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Magdalena Lanuszka

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The Lamentation of Chomranice: A Fifteenth-Century Masterpiece in which South meets North

By Magdalena Łanuszka, Ph.D., Independent Scholar, Cracow

The fifteenth century is considered a breakthrough era: it was the highest moment of the late-medieval court culture with its late-Gothic art and is was when the Renaissance began. Central Europe enjoyed the peak of cultural development at that time, with one of its leading artistic centers being Cracow. Unfortunately, with Poland’s later history, most of the old masterpieces from this period have been lost and what has survived is often not easily accessible. In order to understand a little of what has been lost, this essay will explore the Lamentation of Chomranice, using it as an exemplar of the international artistic influences on Cracow during this complex period.

Introduction: Gothic panel painting in Lesser Poland

The Lamentation of Chomranice (Fig. 1) was created in Cracow, Lesser Poland; almost all the surviving Gothic panels of Lesser Poland are believed to have been created in that city.¹ Unfortunately almost no written sources survive that would

¹ For the 15th century "Lesser Poland" included the whole Cracow Diocese. The subject of the Gothic panel painting in Lesser Poland had been researched by Jerzy Gadomski (1981, 1988, 1995). He concluded that Cracow was the main (if not the only one) artistic centre in Lesser Poland in the 15th century. Previous theories dividing Lesser Poland's painting into "Cracow School" and "Nowy Sącz School" are no longer accepted. Most of the publications about these paintings were collected in the
Figure 1 Lamentation of Chomranice, Diocesan Museum, Tarnow. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

3-volume study Malarstwo Gotyckie (2004). Individual Lesser Poland's Gothic paintings were published in monographs throughout the 20th century, but many require a new research as a result of new technological examination possibilities and the changing state of knowledge on the subject.
enable precise dating or attributions. The only remaining way to establish these parameters is to closely analyze the style and the iconography of the artwork.

Panel paintings were present in Cracow at least from the thirteenth century, as mentioned in the written sources of the time and the oldest surviving piece is a fragment of an altarpiece panel, depicting Saints Catherine and Agnes, from St Michael Church in Dębno Podhalańskie, (c. 1270-1280). In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Poland was fragmented into principalities ruled by rival scions of the Piast dynasty, but the duke of Cracow was a titular suzerain over them. As a result, Cracow aspired to be a cultural leader in the thirteenth century, and would establish that position after becoming a capital of the reunited Kingdom of Poland in the fourteenth century. Unfortunately no Cracow panel paintings from the fourteenth century survived, although many painters (pictores) are recorded in the written sources of the time. The number of the painters in Cracow significantly increased by the end of the fourteenth century, with the painters guild established there by 1404. Guild education system required a journeyman to undertake a working trip; as a result, Cracow painters became familiar with the art of nearby Silesia, Bohemia or Austria, and sometimes Italy or the Netherlands.

For the first three decades of the fifteenth century painting in Cracow was strongly influenced by the Bohemian art of the previous century. The artists followed the "beautiful style," developed by the workshops in Prague, such as the workshop of The Master of Vyšší Brod or The Master of the Třeboň Altarpiece. The figures were tall and thin, elegant, and modelled with chiaroscuro; the drapery folds were rounded

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2 Kalinowski (1976); see also Gadomski (2004): 256.
3 Togner (1993). It is tempera on panel, 68.5 by 23.5 cm, in the Archdiocesan Museum, Cracow.
and fell in cascades as seen in the altar wings from Trzebunia (c. 1400) (Fig. 2), the Triptych with Virgin and Child Enthroned (c. 1420), and the Epitaph of Wierzbęta of Branice (before 1425). In the second third of the fifteenth century, Cracow painters developed their own, slightly different artistic style: they kept the general character of the International Gothic,

Figure 2 Altar wings from Trzebunia, c. 1400, National Museum in Cracow. Photo: http://www.kultura.malopolska.pl/ and Wikimedia

but reduced the elements of composition, simplified the draperies, and chose to use much more significant contours, making the paintings seem more linear. Typical Cracow painting of the 1440s and 1450s is represented for example by the wings of the altarpiece from Ptaszkowa (c. 1440),\(^\text{10}\) or the Crucifixion from Korzenna (c. 1450) (Fig. 3).\(^\text{11}\) Nevertheless, the echoes of the "beautiful style" were still present in the Cracow art as seem in the Epitaph of Jan of Ujazd (1450).\(^\text{12}\) Then, in the second half of the 1460s, a new style of the Netherlandish origin became popular in Cracow, featuring complex compositions placed in interiors or landscapes, less-idealized depictions of figures and angular drapery fold. This style is represented by the panels of the high altar from the Dominican Church in Cracow (c. 1465), by the Master of the Dominican Triptych (Fig. 4)\(^\text{13}\) or by the Augustinian Altarpiece (1468), by Nicolaus Haberschrack.\(^\text{14}\)

**Lamentation of Chomranice**

The Lamentation of Chomranice, now in the Diocesan Museum, Tarnów,\(^\text{15}\) though not well-known outside Poland, is one of the most interesting examples of Polish panel painting of the first half of the fifteenth century (Fig. 1). Polish scholars have noted both Italian and Netherlandish influences in this painting.\(^\text{16}\)

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\(^{10}\) Diocesan Museum in Tarnów. Catalog entry by T. Łozińska in 2\textsuperscript{nd} volume of *Malarstwo Gotyckie* (2004): 244-245.


\(^{13}\) Its panels are in the Dominican Monastery in Cracow and the National Museum in Cracow. Madej-Anderson (2007).


