

## I Two Pietàs from Silesia in the National Museum of Warsaw: The Pietàs from Lubiąż and from St Matthias's Church in Wrocław<sup>1</sup>

Three-dimensional representations of the Virgin Mary with her dead son, the so-called Pietàs, belong to the new devotional images, the *imagines pietatis* or Andachtsbilder, surfacing around 1300. The Pietàs seem first concentrated in Germany and adjacent areas, and only later spread into broader regions. As with other of these new images, they offer condensed versions of more complex representations – in this case, Lamentation groups. Both subjects have no direct biblical base, similarly to the Man of Sorrows and other images thriving in these times. However, the contemporary groups of Christ and St John, a subject isolated from representations of the Last Supper, were motivated by a verse in the gospel according to St John (13: 23).

The National Museum in Warsaw possesses two key works of the two most important early stages of the evolution of the Vesperbild: the Pietà from Lubiąż (Leubus) (**fig. 1**)<sup>2</sup> and the Pietà from St Matthias's Church in Wrocław. The first one is closely linked to a handful of other monumental wooden Pietàs that have been considered to rank among the first known representations of that subject. These very similar pieces are found: in the Museum of Coburg Castle (Upper Franconia), coming from nearby Scheuerfeld, incorporated into Coburg since 1972 (**fig. 2**); at the Ursuline Convent in Erfurt, Thuringia (**fig. 3**); in the museum of Cheb (Eger) in Bohemia, coming from the local St Wenceslaus's Church (**fig. 4**); in the small church of the Assumption of Mary in Salmdorf near Munich, originally coming from Munich itself (**fig. 5**), and in St Peter's Church in Straubing, Lower Bavaria (**fig. 6**).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Inv. no. Śr.4 MNW. See Géza de Francovich, "L'origine e la diffusione del crocifisso gotico doloroso," *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, no. 2 (1938), pp. 189–90; *Die Parler und der Schöne Stil 1350–1400. Europäische Kunst unter den Luxemburgern. Ein Handbuch zur Ausstellung des Schnütgen-Museums in der Kunsthalle Köln*, Anton Legner, ed., vol. 2 (Köln, 1978), pp. 497–98 [Anna Pankiewicz]; Romuald Kaczmarek, *Das Vesperbild aus der Zisterzienserkirche in Leubus*, in *Die Pietà aus Jihlava/Iglau und die heroischen Vesperbilder des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Milena Bartlová, ed. (Brno, 2007), pp. 59–68; id., *Monumentalna Pietà z kościoła klasztorowego w Lubiązu*, in *Opactwo Cystersów w Lubiązu i artyści*, Andrzej Kozieł, ed. (Wrocław, 2008), pp. 43–60. *Historia Sztuki* 26. *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis*, 3012; id., *Das Vesperbild aus der Zisterzienserkirche in Leubus*, in *Frühe rheinische Vesperbilder und ihr Umkreis. Neue Ergebnisse zur Technologie*, Ulrike Bergmann, ed. (München, 2010), pp. 103–13. *Kölner Beiträge zur Restaurierung und Konservierung von Kunst- und Kulturgut*, 20; *The Gallery of Medieval Art. Guidebook* (Warsaw, 2017), pp. 82–84, cat. no. I.4 [Justyna Aniołek].

<sup>3</sup> For the first four see Ludmila Kvapilová, *Vesperbilder in Bayern von 1380 bis 1430 zwischen Import und einheimischer Produktion* (Petersberg, 2017), pp. 28–31 (with earlier literature).

Larger than life size, the body of Christ is formalized in an extreme way with its contour broken three times at a right angle, almost resembling the steps of a stair.<sup>4</sup> Deep cavities in the stomach area are flanked by the forcefully modelled, strictly parallel ribs. These continue through to the spinal column at the back of the figure. Both arms – one aligned with the body and the other hanging down – are rigidly stretched out, as if preserving the posture forced onto them while nailed to the cross. The face of the Virgin (**figs 7–9**) is rendered older and less beautiful than what we usually expect from images of Mary. It is full of sorrow, with very pronounced, vertical folds between the eyes and above the mouth. Deep, frozen grooves are also marked on Christ's forehead. Differences in the treatment of the draperies point to different hands, but the entire conception of these works is so similar that they cannot have been created independently one from the other. Ulrike Heinrichs-Schreiber has underlined that the Pietàs in Coburg and Erfurt have also the same material structure.<sup>5</sup> Like the Salmdorf sculpture, all of them were carved in poplar wood; only the Pietà from Lubiąż was most probably made of lime wood, which has been confirmed by a preliminary FTIR spectroscopy examination during which signals were recorded present in the typical IR spectrum of lime but absent in the typical IR spectrum of poplar.<sup>6</sup> The measurements published for the five works differ by 12 cm in height only.<sup>7</sup> Beyond these large works, some smaller ones are intimately linked to the group: in Naumburg Cathedral (**fig. 10**), in Marienstern Abbey in the east of Saxony, or, with a height of 89 cm much smaller, the Pietà Roettgen in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn, supposedly coming from Mainz Cathedral (**fig. 11**).<sup>8</sup>

Not only the overall design or the treatment of Mary's face are proof to this connection, but also the particular form of the loincloth falling down from Christ's hips and thighs. In Coburg, this section had been attached separately and is now missing (**fig. 2**). Related, but somewhat more distantly, is the large wooden Pietà in Jihlava (Iglau, St James's Church) (**fig. 12**).<sup>9</sup> Another related piece is the 150 cm high Pietà in the cathedral of Fritzlar in Hessen (**fig. 13**).<sup>10</sup>

There is much controversy with regard to the region and, even more, about the date where and when these Pietàs were created. If one looks at the places where the works are or were found, they would form a circle around Prague. However, art associated with the Prague of that time looks much different, and so, for almost a century, there has been a tendency to look

<sup>4</sup> In 1924 Passarge spoke of a "treppenförmiger Diagonaltypus" ("stairlike diagonal type") – see Walter Passarge, *Das deutsche Vesperbild im Mittelalter* (Köln, 1924), pp. 36–44.

<sup>5</sup> Ulrike Heinrichs-Schreiber, *Die Skulpturen des 14. bis 17. Jahrhunderts. Ein Auswahlkatalog* (Coburg, 1998), no. 2, pp. 22–37.

<sup>6</sup> Analysis performed with the use of spectrometer C by Dr Magdalena Wróbel-Szypula (Laboratory of the National Museum in Warsaw, December 2018).

<sup>7</sup> 185 cm are given for Straubing and Salmdorf, 181 cm for Lubiąż, 175 for Coburg, 173 for Erfurt – after: Kvapilova, *Vesperbilder in Bayern...*, op. cit., n. 152, 158, 159; *The Gallery of Medieval Art...*, op. cit., p. 82; Frank Matthias Kammel, *Die mitteldeutschen Vesperbilder und die Iglauer Pietà. Eine Revision unseres Kenntnisstandes*, in *Pietà aus Jihlava/Iglau...*, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>8</sup> Beside other literature quoted in this essay, see in particular Katharina Liebetrau, *Die Pietà Roettgen. Technologische Untersuchung zu Herstellungstechnik, ursprünglichem Erscheinungsbild und Bezügen zu Vergleichsobjekten*, in *Frühe rheinische Vesperbilder...*, op. cit., pp. 8–22.

<sup>9</sup> Milena Bartlová, *Neuentdeckung der Iglauer Pietà*, in *Pietà aus Jihlava/Iglau...*, op. cit., pp. 11–27; ead., *Die Pietà aus der Jakobskirche in Iglau: Ein frühes Beispiel für einen neuen ikonographischen Typ*, in *Frühe rheinische Vesperbilder...*, op. cit., pp. 94–102.

