



A SPALLIERA WITH THE STORY OF SUSANNAH BY MARCO ZOPPO

Mattia Vinco

University of Trento

e-mail: mattia.vinco@unitn.it

ORCID: 0000-0003-1411-0537

ABSTRACT

The article aims to present the new purchase by The Royal Castle in Warsaw–Museum of a *spalliera* by Marco Zoppo. The work was first published by Paul Schubring in his catalogue of Italian secular painting *Cassoni. Truhen und Truhenbilder der italienischen Frührenaissance. Ein Beitrag zur Profanmalerei im Quattrocento* in 1915.

The publication by Berenson in 1968 of its pendant of unknown whereabouts – formerly in the Forbes Collection (London) and Galleria Luigi Bellini (Florence) – has enabled not only the identification of the subject of both paintings as *Story of Susannah*, but also their attribution to Marco Zoppo. The setting of the two *spalliere* was probably completed by two fragments first gathered and published by Roberto Longhi in 1940. They are of the same height and represent episodes from *Shooting at Father's Corpse* in the Los Angeles County Museum and the second, now of unknown whereabouts, formerly in a private collection in Genoa.

KEYWORDS

Marco Zoppo; *spalliera*; *cassone*; Italian secular painting; Renaissance

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The panel with the *Story of Susannah* in the collection of The Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum (fig. 1)¹ was published for the first time by Paul Schubring (1869–1935) in his corpus devoted to secular painting of the Italian Renaissance, printed in 1915 and re-printed in 1923 with an appendix.² The German scholar only published the central detail of the painting, probably suspecting that the side areas were not well preserved (fig. 2). At that time the work was owned by the Venetian antique dealer Antonio Salvadori, as a photograph of the whole panel in the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz confirms (fig. 3).³ Despite the editorial choice, Schubring also considered the side parts of the painting to be original and, in particular, the episode that takes place on the right, where two knights are stopped by a kneeling woman.

Probably this scene let the German scholar assume that the subject of the painting was the *Story of Trajan and the Widow*. The representation on the right could recall this very common subject in secular paintings of the Renaissance, especially in Northern Italy.⁴ In particular, it could be confused with the moment in the *Story of Trajan and the Widow*, when the

¹ The Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, inv. no. ZKW/5981. Panel, transferred onto canvas, 58.5 x 171.7 cm. In 2012 the panel was restored in Florence by Stefano Scarpelli. Provenance: Venice, antique dealer Antonio Salvadori, 1915; Styria, Stübichhofen Castle, Margrave Pallavicini, 1917; Amsterdam, Jacques Goudstikker Gallery, 1927–1934; Paris, van Moppes Gallery, January 1937 (see Florence, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Berenson Library, Ercole de' Roberti, nos. 125337, 401991); Germany, looted by the Nazi authorities, July 1940; Stichting Nederlands Kunstbezit until 1948; The Hague, Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, inv. NK 3265, on permanent loan to the Bonnefantenmuseum (1989–2006); heirs of Jacques Goudstikker, February 2006; New York, Christie's, 29 April 2007, lot. 2; New York, Christie's, 26 October 2016, lot. 58; Cologne, Lempertz, 14 November 2020, lot. 2003; purchased by the Royal Castle Museum in 2020.

