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LISZT'S DEVOTIONAL IMAGE

A 17th CENTURY ABGAR IMAGE AND ITS TWO POSSESSORS

This paper deals with an Abgar image in the Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum (Budapest), which was used as a devotional image by the composer. First the relationship of this representation to its prototype, the cult image of S. Silvestro in Capite in Rome is examined. Second we discuss information about the panel's first possessor, an abbess of the Poor Clares in Pozsony (today's Bratislava), whose name is known from the inscription of the verso. Not only do we attempt a more precise dating based on this information, but also endeavour to place the picture in its original context. The use of images among the nuns of the order of St. Clare, and the question on what occasion the abbess may have received this panel are also considered. The third part addresses the issue of Liszt's relations with Rome, in particular the role his cordial relationship with Pope Pius IX may have played from his painting's point of view. As music and visual arts were considered closely related in Liszt's eyes, in the last part of the paper an analogy is drawn between the composer's Abgar image and his sacred choral works in terms of their archaicism.

Keywords: Liszt, Abgar image, S. Silvestro in Capite (Rome), Wierix, Poor Clares, Pozsony, Vienna, Pope Pius IX

Introduction



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The object of our investigation is a panel painting representing the face of Christ, which is of interest not merely as a *Gnadenbild* copy, but also from a cultural historical point of view, as it was Liszt's (1811-1886) private devotional image (fig. 1).¹ It was hung by the prie-dieu in the bedroom-study of the composer's Sugár street flat in Budapest, where he lived from 1881. Now it is exhibited in the same position in the Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum, which stands in the same place where Liszt's flat used to be (fig. 2).²

¹ It was Zsuzsa Urbach who called my attention to this painting, for which I am very much indebted to her. I would also like to acknowledge with gratitude the help offered by Katalin Schwarcz, Mária Eckhardt, Thomas Tolley, Zoltán Szilárdy and Edit Szentesi. I am most grateful to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for providing me the grant for the research I carried out at the Warburg Institute in London, where this paper was presented.

² *Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum, Catalogue, Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Ed. By M. Eckhardt, Budapest 1996, cat. 53., 45,2 by 28,5 cm. Unknown painter (17-18th cent.) Photo published by Szilárdy, Zoltán: A Krisztusarc mint palladium s egyéb védőpajzsokról (On*

Let us consider the representation first. It shows a greyish image of Christ's face in frontal view surrounded by rays, appearing against a dark background. On both sides of the face there are letter symbols of Jesus Christ, and it is surrounded by the inscription: IMAGO CHRISTI SALVATORIS AD IMITATIONEM + EIVS QVAM MISIT ABAGARO QVAE + ROMAE HABETVR IN MONASTERIO S. SILVESTRI. (An image of Christ, our Saviour, a copy of the one he sent to Abagarus, which is preserved in the monastery of St. Silvester in Rome.) In the upper part of the picture there is another inscription in slightly larger-size letters, which is a quotation from Psalm 45: SPECIOSVS FORMA PRAE FILIIS HOMINVM + DIFFVSA EST GRATIA IN LABIIS TVIS + VNIXITTE DE[VS] TV[VS] OLEO LETITIAE PRAE CO[N]SORTIB[VS] TVIS RESPICE IN FACIEM CHISTI TVI. (You are more beautiful than the sons of man, grace has diffused on your lips, your God has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy, behold your Christ's face.)

According to the catalogue of the Museum, the panel is from the 17-18th century. As it is an archaizing *Gnadenbild* copy, this rather loose dating is not surprising. However, the panel has a Latin inscription on its verso - *Reuerendae et dilectae a Christo Mat[ri] Abbatissae Conventus Posoniens[is] Ordini[s] S. Clarae, Annae Mariae & Lichtenberg recordationis ergo* (fig. 3).³ (To Anna Maria Lichtenberg, honourable Mother Superior of the convent of the Pozsony Poor Clares, beloved by Christ, as a token of remembrance.) Not only may this inscription contribute to a more precise dating, but it may also open up a new dimension for the interpretation of the painting by giving the name of its first possessor: Anna Maria Lichtenberg, an abbess of the Poor Clares in Pozsony (today's Bratislava).

Christ's face as palladium and other military standards), *Ars Hungarica* 27 (1999/2) fig. 1. (beginning of 18th century)

³ This transcription differs from the one in the catalogue of the Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum (see note 2). I would like to thank Katalin Borossay for helping me in the translation of this inscription.

The aim of this paper is to explore the relationship of this picture with its two possessors. As a first step, however, its iconography and art historical context needs to be defined.

I.

