

Contrapposto in El Greco's Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara and its possible prototype

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El Greco's career in Italy brought him into contact with diverse sixteenth-century artistic influences that affected his practice of portraiture. This article focusses on one of his supreme masterworks, the *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*. It is argued that its possible prototype of the depiction of the Cardinal is Michelangelo's *Moses* in the Basilica of San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome. In the representation of both figures the application of *contrapposto*, a harmony of compositional opposites and tensions, is remarkable. Furthermore, the gazes of both are turned to the left, *a sinistra*.
Key words: El Greco, *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*, *contrapposto*, Michelangelo's *Moses*

Contrapposto in El Greco se Portret van Kardinaal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara en die moontlike prototipe daarvoor

El Greco se loopbaan in Italië het hom met verskillende sestiende-eeuse kunsinvloede in aanraking gebring wat sy praktyk van portrettering beïnvloed het. Hierdie artikel fokus op een van sy uitstaande meesterwerke, die *Portret van Kardinaal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*. Dit word gestel dat die moontlike prototipe van die voorstelling van die Kardinaal Michelangelo se *Moses* in die Basilika van San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome, is. Die aanwending van *contrapposto*, 'n harmonie van komposisionele teenoorgesteldes en spannings, is merkwaardig in die voorstelling van albei figure. Voorts is die blik van albei na links, *a sinistra*, gerig.

Sleutelwoorde: El Greco, *Portret van Kardinaal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*, *contrapposto*, Michelangelo se *Moses*

Domenicos Theotokopoulos, called El Greco, who was born in Crete in 1541 and educated in the Greek Orthodox icon tradition, developed into a Western painter in Venice where he sojourned from 1567-70. There he was most probably apprenticed in the workshop of Titian (*circa* 1488-1576), as attested by a reference in Giulio Clovio's¹ letter of introduction to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in Rome, dated 16 November 1570.² It is not clear how extensively El Greco travelled in Italy before he left Venice to live and work in Rome and then departed to Spain. In Rome Michelangelo Buonarroti's (1475-1564) legacy left a clear imprint on El Greco's oeuvre. Not only was his *Pietà*³ based on Michelangelo's sculpture in Florence Cathedral,⁴ but the figure of Christ in his *Trinity*⁵ also derives directly from the older master. In Rome he not only emulated Michelangelo, but also came under the influence of the Mannerists, especially in the field of portraiture.

The development of portraiture during the Italian High Renaissance and Mannerist periods

During the Italian High Renaissance and Mannerist periods, portraiture underwent remarkable developments. Most of the early Renaissance portrait painters, such as Piero della Francesca (1410/20-92), Antonello da Messina (1430-79), Sandro Botticelli (1444-1510), Antonio Pollaiuolo (1431/2-98) and Domenico Ghirlandaio (1499-94), prominently depict the faces of their sitter to fill the format of their panels. However, some background and other meaningful iconographical details are also included, for example, in Botticelli's *Portrait of a Man with a Medal of Cosimo de' Medici*,⁶ Ghirlandaio's *Old Man and His Grandson*,⁷ and Piero's *Diptych Portrait of Federigo*

da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, and His Wife, Battista Sforza.⁸ In the last mentioned portrait the estate owned by the Duke and his wife is depicted in the background. In addition to the function of suggesting spatial depth behind the sitters, architectural and landscape backgrounds enhance the complexity of these above mentioned portrait compositions and relate the sitters to their cultural environments.

Leonardo da Vinci's (1452-1519) most notable contribution to portraiture is in the rendering of his sitters' *moti mentali*, of which the *Mona Lisa* is the supreme example, depicting a sitter who seems to guard what her mind is preoccupied with.⁹ Her face is portrayed in three-quarter frontal view, subtly influenced by a fantastical asymmetrical landscape in the background. All the details of the face, dress and landscape are deliberately and meticulously composed to reveal the sitter's external appearance, while the artist's application of *sfumato* to the features suggests, but also conceals, her actual personality.