<sup>10</sup> See Uta Reinhold, *Das Fritzlarer Vesperbild*, in *Frühe rheinische Vesperbilder...*, op. cit., pp. 34–38.

for their origin to Franconia or Thuringia, the regions to the North and South of Coburg. In addition, for Lubiąż there is an old tradition that it came from Bamberg, a city not far away from Coburg. On the other hand, Frank Matthias Kammel has pointed to the historic links between Erfurt and Mainz as a possible explanation for the Pietà Roettgen ending up so much more to the West.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, he has proposed that the prototype of these works had been developed in Munich, and that an artist coming from there then made his way to Franconia and Thuringia.<sup>12</sup> Such speculations about a wandering artist or workshop have their roots in the 1930s.<sup>13</sup> However, one would have to ask whether these images would really be so similar when created in different places, and whether the same rare wood material would have been employed for the Pietàs in Erfurt, Coburg, and Salmdorf.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the Pietà in Erfurt seems closer to the one in Salmdorf than to the one in nearby Coburg which, in its turn, displays strong links to the ones in Cheb and (to some extent) Straubing.

To the author of these lines, it would therefore seem more plausible that most of these works were made in one place working for export. Taken into account its trade links to Bavaria, Thuringia and Silesia, Nuremberg in Franconia would seem to me a more probable place of origin than Munich.<sup>15</sup> Admittedly, there are no really similar works in Nuremberg, but the connections seen by others, in particular by Milena Bartlová,<sup>16</sup> between the monumental Pietàs, particularly the one in Jihlava, and the art created for Emperor Ludwig IV the Bavarian in Munich do not seem that close to me either – beyond a general similarity of works created in the same era.

The production of at least the core group of these monumental wooden Pietàs in one single spot would recall the phenomenon of the earlier groups of Christ and St John which mostly

<sup>11</sup> Kammel, *Die mitteldeutschen Vesperbilder...*, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 55. In 2000, he had still considered the artist to have wandered in the opposite direction, from Thuringia to Bavaria: Frank Matthias Kammel, *Kunst in Erfurt 1300–1360. Studien zu Skulptur und Tafelmalerei* (Berlin, 2000), pp. 193–97. Before Kammel and Bartlová, Robert Suckale had tentatively established a link between the Salmdorf Pietà and what he – despite of its highly heterogenous character – called the court art created for Emperor Ludwig IV the Bavarian – see Robert Suckale, *Die Hofkunst Kaiser Ludwigs des Bayern* (München, 1993), pp. 144–46. For a discussion of Suckale's theses, see Matthias Weniger, *Kunst und Hofkunst unter Ludwig dem Bayern*, in *Ludwig der Bayer (1314–1347). Reich und Herrschaft im Wandel*, Hubertus Seibert, ed. (Regensburg, 2014), pp. 361–84.

<sup>13</sup> In order to explain the parallels between the Salmdorf, Coburg and Erfurt Pietàs, Georg Lill speculated in 1935 about an artist wandering from central Germany to Bavaria – see Georg Lill, “Wiederhergestellte süddeutsche Bildwerke,” in *Pantheon*, no. 16 (1935), p. 404. Curiously, the many different works of the “Beautiful Style” discussed in the second part of the present article have again erroneously been linked to one wandering artist, above all in the monograph by Karl Heinz Clasen on the Master of the Beautiful Madonnas – see Karl Heinz Clasen, *Der Meister der Schönen Madonnen. Herkunft, Entfaltung und Umkreis* (Berlin and New York, 1974). Of course wandering artists did exist and might explain certain works, like the crucifix from the Corpus Christi Church in Wrocław discussed beneath, but they certainly did not play the role suggested by some authors.

<sup>14</sup> The activity of itinerant artists seems proven for the *crucifigi dolorosi*, and there migrating artists used local wood both in Tuscany and in Westphalia – see Godehard Hoffmann et al., *Das Gabelkreuz in St. Maria im Kapitol zu Köln und das Phänomen der Crucifigi dolorosi in Europa* (Worms, 2006), pp. 137–38. Landschaftsverband Rheinland, Arbeitsheft der rheinischen Denkmalpflege, 69.

<sup>15</sup> For the early economic development of Nuremberg see Alfred Wendehorst, *Nuremberg, the Imperial City: From Its Beginnings to the End of Its Glory*, in *Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg 1300–1550*, Rainer Kahsnitz, William D. Wixom, eds, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, 1986 (New York–Nuremberg–Munich, 1986), pp. 20–25.

<sup>16</sup> Bartlová, *Neuentdeckung...*, op. cit., pp. 14–15.

seem to have come from one single place, Konstanz, as Tobias Kunz considered in 2014.<sup>17</sup> And of the so-called Beautiful Pietàs that will be discussed in the second part of this article.

Still more controversial is the dating of these works. Proposals rank from the time around 1300 to around 1370 or even 1380. In 1998, Heinrichs-Schreiber has dated the Pietàs in Coburg, Erfurt, Salmdorf and Lubiąż all to 1360–70.<sup>18</sup> Only four years later, Serenella Castri proposed for the Pietà Roettgen a date of 1300–05, based on the similarities with the *Crucifixus dolorosus* in the Church of St Mary on the Capitol in Cologne, dated 1304 (cf. fig. 16).<sup>19</sup> That date does not appear as certain anymore since the publication of an article by Godehard Hoffmann almost exactly at the same time.<sup>20</sup> However, the Cologne crucifix appears definitely to have been finished before 1312. Castri gives the Pietà in Coburg to the same early moment, while she offers for Erfurt the conflicting dates of around 1320 or around 1340, and for Lubiąż a dating of c. 1370.<sup>21</sup>

In 2007, Kammel dated the Pietàs in Salmdorf and Straubing to 1330–40, the ones in Coburg and Erfurt c. 1340, and the Pietà Roettgen to 1360.<sup>22</sup> In the same publication, a monograph on the Jihlava Pietà edited by Milena Bartlová, Marius Winzeler dates the Marienstern Pietà to 1350–70,<sup>23</sup> while Romuald Kaczmarek argues for dating the Pietà from Lubiąż between 1360 and 1370.<sup>24</sup> Marienstern would be, for him, still slightly later.

The most recent publication on the subject, the monograph on the Pietàs in Bavaria presented in 2017 by Ludmila Kvapilová,<sup>25</sup> does not even quote the important article by Kammel, nor does it mention the Pietà from Lubiąż. Kvapilová dates the Pietà in Coburg to 1320–30, the ones in Erfurt, Cheb and Salmdorf to 1330–40, and the one in Straubing to 1340. As criticized by Kammel for earlier authors, this sequence still echoes the order by which these works were discovered by art history,<sup>26</sup> instead of analyzing the specific features of these works, and of looking for truly convincing analogies.

Thus, the dates of the very same works seem freely floating between 1300 and 1380 – a highly unsatisfactory state of affairs, and even more so, since this question touches the quest for the

<sup>17</sup> Tobias Kunz, *Bildwerke nördlich der Alpen, 1050 bis 1380. Kritischer Bestandskatalog der Berliner Skulpturensammlung* (Berlin-Petersberg, 2014), pp. 296–97.

<sup>18</sup> Heinrichs-Schreiber, op. cit., p. 29–32.

<sup>19</sup> Serenella Castri, *In virginis gremium repositus. Dall'archetipo del Vesperbild alla 'Bella Pietà': Un excursus, non solo alpino, in Il Gotico nelle Alpi 1350–1450*, Enrico Castelnuovo, Francesca di Gramatica, eds, exh. cat., Castello del Buonconsiglio; Museo Diocesano tridentino, Trento, 2002 (Trento, 2002), p. 174.