The starting point for this is the inscription itself. Our panel is a copy of an Abgar image (also referred to as *Mandylion*), which is an *Akheiropoieton*, i.e. a miraculous image not painted by human hand. According to the legend in the Greek *Act of Thaddeus*, it was produced by Christ himself, who imprinted his features on a cloth. This image was taken by apostle Thaddeus to Abgar, King of Edessa, who was cured by it. It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the various legends of the *Mandylion*, its history, or representations.⁴



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⁴ See Dobschütz, Ernst von: *Christusbilder. Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende*. Leipzig 1899, Runciman, Steven: Some Remarks on the Image of Edessa, *Cambridge Historical Journal* 3 (1931), pp. 238-252, Grabar, André: *La Sainte Face de Laon. Le Mandylion dans l'art orthodoxe* (Seminarium Kondakovianum), Prague 1931, Kitzinger, Ernst: The Cult of Images in the Period Before Iconoclasm, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954), pp. 85-150, Weitzmann, Kurt: The Mandylion and Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Cahiers archéologiques* 11 (1960), pp. 163-184, Bertelli, Carlo: Storia e vicende dell'Immagine Edessena di San Silvestro in Capite a Roma, *Paragone* 19 (1968), pp. 3-33, Cameron, Averil: The History of the Image of Edessa: The Telling of a Story' in *Okeanos. Essays presented to Ihor Ševčenko, Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983), pp. 80-94, Belting, Hans: *Bild und Kult. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, München 1990, pp. 233-246, Ragusa, Isa: The Mandylion-Sudarium: The 'Translation' of a Byzantine Relic to Rome, *Arte Medievale* 5 (1991), pp. 97-106, Kessler, Herbert: 'Pictures Fertile with Truth': How Christians Managed to Make Images of God without Violating the Second Commandment, *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 49/50 (1991/92), pp. 53-65, Drijvers, Han, J. W.: The Image of Edessa in the Syriac Tradition, in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*. Papers from a Colloquium held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1996, Ed. By H. L. Kessler and G. Wolf (Villa Spelman Colloquia 6.) Bologna 1998, pp. 13-31, (further: *The Holy Face...*) Cameron, Averil: The Mandylion and Byzantine Iconoclasm in *The Holy Face...* pp. 33-54, Kessler, Herbert L.: Configuring the Invisible by Copying the Holy Face in *The Holy Face...* pp. 129-151, Wolf, Gerhard: From Mandylion to Veronica: Picturing the "Disembodied" Face and Disseminating the True Image of Christ in the Latin West in *The Holy Face...* pp. 153-179, Trilling, James: The Image Not Made by Hands and the Byzantine Way of Seeing in *The Holy Face...* pp. 109-127.

However, the main issues concerning the prototype of Liszt's panel need to be considered in brief.

This darkish Abgar image, giving an archaic impression, was held in the convent of S. Silvestro in Capite in Rome until 1870, when it was taken to one of the pope's private chapels in the Vatican: Capella S. Matilda (fig. 4).⁵ From 1285 S. Silvestro in Capite was inhabited by the Clarissans, and the *Mandylion* was their possession. The first historical source referring to the icon is fra Mariano da Firenze's *Itinerarium Urbis Romae*, from 1517.⁶ Even if this *Mandylion* was venerated earlier than that, the cult of another image of Christ's face, the *Veronica* of S. Pietro in Rome must have had priority over it.⁷ The cult of this image relic was given an impetus from 1216, when Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) composed a prayer to it, and granted ten days' indulgence for saying this prayer in front of the *Veronica*.⁸

Both in its archaism and size the Abgar image from S. Silvestro in Capite bears a striking resemblance to a replica, venerated in S. Bartolomeo degli Armeni in Genoa from 1384 (fig. 5).⁹ With their characteristic archaism, echoing the style of 3rd-century Syrian representations, the *Mandylions* in Rome and Genoa are distinct from all other Byzantine Abgar images. Both of them are likely to be copies of the original.¹⁰

Although there exist earlier copies of the *Mandylion* from S. Silvestro in Capite, its cult started to flourish from the first decades of the 17th century. It was then that it was placed

⁵ Bertelli 1968 (see note 4)

⁶ Ibid., p. 9, 28 n. 29.

⁷ Belting 1990 (see note 4), p. 246.

⁸ Egger, Christoph: Papst Innocenz III. und die Veronica. Geschichte, Theologie, Liturgie und Seelsorge, in *The Holy Face...* pp. 181-204.

⁹ The *Mandylion* in Genoa is in a 14th century silver chasing representing the Abgar legend. Dufour Bozzo, Colette: *Il „Sacro Volto” di Genova*, Rome 1974, Dufour Bozzo, Colette: *Il „Sacro Volto” di Genova*. Problemi e aggiornamenti, in *The Holy Face...* pp. 55-68.

