

THE DISPERSAL AND FORMATION OF SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE'S COLLECTION OF DRAWINGS BY MICHELANGELO

I. THE DISPERSAL

In 1846 the University of Oxford acquired, through the generosity of a number of benefactors but supremely that of Lord Eldon, a large number of drawings by, attributed to, or associated with Michelangelo and Raphael. Put on display in the University Galleries were fifty-three mountings of drawings associated with Michelangelo, and 137 by Raphael.¹ Some of these mountings comprised two or more drawings and the overall total of individual drawings was somewhat larger.² This exhibition and – consequently – its catalogue included most, but not the totality, of the drawings by these artists offered for sale by subscription to the University of Oxford in 1842. In the prospectus issued that year, the number of mountings of drawings classed under Michelangelo's name totalled eighty-seven and those under Raphael's 190.³ All the works listed in 1842 were in fact acquired by Oxford, but only a selection was exhibited four years later. To the Raphael series, later curators have added by purchase at least two autograph drawings and several copies and studio works; to the Michelangelo series, only one further drawing – an informative copy – has been added by purchase; but some other interesting copies came to the museum by transfer from the Bodleian Library in 1863 and a further group, from the Taylorian Institution, in 1976. Conversely, some drawings believed in 1846 to be by or associable with Michelangelo have been re-attributed to other hands. Nevertheless, with fifty-seven sheets, the Ashmolean houses the third largest collection – after Casa Buonarroti and the British Museum – of autograph drawings by one of the greatest of all draughtsmen, and Oxford's total is increased by four when the Michelangelo drawings included in the 1765 bequest to Christ Church by General Guise – at least one of which came from Casa Buonarroti via Filippo Baldinucci⁴ – are taken into account. The present catalogue, concerned with drawings by, and copies after, Michelangelo, therefore deals with a group of works that – certain subtractions

from Michelangelo apart – in its essentials has not changed since 1846, although one sheet of drawings hitherto placed in the Raphael school is here included as a copy after Michelangelo – an identification, indeed, made in 1830 but subsequently overlooked.⁵

The two series that came to Oxford were the remains of two much larger series of drawings, both owned by the man who has clear claim to be the greatest of all English collectors of Old Master Drawings: Sir Thomas Lawrence. It is Lawrence's collection that provided all the drawings by, and most of those after, Michelangelo now in the Ashmolean Museum. Lawrence, himself a fine draughtsman, whose precision and skill in this area is not always visible in the painted portraits from which he earned an income large enough to indulge his collector's passion, was a predatory and omnivorous – even obsessional – collector of drawings.⁶ He attempted to obtain every significant work that came within his reach, and he was particularly anxious to acquire drawings by or believed to be by Michelangelo. When Lawrence died in 1830, he left his collection of drawings to various representatives of the nation at a very advantageous price, £18,000, probably no more than half his expenditure.⁷ That offer was not accepted – a wounding rejection from which the representation of Old Master Drawings in Great Britain has never fully recovered – and the collection as a whole, comprising, according to the posthumous inventory of 1830, around 4,300 sheets of drawings and some seven albums – including the two precious volumes containing over 500 drawings by Fra Bartolommeo, now in the Boymans-van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam – reverted in 1834 to Lawrence's executor, Archibald Keightley. He ceded the drawings the same year to the dealer Samuel Woodburn for £16,000. This price took into account the fact that Woodburn was Lawrence's principal creditor, and the source from whom he had acquired most of his drawings.⁸ It was at this time that the unobtrusive TL blind stamp was applied to the drawings, although it seems that, in a very few cases, this was omitted.⁹

Samuel Woodburn, who must be recognised as one of the greatest nineteenth-century experts on Old Master Drawings, divided the Lawrence drawings into sequences by author or presumed author and showed about a thousand of them in a series of ten exhibitions during 1835 and 1836 in his galleries in St. Martin's Lane. Each exhibition contained a selection of one hundred drawings by one or more masters, and each exhibition was accompanied by an unillustrated and, if by modern standards fairly rudimentary, nevertheless very informative, catalogue. It should be noted that the dimensions of the drawings shown and the descriptions of their media are, so far as can be judged, trustworthy. It seems, from press reports, that a few additional drawings were occasionally included ex-catalogue, and it may be that the selections were from time to time refreshed – but that is no more than hypothesis.

The tenth exhibition, in July 1836, was devoted to one hundred drawings by or attributed to Michelangelo – or rather one hundred mountings, for a few of the mounts contained more than one drawing. A transcription of this catalogue is given in Appendix 2; to this, the sums – all in guineas – asked by Woodburn for the drawings, which provide a rough indication of his judgement of their quality and value, have been added from a priced copy of the catalogue preserved in the National Gallery. As far as can be judged today, Woodburn's connoisseurship was reasonably accurate. Of the one hundred mountings in the exhibition, the contents of ninety-five can today be identified with reasonable security.¹⁰ Sixty-nine of these would generally be considered to be by Michelangelo as a whole or in part. However, it is worth noting that, knowledgeable though Woodburn and Lawrence were, one or other or both were capable of error. In at least one case, the mistake was glaring. A portrait drawing by Parmigianino of Valerio Belli, in a mount by Vasari, now in the Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam (Inv. 1392), had appeared in the Dezallier d'Argenville sale of 18–28 January 1779, as part of either lot 107 or lot 496, under its correct attribution. In 1836 it was shown by Woodburn among the Michelangelo drawings as no. 39, described as a portrait of Ariosto.¹¹ Whether this was a mistake by the collector Lawrence or the dealer Woodburn cannot be ascertained; it does demonstrate however that some misattributions of the drawings that passed from one to the other were not necessarily the product of erroneous tradition but were of recent introduction.

