

## I From Ribera to Solimena Neapolitan Paintings in the Collection of the National Museum in Warsaw

For scholars of painting, visits to European and American museums usually become an opportunity to view in museums' storerooms works known to them so far only from reproductions. This was the case of my own visit to Warsaw where I came to present two lectures on Bernardo Cavallino and 17<sup>th</sup>-century Neapolitan painting, from Caravaggio to Luca Giordano. Guided by Dr Grażyna Bastek, I visited gallery rooms and storerooms of the National Museum in Warsaw to view paintings by Neapolitan artists of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Before, I had seen only two of them: Bernardo Cavallino's *St Joseph's Dream* and Mattia Preti's *Adoration of the Shepherds*. I had a chance to see the first one at an exhibition dedicated to Cavallino, presented in the years 1984–85 in the museums in Cleveland and Fort Worth, and then in Naples. *Adoration of the Shepherds* arrived in Naples more than a decade later – to be featured in Preti's monographic exhibition at the Museo di Capodimonte and Castel Sant'Elmo in 1999.

Back then, I only knew *Martyrdom of St Sebastian* (fig. 1) from Gianni Papi's contributions published in *Paragone*. The Florentine art historian correctly attributed to Jusepe de Ribera a work that was previously linked to Francesco Guarino, and very convincingly dated it to 1617.<sup>1</sup> Pappi recognized Ribera's style from the period immediately after the artist's ultimate move from Rome to Naples in mid-1616. The axis of the innovative composition is marked by the diagonally arranged figure of the saint, stretched across almost the entire width of the picture, while the scenery involves elements "captured from nature." The painter of Spanish origin, educated and artistically formed in Italy, mostly Rome, employed here the same solutions embedded in the Carravaggesque formula of matter-of-fact naturalism that we encounter – greatly intensified – in Ribera's paintings from the final years of his stay in Rome and the beginning of his long-term activity in Naples. These are, i.a.: *Denial of St Peter* from Galleria Corsini, now in the Palazzo Barberini in Rome; the four pictures of the *Five Senses* cycle preserved in Pasadena (Norton Simon Museum), Hartford (Wadsworth Atheneum), Mexico City (Museo

<sup>1</sup> Gianni Papi, "Un San Sebastiano di Ribera a Varsavia," *Paragone*, no. 98/99 (2011), pp. 54–57. The painting (142.5 × 187.5 cm, inv. no. M.Ob.650 MNW) comes from an unknown private collection that was moved by Nazi authorities to Silesia (transported to the NMW from Jelenia Góra in 1945). For the first time, the work was attributed to Guarino in the catalogue of the 1996 exhibition (*Caravaggio. Złożenie do grobu. Arcydzieło Pinakoteki Watykańskiej. Różne oblicza caravaggionizmu. Wybrane obrazy z Pinakoteki Watykańskiej i zbiorów polskich*, Joanna Kilian, Antoni Ziemia, academic eds, exh. cat., The National Museum in Warsaw, 1996 [Warsaw, 1996], pp. 156–58, cat. no. 18, fig. 66) and in the catalogue of another exhibition organized by the NMW in 1999 (*Sztuka cenniejsza niż złoto. Obrazy, rysunki i ryciny dawnych mistrzów europejskich ze zbiorów polskich. Wystawa poświęcona pamięci Jana Białostockiego*, Anna Kozak, Antoni Ziemia, academic eds, exh. cat., The National Museum in Warsaw, 1999 [Warsaw, 1999], p. 222, cat. no. 76, fig. p. 223).

Nacional de Arte) and Madrid (Prado); *Raising of Lazarus* from Prado; *Crucifixion* of 1618 from the collegiate church of Santa María de la Asunción in Osuna; *St Andrew* from Quadreria dei Girolamini in Naples, or *Pietà*, of 1620–21, in the National Gallery in London.<sup>2</sup>

Gianni Papi proposes a hypothesis that *Martyrdom of St Sebastian* from the NMW should be considered to be the first version of another painting depicting the same subject, yet in a vertical format and showing the saint in a kneeling position: the piece painted by Ribera in Naples, by order of the viceroy Don Pedro Téllez Girón, Duke of Osuna for the local collegiate church of Santa María de la Asunción, alongside a group of works maintained in the formula of straightforward naturalism: *Martyrdom of St Bartholomew*, *St Jerome and the Angel of Judgment Day* and *The Penitence of St Peter*, that today – similarly as the aforementioned *Crucifixion* of 1618, commissioned by the Duke's spouse – is to be found in the Museo Parroquial in Osuna, in the province of Seville, Andalusia.<sup>3</sup>

