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relations with the Spanish government? Was he a noble painter in the service of the regent's court of Parthenope (as Naples was initially known, named after a siren in Greek mythology) who was celebrated in his own time as a genius? Was he a cold-blooded murderer, merciless against anyone who dared to defy his absolute dominance in the Neapolitan art world? Panayotis Ioannou's book on Corenzio—a reworking of his doctoral dissertation, which was submitted to the University of Crete in 2003—is the first scholarly monograph dedicated to the life and work of this “many-faced” strange man. The monograph is accompanied by an annotated and fully illustrated *catalogue raisonné* of the painter's oeuvre, a product of enormous labor, since Corenzio's frescos are, for the most part, scattered all over Naples, and have never been reproduced in print or even photographed (the photographs in the book were taken by Luciano Pedicini).

Ioannou handles his abundant secondary and primary sources (some of which have been unpublished) meticulously, reconstructing a well-documented itinerary for Corenzio, particularly for the period before 1590 that remains until today in obscurity: the Peloponnese, Zakynthos, Venice (although an apprenticeship in Tintoretto's studio seems highly uncertain), Rome (where an involvement in the construction sites of the Eternal City seems probable), and Spain (where a long stay seems plausible). Still, the city of Naples under the *vicere* (the Spanish viceroys) greatly determined Corenzio's life. It is there that he acted as a (probably double) spy (working not only for the Spaniards but also for the Venetians); it is there that, in his later years, he participated in the communal life of the Greek *forestieri* (strangers); and, finally, it is there that almost the totality of his work survives.

The book is divided in two parts. The first part contains the historical, biographical, and historiographical data related to

Panayotis K. Ioannou, *Belisario Corenzio: Η ζωή και το έργο του* (Belisario Corenzio: His life and work), Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia Tommaso Flanghini, no. 4 (Iraklion-Venice: Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Crete University Press, 2011), 590 pp. €50.

Who was Belisario Corenzio (1558–1646)? Was he an obscure figure born in the Peloponnese (in the *città di Arcadia di Morea*, the present-day Kyparissia), into a family of spies that maintained excellent

the painter's career and, in addition, a list of entries with important information about a group of approximately twenty-five artists that belonged to his *bottega* (studio). Among them was Luigi Rodriguez, the *discepolo* (disciple) that exceeded in ability the jealous master, who, according to Corenzio's most important biographer, Bernardo De Dominici, murdered him with poison. Although the accusation was never proved, it contributed enormously to the fabrication of Corenzio's infamous image through the ages. The emphasis given to the studio's production is perfectly justified. In Corenzio's time, the status of the artist was transitory. Fresco paintings were, to say the least, collective products, but, at the same time, as the author demonstrates, the demand for autograph art works was clearly emphasized by patrons in the contracts. Nevertheless, Corenzio's signature can be found only in two churches in Naples (SS. Annunziata and Gesù Nuovo).

The second part of Ioannou's book, in addition to the aforementioned *catalogue raisonné* (fresco cycles, oil paintings, drawings), includes a selection of important documents in connection with Corenzio's life and career, as well as an anthology of critical texts on his art. The last point is crucial because, up to our own day, Corenzio's reception has invariably been partial and contradictory. Although Roberto Longhi proceeded with the "rehabilitation" of Corenzio's art in the 1950s, and the latter's entire production was studied in a more systematic way during the 1960s and 1970s, a little interest was shown for him in the 1980s, while in the 1990s the situation changed again in his favor. One thing, however, seems certain: Corenzio resists being a "canonical" figure in art history. Ioannou retraces in detail and with exemplary conscientiousness the confused situation of Corenzio's reception historically, not without echoing sometimes, it is true, the same chaotic image.

Corenzio was praised in his own time (in 1608, in 1623, in 1630, and, even after his own death, in 1692); at the same time, however, he was also negatively received (already in 1650), a stereotype that prevailed, thanks to the writings of such important figures as Bellori (1672) and De Dominici (1743), although the latter praised a number of the painter's compositions, while (in 1771) some objections were raised by the painter Onofrio Giannone against these, already known (from 1669), negative references, in a different context, whereas Lanzi (1795, 1809), drawing from Resta, was rather ambiguous *vis-à-vis* Corenzio's art.

A central figure in the so-called *Scuola Napolitana* (School of Naples)—belonging to the *epoca terza* (third epoch)—Corenzio followed the destiny of his school: a conservative although prolific artist in a provincial milieu incapable of any qualitative innovation, subject to varied influences from the Roman (particularly Cavalier d'Arpino) and Flemish painters working in Naples. The painter, on the other hand, whose life was dramatized through Opera pieces (1855) and novels (1904, 1937) in Italy, was acclaimed by Grossi (1819). Eventually, De Dominici's influence was attenuated, but Corenzio's reception remains controversial. Even when the School of Naples was re-evaluated in the first decades of the twentieth century, thanks to the effort of a group of Italian regionalist intellectuals that gathered around the philosopher Benedetto Croce, Corenzio's name was an anathema: it was because of him, the art dictator of Naples and the exponent of a *démodé* taste, that the city's artistic life remained stagnant for almost an entire century.

