

Journal

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The James Beck Memorial Lectures:

Did Michelangelo paint either of these sleeves?



– see Hellmut Wohl's *The Integrity of the Work of Art: The Case of the Early Michelangelo*, p. 4

INTRODUCTION:

Shifting primary sources

After James Beck's death in May 2007 we felt it fitting to honour his memory with an annual commemorative lecture that would alternate between London and New York. The inaugural lecture was given in London in June 2010 by Professor Hellmut Wohl. To mark the inaugural year itself, a talk was given in New York in October 2010 by Professor Mark J. Zucker. The two events proved complementary tributes. Professor Zucker's entirely un-illustrated "Metaphors of Paintings and Sculpture in Italian Renaissance Literature" presented an illuminating compilation of the ways in which art was regarded during the Italian Renaissance. In an age when fine art is talked about almost entirely in terms of formal properties or capacities to provoke and offend, it was refreshing and salutary to be immersed in a time when art's magical, transformative, capacities were embedded in the richest languages of literature, myth and religion. We are indebted to the art historian Michael McAuliffe for vividly conjuring (p. 16) the content and delivery of a lecture in which as he remarks, Zucker's nearly sole reliance on Late Medieval and Renaissance literary works, many of which are yet un-translated, was in keeping with Beck's own insistence on the use of primary sources.

Primary sources of several kinds were central to Professor Wohl's thesis. Properly read, the most primary sources of all are the works of art themselves and Professor Wohl's abundant pictorial illustrations constituted a close examination of Beck's critical judgements and historical method. Four recently claimed Michelangelos that Beck decisively rejected were set against the benchmark splendours of six unchallenged early Michelangelos in an invitation to judge the merits or demerits of the various claimant works. This constituted an elegant impeccably sourced and aesthetically alert examination of both art historical method itself and the nature of evidence within it - a dual exercise of which Beck would also have approved and admired.

It so happens that two of the claimant Michelangelos - the National Gallery's *Manchester Madonna* and *Entombment* panel paintings - are local to this organisation. The latter picture had been a key part of our own earlier researches and disputes with the National Gallery. Recently, those researches have been greatly assisted by the gallery which has generously made its historical and conservation records available to us.

We have always maintained that challenges to restorations should be evidence-supported. Without direct photographic comparisons of pre- and post-restoration states, mere recollections of pre-restoration states would be pitted against the full material presence of post-restoration works. Even so, institutions and their defenders sometimes opt to dispute the legitimacy of photographic comparisons. When the Beck and Daley book *Art Restoration: the Culture, the Business and the Scandal* was first published in 1993, its handling of historical testimony was charged by Professor Martin Kemp (*Times Higher Educational Supplement*, April 22 1994) with failing to acknowledge the status of different kinds of evidence when our case had precisely been that so many different kinds of evidence all pointed in the same direction. His complaint that on the restoration of the Sistine Chapel ceiling we had accepted the eye-witness testimony of the painter Charles Heath Wilson (who had examined the ceiling at touching distance on the Vatican's own movable scaf-fold) with an

"unquestioning approval" that constituted "a lack of discrimination" seemed obtuse or perverse given that we had taken Wilson's observation that the glue painting on the fresco surface had cracked as the plaster had cracked as a proof that that glue painting predated the cracking - as indeed any restorer might have done. As the cracking was known to have occurred before any restorers were present, it necessarily meant that only Michelangelo could have applied the surface painting which was removed during restoration (see p. 21). Restorers routinely take materials that have run into pre-existing cracks to post-date those cracks. Kemp's charge that our photographic testimony was generally "rigged" was similarly unfounded. We asked Kemp (letter, *THES* May 6 1994) if he had any grounds for rejecting Wilson's testimony. Concerning our photographic testimony, we pointed out that most had been supplied by the restoration authorities themselves and asked if Kemp was "in possession of photographs that tell a different story?"

We received no answers. This is not uncommon. When the painter Pictro Annigoni protested in the *Times* in 1956 against National Gallery cleanings he received silence. As he told the painter Frank Mason in 1985: "...In the past I tried hard to stop the overcleaning. One night in London, in 1970, I even wrote (big capitals) 'murderers' on the doors of the National Gallery. As a result I got silence..." In a further letter to Mason in 1988, Annigoni wrote: "Twice I have written about the Sistine disaster... but I have been ignored..."

Museums sometimes ignore (or "differently interpret") their own most awkward material evidence. In a booklet that followed the National Gallery's 1969 cleaning of its disputed *Entombment* four staff members, the curators Michael Levey and Cecil Gould; the head of science, Joyce Plesters; and the restorer, Helmut Ruhemann, contended that the picture is a securely autograph work of Michelangelo's and that its unfinished condition provided a "rare opportunity for following the painter's progress."

Attempts were made to fix a date of execution. Gould suggested (on the "evidence" of costumes depicted in a painting by Costa) that it was "extremely unlikely" that the picture was started before 1505. Levey suggested on the picture's "stylistic criteria" that it was probably begun between 1506, after Michelangelo had finished his only secure panel painting, the *Doni Tondo*, in 1503-4, and before he began work on the Sistine Chapel ceiling in 1508. He further suggested that work had resumed in 1512 after the completion of the Sistine and before the picture was abandoned incomplete in 1513. Complicating matters for the gallery is the awkward fact that this uncompleted painting betrays two distinct painterly "hands"; that as Gould put it there is "a difference of style in different areas" and "a difference in method of painting" with the differences of method largely but not entirely corresponding "with the stylistic difference".

Gould contended that "within the context of Michelangelo's career the two halves of the picture may be thought to reflect two distinct phases". The left-hand side of the painting is "close (both in feeling, and in details such as the hair and draperies) to the *Doni Tondo*" - but in that painting there are no disparities of style or method. At the same time, Gould claimed, the figures in the right-hand side "connect with the lunettes of the Sistine chapel". To disarm these awkward "anomalies" Gould offered the suppositious explanation that when working on this painting, Michelangelo was alternately "ranging forwards or backwards within his own development, reworking one motive which he had already formulated, or anticipating another which

he was to explore more fully at a later date". (On such an elastic template any artist might have painted anything.)