¹⁰ Two folding wings in the Sinai collection belong to the same group. They represent the Abgar legend, and used to be parts of a triptych, whose middle panel representing the *Mandylion* is lost. For the group: Bertelli 1968 (see note 4), pp. 10-15, Belting 1990 (see note 4), pp. 235-236, for the Sinai wings Weitzmann 1960 (see note 4).

into a metal reliquary with figural representations, which has been preserved to this day. Its base shows the name of the donor as well as the date when the reliquary was made: SOR. DIONORA CLARUTIA FF. ANNO 1623.¹¹ The fact that in 1628 Giacchetti devoted a work to this cult image reflects the panels's growing popularity.¹² An engraving made after the painting also appeared on the title page.

Some of the copies of the Abgar image from S. Silvestro in Capite identify their prototype in their inscriptions. It seems that it was considered important to state that a picture was a replica of that particular image of Christ's face. The Abgar image in the Liszt Museum is such a copy. It resembles the physiognomy of the prototype, which is reflected in the oval face, long nose, and almond-shaped, slightly black-ringed eyes. At the same time, however, it has the naturalistic characteristics of the period it was painted in. There is some interesting detail about this image, which is worth closer attention. Unlike in other pictures, Christ is not represented with his hair flowing down to his shoulder. Still it does not give the impression of a face with short hair, but rather that of an image cut out from a larger picture. This makes it come over to the beholder as an apparition, which is also intensified by the rays emanating from Christ's head. This representation seems to imitate the visual effect of the prototype from S. Silvestro in Capite, showing Christ's face as it appears surrounded by the metal cover of the reliquary. The only difference is that the triangle-shaped hair and beard line of the original image does not appear in the copy. The greyish colouring of Christ's face in the Budapest panel is likely to be another reference to its prototype, also with a dark tone.

¹¹ Toesca, Ilaria: La cornice dell'Immagine Edessena di San Silvestro in Capite a Roma, *Paragone* 19 (1968) pp. 33-37

¹² Ragusa 1991 (see note 4), p. 102, 105 n. 33.

Another Abgar image in the municipal museum of Trier seems to evidence the dissemination of the iconographical type the Budapest painting is an example of (fig. 6).¹³

Although with more stylised details, it shows the same oval face, letter symbols, and inscription surrounding Christ's face, identifying the picture's prototype. It also has a line quoted from the same psalm. These common features can only be explained by positing the existence of an engraving which may have played an intermediate part between the prototype and its copies.

An engraving by Hieronymus Wierix (1553-1619), member of the Wierix engraver dynasty from Antwerp, seems to exhibit all these shared features (fig. 7).¹⁴ It has the same physiognomy of Christ, the same shape of head, letter symbols, inscription, and quote from the same psalm as the Budapest picture. However, it is a shoulder-length image of Christ. As Wierix was from Antwerp, his representation may have combined the physiognomy of the Abgar image in Rome with Christ's shoulder-length depictions. The latter iconographical type, disseminated by a lost panel by Jan van Eyck, was very frequent in 15-16th century Flemish painting.¹⁵

It seems unlikely that the painter of the panel in the Liszt Museum copied this engraving by Hieronymus Wierix. However, he may have been familiar with another Wierix engraving, which had the same inscriptions, but was of the other iconographical type, showing

¹³ This Abgar image is the pendant of a panel representing the face of the Virgin. For other versions from the region of Trier with the face of the Virgin or without see Becker, Petrus - May, Placidus: *Das St. Mattheiser Marienbild in Trier*, in *Die Gottesmutter. Marienbild in Rheinland und in Westfalen*. Ed. By L. Küppers, Recklinghausen 1974, pp. 349-359. For other baroque Abgar images see Szilárdfy 1999 (see note 2), fig. 3, fig. 4.

¹⁴ Mauquoy - Hendrickx, Marie: *Les estampes des Wierix conservées au Cabinet des Estampes de la Bibliothèque Royale Albert I^{er}*. I., Brussels 1978, Nr. 489.

¹⁵ Smeyers, Maurits: *An Eyckian Vera Icon in a Bruges Book of Hours*, CA. 1450 (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Ms. 421), in *Serta Devota in memoriam Guillelmi Lourdaux*, Leuven University Press 1995, pp. 195-224, Kovács, Imre: *Az eycki Szent Arc ikonográfiai eredete* (The iconographical origin of the Eyckian Holy Face). *Ars Hungarica* 25 (1997/1-2), pp. 101-116.

Christ's face only, without his shoulders. This idea seems to be supported by the existence of an engraving by Antoine Wierix (? - 1574) representing Christ with a similar physiognomy, which is of the same type as the Budapest picture but has no inscription identifying its prototype.¹⁶ In any case, the Wierix-dynasty may have been instrumental in disseminating the cult of the Abgar image in the West in the 16-18th century. Their engravings may have served as prototypes for later engravings as well as paintings.

II.