According to Papi, the viceroy would have rejected the first version of *Martyrdom of St Sebastian* – hypothetically identified by the Florentine scholar with the NMW painting – as too inventive and incongruous with the contemporary convention in terms of iconography and composition. The viceroy would have wished for a more traditional, modest depiction of a kneeling saint in ecstasy. However, this hypothesis arouses certain doubts. First of all, the paintings differ as far as their format is concerned: the Warsaw piece is horizontal, while the one from Osuna is vertical, just like the three remaining works executed on the viceroy's commission. Secondly, the Andalusian *St Sebastian* is smaller in size. And finally – the three mentioned depictions ordered at the same time and accepted without reservations by the commissioner display exactly the same boldness and originality of solutions that unequivocally refer to Carravaggesque naturalism.

Bernardo Cavallino's *St Joseph's Dream* (fig. 2) from the NMW collection, known to me from the aforementioned exhibition,<sup>4</sup> was included in my monograph of the artist and his era, published in Rome in 2013.<sup>5</sup> In 1938, the painting, at that point already correctly attributed, was donated to the National Museum by Bishop Adolf Józef Jełowicki. Earlier, it was exhibited as Cavallino's work at a charity auction in Warsaw in 1901<sup>6</sup>, while organizers of a 1921 exhibition in Lublin attributed it to Giuseppe Cesari, called Cavalier d'Arpino<sup>7</sup>. Contemporary research

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the aforementioned paintings, see Nicola Spinosa, *Ribera. La obra completa* (Madrid, 2008), p. 327ff, as well as critical texts by Gianni Papi and Gabriele Finaldi published in the volumes: *El joven Ribera*, José Milicua, Javier Portús, eds, exh. cat., Museo Nacional de Prado, Madrid, 2011 (Madrid, 2011), passim; *Il giovane Ribera tra Roma, Parma e Napoli. 1608–1624*, a cura di Nicola Spinosa, exh. cat., Museo di Capodimonte, Naples, 2011–2012 (Naples, 2011), passim; Nicola Spinosa, *Pittura del Seicento a Napoli. Da Caravaggio a Massimo Stanzione* (Naples, 2010), pp. 365ff.

<sup>3</sup> Spinosa, *Ribera...*, op. cit., pp. 339–343, cat. nos A66–A69; *El joven...*, op. cit., pp. 162–66; 172–73, cat. no. 17 [Gabriele Finaldi]; *Il giovane...*, op. cit., pp. 178–85 [Gabriele Finaldi].

<sup>4</sup> *Bernardo Cavallino of Naples 1616–1656*, Ann T. Lurie, Anne Percy, eds, with an introduction by Anne Percy and essays by Nicola Spinosa and Giuseppe Galasso, exh. cat., Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland; Kimbel Art Museum, Fort Worth, 1984–1985 (Cleveland–Fort Worth, 1984), pp. 124–125, cat. no. 37 [Anne Percy]; *Bernardo Cavallino (1616–1656)*, a cura di Silvia Cassani, exh. cat., Museo Pignatelli, Naples, 1984, (Naples, 1985), pp. 126–127, cat. no. A.25 [Anne Percy].

<sup>5</sup> Nicola Spinosa, *Grazia e tenerezza "in posa". Bernardo Cavallino e il suo tempo 1616–1656* (Rome, 2013), pp. 99, 119, 327, fig. 91, p. 119, cat. no. 63.

<sup>6</sup> *Katalog wystawy obrazów wielkich mistrzów szkoły włoskiej i flamandzkiej ze zbiorów nieborowskich Ks. Michała Radziwiłła na dochód bezdomnych dzieci przytułku „Nazaret” przy ulicy Freta nr 10* (Warsaw, 1901), p. 7, cat. no. 18.