² P. Schubring, *Cassoni. Truhen und Truhnbilder der italienischen Frührenaissance. Ein Beitrag zur Profanmalerei im Quattrocento*, Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1915, pp. 353–354, cat. 567, pl. CXXV (school of Francesco del Cossa, *The Justice of Trajan*); *A Catalogue of the Margrave Pallavicini collection and other properties*, auction, London, 27 May 1927, London: Knight, Frank & Rutley, 9, lot. 5 (attributed to the circle of Francesco Cossa da Ferrara by Wilhelm Suida and Georg Gronau with the date c. 1456); *Catalogue des nouvelles acquisitions de la Collection Goudstikker*, exh. cat., Amsterdam: Lindebaum 1927, n. pag., cat. 21 (Francesco del Cossa [?]); F. Schmidt-Degener, *Italiaanische Kunst in Nederlandsch Bezit*, exh. cat., Stedelijk Museum: Amsterdam, 60, cat. 90 (workshop of Francesco del Cossa, *Trajan and the Widow*); A.M. Cetto, *Der Berner Traian-und Herkinbald-Teppich*, 'Jahrbuch des Bernischen Historischen Museums', pp. 43–44, 1963–1964; 2nd ed. 1966, p. 188, cat. T 5/4 (Francesco del Cossa); B. Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance. Central Italian and North Italian Schools*, 3 vols., London: Phaidon Press, 1968, I, p. 132; II, fig. 739 (Ferrarese before 1510, close to Marco Zoppo, *Susannah and the Elders*; *The Judgement of Susannah*); R. Longhi, *Nuovi Ampliamenti (1940–1955)*, in: *Edizione delle opere complete di Roberto Longhi. V. Officina Ferrarese*, Florence: Sansoni, 1956, p. 180 (Francesco del Cossa, *Trajan and the Widow*); C. Wright, *Paintings in Dutch Museums. An Index of Oil Paintings in Public Collections in the Netherlands by artists born before*, London: Bernet, 1980, p. 84 (Francesco del Cossa, *Trajan and the Widow*); C.E. De Jong-Janssen, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings in the Bonnefantenmuseum*, Maastricht: Bonnefantenmuseum, 1995, p. 157, fig. 78 (Ferrara, *Susannah and the Elders*, c. 1500); Salvatore Settis, *Due cassoni estensi*, 'I Tatti Studies. Essays in the Renaissance', t. 6, 1995, no. 44, fig. 22 (attributed to Francesco del Cossa, *The Justice of Trajan*); M. Vinco, *Cassoni. Pittura profana del Rinascimento a Verona*, Milano: Officina Libraria, 2018, pp. 280–281, cat. 90; pp. 420–421, cat. 145 (Marco Zoppo, *Susannah and the Elders and Susannah's Trial*); G.A. Calogero, *Marco Zoppo, ingegno sottile. Pittura e Umanesimo tra Padova, Venezia e Bologna*, Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2020, pp. 190–191, note 47 (circle of Francesco del Cossa, *Susannah and the Elders and Susannah's Trial*).

³ Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Photo Library, inv. 113617. The photo documents that the painting has been placed in a modern frame with a central lock to suggest that it originally was the front panel of a wedding chest.

⁴ See Settis, op.cit.



1. Marco Zoppo, *Susannah and the Elders and Susannah's Trial*, c. 1470, The Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, inv. no. ZKW/5981. Photo M. Niewiadomska, A. Ring

widow pleaded with the emperor for justice for the death of her son and asked the emperor to give up his own son to her as reparation for having lost hers. This must not only have been the idea that flashed through Schubring's mind when he saw the work, but also the thought of the painter-restorer when he restored and modified it before 1915. Studies following Schubring's publication up to the end of the 1960s confirmed his attribution and iconographic interpretation.⁵ There were also different points of view, like that of Anna Maria Cetto, who questioned the traditional meaning of the subject. Although she just suggested that 'Frau und Knabe so wie das Pferd am rechten Rand zu einer Traian-Szene gehörten; m(einem) E(indruck) eher nicht', without offering an alternative interpretation.⁶



2. Marco Zoppo, *Susannah and the Elders and Susannah's Trial*, c. 1470, detail. Repr. after: P. Schubring, Cassoni. *Truhen und Truhenbilder der italienischen Frührenaissance. Ein Beitrag zur Profanmalerei im Quattrocento*, Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1915

Despite the conspicuous addition on the right side, the painting enjoyed considerable critical success. For instance, Roberto Longhi changed Schubring's cautious attribution to the school of Francesco del Cossa assigning the work to Francesco del Cossa himself.⁷ However, the real turn to the iconographic and stylistic interpretation of the painting was given by Bernard

⁵ See note 2.

⁶ Cetto, *op.cit.*, p. 188, cat. T 5/4.

⁷ Longhi, *Nuovi Ampliamenti*, p. 180: *L'occasione è buona per rammentare che la stessa possanza dell'architettura vicina, imminente, sulle figure, è anche in quel frammento di cassone con un resto della scena di Traiano e la vedova che fu tanti anni fa dell'antiquario Salvadori e che lo Schubring riprodusse a tavola CXXV del suo repertorio come scuola del Cossa; e meglio era dire: Cossa addirittura, ma guasto in parte.*