Information about the first possessor of the Abgar image in the Liszt Museum does not only contribute to a more precise dating of this panel but also helps to put it into context. According to the panel's inscription, its owner was an abbess of the order of St. Clare from Pozsony: Anna Maria Lichtenberg. She was active during the turbulent decades of the history of the Pozsony Clarissans. An examination of these events seems to be of key importance in finding out more about the painting. The main historical source is a Franciscan historiographer's, Jenő Kósa's (1714-1783) history of the Poor Clares in Hungary, which is part of his Latin language history of the Franciscan order. In 1768 the relevant sections were translated by Kósa into Hungarian for the Clarissans.¹⁷

¹⁶ Mauquoy - Hendrickx 1978 (see note 13), Nr. 492 (catalogue entry under wrong number: 490).

This engraving may also have been the prototype of a 16th century Flemish Abgar image in a private collection (Bahren - Manama). Photo: Brussels, IRPA/KIK 180748 B.

¹⁷ Szent Ferencz Atyánk Rendén lévő Boldog Asszony Provinciájának Megyében Szűz Szent Klára Szerzetében Élő Szűzek Klastrominak Kezdeté, Néhai és mostani Állapottya; Amint az Emlétt Provinciának Archivumából A' Szűzek Conventeinek Protocollumból, és Egyéb Írásokból, és Könyvekből Deák Nyelven egybe szedte, és azután Emlétt Szűzek Kedvéért Magyar Nyelvre fordította P. E. K. 1768. Esztendőben (The beginnings of the convents of the order of St. Clare, belonging to the order of St. Francis, in the province of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Its past and present state, as it is compiled from the archives of the above province, the protocollums of the convents of the nuns, and other writings and books by P. E. K. in the Latin language, and then translated into the Hungarian language in the year 1768 for the above nuns). Of the four handwritten copies in existence I used the 2nd one of

According to the history of the Poor Clares, in May 1605 the nuns had to leave their home because of the impending attack of István Bocskay's Heyducks on Pozsony.¹⁸ It was their confessor, Sándor Ebeczky, who helped them escape to Graz, then to Vienna. In the end, they took refuge at the Viennese Poor Clares'. These nuns were the followers of the order's new, stricter regulations, which the Pozsony Clarissans also wanted to comply with. In order to do so, they had to obtain a papal permission. On receiving it, in 1607 three Viennese Clarissans went to Pozsony to teach the new Rules to their fellow sisters, who had earlier returned to their hometown. One of the three German-speaking nuns was the first possessor of the painting in the Liszt Museum, Anna Maria Lichtenberg, and the other two were Maria Magdolna Englin and Eva Heyslin. In 1607 it was Maria Magdolna Englin who was elected Mother Superior of the convent in Pozsony, who took it in turns with Anna Maria Lichtenberg to hold this position for periods of three years.¹⁹



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the two belonging to the Poor Clares in Pozsony. (Manuscript department of the National Széchényi Library, Budapest, Quart Hung 393) - further: Kósa 1768. In Schwarcz, Katalin: „Mert ihon jön Aßonyotok és kezében új szoknyák.” *Források a magyar klarissza rend történetéből* ("Because here comes your Lady with new skirts in her hand." Sources from the history of the Hungarian Poor Clares), Budapest 2003 (in press).

¹⁸ The Heyducks were peasants who escaped in great numbers from the areas devastated by the Turks or from oppressive conditions on landlords' estate. See *The Corvina History of Hungary*, Ed. By P. Hanák, Budapest, 1991, p. 52.

¹⁹ Kósa 1768 (see note 17), part VIII., fol. 15. Both of them came from Austrian noble families, and took their oath in the Viennese Convent Queen of Angels. For this see Herzog, Placidus: *Cosmographia Austriaco-Franciscano seu Exacta descriptio Provinciae Austriae...* vols. I-II. Coloniae Agrippinae 1749, p. 772. It was Katalin Schwarcz who called my attention to the book by Herzog. I know from her that this book is the source of the Clarissan order's history by Kósa. For the genealogy of the Lichtenberg family: Wurzbach, Constant von: *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums*. Wien 1866, vol. 15, pp. 106-108. For this period of the history of the Pozsony Clarissans also see Karácsonyi, János: *Szt. Ferencz rendjének története Magyarországon 1711-ig* (The history of the order of St. Francis in Hungary until 1711), Budapest 1924, vol. II., pp. 519-521, Schwarcz, Katalin: Mária Terézia látogatása a budai klarisszáknál 1751. augusztus 8-án. A budai klarissza zárda története, 3. rész (Maria Theresa's visit to the Clarissan order in Buda on 8 August 1751. History of the Clarissan convent in Buda, part 3), in *Tanulmányok Budapest múltjából* 29 (2001), p. 145, Horn, Ildikó: Csáky Anna Franciska és a pozsonyi klarisszák (Anna Franciska Csáky and the Pozsony Clarissans), *Aetas* 3 (1992), pp. 28-29.