\(^{15}\) In most non-Polish publications where the *Lamentation of Chomranice* appears, it is only briefly mentioned, sometimes with some basic information about it (including the information that it was influenced both by Netherlandish and Italian art, but with no further details), but without any explanations or analysis, rather in a form of a short summary: Rhodes (1972): 137-138; Morawińska (1984): 6 and 58; Poprzęcka (2000): 19 and 46.

\(^{16}\) Jerzy Gadomski was the first one to notice the Netherlandish influences in that painting; he also
concluded that its author must have been to Italy: Gadomski (1972); Gadomski (1981): 104-105. The *Lamentation of Chomranice* has been analyzed or mentioned many times in the Polish art history publications of the 20th century, though the analysis by Jerzy Gadomski is the most complex one. The summary of all the previous research (with the references) is collected in the catalog entry by T. Łozińska in the 2nd volume of *Malarstwo Gotyckie* (2004): 150-151. See also Gadomski (1986).

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**Figure 3** Crucifixion from Korzenna, c. 1450, National Museum in Cracow. Photo: [http://www.kultura.malopolska.pl/](http://www.kultura.malopolska.pl/)
Its artist was ready to absorb foreign influences; he probably traveled a lot, observing, and not just copying, but rather creating a new style, mixing elements taken from various sources.

Figure 4 Entombment, c. 1465, Master of the Dominican Triptych, panel of the Dominican Altarpiece, National Museum in Cracow. Photo: http://www.kultura.malopolska.pl/
The *Lamentation of Chomranice* was painted with tempera on wood and measures 176 by 139 cm. Oil glazes most likely adorn the work, as does the background of silver foil, decorated with a pattern of grapevines and grapes.\(^{17}\) The painting is called "of Chomranice" because it was acquired by the Diocesan Museum in Tarnów in 1904 from the parish church in Chomranice (a village close to Nowy Sącz in Lesser Poland). Nevertheless, the panel was not originally destined for that church, but relocated there, probably at the beginning of the seventeenth century. From 1556 to the beginning of the seventeenth century the church in Chomranice was used by Protestants (Calvinists) who had emptied it of all the earlier Catholic furnishings. When the church was taken back by the Catholics, it was rebuilt and re-equipped; there is a protocol of visitation from 1608 that describes a main altar as containing the "ancient structure with the Deposition and the cycle of the Lord's Passion."\(^{18}\) We can assume that the *Lamentation of Chomranice*, which once formed the middle part of a winged altarpiece, was probably brought to the parish church in Chomranice at the beginning of the 17th century. The altarpiece most likely originally came from a church in Cracow.\(^{19}\)

**Iconography of the Lamentation**

The iconography of *Lamentation* derives from the text *Meditationes*. The idea had been developed in Byzantine art prior to the eleventh century and this

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\(^{19}\) Dobrowolski (1965): 54, n. 93 suggested that the painting could have been taken from the Holy Cross Church in Cracow in 1818, when the church was torn down. Dobrowolski assumed that the patronage of the Holy Cross fit the Passion theme of the panel. In fact, it is much more probable that this church had an altarpiece with the depiction of the Crucifixion; besides, the *Lamentation* was brought to Chomranice probably at the beginning of the 17th century, so that does not fit within the time-frame for the Church of Holy Cross.
development with its many variations in characters and spatial placement exerted a strong influence on later works. While the oldest Byzantine examples date from the 11th-century, such as the manuscript miniature in the Tetraevangelion, the most famous Byzantine image is the fresco in the Church of St. Panteleimon in Gorno Nerezi (c. 1164). Later the Lamentation became popular in the Italian art. Famous examples include the mosaic in the Florence Baptistery (thirteenth century), Giotto’s fresco in the Arena Chapel in Padua (1303-06), the Master of the Codex of Saint George (c. 1330-35), that by the Master of the Dominican Effigies (c. 1340), or the panel by Giottino (c. 1360-65). Subsequently the subject was taken up by the Franco-Flemish artists in the fourteenth century. At first they combined motifs of Lamentation with the depictions of Entombment as seen in Jean Pucelle’s, The Hours of Jeanne d’Evreux (c. 1324-28), the Parement of Narbonne (c. 1375), and the miniature by Jean Le Noir in The Petites Heures of Jean de France, Duc de Berry (c. 1375-80). By the fifteenth century, depictions of Lamentation not related to the Entombment became more popular in the French manuscripts. Examples include miniatures in The Grand Heures of Jean de France, Duc de Berry (c. 1407-09), the Limbourg Brothers, The Belles Heures of Jean de France, duc de Berry (c. 1405-

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20 Three types deriving from Byzantine art were described by Millet (1960): 493. It includes the Virgin sitting on the ground and holding Christ on her lap, the Virgin standing, and the Virgin sitting next to the body of Christ. See also Hazzikostas (2013).
26 Mund, Stroo & Goetghebeur (2003): ill. 30. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cloisters Library, Ms. 54.1.2, fol. 82v.
1408/9),\textsuperscript{30} and the famous *The Grand Heures de Rohan* (c. 1430-35).\textsuperscript{31} In the Central Europe the *Lamentation* became popular in the fourteenth and the early-fifteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{32} The best-known examples are *Vyšší Brod Altarpiece* (c. 1350),\textsuperscript{33} a panel of the altar from St. Mary church in Toruń (c. 1380-90),\textsuperscript{34} and the drawing by the Master of the Votive Painting of St Lambrecht (c. 1430).\textsuperscript{35}