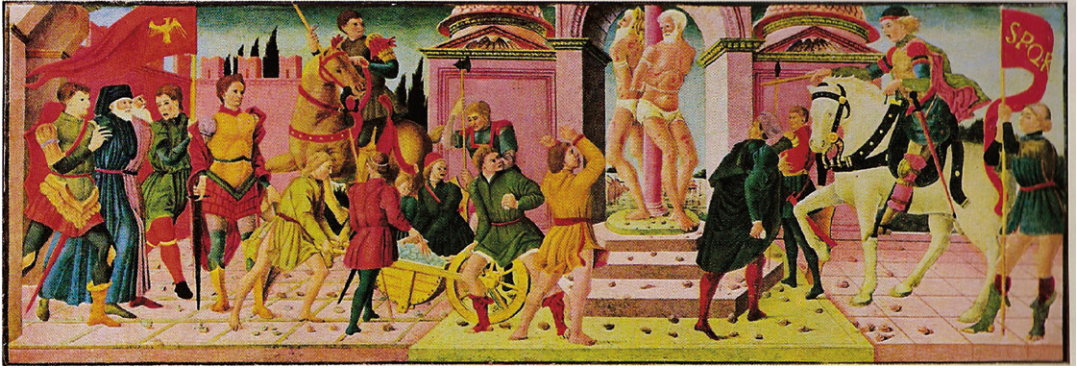
3. Marco Zoppo, *Susannah and the Elders and Susannah's Trial*, c. 1470. Photo Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Photo Library, inv. 113617

Berenson in the posthumous edition of his *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance*, identifying the pendant in a panel of almost identical dimensions held in the Forbes Collection, London.⁸ The two paintings were significantly published on the same plate with the correct titles: *Susannah and the Elders*, and *Stoning of the Elders* and a new attribution to the 'Ferrarese School before 1510, close to Marco Zoppo' (fig. 4).⁹ This proposal modified the unpublished cataloguing of the photographs by Berenson, who held a reproduction of *Susannah and the Elders* in the Ercole de' Roberti box of his Photograph Archive and that of the *Stoning of the Elders* in the Francesco del Cossa box.¹⁰

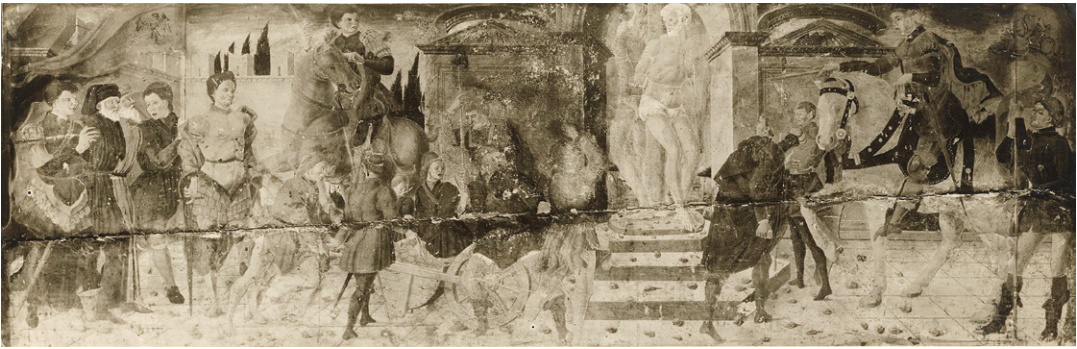
⁸ Berenson, op.cit., p. 132, fig. 740 (panel, 58 x 170 cm), 2^a *Mostra Mercato Internazionale dell'Antiquariato*, exh. cat., Florence: Vallecchi, 1961, stand 82, colour photo (Marco Zoppo); 'Die Weltkunst', XXXI, 17, 1961, p. 11 (Marco Zoppo, *Stoning of the Elders*); 'L'Oeil', 81, 1961, pp. 54–55 (Marco Zoppo, *Scene of Martyrdom*); *Tesori d'arte italiana mostra-mercato dell'antiquariato*, exh. cat. Treviso: Arti Grafiche Longo e Zoppelli, Venezia, Palazzo Grassi, 1962, p. 33, cat. 192 (Marco Zoppo, *Stoning of the Accusers of Susannah* [?]); *Galleria 'Luigi Bellini' di Giuseppe e Mario Bellini Firenze*, Florence: Galleria Luigi Bellini [1966] (Marco Zoppo); 3^a *Mostra nazionale dell'Antiquariato*, exh. cat., Roma: Federazione Italiana Mercante d'Arte, 1966, pl. XCII (Marco Zoppo); E. Ruhmer, *Marco Zoppo*, Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1966, p. 64, figs. 34–37, pl. I (Marco Zoppo, *Stoning of Two Men*); Vinco, op.cit., pp. 280–281, cat. 90, pp. 420–421, cat. 145 (Marco Zoppo, *Stoning of the Elders*); Calogero, op.cit., pp. 190–191, note 47 (circle of Francesco del Cossa, *Stoning of the Elders*). Provenance: Paris, M. Pellettier Collection, June 1924 (see Berenson Library, Photograph Archive, Florence, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Francesco del Cossa, inv. 124367); London, Forbes, ante 1961; Florence, Galleria Luigi Bellini, 1961–1966.

