

# THE ALTARPIECE OF THE CORPUS DOMINI IN VENICE REVISITED

Marina Vicelja-Matijašić, Barbara Španjol-Pandelo

M. Vicelja-Matijašić  
Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci  
Odsjek za povijest umjetnosti  
Sveučilišna avenija 4,  
HR-51000 Rijeka  
mvicelja@ffri.hr

B. Španjol-Pandelo  
Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci  
Odsjek za povijest umjetnosti  
Sveučilišna avenija 4,  
HR-51000 Rijeka  
bspanjol@uniri.hr

*The article examines more thoroughly the iconographic composition of the altarpiece from the church of Corpus Domini in Venice, a work by Caterino Moronzon and Bartolomeo di Paolo within the context of theological teaching and debates of Christ's body and Eucharist in the Middle Ages. It also brings to closer consideration the style and work of Caterino Moronzon in comparison to the works of his father Andrea.*

**Key words:** *Corpus Domini, Caterino Moronzon, Giovanni Dominici, St Peter Martyr, Eucharist, Venice, altarpiece, iconography*

The woodcarvers from the Venetian family Moronzon signed for and created a number of commissions in the area of present-day Italy and the Eastern Adriatic coast in the period from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century to the first decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Their member was Caterino Moronzon, active woodcarver during the first third of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Venice. In most of the preserved documents Caterino is mentioned as Moretta's husband with the exception of the one from 1399 where he acted as a witness.<sup>1</sup> In the documents he is usually referred to as *intaiatore* (woodcarver) but there is not a single contract to certify any work commissioned from him. In this regard it is extremely important that he signed the altarpiece, originally in the Church of Corpus Domini in Venice and presently in the Museo Correr in the same city.<sup>2</sup> The altarpiece (86x280 cm) is divi-

---

\* The research for this article has been supported by the University of Rijeka under the project SREBAK (num. 13.04.1.2.02)

<sup>1</sup> The first attempt to approach Caterino's *opus* and life was made by Lucia Sartor who published a list of the relevant documents regarding the artist in 2004. See in: L. SARTOR, *Andrea e Caterino Moranzone e il Friuli Venezia Giulia*, in *Artisti in viaggio 1300-1450. Presenze Foreste in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Atti del convegno*, M. P. FRATTOLIN (a cura di), Udine, 2003, p. 95. This list was consequently supplemented by Anne Markham Schulz in 2011. See in: A. MARKHAM SCHULZ, *Woodcarving and Woodcarvers in Venice 1350-1550*, Firenze, 2011, p. 94. Caterino's life was also reconstructed in the doctoral dissertation by Barbara Španjol-Pandelo. See in: B. ŠPANJOL-PANDELO, *Umjetnička djelatnost drvorezbara iz porodice Moronzon (The Artistic Activity of the Woodcarvers of the Moronzon Family)*, doctoral thesis, Zadar, 2014, pp. 81-99.

<sup>2</sup> The altarpiece is exhibited in the room 32 of the Museo Correr in Venice.



Fig. 1. Caterino Moronzon and Bartolomeo di Paolo, Altarpiece originally at the Church of Corpus Christi in Venice, now Museo Correr in Venice, late 14<sup>th</sup> c. (by permission of the Museo Correr)

ded into two registers with the relief of the *Presentation in the Temple* in its center (fig. 1). On the small altar depicted in the center of the composition Caterino signed his name together with the painter's, Bartolomeo di Paolo: *Bartolomey)/ M(AGISTR)I PAVL(i) PI(N)XIIt/ chatarin(us)/ filiu(s) magis/ tri andree/ incixit hoc/ opus*.

The convent and the Church of Corpus Christi was founded by Benedictine nun Lucia Tiepolo as a wooden construction between March 1393 and 29 June 1394.<sup>3</sup> New church and convent were erected in the same place under the patronage of a famous Dominican, Giovanni Dominici<sup>4</sup> who guided the nuns' spiritual direction so they changed from Benedictine to Observant Dominican, the so-called *mantellate*. It was Dominici who defined the convent in *clausura* on the Day of Saints Peter and Paul in 1394 and ordained the rigorous observance that he had established in the male convents. The community of Venetian nuns, that initially numbered less than thirty sisters,<sup>5</sup> grew fast so that at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century it became one of the largest and most important among female religious establishments in Venice. Most of the nuns came from noble Venetian families and shortly after the founding of the convent a Confraternity of the Body of Christ was established, which organized the annual procession during which the Blessed Sacrament, the Eucharist, was carried through the streets. By the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, the procession was one of the greatest feasts of the liturgical year under the auspices of the Venetian administration, with the participation of all the confraternities of the city.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the new patron of the convent, Fantino Dandolo, ordered the construction of a new, larger church, which was completed between 1440 and 1444 and was consecrated by Lorenzo Giustiniani, the patriarch of Venice.<sup>7</sup> After the dissolution of the convent on 25 April 1810 the church was deconsecrated and used as a private lodging and granary, and then demolished in 1814;<sup>8</sup> the altarpiece was