Chronologically, the moment of the *Lamentation* should be situated between the *Deposition* and the *Entombment*, and it quite often contains elements which refer to either of those two events. In case of *Lamentation of Chomranice*, it is definitively closer to the *Deposition*, as there are all three crosses (including the crucified Thieves) in the background, but no tomb is depicted. One of its most interesting iconographic motifs, and very unusual in depictions of the *Lamentation*, is the depiction of the two crucified Thieves, one of which is shown in a convulsive pose, almost wrapped around his cross. The depictions of the Thieves twined around their crosses were popular in the *Crucifixions*, especially in German and Austrian painting of the first half of the fifteenth century; interestingly, in most cases both Thieves were posed in a similar way; even if in some examples the Bad Thief seems to suffer more, the distinction is usually (although not always) particularly subtle.\textsuperscript{36}

The depiction of the Thieves on T-shaped crosses, with their arms slung over the horizontal beams, was seen as early as an eighth-century icon from the Mount

\textsuperscript{32} See Kalina (1993).
\textsuperscript{33} Pešina (1982): ill. 6. Prague, Národní Muzeum.
\textsuperscript{34} Michnowska (1961): 121-212. Pelplin, Diocesan Muzeum.
\textsuperscript{36} A separate study of this particular iconographical motif will be published in a forthcoming article "O kilku ciekawych motywach ikonograficznych w Oplakiwaniu z Chomranic" in *Imagines pictae. Studia nad gotyckim malarstwem w Polsce*, ed. W. Walanus, M. Walczak, Societas Vistulana, 2016. Various poses marked the difference between the Bad Thief (who suffers in agony) and the Good Thief (who dies in peace); on that subject see Merback (1999): 218-265.
Subsequently, in Western European, it appeared in the Ottonian manuscripts, the *Codex Egberti* (c. 980-983), and the *Liuthar Gospels*, (c. 996). In these early examples, the Thieves hang straight down, a motif later popularized in Italian and then Franco-Flemish art of the fourteenth century. In the Central Europe *Crucifixions* with such depictions of Thieves were especially popular in the German art of the late fourteenth and the early-fifteenth century – many examples may be found in the collection of the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne.

In contrast, though, many examples of these depictions illustrate the crucified Thieves in quite dynamic and convulsive poses. Examples of these include the *Kaufmann Crucifixion* (c. 1350) and the altarpiece probably from St. Lambrecht Abbey (c. 1366). In the fourteenth century such depictions occurred in the frescos in then-Upper Hungary (Švábovce, Kocel’ovce, Ochtiná – present-day Slovakia). Most of the examples of the Thieves almost wrapped around their crosses come from the fifteenth century Austrian painting; the early ones are the *Obervellach Altar* (c. 1400),

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38 Ronig (1977): 101-102. Trier, Stadtbibliothek, MS 24, fol. 83v i 84v.
40 See e.g. fresco by Pietro Lorenzetti in the Lower Church of San Francesco in Assisi (c. 1325-30), a painting by Master of Città di Castello (c. 1320 r., Manchester, City Art Gallery); *Crucifixion* by Altichiero in Oratorio di San Giorgio in Padua (1379-1384), a miniature in *The Hours of Jeanne d’Evreux*, *The Tres Belles Heures of Jean de France, duc de Berry* (a miniature attributed to the Master of the Parament of Narbonne, c. 1413, Manuscrit Nouv. Acq. Lat. 3093, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fol. 111), or the miniatures in *The Très Riches Heures of Jean de France, duc de Berry* (Limbourg Brothers, c. 1415-1416, Chantilly, Musée Condé, Ms.84, f. 153 and 156v).
41 E.g. the *Crucifixions* by Master of the Netze Altarpiece (*The Netze Altarpiece*, c. 1390; *The Osnabrick Altarpiece*, c. 1385-1390), *The Small Calvary* by the Master of Saint Veronica (c. 1416), *The Sankt-Andreas Calvary* (c. 1420), *The Wasservaas Calvary* (c. 1420); see Corley (1996): 77-78, 164, 169.
42 Merback (1999): 172-197 calls it "arched-back pose" and compares to the punishment of wheel: a form of execution familiar to the medieval viewer.
43 Berlin, Gemäldegalerie. Usually described as Bohemian c. 1350 as in *Karel IV* (2006): 76-78; cat. no 1. It was also suggested that it may be Austrian c. 1340-45, from Vienna or Salzburg: *Gotik* (2000): 538-539 (cat. note no. 277) by I. Trattner.
altar by the Master of St. Lambrecht Votive Altarpiece (c. 1410),\textsuperscript{47} and the Wilten

**Figure 5** Comparison of the detail of *Lamentation of Chomranice* with *Bad Thief* by Master of Flémalle, c. 1430, Städelisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

*Cruifixion* (c. 1430).\textsuperscript{48}

Even though the motif of expressively posed Thieves was present in Central-European art of the early-fifteenth century, the Bad Thief in the *Lamentation of Chomranice* seems to be especially close to the fragment of the *Deposition Triptych* by Master of Flémalle, whose image of the Thief survives (c. 1430).\textsuperscript{49} Their similarity was first noticed by Jerzy Gadomski, who also compared it to a drawing of this fragment, now in the Fogg Museum.\textsuperscript{50} The Bad Thief in the panel from Chomranice is

\textsuperscript{47} *Gotik* (2000): 546 (cat. note no. 287 by G. Schmidt), Graz, Landesmuseum Johanneum.