It is not fully clear how many drawings Sir Thomas Lawrence owned that he believed to be by or after Michelangelo, and it is likely that attributions – then as now – fluctuated. Some 145 mountings of drawings,

probably comprising around 170 individual sheets by Michelangelo, are listed in the posthumous inventory of 1830. But this inventory was evidently compiled in haste and no doubt under fraught circumstances by Woodburn – not by Ottley whom Lawrence had wished to undertake the task – and although it maintains a reasonable standard of accuracy, it certainly contains mistakes that Woodburn later corrected at leisure. Nor is it always possible to identify securely drawings listed in it with those described in greater detail in subsequent catalogues. Furthermore, it seems that at least a few Michelangelo drawings that Lawrence owned were either overlooked or not recorded for reasons about which we can only speculate. We cannot be certain either of Woodburn's estimate of the Michelangelo drawings he had acquired, although he was well aware that his run totalled considerably more than the hundred drawings that he exhibited in 1836. J. C. Robinson conjectured that Woodburn had acquired about 150 altogether, but this total, which more or less matches what can be inferred from Lawrence's inventory, certainly refers to mountings rather than individual drawings.¹² Of course, it included a number of copies.

Woodburn hoped to sell Lawrence's drawings in runs. As he explained in the prefaces to some of his catalogues, he believed in keeping the works of artists together. He achieved this aim in some cases: the Earl of Ellesmere acquired the Carracci and the Giulio Romano sequences complete, and both series remained together in his family – apart from a gift of a group of Carracci drawings to the Ashmolean in 1853 – until they were dispersed at auction by Sotheby's in 1972. But Woodburn was unsuccessful with regard to the Michelangelos. It was not until the beginning of 1838 that fifty-nine drawings from those exhibited in 1836 (plus a comparable number by Raphael) were acquired from him by King William II of Holland: A list of William II's purchases, taken from Woodburn's invoice, is given in Appendix 2. However, the invoice presented by Woodburn in February 1838 does not tell the full story, for William II returned to make further purchases. In August that year, he acquired from Woodburn another drawing by Michelangelo from the 1836 exhibition, one of supreme importance, the *Epifania* cartoon made for the abortive painting by Ascanio Condivi, plus a number of other drawings that had not been displayed in 1836. At his death, William II owned some nine further drawings by or after Michelangelo that must have been acquired from Woodburn in August 1838 – there is no evidence that the king acquired drawings from any other dealer.

According to Robinson,

the knowledge and experience of the Royal amateur were not on a par with his zeal. He evidently intended to select all the most important specimens; but his choice fell almost exclusively on the largest, most completely finished and showy drawings; and thus, in great measure, he defeated his own object; for although it must be admitted that the final selection did comprise some of the finest gems of the Lawrence series, the great majority of the specimens chosen were copies and drawings by scholars and followers of the two great artists.¹³

Overall, Robinson calculated, about half of these were genuine, but he was unduly critical: Of William's purchases from the 1836 exhibition that can now be traced and identified – at present fifty-four of the total of sixty – fourteen are certainly copies and derivations, and most were known to be such, since for these the king paid relatively low prices.¹⁴ Even if the six drawings that remain to be traced were all copies, the average is still respectable: Forty of the sixty drawings, that is two-thirds of William's purchases, were autograph.¹⁵ If the total of sixty-seven drawings in William's posthumous sale catalogue listed either under Michelangelo's name or misattributed to Sebastiano or Venusti is examined, of which a further seven drawings elude identification, it would seem that a total of twenty-seven drawings were not by Michelangelo, but most of these were minor works and were no doubt known to be such.¹⁶ On the evidence, William deserves to be rehabilitated as a judge of Michelangelo drawings – and Old Master Drawings in general – for he obtained a very significant number of major masterpieces. Robinson's depreciation of the king's choice – in which he was followed by many other scholars until a well-researched account of William's collecting was published in 1989 – is hard to explain.¹⁷ Indeed, Robinson himself acquired, directly or indirectly, a number of Michelangelo drawings that had been owned by William II and that he then sold to his own clients.

Either before or after the disposal to William II, Woodburn seems to have reconciled himself to selling at least one drawing as a single item to an individual purchaser. "*The Repose*," that is *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, no. 11, in Woodburn's 1836 exhibition, in which it was marked at the very high price of 250 guineas, emerged from a then undisclosed British source at Christie's on 6 July 1993, lot 120, and was acquired by the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.¹⁸ It is unclear whether it had remained in the same family collection since Woodburn sold it or whether it had

moved silently from owner to owner. The case of the *Annunciation*, a *modello* made for Marcello Venusti and now in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, may be similar.¹⁹ Although this drawing was not included in the 1836 exhibition, Woodburn considered it sufficiently important to reproduce as Plate 2 in his *Lawrence Gallery*, published in 1853, the single drawing in that publication not displayed in 1836. It was not among the drawings sold to William II and re-purchased at his sale. What happened to it between 1830 (it cannot specifically be identified in Lawrence's inventory) and 1860, when it appeared in Woodburn's posthumous sale of the remainder of the Lawrence collection, can only be conjectured, but one possible explanation is that it was sold by Woodburn even before 1836 and was subsequently re-purchased by him.