<sup>20</sup> Godehard Hoffmann, "Der Crucifixus dolorosus in St. Maria im Kapitol zu Köln," *Colonia Romanica*, no. 15 (2001), pp. 9–82; see also Hoffmann et al., *Das Gabelkreuz...*, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> Castri, op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>22</sup> Kammel, *Die mitteldeutschen Vesperbilder...*, op. cit., pp. 46–48.

<sup>23</sup> 144 × 95 × 63 cm. See Marius Winzeler, *Das Große Vesperbild aus St. Marienstern*, in *Pietà aus Jihlava/Iglau...*, op. cit., pp. 76–77 (see also p. 72).

<sup>24</sup> Kaczmarek, *Das Vesperbild...* (2007), op. cit., p. 68; id., *Das Vesperbild...* (2010), op. cit., passim. In his iconographic study, Tadeusz Dobrzeńiecki, "Crucifixus dolorosus. Christus am Lebensbaum im Nationalmuseum Warschau," *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie*, no. 35 (1994), pp. 15–19, limits himself to quote the dates offered in the earlier literature, especially the very late date of around 1370–80 given in the unpublished dissertation of Monika von Alemann-Schwartz, *Cruzifixus dolorosus. Beiträge zur Polychromie und Ikonographie der rheinischen Gabelkruzifixe*, doctoral dissertation, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität (Bonn, 1976).

<sup>25</sup> Kvapilová, *Vesperbilder in Bayern...*, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Kammel, *Die mitteldeutschen Vesperbilder...*, op. cit., p. 53.

beginnings of the iconography. Both the Coburg and the Roettgen Pietàs have on some occasion been proposed to be the oldest Pietà surviving, a title now given with more reason to pieces in the Southwest of Germany.<sup>27</sup> The dilemma can only be overcome if all works in question are analyzed together, with the same scrutiny, and by taking into account all material evidence.

The main argument for Kaczmarek for a late dating of the Lubiąż Pietà was the type of surcot worn by the Virgin. The neckline alone, however, cannot be a decisive argument for a chronology of some of these Pietàs since it is quite low already on the Virgin of the dedication relief of the St Lawrence Chapel in Alter Hof, Munich, featuring Emperor Ludwig IV and his wife Margaret, in 1324 (Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich) (**fig. 14**). In addition, the fashion mostly associated with the reign of Emperor Charles IV (1346–78) is today assumed to have had its beginnings already around 1340.<sup>28</sup> An early example of a very fashionable dress on a representation of Our Lady in Bavaria would be the Virgin in the church of Fürstenfeld Abbey, the former Cistercian monastery, probably donated during the reign of Emperor Ludwig IV (1328–47) (**fig. 15**).<sup>29</sup> The bezants on the edges of the garments of the Virgin of the Pietà Roettgen and on some related pieces might be indeed an indication, however, that at least some of the smaller Pietàs originated only towards the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, or even slightly after 1350. Nevertheless, even this argument might not be decisive.<sup>30</sup>

As far as the monumental Pietàs are concerned, however, the stylistic criteria adduced both by authors arguing for their creation around 1350, and by Heinrichs-Schreiber in order to support her still later dating, seem far from convincing. Neither the works from the so-called Master of Wolfskeel Group nor the statues in the chancel of Nuremberg's Our Lady's Church offer concrete parallels. Moreover, the arguments put forward by Kaczmarek and based on the fashion displayed in the works might, as mentioned, ultimately not be that conclusive either. Among the Pietàs quoted above, the only one with a definitely more fashionable neckline is the one in Fritzlar, and this work seems in general more modern. Moreover, if the Fritzlar Pietà can be dated quite plausibly around 1360, this adds yet more probability to a (considerably) earlier dating of some of the other works mentioned. What would seem certain is, in any event, that the monumental wooden Pietàs must have been created within a shorter timespan than hitherto assumed. Pending the more systematic research postulated above, it seems not to make much sense to date the Lubiąż Pietà decades after its companion pieces in Bavaria and Thuringia.

In future analyses, related works that also comprise the Crucifix in Cologne mentioned above (**fig. 16**) have to be included, as well as the consequences that the new findings on this have on the dating of the *Crucifixi dolorosi* in general. One work that in future should play a more important part in such discussions is to be found in Warsaw itself: the *Crucifixus dolorosus* from the Corpus Christi Church in Wrocław (**fig. 17**). It is traditionally and until today dated

<sup>27</sup> Jürgen Michler, "Neue Funde und Beiträge zur Entstehung der Pietà am Bodensee," in *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg*, vol. 29 (1992), pp. 29–49; Michaela Burek, Jürgen Michler, Peter Vogel, "Eine neu entdeckte frühe Bodensee-Pietà in Meersburg," *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung*, no. 6 (1992), pp. 315–23.

<sup>28</sup> See Stella Mary Newton, *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince. A Study of the Years 1340–1365* (Woodbridge and Rochester, 1980). Thanks for discussions on fashion go to Johannes Pietsch.

<sup>29</sup> Suckale, *op. cit.*, pp. 74–75, 234–35.

<sup>30</sup> Applications are found on some of the apparently quite early Pietàs (or fragments of such) published by Michler, "Neue Funde...", *op. cit.*

around 1360<sup>31</sup> – with the notable exception of the important study on the *Crucifixi dolorosi* by Géza de Francovich of 1938 who situated it in the years 1330–50.<sup>32</sup> However, if the core group of the Rhenanian *Crucifixi dolorosi* has to be dated to the first two decennia of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as Godehard Hoffmann wrote in 2006, this must have consequences for the Wrocław Crucifix as well.<sup>33</sup> Hoffmann ranks it, together with (or rather after, as Francovich) the *crucifixi* in Friesach (**fig. 18**) and Nonnberg as a work that took up the inspirations which the Jihlava Crucifix brought to the East (**fig. 19**). However, such a sequence does not really work, and might rather have to be inverted. Despite all similarities in other areas, it seems hard to deny that in the rendering of the face, the design of the eyebrows, the folds that reach from the nose to the cheeks, and even the details of the beard and the treatment of the hair – highly abstract in the Wrocław work, as with the Rhenanian Crucifixes – the Friesach sculpture cannot serve as an intermediate between the Church of St Mary on the Capitol and Wrocław Crucifixes (**figs 20–23**); indeed, the Wrocław work is much closer to the Cologne one in these aspects than Friesach, Nonnberg and Jihlava themselves are. As in Cologne,<sup>34</sup> the veins are suggested in the crucifix from Wrocław by cords embedded into the polychromy – although this time in a very geometric, formalized way. Ultimately, the pronounced eyebrows and the deep folds between nose and cheeks are features that go back to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as the tombstone for Emperor Rudolf I in the crypt of Speyer Cathedral attests.

The question of the *Crucifixi dolorosi* is important because the treatment of the back of the Christ from Lubiąż recalls to some extent the back side of the Cologne Crucifix. Likewise, the facial traits of Jesus in the Pietàs from Lubiąż and Salmdorf resemble the face of the Crucified from Wrocław. And the Crucifix in the Cathedral in Bozen (**fig. 24**)<sup>35</sup> has a deeply receding stomach area that recalls the Christ in Salmdorf (cf. fig. 5). Other comparisons confirm that research on the *Crucifixi* and the wooden Pietàs should go hand in hand, and not be carried out independently as, mostly, up to now. So, the treatment of the upper parts of the body of Christ from Wrocław and the design of the face bear some general similarities with the Pietàs from Lubiąż and, still more, the one in Salmdorf. And the torrents of blood emanating from Christ's wounds resemble those found in the Pietà Roettgen in Bonn. Similar features are seen in the Pietàs in Fritzlar, Wetzlar and the Landesmuseum in Zurich (from Graubünden) that are somewhat more distantly related to the works discussed here. Such details, often added in pastiglia, are today mostly absent in the large Pietàs discussed before, but it would seem improbable that they are later additions in all the cases in which they are still present. Also, they are said to have once existed in the Straubing Pietà. On the Pietà from Lubiąż they were reconstructed in 1935 on the basis of traces found,<sup>36</sup> but the interpretation is complicated by the fact that the work had apparently received a new polychromy after the damage

<sup>31</sup> *The Gallery of Medieval Art...*, op. cit., pp. 79–81, no. I.3 [Małgorzata Kochanowska]. By Anna Pankiewicz (in *Die Parler und der Schöne Stil...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 496–97) it has even been dated to 1370–80.

