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Once again about the London *Entombment*

Introduction: documentary evidences of a failed project

According to the account book of the bankers Baldassare and Giovanni Balducci, in September 1500 Michelangelo received a commission for a “tavola di pittura” destined for the chapel of Giovanni Ebu, bishop of Crotone in the church of Sant’Agostino in Rome. According to the same documents, however, the 60 ducats were reimbursed by the artist between November 1501 and June 1502 to a certain “messer Agostino” who seems to have carried out the painting. On the other hand, the written sources do not make any mention about the subject of the painting. Since the chapel in Sant’Agostino was dedicated to the *Pietà*, it seems logical that its altarpiece had to represent the same subject.¹ Further sources from the Augustinian archive prove that a large endowment of 500 ducats was to cover the expenses of the chapel decoration, which was already documented in 1506 in the possession of the courtesan Fiametta and dedicated to Mary Magdalene. Masses were not celebrated in the memory of the bishop and there are serious reasons to believe that the chapel was dedicated to his memory only for a very short time.² Vasari described the wall-paintings of the chapel in the life of Jacopo dell’Indaco, mentioning that “nella tavola della medesima cappella, la quale egli dipinse a olio, è un Cristo morto lavorato e condotto con molta pratica e diligenza”.³ We might deduce, that the original panel decorating the altarpiece of the chapel, executed by master Agostino (?), was perhaps replaced by a painting by Jacopo dell’Indaco.

The Balducci bankers account book and the Augustinian documents are precious sources attesting to a vivid relationship between Michelangelo and his high-ranking commissioners in Rome. One of them, the banker Jacopo Galli, was closely related to the household of Cardinal Raffaele Riario, nephew of

Pope Sixtus IV, protector of the Augustinian order. We know that the cardinal was involved in bishop Ebu’s legacy. The bishop originated from Viterbo like the famous theologian Egidio, at times present in the church of Sant’Agostino. The procurator of the bishop’s heirs was Cardinal Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini, who was to become pope for a short time as Pius III in the year 1503. In May 1501 he commissioned fifteen statuettes from Michelangelo for his altar in Siena Cathedral.⁴ While the documents are valuable for offering much information about patrons, high curial officials, bankers and their love for art, they were used tendentiously when referred to a painting conserved at the National Gallery possession and commonly called the *Entombment* (fig. 1).⁵



Fig. 1: Michelangelo's unknown follower: *Entombment*. London, National Gallery (inv. 790). Michael Hirst and Jill Dunkerton, *Michelangelo giovane – Scultore e pittore a Roma 1496-1501*, Modena 1997, Tav. III.

Admittedly, it has not been possible to carry out archival research to contest what has been said before, and so the present considerations are based solely on visual evidence. What makes our task extremely difficult is the unfinished state of the painting, making its details not easily accessible for interpretation.⁶ Albeit the documentary lacunas in the provenance of the London panel, offering no sufficient evidence to clear its identity, we should reconsider here a possibility aroused by some scholars, who thought it would be suitable to search for the author between the Florentine mannerists who became under Michelangelo's influence during work in the Sagrestia Nuova.⁷ Before doing this, we should look briefly at the historiography, to the composition and figure-types of the *Entombment*.

Provenance and historiography of the London *Entombment*

The provenance of the panel can be traced back to the seventeenth century, when it occurs in the inventories of the Farnese Palace in Rome (the first mention bears the date 1649). From there it was moved to the Cardinal Fesch's palace in Via Giulia (Palazzo Falconieri), probably in Napoleonic times, when the prelate acted on the emperor's behalf taking possession of the Bourbon estates and wealth in Italy, palace Farnese included. It entered the Roman art-market probably in the 1840's, and came in the possession of first Vito Enei, then Robert Macpherson, who sold it to the National Gallery in 1868. Before this, it was published in *Schorns Kunstblatt* (no. 27, 1846, p. 196), where mention was made of the Farnese *fleur de lis* and an inventory number visible on the panel's back. The painter Peter Cornelius, who saw it in Rome, attributed it to Michelangelo.⁸

The National Gallery was proud of the new acquisition and French visitors described the painting with admiration, for example de Triqueti in 1869, and Paul Mantz in 1876. This latter author already observed some parallels between the bearded man sustaining Christ in the center of the London panel and Saint Joseph in the *Doni Tondo*, and believed the panel to belong to the "première manière" of the master. Voices of dissent can also be found since Reiset asked:

"Mais pour-qui ce nom de Michel-Ange donné a Rome, dit-on, par le peintre Cornelius? C'est ce qu'il nous est impossible de comprendre".⁹ English critical literature also expressed uncertainty, such as the well-written monograph of Charles Heath Wilson, where the panel is listed among the works of the followers and imitators.¹⁰ A vivid discussion took place on the pages of the *Times* in 1881 opening with John Charles Robinson's study in which the great *connoisseur* called in question the authenticity of the work reminding that "we must make our minds undeceived". He argued convincingly that the oil technique was condemned by Michelangelo and raised the name of Baccio Bandinelli as the possible author, since the painting seemed for him a "painted sculpture unfinished".¹¹ We must also mention the critical account of Michelangelo's early works by Heinrich Wölfflin, where we are told generally in agreement with Robinson, that the figure-types and composition (of the main group) resemble Michelangelo, but as for the details, they seem to recall different stages of the master's career, that is for the whole it can be considered with major certainty the work of a disciple.¹²