<sup>7</sup> *Katalog wystawy sztuki i starożytności w Lublinie, wydany częściowo z zapomogi Ministerstwa Sztuki i Kultury* (Lublin, 1921), p. 11, cat. no. 22.

gave the painting back to Cavallino, even if varying dating was cited. The piece was only properly dated in the years 1984–85, in the course of preparatory works before the exhibition in Cleveland, Fort Worth and Naples, on the basis of similarities of its style to *Ecstasy of St Cecilia* from the Museo di Capodimonte, the only extant work by Cavallino that apart from the monogram BC also features a date inscribed by the artist: 1645.<sup>8</sup> The painting was considered to have been executed a little earlier because of the presence – as in the works from the 1630s (i.a., *Flight to Egypt* in Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut)<sup>9</sup> – of stylistic qualities that distinctly refer to the naturalism of Ribera and Aniello Falcone: most of all, the manner of operating light and shade and the limited scale of saturated colours. As much as certain refined forms, beaming with studied elegance (in particular, the depiction of the angel from St Joseph's dream) reveal a strong influence from northern European engravings of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, then universally present in Naples, and, at the same time, testify to continuous inspiration from the art of Neapolitan painters contemporary to Cavallino, from Antonio De Bellis to Giovan Battista Spinelli in particular,<sup>10</sup> the spatial disposition and dramatic narration of the depicted story (Mt 2: 13–21) permit to observe that Cavallino, like his contemporaries, knew techniques and solutions employed in theatrical performances, both religious and secular.<sup>11</sup>

A comparison of *St Joseph's Dream* with *St Cecilia* from the Museo di Capodimonte and other Cavallino's paintings from that period reveals their similarities, despite the aforementioned intensity of the colour scheme: primarily, the meticulous manner of application of paint that directs our attention to “neo-Venetianism.” This formula, worked out in the late 1630s, was employed by Ribera as well as other Neapolitan painters, like Massimo Stanzione, Francesco Guarino and Andrea Vaccaro, with whom Cavallino closely collaborated for a long time. He was also linked to this circle of artists because of his ability to expressively render spiritual and emotional states, which, beginning with the aforementioned *St Cecilia* of 1645, allowed him – along with the growing interest (post-1620) in Roman art of Simon Vouet – to achieve a new effect of sophisticated elegance of form that displayed a gentler, more gracious expression.

By contrast, I was not familiar with Domenico Gargiulo's painting *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (fig. 3). It was not even mentioned in the extensive monograph of the artist by Giancarlo Sestieri and Brigitte Daprà published in 1994.<sup>12</sup> Attributed in the past to Pier Francesco Mola or Giovan Benedetto Castiglione, called Il Grechetto, it is undisputedly a mature work by Domenico Gargiulo, called Micco Spadaro (by reason of his father's profession: *spadaro* means ‘sword maker, bladesmith’), and this in accordance with the accurate earlier attribution by Jan Białostocki in 1967.<sup>13</sup> The decision to reject Białostocki's suggestion and to attribute the painting to Mola or

<sup>8</sup> Spinosa, *Grazie e tenerezza...*, op. cit., pp. 344–45, figs 115–117.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 295, cat. no. 28 (and earlier works listed in the bibliography in this book).

<sup>10</sup> More on the artistic activity of Antonio De Bellis and earlier texts on this subject see *ibid.*, pp. 453–68; *id.*, *Pittura del Seicento a Napoli*, vol. 1, *Da Caravaggio a Massimo Stanzione* (Naples, 2010), pp. 205–12. Detailed information concerning Giovan Battista Spinelli complete with bibliography related to the artist, see Nicola Spinosa, Denise Maria Pagano, “Giovan Battista Spinelli,” in *I pittori bergamaschi dal XIII al XIX secolo. Il Seicento*, a cura di Pietro Zampetti, vol. 4 (Bergamo, 1988), pp. 1–56; Spinosa, *Pittura del Seicento...*, op. cit., pp. 398–403.

<sup>11</sup> On Neapolitan theatre of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Franco Carmelo Greco, “Drammaturgia e teatro a Napoli,” in *Il Teatro a Napoli. Atti del convegno, Napoli, 19–20 giugno 1985* (Naples, 1985), pp. 15–28.

