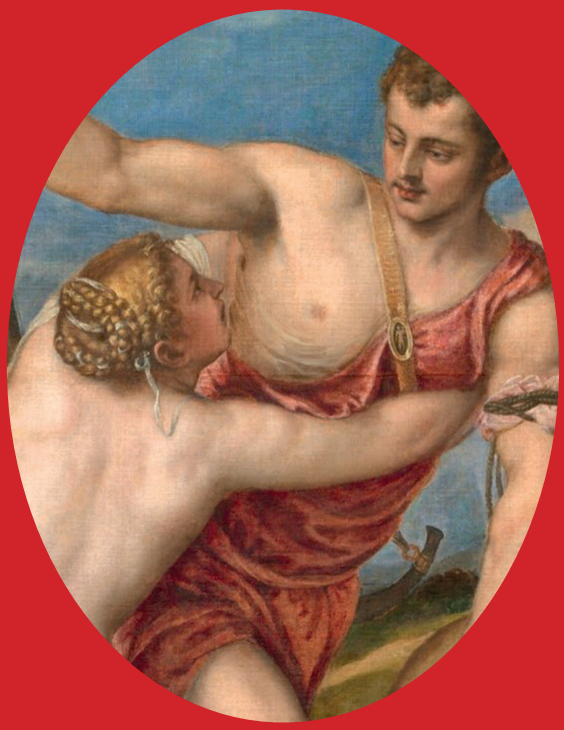
STUDIES IN ICONOLOGY 23

Inner Affinity

Ovid, Titian, Philip of Spain

Jean-François Corpataux

Translated by Elisabeth Dutton



PEETERS

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He must have felt an inner affinity to an author profound as well as witty, sensuous as well as aware of mankind's tragic subjection to destiny. And it was precisely this inner affinity which enabled Titian to interpret Ovid's texts both literally and freely, both with minute attention to detail and in a spirit of uninhibited inventiveness. No other major artist interested in mythological narratives relied so largely on Ovid, and from a single phrase of the text drew visual conclusions of such importance. Yet no other major artist indebted to Ovid hesitated so little to supplement the text with other sources and even, in at least one case, to change its essential significance. Small wonder that Titian, as an interpreter of Ovid, felt free to use all kinds of visual models, ancient or modern, while yet, on the whole, remaining independent of the specific tradition which flourished all around him in countless illustrated editions, translations and paraphrases of the Metamorphoses.

Erwin Panofsky, *Problems in Titian. Mostly Iconographic*, 1969, p. 140-141

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1
Preface

The title of this little book is inspired by Erwin Panofsky's remarks on the "inner affinity" between Ovid and Titian.[1] But this inner affinity between the Latin poet and the Venetian painter also extends to Philip of Spain, for whom Titian painted the famous cycle of canvases that he referred to in his letters as the "*Poesie*". To understand this kinship of spirit among the poet, the painter, and the king as more than a veiled semantic intention, the reader may consider a creative matrix, namely the conviction, widely held at the time, of the effects of works of art on the imagination, the soul and the body in the context of dynastic fecundity. How, then, did Titian's mythological paintings reflect a deep understanding between the artist and his patron? The hermeneutic chosen here is characterised by several levels of reading within a given historical framework. The metaphorical and analogical associations resulting from formal affinities will reveal a space of perception in which the poetic and generative effects of the *Poesie* could be produced by "affinity", understood here in the sense of an encounter between the image and the imagination of the "spectator". The canvases will also be examined with an intuitive and experimental approach in terms of the phenomena of "association", "displacement", "condensation" ("Assoziation", "Verschiebung", "Verdichtung"),[2] at the conjunction of "afterlife" ("Nachleben")[3] and chronological coincidence ("Synchronizität").[4] From this perspective, the aim is to revive certain facets of the poetry, meaning and purpose of Titian's *Poesie* by considering as examples a few paintings from their creation to their reception in the second half of the 16th century.