Composition and figure-types

The origin of the composition of the *Entombment* with Christ kept in a frontal, vertical position can be traced back to works by Fra Angelico and Rogier van der Weyden in the first half of the Quattrocento, but it was popular all through the fifteenth century. A similar solution can be found in Piero di Cosimo's *Visitation* in the National Gallery, Washington (1490–1500 ca). Here the main event takes place in the background, raised by steps, while closer to us we see two saints, Saint Nicholas and Saint Anthony Abbot meditating on the main scene, underlining its importance. The same position is occupied by a woman on the left of the London panel who seems to meditate on something she holds in her right hand. She has elongated forms, wears a fanciful cap and her heavy mantle on her knees. On the opposite side, we see the outlines of an unfinished figure, which was probably intended to be represented from the back. The fragile figure of Christ is held up by a young male and a female bearer on his sides; an aged, bearded man can be seen be-

hind him. A third, young woman with floating hair enters the scene from the right; her relationship to the general composition seems unresolved. Behind her, in the distance we see a rocky mountain and the contours of two figures holding a huge stone that covers the entrance of a shrine. Far on the left, barely visible is a town, mountains and rocks and we can see some clouds against a serene sky.

The composition with two kneeling figures in the foreground is rather archaic, but High Renaissance and mannerist artists at times also employed it. See for example Andrea del Sarto's *Dispute on the Trinity* (Galleria Palatina, Florence, c. 1517) or the *Santo Spirito altarpiece* by Ridolfo Ghirlandaio and Michele Tosini (c. 1530) representing Saint Anne, the Virgin Mary and the infant Christ with saints. More complex in design seems to be the "bearer group," Christ and its holders. Their activeness and physical force seem to be in contrast with meditation, and the whole scene has a general "frozen" character given its unresolved contrast between meditative and narrative aspects.¹³



Fig. 2: Michelangelo: *The Lamentation of Christ*. Red chalk. Vienna, Albertina. (inv. 102). Achim Gnann, *Michelangelo. The Drawings of a Genius*, Vienna 2010, p. 227.

In Michelangelo's drawings the kind of *Lamentation* showing Christ in vertical position occurs in the years 1520's–1530's, and we don't have convincing visual proofs to believe that he was interested in this particular iconography earlier. The Haarlem drawing (Teylers, inv. A 25) showing the *Descent from the Cross* contains sketches with lifeless bodies hold up by mourners and one of them is very close to the Albertina *Lamentation* (inv. 102, fig. 2). The position of Christ is characteristic due to the knees pulled close to one another, suggesting that they are not able to sustain the weight and the head is hanging abandoned as do the arms.¹⁴ This "Meleager-like" position of the bust and members also recalls the drawings made for the *Ubeda Pietà* from 1533/34 (Louvre, inv. 716). Closest to the London Christ is, however, another Albertina study (inv. 103) presenting the nude Christ sitting on the sarcophagus with a sustaining figure behind him. The authenticity of the study has often been questioned, but the idea must come from Michelangelo and it announces his late-*Pietàs*: that is why its chronology is particularly important.¹⁵ The heaviness of the body of the Albertina Christ is different from the fragile proportions and members visible on the London panel. Whoever depicted this latter was different from the robust-mannerist body-ideals proposed by the *Last Judgment*, collaborators such as Sebastiano or imitators as Clovio.

What makes so characteristic, however, the Albertina *Lamentation* (and other drawings similar to it) is the position of Christ between the legs of his mother, in a strong physical contact with her. This essential quality is strikingly missing from the London *Entombment*. Mary should be identical with the figure left unfinished in the lower right corner, opposite to the female mourner wearing the fanciful cap. How can we explain such a separation knowing that the relationship of mother and son was one of Michelangelo's deepest concerns? A characteristic without which it is impossible to interpret his highly personal late *Pietàs*: the *Bardini* and *Rondanini* marble groups.¹⁶

Even though Michelangelo's drawings and studies seem to indicate a later date for the London *Entombment*, critical literature tried to find analogies with the master's early works executed during the first decade of the sixteenth century such as the *Doni Tondo*, the

unfinished *Saint Matthew* (Florence, Academy), the *Cascina Cartoon* and sometimes even the Sistine vault. But none of these parallels proved conclusive with the exception of a study for the Woman kneeling on the left, now in the Louvre (inv. 726, fig. 3).¹⁷ The young woman holds the nails in her left and the crown of thorns in her right hand. Even if we accept the Michelangelo-authorship of the drawing, the differences that separate it from the painted figure on the London panel remain to be explained. Contrary to the organic conception of the drawing, the painted figure gives the impression of something stiffed, artfully planned. The rendering of the clothes on her bust, especially in its relationship to the forms of the body, fails to convince us. We must emphasize that the interplay of bodily forms and drapery were an essential preoccupation in Michelangelo's well-known earliest drawings and remained as such in later works. Drapery must express vividly the forms beneath and show the emotions and the action of the figure. That is why the ornament-like pattern of the folds on Saint John's body (Christ's right bearer) cannot be compared to the tragic pathos of a *Saint Matthew*.¹⁸



Fig. 3: Michelangelo (?): *Kneeling female nude in profile*. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Département des Arts Graphiques. inv. 726. Achim Gnann, *Michelangelo. The Drawings of a Genius*, Vienna 2010, p. 56.