<sup>3</sup> The early history of the convent is still unclear. It reads in the chronicle of the convent that Lucia Tiepolo built the first wooden construction in 1366; that was replaced by the stone church with the help of Francesco Rabbia shortly after, probably in 1375. See in: B. RICCOBONI, *Life and Death in a Venetian Convent: The Chronicle and Necrology of Corpus Domini, 1395-1436*, D. BORNSTEIN (ed.), Chicago, 2000, pp. 1-5, 34; L. SARTOR, *op. cit.*, 2004, n. 52, p. 105. There are different approaches to this early chronology of the church's and the convent's construction and rebuilding, see in: E. NARDIN, *Le vicende artistiche della chiesa e del monastero del Corpus Domini di Venezia*, in *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte*, 33, Venice, 2011, pp. 109-164.

<sup>4</sup> B. RICCOBONI, *op. cit.*, 2000, pp. 30-32; L. SARTOR, *op. cit.*, 2004, n. 52, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> Lucia Tiepolo enrolled in the Dominican order and together with 27 nuns attended the dedication of the monastery and church on 29 June 1394.

<sup>6</sup> B. RICCOBONI, *op. cit.*, 2000, pp. 5-9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 9, 38-40; L. SARTOR, *op. cit.*, 2004, pp. 105-106.

<sup>8</sup> G. TASSINI, *Edifici di Venezia distrutti o vólti ad uso diverso da quello a cui furono in origine destinati*, Reale tipografia G. Cecchini, 1885, p. 103; E. BASSI, *Tracce di chiese veneziane distrutte*, Venice, 1997, p. 261.

moved to the storage of the Church of San Giovanni Evangelista, and eventually it later became a part of the private collection of Teodoro Correr.<sup>9</sup> After his death in 1830 the collection was entrusted to the community of Venice, so that the altarpiece became part of the permanent exhibition of the Museo Correr in Venice.<sup>10</sup> Dominican nuns, led by Lucia Tiepolo, were a very important part of the Venetian community in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and especially during the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Since the convent was the retreat for the women of the upper classes and was under the patronage of wealthy individuals, it received significant amounts of money, often in the form of the girls' dowries.<sup>11</sup> We can assume that the altarpiece was completed by June 1394 when the church was consecrated.<sup>12</sup>

The altarpiece has interesting iconographic composition built from separated images but all connected with the common subject referring to the body of Christ, sacrifice and Eucharist miracles (from upper left to bottom right): *Miracle of the Host with St Peter Martyr, Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes, Supper at Emmaus, Calling of Saints Peter and Andrew, Parable of the Gathering of Grain on the Sabbath, Veneration by a Horse of the Host Proffered by Saint Anthony of Padua, Gathering of Manna, Visit of the Three Angels to Abraham, Sacrifice of the Pascal Lamb, Sacrifice of Isaac, Sacrifices of Cain and Abel and Daniel in the Lions' Den*. In the center, the image of *Presentation in the Temple* is placed encompassing both registers. The iconography has recently been studied by Anne Markham Schulz who concluded that the composition was elaborated in an intelligent and sophisticated way, referring at almost every point to the dedication of the Church.<sup>13</sup> She also attributed the elaboration of the scheme for the altarpiece to Giovanni Dominici, a Dominican friar, an influential and charismatic preacher and writer.<sup>14</sup> He was presumably involved in building the iconographic program which was not only related to the main altar and the sacramental service, but also to the contemplative and didactic role of the images.

---

<sup>9</sup> Venezia, Biblioteca del Civico Museo Correr, Codd. Cicogna 2978/XIV in G. M. PERUZZI, *Elenco delle Chiese*, Nov. 1814, n.c., no. 140. A record referring to the *pala* from the Corpus Domini convent mentioning the *tavola* signed by Caterino (*Katerinus pinxit*) was reported by a Signor Sasso and in 1809 by Lanzi, in L. LANZI, *Storia pittorica dell'Italia*, vol. II, M. CAPUCCI (ed.), Florence, 1809; digital version [http://www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/LANZI\\_STORIA\\_PITTORICA\\_1809.pdf](http://www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/LANZI_STORIA_PITTORICA_1809.pdf) (accessed 12.06.2014.)

Emanuelle Antonio Cicogna (E. A. CICOGNA, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, Venice, II, 1827, p. 422) writes that in the choir of the Church of Corpus Domini stood a carved and painted altarpiece with multiple compartments with depicted scenes from the life of Jesus which could be dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The author most likely refers to the altarpiece of Caterino. The altarpiece is mentioned in two inventories of the objects appropriated from the dissolved monasteries: one from 1828 in *Depositorio così detto di san. Gio. Evangelista ai Frari* lists a “tavola con intaglio dorato” (“lavoro senza gusto di esecuzione”); and the other from 1832, from the account of the paintings consigned to D. Pietro Bettio, a librarian in Marciana, lists it under the same title erroneously attributed to Bartolomeo Scaligero (See in E. NARDIN, *op. cit.*, 2011, pp. 156-159).