<sup>32</sup> Francovich, op. cit., pp. 218–19.

<sup>33</sup> Hoffmann et al., *Das Gabelkreuz...*, op. cit., pp. 16–17, 135–36.

<sup>34</sup> See Hans-Wilhelm Schwanz, “Zur Technologie des Crucifixus dolorosus in St. Maria im Kapitol,” *Colonia Romanica*, no. 15 (2001), fig. 3, p. 85.

<sup>35</sup> Francovich, op. cit., p. 211, fig. 174–75.

<sup>36</sup> Kaczmarek, *Das Vesperbild...* (2007), op. cit., p. 64.

caused to the Lubiąż monastery by Swedish troops between 1632 and 1642.<sup>37</sup> Despite these uncertainties, the Crucifix from Wrocław and the Pietà Roettgen seem to demonstrate that the idea of emphasizing Christ's wounds in such a drastic and three-dimensional form was already well-known to the period itself. The numerous similarities strengthen my belief that *crucifixi dolorosi* and monumental wooden Pietàs should be analysed jointly.

The late dating of the Wrocław Crucifix and of the Lubiąż Pietà is partly based on the supposition that we are dealing with Silesian local products. However, one has to ask whether we are not in the presence of, if not outright imports, at least of works by itinerant artists with deep roots in the West.

With the second Pietà in the focus of this article we are, happily, on much more solid ground. It comes again from Silesia, from St Matthias's Church in Wrocław (**fig. 25**),<sup>38</sup> and it belongs again to a group of similar pieces, the so-called Beautiful Pietàs. There are considerably more surviving versions of them than of the large wooden Pietàs, more than 30. And these are spread among a yet wider range: from the Rhine valley in the West to Krakow in the East, and from Gdańsk in the North to Bern in Switzerland in the Southwest and Sibiu (Hermannstadt) in Romania (Siebenburgen, Transylvania) in the Southeast. Many of these versions have been united in a groundbreaking exhibition on the subject that took place in Salzburg in 1970: *Stabat Mater*; the Warsaw piece was also present in this unique event.<sup>39</sup>

Along with the version from Wrocław, there are several more works of that group in Poland: in the National Museum in Gdańsk (**fig. 26**) (coming from Our Lady's Church); in St Barbara's Church in Krakow (**fig. 27**), and in St Thomas the Apostle's Church in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie (Neumark in Westpreußen).

Another important Pietà had been in the Cistercian convent of Wągrowiec (Wongrowitz, Greater Poland) but was sadly lost during the Second World War.<sup>40</sup> A related work (see beneath) was, again until the war, in the Schlesisches Museum für Kunstgewerbe und Altertümer in Wrocław (**fig. 28**).<sup>41</sup> It had arrived there from St Mary Magdalene's Church in the same town.

The other versions of Beautiful Pietàs are found in:

1. Austria:

- Dominican convent, Altenstadt near Feldkirch;
  - The Lobenstein chapel of the former Benedictine abbey church, Garsten (**fig. 29**);
  - Landesmuseum Joanneum (from the Benedictine Admont Abbey - work known to art historians as "Pietà Admont I"), Graz;
  - Kreuzenstein Castle near Vienna (present whereabouts unknown);
  - Nonnberg Abbey (church of the Benedictine nuns), Salzburg.
- Related is a Pietà in the museum of the monastery of Klosterneuburg.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>38</sup> Inv. no. Śr.11 MNW.

<sup>39</sup> *Stabat Mater. Maria unter dem Kreuz in der Kunst um 1400, Ausstellung im Salzburger Dom, 1. Juni bis 15. September 1970* (Salzburg, 1970), p. 61, cat. no. 13.

<sup>40</sup> *Monasticon Cisterciense Poloniae*, Andrzej Marek Wyrwa, Jerzy Strzelczyk, Krzysztof Kaczmarek, eds, vol. 2: *Katalog męskich klasztorów cysterskich na ziemiach polskich i dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* (Poznań, 1999), p. 246 and fig. 168.

<sup>41</sup> Inv. no. KGM: 211.80.

## 2. Czech Republic:

– Olomouc (the ancient center of Moravia), Arcidiecézní muzeum branch of the Muzeum umění, *The Pietà of Canon Křivák* (coming from the local St Wenceslaus's Cathedral) (**fig. 30**).

Related are a Pietà from nearby Lutín in the same museum of Olomouc as well as another in St Thomas's Church in Brno, modern capital of Moravia.

## 3. Germany:

– Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung (from Baden near Vienna – since the Second World War lost except for the heads of the Virgin and Christ)<sup>42</sup>;

– Cologne, New St Alban's Church and St Kolumba's Church;

– Düsseldorf, St Lambertus's Church (**fig. 31**);

– Jena, Stadtmuseum (from the main local church, dedicated to St Michael);

– Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Kirchdorf near Haag in Oberbayern (east of Munich);

– Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Kirchheim am Ries (formerly a Cistercian convent);

– St Blasius' Church in Landshut (formerly a Dominican convent) (fig. 45);

– Cathedral of St Catherine and St Maurice in Magdeburg (**fig. 32**);

– St Elizabeth's Church in Marburg;

– church of the Cistercian abbey of Marienstatt (60 km to the East of Bonn and 50 km to the North of Koblenz);

– Our Lady's Church in Munich (now cathedral);

– Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich<sup>43</sup>; coming from the Benedictine convent of Seon (north of the Chiemsee) (**fig. 33**);

– St Lantpert's Church in Pfettrach near Freising (said to come from St Andrew's, a church of canons in Freising).

Related are the versions in St John's Church of Bad Mergentheim and in Our Lady's Church in Frankfurt am Main.

## 4. Romania:

– Brukenthal National Museum of Sibiu (Ger. Hermannstadt; coming from the Cathedral of St Mary).

## 5. Russia:

– The State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg (of unknown provenance).

## 6. Slovenia:

– Cathedral of St Daniel, former abbey church, of Celje (Cilli/Zilli, Lower Styria).

Among several related pieces, one should particularly mention a Pietà from Velika Nedelja (Großsonntag), today on view in the Pokrajinski muzej in Ptuj.

## 7. Switzerland:

– Historisches Museum, Bern (found during excavations beneath the terrace of Bern Münster in 1986).

<sup>42</sup> There will be a broad discussions of these fragments in the forthcoming critical catalogue by Tobias Kunz, *Bildwerke nördlich der Alpen und im Alpenraum, 1380 bis 1440. Kritischer Bestandskatalog*, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin [Petersberg, 2018 or 2019].

<sup>43</sup> Inv. no. MA 970.