In the male studies for the *Cascina Cartoon*, a new figure-type appears in Michelangelo's oeuvre, as pointed out by Johannes Wilde. Male figures such as the *Nude sitting and twisting around* in the British Museum (inv. 1887-5-2-116) are characterized as having "narrow shoulders, broad hips, long, tapering limbs".¹⁹ The master developed a new, more abstract, heroic type that will be perfected further on the Sistine ceiling in figures like Haman. In this effort he was helped by the example of the Hellenistic sculpture. But the master had a firm knowledge of the structure of the human body, based on anatomical research (we know that he intersected human cadavers in the Santa Maria Nuova hospital). The wash, the heightening and the sharp contours of the *Twisting nude* in the British Museum all emphasize the bones under the skin and the play of the muscles. Nothing of this self-assuredness can be perceived in the figures of the London *Entombment*, but it is betrayed by the muscular Virgin of the *Tondo Doni*.

If we compare further the Saint John in the London panel to what Wölfflin has compared it, the man holding up his wife on the *Bronze serpent*, on the Sistine ceiling (upper, left part of the composition), we remain here as in case of the *Saint Matthew* rather stirred up by the differences (fig. 4).²⁰ The position of the London apostle is weak, and his movement is effortless. The painter of the Sistine vault is enormously superior in representing dramatic action and narrative through tragic actors to the artist of the London *Entombment*. In summary, the parallels offered by previous literature do not seem to help collocate the painting and find its right artistic place.



Fig. 4: Michelangelo: *The Bronze Serpent*. Vault of the Sistine chapel (detail). *Die Sixtinische Kapelle. Die Deckenfresken. Mit Beiträgen von Gianluigi Colucci [...]*, Zürich/Düsseldorf 1997, p. 184.

Florentine mannerists and the London *Entombment*

Between the fall of the Florentine Republic (1529) and his return to Rome (1534) Michelangelo not only worked intensively on the Medici tombs in the Sagrestia Nuova but he was also involved in different other commissions. One of these was the aforementioned drawing for the *Ubeda Pietà*, painted years later by Sebastiano del Piombo, destined to become a gift for Charles V's chancellor, Francisco de los Cobos.²¹ Further on, there is conspicuous documentary material surviving, referring to the cartoon of the *Noli me tangere*, commissioned by Alfonso d'Avalos, marquis of Vasto for his cousin's widow, Vittoria Colonna. One of the three variants known today is in Milan, private collection (oil on wood, 124x95 cm), and is generally accepted as the original depicted by Pontormo after Michelangelo's cartoon. Other two variants are today in the Casa Buonarroti, Florence and are attributed to the Venetian Battista Franco and the young Bronzino, pupil of Pontormo.²²

The panel in the Casa Buonarroti (inv. 6302) attributed to Bronzino can be compared to the London *Entombment* for a number of reasons (fig. 5). First of all, on both panels the actors have been brought close to the margin of the painted surface. The horizon-line is placed high and several elements of the landscape can be seen in the background, such as rocks and edifices. The foreground and the background are connected through steps leading the eye backwards. Figure-types themselves are also comparable. Christ in the *Noli me tangere* resembles Saint John on the London panel on account of his oval face, curly hair and the shape of the eyes. The proportions of the bodies, the small hands and feet are similar. As for the whole of the body, Mary Magdalene is also reminiscent of the female bearer in the *Entombment*, but her profile is similar to the *Aurora* on Lorenzo de Medici's tomb, while the eccentric physiognomy, especially the high forehead of the London figure has no parallels in Michelangelo's works.²³ Other difference is in the pictorial rendering: as far as it can be judged from the much consumed painted surface, the author of the *Entombment* shows no interest in *chiaroscuro* effects, through which the *Noli me tangere* landscape as-

sumes a melancholic atmosphere. The red color of Saint John's clothes is harsh, the folds are depicted rigidly and this is characteristic of another phase of Florentine *maniera*.



Fig. 5: Agnolo Bronzino (following a drawing by Michelangelo): *Noli me tangere*. Oil on wood. Florence, Casa Buonarroti, inv. 1890 n. 6307. Bronzino. *Pittore e poeta alla corte dei Medici*, ed. by Carlo Falciani and Antonio Natali, Firenze 2010, p. 83.

Bronzino will turn to the *Noli me tangere* subject much later in a version painted for the Cavalcanti chapel in Santo Spirito, Florence, now in the Louvre (fig. 6).²⁴ Here the composition remains basically the same as it was in the earlier painting and as it is on the London *Entombment*. Behind the figures we discover the steps and the rocky mountain on the right with the angel sitting at the entrance of the tomb speaking to the holy women. Distantly we see Jerusalem, the architectural forms of which let them be compared to those barely visible in the far left of the London panel. In the Louvre version, Bronzino might have been helped by his pupil, Alessandro Allori, in executing some details, such as the three women in the background.²⁵ What remains however a mystery is the consequent return of the setting in case of the three

paintings. This does not mean of course that Bronzino depicted the *Entombment*, but it can be useful when we consider the chronological terms of its genesis.



