from the profitable commissions.\(^{92}\) However, in late 1856 he confessed that he had received ‘multiple offers’ by Charles Robert Cockerell, Thomas Leverton Donaldson and Edward Falkener shortly before his departure from London.\(^{93}\)

**Rudolph Schramm**

Soon after his arrival in London, Semper was introduced to some members of the German community – or rather the group of German speaking émigrés and refugees – by Emil Braun. On 29 September 1850 he met, besides Edwin Chadwick, Eduard vom Hof whom he called ‘a kind of *homme d’affaires*’,\(^{94}\) and in December he brought several drawings of a Lycian frieze, probably of the frieze of the Nereid Monument in Xanthos, to the Hungarian Franz Pulszky who was to send them to the publishers Williams and Norgate. On Braun’s demand, Semper had compared these drawings produced by an unknown person with the original frieze exhibited in the British Museum.\(^{95}\) Possibly through Pulszky, he was connected with the journalist Rudolph Schramm who helped him draft and publish the advertisement of his intended school for architects and engineers in February and March 1851.\(^{96}\) Schramm, whose brother Conrad then belonged to Karl Marx’s circle, introduced Semper to two other journalists, Lothar Bucher and Julius Faucher, the London correspondents of the

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\(^{92}\) [Gottfried Semper], fragmentary letter draft to [Emil Braun], [January 1851], 20-K-1851-01(S); [Gottfried Semper], fragmentary letter to Bertha [Semper], [August 1852], 20-K-1852-08(S).

\(^{93}\) Georg Herwegh, ‘Gottfried Semper. Aufzeichnungen von Georg Herwegh nach Erzählungen von G. S.’ (manuscript, copy by Manfred Semper), [November or December 1856], 20, without specific number.

\(^{94}\) Gottfried Semper, letter to [Johann Carl Semper], 30 September and 1 October 1850, 20-K-1850-10-01(S).

\(^{95}\) Emil Braun, letter to [Gottfried] Semper, 23 November 1850, 20-K-1850-11-23:1; Gottfried Semper, letter draft to Franz (‘Franzis’) Pulszky, [4 December 1850], 20-K-1850-12-04(S).

\(^{96}\) Rudolph Schramm, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 25 February [1851], 20-K-1851-02-25; Gottfried Semper, letter draft to [Rudolf Schramm], [February 1851], 20-K-1851-02-25(S);2; Rudolph Schramm, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 26 February [1851], 20-K-1851-02-26:1; Rudolph Schramm, letter to [Gottfried Semper], [February 1851], 20-K-1851-02:2.
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When he invited him to ‘a German tea party’ arranged by Arnold Ruge on 4 March he remarked: ‘Ronge and wife, Zimmermann and wife, Struve and wife, Oppenheim, Julius, Goldsticker, Fersman, Bucher, Kinckel, Dr Bauer, briefly, almost all German democrats, refugees or not, have accepted.’ Schramm probably meant the theologian Johannes Ronge, the lawyers Eduard Zimmermann, Gustav Struve and Heinrich Bernhard Oppenheim, the journalist Gustav Julius, the philologist Theodor Goldstücker, the chemist Friedrich Versmann, Lothar Bucher, the theologian (and later art historian) Gottfried Kinkel and the physician Louis Bauer by these men. He admitted, however: ‘I do not expect much fun there, only some boring speeches […]’

The letters preserved in Zurich do not reveal whether Semper joined Ruge’s ‘tea party’, and they hardly disclose his connections with the German community. The fact that Semper was, besides Lothar Bucher, Gottfried Kinkel and Oscar Reichenbach, elected to a refugees’ committee in August 1851 can be learned from one of Marx’s letters to Friedrich Engels only. Obviously, Semper left the committee after a short time, for he assumed that it was dissolved when he was supposed to transfer some money from Dresden to it in the spring of 1852. Since Eduard Meyen convinced him of the opposite, he consigned the money to Oscar Reichenbach who delivered it to an unknown treasurer – who finally

97 Compare Rudolph Schramm, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 25 February [1851], 20-K-1851-02-25.
defrauded it. Yet, Semper joined the ‘German Society of Welfare and Unity’ in the summer of 1853.

On 26 March 1851 Schramm explained to Semper:

> A German-English paper representing the interests of the German industry on the occasion of the Exhibition is realized here. I am occupied with the composition of the prospectus and will probably assume the editor’s job. In this case I hope that you will not refuse me your cooperation. [...] Should you not want to comment also on the style, the construction and arrangement of the Crystal Palace itself?