<sup>12</sup> Giancarlo Sestieri, Brigitte Daprà, *Domenico Gargiulo detto Micco Spadaro. Paesaggista e “cronista” napoletano* (Milano–Roma, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> On the basis of the famous painting by Giovanni Paolo Panini from the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, it was determined that the NMW painting (97.2 × 145 cm, inv. no. M.Ob.306 MNW) originally belonged

Grechetto may be explained to a certain extent by the evident dependency from colour solutions employed by the two artists. Beautiful sunny colours bring to mind works of other artists well-known in Naples, like Pietro da Cortona, Andrea Scacchi, Pietro Testa and the young Nicolas Poussin, who, similarly as Mola and Grechetto, absorbed in various ways and in a new style (not without the distinct agency of the Italian art of Peter Paul Rubens and Anton van Dyck), models of unparalleled 16<sup>th</sup>-century Venetian painting, in particular of Titian and Veronese. Recent research into Micco Spadaro has indicated that the artist, following the direction taken by Ribera in Naples c. 1635, and at the same time familiar with numerous works in local art collections of such painters as Castiglione, Poussin, Claude Lorrain and Gaspar Dughet, from the late 1630s, and apart from Aniello Falcone and Andrea di Lione, became one of the greatest representatives of “neo-Venetianism” that expanded in Naples and in other Mediterranean centres. It should be noted, though, that *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, as with other works by Gargiulo from that period or stylistically related pieces (e.g., the pair of paintings *Venus and Adonis* and *Diana and Actaeon* from the Museo Civico in Pavia or *Martyrdom of St Sebastian* from Banco Sannitico in Benevento, now in Banca Popolare in Novara, being a pendant to *Martyrdom of St Stephen* from the former Elvehjem Art Center, now the Chazen Museum of Art in Madison, Wisconsin<sup>14</sup>), refers not so much to Mola and Grechetto but to Poussin’s works painted in Rome at the end of 1620s. They are the most likely source of the warm, glowing, brilliant colours, as well as the more studied, almost classical working of shapes and volumes that nevertheless remain in harmony with the careful and yet naturalistic literal rendition of details of bodies, expression of figures, as well as substance and textures of precious textiles and various objects. Similarly, the majestic figure of God the Father visible against the luminous landscape dominated by huge trunks of old oak trees, owing to the skilful combination of naturalism and classicization, displays a level of painterly depiction that immediately brings to mind associations with Lorrain’s and Dughet’s works from the 1630s. By the same token, having considered all these interrelations, one could date Gargiulo’s painting in the NMW to the period before 1650. Such dating is also supported by the striking stylistic similarities to other paintings of this artist from the same period, cited earlier.

A little later, in 1653, Mattia Preti returns to Naples from his hometown of Taverna, a small town in Calabria. He has already had a short stint in Naples in the mid-1630s, just before moving to Rome. Now he comes back as a recognized painter who owes his success to works stretched between early experiments with Caravaggesque naturalism, the later reception of “neo-Venetianism” in the spirit of Poussin and a tendency towards the formula *alla Guercino* as well as the

to the Roman collection of Cardinal Silvio Valenti Gonzaga – see Janina Michałkova, “Panini et autour de lui,” *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie*, Ann. 27, no. 2–4 (1986), pp. 48–49, fig. 15; *Ritratto di una collezione. G.P. Panini e la galleria del cardinale Silvio Valenti Gonzaga*, a cura di Raffaella Morselli, Rossella Vodret, exh. cat., Palazzo Te, Mantua, 2005 (Milan, 2005), pp. 175–76, cat. no. 23. From the collection of Bishop Ignacy Krasicki in Lidzbark Warmiński, it was transferred to the collection of Cyprian Lachnicki, who bequeathed his entire collection in 1902 to the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, from where it was transferred to the NMW in 1908. As a work by Domenico Gargiulo, called Micco Spadaro, it is listed in: Jan Białostocki, *Malarstwo europejskie. Katalog zbiorów*, The National Museum in Warsaw (Warsaw, 1967), vol. 2, p. 125, cat. no. 1235. As a work by Pier Francesco Mola, in: *Europäische Malerei des Barock aus dem Nationalmuseum Warschau*, Hanna Benesz, Hrsg., exh. cat., Herzog Anton-Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig; Centraal Museum, Utrecht; Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Köln; Alte Pinakothek, Munich, 1988–1990 (Braunschweig, 1988), pp. 48–50, cat. no. 9; *European Baroque Painting. The National Museum in Warsaw*, Hanna Benesz, ed., exh. cat., Kumamoto Prefectural Museum, 1992–1993 (Kumamoto, 1992), p. 99, cat. no. 41. As a work by Grechetto, in: *Trionfo Barocco. Capolavori del Museo Nazionale di Varsavia e delle collezioni del Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, a cura di Annalia Delneri, exh. cat., Castello di Gorizia, 1990 (Monfalcone, 1990), pp. 100–1, cat. no. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Sestieri, Daprà, op. cit., pp. 255–63, cat. nos 118–19, 123–24.