<sup>10</sup> A. DE MARCHI, *Ritorno a Nicolò di Pietro*, in: *Nuovi studi*, II, Milano, 1997, pp. 96-97; L. SARTOR, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 105.

<sup>11</sup> B. RICCOBONI, *op. cit.*, 2000, pp. 16, 38. The welfare of the Dominican nuns at the convent is confirmed by the diligent activity of extending, refurbishing and decorating the spaces in the nunnery in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Besides Caterino Moronzon, an altarpiece for the Church of *Corpus Domini* was executed by his brothers Matteo and Lorenzo before 1408 for a price of 103 ducats and 22 soldi. Caterino's altarpiece was sometimes referred to as antependium, however Markham Schulz argued that the altarpiece had a role of antependium. A. MARKHAM SCHULZ, *La pala d'altare del Corpus Domini di Caterino Moronzone presso il Museo Correr: storia, significato e stile*, in *I ritratti in miniatura delle collezioni dei Musei Civici Veneziani 2, Bollettino dei Musei Civici Veneziani, III serie*, Venice, 2007, pp. 95-97; A. MARKHAM SCHULZ, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 237. For the argument of the function of the altarpiece as an antependium see in: G. MARIACHER, *Paliotti lignei Veneziani*, in *Emporium*, volume CXV, Bergamo, 1952, p. 161; P. HUMFREY, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice*, Yale University Press, 1993; D. VALENTI, *Le immagini multiple dell'altare: dagli antependia ai polittici. Tipologie compositive dall'Alto Medioevo all'età gotica*, Padua, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> L. TESTI, *Storia della pittura veneziana*, Bergamo, 1909, n. 2, p. 250, n. 7, p. 253.

<sup>13</sup> A. MARKHAM SCHULZ, *op. cit.*, 2007; A. MARKHAM SCHULZ, *op. cit.*, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> A. Markham Schulz refers to him as Giovanni de' Dominici, lettore at SS Giovanni e Paolo (*op. cit.*, 2011, p. 240). See also in: *Regola del governo di cura familiare: compilata dal beato Giovanni Dominici, fiorentino*, D. SALVO (ed.), Florence, 1860, pp. I-CXXI.

Dominici was sent to Venice in 1391 where he was acting as a preacher in the convents of San Domenico and Santi Giovanni e Paolo and was a zealous supporter of the Order's reforms. He was close to the nuns of the Corpus Christi and was perceived in the literature as their closest spiritual guide, although this did not last long, since in 1399 he was involved in the procession of the *Penitenti bianchi* that he organized in Venice, despite the Pope's strict interdiction.<sup>15</sup> Dominici was charged with disobedience and was banished from Venice on 21 November 1399 with the restriction of not returning to the city and the territory of the Republic for five years.<sup>16</sup> Dominici was a prolific writer who left several important manuscripts which discuss theological and spiritual subjects some of which were compiled by Antonino Pierozzi in the biographic profile.<sup>17</sup> In his early texts he covered the important doctrinal issues through a poetic and pedagogical language focusing on lifestyle and inspiration. He, as other preachers, understood his role as the one who was inspired to speak the Word of God and to make Christ present through their vivid words, actions and images.<sup>18</sup> His sermons were also an important instrument for teaching the proper belief as well as virtuous life and the Eucharist was one of the constant topics. The Eucharist was the central experience of Christian ritual, bringing believers in relation with the body of risen Christ and mediating the Word to the soul, especially in the time when the Eucharist communion was limited (usually once a year).<sup>19</sup> The church and the convent were dedicated to Corpus Christi and the established fraternity and the famous processions organized in Venice reflect the importance of the feast founded in the mid of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and disseminated largely in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup>

After the teaching of Berengar of Tours (c. 999-1088) who introduced analogies to Biblical texts and who demonstrated the concordance of Scripture with the theological teaching, the idea of sacramentality was developed that assigned a figurative relation of Christ's body to the Eucharist, the idea that was much opposed and even considered heretical. Berengar's view would triumph in the 12<sup>th</sup> century supported by the new interpretation, grounded in the tradition of scriptural exegesis that viewed the Eucharist as *manna* or a sacrificial lamb. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century the new formula was strengthened and designed mostly to help pastoral work in the writings of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, with the focus on food, nourishment and union.<sup>21</sup> One of the heated debates was held concerning the problem of the ways in which Christ's real presence comes to be in the consecrated host, in which Dominican theologians took part, such as John of Paris who wrote extensively on the subject at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> The Eucharist in the pastoral life was designed at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century through guidebooks, legislations, sermons and exempla. It was defined as a "food for the soul", a fragile object, made of wheat grain (as Christ compared himself to a grain of wheat; John, 12:24), in a form of a circle, without blemish, thin and unleavened, regularly kept and protected. One of the main roles of the priests was to teach the symbolism and the claim that