Mannerists such as Giulio Romano (1499-1546), Jacopo Pontormo (1494-1557), Agnolo Bronzino (1503-72) and Parmigianino (1503-40) tended to portray sitters in three-quarter view and to surround them with elaborate environmental and background details, all of which are given the same meticulous attention as the faces and figures. Notwithstanding their ostensibly naturalistic portrayals, these painters severely geometricized the compositional framework onto which they imposed the portraits, backgrounds and other details.¹⁰ In Mannerist portraiture faces consequently appear inscrutable in a psychological sense. To a Mannerist painter, the expressive distortion of the facial features of a sitter, caused by implied *moti mentali*, would have seemed inadmissible if it distracted from an idealised, albeit frozen, vision of a sitter. It is, therefore, almost impossible to interpret the personalities of the sitters portrayed by Mannerists beyond their exterior appearance and setting. For example Bronzino's *Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo and Her Son*,¹¹ and Pontormo's *Portrait of Ugolino Martelli*,¹² tend to reveal the ingenuity of the painters in solving compositional problems, but there is seemingly a lack of involvement with or insight into the personality portrayed. Stylistic problem solving seems to be the real subject matter in these portraits.

What Giorgio Vasari (1511-73) called *bella maniera* in his *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architetti* (1550) was partly based on the concept of *facilità*, that is, making what is difficult to execute, seem easy. While not breaking completely with the fifteenth-century ideal of the Florentine painters, Mannerists complicated their compositions in various ways. Intricate compositional schemes underlie the shapes of the apparently naturalistically rendered sitters, as well as the often elaborate back- and foreground details. Especially noteworthy is the design, based on circular forms, in Parmigianino's *Portrait of a Lady*.¹³ Despite their rigorous application to the sitter's face, headdress and shoulders, these geometric forms barely distort her appearance, but add a quality of idealised beauty. Mannerist portraiture most often emphasises the artifice of courtiers or members of the nobility who self-consciously pose in elaborate environments, dressed conspicuously in fine clothes, and display or are surrounded by emblems of their status. For example, in Bronzino's *Portrait of a Young Man*¹⁴ the youth holds a book, while the Conte de Fantanello in Parmigianino's *Portrait of Galeazzo Sanvitale*¹⁵ is depicted with his knight's armature.

El Greco's *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*

The general characteristics of *maniera* portraiture are recognisable in El Greco's *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara* (figure 1). Most notable is that the focus is not only on

the sitter's face. Even though his head is the portrait's main focus, it is influenced by and cannot be separated from the rest of the composition that has various focal points. This practice recalls a common trait in Mannerist painting, as well as the fact that back- and foreground elements and forms are meticulously detailed. The sitter's setting and finery of his dress indicates his elevated status as Cardinal, and is comparable to any person of rank in Cosimo I's court, as portrayed by Bronzino.



Figure 1

El Greco, *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*, circa 1600, oil on canvas, 170,8 x 108 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (source: internet).

Besides the influence of the Mannerists, El Greco was also the heir to Leonardo's concept of penetrating the *moti mentali* and character of a sitter in the portrait of the Cardinal, who was the leading figure in the Spanish Inquisition. A formal analysis of the composition will validate this.

As a point of departure in the following analysis it can be accepted that, in essence, a portrait is the depiction of a person who posed for the artist in one or various sittings in which they were mutually involved in the outcome. A portrait is assumed to be a likeness of the sitter, but in an artistic sense, a mere likeness would be uninteresting (like almost all photographs of people). Therefore, the penetrating gaze of the portraitist should reveal the essence of the sitter's personality and environment in which the latter chooses to be portrayed. In the case of El Greco's *Portrait of Cardinal Fernando Niño Don Guavara*, it is assumed that the portrayed is indeed of the Spanish Great Inquisitor and that the painter portrayed him from life in an interior in which he was at home.