Fig. 6: Agnolo Bronzino: *Noli me tangere*. Paris, Louvre. Maurice Brock, *Bronzino*, Paris 2002, p. 295.

In the 1520's a young mannerist generation showed sensibility for the new impulses from Michelangelo's art. One of them was the sculptor Baccio Bandinelli (born 1493) who was suggested as a possible author for the *Entombment* due to a story recorded by Vasari: "[...] aveva preso a fare di pittura una tavola assai grande per la chiesa di Cestello e n'aveva fatto un cartone molto bello, dentrovi Cristo morto e le Marie intorno e Niccodemo con altre figure, ma la tavola non dipinse [...]".²⁶ Struck by Michelangelo's criticism, Baccio called Franciabigio's brother, Agnolo di Cristofano, to finish the painting, which at the end remained uncompleted due to the upheaval in 1527. The drawings that can be connected to this lost panel and all we know about Baccio's activity as a painter and

draughtsman does not seem to sustain his authorship for the London *Entombment*.²⁷ The same can be said about the Venetian Battista Franco (born around 1510) whose activity is much clearer thanks to recent scholarship.²⁸

The most important Florentine workshop in the first decades of the Cinquecento was that of Andrea del Sarto. Vasari counted between his disciples Pontormo, Andrea Sguazzella, Solosmeo, Pier Francesco Foschi, Francesco Salviati, Jacopino del Conte and Jacone, but the list is incomplete.²⁹ Most of them came under Michelangelo's influence at the end of the 1520's and the beginning of the 1530's. We would like to point to Jacopino del Conte (1515–1598), who, as some of his fellows from the *bottega*, had contact with their native city even after settling down in Rome, where their career reached its peak. On one of his early works entitled *Madonna with the Infant Christ and Saint John the Baptist* (around 1533–35, Uffizi, inv. 6009) Mary has elongated, feeble forms comparable to the woman kneeling on the left side of the London *Entombment*. Furthermore, the Virgin's oval face recalls in some way that of the woman's entering on the right on the London panel, but the quality of Jacopino's figure is visibly higher. On another, slightly later painting by Jacopino, *The Virgin, Saint Anne and the two Infants* (Cambridge, UK, Fitzwilliam Museum), Mary has a similar coiffure to the female bearer on the London panel. However, the sartesque way of softening the forms, which makes Jacopino's works so characteristic, is not present in the *Entombment*. Jacopino exhibits in his early Madonnas an amalgam of sartesque, pontormesque and michelangelesque elements, a tendency, which will reach its climax in the monumental *Madonna with Saint Anne and the two Infants* in the Washington National Gallery of Art. The distance from the *Entombment* becomes here insuperable proving that the author of the London panel cannot be counted among the major representatives of the new *maniera*: his capacities in affronting large figural compositions remain limited.³⁰

Around 1548–1550 Jacopino executed a panel for one of the chapels of the church Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome (now Chantilly, Musée Condé, fig. 7). This represents the same scene as the London *Entombment*: a farewell between Mary and her son

transported to the sepulcher. The Virgin is presented from the back; her collapsed body is sustained by a holy woman. Christ is held up by three men, one wearing a turban (Nicodemus?), a younger, bearded disciple (Saint John the Evangelist?) and a third figure wearing a costume similar to that of the Roman soldiers. Instead of organizing a composition in a rigidly frontal way, Jacopino has chosen to place the figures along a diagonal, in this way he achieved major unity and more convincing relationships between the actors. The rocky setting and the opened shrine with the holy women recall the London panel. Should we think of a direct relationship between them, and say that Jacopino knew the London *Entombment*? The visual evidences are not enough to prove such an influence. Certain elements from the provenance and historiography of the Chantilly picture seem however interesting to consider. The painting comes from the Elvino chapel of the church of Santa Maria del Popolo and was known correctly as a work by Jacopino till the eighteenth century when it was erroneously attributed to Daniele da Volterra and one had to wait till 1965 for a correction and reattribution.³¹ The Chantilly painting hung most probably for a short time together with the London *Entombment* in the Palazzo Farnese in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

If one wonders on the different destiny that falls on the two burial scenes, one finds it rather curious, that while in the case of Jacopino's work the attribution has finally been corrected, in the case of the other this did not happen. Was it Michelangelo's name and repute that impeded and diverted scholarly discussion on the attribution and real artistic place and quality of the London *Entombment*?



Fig. 7: Unknown artist: *Entombment*. Copy after the London *Entombment*. Siena, Biblioteca degli Intronati. Inv. S.I.4. 40r. Michael Hirst and Jill Dunkerton, *Michelangelo giovane – Scultore e pittore a Roma 1496-1501*, Modena 1997, p. 46.

