



Giovanni Lanfranco (Parma 1582 –Rome 1647)

Il bacio di Angelica e Medoro

Oil on canvas, 168 x 182 cm

On the back of the original canvas, an antique paintbrush inscription:

« N.G. / 183 Stanza n. »

Bibliography: unpublished

The painting depicts the celebrated love between Angelica, the princess of Catay (China), and the Christian warrior Medoro recounted in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1516 ; 2.ed. 1532), a theme particularly dear to seventeenth century Emilian painters (Guercino, Tiarini, Cantarini, see: A. Pigler, *Barockthemen*, vol. II, Budapest 1956, pp. 444- 445; Rensselaer W. Lee, *Names on Trees, Ariosto into Art*, Princeton 1977), but also explored by the Roman Giovan Francesco Romanelli (formerly in the collection of Denis Mahon) and the Florentine Matteo Rosselli and became so popular it was even depicted by Giovan Battista Tiepolo, as well as by many painters beyond the Alps.

The encounter of the two lovers takes place in a romantic, wild landscape in the evening. Already mentioned in canto XIX, it is again described in canto XXIII: Medoro, injured by Dardinello and

Cloridano, is cured and healed by Angelica who squeezes an herbal juice on the young man's wound and then falls in love with him.

The episode is depicted by Lanfranco in very diverse compositions and in distinct phases: from the beginning in a relatively young painting from 1616 c., now in New York¹; in a landscape where the figures are less than half of what is real and again in the most celebrated painting of large dimensions (182 x 199 cm) preserved in the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro in which the two protagonists are illustrated in full size against a background in the woods, in the evening. This last canvas was painted in 1633-34 for Cardinal Antonio Barberini jr. (nephew of Pope Urban VIII), who gave it to the Duke de Créquy, the extraordinary ambassador of Louis XIV to the Holy See from June 1633 to July 1634². The painting is Preti-esque in some ways, and this one was attributed to Mattia Preti in the Museum catalogue of 1853³. The format is not the only thing that the Rio painting and the unpublished canvas, presented here for the first time, have in common. There are also stylistic elements that seem to indicate that the two works have a similar chronology to be established, I believe, in the last period that Lanfranco spent in Roma, between 1632 and the first months of 1634. In both canvases the figures of the two protagonists are painted in the foreground and the young Medoro portrayed by a similar firmness in form, combined with a round and delicate contour, while the landscape is immersed in a similar moonlight.

To date, there are no known replicas or copies of the painting discussed here⁴. In the work, the young Medoro appears to be concentrated on engraving the letters « ANG », the first letters of the

¹ The painting, belonging to the heirs of D. Jacobs (formally that of Colnaghi) is originally from Anzio, Borghese collection, but was probably painted for Cardinal Odoardo Farnese. See: *Giovanni Lanfranco: Un pittore barocco tra Parma, Roma e Napoli*, ed. By E. Schleier, Milano 2002 (hereafter: *Mostra Lanfranco* 2002), p. 37, fig. 14; 115.5 x 158 cm. There is a known round autographed replica in the Lampronti collection.

² See: *Mostra Lanfranco* 2002, n. 83, p. 278.

³ We know of an antique copy of this version from Colonna, which in 2002 was preserved in a private collection in Milan.

⁴ However, there is another painting by Lanfranco with the same subject matter, the measurements are much smaller (oil on canvas, 73 x 97.5 cm) and expressed in a full figured transversal composition. The work was sold at the Hotel de Drouot in Paris on 23.2.2001 with an attribution to the *école française*, but Julien Stock noted that it could be a work by Lanfranco. It was sold again at Sotheby's in Olympia in 2002 (31.10.2002, p. 81, batch 87) as the *circle of Giovanni Lanfranco*. I was able to examine the painting in Florence at Fabrizio Moretti's in 2006 after the cleaning and the arrival at the conclusion that we were dealing with an actual original, datable between 1624 and 1634. Based on my catalogue, the painting was then published by Daniele Benati in 2007 (see: *Quadreria Emiliana*, Galleria Fondantico, Bologna 2007, pp. 48-50). The composition is very different from the one being discussed here, the poses of the two protagonists and the relationship between them is different, while the color of Angelica's garment is shimmering greenish-yellow. Nevertheless, as in the picture under analysis, the tree onto which Medoro carves the first letters of Angelica's name is found on the far left of the composition and the cloudy, evening sky, is also similar, just as the robust anatomic shapes and the burly legs of Medoro.

name Angelica, with a knife into the trunk of a tree, while the young girl embraces him and prepares herself to kiss him. Medoro, sitting on the ground, supports himself with his arm and with his left hand on the ground.

The painter concentrates on the naked, muscular torso and the shoulder of the young man, onto which Angelica gently rests her right hand, while only Medoro's bent, naked knee of his left leg is visible. Angelica turns to her beloved, crossing her left leg on his thigh, while her right thigh appears covered by a rich copper-gold dress or skirt, drawn with lavish pleats with bizarre angles. Angelica's drapery also covers a part of Medoro's imposing naked right leg, resting on the ground, as the foot, almost larger than natural, donning an elegant sandal that allows the young man to be recognized as a warrior. On the bottom right there is a naked man uprooting a tree (an element that is missing on the canvas in Rio) and that alludes to the eponym *furios* of Orlando in love, the moment he discovers Angelica with her lover.