Gould attempted to explain away the anomalous fact that although all parts of the picture were in the same medium - oil - in some parts the artist's touch was "hard, brilliant, enamel like, precisely similar to that of the *Doni Tondo*, and with no brush marks visible", while elsewhere "the touch is broader with the brush marks visible". At one point Gould concedes that these differences and anomalies might mean that parts were painted "by another hand" but he then rallied by seeing in the *un-Doni Tondo*-like rougher sections of the picture a "heart-rending pathos which is wholly characteristic of Michelangelo". Recognising that some explanation for manifest material and stylistic differences of paintwork was due, Gould suggested that enough time had elapsed between the painting of the two stylistically and materially different parts "to permit a change in technique".

In the conservation dossiers of this painting there is a magnified photograph of a detail (see back cover) of Christ's feet overlapping the left foot of one of the bearers who support His body. That photograph shows even further disparities and anomalies: the smooth enamel-like passage of the bearer's foot has a dense fine and evidently aged craquelure, while that of the more roughly textured right foot of Christ, in which paint is seen (entirely uncharacteristically for Michelangelo) to be dragged across the contours of the toes, has virtually none. The rougher but uncracked paint is seen to overlap the smoother cracked paint, and so must post-date it.

When we first challenged the Michelangelo attribution (Michael Daley, "How to Make a Michelangelo", *Art Review*, October 1994), the National Gallery refused to comment but insisted that all questions would be answered in the catalogue for the forthcoming exhibition "Making and Meaning: The Young Michelangelo". In it, the Gallery's own (once "scientifically" supported) speculations of 1969 were junked. The painting was moved back in time and was now said not to have echoed but to have "anticipated many features of the *Doni Tondo*". (On that logic it must also have anticipated the four years long stylistic evolution of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling painting as well as the drapery conventions that were to emerge a quarter of a century later in the paintings of Rosso - see front cover.) In 1994, it was insisted that to "understand the method of the paint application... and to understand the extent to which each area is finished... it is necessary to make frequent references to the *Doni Tondo*". Earlier claims that the *Entombment's* figures' costumes post-dated ones observed elsewhere in 1505 were also junked.

The need for these inversions arose because Professor Michael Hirst, a co-curator of the exhibition, had attached this painting to a banker's record of a payment made to Michelangelo in 1500 for the painting of an altarpiece. Where Gould had seen heart-rending pathos, Hirst saw "marked emotional reticence". Where Gould had seen an artist simultaneously repeating and anticipating himself, Hirst saw one experimenting for a very brief period within a young artist's stylistic explorations. But even Professor Hirst conceded that while some had accepted the picture as a Michelangelo, others have "advanced the view that it was the work of two hands, Michelangelo and an assistant or follower". In fact, others had seen it as "extraordinary that the picture should ever have been attributed to so great a master" (Charles Heath Wilson); and that it was "painful to believe that at any time in his life Michelangelo could have produced a composition so discordant, so unsatisfactory... so feelingless and ugly" (John Symonds). **Michael Daley, Director, May 2011.**



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Left, the National Gallery's Michelangelo *Entombment* (detail), now said to be 1500-1501. Right, the San Lorenzo Rosso Fiorentino *Marriage of the Virgin* (detail, reversed) of 1523.

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ArtWatch UK campaigns to protect the integrity and the dignity of works of art and architecture from injurious or falsifying restorations and from demeaning, exploitative or hazardous uses. It welcomes direct debate with restoration/conservation practitioners and seeks access to treatment records in all publicly or charitably supported museums and galleries. It works through its Journal and elsewhere to establish an aesthetically informed and properly critical restoration literature and, where appropriate, to counter partisan or propagandistic accounts in the specialist press and public media.

ArtWatch UK was founded as a members' organisation in 1995 by its present director, Michael Daley, an artist and illustrator who had served as the London manager of ArtWatch International from its foundation in 1992 by (the late) Professor James Beck of Columbia University, New York. An account of the circumstances of Art Watch's creation and early campaigns is given in the book *Art Restoration - The Culture, the Business and the Scandal* by James Beck and Michael Daley, London, 1993, and (revised) New York, 1996.

The James Beck Memorial Lectures

The inaugural James Beck Memorial Lecture in honour of Professor Beck and his wife, Darma, was given by Professor Hellmut Wohl, at the Society of Antiquaries of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly, on June 23rd 2010.

"The Integrity of the Work of Art: The Case of the Early Michelangelo"

Hellmut Wohl

In 1891 Heinrich Wolfflin published *Die Jugendwerke des Michelangelo*, a short book on Michelangelo's early production, with chapters on the following works: the reliefs of the Virgin of the Stairs and the Battle of Centaurs, the small statues of St. Petronius and of the candelabrum-bearing Angel on the tomb of St. Dominic in San Domenico in Bologna (Wolfflin did not yet know the St. Patroclus, which in the modern literature was first published as a work of Michelangelo in 1902), the Bacchus, the Pieta in St. Peter's, the David, the Doni Tondo, the Bruges Madonna, the so-called Cupid/Narcissus in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Pitti and Taddei tondi, and the unfinished St. Matthew. With the exception of the Cupid/Narcissus, which is now given to Valerio Cioli, these were, at the end of the nineteenth century, by Charles de Tolnay in *The Youth of Michelangelo* of 1943, and are still today considered to be undisputed works of Michelangelo prior to 1508, when he moved to Rome to begin work on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

In order firmly to establish the style and character of the early work I shall show you, familiar as they are, six of them that in different contexts I will be showing you again. Because the sources of attributions to Michelangelo will be an issue as we proceed, I shall identify them here for each of the six works: the *Battle of Centaurs*, (See Fig. 1) not signed or documented, first mentioned in Ascanio Condivi's biography of Michelangelo in 1553; the Angel on the tomb of St. Dominic, (Fig. 2) also not signed or documented and first mentioned by Condivi; the *Bacchus*, (Fig. 3) not signed or documented, first mentioned by Condivi and by the Bolognese naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandri in *Delle statue antiche*, an inventory of antique statues in Rome compiled in 1553 but not published until 1556; the Pieta, (Fig. 4) which is signed MICHAELANGELUS. BUONAROTUS. FLO-RENTIN. FACIEBAT on the ribbon across the Virgin's breast; the Bruges Madonna, (Fig. 5) not signed or documented and first mentioned by Condivi; and the *Doni Tondo*, (Fig. 6) also not signed or documented and first mentioned by Condivi.