Apart from these instances, which may or may not be isolated, following the disposal to William II, Woodburn returned to the public fray, campaigning to have the remainder of the Michelangelos and Raphaels bought for the Oxford University Galleries at preferential rates – in this he seems to have been prompted and sustained by the interest, enthusiasm, and protracted effort of the Reverend Henry Wellesley. In 1842 Woodburn produced the prospectus of the drawings on offer, which supplements the information provided in the 1836 catalogue. His efforts were rewarded in 1846, and it is worth reflecting that, but for the determination, persistence, and public-spiritedness of a dealer, whose sense of public responsibility outweighed his own desire for gain, and the informed energy of a clergyman and academic, the Ashmolean Museum would not now have one of the world's greatest gatherings of drawings by two of the greatest of High Renaissance masters. Of the one hundred mountings of drawings by or attributed to Michelangelo exhibited by Woodburn in London in 1836, forty (comprising forty-eight drawings) entered the ownership of Oxford University.²⁰ All these drawings are identifiable in the Ashmolean's collection. Forty-two further mountings, certainly from Lawrence's collection, but not exhibited in 1836, comprising fifty-three drawings also came to the Oxford University Galleries. To these were added five further mountings, comprising five drawings, acquired by Woodburn in the interim from the collection of Jeremiah Harman, which, according to Woodburn, Lawrence had coveted in vain. Together this made up a grand total of eighty-seven mountings comprising 104 drawings then believed with more or less conviction to be by Michelangelo, of which the present catalogue retains fifty-seven as substantially autograph and around

fifteen by followers so close that they can reasonably be considered as coming from Michelangelo's studio.

Disinterested though Woodburn's motives and achievements largely were, it is clear that this sale did not fully liquidate his holdings of Lawrence's Michelangelo drawings. We cannot be sure how many Woodburn retained: It is, after all, uncertain how many drawings by and attributed to Michelangelo Lawrence himself owned and whether some attributions might have changed between his death and Woodburn's exhibition. It would seem that most of the Michelangelo drawings that remained in Woodburn's hands were not deceitfully withheld from Oxford; they were either slight or scrappy drawings or architectural sketches that Woodburn probably considered to be of little interest – indeed, may simply have forgotten about – or obvious copies that he probably did not much value. He cannot be shown to have retained for himself any Michelangelo drawing that would then have been regarded as of real worth. It is unclear how many drawings by and after Michelangelo remained in his possession, and it is difficult to calculate this from Woodburn's posthumous sale of 1860 because some of the drawings in that – such as the Morgan Library *Annunciation* – may have been sold to clients other than William II of Holland and subsequently bought back by Woodburn.

The Michelangelo drawings purchased from Woodburn by King William II of Holland were enjoyed by their new owner for no more than a decade. With the King's death in 1850, they again came on the market. The sale held in The Hague in August 1850 to dispose of William II's collections contained some eighty-two lots of drawings by, associated with, or after Michelangelo. Many of the most important of these were, as has long been known, re-acquired by Woodburn. Robinson remarked that Woodburn's purchases at the William II sale "reunited the great bulk of them to the residue of the Lawrence collection still in his possession."²¹ According to Robinson, thirty-three of the Michelangelo drawings sold by Woodburn to the King were repurchased by Woodburn, but this was an underestimate for, from a marked copy of the sale catalogue preserved in the National Gallery, it appears that Woodburn in fact acquired thirty-seven. Three others were acquired by the Louvre – appropriately one of these had earlier been owned by Pierre-Jean Mariette and, no doubt, Pierre Crozat.²² A few more were reserved for the Duke of Sachsen-Weimar, William II's son-in-law, who acquired drawings both for the Museum in Weimar and for his family's own collection: Most of these were copies.

Woodburn's motives for buying back the drawings are uncertain. He may have acquired them for stock, hoping

to disperse them piecemeal over the years to come, and some he certainly sold. He may have wished to reconstitute a nucleus of Lawrence's best drawings, either for his own pleasure or to sell again as a small choice collection. The volume of thirty-one lithographic reproductions, comprising thirty drawings either by, or thought to be by Michelangelo, plus a page of his poems, published by Woodburn in 1853, just before his death, may have been part of an effort to re-awaken interest in Lawrence's Michelangelos.²³ The great allegorical drawing, the so-called *Dream of Human Life* (London, Courtauld Institute), the most expensive of the drawings Woodburn had sold to William in 1839 and re-acquired for 1,200 guilders at William's sale (lot 125), was soon sold on to the Duke of Sachsen-Weimar, who presumably regretted not having reserved it. Several other drawings by or attributed to Michelangelo went to the Reverend Henry Wellesley who – surprisingly – did not bequeath them to the Ashmolean. They were included in his posthumous sale of 1866.

Woodburn died in 1853, and it is unclear how many of the Michelangelo drawings repurchased by him at William II's sale had been sold between then and his death. Nor can it be considered certain, although it is probable, that none was sold by his legatees between 1853 and 1860. In 1854 that part of his collection of drawings that did not stem from Lawrence was offered at Christie's, but the sale was not a success. This may have discouraged another sale in the short term, and the drawings remained in the possession of his sister, Miss Woodburn, until June 1860, when, in an enormous sale running to 1,075 lots – many of them comprising several drawings – the remainder of the Lawrence collection was dispersed. The sale included sixty-one lots of drawings by and after Michelangelo, comprising 111 sheets, plus two letters, one by Michelangelo himself, the other by Sebastiano del Piombo. A number of these drawings were explicitly described as copies, and it is probable that those genuinely by Michelangelo – or at that time honestly believed to be by him – numbered some fifty-three. However, there were some errors: A double-sided sheet of *Figure Studies* certainly by Taddeo Zuccaro, now in the Art Institute of Chicago, is to be found as lot 1492 in William Young Ottley's sale of 1814, correctly given to Taddeo. In 1860 the sheet re-appeared as lot 108, now given to Michelangelo.²⁴ Of course, this reattribution may not have been the responsibility either of Lawrence or of Woodburn, but whether it was a mistake by the one or the other, or merely a later administrative error – quite understandable given such a mass of material – it demonstrates the introduction of at least one misattribution more recent than that of the Parmigianino

noted previously. From the 1860 sale, ten drawings by Michelangelo were purchased for the British Museum, all of which seem to have been owned by William II. Others were acquired by John Charles Robinson, the first catalogue of the Michelangelos and Raphaels in the Ashmolean, both for his own collection and for that of John Malcolm of Poltalloch.