---

<sup>15</sup> In 1399 a wave of popular devotion spread through Italy involving men and women, dressed in white, in the pious processions for "peace and mercy". See in: D. E. BORNSTEIN, *The Bianchi of 1399: Popular Devotion in Late Medieval Italy*, Cornell University Press, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> His connection to the convent was strengthened by the fact that his mother entered the monastery and remained there until her death, during the Council of Constance. (B. RICCOBONI, *op. cit.*, 2000, pp. 42-43).

<sup>17</sup> This was especially in reference to his sermons. See in: *Regola del governo di cura familiare...*, *op. cit.*, 1860, pp. LVI-LXVI.

<sup>18</sup> *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period*, L. TAYLOR (ed.), Brill, Leiden, 2001, pp. 147-151.

<sup>19</sup> Dominici was reproved for giving Communion to the nuns every Sunday and, according to B. Riccoboni he replied that "when someone asks him for the holy sacrament and he refuses to give it, may God deprive him of his grace". See in: B. RICCOBONI, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> M. RUBIN, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 20-25.

<sup>22</sup> G. BRIGUGLIA, *Theology, Sacramental Debates, and Political Thought in John of Paris: The Case of the Eucharist*, in *John of Paris. Beyond Royal and Papal Power*, C. JONES (ed.), Brepols Publisher, 2015, pp. 410-421.

the God could be brought into the presence of men and that Christ could be received in their bodies which made the utmost ritual experience. Sister Bartolomea Riccoboni wrote about that mysterious experience and the power of the Eucharist in her chronicle. She details how the sisters loved receiving Communion (Dominici was criticized for giving them Communion weekly) but also had fear and complicated attitudes towards the Eucharist. In the text she describes the event of the arrival of the tabernacle with the consecrated host in the church and the nuns who were “rapt in ecstasy, raised off the earth, prostrated on the ground, who cried and even spoke to the host”.<sup>23</sup> Also, when the chalice was accidentally knocked over and the host tumbled down, landing on the heads and shoulders of the sisters below the altar, the nuns were terrified, cried in pain and sorrow “as if they were seeing the Lord Jesus Christ dead on the ground.”<sup>24</sup> It is one of the best testimonies of how this symbolic system was powerful and disseminated and communicated through the Word (knowledge delivered in sermons and vernaculars), but also through images that illustrated words of theology and popular devotion.

The iconography of the *pala* has raised much interest, most recently it was interpreted by Denise Zaru.<sup>25</sup> Ann Markham Schulz gave a thorough interpretation connecting the scenes with the text, mostly the Scriptures. She recognizes in the three scenes of sacrifice the prefiguration of Christ’s sacrificial death and in the Old Testament scenes the prefiguration of the Eucharistic meal. The New Testament scenes are seen as the prototype of the Last Supper and the food distributed as Eucharistic elements,<sup>26</sup> therefore recognizing the typological organization of the *pala* which could be related to the current debates over the Communion. The narratives refer to the symbolic significance of the sacrifice, the body of Christ and the Holy Communion except the two outermost scenes of the upper register representing St Peter Martyr on the left and St Anthony on the right. The scene with St Anthony illustrates the story of the horse’s veneration of the host and the conversion of the animal’s heretical owner, based on the account of the miracle in the *Vita Beati Antonii de ordine fratrum minorum* by Fra Jean de Rigaud (*Legenda Rigaldina*).<sup>27</sup> This scene Markham Schulz sees as the parallel to the first scene on the left of the upper register that has been connected to St Peter Martyr represented standing in front of the kneeling crowd, with lifted hands holding the host (fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Detail of the altarpiece representing a Dominican saint with the host (probably St Peter Martyr)

<sup>23</sup> B. RICCOBONI, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 40-41.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>25</sup> D. ZARU, *Visualizing the Eucharist: altarpieces for Observant Dominicans in Venice*, lecture given at The Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague on 13 May 2014.

<sup>26</sup> A. MARKHAM SHULZ, *op. cit.*, 2011, pp. 237-238.

<sup>27</sup> *La vita del Santo raccontata dai contemporanei. Assidua – Rigaldina*, V. GAMBOSO (ed.), Edizioni Messagero, Padova, 2012.