⁹ The most complete representation of the story can be seen in the two *spalliere* of the Musée du Petit Palais in Avignon, the first attributed to Francesco Pesellino, the second to Zanobi Strozzi (inv. 228, 257), see M. Laclotte and E. Moench eds., *Peinture italienne. Musée du Petit Palais Avignon*, Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2005, pp. 43, 174–176. The same subject is depicted in three fragments of the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (inv. 37.2503), the Rutgers University Art Gallery at New Brunswick (N. J.) and the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte in Naples (inv. 935), gathered by F. Zeri, *Italian Paintings in the Walters Art Gallery*, ed. U. E. McCracken with condition notes by P. E. Cracken, 2 vols, Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery 1976, pp. 77–79, cat. 47, fig. 39. Episodes of the *Story of Susannah* are also painted on a birth salver in a Florentine private collection attributed to the Master of the Paris Judgement. See the entry by G. D'Andrea, in C. Paolini et al. eds. *Virtù d'amore. Pittura nuziale nel Quattrocento fiorentino*, exh. cat., Florence: Giunti, 2010, pp. 214–215, cat. 17.

¹⁰ With regard to these attributions by Berenson, see: Berenson Library, Photograph Archive, Florence, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Ercole de' Roberti, inv. 401991 (with Ercole Roberti);



4. Marco Zoppo, *The Stoning of the Elders*, c. 1470, whereabouts unknown, formerly London, Forbes Collection and Florence, Bellini Gallery. Repr after: *Galleria «Luigi Bellini» di Giuseppe e Mario Bellini, Firenze, Florence* [1966]



5. Marco Zoppo, *The Stoning of the Elders*, c. 1470, whereabouts unknown, formerly London, Forbes Collection and Florence, Bellini Gallery. Photo Berenson Library, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies

Listing the references of the panels, it is worth remembering that since the purchase of the *Stoning of the Elders* by the Luigi Bellini Gallery in Florence in the 1960s there has been unanimous consensus on the attribution to Marco Zoppo.¹¹ Although probably unaware of the connection established by Berenson between the two works, Roberto Longhi also attributed the Bellini painting to Marco Zoppo, noticing his name and the date 'around 1470' on the back of his photograph of *Stoning of the Elders*.¹² In my opinion, the agreement of Fiocco,

Berenson Library, Photograph Archive, Florence, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Francesco del Cossa, inv. 124367 (with Cossa). On the back of the latter photograph Berenson noticed the correct subject of the latter panel as *Stoning of the Elders Who Wanted to Seduce Suzanna*, and the provenance of the reproduction from the antique dealer Joseph Duveen 'Sent by D(u)v(een)'. Duveen's property of the panel is confirmed by a piece of information published in the catalogue of the 3^a *Mostra nazionale* 1966, pl. XCII.

¹¹ With regard to the provenance and the references of the painting, see note 8. Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti and Giuseppe Fiocco also attributed the work to Marco Zoppo. Their opinions are recorded in the catalogue of the *Galleria 'Luigi Bellini'* [1966], n. pag.

¹² Florence, Fondazione di Studi di Storia dell'arte Roberto Longhi, inv. 0600339: 'F.lli Bellini 1.70 x 58/1964 Marco Zoppo, about 1470'.

Ragghianti and Longhi concerning the author of *Stoning of the Elders* should not be underestimated, since they probably examined the painting firsthand.¹³ On the contrary, it should be considered as the starting point for the correct attribution of *Susannah and the Elders*. The Luigi Bellini painting allows in fact a much more reliable stylistic evaluation than that of *Susannah and the Elders*, as it can be studied on a photograph which shows the painting in a genuine state of conservation, without any repainting (fig. 5).

However, the story of the two panels does not end here, but continues with an assessment by Giuseppe Fiocco reported in a catalogue entry of the antique dealer Luigi Bellini from 1966. With regards to the *Stoning of the Elders*, he suggested that the painting 'doveva avere il suo corrispondente in un'altra composizione di cui conoscevo alcuni frammenti, molto in cattivo stato, pubblicati da Roberto Longhi'.¹⁴ The two fragments can be easily identified with a work of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and another of unknown whereabouts, formerly in Genoa, in the collection of Ildebrando Bossi and then Françoise Galeppini (figs. 6–7).¹⁵ Ruhmer

¹³ Calogero (op.cit., pp. 190–191, note 47) does not consider any of the opinions regarding the attribution of the *Stoning of the Elders* referred to here.

¹⁴ Galleria 'Luigi Bellini' [1966], n. pag.