John Malcolm assembled an extraordinary collection of Old Master drawings in the years between 1860, when he acquired the collection formed by J. C. Robinson, and 1891, two years before his death, when he bought his last drawing, a fine pen-sketch by Raphael.²⁵ Malcolm was interested only in works of the highest quality and obtained some of the greatest drawings to come onto the market. He seems to have discarded even perfectly genuine drawings if he felt they were too scrappy. Some of these lesser drawings, including three by Michelangelo and an interesting sheet often attributed to Jacomo del Duca, who assisted Michelangelo in his late years, were given by Malcolm to the family of his son-in-law, A. E. Gathorne-Hardy; their holdings were liquidated at two sales by Sotheby's in London in 1976.²⁶ Happily, most of Malcolm's collection was purchased from his heir in 1894 for the British Museum. So by indirect paths, the greater part of Lawrence's collection of Michelangelos was reunited in British public collections. All told, the British Museum now owns thirty-one of the drawings acquired from Woodburn by the King of Holland.

Another purchaser at the 1860 sale was the obsessive bibliophile, Sir Thomas Phillipps, who acquired several group lots of lesser drawings, among them some fine early copies after Michelangelo. These descended to the Phillipps-Fenwick family, whose collection of drawings was catalogued by A. E. Popham in 1935 – Popham noting that some of the parcels had remained unopened since the sale of 1860. The Phillipps-Fenwick drawings, minus a few sheets kept for his own collection, were acquired and given to the British Museum in 1946 by an anonymous benefactor, revealed, after his death, to be Count Antoine Seilern. It was Seilern, the most significant collector of Michelangelo drawings in the twentieth century, who acquired the *Dream of Human Life* from the Sachsen-Weimar family in 1950. This and four other drawings by Michelangelo, including an important *Christ on the Cross* also owned by Lawrence and lithographed for the Lawrence Gallery in 1853, were, on the Count's death in 1978, bequeathed by him to the Courtauld Institute of London University, where they form part of the Prince's Gate Collection.

At the sale of William II's collection, there were of course other purchasers beside Woodburn. The majority,

probably, were dealers rather than collectors, and none of them seems to have acquired drawings by Michelangelo in large quantities. These drawings gradually filtered back onto the market, where a number were acquired for his own collection by Robinson; most of these eventually migrated to public collections in the United States, although Robinson also owned other drawings by or attributed to the master, which have yet to reappear. Apart from the purchase by the Louvre, France benefited further.²⁷ In the great religious painter, portraitist, and collector Léon Bonnat, France found an equivalent of both Lawrence and Robinson. Bonnat's exceptional discernment and large income allowed him to form a collection of drawings of the highest quality, including seven by Michelangelo, two of which had certainly passed through the collections of Lawrence and William II. With the exception of one sheet, given to the Louvre in 1912, these were bequeathed to the museum of his native town, Bayonne, in 1922.²⁸

II. THE FORMATION OF SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE'S COLLECTION OF MICHELANGELO DRAWINGS

It is not fully clear when Lawrence began collecting drawings seriously. By his own testimony, he always had great enthusiasm for Old Master drawings and, in his youth, copied prints after them with avidity. Having attained great success by the early 1790s, he could have purchased drawings in that decade, when, for example, Sir Joshua Reynolds' enormous collection came on to the market, but he does not appear to have done so. The available evidence suggests that Lawrence began collecting drawings on a large scale only shortly before 1820.²⁹

It is impossible to be certain of the provenance of all of Lawrence's drawings, but Woodburn's exhibition catalogue of 1836 and his 1842 prospectus listing the drawings on offer to the University Galleries provide useful leads. A list of what the compiler has been able to ascertain or conjecture is provided in Appendix 2. Within the approximately 145 mountings of Michelangelo and Michelangelo-like drawings owned by Lawrence, certain currents can be distinguished.

A limited number of Lawrence's Michelangelo drawings came to him from British collections, mostly those of artists. In general, it seems that throughout Europe, royal and aristocratic collectors attempted to obtain drawings that were highly finished and of display quality, and it was left to artists to collect more sketchy and less obviously elegant drawings.³⁰ It is likely that many of the more

wealthy artists who formed collections owned one or two slight drawings, or scraps, by Michelangelo, although this can rarely be proved because provenances are usually difficult to trace and rarely go back further than the eighteenth century. The great collection of Sir Peter Lely seems to have contained very few autograph drawings by Michelangelo – or, at least, very few genuine Michelangelo drawings bear his stamp.³¹ Thus, the Devonshire collection, formed with virtually unlimited resources in the early eighteenth century, and including many drawings once owned by Lely, contained and contains no single autograph sheet by Michelangelo. Whether Nicholas Lanier owned any Michelangelos is conjectural: So far his marks have been found only on copies. The painter and collector Jonathan Richardson the Elder, however, certainly owned several genuine drawings by Michelangelo including Cats. 33 and 43, W2/Corpus 16 and probably W11/Corpus 134 in the British Museum, and the recently re-discovered *Draped Woman*, whose passages of ownership after Richardson's death are unknown.³² His son, Jonathan Richardson the Younger, possessed at least some scraps by Michelangelo, but it is unclear whether he inherited these from his father or acquired them independently.³³ Whence Richardson the Elder obtained his Michelangelo drawings is not known.