early-Baroque style of Giovanni Lanfranco. Coinciding with Preti's arrival in the capital of the Spanish viceroyalty situated at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, Neapolitan painting vehemently changes and pursues the formula of mature Baroque, tested earlier in Rome. The NMW collection holds an otherwise well-known painting that demonstrates the artistic mastery achieved by the Calabrian painter during his Neapolitan period, before he ultimately settled in Malta after 1660: *Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 4), a subject depicted by Preti multiple times, often as a pendant to the *Adoration of the Magi*.<sup>15</sup> The unique combination of naturalism (the use of chiaroscuro to construct shapes and volumes, to add authenticity to skin tones, textures of fabric and leather worn by the shepherds, the emphasis of emotions shared by the participants of the Nativity scene, as well as objects and surroundings) and "neo-Venetianism" (shimmering light and warm tones that emphasize the beauty of dusk and enhance the meticulous preciousness of youthful Mary's robe) indicates that the piece was painted in the middle of Preti's second stint in Naples (1653 – after 1660), i.e., in the years 1655–56, not so distant from the point in time when *St John the Baptist Preaching Before Herod* from a private collection in America and *Feast of Herod* from the Museum of Art in Toledo, Ohio, were executed.<sup>16</sup>

It is universally understood that the style worked out by *Cavalier calabrese* – a brilliant synthesis of Caravaggesque naturalism and painterly "neo-Venetianism" and "neo-Veronesian style" involving compositional solutions taken from Correggio – either studied directly in Parma, or through the agency of Giovanni Lanfranco, active between Rome and Naples, and Guercino, active between Modena and Rome – must have exerted an impact (which later proved double-sided) on the young Luca Giordano and his choice of the formula of mature Baroque in the mid-1650s. Indeed, in 1655 or shortly before, after his return from the first excursions to Rome and Venice, the young artist ceased to imitate or perfect Ribera's naturalistic style of c. 1630 (it is worth noting here that Giordano – despite literature stating otherwise – was never a member of Ribera's studio) and followed a new path outlined by Lanfranco in the latter's

<sup>15</sup> *Adoration of the Shepherds* (148.5 × 197, inv. no. M.Ob.666 MNW) was listed in the 1703 inventory of the Neapolitan collection of Marquis Geronimo Ferdinando Alarçon de Mendoza, whose ancestors moved to Naples in the 16<sup>th</sup> century following the Viceroy Pedro de Toledo. The painting was inventoried there alongside *Adoration of the Magi* (Gérard Labrot, *Collections of Painting in Naples, 1600–1780* [Munich, 1992], p. 217), which ought not to be identified – as was suggested by Labrot – with the painting of the same subject from the collection of Count of Leicester at Holkham Hall, originating from the Roman collection of Maffeo Barberini. *Adoration of the Shepherds* from the NMW, noted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Galleria Antonelli in Naples, made its way to the collection of Janusz Radziwiłł in Warsaw. In 1939, it was deposited in the NMW, and in 1948, purchased by the Museum and integrated into the collection of European painting. The correct attribution is featured as early as in the NMW catalogue of 1967 – see Białostocki, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 50, cat. no. 1003). The painting was exhibited in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig in the years 1988–90 – see *Europäische Malerei des Barock...*, op. cit., p. 53, cat. no. 10 [Katarzyna Murawska]; in Castello in Gorizia at the exhibition dedicated to selected Baroque paintings from the NMW: *Trionfo Barocco...*, op. cit., p. 64, cat. no. 8 [Katarzyna Murawska]; in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples at the occasion of the monographic exhibition of the Calabrian painter: *Mattia Preti tra Roma, Napoli e Malta*, a cura di Nicola Spinosa, Mariella Utili, exh. cat., Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples, 1999 (Naples, 1999), p. 126–27, as well as in the years 2002–3 at the exhibition dedicated to Leonardo da Vinci and selected masterpieces from Polish museums at the Milwaukee Art Museum, Museum of Fine Arts in Houston and the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco: *Leonardo da Vinci and the Splendor of Poland. A History of Collecting and Patronage*, Laurie Winters, Dorota Folga-Januszewska, eds, exh. cat., Milwaukee Art Museum; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, California Palace of the Legion of Honor, 2002–2003 (New Haven, 2002), pp. 104–5, cat. no. 23. In 1999, it was included in the monography of Mattia Preti – see John T. Spike, *Mattia Preti. Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings* (Florence, 1999), p. 407, cat. no. 442, erroneously dated to 1670; there is no extensive description that the painting would definitely deserve.