Schramm meant by this ‘paper’ the German supplement of the *Illustrated London News*. Around the same time Friedrich Wetzler, one of Eduard vom Hof’s friends, asked Otto Wigand Junior if Semper could regularly report on the Great Exhibition in a journal supposed to be established in Leipzig by Wigand’s father. Otto Wigand Senior rejected such an engagement ‘for several reasons’, but on 10 April he begged Semper to write for the supplement of Johann Jacob Weber’s *Illustrierte Zeitung*. Although Semper promised to contribute to both supplements, no article published in the *Beilage zur Illustrierten Zeitung* can be ascribed to him. However, he reviewed the Great Exhibition in the German supplement of the *Illustrated London News*.

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107 [Otto Wigand Junior], letter (partial copy) to [Friedrich Wetzler], 10 April [1851], 20- K(DD)-1851-04-10. – Otto Wigand Junior called his father the ‘administrator’ of Weber’s publishing house. The *Beilage zur Illustrierten Zeitung* appeared in twenty issues from 10 May to 1 November 1851.

108 Rudolph Schramm, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 22 April [1851], 20-K-1851-04-22. – No article published in the *Illustrierte Zeitung*, either, can be ascribed to Semper.
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News and the Crystal Palace in the Edinburgh Review. Whether he owed the second opportunity to Schramm or another German journalist, Lothar Bucher for instance with whom he exchanged ideas about the Great Exhibition, is uncertain.

Karoline Heusinger

Semper’s wife Bertha initiated a seductive connection. In the spring of 1850 she already advised him to visit her old friend Karoline Heusinger, a Saxon woman living in London since 1841 or 1842 and having ‘many acquaintances among the noblest families of London’, if political reasons compelled him to escape from Paris. In summer, when Semper announced his trip to London, she sent him Heusinger’s address and told him: ‘[…] she is a governess in a family whose head is regarded as a very influential gentleman in London, […] perhaps she can be of some use to you, too, by introducing you to her employer […].’ This gentleman was the lawyer John Campbell.

Semper did not visit Heusinger on his trip. Yet in autumn, shortly after his definite arrival, he knocked on her door. Since she was staying in Scotland at that time she could invite him on 7 February 1851 only. Then she explained: ‘Lord Campbell is in a position to which the field of any art remains strange; he is Chief Justice of the Queen’s Bench; therefore I do not have the tiniest hope, either, to be able to assist you from this side.’ Ten days later she reported to Semper that Johann Nicolaus Trübner and Jonas Carl Hermann Freund whom she had informed about


110 [Gottfried Semper], ‘Plan des Aufsatzes. Briefliche Form’ (manuscript), [1851], 20-Ms-95.

111 Bertha [Semper], letter to [Gottfried] Semper, [May 1850], 20-K-1850-05-05.


113 Karoline Heusinger, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 7 February 1851, 20-K-1851-02-07.

114 ‘Lord Campbell’s Stellung ist eine solche, welcher das Bereich irgens [!] einer Kunst fremd bleibt; er ist Chief Justice of the Queen’s Bench; daher habe ich auch nicht die leiseste Hoffnung, Ihnen von dieser Seite behülflich sein zu können.’ Karoline Heusinger, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 7 February 1851, 20-K-1851-02-07.
him were very keen on his acquaintance.\textsuperscript{115} Trübner was a German bookseller and publisher who had settled in London eight years earlier,\textsuperscript{116} and Freund was a Bohemian-Jewish doctor and one of the founders of the German Hospital in London.\textsuperscript{117} Moreover, Heusinger announced that she would introduce Semper to another one of her acquaintances, the royal stable master Wilhelm Meyer.\textsuperscript{118}

Before Semper met these three men he engaged Karoline Heusinger to translate the programme of the school for architects and engineers which he intended to establish for continental and British boys.\textsuperscript{119} In March 1851 he visited Freund who soon became his new doctor.\textsuperscript{120} Since Karl Marx also was one of Freund’s patients in the early 1850s there is a small possibility that he encountered Semper in an intimate ambience.\textsuperscript{121}

Probably in the spring of 1851, Semper visited Trübner, too.\textsuperscript{122} About two years later he drafted a letter for an unknown German, possibly for Trübner, indicating that he had been asked by the receiver to review at least two books, among them John Henry Parker’s Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England, from Edward I. to Richard II., and that he did not like this book. ‘We Germans’, he explained, ‘cannot accustom ourselves to such collection books and always request that the matter is dominated by a certain system and that the first, namely the matter, only forms the base on which a particular idea, a new cognizance, sprouts up and unfolds itself.’\textsuperscript{123} An anonymous review of Parker’s book appeared in the

\textsuperscript{115} K[aroline] Heusinger, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 17 February [1851], 20-K-1851-02-17:1.
\textsuperscript{118} K[aroline] Heusinger, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 17 February [1851], 20-K-1851-02-17:1.
\textsuperscript{123} ‘Wir Deutschen können uns nicht an dergleichen Sammelwerke gewöhnen und verlangen immer, dass durch den Stoff ein gewisses System hindurchgehe und dass der erstere, der
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_Athenæum_ on 16 July 1853.\(^{124}\) It was possibly by Semper, for it was consistent with his letter draft.