A few drawings by Michelangelo had been owned by Sir Joshua Reynolds including Cats. 20 and 26. In the 1794 exhibition of drawings from Reynolds' collection, it was claimed that forty-four drawings among the 2,253 on sale were by Michelangelo.³⁴ There is no way of determining how many of these were genuine, but it is a fair presumption that the majority were drawings from Michelangelo's circle or copies after him, rather than originals. The sale of the remainder of the drawings in Reynolds' collection, which took place over eighteen days from 5 March 1798, comprised 4,034 drawings, divided into 836 lots, mostly undescribed. Drawings unsold in 1794 may have been re-offered. Whether any Michelangelos were among these is conjectural. Interestingly, what was probably the most important Michelangelo that Reynolds owned – if, indeed, he did own it – the study for Adam in the *Creation of Adam* on the Sistine ceiling, now in the British Museum, does not bear his collection stamp, was not engraved or described when in his collection, and was claimed to be from it only by Ottley, who later owned it, in his *Italian School of Design*.³⁵ If Ottley was correct, then two possible explanations occur for the absence of Reynolds' stamp. Either it was applied to a now-lost mount, not to the sheet, or else the sheet has been trimmed in such a way as to excise the stamp. Some support for the first option is

offered by the fact that Ottley lists Jonathan Richardson the Elder, whose stamp is also absent, as its owner before Reynolds. When Richardson had a double-sided sheet, he generally placed his stamp on the mount rather than the sheet, and Reynolds' executors may have followed suit. Reynolds also owned a second drawing, believed to be a study for the *Adam* by Michelangelo and included as such in Woodburn's 1836 exhibition, as no. 44, but this beautiful drawing is by Jacopo Pontormo.³⁶ The drawing that Reynolds may have valued most highly, the *Count of Canossa*, was accepted even by the most sceptical connoisseurs until the twentieth century and was shown to be a copy only by Wilde in 1953.³⁷

It is clear from this listing that relatively few Michelangelo drawings were available in England in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries and that, of these, Lawrence was the main beneficiary. However, some of the drawings mentioned previously were probably acquired via intermediaries or other collectors rather than directly at sales. And a few items, which had been in earlier British collections, escaped him – at least four fragmentary drawings by Michelangelo once owned by the younger Richardson went to Lawrence's contemporary and predecessor as President of the Royal Academy, Benjamin West, and the track of another drawing, once in Lely's possession and now at Princeton, is lost during this period.³⁸ But, finally, when Lawrence's autograph Michelangelos are totalled, it is evident that not more than three or four came from seventeenth- or eighteenth-century British sources, although the number could probably be increased threefold if drawings that Lawrence believed to be by Michelangelo but that are no longer considered autograph are taken into account.³⁹

Lawrence's collection also contained several drawings from French sources. The greatest connoisseur of Old Master Drawings of the eighteenth century – the French dealer, print-maker, and art-historian, Pierre-Jean Mariette – had been a friend of the banker and collector Pierre Crozat, “le roi des collectionneurs,” and had catalogued his vast collection for the posthumous sale of 1741.⁴⁰ Mariette himself benefited greatly from this sale, and when he died, in 1774, his collection, sold in 1775–6, included some forty sheets of drawings by or believed to be by Michelangelo, divided into eight lots. The single most significant beneficiary from the Michelangelos in the Mariette sale was the Prince de Ligne.⁴¹ Employing as an intermediary the painter and dealer Julien de Parme, he acquired several superb sheets, as well as others from French collections.⁴² The Prince was killed in 1792, and, at an auction held in 1794, most of his drawings passed to Duke Albert Casimir August von Saxe-Teschen.

Saxe-Teschen's holding, the nucleus of the Albertina, named after him, eventually became the property of the Austrian State in 1920. The group of Michelangelos purchased by the Prince de Ligne forms virtually the whole of the run of eight magnificent sheets of drawings by Michelangelo now in the Albertina.⁴³

Lawrence's ex-Mariette drawings seem to have come to him via the banker, Thomas Dimsdale – his greatest rival – and the Marquis de Lagoy, who had sold his collection of 138 drawings to Woodburn in 1821; Woodburn in turn sold it to Dimsdale.⁴⁴ Before Mariette, most of these sheets had been owned by Pierre Crozat and Everard Jabach, and at least two of them, Cat. 19 and 1836-13 (BM W4/Corpus 48), would have been among those given by Michelangelo to his pupil Antonio Mini and brought by him to France, for figures on both were copied by Primaticcio.⁴⁵ Lawrence also possessed at least one Michelangelo drawing that had been owned by J.-D. Lempereur, a purchaser at Mariette's sale, but it is unlikely that this drawing (1836-3/BM W1) had been owned by Mariette.⁴⁶

Probably in 1826, Lawrence acquired two and perhaps more drawings by Michelangelo that had been in the collection of Baron Dominique-Vivant Denon, who died on 28 April 1825, but it is uncertain whether the earlier provenance of these is French or Italian.⁴⁷ Lawrence had mentioned Denon's collection in a letter of 14 April 1825 to Woodburn, who was in Paris to attend the posthumous sale of Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy Trioson.⁴⁸ In an undated letter to Woodburn, written a few weeks later, he remarked

I am sincerely sorry for the death of M. Denon; he is a great loss to the arts, and I promised myself much pleasure from an intercourse with him in my next visit to Paris. Mr. Ford tells me he had six Raphaels, two of them very fine. He says his nephew had no love for art, and would readily have parted with drawings, separate from the rest, in his uncle's life-time could he have been permitted to do so; he thinks an effort from you might be successful. It is most probable that he had some Michael Angelos.⁴⁹

