

Albert Boesten-Stengel

Toruń, Katedra Historii Sztuki i Kultury, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika

Roman Reminiscences in Toledo – El Greco's *Trinity*

The *Trinity*¹ (ill. 41), painted in 1577 to 1579 for the attic of the main altarpiece in the church of Santo Domingo el Antiguo in Toledo, is considered a typical example of El Greco's use of visual sources. Scholars tried to find out motifs or formal schemes, El Greco once should have adopted from originals or through copies, and then, from such observations, deduced the painter's stylistic choices taken from or "influences" of notable masters.²

Modern comments recognize in the composition of El Greco's *Trinity* at least three visual models: Albrecht Dürer's *Trinity*-woodcut³ (ill. 42) from 1511; Michelangelo Buonarroti's *Florence-Pietà*⁴ (ill. 43), executed from 1547 and abandoned, unfinished, in Rome after 1555; Taddeo Zuccari's *Lamentation with Angels*⁵ (ill. 44), painted in Rome in the

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¹ El Greco, *Trinity with Angels*, oil on canvas, 300 × 178 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Cfr. R. Gómez, *El Greco*, Madrid 2007, p. 45–53.

² J. Gudiol, *El Greco*, Barcelona 1982, passim; J. Álvarez Lopera, *El Greco. Estudio y catálogo*, I–II, Madrid 2002–2007, passim.

³ A. Dürer, *The Trinity* (B. 123), 1511, woodcut, 39, 2 × 28, 4 cm; cfr. E. Panofsky, *Das Leben und die Kunst Albrecht Dürers*, München 1977, fig. 185.

⁴ Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Pietà*, Firenze, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo; cfr. L. Steinberg, *Michelangelo's Florentine Pietà: The Missing Leg*, "The Art Bulletin" L, 1968, no. 4, p. 343–353; idem, *Michelangelo's Florentine Pietà: The Missing Leg. Twenty Years After*, "The Art Bulletin" LXXI, 1989, no. 3, p. 480–505; P. Fehl, *Michelangelo's Tomb in Rome: Observations on the "Pietà" in Florence and the "Rondanini Pietà"*, "Artibus et Historiae" XXIII, 2002, no. 45, p. 9–27; J. Wasserman, *La pietà di Michelangelo a Firenze*, Firenze 2003; C. Acidini Luchinat, *Michelangelo scultore*, Milano 2005, p. 264–277.

⁵ T. Zuccari, *Lamentation with Angels*, Torre Canavese, private collection; cfr. K. Herrmann Fiore, *La pietà nell'opera di Federico e Taddeo Zuccari*, [in:] *Der Maler Federico Zuccari. Ein römischer Virtuoso von europäischem Ruhm*, Hrsg. M. Winner, D. Heikamp, München 1999, p. 185.



41. El Greco, *Trinity with Angels*, 1577–1579, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

early 1560s.⁶ All circumstantial evidence seems to point to El Greco's sojourn in Rome between 1570 and 1572, where he probably frequented the artistic circle in and around Palazzo Farnese, meeting there, for example, artists like Giulio Clovio, Marcello Venusti or Federico Zuccari.⁷

Ludovico Cigoli's *Trinity*⁸ (ill. 45) in the Museo dell'Opera di Santa Croce in Florence seems to mirror at first glance El Greco's composition of the same subject. But the probable dating of the Florentine altarpiece to 1592 excludes any direct contact or exchange between Cigoli and El Greco. It may be that both painters used for their individual inventions the same visual source located most probably in Rome and dated before or around 1570. A small painting on copper⁹ representing the same subject in the Musée Fabre in



42. Albrecht Dürer, *The Trinity* (B. 123), 1511

Montpellier, with an uncertain attribution to Federico Zuccari, makes evident the elevated and sitting position of God the Father in Cigoli's composition, reminding us even

⁶ L. Goldscheider, *El Greco*, London 1938, p. 26, demonstrates the visual derivation of El Greco's invention from Dürer's *Trinity* and Michelangelo's Florentine *Pietà*; cfr. furthermore P. Joannides, *El Greco and Michelangelo*, [in:] *El Greco of Crete. Proceedings of the International Symposium Held on the Occasion of the 450th Anniversary of the Artist's Birth Iraklion, Crete, 1-5 September 1990*, ed. N. Hadjinikolou, Iraklion 1995, p. 199–214.