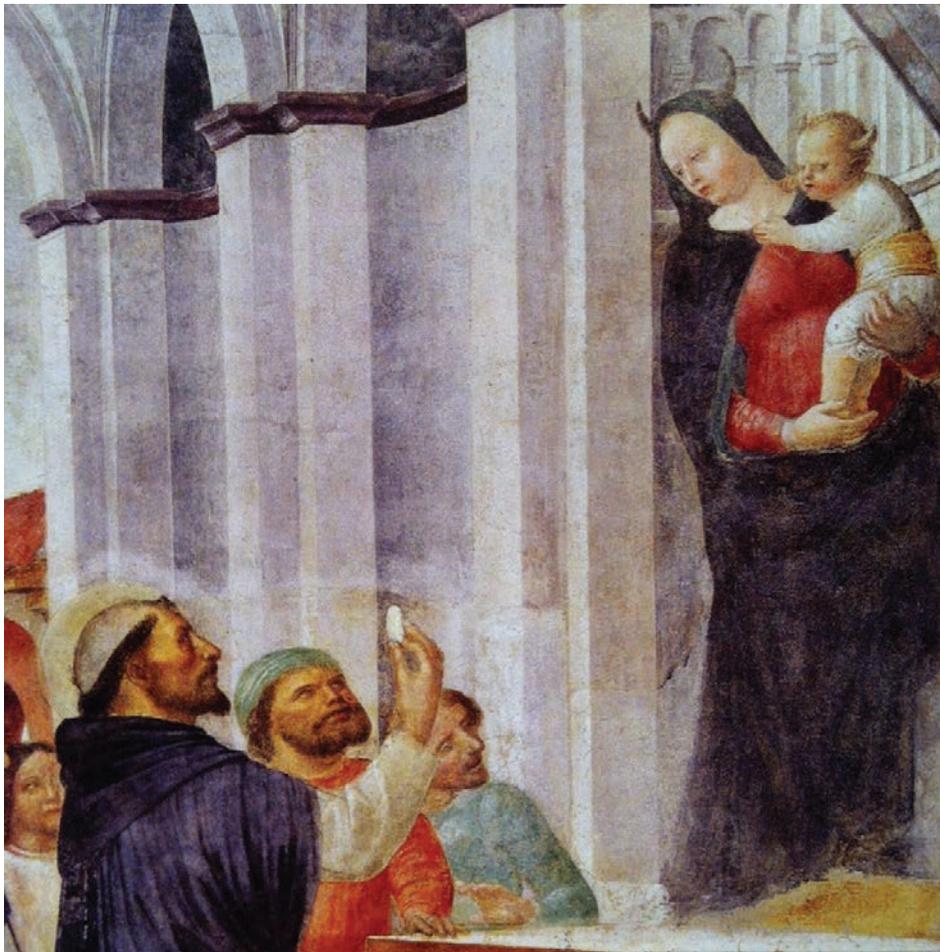


Fig. 3. Vincenzo Foppa, *Exorcism by St Peter Martyr of a Diabolical Apparition (Miracle of the False Madonna)*, fresco in the Cappella Portinari of the Church of Saint Eustorgio, Milan, c. 1468 (photo: M. Štitić)

Markham Schulz interpreted the scene as the *Exorcism by St Peter Martyr of a Diabolical Apparition* in which the saint routs the Devil that had appeared to heretics in the church, disguised as the Virgin with Child, and evoked by a necromancer: “If you are truly the Mother of God, kneel before your Son and worship him.”

Peter was seen in the Dominican literature as the perfect follower of Christ, as almost *alter Christus*, so his deeds could be perceived as being parallel to those of Christ’s.<sup>28</sup> Related to this but also to the fact that Dominican devotion had a Marian character, his devotion to Mary was recognized during his life but even more emphasized by his hagiographers.<sup>29</sup> His life is embellished with this story that originally appears in *Vite Fratrum*, and tells of a preacher in Germany in 1230 who was invited to the church of heretics where the Blessed Virgin was appearing. When he arrived at the church he saw a beautiful apparition of Mary holding the baby Jesus and, suspecting the apparition to be a devil, he took out the host he had concealed in his garments and repelled it. The similar miracle

<sup>28</sup> A. DONDAINE, *Saint Pierre Martyr. Études*, in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 23, 1953, pp. 66-172; C. CALDWELL, *Peter Martyr: The Inquisitor as Saint*, in *Comitatus. A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 31 (1), 2000, pp. 137-174; *Martire per la fede. San Pietro da Verona domenicano e inquisitore*, G. FESTA (ed.), Bologna, 2007; D. PRUDLO, *The Martyred Inquisitor: The Life and Cult of Peter of Verona († 1252)*, Ashgate Publishing, 2008, pp. 109-111; A. IMPROTA, *Dal pulpito al sepolcro. Contributo per l’iconografia di San Pietro Martire da Verona tra XIII e XIV secolo*, in *Porticum, Revista d’Estudis Medievalis*, n. 1, 2011, pp. 105-119.

<sup>29</sup> D. PRUDLO, *op. cit.*, 2008, pp. 109-111.