1 Erwin Panofsky, *Problems in Titian. Mostly Iconographic*, New York, 1969, p. 140-141. First printed edition of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid: Bologna, 1471. On Titian and Ovide, see also: Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis. The Humanistic Theory of Painting*, New York, 1967, p. 97-105; Carlo Ginzburg, *Tiziano, Ovidio e i Codici della Figurazione erotica nel '500*, in *Tiziano e Venezia*, ed. Neri Pozza, Vicenza, 1980, p. 125-135; Thomas Puttfarken, *Titian & Tragic Painting. Aristotle's Poetics and the Rise of the Modern Artist*, New Haven – London, 2005, p. 155-181. Even if Titian, according to Carlo Ginzburg, o.c., did not master Latin, this does not call into question the "inner affinity" of his works with Ovid. This affinity may even have been enriched by consulting Italian translations or by the help of a humanist who knew Latin and could advise him.

2 On the *Traumdeutung* of Sigmund Freud as a hermeneutic tool, see: Henri Zerner, *L'Art*, in *Faire de l'histoire. Nouvelles approches*, eds. Jacques Le Goff & Pierre Nora, Paris, 1974, p. 183-202.

3 On the idea of "Nachleben", see: Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'Image survivante. Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg*, Paris, 2002.

4 See for example the writings on synchronicity of Carl Gustav Jung.

2
Emulations

Fig. 1. Titian, *Venus and Adonis*, about 1553-1554, oil on canvas, 186 × 207 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

Venus and Adonis (1553-54), Titian's second *Poesia* for Philip of Spain (fig. 1),[5] contains several references to works of Antiquity and the Renaissance, such as the so-called *Bed of Polyclitus* (fig. 2) and *Raphael's Wedding Banquet of Cupid and Psyche*. Among other possible visual sources, Correggio's painting of *Io and Jupiter* probably played a decisive role (fig. 3). Correggio had painted this work in 1530-34 as part of a cycle of *Jupiter's Loves* for the Duke of Mantua Federico II Gonzaga.[6] Titian's Venus shows a great affinity with Correggio's nymph in the seated pose, the view from behind, the head thrown back, the arrangement of the legs, the tied and braided hair and something of the whiteness of the flesh. Even the twisting of Venus' torso seems to owe some debt to the Correggio embrace. While Io opens her arms to the rapture of Jupiter transformed into a cloud, Venus, sensing that Adonis' ill-fated plan will lead to his death, opens hers to prevent her lover from going hunting. As always, Titian took liberties with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

> […] She warns you, too, Adonis, to fear these beasts, if only it were of any avail to warn. "Be brave against timorous creatures," she says; "but against bold creatures boldness is not safe. Do not be rash, dear boy, at my risk; and do not provoke those beasts which nature has well armed, lest your glory be at great cost to me. Neither youth nor beauty, nor the things which have moved Venus, move lions and bristling boars and the eyes and minds of wild beasts. Boars have the force of a lightning stroke in their curving tusks, and the impetuous wrath of tawny lions is irresistible. I fear and hate them all." When he asks her why, she says: "I will tell […]. But now I am aweary with my unaccustomed toil; and see, a poplar, happily at hand, invites us with its shade, and here is grassy turf for couch. I would fain rest here on the grass with you." So saying, she reclined upon the ground and on him, and, pillowing her head against his breast and mingling kisses with her words, she told the following tale […].[7] (X, 542-559)

Fig. 2. *Bed of Polyclitus*, Renaissance copy of an antique relief Marble, height: 46 cm, Rome, Palazzo Mattei di Giove