⁷ M. Fabiański, *El Greco in Italia: precisazioni su due quadri*, "Paragone (Arte)" LIII, 2002, n. 46 (633), p. 33–38; C. Robertson, *El Greco e Italia: arte, patrocinio y teoría*, [in:] *El Greco*, ed. N. Sobregués, Barcelona 2003, p. 85–98.

⁸ L. Cigoli, *Trinity*, Firenze, Museo di S. Croce, formerly in the Risaliti Chapel in S. Croce; cfr. F. Faranda, *Ludovico Cardi detto il Cigoli*, Roma 1986, p. 212–213; M. S. Chappel, *Disegni di Ludovico Cigoli (1559–1613)*, Firenze 1992, p. 23–26, cat. 14, refers to a preparative drawing that seems to prove the derivation of Ludovico Cigoli's composition from Albrecht Dürer's *Trinity*-woodcut; A. M. Petrioli Tofani, *Ludovico Cigoli, variazione su un tema di Dürer*, [in:] *Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Roberto Salvini*, a cura di C. de Benedictis, Firenze 1984, p. 461–465.

⁹ Federico Zuccari (attr.), *Trinity with Angels*, oil on copper, 0, 41 × 0, 32 m, Montpellier, Musée Fabre, Inv. 1825.1.224; cfr. K. Herrmann Fiore, *La pietà nell'opera...*, op. cit., p. 202, fig. 22.



43. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Pietà*, circa 1500, Firenze, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo

other works in Rome, for example Federico Zuccari's fresco-painting¹⁰ of the Pucci-Chapel in Santissima Trinità dei Monti and Marco Pino's altarpiece¹¹ in Santa Maria in Aracoeli, executed after 1578 but before 1585. The last-named composition is derived from the *Pietà*, drawn after 1538 by Michelangelo for Vittoria Colonna and known since 1546 in several reproductive prints, for example the engraving of Nicolas Beatrizet, with the dating "1547", edited by Antonio Lafrery.¹² We even know of El Greco's adaptations in Philadelphia,¹³ and in New York¹⁴ after the scheme of Michelangelo's *Colonna-Pietà*.

Taddeo Zuccari's *Lamentation with Angels* (ill. 44) combines ingredients from Michelangelo's *Pietà* and especially from Rosso Fiorentino's *Dead Christ with Four Angels*,¹⁵ now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, painted most probably when he was active in Rome in the years from 1524 to 1527.¹⁶ Nothing disturbs the integrity and beauty of the completely naked body



44. Taddeo Zuccari, *Lamentation with Angels*, early 1560s, Torre Canavese, private collection

¹⁰ K. Herrmann Fiore, *La pietà nell'opera...*, op. cit., p. 194, fig. 12.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 202 and fig. 23.

¹² Nicolas Beatrizet, *Pietà with Angels in Front of the Cross*, engraving, signed with monogram 'NB' lower centre, inscribed and dated above: 'M ANGELVS INVE/ROMAE 1547', at top: 'NO VI SI PENSA QVANTO SANGVE COSTA' and with publisher's address: 'ANT/LAFRERI/SEQVANI/FORMIS'.

¹³ El Greco, *Pietà (The Lamentation of Christ)*, tempera on panel, 29 × 20 cm, Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

¹⁴ El Greco, *Pietà*, oil on canvas, 66 × 48 cm, New York, The Hispanic Society of America.

¹⁵ Rosso Fiorentino, *Dead Christ with Four Angels*, oil on canvas, 133, 5 × 104 cm, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts.

¹⁶ A letter from the year 1526 proves Rosso's relationship with Michelangelo. Cfr. J. Shearman, *The "Dead Christ" by Rosso Fiorentino*, "Boston Museum Bulletin" LXIV, 1966, p. 156.

in Rosso Fiorentino's version. The signs of Christ's passion are reduced to mere allusions. The small, bloodless wound in his side touched by the hand of an angel, the thin, quite immaterial crown of thorns surrounding the head of the Redeemer, the rod with the sponge soaked in vinegar, and the nails, depicted along the lower edge of the painting. The effects of illumination in this *nocturne* are linked with the flaming torches, a motif which Taddeo Zuccari took over.