The quality that these works share, with variations according to the subject and its interpretation, is *gravitas*: physical and moral weight; clarity and breadth of form; the adjustment and balance of stability and movement; and latent, contained, expressive power. In *Die klassische Kunst*,

published in 1899, Wolfflin put it as follows: "[Michelangelo's] style aims at concentration and the creation of closed masses. The grasp of form and clarity of inner vision which he possessed are without parallel. The inner structure [of his forms], the mechanics of movement, have been expressed to the very last detail, compelling the spectator to share his experience completely. Every turn, every bend of a limb has a latent power - quite trivial displacements have an incomprehensible, powerful effect and the impression thus produced can be so great that one forgets to seek the motives behind the movement."



Fig. 1, above: the *Battle of the Centaurs*.

I shall now show you four works whose attributions to Michelangelo have been and continue to be contested, and which were presented as early productions of Michelangelo in 1999 in the exhibition *Giovinetta di Michelangelo* at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence: *The Manchester Madonna* in the National Gallery (Fig. 7), first given to Michelangelo in an inventory of 1700 of the Borghese Collection in Rome; the wooden *Crucifix* from Santo Spirito in Florence, (Fig. 8) first mentioned as a work of Michelangelo by Francesco Albertini in 1510; the *Entombment* in the National Gallery, (Fig. 9) first attributed to Michelangelo in an inventory of 1649 of the Farnese

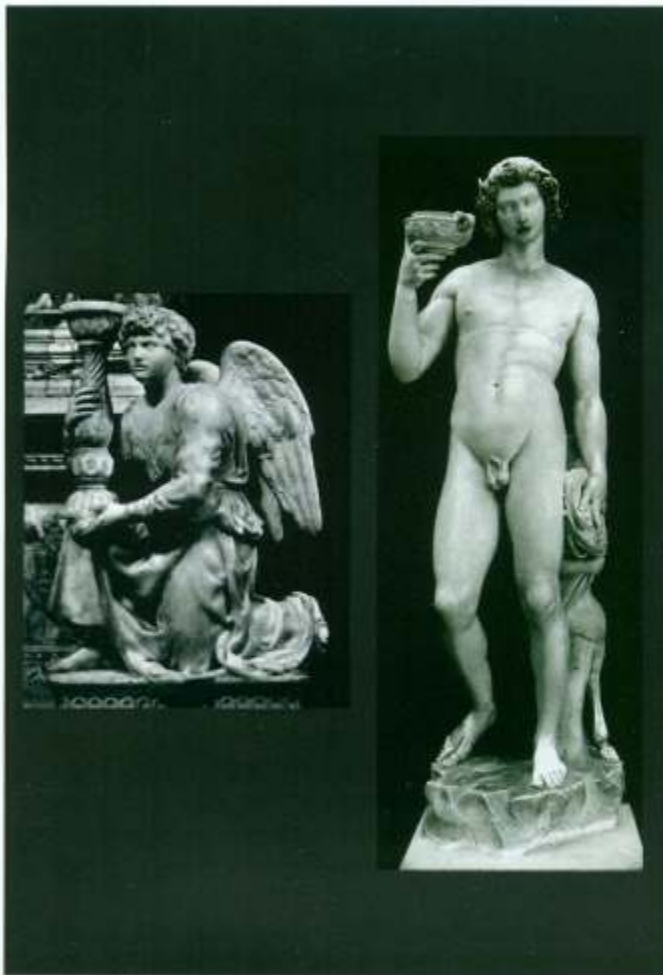


Fig. 2, above, (left): the *Angel* on the St. Dominic tomb.
Fig. 3, above, (right): the *Bacchus*.



Fig. 5, above: the *Bruges Madonna*.



Fig. 4, above: the *Pietà*.



Fig. 6, above: the *Doni Tondo*.

Collection in Rome; and the *Archer* from the Payne Whitney House in New York, (**Fig. 10**) now exhibited in the Velez Blanco Patio at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which has been identified as a statue that Michelangelo made in Rome for the collector of antiquities Jacopo Galli. Condivi called it a Cupid, and Aldovrandi an Apollo. The *Manchester Madonna*, the *Santo Spirito Crucifix*, and the *Entombment* were also shown with attributions to Michelangelo in the exhibition *The Young Michelangelo* at the National Gallery in 1994.

I would now like to ask you to think back to the six undisputed works that I have shown you, and then to the four contested ones, and ask yourselves three questions: Are the contested works compatible with the undisputed ones? Do they display the gravitas and the qualities of form described by Wofflin that are the essential characteristics of Michelangelo's early works? And where could they be inserted in the sequence of Michelangelo's productions between 1492 and 1506?

In attempting to answer these questions it is useful to keep in mind the admonition of Richard Offner that the history of art "should be evolved directly out of its concrete examples." It should "free the object of the verbal system with which the literature of art has overlaid it." Only after scrutiny of the object itself should relevant literary evidence be introduced, for only then can the concrete image - what I have called the integrity of the work of art - be secured "against factitious elaboration and simplification." It was the merit of Jim Beck's approach to the four contested works which you have seen that he adhered to Offner's admonition.

The attributions of all four to Michelangelo are attempts to match a work of art with a document or text. This was done successfully in the case of an Adoration of the Shepherds by Vasari in the Elvehjem Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin. The picture had been donated to the museum in 1923 with an attribution to Baldassare Peruzzi. In 1939 Wolfgang Stechow attributed it to Vasari, matching it with a painting listed in a register of Vasari's works compiled by his nephew Marcantonio in 1570. Attempts to match the four contested works attributed to Michelangelo with documents or texts adduced to support their attribution have not been successful, for the reason that neither their style, quality, or character are compatible with Michelangelo's hand or conception in the undisputed early works. No amount of literary overlay can make them so.