In 1619 the Poor Clares of Pozsony again had to seek refuge in Vienna, this time because of Gábor Bethlen's attack.²⁰ They became temporary residents in the building of Königstall for four years. The Hungarian nuns had strained relations with their German-speaking fellows. The former wanted to return to their convent in Pozsony when it became a safe place again, whereas the latter wished to stay in Vienna. Finally, the conflict was solved by separation. Maria Magdolna Englin succeeded in gaining the support of empress Eleonora, who granted the nuns the convent of St. Nicholas, formerly inhabited by the Franciscans, as a place of residence.²¹ The Hungarian sisters returned to Pozsony, while the fourteen German-speaking nuns, on the 23rd of October 1623, entered the renovated St. Nicholas convent with due ceremony. According to the history of the Poor Clares, Anna Maria Lichtenberg was among these nuns.²² No more is known about her, in all probability she lived the rest of her life in the same convent.

As the prototype of Anna Maria Lichtenberg's painting was in the possession of the Poor Clares in S. Silvestro in Capite, it seems reasonable to suggest that the relations between the orders in Pozsony or Vienna and Rome may have contributed to having a copy made for the Mother Superior. The inscription on the back of the panel refers to Anna Maria Lichtenberg as abbess of the Poor Clares in Pozsony. Provided the rules were adhered to, she was entitled to bear this title from 1610 to 1613, and she may have had another term until 1623.²³

How the picture came into her possession is not known. She may have received it on becoming Mother Superior in Pozsony in 1610. Another potential occasion may have been the

²⁰ For Gábor Bethlen see *The Corvina History of Hungary* (see note 18), pp. 54-55

²¹ Perger, Richard - Brauneis, Walter: *Die mittelalterlichen Kirchen und Klöster Wiens* (Wiener Geschichtsbücher), Wien - Hamburg 1977, pp. 183-186. I would like to thank Edit Szentesi for this photocopy.

²² Kósa 1768 (see note 17), fol. 17.

German-speaking nuns' ceremonial entry to St. Nicholas convent in Vienna in 1623, on the occasion of which all the nuns were represented in a commemorative picture.²⁴ Even if the former is the case, that is Anna Maria Lichtenberg received the painting in Pozsony, she may have taken it with her into Vienna as her private property, and she may have had it in her cell in St. Nicholas convent as well. After she died, the panel either became her family's possession, or it remained in the convent, which, on losing its function after Joseph II dissolved the Clarissan order in 1782, was demolished in 1785.²⁵

The use of images was strictly controlled by the Clarissan Rules. An illustrative example is the one written by Anna Franciska Csáky, abbess of the Poor Clares moving to Buda from Pozsony in 1714, according to which nuns were only allowed to put black and white pictures, i.e. engravings, on the walls of their cell, colour paintings were permitted only on their domestic altars.²⁶ In a letter written in 1692, one of the Pozsony Clarissans, Magdolna Esterházy gives a description of a cell that she prepared for her niece.²⁷ The only furnishings in the cell were a bed, a table, a chair, a chest, and a cabinet. On this cabinet did the domestic altar decorated by the nuns themselves stand, with a painting in the middle, and surrounded by candles and cloths. The private devotional image owned by Anna Maria Lichtenberg is to be imagined in such a context.

²³ According to Karácsonyi 1924 (see note 19), p. 528 Anna Maria Lichtenberg was abbess from 1610 to 1613.

²⁴ The original was in the Viennese St. Nicholas convent, while its copy in the refectory of the Clarissan convent in Pozsony. In the picture Christ on the Cross and the standing figures of the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist, Mary Magdalene, three wreathed virgins, abbess Maria Magdolna Englin, and empress Eleonora holding the Rules are accompanied by the kneeling nuns identified in inscriptions. Below explanatory inscription in Latin about the entry into St. Nicholas convent. Herzog 1749 (see note 19), p. 726, Kósa 1768 (see note 17), fol. 18.

²⁵ Perger - Brauneis 1977 (see note 21), pp. 185 -186.

²⁶ Éva Franciska Csáky: A Szent Clara szerzetében élő szerzetes szüzek előljáróinak, avagy abatissáinak tisztek szerint való rendtartások, rövid oktatások (Rules, short lectures by the principals or Mother Superiors of the Poor Clares) manuscript, after 1714, 81. lev., 47.

Schwarcz 2001(see note 19), p. 149.

²⁷ MOL P 125 12. cs. No. 922. Quoted by Horn 1992 (see note 19), p. 34.