After Taddeo's early death in 1566 his younger brother Federico Zuccari was engaged to execute the left projects. The gallery in Villa Borghese in Rome possesses an early copy by his hand after Taddeo's *Pietà with Angels*.¹⁷ In the chapel of Palazzo Farnese in Caprarola we find a variation which integrates the figure of Nikodemus.¹⁸ Adaptations of the main motif in prints date, according to this author from after 1580. In all these compositions the dead Christ sits on the edge of an open sarcophagus, a state of affairs which even explains the position of the legs.

In opposition to all similarities which may suggest El Greco's reception of the here quoted works, we have to emphasize the difference and the individual accent of his version of the *Trinity*. I think that a precise methodological approach in the sense of poetics and hermeneutics will help us to understand the Greek-Venetian painter's *peinture*, *Bildsprache*, his *visual language*, for instance the significant posture of Christ's right arm, the back of the hand placed against the hip, the palm turned outwards. Instead of the solutions we find in the works of the painter's Roman friends, we will discover in El Greco an artist concerned to emulate inherently with the masters of Roman Antiquity and High Renaissance, the *genius loci*.

In the second book of his treatise on the art of painting *De pictura* (1435) Leon Battista Alberti writes: "An istoria¹⁹ is praised in Rome in which Meleager, a dead man, weighs down those who carry him. In every one of his members he appears completely dead – everything hangs, hands, fingers and head; everything falls heavily. Anyone who tries to express a dead body – which is certainly most difficult – will be a good painter, if he knows how to make each member of a body flaccid. Thus, in every painting take care that each member performs its function so that none by the slightest articulation remains flaccid. The members of the dead should be dead to the very nails; of live persons every member should be alive in the smallest part. The body is said to live when it has certain voluntary movements. It is said to be dead when the members no longer are able to carry

¹⁷ K. Herrmann Fiore, *La pietà nell'opera...*, op. cit., p. 185 and fig. 1.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 192 and fig. 11.

¹⁹ Narrative representation.

on the functions of life, that is, movement and feeling”.²⁰

Several works of Early and High Renaissance seem to follow Alberti's recommendation and its classical model, the famous fragment,²¹ representing the transport of the dead Meleager, from the front of a Roman sarcophagus in the Musei Capitolini in Rome. A similar composition is remembered in Luca Signorelli's fresco in Orvieto (*Lamentation over the Dead Christ with Sts. Faustinus and Parentius*, 1499–1502, Fresco, Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto) and to a certain degree even in Raphael's *Borghese Deposition*.

Other subjects and occasions have led artists to suppose and, in the same moment, to deny Alberti's strict and clear distinction of life and death. Giovanni Bellini's *Madonna Enthroned Adoring the Sleeping Child*²² (from 1475) offers the implicit representation of a *Lamentation* or *Pietà*. We recognize here

the basic ambiguity in postures and mimics that represent sleep by referring indissolubly both to life and to death. The same commutability of sleep and death is even expressed



45. Ludovico Cigoli, *Trinity*, 1592, Firenze, Museo di S. Croce

²⁰ English translation after the edition: L. B. Alberti, *On Painting*, translated with introduction and notes by J. R. Spencer, New Haven 1970. Cfr. L. B. Alberti, *De pictura*, [in:] L. B. Alberti, *Opere volgari*, a cura di C. Grayson, III, Bari 1973, p. 64, chap. 37: “Lodasi una storia in Roma nella quale Meleagro morto, portato, aggrava quelli che portano il peso, e in sé pare in ogni suo membro ben morto ogni cosa pende, mani, dito e capo; ogni cosa cade languido; ciò che ve si dà ad esprimere uno corpo morto, qual cosa certo è difficilissima, però che in uno corpo chi saprà fingere ciascuno membro ozioso, sarà ottimo artefice. Così adunque in ogni pittura si osservi che ciascuno membro faccia il suo officio, che niuno per minimo articolo che sia, resti ozioso. E sieno le membra de' morti sino all'unghie morte. Dei vivi sia ogni minima parte viva. Dicesi vivere il corpo quando a sua posta abbia certo movimento: dicesi morte dove i membri non più possono portare gli officii della vita, cioè movimento e sentimento”.