Stechow made the point that attributions such as that of the Elvehjem picture to Vasari "bear out their correctness at first sight or fail to do so even with the support of circumstantial arguments." While much can be said for this, the issue is not always that simple. "Scrutiny of the object" before arriving at a correct attribution is often a long process. The philosopher David Hume wrote more than two centuries ago that "the meaning of a great work of art discloses itself slowly and with great difficulty, over the years.. .The same may be said about the attribution of a work of art, whether great or not." And this is the other side of the coin. If the four contested works are not by Michelangelo, to whom and to what date can they be given? Various proposals have been made, but none have met Stechow's criterion.

I shall begin with the unfinished *Manchester Madonna*, (**Fig. 11**) which in the catalogues of the 1994 and 1999 exhibitions was assigned the date 1496-97, the years in which



Fig. 7, above: the *Manchester Madonna*.



Fig. 8, above: the *Crucifix* from Santo Spirito.



Fig. 9, above: the National Gallery *Entombment*.



Fig. 10, above: the Payne Whitney House *Archer*.

Michelangelo was working on the Bacchus. The painting was first mentioned as a work of Michelangelo in inventories of 1700, 1725, and 1765 of the Borghese collection in Rome. In the early nineteenth century it was in a private collection in London, where it was seen by Friedrich von Rumohr, who gave it to Michelangelo in the third volume of his *Italienische Forschungen*, published in 1831. In 1844 and again in 1845 it was offered to the National Gallery in London as a work of Domenico Ghirlandaio. On February 22, 1846 Otto Miindler, an agent of Charles Eastlake, the director of the National Gallery, wrote to Gustav Friedrich Waagen, the director of the Konigliche Gemaldegalerie in Berlin, that the painting, which, according to Miindler, was a masterpiece by Michelangelo, was for sale at an asking price of 800 Pounds Sterling. Miindler's letter, which contains the bizarre information that a German friend of his thought the painting might be by Mantegna, was copied for the archive of the Berlin gallery and forgotten. Waagen later saw the picture in the collection of Henry Labouchere, who had bought it as a Domenico Ghirlandaio.



Fig.11, above: the *Manchester Madonna*

As a result of Waagen's reattribution of the painting to Michelangelo in the third volume of his *Treasures of Art in Great Britain* it was exhibited as a work of Michelangelo in Manchester in 1857. It was acquired by the National Gallery in 1870 and given to Michelangelo in catalogues of the National Gallery until 1962, when Cecil Could listed it as "ascribed to Michelangelo" for the reason that "if it were autograph it would have to be very early, and since there is no means of judging Michelangelo's handling of paint in a panel picture at this stage of his career the question cannot be settled." There are, however, grounds for a later date, and in that case we would know from the *Doni Tondo* exactly how Michelangelo handled paint in a panel picture.

The compositional structure of the *Manchester Madonna*

is a constricted, vertical alignment of figures in a crowded, airless space reminiscent of the spatially flattened composition of altarpieces by Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino of the late first and early second decades of the sixteenth century. There is little room for the Christ Child between the legs of the Virgin, and less for the Infant St. John between the Virgin and the angels on the right. There is no link that either formally or psychologically connects the figures as interrelated parts of a unified scheme. Nowhere is there evidence of a sculptor's sense of form, as there is in the *Doni Tondo*, (Fig. 12) a painting which, as Wolfflin observed, is "full of life in every muscle," and in which Michelangelo connected the deeply modeled painted group and its parts "as if they were pieces of a single mass of marble." Comparison (Fig. 13) of the shallow modeling of the head of the angel at the left of the *Manchester Madonna* with the forceful, sculpturally conceived head of the Christ Child in the *Tondo* reinforces the point. The motif of the angels holding a scroll appears to have been inspired by the choristers at one of the sides of the *Cantoria* by Luca della Robbia in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence.

The apparent derivation of the angels from Lucca della Robbia is but one example of the variety of sources, from the mid-quattrocento to the early cinquecento, on which the painter of the *Manchester Madonna* drew. The posture of the Infant St. John has been connected to that of the Christ Child in the *Bruges Madonna* (Fig. 14). However, it is the reverse of the pose of the Christ Child in the sculpture. In the *Bruges Madonna* the head turns toward the figure's right, the arm crosses over to the left, and the weight is on the right leg. In the painting the head is turned to the left, the left arm reaches over toward to the right, and the weight is on the left leg. A similar pose, independent of the *Bruges Madonna*, is assumed by the Christ Child in a tondo by Andrea Sansovino in the Museu de Arte Antiga in Lisbon (Fig. 15). Andrea went from Florence to work in Portugal for eight months in January 1493, and may have returned to Portugal in 1495. The provenance of the tondo is a convent in Lisbon, although it is not known whether Andrea carved it in Lisbon or brought it with him from Florence. In either case, the tondo is earlier than the *Bruges Madonna*, which was carved between December 1503 and August 1505.

The posture of the Infant St. John in the *Manchester Madonna* can also be found in a small sketch (Fig. 16) that Michelangelo may have made for the lost sculpture of an Infant St. John that Condivi said he carved for Pierfrancesco de' Medici in 1495, after returning to Florence from Bologna. According to Condivi, Pierfrancesco thought it "very beautiful." A direct connection between the sketch and the Infant St. John in the *Manchester Madonna* would appear to be excluded on stylistic grounds. However, it is not unlikely that both Andrea Sansovino and the painter of the *Manchester Madonna* knew the statue for Pierfrancesco de' Medici, and if in fact its pose was the same as the one in Michelangelo's sketch, could have adopted it.

In contrast, the posture that Michelangelo invented for the Christ Child in the *Bruges Madonna* was clearly repeated in a painting of c. 1520 by Francesco Granacci in the Musee d'Art at Toulon (Fig. 17). Granacci and Michelangelo knew each other and were friends from the early 1490s on. It was Granacci who introduced Michelangelo to the sculpture garden at San Marco; and in 1508 he briefly assisted Michelangelo on the



Fig. 12, above: the *Doni Tondo*.