¹⁵ The fragment in the Los Angeles County Museum, panel, 52.1 x 69.9 cm (inv. M. 81.259.1), R. Longhi, *Ampliamenti nell'Officina ferrarese*, 'La Critica d'arte', 4 (1940); 2nd ed. *Edizione delle opere complete di Roberto Longhi. V. Officina ferrarese*, Florence: Sansoni, 1956, pp. 139–140, figs. 327–329 (Marco Zoppo, *Martyrdom of St Christopher*); W. Stechow, 'Shooting at Father's Corpse. A note on the Hazards of Faulty Iconography', *The Art Bulletin*, 37.1 (1955), pp. 55–56 (attr. Marco Zoppo, *Shooting at Father's Corpse*); Ruhmer, op.cit., pp. 63–64, fig. 32 (Marco Zoppo, *Martyrdom of St Christopher*); L. Armstrong, *The Paintings and Drawings of Marco Zoppo*, New York: Garland, 1976, pp. 348–349, no. 4 (Marco Zoppo, *Shooting at Father's Corpse*); P. Conisbee, *Entry*, in: P. Conisbee, et al. *The Ahmanson gifts. European Masterpieces in the Collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art*, Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991, pp. 83–86 (Marco Zoppo, *Shooting at Father's Corpse*); S. Caroselli, *Italian Panel Painting of the Early Renaissance*, Los Angeles: Museum Associates, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1994, pp. 122–123, cat. 18 (Marco Zoppo, *Shooting at Father's Corpse*); Vinco op.cit., pp. 280–281, cat. 90, pp. 420–421, cat. 145; Calogero, op.cit., pp. 187–189. Provenance: Rome, Prof. Paolo Paolini, 1910–1937: see Berenson Library, Photograph Archive, Florence, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Marco Zoppo, nos. 124380–124383; New York, The Ehrich Galleries, by 1940; New York, Duveen Brothers, by 1959; Los Angeles, Howard Ahmanson Collection; Newport Beach, Mrs Denis Sullivan; Los Angeles, Howard Ahmanson, Jr; at the museum from 1981. The fragment of unknown whereabouts, panel, 54 x 67.5 cm, Stechow, *Shooting... A note*, pp. 55–56 (attr. Marco Zoppo, *Shooting at Father's Corpse*); Longhi, *Nuovi Ampliamenti*, p. 184, fig. 142 (*Martyrdom of St Sebastian*); Ruhmer, op.cit., pp. 63–64, figs. 30–31, 33 (*Martyrdom of St Christopher*); Armstrong, op.cit., pp. 348–349, no. 4 (Marco Zoppo, *Shooting at Father's Corpse*); Conisbee, op.cit.; Caroselli, op.cit., pp. 122–123, cat. 18; Vinco, op.cit., pp. 280–281, cat. 90; pp. 420–421, cat. 145; Calogero, op.cit., pp. 187–189. Provenance: Milan, private collection, 1956; Genoa, Ildebrando Bossi collection, 1961: see *2^a Mostra Mercato* 1961, n. pag.); Genova, Françoise Galeppini collection, 1962: see *Tesori d'arte italiana* 1962, p. 55, cat. 486; Florence, Sotheby's, 23 October 1974, lot. 87; Florence, Sotheby's, 14 November 1978, lot. 669. At some point the painting was in the Viezzoli collection in Genova (see Bologna, Fototeca Zeri, entry 26308). Longhi (*Ampliamenti*, pp. 139–140) wrongly thought the two panels were fragments of a predella depicting the *Martyrdom of St Christopher*. His proposal was corrected by Stechow, *Shooting... A note*, pp. 55–56. However, Longhi keenly described the painting as follows: *Un'altra cosa fra le più antiche e, un tempo, fra le più belle dello Zoppo, è una predella oggi ridotta a due frammenti (guasti per molti e cattivi restauri) che da poco m'è riuscito di ricollegare in una sola figurazione del Martirio di San Cristoforo. Mi occorre di vederne prima, a Milano, la parte destra dove il Santo gigantesco, ma come febbricitante, ravvolto in un sudario, sembra piegare le ginocchia nell'imminenza del martirio: singolare versione antieroica per un santo così intrepido nella leggenda. Ravvisata l'impronta del maestro ad onta dei banali rifacimenti che danno ad alcuni degli spettatori apparenza quasi di moderna fabbricazione, mi accorsi più tardi ch'essa non poteva non connettersi con altra tavola, già presso la casa Ehrich a New York, dov'era riferita al Roberti e, per la incompletezza del soggetto, designata alla meglio,*



6. Marco Zoppo, *Shooting at Father's Corpse: Scene of Judgement*, c. 1470, Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Photo Los Angeles County Museum of Art <https://collections.lacma.org/node/246805>