²¹ G. Becatti, *Raffaello e l'antico*, [in:] *Raffaello. L'opera, le fonti, la fortuna*, a cura di M. Salmi, Novara 1968, p. 493–569; J. H. Beck, *Raffaello*, Köln 2003, p. 20, 28, fig. 37, 38.

²² Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna Enthroned Adoring the Sleeping Child*, tempera on wood, 120 × 63 cm, Venezia, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Inv. 591.

in a composition traditionally attributed to Michelangelo and mostly known by copies of Marcello Venusti, the so called *Madonna del silenzio* (*Madonna of Silence*) – here the version from around 1565 belonging to the collections of the National Gallery in London.²³

Next to the quoted *Meleager-fragment* we find another perhaps classical art object used by Italian Renaissance artists as prototype of individual inventions. It is not known before the 16th-century artistic literature where it is described as an ancient bas-relief which once should have belonged to Lorenzo Ghiberti. Its curious title *Letto di Policleto* (*Bed of Polycletus*), not mentioned by any classical author, corresponds well to its obvious fame among Italian Renaissance artists, such as Titian and Michelangelo.²⁴ Today Ghiberti's object is most probably missing. But we recognize a quite similar composition in a small number of ancient or modern copies: the marble-relief²⁵ integrated in the wall of the Loggia in Palazzo Mattei di Giove (Rome) (ill. 46) and another one recently registered in the art market.²⁶

The composition possibly represents the most dramatic scene in Apuleius' novel *Amor and Psyche* written in the 2nd century AD. One night, after Amor had fallen asleep, Psyche brought out a dagger and a lamp she had hidden in the room, in order to see and kill the foreign being she had taken for a monster. But the light instead revealed the most beautiful creature she had ever seen. The bas-relief translates the narrative into pregnant postures.

It is fascinating to see how far the selective borrowings from the *Bed of Polycletus* appearing in the works of Renaissance masters conserve a memory of the related figure's original visual context and meaning. *Psyche's* complex *contrapposto* is easily recognizable in Titian's *Venus and Adonis*²⁷ in Madrid, painted between 1553 and 1554 for King Philipp II of Spain. This highly characteristic figure of the sleeping *Amor* returns on a drawing sheet²⁸ of Titian in the Uffizi at Florence. A figure study on the backside of the same sheet refers

²³ Marcello Venusti (attr.), *Madonna del silenzio*, oil on panel, 43, 2 × 28, 6 cm, London, National Gallery; cfr. P. Joannides, *Michelangelo and His Influence. Drawings from Windsor Castle*, London 1996, p. 29, fig. 27.

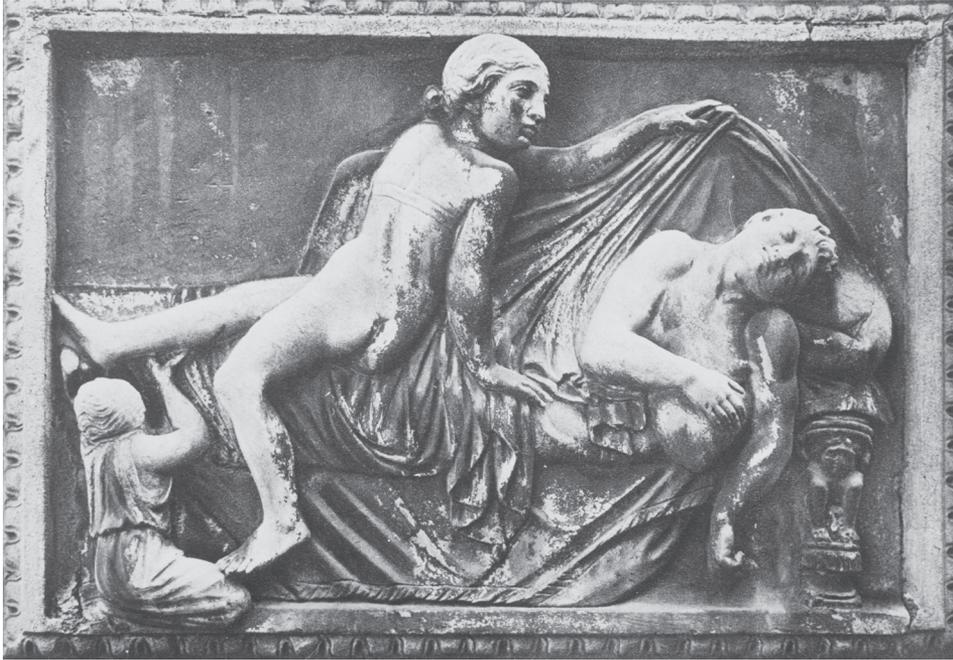
²⁴ F. Zöllner, *Polcretior manu – Zum Polykletbild der frühen Neuzeit*, [in:] *Polyklet: der Bildhauer der griechischen Klassik*, Hrsg. H. Beck, Mainz 1990, p. 461 and p. 463–464.