Fig. 13, above, details: the *Manchester Madonna* (left);



Fig. 14, above, details: the *Bruges Madonna* (left); the *Manchester Madonna* (right); the *Doni Tondo* (right).



Fig. 15, above: a tondo by Andrea Sansovino.



above: a Francesco Granacci painting



Fig. 16, above: a sketch by Michelangelo, possibly for a lost *Infant St. John* sculpture.

ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. On January 1, 1506 Michelangelo wrote to his father from Rome asking him to have "that marble of Our Lady," presumably the *Bruges Madonna*, "moved into the house and not to let anyone see it." It is nevertheless virtually certain that Granacci did see it before it was sent to the Netherlands in August 1506. In his *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* with the Infant St. John in the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin the left knee of the Virgin is raised, as in the Madonna in Bruges, and the Infant St. John, like the Christ Child in Michelangelo's sculpture, is placed between the



Fig. 18, above: a sketch by Raphael (left); the *Manchester Madonna* (right).

Virgin's knees.

Evidence for a date of the *Manchester Madonna* later than the years 1496-97 is not only stylistic but may be provided by the motif of the Christ Child reaching for the book held by the Virgin. It appears to have been invented by Raphael in a sketch of a *Madonna of Humility* in the Albertina (Fig. 18) in which the pose of the Virgin is derived from that of the Virgin in the *Doni Tondo*. The drawing can be dated c.1508, prior to Raphael's move to Rome in the autumn of that year. In light of the diversity of motifs and sources of the *Manchester Madonna*, the authorship and date of the painting must remain uncertain. Its stylistic affinities with early Mannerist compositions by Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino would tend to support

Jim Beck's proposal that it may have been executed at the beginning of the second quarter of the sixteenth century.

I turn next to the *Crucifix* from Santo Spirito, (**Fig. 19**) whose attribution to Michelangelo has been used to bolster the attributions of both the London Entombment and the New York *Archer*. A *Crucifix* by Michelangelo in Santo Spirito was first mentioned by Francesco Albertini in a guidebook of 1510 to works of art in Florence, and subsequently by Vasari in 1550 and Condivi in 1553. Condivi reported that "to oblige the prior of Santo Spirito, who provided him both with a room and with corpses for the study of anatomy," Michelangelo made a wooden *Crucifix*, "a little less than life-size, which is still today to be seen over the main altar of that church." A drawing of the 1580s by Giovanantonio Dosio shows the *Crucifix* still on the main altar, but it is too indistinct to identify. In the seventeenth century it was moved to the sacristy. Giovanni Bottari reported in an edition of Vasari of 1759/60 that the painter and connoisseur Ignatio Hugford saw it, and that Hugford believed that despite its beauty and devoutness it was not sufficiently characteristic of Michelangelo's sculptures to be by his hand. Nothing further is heard of the work until 1963, when Margrit Lisner published a wooden crucifix that she found in the convent of Santo Spirito as the one that, according to Condivi, Michelangelo made for the convent's prior. It was exhibited in the Casa Buonarroti until it was installed in the sacristy of Santo Spirito a few years ago.

In spite of the initial acceptance of Lisner's identification, including that of Charles de Tolnay in 1971, and the energetic endorsement in the catalogues of the 1994 and 1999 exhibitions, the consensus has moved toward the position of Hugford. In 1978 Ulrich Middeldorf published a short article in which he cited a report in the second volume of Filippo Baldinucci's *Notizie de' professori del disegno*, published in 1686, that the maniera painter Giovanni Battista Naldini, who died in 1591 and had been a pupil of Pontormo from 1549 until Pontormo's death in 1556, lent a cartoon of a *Crucifix* by Pontormo to Taddeo Curradi, a Florentine sculptor of wooden crucifixes. "Henceforth," according to Baldinucci, "Taddeo followed the cartoon and softened the modeling [of his crucifixes], imbuing them with grace and piety."

Pontormo's cartoon has not survived. The only known crucifix by his hand is in the central compartment of a tabernacle of c.1525-26 from Boldrone now in the Accademia del Disegno in Florence (**Fig. 20**), which has the same slender proportions and soft, fluid modeling as the *Crucifix* from Santo Spirito. The two figures also share the unusual position of the right knee hiding the left knee, which breaks the symmetry normally preserved in Renaissance crucifixions. None of the crucifixes by Curradi listed by Baldinucci has survived, but it is worth noting that the cross in Santo Spirito, like Pontormo's Boldrone cross, exhibits precisely the grace, piety, and softness of modeling described by Baldinucci.

Margrit Lisner has countered Middeldorf's conjecture that the Santo Spirito *Crucifix* may have been carved by Curradi by pointing out that Curradi's crucifixes mentioned by Baldinucci were carved in the 1570s and 1580s, which she considers too late for the Santo Spirito cross; and she argues that the crucifix in Pontormo's Boldrone tabernacle is one of



Fig. 19, above: the Santo Spirito *Crucifix*.



Fig. 21, above: the *Battle of the Centaurs* (left); the Santo Spirito *Crucifix* (right).

several reflections of it. By the time that Pontormo painted the Boldrone tabernacle, however, the classical style of Michelangelo's early works had been replaced by Mannerist variations. The elongated, Mannerist body of the Santo Spirito cross, with its slender, body and twist to its left, fits a later date far better than it does the end of the quattrocento. It has nevertheless been used as evidence supporting the attribution to Michelangelo of the London *Entombment* and the New York *Archer*.