7. Marco Zoppo, *Shooting at Father's Corpse: The Dead Father*, c. 1470, whereabouts unknown, formerly Genoa, private collection. Photo Author's archive



8. Master of the Putti, *The Story of the Dead King and his Sons*, 1471, New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, Purchased in 1929. Photo The Morgan Library & Museum

9. Follower of Baccio Baldini, *The Story of the Dead King and his Sons*, c. 1460–1480, London, The British Museum. Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum

followed this interpretative line too, publishing *Stoning of the Elders* and the Los Angeles and Bossi-Galeppini panels on the same plate of his monograph on Marco Zoppo.¹⁶

The fact of the four panels belonging to the same decorative set of *spalliere*, is not only suggested by their very similar height, but also by the link to the iconography of a judgement.¹⁷ Susannah's story concludes with the prophet Daniel condemning the two elders to death by stoning, but the sense of justice also inspires the subject of the Los Angeles and Bossi-Galeppini

come una 'deputazione davanti al sultano'. Qui, oltre alla figura del Santo, meglio conservata, sopravvivono alla rovina certi tracciati di mani prensili, sensibilissime, e lo stupendo motivo del saettatore di profilo, bello come una terracotta steccata di Nicolò dell'Arca, anche per quell'aria curiosamente 'borgognona' che circola un po' dappertutto nel dipinto. With regard to the Los Angeles panel, we do not know the iconographical proposal which Zeri communicated to Roberto Longhi in a letter of 24 August 1955, see M. Natale, ed. *Federico Zeri, Roberto Longhi. Lettere (1946–1965)*, Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2021, p. 480, no. 282, figs. 137a–137b. Zeri had probably identified the right subject, as is confirmed by the reproductions in his Photograph Library (entry 26308).

¹⁶ Ruhmer, op.cit., pp. 63–64, figs. 30–37.

¹⁷ In my opinion, Calogero (op.cit., pp. 190–191, note 47) underestimates the almost identical height of the four paintings. Furthermore, he does not consider that the fragments might also be completed by a third element in order to reach the length of the panels with the *Story of Susannah*. With regard to the function of these paintings, see J. Miziolek, 'Exempla di giustizia: tre tavole di cassone di Alvise Donati', *Arte Lombarda* 132.2 (2001): 78–79, 86, note 74; Vinco, op.cit., pp. 420–421, cat. 145.

painting, which has been identified as *Shooting at Father's Corpse* by Wolfgang Stechow.¹⁸ The latter had correctly connected these works to a story from the Babylonian Talmud which relates that an unfaithful woman confessed to her husband that only one of her ten children had been born within their marriage. The woman, however, died without revealing the identity of their son to her husband. The latter, on the verge of death, told the rabbi his intention to leave his entire inheritance to his legitimate son. To settle the matter, the rabbi asked the children to shake the coffin where their father was buried. Once awakened, and having come back to life, he would have made his decision. Only the legitimate son refused to carry out this operation, refraining from desecrating the tomb. So it was easy for the rabbi to find out who was entitled to the inheritance.¹⁹

This subject was frequently represented by painters and illuminators of the Renaissance relying on the account of Alexander Neckam from around 1200, or on similar versions of the story.²⁰ In the medieval tales of *Shooting at Father's Corpse*, the number of sons is sometimes two or sometimes four, but what changed the most was the way of finding out which was the legitimate son. He would no longer be identified by shaking the tomb, but by shooting at father's corpse: in the oldest tales with spears and pikes, in the most recent with bow and arrows. The challenge consisted of shooting at father's heart and the winner, who aimed closest, would obtain the inheritance. Actually, this was just a trick to recognize the legitimate son as the one who refused to shoot at his parent.

In the latest versions of the story the role of the rabbi was characteristically played by a judge, or prince, or an earl. At that same time a few sources such as texts by Bernardino da Siena, the *Rosarium sermonum* of Bernardino de Bustis from 1498 and the *Novelliere* of Giovanni Sercambi (Lucca, 1348–1424) reported that this character was King Solomon.²¹ In the *Novelliere* Solomon is a young man with a sceptre and crown who delivers a judgement under the reign of King David, as represented in the illumination of the Master of the Putti in the Bible of the Morgan Library in New York, printed by Vindelin de Spira in 1471 (fig. 8).²² In an etching by a follower of Baccio Baldini in the British Museum in London and in the painting by Marco Zoppo he is characterized as an old judge (fig. 9).²³

¹⁸ Stechow, *Shooting... A note*, pp. 55–56. The author had published a more complete contribution on this topic in 1942: W. Stechow, 'Shooting at Father's Corpse', *The Art Bulletin* 24.3 (1942), pp. 213–225. Miziołek (*Exempla*, pp. 75–81) has also examined this iconography considering three panels by Alvise Donati, formerly in the Karol Lanckoroński collection and now held in the Wawel Castle in Kraków, and a painting in the Stefano Bardini Museum in Florence, J. Miziołek, 'I figli che saettano il padre in un ovale rinascimentale del Museo Bardini a Firenze', *Iconographica*, 5, 2006, pp. 88–105.