\textsuperscript{50} Rosenberg (1950), Gerdts & Gerdts (1960): cat. no. 3; see also Gadomski (1981): 105.
indeed similar to the one painted by Master of Flémalle (Fig. 5), but it is likely that
the second Thief in the lost Deposition Triptych was depicted in the similar pose as
the first. This assumption is based on the copy of the Master of Flémalle's lost
triptych, kept in Liverpool.51

In contrast, the Thieves’ poses in the panel from Chomranice differ from each
other; perhaps there used to be some other painting by Master of Flémalle, in which
the distinction between the Thieves’ poses was as clear as in the Lamentation of
Chomranice. The case for this may be found in the panel of Crucifixion in the
National Museum in Poznań, which is believed to be by a follower of Master of
Flémalle52 (Fig. 6). The Crucifixion in Poznań contains many elements also present in
the Lamentation of Chomranice: the turbans, the white coat of the Virgin, a kneeling
person seen from behind, and the depiction of the Thieves. The good one, on the left,
hangs on his cross in rather-straight position, while the bad one on the right is shown
in convulsions. Perhaps the particular composition was used in a lost work by Master
of Flémalle and was later repeated by both painters.

Interestingly, it is not easy to find an example of Lamentation which includes
the crucified Thieves; they are usually seen in scenes of the Crucifixion or the
Deposition. Rare examples of the Lamentations that include the Thieves include two
fifteenth-century paintings in The Frick Collection in New York,53 and a fresco in the
Saint Elisabeth Cathedral in Košice in Upper Hungary, present-day Slovakia (second
quarter of the fifteenth century).54

51 Sander (2009.2): 223, ill. 125. Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool (attributed to the circle of the Master
of Saint Ursula Legend).
52 Dobrzycka (1971): ill. 49.
53 Art in The Frick Collection (1996): 43-44. See
http://collections.frick.org/view/objects/asitem/items$0040:289
who mentioned the fresco in Košice while writing about how the Lamentation of Chomranice used
to be a part of the triptych, though he did not really point to any connections or mutual relations
between those two images.
The two paintings in New York could be considered as a single example, as one was produced in the circle of Conrad Witz (c. 1440) and the other is its later, fifteenth-century copy, painted probably in southern France. In these, the crosses of the Figure 6 Follower of Master of Flémalle, Crucifixion, 15th century, National Museum in Poznań. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.
Thieves look more like the trees than the crosses and the Thieves' bodies are severely bruised and cut. The drapery is crushed into angular folds typical of Netherlandish painting. It is possible that these *Lamentations* were based on some lost Netherlandish masterpiece. In any case, due to the uncertain dating of all the panels in question (the ones in New York and that from Chomranice) it is impossible to decide which may have served as the primary iconographic source.

An even more interesting comparison is the fresco from Saint Elisabeth Cathedral in Košice (Fig. 7). The compositions of both depictions are very close – the figures are placed in the scene in a similar way and there is also an empty cross in the background flanked by the two Thieves on their crosses. There are also some

**Figure 7** Comparison of *Lamentation of Chomranice* with Lamentation fresco in Saint Elisabeth Cathedral in Košice, second quarter of the 15th century. Photo: after Zdzisław Kliś, *Pasja: cykle pasyjne Chrystusa w średniowiecznym malarstwie ściennym Europy Środkowej* (Kraków, 2006), il. 40b.
differences: for example, on the Košice fresco, angels were once depicted above the Thieves, but no angels appear in the Chomranice painting. Here Christ's legs are not crossed and there is no gesture of wiping a tear, both present in the Chomranice panel. The Košice image is surrounded by four other smaller pictures that evoke the triptych form with two panels on each wing – even though it is a fresco! As we know from the early-seventeenth century protocol of visitation, it is likely that the Lamentation of Chomranice used to form the middle part of a winged altarpiece, with the scenes of Christ's Passion on the wings. At Košice, the Lamentation is surrounded by the scenes of Christ Nailed to the Cross (upper left), Carrying the Cross (lower left), Flagellation (upper right,) and Christ Crowned with Thorns (lower right). Thus, it is possible that the fresco simply repeats the whole structure from Chomranice in its original form, in the manner of a rather-free copy.

**Italian influences**

The Lamentation of Chomranice is significant not only for its unique iconography in Lesser Poland, but for its stylistic mixture derived from very different artistic sources. For instance, the facial features are rendered with distinctive chiaroscuro: deep shadows and highlights that enhance the forehead, nose, and cheeks of the figures. This reflects the influence of Italian painting which was, in turn, based on the Byzantine traditions. Other characteristics such as the long, narrow noses and almond-shaped eyes, with clearly marked upper and lower eyelids, also derive from Italo-Byzantine origins.

The Italian influences in this panel have been discussed by earlier scholars\(^{55}\) who mostly looked for the sources in artists from the first half of the fourteenth

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\(^{55}\) For example: Walicki (1937): 8, no 5; Dobrowolski (1976): 54, note 37a; Otto (1955): 449;
century from various places: Florence (Giotto), Siena (Simone Martini) and Naples (Antonio Cavarretto). It is likely, however, that the painter from Cracow may have visited Italy at some point in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, therefore it seems odd that he would pick up elements of the style of the Italian masters from the past century instead of learning from his contemporaries. While the Italo-Byzantine style was a bit archaic in the fifteenth century, it was still popular in Siena, making it plausible that the painter visited that city.

One reason for the continued conservative artistic outlook in Siena was its history. The plague of 1348 was devastating: it reduced the population of the city by more than half, so Siena never fully recovered its former economic and artistic position. Many Sienese artists active between 1350 and 1425 were content to continue the style of their famous forebears; interestingly, contemporary Sienese painting seems to have been ignored in the fifteenth century written sources. Retrospective stylistics of the Sienese painting of the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries may also have been supported by the expectations of the local donors, keen to refer to the art of the golden age of the city. For example, the republican government of Siena, formed in 1404, supported art relating to Sienese historical traditions.