Further on, Jacopino's *Entombment* seems to have had some kind of effect in later centuries. There is a drawing in Windsor Castle (inv. 206) which is a variant made later following the original in Chantilly, but Pieter de Witte's Volterra *Deposition* also bears the imprint of Jacopino's influence.³² What proves to us that the London *Entombment* was known for posterity and artists drew inspiration from it? This should really be expected in the case of a Michelangelo original, since all his works, including those for Vittoria Colonna, where the original is lacking (*Christ and the Samaritan Woman*), we possess engravings that show the originals were kept in great respect by the contemporaries. Michelangelo's repute was so important that all his original works, including the drawings and sketches, soon became a model. What should we say about the London *Entombment* in the case of which all we have is a mediocre pen drawing in Siena (fig. 8)?³³



Fig. 8: Jacopino del Conte: *Entombment*. Chantilly Musée Condé.
 Andrea Donati: *Ritratto e figura nel manierismo a Roma. Michelangelo Buonarroti, Jacopino del Conte, Daniele Ricciarelli*, San Marino 2010, p. 180.

I believe in agreement with James Beck that there are serious enough reasons to sustain that the painting could not have been executed before the 1520's. It was during work in the New Sacristy that Michelangelo kept a workshop. He had fellows around him for whom he also made "pedagogical drawings" to be copied. One of these students was Antonio Mini, who was given original drawings and cartoons by Michelangelo, for example the *Leda and the Swan*. He was promised to have the cartoon of the *Noli me tangere* also, according to what he says in a letter he wrote in Lyon in December 1531.³⁴ It is difficult to have a clear opinion on Mini's personality as an artist, similarly to other Michelangelo students like Ascanio Condivi; that is why we cannot argue convincingly in favor of an attribution of the London panel to these disciples.³⁵ A new research in the Farnese Archive can possibly throw new light on the provenance of the London panel prior to 1649, but until we do not possess a

clear visual proof or documentary evidence its authorship must be treated with caution.

Endnotes

1. Michael Hirst, *Michelangelo in Rome. An Altar-Piece and the 'Bacchus'*, in: *The Burlington Magazine*, 943, 1981, pp. 581-593. Citations from sources referring to Michelangelo's commission for the altarpiece of Sant' Agostino are from Michael Hirst's study.
2. Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo's London 'Entombment' and the Church of S. Agostino in Rome*, in: *The Burlington Magazine*, 1092, 1994, pp. 164-167.
3. Giorgio Vasari, *Vita di Iacopo detto l'Indaco*, in: *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, I-IX, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, Firenze 1906, cit. vol. III, p. 680. For further information considering the activity of Jacopo see: Fiorella Sricchia-Santoro, *Del Franciabigio, dell'Indaco e di una vecchia questione* II, in: *Prospettiva*, 71, 1993, pp. 12-33.
4. Nagel 1994, *Michelangelo's London 'Entombment'*, p. 166.
5. [This hypothesis occurred first in Harold Manuzci-Ungaro's book: *Michelangelo. The Bruges Madonna and the Piccolomini Altar*, New Haven/London 1971, p. 7, note 38, but it took greater popularity after Hirst's study cited in note 1. Hypothetic as it may be, today it seems firmly grounded and generally accepted; however it was contested soon by James Beck, *Is Michelangelo's Entombment in the National Gallery Michelangelo's?*, in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Mai-Juin, 1996, pp. 181-198. More recently, Rab Hatfield argued that "In any case, Michelangelo's authorship of the so-called *Entombment* at London can be neither proved nor disproved by reference to the records of the Balducci Bank." *The Wealth of Michelangelo*, Rome 2002, p. 14.
6. For the technical description of the panel see: Jill Dunkerton, *La tecnica pittorica del "Seppellimento di Cristo"* in: Jill Dunkerton and Michael Hirst, *Michelangelo giovane. Scultore e pittore a Roma 1496-1501*, trans. Isabella Lodi Fè Chapman, Modena 1997, pp. 111-130. I also wish to thank Prof. Maurizio de Luca, ex chief restaurateur of the Vatican Museums, and Prof. Andrea de Marchi for sharing some observations with me regarding the painting.
7. First of these was Charles Heath Wilson, who perceived something pontormesque in Christ's right female bearer, a figure he defined "strange and gaunt" with "ugly features, thin form, feeble outline" (idem, *Life and Work of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, London 1876, p. 65). Later Friedrich Antal in a brief note commenting an article by Adolfo Venturi stated that the London panel should date from the 1530's when artists like Antonio Mini, Bugiardini, Bacchiacca, Michele di Ridolfo and others reacted to the Medici tombs (*Notizen und Nachrichten*, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 1, 1932, p. 383). Adolfo Venturi accepted earlier the autography of the London panel (*La pittura del Cinquecento*, 1, Milan 1925, pp. 730-733) but in a somewhat contradictory way proposed Jacopino del Conte as the author of the *Manchester Madonna* in London, National Gallery. *Pittura attribuita a Michelangelo, opera di Jacopino del Conte*, in: *L'Arte*, 3, 1932, pp. 332-337.
8. A precise description of the *provenance* can be found in: Henry Thode, *Michelangelo - Kritische Untersuchungen über seine Werke*. Berlin 1908, pp. 483-484, who makes reference to *Schorns Kunstblatt*. Further information can be found in: Giorgio Vasari, *La vita di Michelangelo nelle redazioni del 1550 e del 1568*, I-V, ed. Paola Barocchi, Milano/Napoli, 1962, vol. II (*Commento*), pp. 241-242, who quotes the hand-written catalogue of Cornelius and Overbeck. See also: Cecil Gould, *The Provenance of the National Gallery 'Entombment' and an Early Sketch Copy*, in: *The Burlington Magazine*, 582, 1951, pp. 281-282. Farnese inventories were checked by Hirst 1981, *Michelangelo in Rome*, p. 584. Further details for how the painting entered the Farnese collection can be expected from the Farnese Archives now in Naples.