Fig. 4. Giovanni di Balduccio, marble arca of St Peter Martyr, Cappella Portinari of the Church of Saint Eustorgio, Milan, c. 1339, front showing the following scenes: Miracle of the Mute, Miracle of the Cloud and Funeral of St Peter (photo: M. Štitić)

was ascribed to Peter in the *Vitae*<sup>30</sup> and in the collection compiled at the order of Dominican Master General Berengar of Landorre in ca. 1314. It was not included in *Legenda aurea* but was incorporated in a collection of miraculous stories from 1340 - *Catalogus sanctorum et gestorum eorum ex diversis et multis voluminibus collectus*, by Pietro Calo of Chioggia.<sup>31</sup> This episode, although uncommon in the corpus of *vitae*, did not have an important impact on Peter's iconography since it appears in very few interpretations of the theme such as the representation of Mary and Jesus with devilish horns in the Cappella Portinari of the Church of Saint Eustorgio in Milan where the saint's tomb is placed (fig. 3).<sup>32</sup> The narrative is based on the text of the *Vita* (later collected in *Acta Sanctorum*) that describes the diabolical apparition in the shape of Virgin Mary with baby Jesus in her arms, standing above the altar, and Peter exposing the false Madonna by holding up the pyx with consecrated host which made the apparition disappear with tremendous noise and stink.<sup>33</sup> The Devil's intrusion and diabolical deceptions are usually introduced in the lives of the saints who were struggling against evil and were presented as didactic images which unmasked the deceit and functioned as a strong *memento*

<sup>30</sup> Jacobus de Voragine included Peter in his *Legenda aurea* (1263–1267) but the Order's apparent dissatisfaction with this hagiographical collection spurred the Dominican patriarch of Jerusalem, Thommaso Agni da Lentino, to use the *Legenda* as a source for his biography of St Peter Martyr. This became the official life and the most known biography of the saint, written in 1276 and published in part by L. Sudo in Cologne in the 1578s, and entirely by the Bollandists in *Acta sanctorum* (T. DE LENTINO, *Vita sancti Petri martyris*, in *Acta sanctorum*, Aprilis, tomus III, Paris-Rome, 1866, pp. 694-727). Despite the existence of this official *vita*, the general chapter repeated in 1289 the call for new miracles of Peter to be written and sent to the master general, and in 1314 it again ordered that any new miracles should be reported to the prior of Milan. The *vita*, changed and updated, translated and popularized in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries was printed for the first time by R. de Visiani in Verona in 1862. See in: S. ORLANDI, *S. Pietro Martire da Verona - Leggenda di fra' Tommaso Agni da Lentini nel volgare trecentesco*, Florence 1952.

<sup>31</sup> A. DONDAINE, *op.cit.*, pp. 107, 143-144.

<sup>32</sup> G. SCOTTI, *Alcune ipotesi di lettura per gli affreschi della Capella Portinari alla luce degli scritti di S. Antonino vescovo di Firenze*, in *Arte Lombarda*, 64, 1983, pp. 65-78.

<sup>33</sup> *Acta sanctorum*, *op. cit.*, 1866, p. 701, <http://archive.org/details/actasanctorum12unse> (accessed May 12, 2015).



Fig. 5. *Miracle of the Cloud*, façade relief panel, Church of St Anastasia, Verona (Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository)

of the evil's constant presence and danger for the believers. In this particular event the power of Eucharist, in the context of overpowering evil, is underlined.

This episode does not appear in the earliest cycle of the saint's life - the marble *arca* of the saint, dated 1339 and signed by the Pisan sculptor Giovanni di Balduccio.<sup>34</sup> The reliefs on the tomb show three miracles from his life that are considered most prominent in his hagiography and certainly most represented as well as founded in the text of the *Golden Legend*: *Miracle of the Mute*, *Miracle of the Cloud* and *Miracle of the Sea*. In the first two (fig. 4) the saint is depicted in front of the praying crowd manifesting his miraculous powers in compositions that are easily understood and made forward to communicate the clear message to the viewer. In the so-called *Miracle of the Host* on the Venice altarpiece the scene is ambiguous. The main characteristic of this narrative is that it takes place in the church and is always accompanied by the vision of Mary – which is the main focus of the miraculous subject. Both fundamental elements are missing which makes the reading of the scene complicated and certainly not easily connected to the exorcism episode. The story takes place in the open air, denoted by a tree; even the architectural elements referring to a church square or a town context are omitted. The *exempla* and similar stories were helpful tools that made

preaching clearer and were used to reinforce the belief and counter doubt. A Eucharistic miracle tale was a manifestation of how regular and reliable intervention was and therefore the forthright and unambiguous representation was a precondition. Also, a representative of the heretics or a whole group of heretical followers is missing, symbolically defined with specific robes or caps. Instead we perceive kneeling believers oriented toward a saint and not toward the center of the miracle action. The scene could be, therefore, interpreted not as a miraculous story but as a representation of the devotion of the Host within the context of the Holy Communion performed by the priest or in the