From a scene of union in Correggio, we move to a scene of separation in Titian. However, a form of intertwining of the mythological figures remains. Giorgio Vasari writes of Titian's painting: "*Fece anco una Venere et Adone, che sono maravigliosi, essendo ella venutasi meno et il giovane in atto di volere partire da lei, con alcuni cani intorno molto naturali.*"[8] "He also made Venus and Adonis, which are marvellous, given that Venus has fainted and that the boy is in the act of rising to leave her, with some dogs about him that are very natural."[9] How to understand "*venire meno*"? From a linguistic point of view, it is certain that "*venire meno*" can only mean "to faint" in this context.[10] It is therefore an error or a description from a lost drawing or sketch,[11] as Titian's Venus is not "fainting". On the contrary, she is experiencing a strong emotion, clearly visible in the energy of her body. But on a phantasmatic and imaginary level, the use of the term "*venire meno*" here is not incompatible with a kind of kinship between Correggio and Titian, in whom the fantasy of a kiss or even an ecstasy remains. Finally, by a strange effect of displacement and inversion, the idea of fainting also plays a part in the tragic outcome of the mythological story, since not Venus,

Fig. 3. Correggio, *Jupiter and Io*, about 1530–1534, oil on canvas, 162 × 73.5 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

but Adonis really faints after being wounded by a boar ("[…] *utque aethere vidit ab alto / Exanimem inque suo iactantem sanguine corpus*" X, 719-721).

Consider the clouds. Despite the differences due to the specific figurative contexts, in both paintings a cloud contributes to the suggestion of a divine component. In Titian's work, we find a trace of Correggio's anthropomorphic cloud. In the background, behind Adonis, darker clouds form a sort of mandorla from which the sun's rays escape, with the silhouette of Venus' chariot in the centre. With reference to John Shearman's article "Raphael's Clouds, and Correggio's",[12] we could call this type of cloud continuity from one artist to another "Correggio's Clouds, and Titian's". Here Titian adopts something of Correggio's vertical clouds, while operating a sort of displacement within his horizontal canvas. The cloud appears in Titian's work as at once an echo of the figure of Venus, and almost as an anticipation, since the mention of Venus' chariot in Ovid follows the dramatic separation:

> "[…] These beasts [lions], and with them all other savage things which turn not their backs in flight, but offer their breasts to battle, do you, for my sake, dear boy, avoid, lest your manly courage be the ruin of us both." Thus the goddess warned and through the air, drawn by her swans, she took her way; but the boy's manly courage would not brook advice. It chanced his hounds, following a well-marked trail, roused up a wild boar from his hiding-place; and, as he was rushing from the wood, the young grandson of Cinyras pierced him with a glancing blow. Straightway the fierce boar with his curved snout rooted out the spear wet with his blood, and pursued the youth, now full of fear and running for his life; deep in the groin he sank his long tusks, and stretched the dying boy upon the yellow sand.[13] (X, 705-716)

In this visual dynamic of association and displacement, from Correggio to Titian, Adonis takes the place of Jupiter by way of his head, which is near the clouds. From a disembodied being in Correggio, that is to say an anthropomorphic cloud with a simple face and hands, in Titian we move to a full figure of flesh and blood. Titian may have seen for himself Correggio's cycle, *Jupiter's Loves*, in Mantua.[14] Moreover, Correggio's cycle is attested in Philip's collections in the second half of the sixteenth century, although it is not clear how these paintings came to the Spanish court.[15] Titian may therefore have been aware that his

Poesia would be compared with the Emilian painter's *Poesie*. In the end, the rendering of Titian's Venus seems to take into account the Correggian style, since, as already noted,[16] it has a more restrained touch and firmer modelling than *Danae*, the first work in the series.

Several scholars have referred to the Cinquecento debate about the superiority of painting or sculpture in connection with *Venus and Adonis*.[17] The famous *paragone* is mentioned because of the back view of Venus and because Titian himself had in a letter raised the question of the viewpoint of the figures. The different types of emulation between Titian and Correggio are thus added to that between painting and sculpture. The dialogue between the Venetian painter and this other canonical painter of Northern Italy is not limited to formal aspects, however.[18] It also touches on anthropological issues that arise from the dignity of the patrons and their dynastic obligations. In order to study these issues in more detail in relation to Philip of Spain, we must place the reception of *Venus and Adonis* in the context of the sensibilities of the time.