One of the followers of the earlier Sienese traditions of Duccio and Simone Martini was Paolo di Giovanni Fei (1340s- d. 1411), using a brilliant palette of strong colors. His style influenced the leading painters of the next generation: Taddeo di Bartolo, Martino di Bartolomeo, Andrea di Bartolo, and the most important painter

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56 Otto-Michalowska & Pezzi-Ascani (1975) listed Simone Martini, Giotto and Antonio Cavaretto as possible sources of inspiration for the Master of Lamentation of Chomranice. They also assumed that this master was Hungarian, educated in Italy.


in Siena in the second half of the fourteenth century, Bartolo di Fredi (d. 1410). His art is characterised by crowded and decorative, yet rather-flat compositions, and the facial features of his figures (especially of the old men) were depicted in an expressive, but calligraphic manner as seen on his two panels of *Adoration of the Magi* dating to 1380s and c. 1390. Note the distinctive difference between the expression of the faces of old and young people in these panels: a quality traceable in the paintings by some of di Fredi's successors and in the *Lamentation of Chomranice*.

The son and pupil of Bartolo di Fredi was Andrea di Bartolo (act. c. 1389 - 1428). He imitated his father's painting, but the facial features of his figures are less expressive and not-that-similar to those in the *Lamentation of Chomranice* whose faces are modeled with a distinctive chiaroscuro. The most likely inspiration for the artist from Cracow may have been Taddeo di Bartolo (b. early 1360s - d. 1422); he was a prolific artist with a significant workshop which dominated Sienese painting in the first two decades of the fifteenth century.

Taddeo di Bartolo also diversified the way of depicting male and female faces: the ladies were rendered using gentler chiaroscuro and much more delicate features. The faces of young men in the painting of Chomranice (Saint John and the younger Thief) are very thin, have sunken cheeks and distinctively square jaws, similar to some figures in Taddeo di Bartolo’s altarpiece in Montepulciano Cathedral (1401) (Fig. 8). In the *Lamentation of Chomranice* both female and male faces reflect this influence. The males are the most expressive, especially the faces of the old men:

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61 Boucher & Fiorani (2012), Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena.
Nicodemus and one of the Thieves. Their grey beards flare outward, their eye sockets are sunken, and their eyebrows bushy. Nicodemus’ eyebrows pucker is looking remarkably like Saint Andrew as depicted by Taddeo di Bartolo, in the 1395 altarpiece now in Szépművészeti Múzeum in Budapest\textsuperscript{66} (Fig. 9). One of the most important commissions completed by Taddeo di Bartolo was a fresco cycle in the chapel of the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena (1406-1407).\textsuperscript{67} In those frescoes, too, there are old men with puckered eyebrows and young men with square jaws and sunken cheeks, modeled with intensive chiaroscuro (Fig. 10) as seen in the work from Chomranice.

\textsuperscript{66} Boskovits (1966): plate 43.  
\textsuperscript{67} Norman (1999): 198-201.
Taddeo di Bartolo died in 1422; it is possible that the painter from Cracow visited Italy before that date, probably as a young artist, and maybe even spent some time in di Bartolo's workshop. Nonetheless, the painter of the *Lamentation of Chomranice* was educated in Cracow, and so one may still recognize Lesser Poland's

![Figure 9](http://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol5/iss4/5)

**Figure 9** Comparison of the detail of *Lamentation of Chomranice* with Saint Andrew by Taddeo di Bartolo, Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 1395. Photo: Ondřej Havala.

... stylistic traditions. These include female heads with broad, high foreheads and narrow chins -- proportions which significantly differ Sienese painting. The eyes, while narrow, are surrounded by thick eyelids, so the eye sockets remain round, which is especially emphasized when the eyes are closed (as seen in Christ and the Thieves). It is though clear that the basic composition of the human face in the *Lamentation of Chomranice* is rooted in the Central European tradition, which is also expressed in the detailed depictions of the plants on the dark green grass and in the limited sense of space in the whole composition.\(^{68}\) Therefore, one may conclude that the Master of the *Lamentation of Chomranice* was a Central-European artist that studied at some point

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\(^{68}\) Gadomski (1981): 106. Scholars previously assumed that the Master of *Lamentation of Chomranice* came from Spiš from the circle of Master of Matejovce Altar (Spiš), as mentioned by Stange (1961), but this view is no longer accepted.
in Italy, probably in a Sienese workshop within the circle of Taddeo di Bartolo, most likely prior to di Bartolo's death in 1422. In the second quarter of the fifteenth century the archaic style based on the Byzantine traditions was no longer as popular, even in Siena; the impact of the early Renaissance style caused artists to change their depictions of narrow eyes and long noses. Yet the Cracow painter absorbed the old Sienese style so much that it was still visible even when combined with his later fascination, with the completely different Netherlandish painting.

**Netherlandish influences**

The *Lamentation of Chomranice* also contains many elements of a Netherlandish origin: in style, in iconography, and even in technology, as the oil in
glazes would prove that the artist knew the most up-to-date Netherlandish technical solutions.\(^69\) Many iconographic elements in the *Lamentation* seem to be rooted in the art of the Master of Flémalle's workshop, as proved by Jerzy Gadomski.\(^70\) As mentioned earlier, the Bad Thief in the panel in Chomranice seems to be based on the *Deposition Triptych* by Master of Flémalle (Fig. 5). The composition of Christ's body, too, is similar to its depiction in the Seilern Triptych (c. 1425)\(^71\) (Fig. 11). Both paintings depict two kneeling figures seen from behind at the front of the scene; a big empty cross in the background, two smaller and T-shaped crosses with the Thieves on either side, and the poses of the Thieves, twined around their crosses. They are both depicted in dynamic poses, although the one to the right is posed more expressively,


\(^{70}\) Gadomski (1972): 143-145; Gadomski (1981): 104-105. Not all the scholars agree that the Master of *Lamentation of Chomranice* was indeed influenced by the Netherlandish art; it was particularly rejected by Dobrowolski (1976): 35.