<sup>34</sup> St Peter Martyr was buried in the cemetery near the basilica in Milan in 1252 and the following year, during his canonization and the identification of his remains, his head was detached and the body was laid in a sarcophagus and placed in the fifth chapel on the left aisle in the church. Around 1336 the Dominicans commissioned a new monument from Giovanni di Balduccio, who completed the tomb in three years. V. ALCE, *La Tomba di San Pietro Martire e la Cappella Portinari in S. Eustorgio di Milano*, in *Memorie Domenicane*, 69, 1952, pp. 3-34; A. MOSKOWITZ, *Giovanni di Balduccio's Arca di San Pietro Martire: Form and Function*, in *Arte Lombarda*, 96/97, 1991, pp. 7-18; *La capella Portinari: i documenti storici e letture critiche*, L. FORMICA (ed.), Milan, 2001.



Fig. 6. Gaetano Bianchi, *St. Peter Martyr Performing the Miracle of the Enraged Horse*, fresco on the façade of Loggia del Bigallo, Florence, c. 1444 (photo: S. Tacchini)

context in his role as a preacher, expressing the Dominican conception of “saving soul” and the embedment within a particular articulation of universal *ecclesia*.<sup>35</sup>

In the examples that present iconography of St Peter Martyr (even those that predate the altarpiece in Venice) the saint is depicted while preaching “all’ aperto”, usually in front of a church, standing on a pulpit, with a theatrical gesture in front of the crowd, usually accompanied by another monk as his follower or as a witness to his miraculous deeds among which the Miracle of the Cloud is the most illustrated (fig. 5) or its close version in the story of the enraged horse (fig. 6). Often miracles accompanied his exhortations and these demonstrations of holy power explicitly serve inquisitorial function by publicly disclosing heresy’s alliance with the devil making it inquisitor’s responsibility to identify the evil.

Nonetheless, the iconography of the first panel of the Venice altarpiece is ambiguous, gives elements for serious doubts about the recognition of the miracle of the host in the depiction as well as opens the space for the future iconological interpretation in the line with the Dominican devotion, preaching and denouncing heresy.

In the absence of similar works of art and due to the proven relationship, the altarpiece of Caterino Moronzon in scholarly literature is regularly compared with the altarpiece of his father Andrea made for the altar of the cathedral in Gemona after 1391 (fig. 7).<sup>36</sup> Andrea Moronzon carved the reliefs in Gemona in a way that they leave an impression of incompleteness, which is surely not accidental, since the painter who should have finished the altarpiece played an important role in the

<sup>35</sup> C. CALDWELL, *Righteous Persecution: Inquisition, Dominicans, and Christianity in the Middle Ages*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Andrea Moronzon was contracted for the making of the altarpiece by Cristoforo Orsetti, the steward of the Church of S. Maria in Gemona, on 18 July 1391. See in: V. BALDISSERA, *L’ancona dell’antico altare maggiore, il coro e l’abside della chiesa arcipretale di Gemona*, Gemona, 1892, pp. 5-6; V. JOPPI, *Contributo quarto ed ultimo alla storia dell’arte in Friuli ed alla vita dei pittori, intagliatori, scultori, architetti ed orefici friulani dal XIV al XVIII secolo*, Venezia, 1894, pp. 108-109; L. SARTOR, *op. cit.*, 2004, pp. 98-102; A. MARKHAM SCHULZ, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 76.

About the comparison with the altarpiece of Caterino see in: A. MARKHAM SCHULZ, *op. cit.*, 2007, p. 104; A. MARKHAM SCHULZ, *op. cit.*, 2011, pp. 241-242; L. SARTOR, *op. cit.*, 2004; B. ŠPANJOL-PANDELO, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.



Fig. 7. Andrea Moronzon, Altarpiece, Church of Santa Maria, Gemona (photo: Elio and Stefano Ciol)

final semblance of the work of art.<sup>37</sup> Andrea relied on the painter who should have highlighted the details with colour and gilding that particularly comes to the fore on the relief of *The Last Supper* where the physiognomies of the figures plus the polychromy and gilding are, unlike much of the relief, relatively well preserved. His figures are quite unwieldy, portrayed with numerous anatomical inaccuracies, and there is obvious woodcarving clumsiness in the way they are made, especially in the shaping of the bodies. With regard to his father Caterino is more successful with the decoration and carving of details. Unlike Andrea, who amasses figures on the reliefs of the altarpiece in Gemona and arranges them within the dimensions of completely various arches, Caterino dedicates great attention to the details of the frame of the altarpiece. He produced the frame and altarpiece arches very carefully by using patterns, since each of the twelve side arches were made almost identically.