During Lawrence's own visit to Paris later in the year, he was unable to see more than a few of Denon's drawings.⁵⁰ Obviously with Lawrence's encouragement, Woodburn returned to Paris in later 1825 or early 1826, and it was no doubt on this visit to Paris that he also purchased two of the Presentation Drawings that Michelangelo had made for Vittoria Colonna, and that re-appeared in his 1836 exhibition with the provenance given as Brunet and the King of Naples.⁵¹ Woodburn may well not have known that these had appeared in 1794 at the sale of

the painter-dealer Julien de Parme.⁵² It was presumably directly at this sale, or via some intermediary, that they were acquired by Brunet, who is plausibly to be identified with Louis-Charles Brunet (1746–1825), the brother-in-law of Dominique-Vivant Denon, by whom he was presumably advised. Louis-Charles Brunet died in the same year as Vivant Denon, and Woodburn no doubt acquired the more important items from both Denon's and Brunet's collections at the same time, from one of Brunet's two sons, Baron Dominique-Vivant Denon's nephews, and final beneficiaries of his estate, as well – presumably – as that of their own father. These brothers were Vivant-Jean Brunet (1778–1866), a General of the Empire, and Dominique-Vivant Brunet (1779–1846), who later took the name Brunet-Denon in honour of his uncle.⁵³

But these acquisitions were on a relatively small scale. Lawrence's Michelangelo drawings came primarily in two groups. One was acquired directly from the collector and writer William Young Ottley, the author of one of the earliest and most important books on Italian drawing, *The Italian School of Design*, arranged historically, and published in instalments between 1808 and 1823. Ottley's book contains a large number of illustrations of drawings, including many from his own collection, which he too had acquired from different sources. Lawrence admired Ottley's expertise and, in an undated note, of which a copy is preserved among his papers, planned to bequeath Ottley the large sum of £500 to compile a catalogue of the collection.⁵⁴ Woodburn stated that Lawrence acquired Ottley's collection en bloc for the enormous sum of £10,000, and there is no good reason to query this.⁵⁵

Between 1803 and 1814, Ottley held four sales – the last much the most important – which included a good number of Michelangelo drawings, many of which were later found in Lawrence's collection. It might seem reasonable to suppose that Lawrence acquired drawings piecemeal in those sales, but if so, it would be difficult to explain the apparently massive purchase. It is probable, therefore, that many – indeed most – of the drawings by Michelangelo and others in Ottley's sales were bought in, subsequently to be sold to Lawrence. But this was not true of all. William Roscoe certainly purchased a number of drawings from Ottley's 1814 sale, some of which re-appeared in his own forced sale of 1816. Roscoe's purchases included at least one drawing catalogued as by Michelangelo in 1814, lot 1677, for on 15 October 1824 Roscoe wrote about it to Lawrence, who replied that he did not believe it to be by Michelangelo,⁵⁶ which was a correct evaluation. It is now in the British Museum firmly identified as by Dosio.⁵⁷ Such exceptions notwithstanding, there is no good reason to doubt that Lawrence's bulk purchase

took place in 1822 or 1823. Some support for this date is provided by a note made by the executors of Lawrence's estate. Lawrence had painted a portrait of Ottley's wife in 1822, which, for unknown reasons, was still in his studio at his death.⁵⁸ In listing it, his executors noted that it had been "paid for in drawings."

As for Michelangelo drawings acquired from other collections, Lawrence's major purchases were made between 1823 and 1825. In 1824 he bought for £500 one hundred sheets, which may have included some by Michelangelo, from a collection of 688 owned by the Viennese Count von Fries. A year later, in 1825, he bought some sheets from his old friend and colleague Conrad Metz, who claimed to have at least three by Michelangelo. In a letter to Metz, resident in Rome, of 24 April 1825, Lawrence wrote: "I am now, from having the first collection of these two great Masters [i.e., Raphael and Michelangelo] in Europe (this seems an arrogant assumption) so thoroughly acquainted with their hand, whether Pen or Wash, at their different periods that at a glance I know them and at a glance, reject all imitations of them."⁵⁹

The "first collection" of which Lawrence was so proud had been enriched magnificently in 1823 when he purchased another major group of Michelangelo drawings. These had been acquired by Samuel Woodburn from the French painter, former advisor to Napoleon's art commissariat in Italy, and collector Jean-Baptiste Wicar, resident in Rome. Wicar wished to build a villa and decided to sell part of his collection. It was this purchase that formed the second main source of Lawrence's Michelangelo drawings. Lawrence was already in part acquainted with Wicar's collection for Wicar had shown him some of it during his Roman sojourn of 1819. Indeed, Lawrence asked Woodburn in a letter of 17 December 1822 to "Give my compliments to Mr. Wicar, and my present thanks for his past liberality in showing me his collections and his work."⁶⁰

Woodburn's negotiations with Wicar were evidently not easy, but they were not protracted. In a letter to Lawrence of 14 January 1823, Woodburn claimed that Wicar had at first tried to pass off some copies as originals, but that he had made quite clear what he thought of them. He obviously believed himself – no doubt rightly – to be an effective and tough negotiator, for he added that had he been in Rome earlier, he could have saved Sir George Beaumont more than half the price of Michelangelo's *Taddei Tondo*.⁶¹ Woodburn prevailed, at a cost, according to a later account, of 11,000 Roman scudi.⁶² Just over a fortnight later, on 1 February 1823, Woodburn announced that he had acquired Wicar's Michelangelo drawings; not only that, he adds that Wicar had then

decided he wanted them back and had offered Woodburn a profit on the deal.⁶³ Woodburn specified two of the Michelangelo drawings: "Mr Lock has looked them also over and is quite satisfied . . . one in red chalk a study for the figure suspended of Haman in the Capell Sistine he esteemed above all price . . . there is also a Drawing for the Leda, which Mr Lock very handsomely gave the Cartoon to the Academy, a Magnificent Drawing."⁶⁴ Although Lawrence was well aware that he was likely to be outdone by Dimsdale, he replied to Woodburn on March 8, saying "I thank you, however, seriously and most sincerely, for particularising those two drawings, the Haman and the Leda."⁶⁵ On March 13, Woodburn provided further details: "For M. Angelo I have various studies for his Crucifixion, the Leda, studies for the Pietà in St. Peters, a Sibyl not finished, the head of the celebrated Faun, the figures of the small M. Venusti I sold to Mr Lock and several others . . . the Leda also is valuable since it is doubtful what became of the picture."⁶⁶