<sup>16</sup> Mariella Utili, "Mattia Preti, caravaggesco sui generis," in *Mattia Preti tra Roma, Napoli e Malta...*, op. cit., pp. 134–37.

Neapolitan period and the Roman period of Pietro da Cortona. Owing to inspiration from Rubens's Italian period and Preti himself, Giordano turned towards frenetic reinterpretation of the sunny aura that infused the paintings of Titian and other masters of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Venice. And so in the course of just several years, beginning in 1657, Luca Giordano managed to achieve mastery in his light-filled paintings with unique painterly power and beauty: paintings that create an illusion of a multi-coloured dream combining reality and fantasy, truth and imagination. In this way, he became, for the remaining part of the century and even later, in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the perfect embodiment of European Baroque, that reigned, by reason of his oeuvre, in Naples and Venice, Rome and Florence – and Madrid.

Apart from one of the author's replicas of *Communion of the Apostles* from the collections of Galleria Pallavicini in Rome, painted in the years 1659–60, the National Museum in Warsaw holds a lesser-known painting by Giordano, omitted even by recent and insightful *studi giordaneschi*. The piece – *Prometheus* – was bequeathed by Cyprian Lachnicki together with his entire collection to the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 1902 and integrated into the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts (the future National Museum) in 1908 (fig. 5). Oreste Ferrari and Giuseppe Scavizzi<sup>17</sup> have not listed the work in any edition of the artist's monograph published in 1966 and reissued with additions in the years 1992, 2000, 2002 and 2003. However, Ferrari mentions it in his letter to the Department of Foreign Painting of the NMW (dated 20 May 1963) and on its basis *Prometheus* is cited as Giordano's work in the catalogue of the NMW's collection of European painting of 1967 and the catalogue of the exhibition themed around Caravaggio and Caravaggesque painters organized by the NMW in 1996.<sup>18</sup>

There is no doubt that *Prometheus* should be dated, as suggested by its clear tendency towards naturalism, to the early period of Giordano's career. It is dated to the years 1652–53 on the basis of the distinct stylistic resemblance with the artist's other paintings from that time. Giordano makes an attempt at merging the “neo-Stoic” stance, developed and spread in Rome and Naples in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the formula of martyrdom of saints worked by Ribera and the type of semi-figures (*mezzo figure*) of apostles, ancient philosophers, astronomers and geographers. In the case of the NMW painting, the best comparison appears to be the one with *Ixion and Tityos* from the *Giants* series painted by Ribera in 1632 (Prado, Madrid), being an interpretation, in a vividly naturalistic take, of model depictions of this subject mostly by Titian, but also by Guido Reni. Despite significant differences in composition and colour scheme (that appears more lucid, not anymore pitch-dark) – Giordano's painting is reminiscent of Ribera's *Prometheus*, also dated to the early 1630s, at one time in the collection of Barbara Piasecka-Johnson, now in a private collection in Naples (moreover, two preparatory drawings

<sup>17</sup> Giuseppe Scavizzi, Oreste Ferrari, *Luca Giordano*, vols 1–3 (Naples, 1966).

<sup>18</sup> *Prometheus* (186.7 × 160.3 cm, inv. no. M.Ob.308 MNW), see Białostocki, op. cit., p. 148, cat. no. 419 (correctly attributed to Luca Giordano); *Caravaggio. Złożenie do grobu...*, op. cit., pp. 148–50, cat. no. 16. Giordano would paint *Prometheus* one more time shortly after 1660 (Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 188 × 138 cm, inv. no. 92.6; *Luca Giordano 1634–1705*, a cura di Nicola Spinosa et al., exh. cat., Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples; Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien; Los Angeles County Museum, 2001–2002 [Naples, 2001], pp. 172–73, cat. no. 46 [Éva Nyerges]), but in another iconographical and compositional variant. This time, the artist would draw inspiration from the *Laocoön Group* in Rome and the figure of Haman painted by Michelangelo in one of the pendentives in the Sistine Chapel. It is worth adding that the NMW collections also hold an anonymous copy of the *Presentation of Mary* from the Venetian church of Santa Maria della Salute – a work painted by Giordano in the years 1672–74 (inv. no. M.Ob.239 MNW).