¹⁹ It is also worth remembering three Emilian panels of the school of Ercole de' Roberti, which present the same subject: *The Elders as Judges* in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, inv. 37.476 (panel, 44.1 x 43.8 cm), the *Shooting of the Elders* formerly in the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Virginia (panel, 45 x 61 cm) and *A Dialogue Between Two Young Men* in the Puškin Museum in Moscow, inv. 2692 (panel, 47 x 17 cm). The first two works were published by Longhi, *Nuovi Ampliamenti*, p. 182, figs. 425–427, the latter by Zeri (*Italian*, 218–220, cat. 146). In my opinion their style is close to Giovan Battista Cavalletto and Giovan Francesco Maineri.

²⁰ For these sources, see Miziołek, *Exempla*, p. 88, Appendices 1–2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

²² New York, The Morgan Library, inv. PML 26984.

²³ London, British Museum, inv. 1867 1012.653 (255 x 194 mm).

As has already been underlined, the very similar height of the four paintings leads to the assumption that they were all part of the same setting. Considering the quite monumental scale of the figures, it can be inferred that these works were displayed as *spalliere* instead of wedding chests.²⁴ It should also be recalled that the panel made up of the Los Angeles and Bossi-Galeppini fragments is missing approximately 30 cm, and it had a lost pendant.²⁵ And finally the iconography of all these subjects related to a judgement leads to the hypothesis that these works were originally located in a Hall of Justice. The civic destination of these works might be confirmed both by a fresco with the *Judgement of Solomon* by Pomponio Amalteo in the Municipal Loggia of Ceneda (c. 1534–1536) and a canvas with the *Story of Susannah* by Jacopo Bassano in the Council Room of Palazzo Pretorio in Bassano del Grappa, both of which are in the Veneto region.²⁶ It is also worth mentioning that King Solomon and the prophet Daniel are represented in two panels with *The Judgement of Solomon* and *The Judgement of Daniel* by Giacomo Pacchiarotti in the Musée of the Petit Palais in Avignon. The two paintings without doubt belong to the same setting and prove the close connection between Solomon and Daniel as symbols of Justice.²⁷

Even if the unity of these scattered pieces needs to be proved by finding other pieces of the series, the search for their author should start from the *Stoning of the Elders* and the two fragments in Los Angeles and of unknown whereabouts, formerly Genoa, private collection, which are the paintings in best condition. It has to be remembered that all three panels have been assigned almost unanimously to Marco Zoppo, an attribution that in my opinion should also be extended to the panel with *Susannah and the Elders* at the Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum.

Ruhmer dated the *Stoning of the Elders* very early in the career of Marco Zoppo, between 1455 and 1460. Instead, Armstrong suggested 1462 as the date of the fragments of the *Shooting at Father's Corpse* panels, linking them to a commission by Barbara Gonzaga to Marco Zoppo of the utmost importance. In a letter dated 16 September 1462, Marco Zoppo wrote 'ala illustra et excelsa madona Barbara da Gonzaga', telling her he had heard 'quanto la signoria vostra seria desideroxa ch'io venisse a farli dui para de chofani'. He also informed the duchess he was painting a couple of chests in Bologna and could not meet her demand straightaway.²⁸ Unfortunately, we do not even know if this commission was ever accomplished

²⁴ First Miziolek (*Exempla*, p. 79) suggested that the Los Angeles and Bossi-Galeppini fragments were originally part of a *spalliera*.

²⁵ Arguing against my proposal (Vinco, op.cit., pp. 280–281, cat. 90, pp. 420–421, cat. 145) Calogero (op.cit., p. 190, note 47) did not properly consider either the fragmentary condition of the two panels, the missing pendant or the function of these works.