Without doubt Caterino Moronzon developed the acquired knowledge in the workshop of his father Andrea and stylistically progressed, however he remained within the frame of the conservative method of design. Despite the fact that the majority of authors emphasized how Caterino progressed technically in relation to his father, particularly in the composition and layout of the relief on the altarpiece, nevertheless a significant number of art historians have considered him to be quite an unskilled woodcarver.<sup>38</sup> In the time of the very lively artistic production in Venice, Caterino's woodcarving production cannot be measured with the artistic achievements or skill of his contemporaries.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> The altarpiece from the Church of Santa Maria in Gemona (130 x 250 cm) is divided into four registers with thirty-three arches of varying sizes filled with scenes from the Old and New Testaments. Over the years the altarpiece has been ruined to a large extent in fires and earthquakes, so many of the reliefs are damaged. Due to these reasons the polychromy and gilding are very poorly preserved, so the impression of incompleteness is additionally increased.

<sup>38</sup> P. PAOLETTI, *L'architettura e la scultura del Rinascimento in Venezia, Ricerche storico artistiche*, vol. I, 1893, p. 80; L. TESTI, *op. cit.*, 1909, pp. 246-254; G. MARIACHER, *op. cit.*, 1952, p. 161-166; E. CARLI, *La scultura lignea italiana dal XII al XVI secolo*, Milan, 1960, p. 68.

<sup>39</sup> A rather small amount of woodcarvings have been preserved from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, however if Caterino's method of design is compared with the method in which his contemporaries in stone in Venice were working it is obvious that Caterino was not able to transmit onto the altarpiece the progress which at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century was achieved in Venice by Jacobello and Pierpaolo dalle Masegne, and during the first third of the 15<sup>th</sup> century by Giovanni and Bartolomeo Bon. Unlike Caterino they successfully animated the figures, highlighted emotions, modelled rich draperies and for them the perspective shortenings were clear.

The Venice altarpiece displays no contacts with other artistic centers, but is, in spite of the variation in quality, on the trail of the expression founded in the artistic workshops of Venice. It also offers an insight into one part of the decoration of church interiors in Venice at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, while at the same time, a discussion about its iconography certainly confirms that in the creation of woodcarvings the collaboration of painter and woodcarver, as well as the patron, was crucial, and that numerous other facts decided upon the final outward aspect. Finally, although it is certain that within the framework of Venetian woodcarving of the late 14<sup>th</sup> century Caterino Moronzon did not move the boundaries of artistic expression, the fact that he continued the family business and also brought his sons, Jacopo and Gasparino into it, is of great significance for the Venetian artistic circle from where several woodcarvers emerged who would leave a trace not only on the north east part of Italy, but also along the east coast of the Adriatic Sea.

### OLTARNA PALA IZ CRKVE CORPUS DOMINI

Drvorezbar Katarino Moronzon i slikar Bartolomej Pavlov izradili su oltarnu palu za samostansku crkvu Corpus Domini u Veneciji, a pala se danas nalazi u Muzeju Correr. U članku se pomnije analizira ikonografski program oltarne pale izveden u dva registra s dvanaest prikaza, te trinaestim središnjim poljem. Sve prikaze povezuje opća tema koja se odnosi na Tijelo Kristovo, njegovu žrtvu te čuda povezana s Euharistijom, pa je u tekstu naglasak stavljen na teološka učenja i rasprave o tijelu Kristovom i euharistiji u srednjemu vijeku. Propituje se i uloga znamenitog dominikanca Ivana Dominikovog u definiranju ikonografskog programa, budući je on bio blisko povezan s redovnicama samostana Corpus Domini.

Osobita je pozornost posvećena ikonografiji prvog prikaza gornjeg registra s lijeve strane, prethodno definiranog kao *Egzorcizam Sv. Petra Mučenika*. Autorice odbacuju takvo tumačenje uzimajući u obzir način na koji je prikazana scena te stavljajući je u odnos prema nekoliko poznatih likovnih rješenja navedenog događaja. Sv. Petar Mučenik u dominikanskoj se literaturi smatra sljedbenikom Krista, gotovo kao *alter Christus*, pa se propitivanjem poznatih događaja iz Petrova života, ponajprije u odnosu na njegovu povezanost s raspravama o euharistijskom misteriju, u tekstu predlaže nekoliko mogućih ikonografskih čitanja navedenog reljefa.

Konačno, pobliže se definira stil i način rada Katarina Moronzona. U nedostatku sličnih umjetnina oltarna pala Katarina Moronzona uspoređuje se s oltarnom palom njegova oca Andrije Moronzona koja se čuva u katedrali u Gemoni. Ujedno se nastoji kontekstualizirati drvorezbarstvo Katarina Moronzona u okviru umjetničke produkcije Venecije kasnog 14. odnosno ranog 15. stoljeća.

**Ključne riječi:** *Corpus Domini, Caterino Moronzon, Giovanni Dominici, Sv. Petar Martir, Euharistija, Venecija, oltarna pala, ikonografija*