In the absence of documentation one can only speculate about the sitter/painter interaction. Close scrutiny reveals no emotional expression on the face of the sitter, and his gaze is clearly directed to a point to the right of the painter: he is looking over his left shoulder. Judging by the stark features of the Cardinal, one may venture to say that El Greco portrayed him as a wary intellectual with a high forehead, the upper line of which is emphasised by his cap. The dark-rimmed spectacles that he wore when posing for his portrait emphasise rather than obscure his eyes by framing them, thus emphasising his limited eyesight that may be the painter's visual pun on his limited spiritual vision. His attitude in the posture of a seated man in the presence of a painter who observes him in order to depict his likeness, is vigilant and taciturn, as if aware of an intrusion into his privacy as an habitually introspective individual.

Four main focal points can be isolated in the composition: the head, the two hands, and the conspicuously unfolded piece of paper placed off-centre on the floor in the foreground. Left and right and above and below are compositionally equally balanced by means of the positioning of these nodal points.

Although the sitter is shown in the full voluminous garb of his status as Cardinal, the artist took great care not to diminish the importance of the face, the main individualising element. Attention is drawn to the face by means of a variety of contrasts in the manner of depiction used in and around that area. Linear emphasis is employed to render the circular forms of the spectacle frame around the eyes, those primary facial elements to which the spectator's attention is initially directed, while the face itself is a modelled form, bounded by contours and set against two different flat background areas. A break in the background patterning occurs conspicuously as a line above the sitter's head, which, if continued, would divide the face in two parts. The austere wooden panelling to the sitter's right contrasts strongly with the silk damask wall cladding to his left. Likewise, changes in colour occur with the juxtaposition of primaries in the Cardinal's silken cloak and carmine coloured cap, while the two parts of the background – the red-brown panelling and the yellow damask weave – are also strongly contrasted. The silvery grey of the sitter's beard and the white of the narrow collar are furthermore contrasted with the flesh tones of his face that are neutral against the surrounding warm hues. Contrasts in texture serve to isolate objects and elements of the sitter's ambience and regalia, ie. the different kinds of background, the partly visible chair, his spectacles, beard, white collar, the fabric of his cap, cloak and dress, as well as his hands and face as the only exposed flesh parts.

Besides the face of the sitter, his two hands are prominently exposed as focal points. They are placed more or less on the horizontal middle line of the canvas, The hands are some distance apart, on either side of the vertical middle line that runs through the face and figure. They are placed at the ends of the chair's arm-rests which they partly obscure to gain in prominence themselves. The dissimilarity between the poses of the left and right hands, both highlighted by white lace sleeves, form as striking a contrast as the dissimilarity between the door panelling and the damask wall cladding in the background. The contours of the hand volumes, especially of the right hand, give a clue to the compositional scheme of the painting and what meaning it suggests. Both hands stand out from shadow areas, while changes in surface, tonality and shape occur around them; both appear isolated where they protrude from the visible parts of the sleeves under the cape. The right hand is rounded and relaxed at the wrist, while angularity is emphasised on the opposite side where the fingers grip the armrest. The hands are dialectically in opposition to one another, but belong together in the unity of the sitter's cramped physical appearance and his mental anxiety, expressed in a vigilant gaze over his left shoulder.

The fourth focal point – the highlighted unfolded "letter" at the Cardinal's hidden feet,

bearing the artist's signature – is emphasised as a shape placed on a dark circular floor tile. It is a tonal focal point to which attention is drawn by the use of light and dark contrasts. Contained within the geometric shape of the foreground tile, it also acts as a visual anchoring point at the base of the composition. In this rather flatly painted area the upturned edge of its bottom right-hand corner has a slight effect of foreshortening and turning the viewers vision back into the painting. Compositionally the letter forms significant relationship with the rings on both hands and the top of the hat, thus linking the main focal points.

The Cardinal's attire takes up a large part of the picture format. It obscures the slight twist in his body and the peculiar distortion in his bent knees. However, one cannot imagine that El Greco was concerned about the anatomy of the man under his heavily draped figure, but one gains the impression of the figure as being rather short. This is an indication that El Greco, who often elongated figures to suggest their spiritual aspiration, clearly had no intention of idealising the Cardinal. Stylistically this is an example of a figure being flattened parallel to the picture plane, notwithstanding the suggestion of depth by means of bent limbs.¹⁶ The compositional scheme imposed upon the sitter, and the painterly emphasis of the decorative lace pattern of the dress exposed under the cloak, result in an anatomical distortion that is disturbing, because it suspends a rational interpretation of a seemingly naturalistic portrait. Furthermore, the chair is distorted with the depth of the seat too narrow for comfort, causing the viewer to speculate how exactly the sitter is placed on it.