For various elements, the painting under analysis is comparable to another painting from the early thirties painted shortly before Lanfranco's departure to Naples in the spring of 1634: a *Cleopatra* painted for a patron from the Barberini house, Marco Marazzuoli (Parma 1602 (2) - Rome 26.1.1662), musician, composer and harp virtuoso. Marazzuoli was from the same area as Lanfranco and had a friendly relationship with the artist, who painted at least three paintings for him in the early thirties, paintings that were left to Prince Maffeo Barberini, son of Don Taddeo and Anna Colonna⁵ in 1662. The bizarre folds of the gold-orange garments that cover Cleopatra and the damask brocade cloth that covers the sofa are comparable to the garments of Angelica, as well as the facial features of the two young girls with the golden-blond hair. Also the contours of the bizarre folds of the red curtain, of the blue dress and the face of *Venere con l'arpa* (or *Allegoria della Musica*), another painting painted for Marco Marazzuoli in 1633-34⁶, are similar to those illustrated in our Angelica.

In the small copper of *Matrimonio mistico di S. Caterina* now in Louisville, Kentucky (Speed Art Museum), the coiffure of blond hair with short curls that characterizes S. Caterina is also similar to

⁵ The *Cleopatra* is listed in various inventories of Casa Barberini and in the guides of nineteenth-century Rome (see: L. Mochi Onori, *Mostra Lanfranco 2002*, pp 79-80, fig. 3). In the nineteenth century, the work in the Sciarra Colonna collection was found in Palazzo Sciarra on Via del Corso. Lost with the sale of Sciarra in 1895, it reappeared on Rome's antique market in the 1970s, when it was bought by renowned restorer Luciano Maranzi. He put it for sale at Semenzato in Venice in 1987 where it was bought for a substantial sum by the Perugian industrialist Umberto Ginocchietti, (see: E. Schleier, *Un quadro barberiniano di Lanfranco ritrovato: «Diana al bagno con tre putti»*, in «Paragone», 116, July 2014, p. 56 and note 6.)

⁶ Roma, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica; see: *Mostra Lanfranco 2002*, num. 77 p. 266. The painting was left to Cardinal Antonio Barberini jr. by Marazzuoli in his will.

that of our heroine. The painting, together with *Noli me tangere* (New York, Richard Feigen), belonged to Maria Maddalena Farnese, sister of Ranuccio II Duke of Parma and Piacenza⁷.

We can also notice a similarity between the brown-gold-coppers skirt of Angelica in the painting discussed here and the golden cloak of the emperor in the large canvas the *Auspici di un imperatore romano* (1634–36 c.) painted for Philip IV as part of the Buen Retiro series in Madrid (Museo del Prado)⁸. The anatomical and muscular forms of Medoro's right leg and torso are in turn akin to the anatomical forms of S. Sebastiano in the painting that in 1644 was in the collection of Cardinal Antonio Barberini jr (datable 1633/34 c.)⁹.

Finally, for further comparison, observe the bizarre folds of gold-copper of Angelica's skirt, next to the golden dress of S. Caterina d'Alessandria at the altar of S. Domenico in Spoleto (also datable to 1633-34 c.) and the similar golden drapery with angled folds worn by S. Lucia in the altar signed and dated 163(?) in the church S. Lucia in Selci in Rome. The painting of *Angelica e Medora* discussed here can therefore be dated to 1633-1634, at the height of the artist's career, in the years he was engaged in the repeated commissions of the viceroy of Naples Don Manuel de Fonseca y Zuniga, Duke of Monterrey, for the famous series of paintings designed to adorn Buen Retiro, the royal villa, in Madrid. It wasn't by chance that the following year Lanfranco would move to the capital of the viceroyalty.

The inscription of inventory number *183/Stanza n.** with the initials *N.G.* (or *N.S.*), read on the side of the canvas, provide traces for the identification of the origin. The large number of paintings and the indication of the room number demonstrate a consistent and significant collection, which we hope will be recognized with further studies of the ancient inventories.

Erich Schleier, 15.7. 2017

(TRANSLATION)

⁷ See: M. Utili in *Mostra Lanfranco* 2002, p. 322, num. 106; and J. Marciari, in L. Kanter – J. Marciari, *Italian Paintings from the Richard L. Feigen Collection*, New Haven and London, 2010, pp. 160 – 162, num. 49. Marciari had plausibly suggested that the paintings were ordered by Duke Odoardo Farnese (1612-1646) alluding to the names of his two daughters Caterina and Maddalena (died 1693), sisters of Ranuccio II.

⁸ *Mostra Lanfranco* 2002, num. 92, pp. 298-299.

⁹ London, Matthiesen Gallery, see: *Mostra Lanfranco* 2002, num. 82, pp. 276-277.