**Prince Albert**

And what about Wilhelm Meyer? On 24 February 1851, when Karoline Heusinger told Semper that she had asked Meyer to show him the royal stables, she remarked: ‘I hope that you will find an opportunity to express your wish and that you will frequently go to Meyer’s anyway; he can be of use to you with reference to the Prince sooner or later.’\(^{125}\) [Fig. 2, Fig. 3.] Did Semper express his wish when he visited Meyer in March?\(^{126}\) And what was his wish? Neither of these questions can be answered. Probably, he considered to arrange an incidental meeting with Prince Albert rather than to enforce an official one. However, Heusinger indicated on 26 August that Semper had not met Albert in the royal stables yet.\(^{127}\)

Semper was advised to approach the native German Prince also by other Germans. His old friend Franz Georg Stammann, a Hamburg architect, suggested to attain Albert’s ‘patronage’ for the school for architects and engineers on 9 March 1851,\(^{128}\) and on 4 October Semper was told by his wife Bertha that the Bavarian lithographer and photographer Franz Hanfstaengl intended to talk to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert about him and his ‘affairs’.\(^{129}\) ‘Perhaps’, she added, ‘Hanfstängel can introduce you to the Queen, her husband is said to favour and foster the arts, thus the artists, too – God may have mercy that you get an employment or at least assignments which are of use to you.’\(^{130}\)

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\(^{125}\) ‘Ich hoffe, dass Sie Gelegenheit finden werden, Ihren Wunsch auszusprechen; überhaupt, dass Sie öfter zu Meyer gehen werden; er kann Ihnen in Bezug auf den Prinzen nützlich werden.’ Karoline Heusinger, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 24 February [1851], 20-K-1851-02-24:2.

\(^{126}\) Compare Karoline Heusinger, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 30 March [1851], 20-K-1851-03-30:3.

\(^{127}\) Karoline Heusinger, letter to [Gottfried Semper], 26 August [1851], 20-K-1851-08-26.


\(^{129}\) Bertha [Semper, letter to Gottfried Semper, 4 October [1851], 20-K-1851-10-04:2.

\(^{130}\) ‘Vielleicht kann Dich Hanfstängel der Königin vorstellen, ihr Mann soll ja die Künste begünstigen und fördern, also auch die Künstler, – Gott gebe seinen Segen dazu, dass Du eine Anstellung, oder doch wenigsten[s] Aufträge erhältst, die Dir von Nutzen sind.’ Bertha [Semper], letter to Gottfried Semper, 4 October [1851], 20-K-1851-10-04:2.
There is no evidence that Hanfstaengl, if he really visited Victoria and Albert, achieved any direct success. Wolfgang Herrmann has refuted Winslow Ames’ assumption that the mysterious ‘private request’ (‘Privataufforderung’) to write *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst* emanated from Albert.131 He has supposed that Edwin Chadwick requested Semper to write this book.132 Why has he not considered the possibility that Henry Cole was the solicitant?

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132 Herrmann, *Gottfried Semper im Exil*, 60 (fn. 205).
Semper was respected by Prince Albert for the first verifiable time in the autumn of 1852 when he designed Arthur Wellesley’s, the Duke of Wellington’s, funeral car with Richard Redgrave and Octavius Hudson. On 24 October, after a conference which he had not attended for unknown reasons, Cole reported to him: ‘The Prince liked many parts of your design [...]’\textsuperscript{133} When George Grove invited Semper on 30 May 1854 to the untimely opening ceremony of the Crystal Palace in Sydenham he instructed him: ‘In order that you may not be put to inconvenience I take an early opportunity of telling you that on the occasion of the opening of the Palace by Her Majesty, you will have to be dressed as you would at one of Her Majesty’s Levées, that is either in an official Costume, or in an ordinary Court Dress.’\textsuperscript{134} Again, there is no evidence that Semper encountered Prince Albert at this ceremony. In the spring of 1855, when he had already decided to accept a professorship in Zurich, Cole entrusted him, on Albert’s behalf, with the design of a

group of cultural buildings in Kensington. Did Semper meet Albert at last by entering through an office door? On 14 June he wrote to his wife: ‘Cole has finally arrived here now, and I have a conference with him and perhaps also with the Prince tomorrow, on Friday.’ Perhaps! Twelve days later Semper left London.

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135 Herrmann, *Gottfried Semper im Exil*, 88–90.


137 On 26 June 1855 Semper obtained a passport ‘for France & Switzerland’. One day later he arrived at the Hôtel de Paris in Rouen. Priestley (?), note (26 June 1855) on: Fletcher Wilson, passport for Gottfried Semper, 17 March 1855, 20-DOK-1855:3; Gibon, bill for [Gottfried Semper], 28 [June 1855], 20-DOK-1855:13.