The various focal points and the strong patterning of the room surfaces, as well as the sitter's elaborate official vestments, do not distract from the compositional whole of the portrait that is more than the sum of its parts. The relationship of the figure to its format is carefully considered. In viewing the portrait, one's eye keeps moving from shape to shape and from surface to surface. For example, the directional thrust of the pointed form of the undergarment, slightly curled up on the floor draws the eye to the lower right edge of the picture but not out of it, while the fine lines of the muted foreground area, subtly allows the spectator's eye to rove back to the focal points and the circular rhythms of the upper and lower parts of the figure. The spectator's eye can move from the left to the right of the picture and back again, because neither side predominates. In fact, there is a very strong visual pull up and down which, paradoxically, adds a restless feeling to a seemingly static figural pose.

Variety is found not only in what is depicted, but also in the prominence given to painterly effects on the individualised surfaces. In depicting the various parts of the dress different kinds of brushstroke are used: on the fabric of the carmine silk there are broad gestural strokes, worked *alla prima*, while the elaborate white lace details are suggested by means of a more elaborate scumble. This reveals the virtuosity of the painter who learnt the craft of the Venetians who excelled in decorative surface effects. No doubt, El Greco's intention with the portrait of the Cardinal was to rival the portraiture of his master, Titian, who, however, never portrayed a religious personage looking over his left shoulder.

In the portrait the most striking area of the background is the large, predominantly yellow plane of intricately designed damask which suggests affluence in the Cardinal's ambience. This plane (curiously reminiscent of Byzantine textured gold-leaf backgrounds) is an assertive element in the picture space. Consequently, the opposite background area of dark wooden panelling, seem to belong to a different optical plane. This background division affects the interpretation of the left and right sides of the sitter himself. Similarly, the artist's rendering of textures by means of alternative and contrasting ways of applying paint also affects interpretation of the inherent qualities of the man portrayed. In the larger carmine, yellow and white areas

the painting is lively, but more dull and flat in the paving and floor areas, while the hands and face are conspicuously highlighted. The viewer's attention is engaged by many intricacies of colour transitions between shapes. There is a smooth transition between the sitter's left ear and the damask background, while on the right side a harsh contour separates the face from the panelling. In the face itself the silvery white beard and the flesh tones are strongly contrasted, while the cap is a linear element that rounds off the high forehead. A transition by means of a dark line is conspicuous between the right wrist and the sleeve. Although the patterning is so varied meticulous attention is paid to the links between the surfaces themselves, conspicuously between the damask and the cloak in which the sheen of the former is reflected in the highlights of the latter.

In other instances contrasts tend to become paradoxes, for example the positioning of the Cardinal's seated figure should imply some depth by means of foreshortening, but his physical space under the voluminous dress is actually severely reduced. Solidity is given to objects by means of texturing, but the background surfaces are actually dematerialised: the plane on the sitter's left side has a gold-leaf flatness and that on his right is rather vacuous and geometrically inert. However, these surfaces actively oppose one another in their different patterning and respectively as light-reflecting and light-absorbing areas. A contradiction is very obvious in the relaxed and tense poses of the dissimilar hands, alternatively implying repose and mental activity. Accordingly, El Greco's composition is expressively arranged to emphasise simultaneously opposing faculties in the sitter. The background, as well as the sitter, implies a duality of parts. To the right of the seated figure the pattern is rigidly rectilinear, but to his left in the more or less equally wide visible area of the damask wall finish, a curvilinear pattern is emphasised. The rectilinear background pattern corresponds with the stiffness and pointed folds of the Cardinal's dress on his left side and his tense left hand, while the opposite is true of the damask weave and the curved contour of the dress on the other side. This correlates with the depiction of the sitter's right hand, posed in a relaxed and elegant way, with the index finger pointing in the direction of the lower, broad curve of the compositional scheme.