²⁶ On the fresco and the related preparatory drawing with the *Judgement of Solomon* by Pomponio Amalteo for the lodge of Ceneda see C. Furlan, *Pomponio Amalteo, pictor Sancti Viti*, in: *Pomponio Amalteo. Pictor Sancti Viti 1505–1508*, exh. cat., eds. C. Furlan et. al., Milano: Skira, 2006, pp. 30–33. With regard to the canvas by Jacopo Bassano, see the entry by G. Ericani and P. Marini, in A. Ballarin et. al. eds., *Jacopo Bassano e lo stupendo inganno dell'occhio*, exh. cat., Milano: Mondadori Electa S. p. A, 2010, pp. 64–67, cats. 3–5.

²⁷ See *Peinture italienne* 2005, p. 168, cats. 218–219; with a similar proposal that they «aient fait partie du décor d'une salle d'audience ou de justice». The same function and was assigned by Everett Fahy (1968) to a series of panels by the Master of Apollo and Daphne representing the story of Susannah.

²⁸ Ruhmer, op.cit., p. 64, cats. 34–37. For the transcription of the document see M. Mazzalupi, *Regesto*, in: *Calogero*, op.cit., pp. 380–381, doc. 11. The document is extremely important for the information regarding the designing of



10. Marco Zoppo, *The Death of Seneca*, c. 1470, London, The British Museum, Album Rosebery, f. XXIIIr. Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum



11. Marco Zoppo, *The Stoning of the Elders*, c. 1470, detail, whereabouts unknown, formerly London, Forbes Collection and Florence, Bellini Gallery. Photo Berenson Library, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies

and, furthermore, there is no reason to link this documentation to the paintings discussed so far.²⁹ Longhi proposed dating *Stoning of the Elders* around 1470, likewise Miziotek the Bossi-Galeppini and Los Angeles fragments.³⁰

Even if reliable documentation for these paintings is missing, the latter proposal still appears to be the best option. In particular, it seems reasonable to compare these works with some drawings of the so-called Rosebery Album by Marco Zoppo held at the British Museum

chests. The painter wrote: *li veria a fare molto vollentiera, ma secondo che m'à deto el portadore voliano essere fati i diti chofani a Nadale, non seria posibele perché, chi li vole fare bene, non serano pur indorati mala pena, perché ora se ne va chontro l'inverno. E anche io voria onore de simele opera, perché non vegniria se no[n] per mostrare ch'io sapa chovele, non tanto per el guadagno quanto per l'onore e per amore del maestro dela signoria del signore, e bastariame l'animo a fare chose che stariano apreso le sue, non desprixiando lui, ma per si breve tempo non si pol, perché sono a fare uno paro qui a una nostra zitadina, i quali sono molto magnifichi e virano doxento duchati forniti, ora sono dorati, mancha a dipinzerle.*

²⁹ In the case of the two panels with the *Story of Susannah* and the two fragments with the *Shooting at Father's Corpse* being considered either as a setting of *spalliere* and/or as a whole they could not be identified with Barbara's commission from 1462. This has been established by the compelling contribution by Alessandro Parenti ('Sull'espressione un paio di nozze', in: A. Parenti, *Parole strane. Etimologia e altra linguistica*, Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2015, pp. 77–114), that the expression *un par* or *un paio* does not mean a couple, as in modern Italian language, but just one as *plurale tantum*. Accordingly, the term *dui para de chofani* does not mean four chests but just two, as usually happened with this kind of commission.

³⁰ See note 12 and Miziotek, *Exempla*, p. 79.

in London which Popham and Pouncey dated to around 1470.³¹ Notably the two sheets representing *Mercury and Paris* and *The Death of Seneca* – characterized by figures dressed like ancient Romans – are also worth considering. In the latter, the geometrical floor, the architectural backdrop and the two soldiers behind the philosopher recall the horseman and the man in armour on the left of *Stoning of the Elders*, both for their grim faces and for their clothing (figs. 10–11).³²

³¹ A.E. Popham, Philip Pouncey, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 2 vols., London: British Museum, 1950, I, pp. 162–163, cat. 260.

³² London, The British Museum, inv. 1920-2-14-1-1, ff. XVr, XXXIIIr.

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Mattia Vinco obtained his PhD in art history from the University of Padua in 2012 and received grants from the University of Udine (2005), the Karl-Franzens University in Graz (2006), the Fondazione di Studi di Storia dell'Arte Roberto Longhi in Florence (2007–2008), the University of Padua (2013–2014 and 2016) and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (2016–2017).

His main field of expertise is Italian secular painting of the Renaissance and Venetian Art from the Late Gothic to the Baroque, with particular regard to the Veronese area. He has published his research in national and international magazines and in many exhibition catalogues. In 2018 he was appointed associate professor in art history by a National Italian academic board. Currently he works as researcher of Art History at the University of Trento and collaborates as supervisor of the artistic heritage of the Diocese of Verona.