The *Haman*, of course, is the drawing now in the British Museum (W13); the study for the *Leda*, which cannot certainly be traced, may be the fine copy after the *Night*, here Cat. 83; at least one of the drawings then connected with the St. Peter's *Pietà* is probably that now in the Louvre (Inv. 716/J38/Corpus 92), made by Michelangelo not in preparation for his famous early sculptural group but for Sebastiano's *Ubeda Pietà*; the head of the *Faun* is, with virtual certainty, Cat. 8 verso, and the drawings connected with the *Venusti* may be those now in the British Museum (W76–8/Corpus 385–7) made for the *Cleansing of the Temple*, painted by Marcello Venusti to Michelangelo's design and now in the National Gallery.⁶⁷ Although Woodburn was corresponding with Lawrence, he was acting mainly as an agent for Lawrence's not altogether friendly rival Thomas Dimsdale, who had "a much heavier purse than Sir Thomas."⁶⁸ On Woodburn's return, Dimsdale, who had earlier bought from him the entire Lagoy collection, purchased the Raphaels and Michelangelos acquired in Rome for 3,000 guineas.⁶⁹ However, it seems that Dimsdale was not a monopolist and that Lawrence "occasionally bought single selected specimens": Fisher remarks that eight of Dimsdale's Raphaels and Michelangelos passed to Lawrence in Dimsdale's lifetime. Dimsdale can have enjoyed the ex-Wicar drawings only for a few days. He died on 18 April 1823, and his collection was bought from his heirs by Woodburn, who had, after all, supplied most of it. And "Very shortly after his [Dimsdale's] death the entire Series of his Italian drawings were purchased by Sir Thomas Lawrence for the sum of five thousand, five hundred pounds."⁷⁰ Lawrence no doubt paid Woodburn in instalments.

Wicar, feeling that he had parted with his Michelangelo drawings too cheaply, seems to have decided not to sell further drawings: Woodburn told Lawrence that it was useless to pursue his series of drawings by Raphael. Wicar certainly acquired further drawings before his death, including many of the group, among them a number by Raphael, which had been stolen from him in 1799, and which he re-possessed by subterfuge from the painter-collector Antonio Fedi (1771–1843), who had master-minded the theft.⁷¹ Lawrence, in the letter to Metz quoted previously, wrote: “The Chevalier Wiens [this must be a mis-transcription of Wicar] has lately I understand been again collecting from these two great men [i.e., Michelangelo and Raphael] but he will not separate from his collection and the distance is too great, and the value of it too uncertain, to justify my attempting to possess it.” He continues: “Can you not in a letter send me drawings from them?” In any case, whatever drawings Wicar purchased between 1823 and 1830, few Michelangelos were among them. His bequest to his home town of Lille contained one of the greatest runs of drawings by Raphael to be found anywhere. But it includes no more than one authentic drawing by Michelangelo: a study of around 1559 for the drum and dome of St. Peter’s, which is very important historically but far from glamorous visually. A book of architectural sketches that Wicar believed to be authentic and valued highly was long ago subtracted from Michelangelo: It has recently been shown that it is very largely by Raffaello da Montelupo.⁷²

Lawrence continued to acquire drawings, both by purchase and exchange, but little information has so far been unearthed about his acquisitions in the later 1820s. However, some light is thrown upon his methods and his interests by a correspondence conducted with Lavinia Forster, the daughter of the eminent sculptor Thomas Banks. Banks had built up a sizeable and varied collection of drawings, which she had inherited on his death in 1805. Lawrence did not make a direct offer to purchase drawings, and he was not overwhelmed with the collection as a whole, but he did express strong interest in certain sheets. He asked her to send over packages of drawings from Paris, where she lived, so that he could examine them and have some of them reproduced in tracings. Mrs. Forster does not seem to have wished to sell her drawings, and ignored Lawrence’s hints, but she did respond to his enthusiasm by giving him some sheets attributed to Dürer, and he responded by making a portrait drawing of her daughter – Lawrence’s own drawings were very much valued at the period and were praised by, for example, François Gérard, even above his paintings. And Lawrence was also generous to her in raising

money to pay for the posthumous publication of her husband’s writings. It is likely that numerous works of art came to Lawrence through his combination of charm, enthusiasm, and generosity. This correspondence – like the letter to Metz – also alerts us to the fact that when he could not acquire autograph drawings, Lawrence tried to obtain copies or tracings of them – his interests were not confined to pursuit of originals: He behaved as a serious scholar, eager to acquire the maximum information about his favoured artists.⁷³

III. THE MICHELANGELO COLLECTIONS OF JEAN-BAPTISTE WICAR AND WILLIAM YOUNG OTTLEY

The run of drawings by Michelangelo – and other artists – acquired from Wicar by Woodburn in 1823 was very substantial, but it did not comprise all the drawings by Michelangelo that Wicar had once owned. A pupil of Jacques-Louis David, admired by his master as an excellent draughtsman, Jean-Baptiste Wicar travelled to Rome with David in 1784. He returned to Italy in 1787 and between then and 1793 lived in Florence, executing drawings for the series of engravings of paintings in the galleries of the city, of which the first volume was published in 1789. Although previously fairly penurious, Wicar seems to have been well paid for this work, and he was no doubt active as a portraitist. In any case, he seems to have acquired a reasonable disposable income for in 1792 he sent via David the large sum of six hundred livres towards the reconstruction of his home town of Lille.