The left side of the face, seen in three-quarter view is emphasised. Notwithstanding the asymmetrical left and right sides of the face and the total composition, there is nevertheless a *contrapposto* or dynamic balance that implies that, notwithstanding the seeming harshness of the Cardinal, he also had a softer, compassionate side to his being. The man, Don Fernando Niño De Guevara, is subtly revealed by El Greco as a complex personality, simultaneously relaxed and tense. What manifests physically in the portrait may have diverse psychological origins: the overt self-assurance arising from a high religious position, endowing him with power over all members and non-members of the Roman Catholic Church,¹⁷ contrasted with uncertainty, maybe self-doubt, due to a moral sense of right and wrong. By showing him looking over his left shoulder – *a sinistra* – it is implied that he is ever-wakeful and fearful of the latter.

On the surface, the *Portrait* can be interpreted as a pictorial counterbalancing feat. Although it has previously been described as a “compositional whole”, its parts are not balanced in a classical symmetrical sense. The system of oppositions is consistent with regard to curvilinear and angular or rectilinear forms; light and dark colouring; textured and plain surfaces, and flattened forms contrasted with three-dimensional spatial effects. The spatial planes are ambiguous and unresolved to the extent that one may wonder where the real picture plane is located. If it is taken to be the back of the chair, visible to the sitter's left, its pictorial function is to establish a middle distance that is decisive for the visual interpretation of the sitter amidst his surroundings. Behind this plane the dark drapery of the curtain and the panelling recedes furthest and the damask cladding is intermediate. But the sitter then presents shifting

planes in relation to the paper on the floor, which is on the same plane as the frontal protruding part of the skirt. In the composition two-dimensional and spatial design are blended, seemingly reinforcing the established opposing psychological traits of the sitter.

At first glance the *Portrait* could be viewed undiscerningly as a naturalistic portrayal of a sixteenth-century Spanish Cardinal dressed in his finery in a palatial interior. After a formal analysis one has to conclude that El Greco synthesised all pictorial elements to the point of artificiality in a conceptual and perceptual whole. The artist deliberately assembled a variety of elements in the interest of artistic complexity. The setting may not represent a real interior and the sitter's face is a psychological abstraction, but one imagined by the artist for his expressive purposes that are visually and mentally more intricate than most bland Mannerist portraits. No part of the representation is overworked or neglected; all the parts fulfil a purpose in the totality. This conclusion tallies with John Shearman's (1967: 28) general assessment of the artist: "El Greco is best considered as an artist who used strongly Mannerist conventions with an increasingly expressive purpose and urgency that is far from characteristic of Mannerism... ."

In concluding the formal analysis of the *Portrait* El Greco should be commended for accomplishing a *tour de force* in portraiture by means of his skill as a painter, his intellectual ability and psychological insight. This unique *Portrait* is a "self-aware image",¹⁸ that is an image created by the artist as a means of reflecting upon the nature of painting. The formal elements of the portrait are clearly manipulated in a calculated way so that the impact of the portrait relies on the metaphorical effect of referring the viewer to the formal means applied to achieve the image. The compositional complexities intensify the viewer's involvement with the human subject. While El Greco's interaction with the sitter – whom he obviously had to please (if not to flatter) – cannot be reconstructed. However, the end product proves that he remained boldly in control of his subject and medium. All the physical details in the *Portrait*, despite their diversity, relate to the person portrayed to reveal the motions of his mind. The intricate composition is not an end in itself as one tends to conclude about *maniera* portraits, but profoundly symbolic of a man with a dual personality.¹⁹

A possible prototype for the *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*

The life task of the Cardinal, an Inquisitor, was to guard the orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic Church. El Greco shows him looking over his left shoulder, symbolically alert to sinister forces. He is obviously not the first Western artist to depict a figure who is alerted to evil by looking to his left. The question arises if the memory of Michelangelo's works inspired El Greco when he composed the Cardinal's portrait, since this renowned artist's *David* and *Moses* figures spring to mind as El Greco's possibly prototypes. It can be argued that El Greco became well acquainted with the sculptor's works during his sojourn in Italy.