In summary, with the help of the inscription on the verso we managed to define a picture of an abbess of the Pozsony Clarissans, painted in the first quarter of the 17th century. This panel is of importance as no other painting associated with the Pozsony Clarissans is known from that period.

III.

Unfortunately, we have no information on where, when, and under what circumstances Liszt may have acquired or received his Abgar image. Not even in his extensive correspondence did we find any reference to this.²⁸ What has been described above, however, seems to point to Vienna.

Liszt's private devotional image is related to the ageing composer, Abbé Liszt, who in 1865 entered the lower orders in Rome, and wore his cassock in the rest of his life (fig. 8).²⁹ It would fall outside the scope of this paper to discuss all the elements of Liszt's catholicism, however one aspect may be relevant for our investigation.

The composer did not remain unaffected by the cult of miraculous images and statues. As it is evidenced by his letters, during his long life he made a pilgrimage to Assisi, Loreto, and Einsiedeln, whose black statue of the Virgin received his special mention.³⁰ In memory of

²⁸ See *Franz Liszt's Briefe*, Ed. By La Mara, VIII vols. Leipzig 1893-1902.

²⁹ For the final third of Liszt's life see Walker, Alan: *Franz Liszt. The Final Years* (vol. 3), New York 1996.

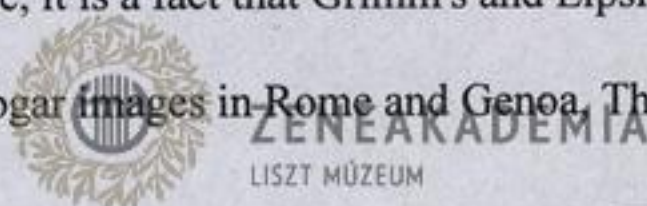
³⁰ "...from tomorrow I undertake my pilgrimage to Assisi and Loreto"...(to E. Repos. Rome, July 1st, 1868) *Letters of Franz Liszt*. Coll. and Ed. by La Mara, trans. C. Bache, II vols. London, 1894, vol. II. p.152. One of the destinations of his journey with Marie d'Agoult in Switzerland was Einsiedeln, which they visited on 22nd of June 1835. What follows is an entry in Liszt's pocket diary from 1835: "Black Virgin - cemetery, skulls exhibited - pagan statues around the main altar." see Eckhardt, Mária: *Egy utazó naplója (Liszt Ferenc és Marie d'Agoult svájci vándorlása 1835 június-júliusában)*. (The diary of a traveller. The wanderings of Ferenc Liszt and Marie d'Agoult in Switzerland in June-July of 1835). In *Zenetudományi Dolgozatok*. Budapest 1984, pp. 54-66. Liszt also refers to the statue of the Virgin in a letter written to his friend, George Sand: "...our friend Ste-Beuve, does he really want to become a Benedictine? He should join the order in Einsiedeln, where he can find the beautiful black Virgin of St. Meinrad, which is more than 1000 years old and still immaculate." (26 June

his pilgrimage to Mariazell, in his Sugár street flat he used to have the photo of the pilgrimage church with its holy statue by his bed.³¹ As he spent a good part of his life in Rome (from 1863), Liszt also had the chance to acquaint himself with the cult images of Rome.

Rome was of special importance in Liszt's life.³² The holy image from which his Abgar image was copied was held in this city. Liszt must have known this, if not from other sources, from the inscription in the picture. Therefore, in addition to being his devotional image, it may have reminded him of Rome as *locus sanctus*.³³

However, there is reason to suppose that Liszt knew more about his painting and its iconographical type than what is said in the inscription. The collection of legends, historical sources, and representations related to the Holy Face all started during Liszt's lifetime.

Although it cannot be established that the composer had a comprehensive knowledge of the literature of the Holy Face, it is a fact that Grimm's and Lipsius' works were already available.³⁴ As for the Abgar images in Rome and Genoa, Thomas Heaphy's (the younger's)



1835). *Liszt Ferenc válogatott levelei (1824-1861)* (Selected letters of Ferenc Liszt 1824-1861), Ed. By M. Eckhardt, Budapest, 1989, p. 32, 20.

³¹ *Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum*, (see note 2) cat. 50b.

³² Liszt's admiration for Rome is expressed in a letter written to Agnes Klindworth: „I am particularly attached to Rome, where I hope to leave my bones, and I repeat with St Bernard: ‘Ibi aer purior, coelum apertius, familiarior Deus!’” *Franz Liszt's Briefe* (see note 28), III. p. 161.

³³ The Abgar image was not the only painting in Liszt's Sugár street flat that may have reminded him of Rome. In his bedroom-study he had a landscape with a view of Castel S. Angelo by Karl Lindemann-Frommel, which has been preserved to this day. *Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum* (see note 2), cat. 38. For "souvenirs from Rome" see also cat. 37.