²⁵ L. Goldscheider, *Michelangelo: Drawings*, London 1951, pl. 143.

²⁶ E. Gombrich, *The Style all'Antica: Imitation and Assimilation*, [in:] *Renaissance and Mannerism. Studies in Western Art. XXth International Congress of the History of Art 1961*, II, Princeton 1963, p. 31–41, here fig. 19.

²⁷ Tiziano, *Venus and Adonis*, oil on canvas, 180 × 207 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.

²⁸ Tiziano, black and white chalk, 40, 9 × 25, 2 cm. Firenze, Uffizi, GDSU Inv. 12907 F v.; cfr. *Tiziano*, a cura di F. Valcanover, catalogo della mostra, Venezia 1990, p. 306–307.



46. Unknown master, *Bed of Polycletus*, Roma, Palazzo Mattei di Giove

to his *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*,²⁹ executed in the years 1557 to 1559. And it may be that Titian adopted the sleeping *Amor* as a laterally reversed reminiscence even in Jesus Christ's body of the *Entombment*³⁰ painted for the same King Philipp II in 1559. Significant is here the feature of the hanging arm, the palm of the hand turned outwards. The painting was registered since 1574 in the Royal Site of San Lorenzo de El Escorial where El Greco perhaps studied it.

The sleeping *Amor* from the *Bed of Polycletus* is recognizable even in three red chalk sketches on drawing sheet³¹ (ill. 47) of the Royal Collection in Windsor Castle, attributed with good reason to Michelangelo. Only the dating in the period around 1525, proposed by the Arthur Popham and then generally accepted, should be discussed more closely. Pen drawing

²⁹ Tiziano, *The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*, oil on canvas, 493 × 277 cm, Venezia, Chiesa dei Gesuiti.

³⁰ Tiziano, *Entombment*, oil on canvas, 137 × 175 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.

³¹ Windsor Castle, Royal Library, Inv. 12763r.; cfr. A. E. Popham, J. Wilde, *The Italian Drawings of the XV and XVI Centuries in the Collection of His Majesty the King at Windsor Castle*, London 1949, p. 246, no. 422, and pl. 23.



47. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Drawing*, around 1525 (?), Windsor Castle, Royal Library, Inv. 12763r.

partly overlaying the red chalk strokes shows a figure (ill. 48), described by Popham and in the recent collection catalogue as “a seated monk”. I perceive here the same type of dress which Michelangelo has given to the figure of Nikodemus in his *Florence-Pietà* (ill. 43) where actually Christ’s hanging left arm, the palm of the hand turned outwards, seems to reflect the sculptor’s perception of the *Bed of Polycletus*.

The early and growing fame of Michelangelo’s *Florence-Pietà* is linked with the tradition that the artist had made it for himself, for reasons of both artistic and religious devotion, and destined it to decorate his own tomb. From Vasari’s 1568-edition of the *Lives* we know the story of the tragic incident, the damaged left leg of the dead Christ’s figure. Michelangelo abandoned the unfinished and – in his eyes – ruined work. In 1561 he left it to his friend Francesco Bandini. Vasari saw it in 1564 in the Garden of Pier Antonio Bandini at the Quirinal.

