

## RIASSUNTO

Nella dichiarazione del catasto del legnaiuolo Zanobi di Michele Canacci per l'anno 1427 nell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze, l'autore ha trovato, fra gli altri debitori dello Zanobi e di suo padre, i nomi dei pittori Masaccio e Giovanni dal Ponte, come pure del capomastro di Parte Guelfa Antonio di Domenico. L'autore cerca di appurare a quali commissioni di questi artisti potrebbero appartenere le consegne del legnaiuolo non ben specificate nei documenti.



1 Dancing Maenads, detail of a sarcophagus relief, 2nd century A. D. Pisa, Camposanto.



2 Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera* (detail). Florence, Uffizi.

*Alison Luchs: A MAENAD FROM PISA IN THE PRIMAVERA*

Signs of Botticelli's inspiration by the world of classical antiquity have been sought and found with particular frequency in the literary realm. His debt to the ancient visual arts is recognized less often in specific borrowings than in his fondness for such generic motifs as "bewegtes Beiwerk" — hair and garments fluttering loose to manifest the effects of wind and motion — motifs whose powerful impression on Quattrocento artists in various media was demonstrated by Aby Warburg.<sup>1</sup> But over the years, considerable evidence has also built up that Botticelli did draw on specific examples from the fund of ancient sculpture available to Renaissance artists, especially — though not exclusively — for his mythological paintings.

Convincing examples include a sarcophagus in the Vatican which provided a model for the composition of *Mars and Venus*, as well as the centaur for *Pallas and the Centaur*.<sup>2</sup> A pair of flying wind gods from the Tazza Farnese, once belonging to Lorenzo de' Medici, seem to have been transmuted into the zephyrs of the *Birth of Venus*.<sup>3</sup> A horse-tamer in the background of the *Adoration of the Magi* in Washington, D. C., reflects Botticelli's study of the Dioscuri from Monte Cavallo in Rome<sup>4</sup>, and a less direct connection has been suggested between the ethereal naked Truth in the *Calumny of Apelles* and a figure from a sarcophagus in the British Museum, frequently copied during the Renaissance.<sup>5</sup>

The only specific work of ancient sculpture that has thus far been connected with the *Primavera* is the flower-crowned "Pomona" in the Uffizi, striding forward with her gathered apron full of fruit, which Warburg convincingly cited as the probable model for Flora.<sup>6</sup> But another figure from an ancient sculptural work close to home seems also to have found her way into the *Primavera*. This is a maenad on a sarcophagus in the Camposanto in Pisa (Fig. 1)<sup>7</sup>, proposed here as an early model for the central figure among the three Graces (Fig. 2).

The Pisan maenad is one of a recurring type rather than a unique apparition.<sup>8</sup> But the Camposanto version of the figure may well have caught Botticelli's attention for a feature especially sympathetic to his draughtsman's eye: the long, curving contour that begins under her left arm and continues down the torso, swelling gently where the hip thrusts forward, then sweeping back again along the left leg down to earth.

The Pisan dancer turns her back to us in a pose with notable similarities to that of the central Grace. Her left arm reaches forward and bends upward (here to clutch a cymbal), her right arm extends back and downward, and a swath of drapery cuts across her bare back, streaming down from the hair and right shoulder to billow loose under the left arm. In both figures the curve of the forward left hip is echoed by a band of drapery that retraces the hip's contour just in front of the figure. Though the Pisan lady's head is much the worse for weathering, each dancer also has a strand of braid in her hair and a loose tress falling into the background along her right shoulder.

Botticelli's Graces are certainly "not a slavish copy of an antique original"<sup>9</sup>, and there are important differences in the poses and proportions of these two evidently related figures. The Botticelli Grace places her weight on her left leg, with her other leg pointing back and to the right, thus turning so that more of her lower back and the backs of her legs are visible. The Pisan maenad is on the verge of shifting her weight forward onto her right leg, which is in the background and all but hidden by streaming drapery (the drapery behind her indeed suggests the future contour of the right leg of the Grace). The maenad twists violently so that we see her upper body almost completely from the rear, while her buttocks are foreshortened and her left leg is carved in profile. In the ecstatic forward dance, her head lurches sharply back in a manner that shares little with the sensitive upright carriage which, in the *Primavera*, allows the dreamy gaze to the left and the continuous slope down the right shoulder and upper arm. The precise arm positions in the two figures also differ. Yet the similarity is still great enough to suggest a process of observation, adaptation and transmutation. Just as the heavy, streaming drapery of the relief becomes a filmy Quattrocento chemise in the painting<sup>10</sup>, so the ancient figure's proportions take on Botticelli's familiar, unearthly elongation and the frenzied bacchic jerking is tamed into the slow and subtle undulation of a more refined sensuality.