\(^{71}\) Courtauld Institute Galleries, London. For recent work on that the triptych, see Jacobs (2012): 43-48. The complex monograph by Susie Nash, including the results of the latest technical examinations of that altar, is still in preparation.
which becomes even more noticeable in the *Lamentation of Chomranice*. Too, both pieces feature a grapevine pattern as a decoration of a metal background.

Other Netherlandish motifs present in the *Lamentation of Chomranice* are glittery clothes decorated with golden patterns, a detailed depiction of a quilted dress adorning one of the women, a gesture of wiping a tear with a finger, and a turban on one woman’s head, made of small, dense folds. Such turbans appeared in Burgundian painting c. 1400, which reflected the previous trend of the International Style.\(^{72}\) It is also present in some of the paintings attributed to the workshop of so called Master of Flémalle including the Seilern Triptych, the *Virgin's Marriage* in Prado, Madrid (c. 1430),\(^{73}\) and on *Saint Veronica* of the Flémalle Panels (c. 1430)\(^ {74}\) (Fig. 12).

Another Netherlandish element is the surprising composition of the pose of the Virgin, kneeling and adoring Christ’s body, most commonly found in fifteenth-century depictions of the *Nativity*. It seems to be possible that the source of the

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\(^{72}\) As seen in the painting of the Limbourg Brothers, e.g. in the miniature with the Adoration of the Magi in the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, c. 1415, Musée Condé, Chantilly (facsimile published: Chantilly 1969).

\(^{73}\) Friedländer (1967): plate 74.

\(^{74}\) Friedländer (1967): plate 88. Frankfurt am Mein, Städelisches Kunstinstitut.
inspiration was the *Nativity* by Master of Flémalle, in Dijon (c. 1430).\(^75\) In both works, the Virgin is also dressed in a straight, white robe and cloak (Fig. 13).

![Figure 13](Comparison of *Lamentation of Chomranice* with *Nativity* by Master of Flémalle, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, c. 1430. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.)

While the author of the *Lamentation of Chomranice* was familiar with the art of the Master of Flémalle, he did not reference works by later popular Netherlandish masters (e.g. Rogier van der Weyden). This means he probably visited Flanders around 1433.\(^76\) He could have traveled to Bruges, as there are documents confirming the journeys of Cracow's merchants to Flanders, especially at the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century. In Bruges, the Hanseatic League had its *Kontor* (trading post) established and Cracow belonged to that League.\(^77\) In the fourteenth century, too, Cracow paid Peter's Pence via the Brugian bankers.\(^78\) In the

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\(^{75}\) Gadomski (1972): 104. Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts.

\(^{76}\) This date is proposed because it is when all the paintings from the workshop of Master of Flémalle (mentioned above) had been completed: the Seilern Triptych (c. 1425), the Triptych with the Thief in Frankfurt (c. 1430), and the Dijon *Nativity*, whose *terminus ante quem* is 1433, when Jacques Daret started his work on the Virgin Altarpiece which used the Dijon *Nativity* as inspiration.


second quarter of the fifteenth century there was so much trade with Flanders that the merchants from Cracow established some companies solely dedicated to that activity.\textsuperscript{79} Couldn't such a merchant's journey include an artist from Cracow?

**Dating, original configuration and patronage**

The *Lamentation of Chomranice* has thus far dated to the 1440s or even to c. 1450,\textsuperscript{80} but I believe that this can be refined. The analysis of both Italian and Netherlandish influences supports the idea that the painter from Cracow went to Italy not later than around 1420, where he still had a chance to absorb the more-archaic Italo-Byzantine style. I suspect that he later came back to Cracow, worked there for some time, and then went on another trip to the Netherlands, presumably around 1430-33, where he familiarized himself with the work of the Master of Flémalle. Because of this, the *Lamentation of Chomranice* could have been completed as early as the second half of the 1430s. Certainly, such an early adaptation of the Netherlandish influences seems a bit odd in Lesser Poland, but this may be why it did not start a trend with other Cracow artists of that time. The angular folds and the style described as "the bourgeois realism" wouldn't become popular in Cracow's art until the second half of the 1460s. So even with the traditional dating of the *Lamentation of Chomranice* at c. 1450, we would still have to admit that its Netherlandish elements were not adopted in the Cracow artistic circle for at least another 15 years. That would be unusual as, at the turn of the 1440s and the 1450s, Netherlandish influences

\textsuperscript{79} It was done, for example, by Jan Sweidniczer, Piotr Hirsberg and Henryk von Steyne, and later also Jerzy Swarz; their goods were transported to be traded in Flanders by Piotr Kreczner. *Consularia Cracoviensia*, vol. II (manuscript in the National Archives in Cracow, no. 428), pp. 298, 302, 449.