Despite having been created less than a century and perhaps just a few decades later than the large wooden Pietàs, the Beautiful Pietàs could not appear more different. They are carved in stone, not in wood,<sup>44</sup> and an intimacy and calmness, almost of serenity replace the agitation and exaggerations of the earlier works. This starts with the composition. Whereas the Pietàs from Lubiąż, Coburg and Salmdorf have a clear vertical orientation, here height and width are in complete harmony. The body of Christ is not elevated as in the earlier works, where the head of Christ is on the same level as that of the Virgin. With the Beautiful Pietàs, the vertical silhouette of Mary is balanced by the horizontally arranged body of her son. There is still some stylization in the rendering of the body of Christ, with some prism-like surfaces, but its forms are in general much more harmonious and much more correct in its anatomy. The side wound, stressing Christ's role for the salvation of mankind and thus so important for the meaning of the image, is displayed with some ostentation, but without the fanfare of the Pietà Roettgen. The Virgin is mourning, but her face is young and beautiful. The deep veil only enhances this effect. In fact, it hides her face to such an extent that it has been reduced on some versions in later periods (e.g., in the Pietà in Olomouc). The suffering is present, but in a more sublime fashion. On some versions – as again that in Olomouc – tears modelled onto Mary's cheeks are preserved, and those which retain their original polychromy display stains of blood on top of the veil on the head of the Virgin.

In the Beautiful Pietàs, the relationship between the Virgin and Christ seems much more intimate, active and intense. In almost all versions, the Virgin supports the neck of Christ with her right hand, instead of his waist.<sup>45</sup> In Warsaw, her left hand tenderly raises his left arm. Her garments are modelled with much more depth than in the earlier version. Softly rounded forms replace the rigid vertical folds of the Pietà from Lubiąż. A special emphasis is given to the treatment of the surfaces. The hair and beard of Christ, his eyes, the muscles of his body, all this is rendered with utmost subtlety and refinement. It is not without a reason that this group of works is known as “Beautiful” Pietàs. Not all versions are treated with the same degree of differentiation, and in the Wrocław Pietà the surfaces lack some of the usual refinement. This seems to be due, however, at least in part, to the later polychromy. Some of the original details are probably hidden beneath it.

With the Beautiful Pietàs, it is much easier to pinpoint the origin of all these works. Prague is geographically once again at the crossroads of the churches and monasteries where they have ended up, but now we have material evidence that the Bohemian capital was indeed the place of their production. In several of the works in question, the stone employed has been identified as Pläner stone (i.e., marly limestone; Czech: *opuka*, Polish: *opoka*, French: *gaize*) coming from the Přední Kopanina near the White Mountain (Bílá Hora, Weißer Berg), on the northwest outskirts of Prague. This is so important because the Pläner stone – *opuka* – had to be worked shortly after it came from the quarries. Only during the first weeks it is so soft that it can be cut with a knife. This implies, it would not make sense to ship *opuka* blocks to Silesia or Gdańsk and work them there, as one could do, for example, with the so-called red marble from Salzburg. In addition, imports of works from Prague are repeatedly mentioned

<sup>44</sup> In 1970, several Pietàs were erroneously believed to be carved in artificial stone, among them the Pietà from St Matthias's Church in Wrocław – see *Stabat Mater...*, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>45</sup> In Altenmarkt, the Virgin Mary supports his shoulders. A more important deviation from the rule is found in the Pietà in Brno that might be considered as a sort of prototype for the entire series: there the Virgin Mary folds her hands in prayer.

in contemporary documents. Some speak specifically of “Sorrowful Virgins” – i.e., most probably images of the Pietà. One such donation is documented for the distant Strasbourg, in 1404. At the time of the 1970 *Stabat Mater* exhibition, there was still uncertainty whether some Beautiful Pietàs might not have originated in Austria, in Salzburg or Vienna. Also the Warsaw Pietà from Wrocław was quoted in this respect. Four of the works mentioned then as comparisons, the Pietàs in Garsten, Marienstatt, Jena and from Admont Abbey near Graz, have since then been analyzed to be of Pläner stone. The theory of an Austrian origin of the Wrocław Pietà can thus no longer be maintained.

That works from Prague were in such demand and transported over such large distances is not surprising if one takes into account that Prague had become the capital of the Holy Roman Empire in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, under the monarchs of the Luxembourg dynasty: Emperor Charles IV (1316–1378) and his sons and successors, Kings of Bohemia and German-Roman Kings Wenceslaus (1361–1419) and Sigismund (1368–1437). The best architects and sculptors of the Empire were working there, leaving a big impact on art and architecture of such surrounding regions as Silesia, Franconia, or Bavaria. In addition, buyers might not only have sought the prestige and refinement of works from Prague, but might also have wished to stress their political affiliation to the Emperor. In any case, the distribution of the Beautiful Pietàs and related works remains limited either to the Empire, to territories dominated by or with special links to the Teutonic Knights (Bern, Gdańsk, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie) or direct possessions of the order (Marburg, Malbork/Marienburg, Velika Nedelja/Großsonntag), and to places outside the Empire with large German communities, as they existed in Sibiu (Ger. Hermannstadt) and also in Krakow. Many of the works seem to have been ordered or bought by noble or otherwise influential families for their burial chapels, a use for which their subject made them particularly appropriate. Such a commission seems almost a certainty in the case of the Pietà in Magdeburg Cathedral. It was most probably first placed on the altar dedicated to the Corpus Christi and donated in 1390 by bishop Albrecht of Querfurt, a prelate with particularly close links to the court in Prague (he was later to become chancellor of King Wenceslaus IV). From at least the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Beautiful Pietà in St Elizabeth’s Church in Marburg is placed close to the tomb of St Elizabeth, and the one in Our Lady’s Church in Munich is shown in 1568 in the vicinity of the tombs of Emperor Ludwig IV and other members of the Wittelsbach family. One Pietà is in St Lambertus in Düsseldorf (cf. fig. 31) which, from 1592 onwards, served as the burial place for the family of local Dukes. Other Beautiful Pietàs are found in the chapel of the counts of Celje in St Daniel in Celje, and in the church of Kirchdorf, the traditional burial place of the Imperial Counts (Reichsgrafen) of Haag. The monasteries of Seeon, Marienstatt or Kirchheim, where other versions were or are still found, equally served as burial places for the local nobility.

All this, however, is just circumstantial evidence – although many Pietàs are still in churches, none is precisely on the spot it was made for around 1400, and in many cases the churches were built several decades after the production of the Pietàs. To make correct assumptions even more difficult, the Baroque Jesuit St Matthias’s Church in Wrocław, earlier dedicated to the Name of Jesus, the first documented home of the Pietà from the National Museum in Warsaw, did not even have a predecessor around 1400, so the work must thus come from another, unidentified, church. One could speculate that the sculpture could have been transferred from St Matthias’s Church of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star, which the Jesuits used before they built their own temple in the years 1689–98 that bore the Name of Jesus (*Zum Namen Jesu*), and since 1819, the titulation of St Matthias. Finally, since the Knights of the Cross with the Red

Star were an order of utterly Bohemian provenance (from Prague), it would combine nicely with the thesis of the Bohemian origin of the aforementioned group of the Beautiful Pietàs.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the limitations, the circumstantial evidence is valuable, and the observations made at very different places seem to confirm each other. In addition, on several epitaphs of the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, one sees donors kneeling beneath or beside an image of the Pietà.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, the Beautiful Pietàs are much better suited for a use in the funeral context than the monumental ones: with their more noble material, the accent on the quality of execution, their more intimate character, the reduced drama, and the reduced size. The more than life-size wooden versions would barely have suited a private chapel. These circumstances probably also explain why the Beautiful Pietàs were found in churches of different orders – Benedictine, Cistercian, Dominican – and also in parish churches and churches of canons. For the earlier large wooden Pietàs, on the contrary, Kammel has made the tempting suggestion that all or at least many of them might have been made for churches of Cistercian nuns.<sup>48</sup>

This funeral-sepulchral context of the usage of the Beautiful Pietàs might also explain why they were in such demand around 1400, and why from this period more Pietàs survive than works of other subjects created in the same workshops. There are even more Beautiful Pietàs surviving from these workshops than Beautiful Madonnas made of stone. Of this relatively small group, several are (or were) in Poland. A Beautiful Madonna from Wrocław is now in the National Museum in Warsaw (**fig. 34**),<sup>49</sup> while another one is to be found in Our Lady's Church in Gdańsk (**fig. 35**). A third had been until the Second World War in St John the Baptist and St John Evangelist church in Toruń (Thorn). Now only its base with a bust of Moses survives (**fig. 36**).