³⁴ Lipsius, R. A.: *Die Edessenische Abgarsage*, Braunschweig 1880, Grimm, Wilhelm: *Die Sage vom Ursprung der Christusbilder*, Berlin 1842. Dobschütz's Christusbilder (see note 4), containing all the texts related to the Holy Face known at the time, was published after Liszt died. The text used for station VI. of *Via Crucis*, completed in 1879, suggests that Liszt was familiar with some literary texts referring to the Holy Face. The text in question is a hymn to the Holy Face with the opening line ‘O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden’, known from Bach's St. Matthew Passion. Merrick, Paul: *Revolution and Religion in the Music of Liszt*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 229, 255.

drawings copying them, which were acquired by the British Museum in 1881, are evidence that they were known in the second half of the 19th century.³⁵

When in 1870 the *Mandyllion* was taken to a papal private chapel in the Vatican, it ceased to be accessible for the man in the street. Not even Dobschütz was allowed to take a look at it, he claims to have received information about it from the pope's own physician.³⁶ This suggests that some privileged people did have access to the picture.

Liszt was on cordial terms with Pope Pius IX (1842-1878).³⁷ They felt mutual respect for each other, the pope granted his *dear Palestrina*, as he called him, free entrance to the Vatican. The meetings of the two notabilities are represented in contemporary drawings. One of these shows the pope and the composer in the cloister of S. Giovanni in Laterano on the occasion of their meeting in 1866 (fig. 9).³⁸ In another picture Liszt is playing the piano for Pius IX in the library of the Vatican in 1868.³⁹ In his Sugár street flat Liszt had several objects reminding him of this friendship. The key to the Vatican he received from Pius IX in 1869, together with a prayer book from the pope were kept on his prie-dieu.⁴⁰ There is a devotional image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Liszt Museum that used to be stitched on to the lining of the composer's overcoat.⁴¹ This picture is also related to Pius IX, as according to the inscription in it, he granted indulgence for saying prayers in front of it. Finally, in one of his letters Liszt writes about his visit to the Vatican in 1863, when the pope presented him with a

³⁵ See Cust, Lionel - Dobschütz, Ernst von.: *The Likeness of Christ. Notes on the Pictures in the Royal Collection III. Burlington Magazine* 5 (1904), p. 523, plate II.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 521.

³⁷ For the relationship between Pius IX and Liszt see Merrick 1987 (see note 34), pp. 36-41.

³⁸ Burger, Ernst: *Franz Liszt. Eine Lebenschronik in Bildern und Dokumenten*, München 1986, fig. 466.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, fig. 481.

⁴⁰ Legány, Dezső: Liszt Homes in Budapest, p. 13, in *Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum* (see note 2)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, cat. 50. a

cameo representing the Madonna with the Child.⁴² In view of all this, it does not seem unlikely that it was Pius IX who showed the Abgar image in the Vatican to the composer. Therefore, the copy owned by Liszt, may have reminded him not only of the Eternal City but also the pope himself.

IV.

However this picture must have been more to the composer than merely a reminder of Rome and the pope. Wilhelm Grimm's description of another Abgar image similar to that of Liszt, gives an idea of what such a picture may have meant to the contemporary beholder:⁴³ "noble face with its long and straight nose and parted hair ... the grandious impression of highness and purity. There was no trace of pain, but, on the contrary, utter peace and serenity, and an ideal beauty free of passions and remote from the character of a portrait." Belting seems to be right in suggesting that this description is reflective of emotions attached to the "true" image of Christ, coupled with some nostalgia for the purity of the religious images of the past.⁴⁴

Bearing Grimm's words in mind, in what follows we will attempt to place Liszt's panel in a wider context. Throughout his life Liszt was deeply involved with the idea of the unity of Arts: visual arts and music were inseparable in his eyes. The excerpt from one of his letters from 1839 is a clear expression of his views on this subject.⁴⁵

"Art appeared before my marvelling eyes in its full glory, it revealed itself in its universality and unity. Day by day I developed a stronger and stronger awareness of the secret ties between

⁴² "I was granted an audience in the Vatican (the first since I came here,) and the Pope presented me with a beautiful cameo of the Madonna." (to Franz Brendel, July 18th, 1863) *Franz Liszt's Briefe* (see note 28), II. p. 46, *Letters of Franz Liszt* (see note 30), II. p. 55. From his second companion, Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, Liszt received a gold pocket watch with Pius IX on one side, and St. Peter on the other. See Burger 1986 (see note 38), fig. 480.