for this composition have been preserved: one in the British Museum in London, the other in Gabinetto Nazionale della Grafica in Rome).<sup>19</sup>

Baroque formal solutions of Luca Giordano in Naples and Pietro da Cortona in Rome also exerted influence on Francesco Solimena – another prominent name in the history of European painting at the end of 17<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries – who had likely visited the Eternal City in his early youth, as was customary for other Neapolitan painters. He referred to Roman models in his art long after moving to Naples in 1674. A strong impact of formulas taken from Da Cortona and Giordano is palpable in the painting from the National Museum in Warsaw: *St Francis Asking the Pope for Plenary Indulgence for the Pilgrims to Portiuncula* (fig. 6). The work is closely tied to the fresco depicting the same subject, painted by the young Solimena beside other scenes from the life of the Saint on the walls and vault of the choir in the Neapolitan church of Santa Maria Donnaregina Nuova at the Franciscan convent, painted in the years 1684–85, that is, the climax of the entire sequence of works inspired by the painting of Giordano and Da Cortona.<sup>20</sup> The piece was in the collection of Wojciech Kolasinski in 1881 and was purchased by the Museum in 1956, already as Solimena's work. The attribution was confirmed in the artist's monograph of 1958 by Ferdinando Bologna, who identified it with a *bozzetto* mentioned by biographer Bernardo De Dominici in *Vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti napoletani* of 1742–45, located in Naples in the house of Fleming Giusto van den Heuvel. Solimena's authorship was then cited by the NMW catalogues as well as catalogues of exhibitions featuring this work. The attribution was rejected by Erich Schleier, who, in a letter to the Museum of January 1990, stated that the painting is a copy of a fragment of the fresco from Santa Maria Donnaregina Nuova.<sup>21</sup>

However, it seems that the painting is not the *bozzetto* from Van den Heuvel's house. It is not, either, a copy or an anonymous partial replica of the fresco, or a repetition of a fragment of another, unidentified *bozzetto* that could have been used for the painting. Rather, as suggested by the high artistic quality of the work, it is the author's replica of the fresco's central fragment, painted for a private commission by Solimena himself, as with other works considered particularly successful and universally admired (for instance, the fresco *Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple* painted in 1725 at the back of the facade of the Gesù Nuovo church in Naples). The painting was a *ricordo* – a “memory,” record, or workshop documentation of a composition executed earlier and handed to the commissioner or sold. The Warsaw painting definitely displays the same luminous tonality abundant in various hues, that, taken, as already remarked, from Roman works by Luca Giordano and Pietro da Cortona, became characteristic for the entire later art of Solimena, from the end of the 1670s to the year 1690 (e.g., from the frescoes in the Chapel of Sts Tecla, Susanna and Archelaa in the Church of San Giorgio in Salerno to the rich *al fresco* paintings on the vault and upper part of the walls in the sacristy

<sup>19</sup> Spinosa, *Ribera...*, op. cit. pp. 392–93, cat. nos A164–A166.

<sup>20</sup> Id., *Francesco Solimena (1657–1747) e le arti a Napoli* (Rome, 2018), pp. 220–27.

<sup>21</sup> Bernardo De Dominici, *Vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti napoletani*, a cura di Fiorella Sricchia Santoro, Andrea Zezza (Naples, 2008), vol. 3, p. 1167, cat. no. 133; Ferdinando Bologna, *Francesco Solimena* (Naples, 1958), pp. 262, 267; id., “Aggiunte a Francesco Solimena,” vol. 1, “La giovinezza e la formazione,” *Napoli nobilissima. Rivista di topografia ed arte napoletana*, no. II/1 (1962), pp. 9–10, fig. 13; Białostocki, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 122, cat. no. 1225; Jan Białostocki, Janina Michałkowa, “Nabytki galerii malarstwa obcego 1945–1957,” *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, 5 (1960), p. 324, cat. no. 103; *Catalogue of Paintings. Foreign Schools*, Andrzej Chudzikowski, ed. (Warsaw, 1969–1970), vol. 2, p. 122, cat. no. 1225; *Europäische Malerei des Barock...*, op. cit., pp. 57–59, cat. no. 12 [Katarzyna Murawska]; *Trionfo Barocco...*, op. cit., pp. 110–11, cat. no. 23 [Katarzyna Murawska]; Simona Carotenuto, *Francesco Solimena. Dall'attività giovanile agli anni della maturità* (Rome, 2015), pp. 146, 152, fig. A21.12; Spinosa, *Francesco Solimena...*, op. cit., p. 226, cat. no. 62c.