Other subjects are still much more rare, and of these again important exponents are found in Poland: the St Catherine of Alexandria, once more from Wrocław, in Warsaw (**fig. 37**),<sup>50</sup> or the St Elizabeth in St John's Church, Malbork, deposited at the Malbork Castle (**fig. 38**). In the National Museum in Gdańsk there is even a group of two female saints flanking a Beautiful Pietà – a unique example and an apparent proof that Beautiful Pietàs might also have served as the centre of traditional altarpieces with accompanying figures of saints (cf. **fig. 19**). Equally unique is the Christ kneeling down in prayer in Malbork Castle – probably a fragment of a once larger Gethsemane group comprising also figures of Sts Peter, John, and James (**fig. 39**). Unique is furthermore the large relief in Sts Johns' Church in Toruń with the *Elevation of St Mary Magdalene* (**fig. 40**).

<sup>46</sup> The transfer of the Pietà to the Jesuit church could have taken place either after 1698 (consecration of the church) or c. 1722–27 (new furnishings, including side altarpieces in 1727). The Pietà was placed in the chapel of the Mary of Sorrows. See Romuald Kaczmarek, Jacek Witkowski, *Kościół św. Macieja. Przewodnik*, Wrocław 1997, passim.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. the Mudersbach epitaph in Limburg Cathedral or the epitaph for Johann of Hirnheim and Albert I of Rechberg in Ellwangen; the first one reproduced in Matthias Weniger, *Die Schönen Vesperbilder und der Kunstexport aus Prag und Böhmen. Fragen der Methode und Zwischenbericht*, in *Pietų krásného slohu. Příspěvky z mezinárodního symposia / Vesperbilder des Schönen Stils. Beiträge des Internationalen Symposiums*, Olmütz 2017, Jana Hrbáčová, ed. (Olomouc, 2018), p. 41, fig. 25.

<sup>48</sup> Kammel, *Die mitteldeutschen Vesperbilder...*, op. cit., pp. 51–52; see also id., *Kunst in Erfurt 1300–1360...*, op. cit., pp. 198–99.

<sup>49</sup> Inv. no. Śr.8 MNW.

<sup>50</sup> Inv. no. Śr.457 MNW.

In Toruń, there is discussion whether the sculptor of the Toruń Virgin settled there and then created works like this relief while residing in the city. Also in Gdańsk and Wrocław, artists trained in Prague or nearby seem to have created works locally. Proof of that would be the big Pietà in Our Lady's Church in Gdańsk (145 cm high) (**fig. 41**) or the Pietà of similar dimensions (149 cm high) from Our Lady on the Sand in Wrocław, today in the National Museum in Wrocław (**fig. 42**).<sup>51</sup> A related Pietà was until the Second World War in St Elizabeth's Church in Wrocław and is since then lost (**fig. 43**). Not only the size of these Pietàs in Gdańsk and Wrocław differs from the Prague originals, also the stone material of the Pietà from the Sand church (limestone) is markedly different. Another area where works in the Prague style were produced in an, apparently, local material is Slovenija (believed to come from Vinica). Versions in cast stone are found in several churches of Austria and Northern Italy.

In Slovenija, as well as in Gdańsk and in Wrocław, such works seem to have been in particular demand. Slovenija, birthplace of the second wife of Emperor Sigismund, played an important role politically around 1400, while Silesia belonged directly to the Bohemian crown. Gdańsk is known to have been a town of the Teutonic Order that in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries maintained close political ties with Luxembourg emperors and kings, and the connections with the House of Luxembourg could have exerted impact on the politics of the town until the moment the Gdańsk townsmen joined the Prussian Confederation in 1440.

As with the large wooden Pietàs, most of the Beautiful Pietàs seem to have been produced by different sculptors, while following extremely similar models. An almost manufacture-like production must have taken place, starting with the selection of the stone blocks in the quarries. The Beautiful Pietàs are always done from monoliths; the material was so valuable that small damages seem to have been repaired during the work process, instead of replacing the stone block. The Pietàs are found in three different sizes, the biggest of them approaching the maximum that can be obtained from blocks of opuka: around little more than 90 × 90 × 40 cm. The most common size is about 75 × 75 × 35 cm, while the smallest works have a height and a width of about 60 cm. The Pietà in Warsaw belongs to that middle-sized group. The standardization is anticipated by the big wooden Pietàs that have a remarkably similar size, and many were made of the same type of wood.

The throne of the Beautiful Pietà in Warsaw is massive, a feature shared with most other versions. If a throne has been carved out as in the case of the Pfettrach Pietà, this must not necessarily reflect the original appearance. Such an intervention could also have happened at some later occasion, probably in order to reduce the weight of the work.<sup>52</sup> If left solid, the back of the throne is never adorned, whereas the folds of the mantle of the Virgin are just summarily marked on her back. Both characteristics apply to the Pietà from Wrocław as well.

As indicated, the height and width of the Beautiful Pietàs are, with a few exceptions, virtually identical.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, the Pietàs are normally twice as high and wide as they are deep. There are more regular proportions: the throne would have had roughly half the height

<sup>51</sup> Bożena Guldán-Klamecka, Anna Ziomecka, *Sztuka na Śląsku XII–XVI w. Katalog zbiorów*, Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu (Wrocław, 2003), pp. 222–24, cat. no. III.16 [Bożena Guldán-Klamecka].

<sup>52</sup> Such later intervention has been analyzed by Dieter Köcher for the Pietà from Baden in Berlin; see the forthcoming catalogue quoted in n. 42.

<sup>53</sup> In the cases of the Pietàs in Kirchheim am Ries and in the (former) Dominican church in Landshut, apparently both early pieces, the height exceeds the width.

of the overall height, and half of the depth of the overall depth.<sup>54</sup> That this is no coincidence is proven by incised lines that are found on the back and the bottom of the throne in most versions, separating the surfaces into equal sections. Even the internal dimensions of the Beautiful Pietàs are so similar that mechanical tools must have played a role in producing the replicas. Indeed, Radomír Surma found marks pointing to such procedures on the Pietà in Olomouc – a work that is almost a twin of the Pietà from Seeon in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich (cf. figs 30, 33).<sup>55</sup>

In addition, there are features common to most Beautiful Pietàs but not visible to the normal visitor or to the faithful praying in front of the images. This applies to the way the crown of thorns is bound on the back of Christ's head (fig. 44), or to tiny indentations near the edges of the rear end of the Virgin's throne, meant to indicate that a wooden bench is imitated. These are missing in the Pietàs from Wrocław and in Nonnberg Abbey in Salzburg, but reappear in almost all other versions. Therefore, such details seem almost like a hidden confirmation of a Prague origin.

On the other hand, none of the Beautiful Pietàs from Prague bear arms, inscriptions or other signs that would point to a specific donor (the Pietà from Velika Nedelja displays such signs, but this is probably a local work done by an artist trained in Prague). Therefore one cannot exclude that at least some of the Pietàs were not created in the context of a specific commission, but kept on stock. This feature is normally just known for much less ambitious works, but in the case of the Beautiful Pietàs the demand might have been so high that it was worth taking the risk.

If the original surface is preserved or has been uncovered beneath later polychromies over the last decades, the colouring is very uniform as well. The Virgin wore a white robe with blue lining and golden edges (cf. figs 26, 29, 30, 33, 41). As has been stated, the veil on her head is stained by blood, alluding to the relic of the veil of the Virgin (*maphorion*, *peplum*) revered in Prague<sup>56</sup> (cf. figs 26, 30, 33). The Pietà from St Matthias's Church in Wrocław belongs to the few pieces that are still today covered by a later polychromy.