5 "*Poesia/Poesie*" in the letters of the artist. For the *Poesie* of Titien, I have relied mainly on: Erwin Panofsky, *o.c.*, p. 139-171; David Rosand, *Ut Pictor Poeta: Meaning in Titian's Poesie*, in *New Literary History*, 3, 1972, p. 527-546; Harold E. Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian. Complete Edition. III The Mythological and Historical Paintings*, London, 1975, p. 71-84; Philipp P. Fehl, *Titian and the Olympian Gods: The 'Camerino' for Philip II*, in *Tiziano e Venezia*, ed. Neri Pozza, Vicenza, 1980, p. 139-147; Charles Hope, *Problems of Interpretation in Titian's Erotic Paintings*, in *Tiziano e Venezia*, ed. Neri Pozza, Vicenza, 1980, p. 111-124; David Rosand, *Titian and the Eloquence of the Brush*, in *Artibus et Historiae*, 2, 1981, p. 85-96; Augusto Gentili, *Da Tiziano a Tiziano. Mito e allegoria nella cultura veneziana del Cinquecento*, Rome, 1988, p. 147-216; Rona Goffen, *Titian's Women*, New Haven – London, 1997, p. 242-273; William R. Rearick, *Titian's Later Mythologies*, in *Artibus et Historiae*, 17, 1996, p. 23-67; Filippo Pedrocco, *Titian. The Complete Paintings*, London – New York, 2001, p. 58-62, p. 222-223, p. 228, p. 248-250, p. 254-258; James Lawson, *Titian's Diana Pictures: The Passing of an Epoch*, in *Artibus et Historiae*, 25, 2004, p. 49-63; John Pope-Hennessy & Stefano Zuffi, *Titien*, transl. Jeanne Bouniort & Gérard-Julien Salvy, Paris, 2004, p. 26-29, p. 104-109 and p. 113; Peter Humfrey, *Titian*, London – New York, 2007, p. 168-186. See also recently: Maria H. Loh, *Titian's Touch. Art, Magic and Philosophy*, London, 2019 and Fernando Checa Cremades, *Mitologías. Poesías de Tiziano para Felipe II*, Madrid, 2021, as well as the catalogues of recent exhibitions on the *Poesie* of Titian: Matthias Wivel (ed.), *Titian. Love, Desire, Death*, (cat. exp.), London, 2020; Miguel Falomir & Alejandro Vergara (eds.), *Pasiones mitológicas*, (exh. cat.), Madrid, 2021. See also: Harald Keller, *Tizians Poesie für König Philipp II. von Spanien*, Wiesbaden, 1969. On *Venus and Adonis*, see also: Harold E. Wethey, *The Mythological and Historical Paintings*, *o.c.*, p. 188-194; Kiyo Hosono, *Venere cerca di trattenere Adone: fonti letterarie e funzione celebrative di Venere e Adone di Tiziano*, in *L'Arte erotica del Rinascimento. Atti del colloquio internazionale*, ed. Michiaki Koshikawa, Tokyo, 2009, p. 57-70.

6 "*Amori di Iove*", so called by Federico II Gonzaga, who commissioned the cycle. See: Elio Monducci, *Il Correggio. La vita e le opere nelle fonti documentarie*, Milano, 2004, p. 225-226. On this cycle, with bibliography, see recently: Jean-François Corpataux, *L'Image féconde. Art et dynastie à la Renaissance*, Geneva – Paris, 2023, chapters VI-IX. On the formal affinities between Titian and Correggio, see: Philipp P. Fehl, *Titian and the Olympian Gods*, *o.c.*, p. 139-147, p. 142-143; Philipp P. Fehl, *Decorum and Wit. The Poetry of Venetian Painting. Essays in the History of the Classical Tradition*, Vienne, 1992, p. 107.

7 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and transl. Frank Justus Miller, Cambridge, MA – London, 1984, vol. II, p. 103.