The larger than life standing *David* figure (unveiled in 1504 in front of the Palazzo della Signoria, Florence) is depicted in an alert pose immediately before his battle with Goliath. His tensed physique and frowning facial expression reveals him as aware of the approach of the evil foe and mentally prepared for combat. This is emphasised by the direction of his gaze: he is looking attentively over his left shoulder, *a sinistra*. However, more appropriate as a prototype for the portrait of the Cardinal would be Michelangelo's seated *Moses* figure in the Basilica of San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome, whose gaze is also turned *a sinistra*. In an ironic way the sculpture of the great Old Testament figure could well have served as the prototype for a portrait of the Cardinal, a lesser guardian of God's law.

In 1545 the design for the funeral monument of Pope Julius II (1443-1513), intended for St. Peter's in Rome, was carried out on a much reduced scale and the few completed sculptures placed in the Basilica of San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome.²⁰ The architectural and sculptural composition of the much reduced monument is dominated by the seated figure of *Moses*, placed at the eye level of the viewer (figure 2). This twice life-sized marble figure is placed in the centre of the lower course of the monument, between two smaller figures, although it was originally intended for the upper course, where it would have made an even more powerful impression and a more desired realistic effect. From a distance the effect of the swollen veins of the left arm, the massive shoulders and somewhat unnatural folds of the drapery would have seemed more natural and in proportion. Nevertheless, the symbolic representation of Moses, who led the Hebrew people from Egyptian captivity, is evoked on a colossal scale with the intention to glorify the papacy of Julius II. He believed himself divinely chosen to be a military commander who liberated the Italian city-states from foreign rule, as well as a reformer of the church after the devastation caused by the Borgias, in a similar way that Moses delivered his people from the idolatry of the golden calf. With this symbolic parallel in mind, Michelangelo created the Moses figure as an idealised image of the powerful Pope who was his patron.



Figure 2
Michelangelo, *Moses*, 1513-15, Basilica of San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome, marble, height 235 cm (source: internet).

Conclusion

The question remains: what could have motivated El Greco to emulate the Moses figure as a prototype for cardinal Guevara's portrait? The gaze over the left shoulder – *a sinistra* – is obvious. One may indeed speculate why a portrait of an overdressed sitter with a modest-sized physique with limited eye-sight could be inspired by a semi-nude monumental figure that is twice life-size, and is clearly not a portrait. El Greco's portrait of the Cardinal – if my insight is correct correct – is a parody of the Moses figure. The Christian Inquisitor, a Roman Catholic law enforcer, is a parody of Moses, the powerful Old Testament law giver whose vigilant pose is not directed at thin air and imaginary sinners, but expresses an awareness of the idolatrous transgressions of the Israelites in the desert. Interpreted in this way, a new dimensions of meaning can be added to El Greco's portrait that is generally acknowledged as one of the greatest portraits ever painted.

Finally, the portrait of the Cardinal is not a work of compassion. El Greco left the viewer many clues to suggest that he was not impressed by his “holy” sitter. In contrast, Michelangelo created a powerful Moses figure that acknowledge his holiness after having received the tablets of the law, held under his right arm, directly from God.²¹