If the *Crucifix* in Santo Spirito were by Michelangelo it would presumably have been carved in the same time span as the marble relief of the *Battle of the Centaurs*, between the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent in August 1492 and Michelangelo's departure for Venice and Bologna in October 1494 (**Fig. 21**). How is it possible to reconcile the gentle,



Fig. 20, above: the Pontormo crucifix from Boldrone.

suave, unrealistic body of the *Crucifix* and the energetic, muscular central figure of Theseus throwing a rock in the relief as works done by the same sculptor at the same time? And which figure, if Condivi is to be believed, exhibits more fully and accurately the knowledge acquired by the anatomical study of corpses? Nevertheless, scholars have gone to extraordinary lengths to make the case for the attribution of the *Crucifix* to Michelangelo. Umberto Baldini, for example, has stated categorically that from an anatomical point of view "all the points of reference in the bones are reproduced, all prominent tendons are perfectly delineated, and all the muscular insertions are just where they are supposed to be in the body of a boy of no more than fourteen who had died just a few hours earlier." Baldini's account, however, is not convincing: it hardly describes the figure we know, and it fails to address the sculpture's style. The issue of its authorship remains unsettled. There are other unanswered questions as well. Why would a work said to be by Michelangelo, the most revered of Florentine artists, be removed from the high altar of the church for which it was allegedly made? And is the crucifix that Hugford saw the same as the one that Margrit Lisner rediscovered? Finally, is this in fact the one described by Condivi?

Questions also surround the *Entombment* in the National



Fig. 22, above: the National Gallery *Entombment*.

Gallery (**Fig. 22**). First, the subject is not an *Entombment*. Bernard Berenson, for instance, called it a *Deposition*.

The earliest citation of the picture, in an inventory of 1649 of the Farnese collection in Rome, referred to it as "Christ Carried to the Tomb". I shall nevertheless continue to call it by its traditional title. Second, aside from Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea, who are the bearers of Christ's body, the woman seated at the lower left, standing at the right, and the one left incomplete at the lower right?

According to the 1649 inventory of the Farnese collection the painting is "by the hand of Michelangelo". Farnese inventories of 1653 and 1697, however, refer to it more cautiously as "said to be by Michelangelo." In the early nineteenth century it was in the collection of Cardinal Fesch in Rome; in 1846 it was bought in Rome by the English painter and photographer Robert Macpherson, and in 1868 it was acquired by the National Gallery, where it has been exhibited ever since as an early work of Michelangelo. The attribution to Michelangelo was endorsed by Bernard Berenson and more recently by John Shearman. It was rejected by Wolfflin in 1891 and by de Tolnay in 1943.



Fig. 23, above: the National Gallery *Entombment* (left); the *Doni Tondo* (right).



Fig. 24, above: the *Entombment* (left); the *Pieta* (right).



Fig. 27, above: the *Entombment* (left); Rosso Fiorentino's *Marriage of the Virgin* (right).



Fig. 25, above: the *Entombment* (left); the Louvre drawing of a *Seated Woman* (right).



Fig. 26, above: a Michelangelo drawing (left) in the Albertina; the *Entombment* (right).

Michael Levey offered an ingenious explanation for the painting's unfinished state: that it was commissioned by Julius II for the interior chamber in the 1505 project for the pope's tomb, which Condivi described as "a small chamber within the tomb resembling a tempietto, in the center of which was a marble chest where the body of the pope was to be placed." Levey supposed that the painting was incomplete when Michelangelo left Rome in 1506; that it remained incomplete because in the 1513 project for the Julius tomb the interior chamber was eliminated; and that Michelangelo later recycled it, without finishing it, for the Florentine banker Pier Francesco Borgherini, who commissioned a painting from

him in 1515. In fact, however, the painting for Borgherini was executed not by Michelangelo, but by Andrea del Sarto.

A comparison of the *Entombment* with the *Doni Tondo* (Fig. 23) confirms Michael Daley's observations that the *Entombment* "lacks Michelangelo's vivid evocation of real bodies in real space," that "one cannot calculate where the non-depicted limbs are placed," and that "the air passes over but not around the figures [whose] contours serve as boundaries not bridges." In the tondo Michelangelo has established a seamless physical and psychological relationship among the three principal figures through their gestures, glances, and centrifugal circular movements. In the *Entombment*, the six figures exist in relative isolation. Although the figures of Christ, Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea, and the two bearers at either side of Christ's body are connected physically, they are unconnected psychologically.

Michael Hirst has related the *Entombment* to documents according to which Michelangelo's account in Rome was credited with the sum of sixty ducats on September 2, 1500, and on the same date the account of the friars of the Roman church of Sant'Agostino was debited with the same amount for a painting by Michelangelo, which he left unfinished. Nine months later, on June 18, 1502, the friars of Sant'Agostino paid a Master Andrea 58 ducats for delivering the completed picture. The *Entombment* in the National Gallery, which is unfinished, thus cannot be, as Hirst has argued, the picture referred to in the Sant'Agostino documents. The painting completed by Master Andrea, to which the Sant'Agostino documents refer as *L'immagine antica della Pieta*, remained over the altar of the first chapel on the left until it was replaced in 1604-5 by Caravaggio's *Madonna of Loreto*. In 1606 Andrea's painting was sold to Cardinal Scipione Borghese.

On the basis of the documents to which Hirst has connected the London *Entombment* he has assigned it a date of 1500-1501, immediately following the completion of the St. Peter's *Pieta* (Fig. 24). It is difficult, however, to imagine that the confined, awkwardly positioned body of Christ in the painting is the work of the same artist who made the expansive body in the *Pieta*. In the words of Heinrich Wölfflin, "the figures [in the *Pieta*] are effortlessly joined together. The [body of] Christ is developed clearly in all directions and at the same time is expressive in every line. The shoulder forced upward and the head sinking backwards lend an accent of pathos of unsurpassable power to the dead body."

In the exhibition *The Young Michelangelo* of 1994 Hirst sought to reinforce the attribution of the *Entombment* to Michelangelo by comparing the head of Christ to the head of the Santo Spirito *Crucifix*, and proposing that a drawing of a *Seated Woman* in the Louvre (Fig. 25) is a study by Michelangelo for the seated woman at the lower left. The drawing, however, lacks Michelangelo's incisiveness, mobility, and sculptural definition, and its attribution is as problematic as that of the painting.

There is a drawing by Michelangelo of the 1530s in the Albertina (Fig. 26) in which the body of Christ has a similar pose to that in the London *Entombment*. To account for the similarity, and to give additional weight to his attribution, Hirst has suggested that in the drawing Michelangelo returned three decades later to the posture of Christ's body in the *Entombment*. But the similarity of the pose alone does not support the attribution of the painting to Michelangelo. Moreover, there is other evidence suggesting that the painting was executed closer to the time of Michelangelo's drawing.