\textsuperscript{80} Throughout the 20th century various dates of the creation of the *Lamentation of Chomranice* had been proposed, most often as the 1440s or c. 1450. Jerzy Gadomski initially suggested the end of 1430s: Gadomski (1975): 42 and Gadomski (1981): 106, but later changed it to 1440-50 in Gadomski (1986), though he did not comment on the change. Subsequently the dating 1440-1450 has been accepted by the scholars with no further discussion – see Malarstwo Gotyckie (2004): 150.
were already accepted in nearby Silesia, where the workshop of Wilhelm of Aachen was active.⁸¹ I suspect that by that time the artists from Cracow would be already interested in the new style and would follow the example of the painter who visited the Netherlands and brought back new ideas. *Lamentation of Chomranice* is a unique example of the early adoption of the Netherlandish art in Cracow. The 1430s would have been too early for the contemporaries to accept the Netherlandish *Ars Nova*, for in the first third of the fifteenth century Central European artists were still creating the artwork in the International Style. The artist of *Lamentation of Chomranice* absorbing very new Netherlandish artistic ideas, while rare, was not unique. It occurred in other places in Central Europe, as seen in the sculpted *Christ on the Mount of Olives* from the Church of St. Maurice, Olomouc (1430s). Like that of the *Lamentation of Chomranice*, it was not followed stylistically by its contemporaries.⁸² Because of these many reasons, it seems reasonable to date the *Lamentation of Chomranice* to before 1440.

The more precise dating and the possible original destination of the altarpiece with the *Lamentation of Chomranice* remain unknown. Nevertheless, further analysis of its iconography may provide some clues and help to, at least, speculate about its original function. While the subject matter of the Lamentation was quite common in late-Gothic painting, it was rarely featured as a middle part of a winged altarpiece. Similarly, it was also very rare to depict Virgin Mary lamenting in a pose of Adoration – that was more popularly found in images of the *Nativity*.⁸³ The

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⁸¹ Formerly known as anonymous Master of Saint Barbara Altarpiece in Wrocław, the artist was identified via the discovery from 2004 of the contracts for the Altar in St. Jacob Church in Nysa. See Kochanowska-Reiche (2006).


⁸³ It is possible that there used to be a source for such an iconography of the *Lamentation* in the Netherlandish art, as there are some single examples of the *Lamentation* with Virgin adoring Christ's body: a panel c. 1460-80, connected to the workshop of Rogier van der Weyden (Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen in The Hague), the middle part of the Triptych of Adriaan Reins (Hans Memling, 1480, Memlingmuseum, Sint-Janshospitaal in Bruges), and the anonymous
Lamentation of Chomranice, then, becomes the adoration of the Body of Christ, presented to the viewer on a white cloth, linking it to the Eucharist. Additionally, the Eucharistic meaning is further symbolized in the background pattern of the grapevine, something quite unusual for the Lesser Poland painting of the first half of the fifteenth century. Together the painting combines the images of Body of Christ and wine symbolizing his blood. If we accept the idea that the fresco in Košice reflects the whole triptych (including the side depictions in the wings), we can assume that originally in the left wing there were the images of Christ Nailed to the Cross (upper) and Carrying the Cross (lower), and in the right wing of the Flagellation (upper) and Christ Crowned with Thorns (lower). This matches the seventeenth-century description of the altar in Chomranice, as being decorated with the scenes of Christ's Passion. In this manner, they were not composed in a narrative, chronological fashion. Instead, it gathers together various depictions of the Christ's suffering. It should be noted here, that the depictions of the Flagellation and Christ Crowned with Thorns are placed (along with the image of the Mass) under the fresco of The Mystical Winepress in the Franciscan cloister in Cracow, which is clearly dedicated to the Eucharistic symbolism.84 So it seems that at least those two scenes were understood as a good addendum to the image of a Eucharistic meaning.

If the whole altarpiece was so concentrated on the Eucharistic symbolism, and the main scene depicted the Adoration of the Body of Christ (lat. Corpus Christi), it is reasonable to assume that the whole structure was destined for a Corpus Christi church or chapel. The panel is not big enough to be a main part of a high altarpiece; it is more likely to have been made to adorn a side altar or altar in a chapel. Most likely

84 See Małkiewiczówna (1972) who accurately analyzed the Eucharistic context of the frescos, including the depictions of the Flagellation and Christ Crowned with Thorns.
placed there in the first half of the fifteenth century, the chapel was probably rebuilt or refurnished around 1600, and so the altarpiece was removed to Chomranice at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

According to surviving documents, there were fourteen altarpieces dedicated to the Corpus Christi in medieval Cracow. If we look for the those created in the first half of the fifteenth century, the list narrows to three. First, there was a Corpus Christi chapel in the Church of Our Lady (now known as the chapel of the Transfiguration of Christ). The chapel was founded in 1439 by Cracow's municipal councillor, Jerzy Szworc; it was equipped up to 1441, for in that year the Pope agreed to support processions to it, granting indulgences to spur them on. The changing dedication to Transfigurationis Domini occurred with the foundation of Agnieszka Rapowa née Waxman, in 1627 – but by that time the altarpiece with the Lamentation had already been in Chomranice for 20 years. There is no information about any new altar for that chapel around 1600; besides, the altar of the Corpus Christi and Saint Longinus are still recorded as being there in 1711. If that was an earlier medieval altarpiece, it probably contained the depiction of Longinus piercing crucified Jesus’s side with a lance.