Giorgio Vasari, defining Michelangelo’s *Pietà* as *opera faticosa, rara in un sasso*³² (“an exhausting and rare masterpiece made from just one piece of stone”), seems to allude to the artist’s intention of emulating the Vatican *Laokoon*, the most prominent classical example of a group excavated from a single block of marble.³³ And just as the mutilated state of

³² G. Vasari, *Vita di Michelangelo Buonarroti* (1568), [in:] idem, *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori*, Milano 1968, p. 245: “Era questo Cristo come deposto di croce, sostenuto dalla Nostra Donna entrandoli sotto et aiutando con atto di forza Niccodemo fermato in piede e da una delle Marie che lo aiuta, vedendo mancato la forza nella madre, che vinta dal dolore non può reggere; né si può vedere corpo morto simile a quel di Cristo, che cascando con le membra abbandonate fa attiture tutte differenti non solo degli altri suoi, ma di quanti se ne fecion mai: opera faticosa, rara in un sasso e veramente divina; e questa, come si dirà di sotto, restò imperfetta et ebbe molte disgrazie; ancora ch’egli avessi avuto animo che la dovessi servire per la sepoltura di lui a’ piè di quello altare dove e’ pensava di porla”.

³³ P. Fehl, *Michelangelo’s Tomb in Rome...*, op. cit., p. 10, refers to Pliny the Elder’s remark on the *Laokoon-group*: Plinius, *Naturalis historia* XXXVI, 4.37.



48. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Drawing*, around 1525 (?), Windsor Castle, Royal Library, Inv. 12763r., detail

Michelangelo's unfinished work appealed to imaginary or real completion, so we see it in an engraving³⁴ attributed to Cherubino Alberti or in Antonio Viviani's *Deposition*³⁵ in the Roman Church Madonna dei Monti painted in the years 1585–1587.³⁶ As early as in the 1550s we find traces of Michelangelo's *Florence-Pietà* in the *Deposition* (ill. 49) of Jacopino del Conte, painted for the main altar in the Oratory of San Giovanni Decollato in Rome, at that time seat of the mostly Florentine Confraternity of Saint John whose member Michelangelo was, and which organised even his burial in 1564.

Ascanio Condivi, the master's confidant and collaborator, describes in his *Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, edited in 1553, the work in progress as far as the former *Florence-Pietà* was carved out until to this date: "It is a group of four figures, larger than life – a Deposition.

³⁴ Cherubino Alberti, *Pietà (after Michelangelo)*, engraving; cfr. *Italian Artists of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. S. Buffa, New York 1982, p. 141, no. 23 (58) (The Illustrated Bartsch, 34); P. Fehl, *Michelangelo's Tomb in Rome...*, op. cit., p. 14, 16, fig. 5.

³⁵ J. Miziołek, *Pod znakiem sztuki Michała Anioła. Kilka uwag o programie ikonograficznym kościoła Madonna dei Monti w Rzymie*, [in:] *Sztuka po Trydencie*, red. K. Kuczman, A. Witko, Kraków 2014, p. 107–108.

³⁶ Concerning the virtual restorations of Michelangelo's *Pietà* cfr. P. Fehl, *Michelangelo's Tomb in Rome...*, op. cit., p. 9–27.



49. Jacopino del Conte, *Deposition*, late 1550s, Roma, San Giovanni Decollato, anonymous photography, around 1900

The dead Christ is held up by His Mother; she supports the body on her bosom with her arms and with her knees, a wonderfully beautiful gesture. She is aided by Nicodemus above, who is erect and stands firmly – he holds her under the arms and sustains her with manly strength – and on the left by one of the Marys, who, although exhibiting the deepest grief, does not omit to do those offices that the Mother, by the extremity of her sorrow, is unable to perform. Christ is dead, all His limbs fall relaxed, but withal in a very different manner from the Christ Michelangelo made for the Marchioness of Pescara, or the Pietà³⁷

Condivi's *ekphrasis* makes visible what may have attracted even other artists before and after El Greco: the complex, dramatic interaction of a small number of figures yet *coming from* and still *united in* a single marble block. Next to the mimetically represented acts and habits we notice the figurative *emergence* of the image itself.