A later date for the *Entombment* would seem to be confirmed by its relationship to Rosso Fiorentino's *Marriage of the Virgin* of 1523 in San Lorenzo (Fig. 27). I owe to Michael Daley the observation that the two paintings share the placement and pose of a kneeling woman in the lower left corner; and that the banded sleeve of the right arm of the bearer on Christ's left in the *Entombment* is a virtual mirror image (see front cover) of the banded sleeve on the left arm of the seated woman in the painting by Rosso. The connection provides strong evidence for endorsing the conclusion of Jim Beck that the London *Entombment*, with its attenuated Mannerist figures, dates from early in the second quarter of the sixteenth century.

The marble *Archer* from the Payne Whitney House in New York (Fig. 28) first came to light when it was put on sale at an auction at Christie's in London in 1902 by the Florentine dealer Stefano Bardini, according to whom it came from the Borghese collection in Rome. In the auction catalogue it was identified as the Infant Hercules and attributed to the School of Michelangelo.

The French translation of the catalogue, however, gave it to Michelangelo. Despite this, at the auction the marble found no buyers. Bardini then bought it back for 100 guineas, not as a Michelangelo but as an antique. In 1905 the American architect Stanford White acquired it in Rome for 2000 Lire, and later installed it in the vestibule of the Payne Whitney House in New York. The statue was first re-attributed to Michelangelo in 1968 by Alessandro Parronchi. It then disappeared from the Michelangelo literature until 1996, when Parronchi's attribution was revived by Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt.

Three years later the *Archer* was prominently displayed as a work of the young Michelangelo in the exhibition *Giovinezza di Michelangelo* at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence.

The naked boy turns to his left, with his head turned upward. The statue is a fragment, lacking the arms and the legs from the knees down. What survives is 99 cm. high. A strap across the left shoulder holds a quiver, made from a lion's paw, which projects from the back at almost right angles. A bundle of arrows in the quiver signals that the boy is an archer or that he is hunting. According to Condivi, the Roman collector of antiquities Jacopo Galli, who in 1497



Fig. 28, above: the marble *Archer*.

acquired Michelangelo's *Bacchus*, "also wanted [Michelangelo] to make him a Cupid;" and Vasari stated in 1568 that Galli "had [Michelangelo] make him a life-sized marble Cupid." A *Cupid* by Michelangelo for Jacopo Galli was mentioned on two other occasions in the sixteenth century: in his funeral oration for Michelangelo in 1564 Benedetto Varchi referred to a "god of love" (uno dio d'amore) by Michelangelo in the house of Galli's heirs; and the Milanese writer and artist Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo in his *Trattato dell'arte dellapittura* of 1584 referred to a marble *Cupid* with wings (con le ali sulle spalle) sculpted by Michelangelo for Jacopo Galli. It is unlikely that Lomazzo had seen the statue, but he knew of it and either learned or assumed, as cupids need wings, that Michelangelo's figure had them.

The *Cupid* for Jacopo Galli was believed lost until 1996, when Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt identified it as the statue mentioned by Condivi, Varchi and Lomazzo.

The identification, however, is flawed. Although in Renaissance images Cupid is usually an infant, he can also be a youth, and he can have arrows, but his main attribute is his



Fig. 29, above: a drawing by Jean-Francois Ango (left); the marble *Archer* (right).



Fig. 32, above: the *Archer*.



Fig. 30, above: the head of the *Angel* in Bologna (left); the head of the *Archer* (right).



Fig. 33, above: the *Archer*.



Fig. 31, above: the *Bacchus* (left); head of the *Archer* (right).

wings. I owe to Creighton Gilbert the observation that in the *Phaedrus* Plato tells us that men call love Eros, "but the immortals call him Pieros, fluttering dove, because the fluttering of wings is a necessity for him." The *Phaedrus*, which was the decisive authority on the theory of love in the Renaissance, constitutes strong evidence that Cupid must have wings, and the *Archer* does not have them.

Ulisse Aldovrandi in his inventory of sculptures in Rome of 1556 also listed a statue by Michelangelo in the house of Jacopo Galli: "An Apollo, full length and nude, with quiver and arrow at the side, and a vase at his feet." It has been assumed that the statue he called Apollo is the same as the one that Condivi, Varchi, and Lomazzo called Cupid. However, Aldovrandi's identification of the figure as Apollo cannot be correct. It was not the only time that he mistook a statue's name. While the name Apollo matches the *Archer* in that arrows may be his prime attribute, the *Archer* is a boy of eleven or twelve, and no stories or images of Apollo in the Renaissance or later refer to him or show him at such an age. Thus the *Archer* cannot be Cupid because he has no wings, and he cannot be Apollo because he is too young. The identification of the *Archer* with the statue Michelangelo made for Jacopo Galli, and the attribution of the figure to Michelangelo on that basis, can therefore not be sustained.

Modern writers have assumed that the work is Italian Renaissance in style, and have included the possibility that

it is a later forgery or a Renaissance forgery of an antique sculpture. Figures portrayed as ideal nudes in the Renaissance are virtually never nameless, but specific heroes from classical sources. Creighton Gilbert has proposed that the *Archer* is Ganymede, the boy carried off by Zeus in the form of an eagle. Virgil and Statius described Ganymede as a hunter, and the seventeenth-century mythographer Natali Conti wrote that Zeus carried him off "while he was hunting." Renaissance images, such as the painting by Correggio in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, regularly show him with a dog. Gilbert has noted that the specific action of the statue is the upward turn of the head toward where the eagle is approaching.

Evidence of the complete figure of the *Archer* may be provided by a drawing of c.1770 by Jean-Francois Ango (Fig. 29), in which the left hand extracts an arrow from the quiver, the right hand holds the quiver steady, and a vase rises to a level above the knee. However, in the drawing the quiver is in front; in the sculpture it juts out from the back. The reason for the change may be that when the drawing was made the arms had already been lost. Bardini's statement that the *Archer* came from the Borghese collection in Rome gains support from a description in a guidebook of 1650 to the Borghese gardens of a statue of "a Cupid without wings, a bow at his feet that leans against a vase, and with arrows wrapped in a wild animal's skin" which has been thought to correspond to both the *Archer* and the Ango drawing.