As in the case of the large wooden Pietàs, there are few reliable clues for the chronology of the Beautiful Pietàs. One of the very few hard facts is the dedication of the Corpus Christi altarpiece in Magdeburg in 1390, as mentioned. Even in this case, however, there is no proof that the Magdeburg Pietà was made for it, and that it was made already at that moment. Other clues are offered by works from Silesia. The Pietà from St Elizabeth's Church in Wrocław (cf. fig. 43) is often linked to a "subtile et magistrale opus" mentioned in a document of 2 June 1384.<sup>57</sup> If this link could be confirmed, it would imply an early date for most of the Beautiful Pietàs,

<sup>54</sup> Landshut forms again an exception, being much deeper than usual.

<sup>55</sup> See Radomír Surma, *Průzkum a restaurování Křivákovy Piety*, in *Křiváková Pietà. Restaurování 2005/2013–2014*, Jana Hrbáčová et al., eds, exh. cat., Muzeum umění Olomouc – Arcidiecézní muzeum Olomouc, 2015 (Olomouc, 2015), pp. 41–48.

<sup>56</sup> Among several medieval relics of Mary's veil or mantle (*maphorion*, *peplum*), one was, according to a legend, gifted by St Helen to St Maximin's Abbey in Trier. A portion of this relic was acquired for his Prague treasury of relics by Emperor Charles IV, and Pope Innocent IV endowed it with the privilege of indulgence in 1354. Since that time, *Peplum Mariae* was exhibited in Prague every seven years on the feast of the Assumption of Mary, and, independently, during the exhibition of imperial Passion relics, since the *peplum* was thought to have been stained with the Holy Blood after the body of Jesus was taken from the Cross when Mary lamented over her son. See David Charles Mengel, *Bones, Stones, and Brothels: Religion and Topography in Prague under Emperor Charles IV (1346–78)*, dissertation, University of Notre Dame (Indiana, 2003).

<sup>57</sup> See Clasen, *Der Meister der Schönen Madonnen...*, op. cit., p. 50 and p. 168, n. 198.

since the St Elizabeth Pietà was quite an advanced work that one would have situated rather to the end than to the beginning of the evolution. For the time being, one can assume that most of the related pieces were created within a time span ranging from 1375 or 1380 to about 1415.<sup>58</sup>

For the relative chronology between the pieces, the draperies and the design of the traceries on the sides of the thrones give certain, but not very reliable indications. If one defines evolution in a traditional way, assuming a progress from simple to more complicated forms, this would again imply an early dating for the entire phenomenon of the Beautiful Pietàs. Some Pietàs, mostly considered to be early pieces, display quite sophisticated traceries on the thrones, as the versions in St Kolumba, Marienstatt and Magdeburg testify. If one links Magdeburg to the date 1390, Pietàs with a much more simple design as those in Marburg or in the Dominican church in Landshut (**fig. 45**) would need to be much earlier, towards 1380 or even 1375. Alternatively, one would have to interpret the simple design on some other versions as archaisms. That such archaisms existed is proven by some replicas of the Beautiful Pietàs done in regions outside Prague. Their thrones show usually a much restricted decoration, if they are not left blank altogether. However, Landshut and Marburg cannot be late works in this sense, and it would in general seem doubtful that such an interpretation could be applied to all works in question.

Combining all these observations, one gets the impression that the artists just played with available stock motives. In most cases the decoration of the two sides of the thrones differs (exceptions from that rule are found in Celje, Magdeburg and St Petersburg), and some Pietàs show a sophisticated design on one side of the throne, and a simple one on the other. The work in Warsaw occupies again a middle position in all this. The design on both sides of the throne recurs elsewhere – the traceries on the left side of the spectator in Düsseldorf (there again at the left side) (**figs 46, 47**), those on the right in Krakow (again at the right hand side) (**figs 48, 49**); St Kolumba's Church in Cologne and Marienstatt have a similar but different tracery design. These parallels among works separated from each other by hundreds of kilometres confirm once more that we are dealing with imported works, made in one spot and then transported to their destinations.

Still less reliable as a base for chronology are the motifs that distinguish the versions. In some Pietàs the left hand of the Virgin rests on Christ's arm or hands, while in others she touches the side wound, raises her hand to her breast, or grasps the end of her veil to wipe off her tears. In the Berlin (from Baden), Graz (from Admont), Kreuzenstein, Marburg and Wągrowiec Pietàs Mary sustains (or sustained) Christ's right arm, while in Warsaw she lifts Christ's left arm. This latest motif is not found again in the core group of the Beautiful Pietàs, but it recurs among the non-Bohemian repetitions of them, as the Pietà from Waakirchen preserved today in the collections of the Diocesan Museum of Freising (**fig. 50**). Again, these motives seem drawn from an available stock, without giving sufficient indications to establish a chronological sequence.

<sup>58</sup> The versions in Poland have been dated sometimes much too late in the earlier literature; the version from Wrocław (St Matthias's Church) in Warsaw to the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century (even mentioning a disappeared date 1463) by Ludwig Burgemeister and Günther Grundmann, *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Breslau* (Wrocław, 1934), pp. 62–63, the one in Krakow (St Barbara's Church) to 1430–35 by Józef Edward Dutkiewicz, *Małopolska rzeźba średniowieczna 1300–1450* (Krakow, 1949), p. 148. The dating of the Pietà from St Matthias's has been corrected in *Stabat Mater...*, op. cit., p. 61, where the piece is dated to around 1400. However, the more recent Polish literature still retains a slightly later date, as in Małgorzata Kochanowska-Reiche, *Mistyczne średniowiecze / The Mystic Middle Ages* (Olszanica, [2003]), cat. no. 22 (1410/20). In addition, this publication wrongly assumes a Wrocław origin of the work.

To make matters more complicated, there are a couple of other Pietàs with a simpler, less elegant composition, and with a slightly different, more complex basic form of throne and base. Within a traditional understanding of evolutionary logic, these would appear to be still earlier. In the Pietàs of Bad Mergentheim and Klosterneuburg, and the lost one from St Mary Magdalene's Church in Wrocław, Christ's body lies flat and without much articulation, both arms rigidly stretched out, the head turned to the viewer. All of them share with the Landshut Pietà the crown of thorns made of just two branches instead of the three seen in Marburg, Magdeburg, Warsaw and most other pieces (**figs 51, 52**). However, whereas the Bad Mergentheim Pietà also displays the simple traceries as found in Landshut, the Klosterneuburg one has them just on one side. On the other, the throne demonstrates a more elaborate design of a type also found in the much more modern looking Pietà in New St Alban's Church in Cologne. In addition, in Klosterneuburg there is more interaction between mother and son than in the other two versions. Indeed, the Virgin places her hand on Christ's body, close to its side wound, in a manner quite similar to that observed with the Pietà in Garsten (in Pfettrach, the hand is even closer to the side wound). For their turn, the draperies in Klosterneuburg resemble those in Kirchdorf bei Haag, another apparently later version. Of the Pietà from St Mary Magdalene's Church in Wrocław, sadly only front views are known. These show that the throne had traceries on its front side, a property not known from any other of the works mentioned above. This provokes the question of the appearance of the sides of the throne – a question that might remain forever unanswered, although a slightly oblique view in an old photograph in the Herder-Institut, Marburg,<sup>59</sup> points to a scheme like in Bad Mergentheim.