El Greco's *Trinity* seems to transform different aspects of the sculptured group in a single one, but virtually pregnant projection. Only the original volumetric group, in difference to any painted or graphic reproduction, could give the opportunity to such an operation. In a certain way El Greco's composition summarizes the postures and gestures of St. Mary and Nicodemus in the single figure of God the Father. Now the Father alone, while he himself is sustained by the two flanking angels, supports Christ's body on his bosom with his arms and with his knees. Furthermore: the twisting of the dead Christ's hanging arm, the back of the hand leaning at the hip, the palm turned dramatically towards the beholder, is more accentuated than in any other work of Michelangelo's Roman followers. By this

³⁷ A. Condivi, *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti* – English translation from H. Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, Harmondsworth 1978, p. 280–281. Cfr. A. Condivi, *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti raccolta per Ascanio Condivi da la Ripa Transone*, Roma 1553, p. 39r–v: “Questè un gruppo di quattro figure piu che al naturale, cioè un Christo deposto di croce, sostenuto così morto dalla sua madre. Laquale si vede sott'entrare à quel corpo, col petto, colle braccia et col ginocchio in mirabil'atto, ma però aiutata di sopra da Nicodemo che ritto et fermo in sù le gambe, lo sollieva sotto le braccia, mostrando forza gagliarda, et da una delle Marie della parte sinistra. La quale anchora che molto dolente si di mostri, non dimeno non manca di far quel uffitio, che la madre per lo estremo dolore prestar non può. Il Christo abandonato casca, con tutte le membra rilassate, ma in atto molto differente, et da quel che Michelagnolo fece per la Marchesana di pescara, et da quel della Madonna della febre”.

detail El Greco transforms the simply limp state of the dead body in a kind of tension and suspense, visible only in Michelangelo's original. It makes us expectant of Christ's reawakening in the next moment. Emulating Michelangelo's art of *rilievo*, El Greco prepares the next step. It is the painter's role. The highlights and shadings led us imagine an intensive directed illumination from the left, coordinated with the large window in the church wall next to the altarpiece. The silk draperies of the angels shimmer in all the colours of the rainbow. It is the moment of the rising sun on Easter morning.

Rzymskie reminiscencje w Toledo – *Trójca Święta* El Greca*

Streszczenie

Trójca Święta (Madryt, Museo Nacional del Prado), malowana w latach 1577–1579 dla górnej partii głównego ołtarza w kościele Santo Domingo el Antiguo w Toledo, jest uważana za typowy przykład użycia źródeł wizualnych przez El Greca. Precyzyjne podejście metodologiczne – w sensie poetyki i hermeneutyki – pomoże nam zrozumieć *peinture*, *Bildsprache*, tego grecko-weneckiego malarza, jego *język wizualny*, choćby znaczącą posturę Chrystusa – pozycję jego prawej ręki, której tył opiera się o biodro, a dłoń zwrócona jest na zewnątrz. Ten motyw jest rozpoznawalny w zapewne klasycznej płaskorzeźbie, znanej z XVI-wiecznej literatury artystycznej pod ciekawym tytułem *Letto di Policleto* (*Łoża Polikleta*), niewspominanej przez żadnego klasycznego autora, lecz korespondującej z jego oczywistą sławą wśród artystów włoskiego renesansu. Arkusz rysunkowy w kolekcji Royal Library w zamku Windsor dowodzi, że Michał Anioł znał śpiącego *Amora z Łoża Polikleta*, gdy około roku 1550 projektował w Rzymie swą rzeźbę, znaną później jako *Pietà florencka*. *Ekphrasis* powstającej pracy Michała Anioła, autorstwa Ascania Condiviego (*Życie Michała Anioła Buonarrotiego*, 1553), podkreśla to, co mogło przyciągnąć nawet innych artystów przed i po El Grecu: złożoną, dramatyczną interakcję niewielkiej liczby postaci, *wychodzących* niejako z jednego bloku marmuru, a zarazem w nim *zjednoczonych*. Obok mimetycznie przedstawionych aktów zauważamy figuratywne *pojawienie się* samego wizerunku. *Trójca* El Greca zdaje się transformować różne aspekty grupy rzeźbiarskiej Michała Anioła w jedną jedyną, lecz wirtualnie pełną nadziei projekcję. Rozszerzając *rilievo* Michała Anioła, El Greco przygotowuje następny krok. To rola malarza. Blaski i cienie pozwalają nam domyślać się intensywnego oświetlenia z lewej strony. Jedwabne draperie aniołów lśnią we wszystkich kolorach tęczy. To chwila wschodu o poranku w Niedzielę Wielkanocną.

* Przeł. Marta A. Urbańska.