Aside from the improbability of a wingless Cupid, the guidebook's description of a Cupid with a bow leaning against a vase can hardly refer to the figure in the drawing. Even if we assume that the break in the figure's left leg suggests that the vase broke off, there is no evidence of a bow in either the drawing or the statue. Whether or not the drawing is a copy of the *Archer* remains an open question. Either way, it has no bearing on the statue's authorship.

The attribution of the *Archer* to Michelangelo has not fared well. A comparison of the bland, un-modulated head (Fig. 30) with the seriousness, solidity and structural clarity of the head of the *Angel* on the tomb of St. Dominic in Bologna does little to favor it. Michael Hirst, for once in agreement with Jim Beck, dismissed the attribution on the ground that the *Archer's* lack of physical substance shows that it is the work of a sculptor ill at ease with fully developed three-dimensional form - a consummate example of which is the *Bacchus* (Fig. 31) - and for that reason alone could not have been conceived or executed by Michelangelo.

A close inspection of the New York marble shows that the quiver attached to the right shoulder is carved from a separate piece of marble; that the lower parts of the legs are additions or repairs; and that a piece of marble was added at the top to accommodate the head (Fig. 32). The whole figure is awkward and anomalous, and the question of its authorship and authenticity must remain open.

My conclusion is a simple but fundamental one. As Jim Beck insisted throughout his career, questionable attributions and misattributions impugn the integrity of the work of art. The *Archer* (Fig. 33), now on exhibition (5/1/2011) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, makes it abundantly clear that in seeking to expand an artist's production with works that fall outside of the canon, conception and execution of his certifiable works, such attributions also impugn and are a disservice to the integrity of artist.

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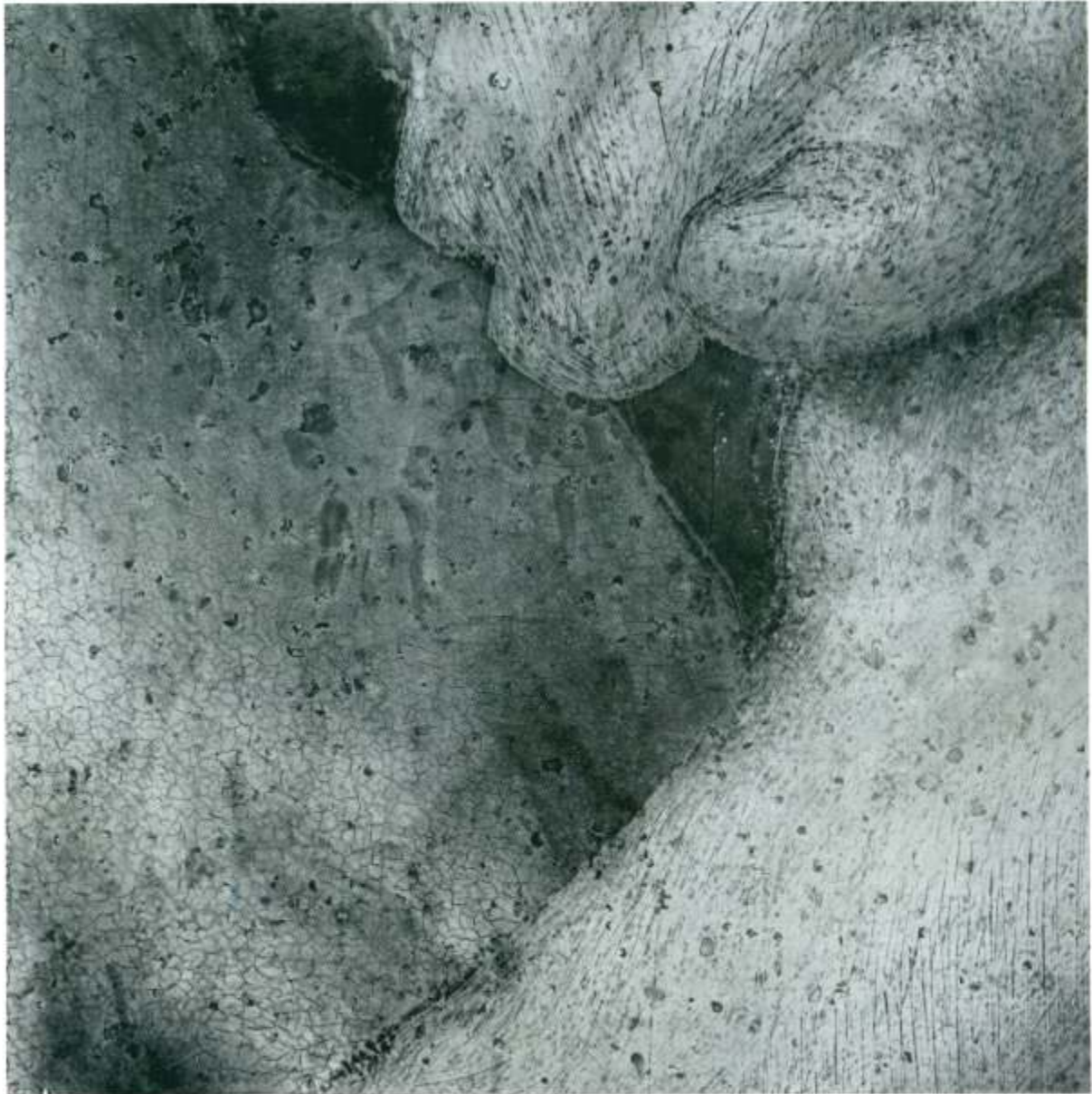
Did Michelangelo paint all, any, or none of the three feet shown here?

(For the answer, see Introduction, p.2)

Right: detail of the National Gallery's *Entombment*, which is attributed to Michelangelo, showing the feet of Christ overlapping the left foot of one of his bearers



Below: enlarged detail showing the right foot of Christ (top) overlapping the bearer's foot. Note the radically different brushwork and craquelures found in those two feet.



Photographs by courtesy of The National Gallery