Botticelli's opportunity to see the Pisan figure would have come during one of his few recorded journeys. He made two trips to Pisa in 1474, the first to see *dove avea adipingere in camposanto* and the second to begin work on an Assumption of the Virgin in the Duomo there. The uncompleted Assumption was apparently destroyed in 1583, and the Camposanto painting never begun.<sup>11</sup> But during the time he spent at the Campo dei Miracoli, the artist doubtless took advantage of the chance to examine both the frescoes and the sarcophagi of the Camposanto. He could easily have noticed the maenad in question even if the sarcophagus end where she appears was not then in its present prominent position beside the entrance to the hall of the *Triumph of Death*. It is possible that he made a drawing of the cymbal carrier and also of her companion, whose torso and leg contours bear some similarity to those of the right hand Grace in the *Primavera*. When the painting was in progress, within a few years after the Pisa trips, such drawings of specific ancient dancers might have made their contribution to the design process.

If the Pisan dancer was indeed a model for the Florentine Grace, the significance of this antique adaptation changes according to the point in Botticelli's career that one assigns to the *Primavera*. Lightbown has recently proposed a late date of c. 1482-1483, in connection with the owner Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici's marriage to Semiramide d'Appiano.<sup>12</sup> This would place Botticelli's use of the Uffizi Pomona and the Pisan maenad in the context of a period when he repeatedly quoted specific antique models, evidently stimulated by his trip to Rome in 1481-1482.<sup>13</sup> But if the more usually accepted date in the late 1470's holds good<sup>14</sup>, then Botticelli's dialogue with the ancient world clearly found its visual as well as imaginative wellsprings at home in Tuscany.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *A. Warburg*, Sandro Botticelli's 'Geburt der Venus' und 'Frühling' (1893) and: Sandro Botticelli (1898), in: *idem*, Gesammelte Schriften, ed. G. Bing and F. Rougemont, Leipzig-Berlin 1932, pp. 1-68. For a general discussion of Botticelli's romanticizing relationship to his ancient visual sources see *R. Salvini*, Umanesimo di Botticelli, in: *Emporium* 99, 1944, pp. 19-26.
- <sup>2</sup> *E. Tietze-Conrat*, Botticelli and the Antique, in: *Burl. Mag.* 47, 1925, pp. 124-29.
- <sup>3</sup> *T. E. S. Yuen*, The Tazza Farnese as a Source for Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and Piero di Cosimo's *Myth of Prometheus*, in: *Gaz. B.-A.* 74, 1969, pp. 175-78; Lorenzo de' Medici had acquired the Hellenistic cameo in question in 1471.
- <sup>4</sup> *R. J. M. Olson*, Botticelli's Horsetamer: A Quotation from Antiquity which Reaffirms a Roman Date for the Washington *Adoration*, in: *Studies in the History of Art* 8, 1978, pp. 7-22.
- <sup>5</sup> See *U. Middeldorf*, Su alcuni bronzetti all'antica del quattrocento, in: *Il mondo antico nel Rinascimento*, Florence, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1958, pp. 169-70. *Middeldorf* suggests Botticelli may have taken over the sarcophagus figure through the intermediary of a garland-bearer on Lorenzo (or Vittorio) Ghiberti's frame for Andrea Pisano's Florence Baptistery doors. For an illustration of the sarcophagus see *B. Degenhart*, Michele di Giovanni di Bartolo: Disegni dall'Antico e il Camino 'della Iole', in: *Bollettino d'Arte* 35, 1950, p. 208, fig. 1.