9. All three authors published their impressions in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 1869, pp. 157-161; 1876, pp. 135-136; 1877, p. 246.
10. Wilson, *Life and Work of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, London 1876, p. 64-65.
11. John Charles Robinson, *Pictures by Michelangelo and Baccio Bandinelli*, in: *The Times*, 01 September 1881, p. 3. As for the responses see: 09. Sep. p. 9; 13. Sep. p. 9; 15. Sep. p. 11.
12. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Die Jugendwerke des Michelangelo*, München 1891, pp. 82-83. Wölfflin had a great impact on Charles De Tolnay, who also believed that the author was a disciple: *The Youth of Michelangelo*, Princeton 1947, p. 236. On the other hand, Bernard Berenson called in question Wölfflin's arguments, and seriously believed that the painting is an autograph: *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, Chicago 1938, vol. I (Text), p. 195.
13. Alexander Nagel treated extensively these particularities in his PhD dissertation basing his observations on those by Warburg and Goldschmidt, *Michelangelo, Raphael and the Altarpiece Tradition*, Cambridge, Mass 1993, pp. 29-72.
14. Johannes Wilde dated the Haarlem *Deposition* and the *Three crosses* in the British Museum (inv. 1860-6-16-3) to the same period and believed that they can be referred to a commission in 1523 (*Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. Michelangelo and his Studio*, London 1953, no. 32). This chronology is mostly accepted in recent scholarship. See for example: Achim Gnann's catalogue entry, in: *Michelangelo. The Drawings of a Genius*, exh. cat. Vienna, Albertina, October 8, 2010-January 9, 2011, no. 63. Tolnay however believed that the *Haarlem* and the *Albertina* drawing belong to the 1530's: *Corpus dei disegni di Michelangelo*, I-IV, Novara, 1975-1980, cit. vol. I, no. 89, vol. II, no. 269. He emphasizes the relationship of certain details to the *Last Judgment* and argues convincingly to a date around 1536. Even to Frederick Hartt they seemed more mature than the British Museum *Calvary*. *The Drawings of Michelangelo*, London 1971, p. 452.
15. Tolnay considered it in strong relationship with the late-*Pietàs*, supposing that its author may be the same person who sculpted the *Palestrina Pietà* (Florence, Academy), probably Tiberio Calcagni (*Corpus*, vol. III, no. 432). For Gnann the similarities with the preparatory drawing for the *Ubeda Pietà* in the Louvre (inv. 716) seem more decisive, therefore he argues for a date around 1531-34 (*The Drawings of a Genius*, 2010, no. 91). The proportions of Christ's body recall those of the *Last Judgment* and works of Giulio Clovio, to whom at times it was attributed, and all this indicates a date later than 1534. Painted variants by the Zuccari brothers (Torre Canavese, private collection; Rome, Galleria Borghese) and Bronzino (Florence, Santa Croce) date from the 1560's; this can also be an argument for a later chronology.
16. For the *Pietà Bardini* see: Leo Steinberg, *The Metaphors of Love and Birth in Michelangelo's Pietàs*, in: *Studies in Erotic Art*, ed. Theodore Bowie and Cornelia V. Christenson, New York, 1970, pp. 231-285. For a recent survey of drawings related to the *Rondanini Pietà* and its iconography see: *L'ultimo Michelangelo. Disegni e rime attorno alla Pietà Rondanini*, exh. Castello Sforzesco, Milan, March 24-June 19, 2011, ed. Alessandro Rovetta.
17. The first scholar to mention the relationship between the drawing and the painting was Thode, *Verzeichnis der Zeichnungen, Kartons und Modelle (Kritische Untersuchungen II)*, Berlin 1913, no. 492. However, the authenticity of the drawing remained doubtful for many. For a recent survey of different opinions see: *The Drawings of a Genius* 2010, no. 10.
18. This comparison has been laid down by Wilhelm Reinhold Valentiner, who believed that the "marble and painting are related to one another through drawings." *Michelangelo's Statuettes of the Piccolomini Altar in Siena*, in: *The Art Quarterly* 5, 1942, pp. 3-44, cit. p. 13. It was Anny E. Popp who first quoted the drawing now in the Louvre (inv. 689 r) representing a male nude in connection with the Saint John on the London *Entombment*. idem, *Garzoni Michelangelos. Antonio Mini*, in: *Belvedere*, 8, 1925, p. 22. Her hypothesis is not confirmed by the visual evidence because the movement of this figure is different from that of Saint John's. Despite of that, Cecil Gould has used the drawing for a fully hypothetical reconstruction of the panel's composition: *Michelangelo's 'Entombment'. A Further Addendum*, in: *The Burlington Magazine*, 850-861, 1974, pp. 31-32.
19. Johannes Wilde, *Michelangelo and Leonardo*, in: *The Burlington Magazine* 95, 1953, pp. 65-77, cit. p. 77.
20. Wölfflin 1891, *Die Jugendwerke des Michelangelo*, p. 83.
21. Paul Joannides, in: *Sebastiano del Piombo (1485-1547)* exh. cat. Rome, Palazzo Venezia, February 8-May 18, 2008, nos. 110, 111.
22. See for the different variants: William E. Wallace, *Il "Noli me Tangere" di Michelangelo. Tra sacro e profano*, in *Arte Cristiana*, 729, 1988, pp. 443-450; Philippe Costamagna, *Pontormo*, Milan 1994, nos. 69, a, b; Michael Hirst, *Michelangelo, Pontormo e Vittoria Colonna*, in: *Tre saggi su Michelangelo*, trans. Barbara Agosti, Florence 2004, pp. 5-29.
23. It is very hard to find analogies to the physiognomy of the female bearer in Michelangelo's art even if we consider the exotic types of *Sistine veils* and *lunettes*, representing Christ's ancestors. It is much more fruitful to compare it with the eccentric profiles of mannerists like Pontormo and Bronzino. I refer to the *Portrait of the young Cosimo I*, painted by Vasari (Uffizi, inv. 5052) after a drawing by Pontormo (Uffizi, GDS, inv. 6528), or to the *Portrait of Laura Battiferri* by Bronzino (Florence, Palazzo Vecchio). Other, similar female types as the London bearer can be found on the tapestries representing the *Life of Joseph*, woven by Dutch masters following the drawings of Pontormo, Bronzino, Salviati and others (1546-1553, Florence, Palazzo Vecchio; Rome, Quirinale).
24. The continuity between the version in the Louvre (inv. 130, oil on wood, 289x194 cm) was clear for Henry Thode: *Michelangelo – Kritische Untersuchungen über seine Werke*, 1908, pp. 446-449 who stated: "In einem Gemälde des Louvre hat Angelo Bronzino das 'Noli me tangere' dargestellt. Es wäre wohl möglich, dass er an Pontormos Bild angeknüpft und die Hauptmotive übernommen hat. Sehen wir von manieristischer Übertreibung ab, erscheinen die Bewegungen Michelangelesk." On the contrary, Elisabeth Pilliod states that "Ironically, Bronzino's Noli me tangere did not resemble the prototype painted decades earlier by his master, Pontormo." eadem, *The Influence of Michelangelo. Pontormo, Bronzino and Allori*, in: *Reactions to the Master. Michelangelo's Effect on Art and Artists in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Francis Ames-Lewis and Paul Joannides, Vermont, 2003, pp. 31-52, cit. p. 39. But the details speak in favor of Thode's statement.
25. Pilliod 2003, *The Influence of Michelangelo*, p. 39.
26. Vasari-Milanesi, *Vita 1906*, vol. VI, pp. 151-152.
27. Bandinelli's name was aroused first by J. C. Robinson, and more recently by James Beck 1996 (*Is Michelangelo's Entombment in the National Gallery Michelangelo's?*, p. 182). A drawing with pen and ink survives in the Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, inv. 117. This shows the dead Christ in a standing position, hold up by a bearded man and other figures joined in a rather additive, relief-like manner so that the general impression is more decorative than dramatic. For a survey of Baccio's activity as a painter see: Philippe Costamagna and Sylvie Béguin, *Nouvelles considérations sur Baccio Bandinelli peintre. La redécouverte de la Léda et le cygne*, in: *Les Cahiers d'Histoire de l'Art*, 1, 2003, pp. 7-18.
28. Battista Franco's name was aroused by Antal, *Notizen und Nachrichten*, 1932 (p. 383) in connection with the London panel. The artist was working in Florence in the 1530's as a guest of the sculptor Bartolomeo Ammanati. It was through him and Raffaello da Montelupo, Buonarroti's help in the Sagrestia Nuova, that he got in contact with the art of Michelangelo. His surviving drawings and paintings do not sustain his authorship for the *Entombment*. See: Anne Varick Lauder, *Absorption and Interpretation. Michelangelo through the Eyes of a Venetian Follower, Battista Franco*, in: Ames-Lewis/Joannides 2003, *Reactions to the Master*, pp. 93-113.
29. Vasari-Milanesi, *Vita 1906*, vol. V, pp. 5758. For Andrea's workshop see: Philippe Costamagna and Anne Fabre, *Di alcuni problemi della bottega di Andrea del Sarto*, in: *Paragone*, 491, 1991, pp. 15-28.
30. For a recent survey of the literature on Jacopino see: Andrea Donati, *Ritratto e figura nel manierismo a Roma*, San Marino 2010. For Jacopino's Madonnas see: Federico Zeri, *Salviati e Jacopino del Conte*, in: *Proporzioni*, 2, 1948, pp. 180-183; idem, *Riveden-*