8 Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite dei più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti*, introduzione di Maurizio Marini, Rome, 2009, p. 1293-1294.

9 Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, transl. Gaston du C. de Vere, London, 1996, vol. II, p. 793-794, translation lightly modified by Giorgia Sassi and Elisabeth Dutton.

10 I thank Uberto Motta and Giorgia Sassi for this confirmation. See also: Giorgio Vasari, *Les Vies des meilleurs peintres, sculpteurs et architectes (1550 et 1568)*, tr. et éd. commentée sous la direction d'André Chastel, Paris, 2005, vol. X, p. 32-34; Giorgio Vasari, *Das Leben des Tizian. Neu übersetzt und kommentiert*, Berlin, 2017,

p. 43, Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, *o.c.*, p. 793-794.

11 André Chastel, in: Giorgio Vasari, *Les Vies*, *o.c.*, vol. X, p. 62, note 127.

12 John Shearman, *Raphael's Clouds, and Correggio's*, in *Studi su Raffaello*, eds. Micaela Sambucco Hamoud & Maria Letizia Strocchi, Urbino, 1987, p. 657-668.

13 Ovid, *o.c.*, vol. II, p. 115.

14 Harold E. Wethey, *The Mythological and Historical Paintings*, *o.c.*, p. 71.

15 Details in: Cathleen Sara Hoeniger, *The Reception of Correggio's Loves of Jupiter*, in *Coming About… A Festschrift for John Shearman*, eds. Lars R. Jones et alii, Cambridge, MA, 2001, p. 191-197, p. 192-193.

16 Peter Humfrey, *o.c.*, p. 172-176. See also: Valeska von Rosen, *Mimesis und Selbstbezüglichkeit in Werken Tizians. Studien zum venezianischen Malereidiskurs*, Emsdetten – Berlin, 2001, p. 337-338.

17 David Rosand, *Ut Pictor Poeta*, *o.c.*, p. 535; Charles Hope, *o.c.*, p. 114; Peter Humfrey, *o.c.*, p. 176. On the *paragone* between painting and sculpture in the Renaissance, see among others: Paola Barocchi (ed.), *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma. Varchi, Pino, Dolce, Danti, Sorte*, Bari, 1960; Lauriane Fallay d'Este (ed.), *Le Paragone. Le parallèle des arts*, Paris, 1992; Claire Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's 'Paragone'. A critical Interpretation with a new Edition of the text in the 'Codex Urbinas'*, Leiden – New York, 1992; Benedetto Varchi, *Pittura e scultura nel Cinquecento*, ed. Paola Barocchi, Livorno, 1998; Ekkehard Mai & Kurt Wettengl (eds.), *Wettstreit der Künste. Malerei und Skulptur von Dürer bis Daumier*, (exh. cat.), Munich – Wolfratshausen, 2002; Sefy Hendler, *La guerre des arts. Le Paragone peinture-sculpture en Italie. XVI^e^-XVII^e^ siècle*, Rome, 2013; Benedetto Varchi, *Paragone. Rangstreit der Künste : Italienisch und Deutsch*, ed. Oskar Bätschmann & Tristan Weddigen, Darmstadt, 2013; Stephen J. Campbell & Jérémie Koering (eds.), *Andrea Mantegna: Making Art (History)*, Special Issue, in *Art History*, 37, 2, 2014, p. 204-399; Joris van Gastel & alii (eds.), *Paragone als Mitstreit*, Berlin, 2014; Christiane J. Hessler, *Zum Paragone. Malerei, Skulptur und Dichtung in der Rangstreitkultur des Quattrocento*, Berlin, 2014.

18 On emulations between canonical painters of the Renaissance, see for example: Rona Goffen, *Renaissance Rivals. Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Titian*, New Haven – London, 2002.