- <sup>6</sup> Warburg (see note 1), p. 38, fig. 15.
- <sup>7</sup> The sarcophagus has been dated at various points in the second century A. D., and may have originated in Ostia. The figures stand .69 meters high. See *F. Matz*, *Die Dionysischen Sarkophage*, Berlin 1968-75, vol. IV, p. 455 ff., catalogue 260, pl. 288, lower illustration; and *P. E. Arias*, *E. Cristiani and E. Gabba*, *Camposanto monumentale di Pisa. Le antichità*, Pisa 1977, p. 128 ff., plate LXVIII, fig. 143, C 5 est.
- <sup>8</sup> In *Matz* (see note 7), vol. I, p. 19, she is noted as an example of TH 5, "Tympanistria, Rückenansicht", and various other versions are cited.
- <sup>9</sup> *R. Lightbown*, *Sandro Botticelli*, London 1978, vol. I, p. 77.
- <sup>10</sup> *E. Birbary*, *Dress in Italian Painting, 1460-1500*, London 1975, p. 40.
- <sup>11</sup> For the documents see *H. P. Horne*, *Alessandro Filipepi Commonly Called Sandro Botticelli, Painter of Florence*, London 1908, p. 349, docs. XII and XIII, and the discussion on pp. 34-35. The January 27 payment due to Botticelli for his trip to Pisa to inspect the place where he was to paint in the Camposanto is dated 1474 (Pisan style). Botticelli apparently worked on the Assumption during the summer of 1475 Pisan style, that is, 1474 modern style, and received a payment in September.
- <sup>12</sup> *Lightbown* (see note 9), vol. I, p. 81.
- <sup>13</sup> *Olson* (see note 4), p. 21: "With the exception of the *Calumny of Apelles*, the Roman period and the subsequent years mark the zenith of Botticelli's interest in specific antiquities as opposed to the generalized evocation of an ancient ambient." *Olson's* dissertation on the late works of Botticelli, which I have not seen, includes a chapter on Botticelli's relationship to antiquity.
- <sup>14</sup> For a summary of opinions see *Lightbown*, vol. II, p. 53.

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È noto da tempo il fatto che il Botticelli si sia ispirato alla letteratura antica per alcuni suoi dipinti. Meno studiati sono i suoi prestiti dall'arte figurativa degli antichi. L'autrice ha constatato che dalle tre Grazie della "Primavera" quella centrale ricorda la figura di una Menade danzante di un sarcofago del secondo secolo d. C. nel Camposanto di Pisa. L'artista potrebbe aver visto il bassorilievo in occasione dei suoi due viaggi a Pisa, documentati nell'anno 1474, e potrebbe aver utilizzato un disegno del rilievo per il suo dipinto datato comunemente alla fine degli anni '70.

Photo Credits: *Alinari: Fig. 1. - Anderson: Fig. 2.*

## Peter Anselm Riedl: ERGÄNZENDE BEMERKUNGEN ZUM FONDI-GRABMAL IN S. AGOSTINO ZU SIENA

Nach Erscheinen meiner Untersuchung über das Fondi-Grabmal in der ehemaligen Azzoni-Kapelle in S. Agostino zu Siena<sup>1</sup> werde ich auf eine Zeichnung aufmerksam gemacht<sup>2</sup>, die sich bei näherer Prüfung als überraschend aussagekräftig erweist. Es handelt sich um das Blatt 113 recto im Codex YZ.2.2. der Biblioteca Estense in Modena (Cod. Campori, cat. 1755; Abb. 1).<sup>3</sup> Der Frage, ob man in Giovanni Antonio Dosio den Autor dieser und der anderen Zeichnungen des Skizzenbuches sehen dürfe, soll hier nicht weiter nachgegangen werden; die Qualität vieler Darstellungen lässt eher an einen Künstler geringeren Ranges denken.<sup>4</sup> Wichtig ist hier nur die Feststellung, dass zahlreichen Skizzen ein ausserordentlicher Informationswert zukommt — auch dann, wenn sie offenkundig die kopierten Vorbilder nur unvollkommen wiedergeben.

Blatt 113 recto reproduziert das Fondi-Grabmal und bekräftigt diese Tatsache durch die Unterschrift: *sepolitura in Siena di pittura inventione del riccio*. Durch dieses Zeugnis eines Zeichners des späteren Cinquecento dürfte meine Zuschreibung des Freskos in S. Agostino an Bartolomeo Neroni, gen. Riccio, endgültig gesichert sein. Die Aussage *in pittura* ist zweifellos als Anspielung auf das Ungewöhnliche der Ausführung zu verstehen. Die Federskizze gibt die linke Hälfte des gemalten Kenotaphs wieder, in den Proportionen reichlich verzerrt und in den Details nicht eben mustergetreu. Der Zeichner scheint das Wandbild an Ort und Stelle notiert und dabei — wie schon die Partialerfassung beweist — vor allem Wert auf das Strukturprinzip gelegt zu haben. Immerhin überliefert er Einzelheiten, die aus dem heutigen Befund nicht mehr zu erschliessen sind. Mein Vorschlag zur Rekonstruktion der Basiszone — mit einer von Putten gehaltenen mittleren Inschrifttafel und seitlichen Konsolen<sup>5</sup> — erfährt zwar eine grundsätzliche Bestätigung; in den Details wird er aber so korrigiert, dass mir eine erneute Untersuchung der Basisreste an der Wand der Cappella Azzoni und eine Überarbeitung meiner Rekonstruktionsdarstellung nötig erschienen.