- do Jacopino del Conte, in: *Antologia di Belle Arti*, 6, 1978, pp. 114-121; Joseph Sydney Freedberg, *Jacopino del Conte. An Early Masterpiece for the National Gallery of Art*, in: *Studies in the History of Art*, 18, 1985, pp. 59-65.
31. For a detailed research on Jacopino's Chantilly *Entombment* see: Antonio Vannugli, *La "Pietà" di Jacopino del Conte per S. Maria del Popolo. Dall'identificazione del quadro al riesame dell'autore*, in: *Storia dell'arte* 71, 1991, pp. 59-93.
 32. Vannugli 1991, *La "Pietà" di Jacopino del Conte per S. Maria del Popolo*, pp. 69-70; Donati 2010, *Ritratto e figura nel manierismo a Roma*, pp. 142-143.
 33. Biblioteca degli Intronati, inv. S.I.4, 40r. This bears the false attribution to Baldassare Peruzzi. See: Gould 1951, *The Provenance of the National Gallery 'Entombment'*, p. 281.
 34. For Michelangelo's students in Florence see: Hugo Chapman, *Michelangelo Drawings. Closer to the Master*, London 2005, pp. 192-211. For the cartoons see: Ernst Steinmann, *Cartoni di Michelangelo*, in: *Bollettino d'Arte*, 1, 1925-26, pp. 3-16. For Mini's letter see: *Il Carteggio di Michelangelo*, I-V, ed. Paola Barocchi and Renzo Ristori, Florence, 1965-1983, cit. vol. III, pp. 340-341.
 35. Annie E. Popp argued first that the *Entombment* could have been executed by a disciple. She thought that this cannot be Mini, but a certain Carlo, who was presented to Michelangelo by Leonardo Sellaio (Popp 1925, *Garzanti Michelangelos*, p. 25). Tolnay also believed that the master's students, such as Silvio Falconi, Pietro Urbano or Tiberio Calcagni can be called in question for the London *Entombment* (Tolnay 1947, *The Youth of Michelangelo*, p. 236).