Other elements deserve attention as well. Both in the versions in St Thomas's Church in Brno and from Lutín in Olomouc, the Virgin folds her hands in prayer and thus does not touch her son's body directly. Christ's arms, aligned with the body, with hands crossed on the level of his hips, offer another element differing from the aforementioned sculptural groups in Klosterneuburg, Bad Mergentheim and from St Mary Magdalene's Church in Wrocław. In addition, the draperies in Lutín differ little from classical Pietàs, like the one in Garsten. Those in Brno might be compared to the Pietàs in Celje, Magdeburg, or in Our Lady's Church in Munich. Moreover, the traceries in Lutín are very complex. All these elements indicate that the relationship between the more properly Beautiful Pietàs and these more "rigid," "raw" versions (Bad Mergentheim, Klosterneuburg, St Mary Magdalene's Church in Wrocław, Lutín, Brno) is more complex than one would assume – and that it therefore does not seem probable that the "rigid" Pietàs were made much earlier than the others. The Pietà in Our Lady's Church in Frankfurt am Main that also stands somewhat apart from the rest of the "beautiful" works discussed here, seems even later.

For the design of the draperies in the Pietà in Warsaw no precise parallel is known. The biggest similarities in their general arrangement are found again in Düsseldorf (cf. fig. 31). More distantly related are the Pietàs in St Kolumba's Church in Cologne and in Nonnberg Abbey in Salzburg. The S-shaped fold beneath Christ's feet is repeated almost identically in the Pietà from St Barbara's Church in Krakow. The feet themselves are severely damaged in most versions, as the most protruding part of the work. In Warsaw, apparently a big portion of them consists of replacements from the early modern era and the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>59</sup> Herder-Institut für historische Ostmitteleuropaforschung, Bildkatalog [online], [retrieved: 16 May 2018], at: <<https://www.herder-institut.de/bildkatalog/iv/48232>>.

All these characteristics make it clear – parallel to those of the large wooden Pietàs – that the phenomenon of the Beautiful Pietàs can only be properly understood if all remaining versions are analyzed with the same scrutiny. While mainly frontal images are published, these three-dimensional works have to be looked upon from all sides, including from beneath, and in all their technical aspects. This necessarily includes stone analyses. Such stone analyses have been published in detail for the Pietàs in Bern, St Petersburg, Olomouc and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie,<sup>60</sup> and they have been carried out for a number of other pieces – in Berlin (from Baden), Magdeburg, Jena, Garsten, Admont, Salzburg-Nonnberg, Munich (from Seeon), Marienstatt – pointing to opuka in all these cases.<sup>61</sup> However, they are sometimes only briefly mentioned in literature, or not published at all.

For such analyses, though, it is even more important that they are pursued systematically and under similar circumstances, with standardized procedures. Stone analyses are not as reliable as wood analyses, so there always is a degree of interpretation. In addition, they imply the taking of samples and hence the infliction of (albeit minimal) damage to the art work, and thus cannot be repeated many times. That the majority of the pieces are still in churches, and often play an important role there for the faithful, does not make this task any easier. And since the Beautiful Pietàs are an international phenomenon, and the remaining pieces spread over eight countries, and since the research on them has been published in many different languages, such research can only be properly carried out by an international team of experts from different areas and countries. For some years now, the author of these lines has attempted to lay the ground for such an international project.<sup>62</sup>

Until it materializes, a still more profound research on the many works in the Prague style existing in Poland would seem most promising – especially since in Poland there is more variety in genres than anywhere else, with the only exception, to a certain degree, of Slovenia.<sup>63</sup> In addition, among the works in Poland there are several pieces that have been

<sup>60</sup> The latest one by Jan Šrámek from Prague (Center for Higher Education Studies). See <<http://www.sci.muni.cz/~vavra/scripta/scripta28-29/Sramek2.htm>> [retrieved: 16 May 2018]; Jan Šrámek, “Stone of a Gothic Pietà from Toruń (Poland),” *Scripta Facultatis Scientiarum Naturalium Universitatis Masarykianae Brunensis. Geology*, vol. 28–29 (1998–1999), pp. 99–108.

<sup>61</sup> For the Malbork pieces: *Christ in Agony, St Elizabeth of Thuringia*, as well as the Pelplin *St Barbara* (Diocesan Museum in Pelplin), see Monika Czapska et al., *Święci Orędownicy. Rzeźba gotycka na Zamku Malborku*, exh. cat., The Malbork Castle Museum, 2013 (Malbork, 2013), pp. 77, 175, 245, 511, 515.

<sup>62</sup> In the meantime, I have presented a couple of articles on the subject that are, however, all very preliminary, as is this present one as well: *Die Vesperbilder des Schönen Stils in Kastilien*, in *Kunst als Herrschaftsinstrument. Böhmen und das Heilige Römische Reich unter den Luxemburgern im europäischen Kontext*, Jiří Fajt, Andrea Langer, eds (Berlin–München, 2009), pp. 564–576; ‘Bellas Piedades’ en Castilla, in *El taller europeo: intercambios, influjos y préstamos en la escultura moderna europea. Actas del I encuentro europeo de museos con colecciones de escultura*, Valladolid, Museo Nacional de Escultura, 2012 (Valladolid, 2012), pp. 145–66; *Die böhmisch orientierte Steinskulptur um 1400*, in *Eine Schöne Madonna für das Bode-Museum*, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin, 2013), pp. 39–55. Patrimonia, 366; Matthias Weniger, *Olomoucká Pietà a sériová výroba luxusních soch v Praze doby Lucemburků*, in *Křiváková Pietà...*, op. cit., pp. 30–38; *Die Schönen Vesperbilder...*, op. cit. My contribution to the proceedings of the symposium “Die ‘Berliner’ oder die ‘Prager’ Pietà? Kunst und Kulturpolitik in einer spätmittelalterlichen Stadt,” held in Bern on 23–24 November 2017 (“Import – Export: Der [Prager] Kunst-Export als Marke/Strategie”), will be published in 2018/2019. A review on the monograph by Kvapilová mentioned in n. 3 will be published in *The Burlington Magazine*. For a broader discussion of the subject, see the two volumes from Olomouc mentioned (*Křiváková Pietà...*, op. cit. and *Pietý krásného slohu...*, op. cit.).

<sup>63</sup> For works there compare, i.a., *Polona Vidmar, Veneration of the Virgin and Memoria: Sculptures in Ptujška Gora pilgrimage church, in Art and Architecture around 1400. Global and regional perspectives* (Maribor, 2012), pp. 239–50; Branko Vnuk, “Kip sedeče Marije z Detetom iz okoli leta 1400 – nova pridobitev Pokrajinskega muzeja



involved in previous discussions with regard to the question of whether we are dealing with direct imports or with works done locally by Prague trained artists. This applies to the figure of St Catherine from Wrocław in the NMW, but also to the Beautiful Madonna in Our Lady's Church in Gdańsk and to the Beautiful Pietà with the female saints in the museum there. Such discussions deserve to continue.

Therefore, if the dozen relevant works preserved in Polish collections could be analyzed with a standardized procedure, this would be of great assistance in leading towards a deeper understanding of where and under which circumstances the Prague style works were created. The collections of the National Museum in Warsaw themselves, with the Beautiful Madonna, the St Catherine and the Pietà from Wrocław, would be a good place to start.

Ptuj – Ormož,” *Zbornik pokrajinskega muzeja Ptuj-Ormož*, no. 5 (2017), pp. 228–47; id., *Kiparstvo med 12. in 14. stoletjem*, and Polona Vidmar, *Ptujskogorska kiparska delavnica*, in Janez Balažic et al., *Umetnost srednjega in zgodnjega novega veka, 1200–1550*, exh. cat., Pokrajinski muzej Ptuj-Ormož (Ptuj, 2017), pp. 9–27 and 29–69; on the Pietà from Velika Nedelja see – pp. 49–51, cat. no. 12.