Notes

- 1 Giulio Clovio (1498-1578) was a Croatian illuminator, miniaturist and painter who was active in Renaissance Italy. He befriended El Greco who painted a portrait of him, entitled *Giulio Clovio Pointing to his Farnese Book of Hours* (1571-71), oil on canvas, 58 x 86 cm, Naples, Museo Nazionale di Capidamonte. 115 x 96 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. See the discussion of this portrait in Maré (2002).
- 2 Giulio Clovio’s letter stated: “There has arrived in Rome a young Candiot pupil of Titian who in my judgement is exceptional in painting; and among other things he has done a portrait of himself which has astonished all of these painters in Rome. I should like to keep him under the shadow of your Excellency without the other expenses of his living, but only a room in the Palazzo Farnese for a short time until he succeeds in finding better quarters.” (Quoted from Wethey 1962: 7.) 12 Jacopo Pontormo, *Portrait of Ugolino Martelli*, circa 1540, oil on panel, 92 x 69 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.
- 3 El Greco, *Pietà*, circa 1574-76, oil on canvas, 0,66 x 0,47 cm, Hispanic Society, New York. 13 Parmigianino, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1530-31, oil on panel, 69 x 51 cm, Galleria Nazionale, Parma.
- 4 Michelangelo Buonarroti, Florentine *Pietà*, circa 1550, marble, height 226 cm, Museo del Opera del Duomo, Florence. 14 Agnolo Bronzino, *Portrait of a Young Man*, circa 1538, oil on panel, 95 x 75 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York.
- 5 El Greco, *Trinity*, 1577-79, oil on canvas, 300x178 cm, Prado Museum, Madrid. 15 For a description of *maniera* conventions see Smyth (1963).
- 6 Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Man with a Medal of Cosimo de’Medici*, 1474-75, tempera on panel, 57,5, 44 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. 16 Parmigianino, *Portrait of Galeazzo Sanvitale*, 1524, oil on panel, 107 x 80 cm, Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples.
- 7 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Old Man and His Grandson*, circa 1490, tempera on wood, 62 x 46 cm, Louvre, Paris. 17 Zeldin (1998: 12) states that “El Greco witnessed over a thousand supposed heretics brought to trial before the local Inquisition”.
- 8 Piero della Francesca, *Diptych Portrait of Federigo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, and His Wife, Battista Sforza*, 1465-66, tempera on panel, 47 x 33 (each), Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. 18 The term “self-aware image” was created by Stoichita (1997) to discuss the issue of meta-painting, that is a painting that contains paintings, or develops in the form of a painting (or paintings) within-a-painting. While El Greco’s portrait of the Cardinal does not qualify as meta-painting in Stoichita’s sense, it nevertheless has a metaphorical connotation that refers the viewer from viewing the subject matter back to viewing the formal qualities of the painting.
- 9 See Garrard (2010). 19 With regard to the fact that El Greco emphasises the tension between left and right in the person of the Cardinal, it should be noted that it is a modern neurological discovery that different modes of consciousness have a physiological basis in the brain. The cerebral cortex of the brain is divided into two hemispheres, joined by a bundle of interconnecting fibres. The right side of the cerebral cortex primarily controls the left side of the body, and the left side of the cortex controls the right side of the body.
- 10 For an analysis of the composition of Mannerist portraits, see Maré (1979).
- 11 Agnolo Bronzino, *Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo and Her Son*, circa 1545, oil on panel,

- 20 In 1505 Pope Julius II called Michelangelo to Rome to create a gigantic tomb for him in St. Peter's. The project was never completed. However, the *Moses* statue, which is double life size, the focus of the architectural and sculptural composition of the tomb, was intended to express the painfully restrained wrath of the leader of a wayward people. An allusion to the warlike prowess of Julius II was intended and the sculptor has embodied his own conception of masculine prowess. The way in which the Moses figure grasps the Tables of the Law, the bare arm and right knee, the heavy beard and the "horns" heighten the effect of physical and spiritual power. The flanking figures of Rachel and Leah, symbols respectively of contemplative and active life, were carved by Michelangelo himself, but they are not as satisfactory as the Moses. The monument itself and the figures on the upper course were not executed by the great master, though they were worked out according to his suggestions. On the other hand, two shackled figures out of the series planned by the sculptor are in the Louvre, though incomplete. These *Slaves* were intended to typify the power of the Pope in the domains of war and art, and were to stand in front of the herm as pillars, where the inverted consoles now are. In the *Slaves* in the Louvre the antithesis between resistance to the fetters and submission to the inevitable is expressed with remarkable skill. There are also in Florence some unfinished figures belonging to this monument, namely a victor kneeling on a fallen foe, and four other figures, which are merely blocked out.
- 21 Most probably Michelangelo was not aware of the fact that the Mosaic law closely resembles the Code of Hammurabi (died 1750 BCE).

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