Figures

Fig. 1: Michelangelo's unknown follower: *Entombment*. London, National Gallery (inv. 790). Michael Hirst and Jill Dunkerton, *Michelangelo giovane – Scultore e pittore a Roma 1496-1501*, Modena 1997, Tav. III.

Fig. 2: Michelangelo: *The Lamentation of Christ*. Red chalk. Vienna, Albertina. (inv. 102). Achim Gnann, *Michelangelo. The Drawings of a Genius*, Vienna 2010, p. 227.

Fig. 3: Fig. 3: Michelangelo (?): *Kneeling female nude in profile*. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Département des Arts Graphiques. inv. 726. Achim Gnann, *Michelangelo. The Drawings of a Genius*, Vienna 2010, p. 56.

Fig. 4: Michelangelo: The Bronze Serpent. Vault of the Sistine chapel (detail). *Die Sixtinische Kapelle. Die Deckenfresken. Mit Beiträgen von Gianluigi Colucci [...]*, Zürich/Düsseldorf 1997, p. 184.

Fig. 5: Agnolo Bronzino (following a drawing by Michelangelo): *Noli me tangere*. Oil on wood. Florence, Casa Buonarroti, inv. 1890 n. 6307. *Bronzino. Pittore e poeta alla corte dei Medici*, ed. by Carlo Falciani and Antonio Natali, Firenze 2010, p. 83.

Fig. 6: Agnolo Bronzino: *Noli me tangere*. Paris, Louvre. Maurice Brock, *Bronzino*, Paris 2002, p. 295.

Fig. 7: Unknown artist: *Entombment*. Copy after the London *Entombment*. Siena, Biblioteca degli Intronati. Inv. S.I.4. 40r. Michael Hirst and Jill Dunkerton, *Michelangelo giovane – Scultore e pittore a Roma 1496-1501*, Modena 1997, p. 46.

Fig. 8: Jacopino del Conte: *Entombment*. Chantilly Musée Condé. Andrea Donati: *Ritratto e figura nel manierismo a*

Roma. Michelangelo Buonarroti, Jacopino del Conte, Daniele Ricciarelli, San Marino 2010, p. 180.

Summary

Historical sources, such as the account books of Renaissance bankers offer valuable information about relationship between artists and commissioners. Yet, it is not easy to use such sources in identifying works of art and to integrate them into the catalogue of an important artist such as Michelangelo Buonarroti. Visual evidences and stylistic parallels are indispensable for art historians who endeavor to attribute new works to Michelangelo. After-life or influence of a work (the number of surviving copies and interpretations) can also be indicative, moreover there are iconological aspects (such as the relationship between mother and son in case of Pietàs) which can also be conclusive. This study proposes to reconsider a hypothesis aroused by earlier scholarship regarding the authorship of the *Entombment* in London, the National Gallery attributed to Michelangelo. According to some scholars, the author of this painting can probably be found among Florentine mannerists who became under Michelangelo's influence during work in the Sagrestia Nuova (1520's).

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Title

Ferenc Veress, *Once again about the London 'Entombment'*, in: *Original – Kopie – Fälschung / Original – Copy – Forgery*, ed. by Angela Dressen, Susanne Gramatzki and Berenike Knoblich, in: *kunsttexte.de*, no. 1, 2018 (10 pages), www.kunsttexte.de.