⁴³ Grimm 1842 (see note 34), quoted by Belting 1990 (see note 4), pp. 234-235.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ To Hector Berlioz, 2 October, 1839 (Gazette Musicale, 24 October, 1839) In Liszt, Franz: *Sämtliche Schriften*. I. Ed. By R. Kleinertz. Wiesbaden, 2000, p. 306.

works of art. Raphael and Michelangelo helped me better understand Mozart and Beethoven. Giovanni di Pisa, Fra Beato, Francia explained Allegri, Marcello, and Palestrina to me; Tizian and Rossini appeared as two stars with a similar radiance... Dante has found a pictorial expression in Oragna and Michelangelo; one day he may find a musical expression in a future Beethoven."

The analogy between music and painting, composers and painters, a commonplace in Liszt's time,⁴⁶ was not merely some attractive theory for Liszt. Many of his pieces were inspired by works of fine arts, including those of his own with a religious subject.⁴⁷ Although his Abgar image has no concrete musical counterpart, his sacred choral works may well be seen as the musical analogies of this painting.

These works are closely related to the German *Cecilian movement*, which aimed at a reform of 19th century church music.⁴⁸ Its representatives wanted to rid *musica sacra* from all theatrical elements, and return to the roots: Gregorian music and the style of Palestrina. One of Liszt's endeavours in Rome was to contribute to this reform movement by taking on the mantle of a new Palestrina, whose music and life were of particular interest to him.⁴⁹

To find the divine in the simple and pure forms of ancient times. The very same nostalgia lies at the heart of the ideological background of the Nazarene painters in Rome, whose art did not only shape the composer's taste but inspired some of his compositions.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ From these, the analogies between Mozart - Raphael, and Beethoven - Michelangelo were generally accepted. For an overview of this issue Tolley, Thomas: *Painting the Canon's Roar. Music and the Rise of an Attentive Public in the Age of Haydn*. Ashgate 2001, pp. 311-312.

⁴⁷ For an overview see Salmen, Walter: Liszt und Wagner in ihren Beziehungen zur bildenden Kunst, *Liszt Studien* 3 (1986) pp. 152-161.

⁴⁸ The General Cecilian Society was founded in 1869 at the instigation of Franz Xaver Witt. See Domokos, Zsuzsanna: Liszt's Connection with the Cecilian Movement in the Light of His Music Library in Budapest, in *Franz Liszt's Estate at the Budapest Academy of Music, II. - Music*. Ed. By G. Eckhardt, Budapest 1993, pp. 76-83, Várnai, Péter: *Oratóriumok könyve* (Book of oratorios), Budapest 1983, pp. 228-229.

⁴⁹ Merrick 1987 (see note 34), pp. 87-99.

⁵⁰ In a preface to the score of his *Septem Sacramenta* written in 1878, Liszt gives an account of the work's origin: "One day when Overbeck was explaining to me his composition based upon the Seven Sacrament,...I was seized with admiration for his work and promised to reproduce the same subject in my own art, music." Ibid., p. 259. The engravings representing

Liszt's devotional image is to be considered in this context. With its archaism it is closely related not only to Nazarene paintings but also to the composer's sacred choral music.⁵¹ The Abgar image and the Palestrina-esque style sacred choral works may have been viewed by the composer believing in the unity of Arts as two manifestations of the same idea.



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the fourteen stations of the Passion that Liszt received from Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, which were made after Overbeck's drawings, inspired his *Via Crucis*, completed in 1879. See *Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum* (see note 2), cat. 86. There was a drawing by Steinle representing Liszt's patron saint, St. Francis of Paola walking on the waves, which the composer drew inspiration from for his work *St. Francis of Paola walking on the waters*, composed in 1863 in Rome. The drawing later stood on the desk of his study in Weimar. See Merrick 1987 (see note 34), pp. 247-248.

⁵¹ The parallel between music and painting in this context has been referred to by Merrick with regard to Liszt's *Missa choralis* (1865): "Though derived from his admiration for the Renaissance, the work is entirely a product of the nineteenth century, a musical parallel to the 'Nazarene' painters of Germany, or the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in England." Ibid., p. 123.

Illustration

Fig. 1. Liszt's Abgar image, first quarter of the 17th century, Budapest, Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum

Fig. 2. Liszt's study-bedroom with his prie-dieu and Abgar image

Fig. 3. Inscriptions on the verso of fig.1

Fig. 4. Abgar image from S. Silvestro in Capite, Vatican, Capella S. Matilda

Fig. 5. Abgar image, Genoa, S. Bartolomeo degli Armeni

Fig. 6. Abgar image, Trier, Municipal Museum

Fig. 7. Abgar image, engraved by Hieronymus Wierix, Brussels, Cabinet des Etampes de la Bibliothèque Royale Albert I er

Fig. 8. Liszt's photograph from the mid-1870s, Budapest, Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum

Fig. 9. Liszt in the cloister of S. Giovanni in Laterano, Rome in 1866 in conversation with Pius IX and Cardinal Antonelli (xylography after Paul Thumann's drawing)



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