The second option would be the altar of Corpus Christi founded in 1440 by the municipal councillor Piotr Hersberg to the Carmelite Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Unfortunately it was probably destroyed in a fire in November 1587. That leaves us with the third option, the chapel of Corpus Christi in the Franciscan Church in Cracow. It was consecrated in 1436 by the bishop Zbigniew

86 Gąsiorowski (1878): 28. I would like to thank Mrs Agata Wolska of Our Lady's Church Archives for her helpful information and for recommending the appropriate resources.
Oleśnicki,\textsuperscript{89} who was very much involved in popularizing the veneration of Corpus Christi in Cracow.\textsuperscript{90} The \textit{Adoration-Lamentation} perfectly complements the frescoes in the Franciscan cloister, which are dominated by Eucharistic symbolism. Apart from the \textit{Mystical Winepress}, mentioned above, there is an \textit{Annunciation} with the motif of \textit{Puer Parvulus Formatus}, a small Christ Child with a cross in the image of Annunciation. This clearly visualizes the moment of the Incarnation and places the Body of Christ within the context of his future Passion, all linked together through Eucharistic symbolism. The Franciscan's chapel's history also parallels the history of the panel of Chomranice: the chapel was founded in the 1430s and its furnishing may have been replaced around 1600, while the panel was created possibly before 1440 and relocated to the church in Chomranice before 1608. The reason for the changing of the chapel's furnishing may reflect a Brotherhood of the Passion created in 1595 (and acknowledged by the Pope in 1597) which took over the chapel and changed its dedication to the Passion of Christ.\textsuperscript{91} It may have been possible that, on this occasion, the main altarpiece of the chapel was exchanged; at the beginning of the seventeenth century the old one could have been sent to Chomranice. Of course, one can only hypothesize this because no documents survive confirming the presence of the \textit{Lamentation of Chomranice} in the Franciscan church in Cracow in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{92} The changing of the chapel's dedication, too, did not have to

\textsuperscript{89} It is widely accepted that the consecration of the patronage of Corpus Christi, known to had been done by Zbigniew Oleśnicki in the Franciscan Church in 1436, refers to the creation of new chapel: Gogola (2006): 30-32. See also Rosenbeiger (1933): 66-69.


\textsuperscript{91} It is not certain when the patronage of the chapel changed, but most likely it was when the Brotherhood that took over the chapel. See Rosenbaiger (1933): 139; The complex rebuilding of the chapel took place in the 2nd half of the 17th century (after 1655).

\textsuperscript{92} Not all the altars are mentioned in the documents in a way that would enable one to identify them. In the Franciscan Archives there is a visitation description completed by Jan Donat Caputo in 1597, but there is no information that could refer to the \textit{Lamentation of Chomranice} – see Maćzka (2006): 26. However, that visitation took place when the chapel's patronage had already been changed, as it was given to the Brotherhood of the Passion. It could be possible that the old altar had been
necessarily be followed by an immediate change of the altarpiece, as both the ideas of the Corpus Christi and the Passion of Christ might be addressed with similar images. Of course, if the panel was placed inside the Franciscan church, it means that it would have to have survived the church fire of 1462. The fire is not well-described and it is not certain what was destroyed and what managed to survive. On the other hand, changing the altarpiece to correspond to the change of the chapel’s patronage may have carried a prestigious meaning (it did not have to be supported by practical aspects), as a new Brotherhood was created. By the end of the sixteenth century, the medieval altarpiece must have been regarded as old-fashioned, especially in case of *Lamentation of Chomranice*, which preserves the elements of the even-earlier, archaic Italo-Byzantine style.

The restoration of the church in Chomranice was completed in 1601 by Przeclaw Marcinkowski of Marcinkowice, who had the Gryf coat of arms. Having that coat of arms did not automatically connect it to the Franciscan church in Cracow, but in 1642 the new Franciscan provincial superior elected was Franciszek Marcinkowski, who had the Gryf coat of arms, and who may have been a relative of Przeclaw. Perhaps because the Marcinkowski family had some connections to the Franciscans already at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it might have paved

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93 Rosenbaiger (1933): 103 wrote, that it was a rather small fire and the church was not damaged much. The more significant catastrophe – the collapse of the tower and the ceiling – happened three years later, in 1465; but that did not necessarily affect all the altars, especially those in the chapels. See Włodarek & Węclawowicz (2006): 58-63.


95 In 1612 a visitor A. Goski noted a service for the soul of Cządron as a founder of the Cracow's Franciscan convent, Rosenbeiger (1933): 46-47, which probably refers to Theodore of Gryf family, Voivode of Cracow, who died in 1237. "Cządron" is a medieval form of the name "Theodore," an old form no longer used in the 17th century, so it could mean that the note is based on earlier, probably medieval source – see Labuda (1983). In any case, at the beginning of the 17th century it was assumed that the Gryf family was involved in founding of the Franciscan convent in Cracow.

96 Herbarz Polski (1841): 346-347.
the way for them to acquire an old altarpiece and to place it in the church in Chomranice. Of course, this is an unproved hypothesis, but one that I propose here as a starting point for further research and discussion.

**Conclusion**

To sum up: it should be stressed that the creator of the *Lamentation of Chomranice* was a well-educated artist; he traveled a lot, both to Italy and to the Netherlands. He managed to combine the influences of those very different artistic centres in a quite surprising way. He probably spent some time in Siena around 1420, perhaps in the circle of Taddeo di Bartolo. Later, perhaps in the early 1430s, he took a trip to the Netherlands, where he learned about the painting of the Master of Flémalle. Most likely he was back in Cracow not later than in the second half of the 1430s. It is in Cracow, that the painting was once originally placed; we do not know where exactly, but perhaps it may have been in the Corpus Christi Chapel in the Franciscan Church. This placement would support dating the panel to c. 1436, consistent with its style and iconography. That makes the *Lamentation of Chomranice* one of the earliest examples of the adoption of the Netherlandish influences in Central European art, and thus worthy of further investigation.
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