3
Animations

In his letter to Alessandro Contarini,[19] written around 1554-55 and first published in 1559,[20] the art theorist Lodovico Dolce provides a remarkable description of the painting *Venus and Adonis* from 1553-54. The Venus and her effects are the focus of attention:

> One sees in her case a superhuman discernment, in that Titian, faced with the task of depicting such a goddess, envisioned in his mind a beauty which was not just extraordinary, but divine; and, to sum it up in a word, a beauty appropriate to Venus in the sense of a resemblance here to she who carried off the golden apple on Mount Ida. There are many features to talk about here, all of which partake of the miraculous and the celestial; but I am not even sure that I can envision them, let alone write them down. The Venus has her back turned, not for want of art – as in a certain painter's performance – but to display art in double measure. For in the turn of her face towards Adonis, as she exerts herself with both arms to hold him back and is half-seated on a firm cloth of purple, she everywhere evinces certain feelings which are sweet and vital and such that they are not seen except in her. With her, too, there is a marvellous piece of dexterity on the part of this divine spirit, in that one recognizes in the hindmost parts here the distension of the flesh caused by sitting. Yes indeed, one can truthfully say that every stroke of the brush belongs with those strokes [strikes][21] that nature is in the habit of making with its hand. Similarly her look corresponds to the way one must believe that Venus would have looked if she ever existed; there appear in it evident signs of the fear she was feeling in her heart, in view of the unhappy end to which the young man came. […] I swear to you, my Lord, that there is no person so sharp of sight and discernment that he does not believe when he sees her that she is alive; no one so chilled by age or so hard in his makeup that he does not feel himself growing warm and tender, and the whole of his blood stirring in his veins. And no wonder; for if a marble statue could,

> with the shafts of its beauty, penetrate to the marrow of a young man so that he left his stain there, then what should this figure do which is made of flesh, which is beauty itself, which seems to breathe?[22]

It is significant that Dolce first mentions the representation which Titian envisioned "in his mind [as] a beauty which was not just extraordinary, but divine". This type of ideal beauty was crystallised in a famous letter attributed by Lodovico Dolce to Raphael: "[…] I tell you, that in order to paint a beautiful [woman], I would need to see more beautiful ones, so that your lordship could choose the best with me. But as there is a scarcity of good judgments and beautiful women, I make use of some ideas which come to my mind."[23] Dolce then notes that Venus "has her back turned, not for want of art – as in a certain painter's performance – but to display art in double measure": "*non per mancamento d'arte, come fece quel dipintore*, *ma per dimostrar doppia arte*". Here we are very close to the *paragone* between painting and sculpture. One of the arguments of the sculptors rests, to quote Giorgio Vasari's summary, "on the fact that things are more noble and more perfect in proportion as they approach more nearly to the truth, and they say that sculpture imitates the true form and shows its works on every side and from every point of view, whereas painting, being laid on flat with most simple strokes of the brush and having but one light, shows but one aspect".[24] But Titian's Venus is not just a veneer. Dolce praises not only the beauty and divinity of Venus as seen from behind, but also the sensuality of her incarnation which grows from this unusual point of view: this allows him to highlight aspects related to Titian's extraordinary achievements within the art of painting itself.

These physical and spiritual levels refer respectively to the *topos* of living image,[25] which reproduces nature, and to the *topos* of the *divino artista*,[26] capable of breathing life into divine beauties. By insisting both on the physical rendering, down to the smallest details of the skin, and on the inner feelings of Venus, Dolce makes the reader aware of a prodigious articulation between the visible and the invisible. And he concludes his long description with the praise of a beauty that must be alive, the term "breathing" being synonymous with life: "*che è di carne; ch'è la beltà istessa; che par, che spiri*". Note also that Titian's "brushstrokes" evoke for Dolce the "strikes" given by the hand of nature": "*puossi con verità dire, che ogni colpo di penello sia de que' colpi, che suol far di sua mano la*

natura".[27] This is a subtle metaphorical play in which Dolce refers to Mother Nature's "hand" to speak of the living character of Titian's painting. The motif of the "strokes/strikes" is in fact linked to the double image of "nature" in a forge (fig. 4) or of a couple united in bed (fig. 5). These images are found in various manuscripts of the *Roman de la Rose* where Nature "continues always to hammer and forge and always to renew the individuals by means of new generation."[28]