This is the central issue that Ioannou's book is trying to address: is it true that Corenzio was the favorite painter of the city's wealthy patrons, in fact, of the court nobility and the heads of the religious orders? It is certainly true. The huge output of his studio seems to prove it. All the

great narrative fresco cycles that decorated the walls of the most important buildings in Naples during the first half of the seventeenth century—civilian or religious—were executed under his supervision. But why was that? Was it because of his ability to deal with the patrons thanks to his ruthless character? Was it because of his political connections that secured a high protection for him? Those are the traditional interpretations of the success of Corenzio's painting that prevail in art historiography, with a few exceptions. According to that argument, Corenzio's "connections" guaranteed his dominance in the art scene of Naples despite the low quality of his art and his conservative style.

One of the great merits of Ioannou's monograph is that it rejects this simplistic view. At first, as the author convincingly argues, it seems that some innovations of the new classicist style that emerged in Italian painting during the first decades of the seventeenth century through the Carracci had penetrated into the rigid art of Corenzio. Even Caravaggio's dramatic expression was not alien to the painter. One of his best drawings is a study from Caravaggio's—who was in Naples in 1609—the *Calling of St. Matthew*. On the other hand, the patrons' taste—particularly of those who were not under the direct influence of the court—was not expressed in a totally univocal way. The history of the decoration of the *Capella del Tesoro di San Gennaro* in Naples, which Ioannou uses as an example, demonstrates a more complicated situation. The syndics of the institution wished to call a foreign—and more "informed" painter—to decorate the walls of the chapel, Guido Reni or Domenichino in that case. Corenzio used every possible mean—menaces, and even murder—to annul the syndics' plans and finally succeeded, after almost three decades of efforts, in obtaining the commission. The regent's intervention was not irrelevant to the story. It is though obvious that, even if

Corenzio's use of totally immoral means to reach his goal is undeniable, the question of style cannot be resolved in terms of a rigid bipolarity between conservatism and innovation. Ioannou is, then, perfectly right in commenting, in connection with the traditional interpretation of the artist's success, that

the restriction to the one-dimensional study of stylistic traits and influences results in schematic categorizations according to which in fact and inevitably, Corenzio was nothing more than a "Graeculus" who, as a member of the Neapolitan camorra monopolized the whole field of the fresco commissions (157).

The author maintains a totally different position: Corenzio's success is mainly due to his ability to visualize the propaganda of the Spanish rule and the dogmas of the Counter-Reformation. It is undeniable that this position allows us to see Corenzio's art in a new light. But is that all? Although the reader waits to discover a sophisticated discussion of one of the most crucial issues in art history, that of style, the narration is cut short. The next chapter deals with the members of the artist's studio. Here one could ask a simple question: wasn't the Carracci's "new" painting, even Caravaggio's idiosyncratic manner, the product of an analogous historical and ideological ambience, didn't it also express, *mutatis mutandis*, the same catholic credos as the mannerist "smudges" of the old conservative painter of Greek origin? Would it be enough to reject, rightly, a formalistic analysis just in order to substitute it for a totally incomplete theory of "visualization"?

A second, more general, issue is connected with the very notion of the monograph as a research instrument in art history. It is true that the value of the monograph was traditionally overestimated. Some years ago, James Elkins questioned the status of Ernst Gombrich as an art his-

torian because, in his view, he was “uninterested in the staple of art-historical scholarship, the biographical monograph.” But it is just this biographical element that frequently transforms the monograph to an inadequate tool for historical research.

The value of Panayotis Ioannou’s monograph—a result of indefatigable work and a model of scholarly research in art history—lies just there: the book not only enables us to get a clear idea of Corenzio’s “individual” artistic expression but also—and in my opinion more valuable—allows us to gain a better understanding of the complex situation of art in Naples in its European historical context during the transitional period from the Mannerist to the Baroque era. This is the most important contribution of Ioannou’s rigorous study to the field of the art historical research of the *mezzogiorno* (southern Italy).

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The main objective of the *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* is the dissemination of scholarly information in the field of modern Greek studies. The field is broadly defined to include the social sciences and the humanities, indeed any body of knowledge that touches on the modern Greek experience. Topics dealing with earlier periods, the Byzantine and even the Classical, will be considered provided they relate, in some way, to aspects of later Greek history and culture. Geographically, the field extends to any place where modern Hellenism flourished and made significant contributions, whether in the “Helladic space” proper or in the *Diaspora*. More importantly, in comparative and contextual terms, the Mediterranean basin and Europe fall within the province of the *Yearbook*’s objectives. Special attention will be paid to subjects dealing with Greek-Slavic relations and Eastern Orthodox history and culture in general.

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