If Eugène Piot is to be believed, it would have been well before the French invasion of Italy that Wicar “s’était lié d’amitié avec Philippe Buonarroti, et put alors acheter et choisir un nombre de dessins assez considerable parmi ceux qui avaient été conservé par la famille.”⁷⁴ If this is correct, then it would seem that Wicar’s collection of drawings – and of Michelangelo drawings in particular – was begun in the late 1780s because Filippo Buonarroti spent very little time in Florence after c. 1789, and lived in virtually permanent exile. A friendship with Wicar could well have been formed in the late 1780s, but there would have been fewer opportunities for it to have occurred later.

It was this still-mysterious dispersal from the Buonarroti family collection in Casa Buonarroti, the fountain-head of Michelangelo’s work, that radically changed the availability of Michelangelo drawings. Piot’s account would suggest that Wicar acquired his group of Michelangelo drawings at a single moment, but whether or not this

is so is conjectural. Nevertheless, although Casa Buonarroti was certainly the main source of Wicar's Michelangelo drawings, it was not the only one and the fact that Wicar once possessed a Michelangelo drawing does not automatically prove that it came from Casa Buonarroti. Wicar bought drawings from a range of collectors and dealers, including the sculptor, restorer, and large-scale art collector (and dealer) Bartolommeo Cavaceppi, who certainly had drawings by Michelangelo in his stock.⁷⁵

During the Italian wars of the mid-late 1790s, Wicar became a commissioner for Napoleon, advising on the sequestration of Italian works of art for the Musée Napoléon. The commission concentrated on paintings and sculptures, and few collections of drawings were seized. But Wicar was believed to have used his powers as a commissioner to persuade owners to sell their possessions to him and to have taken the opportunity to form a large and important collection of drawings on his own account. According to his lights, Wicar probably behaved honestly, but, whatever the specific details, he certainly profited from the revolutionary situation and no doubt paid low prices and obtained remarkable bargains. It seems unlikely, on the whole, that Wicar stole or sequestered drawings for himself – as Vivant Denon sometimes did – and he cannot be proved to have done so. Thus, although Wicar has been held responsible by some scholars for part of the depredation of the collections of the Duke of Modena, seized by a commission under the instructions of Napoleon in 1796, and handed to the Louvre, he was officially appointed to the Commission des Arts only in February 1797, and there is no firm evidence linking him with Modena.⁷⁶ The Modena Collection of drawings, formed largely in the mid-seventeenth century, was not rich in sixteenth-century work. But two drawings were recorded, in 1771, then on display, as attributed to Michelangelo.⁷⁷ The Louvre's part of the Modena booty included no drawings by Michelangelo and it seems that these two sheets escaped the general seizure. They are, with virtual certainty, identical with two drawings, one by Michelangelo, and the other then stated to be by him, but probably by an associate, both exhibited by Woodburn in 1836 with a provenance given as from the Duke of Modena, as no. 18, now unlocated and 33, here Cat. 32. But Wicar's name was not attached to their provenance, and it is uncertain whether he ever owned either. The disruptions and uncertainties of this period led to the breakup or partial dispersal of many great Italian collections of paintings, and the same was true of collections of drawings. These, of course, inevitably, attracted less attention and are less documented. It is also worth noting that dispersals from the Modena Collection

may well have occurred earlier and that one cannot be certain that the two drawings attributed to Michelangelo were not alienated before 1796.

By the end of the 1790s, Wicar had built up a very significant collection of Italian drawings. The most important section of it was a run of drawings by Raphael, whose exact number is unknown but which may have comprised as many as eighty sheets.⁷⁸ According to Robinson, this collection – Wicar's first – was purloined from him (by Antonio Fedi, who seems to have served with Wicar on the Napoleonic commission): "He had . . . entrusted a large and very valuable portion [N.B. but not all] of them to a Friend in Florence who stole them and sold them to William Young Ottley, a dealer and writer on art, especially old master drawings, and his collection in turn was eventually purchased in its entirety by Lawrence."⁷⁹

Wicar was soon informed by his friend the painter Louis Gauffier of the fraud perpetrated upon him and learned – it is unclear how – that a number of his drawings had been acquired by Ottley. On 24 March 1801, he wrote a letter of protest to his friend Humbert de Superville, also a friend and associate of Ottley, whom he asked to intervene with Ottley on his behalf. In it he described the affair. On September 19, he sent to Humbert an *État* listing some of the drawings he had lost.⁸⁰ Ottley is reported to have replied that he had acquired about twenty of the stolen drawings – although he might have underestimated – and would be prepared to return them to Wicar, but required reimbursement. What finally transpired is unknown for no further correspondence about the matter has come to light, but an hypothesis is advanced later.⁸¹

Over the twenty years following 1800, Wicar continued to collect drawings. He had certainly succeeded in re-acquiring some of the drawings stolen from him even before the coup of 1824 in which he bought some seventeen of his Raphaels back from Fedi through an intermediary, plus an unknown number of other Renaissance and baroque drawings. Some minor Michelangelo drawings may have been among these earlier retrievals. It is unknown whether he could have continued to acquire drawings by Michelangelo from Filippo Buonarroti; Filippo may well not have disposed immediately of all the drawings that he had taken from Casa Buonarroti, but he could have sold them in small groups over the years as he required funds. Only future documentary finds are likely to clarify this. Wicar no doubt bought further Michelangelo drawings from sources other than Filippo – thus, he attempted to acquire Michelangelo's *Epifania* cartoon before that came formally onto the market in Rome in 1809. His collection was not inaccessible: J. D. Passavant,