of San Paolo Maggiore church in Naples). The characteristic vast space in the composition (of both the fresco and its *ricordo*) is a manifestation of the growing admiration of the young painter for the Neapolitan paintings of Domenichino, and Giovanni Lanfranco in particular.

The later, more mature period of the long artistic activity of Solimena is related to another painting from the NMW collections: *Ecce Homo (Christ in the Crown of Thorns)* (fig. 7),<sup>22</sup> a subject that was repeatedly depicted, be it in various styles, by the artist in the 1720s and 1730s, usually in combination with *Our Lady of Sorrows*, known from numerous workshop copies. The Warsaw version of *Ecce Homo* was likely painted in the mid-1730s, along with the one that is housed together with its pendant, *Our Lady of Sorrows*, in the Palacio Real de Aranjuez, to where it was moved from the collection of Philip V of Spain and his second wife Elisabeth Farnese, housed in La Granja de San Ildefonso. Though the depiction of the figure of Christ remains conventional and strictly classical, the painting, similarly as with other canvases and frescoes painted by the artist after 1734, belongs to the next period in Solimena's art: the old painter's turn – strong and unanticipated – to the Baroque formula through the reinterpretation of Mattia Preti's style of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. This testifies to the rediscovery and reestablishment of the formula of intense expression. It can be observed in the handling of light and shade, application of compact, thick layers of paint within an almost tenebrist colour scheme, firm modelling of shapes and volumes, clear rendition of texture of fabrics and skin, as well as a strong characterization of figures, their corporeality and emotions. The effects can be seen here as well as in the fragments of the decoration of the Palazzo Reale in Naples painted on the occasion of the wedding of Charles III Bourbon and Maria Amalia of Saxony, in the huge canvas *Battle of Alexander and Darius* from La Granja de San Ildefonso or in the painting *Aeneas and Dido* from the Museo di Capodimonte.<sup>23</sup> On the one hand, Solimena rejected in them and almost completely did away with his previous inclinations towards Carlo Maratta's Roman classicism that led him to rigoristic "purism" in the 1720s, while on the other hand, they contest the middle-of-the-road stance stretched between moderate Classicism and refined Rococo that he adopted with growing success before 1730, which must have been insufferable for Francesco De Mura, one of Solimena's most trustworthy and valued pupils.

At that time in Naples, similarly as in other Italian and European centres, the aesthetic sense and artistic preferences and taste began to undergo sudden and unavoidable changes. It could only mean one thing: the near 80-year-old Francesco Solimena with his declining "return to Baroque" would run out of space and time for any potential new achievements and successes.

Translated from Polish by Karolina Koriat

<sup>22</sup> The painting (73,5 × 63,5 cm, inv. no. M.Ob.218 MNW) belonged in 1881 to the collection of Wojciech Kolański, when it was purchased by the Museum of Fine Arts in Warsaw (the future NMW) – see Białostocki, op. cit., p. 122, cat. no. 1227; Spinosa, *Francesco Solimena...*, op. cit., p. 511, cat. no. 249a.1. The MNW storerooms also contain the painting *Holy Family* (74,5 × 61 cm, inv. no. M.Ob.672 MNW), once attributed to Solimena, but in reality being a work by one of the master's numerous pupils or imitators, mostly little known or unknown, who executed pastiches of the master's works.

<sup>23</sup> For more information on this one and other paintings from the last period of Solimena's artistic activity as well as his evolution from Classicism and "purism" of the first three decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the renewal of expressive Baroque and fascination with Preti's painting in the final years of his career, see the aforementioned monograph by Ferdinando Bologna of 1958 (see n. 18). Earlier bibliography in: Spinosa, *Francesco Solimena...*, op. cit., pp. 115ff, 512ff.