Fig. 4. *Nature in her forge*, illustration of the *Romance of the Rose*, Lyon, Bibl. mun. MS P.A.25, fol. 137a

Fig. 5. *Nature in her forge*, illustration of the *Romance of the Rose*, Warsaw, Bibl. Narodowa, MS 3760, fol. 149v

The Titian rendering of flesh with a characteristic and divine touch has already been the subject of many important studies.[29] Perhaps we can go one step further. Is there some way to explain the power of Titian's figures within the real lives of those who become permeated by viewing them? As we will see, *Venus and Adonis* is indicative of beliefs in the efficacy of images and imagination in a nuptial and dynastic context.[30] Indeed, a series of observations will allow us gradually to penetrate this notion of the period: the work itself and its visual strategies, its theoretical and philosophical framework, the historical context and its chronological coincidences.

19 On Alessandro Contarini and Titian: Hans Ost, *Tizian und Alessandro Contarini*, in *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, 52, 1991, p. 91-104.

20 An early textual witness to this apparently lost letter appears in: *Lettere di diversi eccellentissimi huomini*, ed. Lodovico Dolce, Venice, 1559. On this letter: Mark W. Roskill, *Dolce's 'Aretino' and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, New York, 1968, p. 35-36 and p. 348-351.

21 Modification by the translator. We could say "colpo" in Italian refers to a brush stroke, but also a violent hit. However, the English "stroke" cannot capture the force of this second meaning of "colpo".

22 "[…] vedesi in questa un giudicio sopra-humano. Che havendo egli a dipingere una cosi fatta Dea, si rappresentò nell'-animo una bellezza non pure straordinaria, ma divina; e per dirlo in una parola, una bellezza conveniente a Venere, in guisa, ch'ella assembra quella, che meritò in Ida il pomo d'oro. Qui molte cose sono da dire, che hanno tutte del miracoloso e del celeste; ma io non m'assicuro pur d'imaginarmele, non che di scriverle. La Venere è volta di schena, non per mancamento d'arte, come fece quel dipintore, ma per dimostrar doppia arte. Perche nel girar del viso verso Adone, sforzandosi con ambe le braccia di ritenerlo, e meza sedendo sopra un drappo sodo di pavonazzo, mostra da per tutto alcuni sentimenti dolci e vivi, e tali, che non si veggono, fuor che in lei: dove è ancora mirabile accortezza di questo spirito divino, che nell'ultime parti ci si conosce la macatura della carne causata dal sedere. Ma che? puossi con verità dire, che ogni colpo di penello sia de que' colpi, che suol far di sua mano la natura. Lo aspetto è parimente, qual si dee creder, che fosse quello di Venere, s'ella fu mai: nel quale appariscono manifesti segni della paura, che sentiva il suo cuore dell'infelice fine, che al giovane avenne. […] Vi giuro, Signor mio, che non si truova huomo tanto acuto di vista e di giudicio; che veggendola non la creda viva: niuno cosi affreddato da gli anni, o si duro di complessione, che non si senta riscaldare, intenerire, e commoversi nelle vene tutto il sangue. Ne è maraviglia, che se una statua di marmo pote in modo con gli stimoli della sua bellezza penetrar nelle midolle d'un giovane, ch'ei vi lasciò la macchia: hor, che dee far questa, che è di carne; ch'è la beltà istessa; che par, che spiri?" *Letter from Lodovico Dolce to Alessandro Contarini*, written around 1554-1555, in: Mark W. Roskill, *o.c.*, p. 212-216, p. 214-216. Transl. Mark W. Roskill, *o.c.*, p. 215-217. Translation lightly modified by the translators.

23 "& le dico, che per dipingere una bella, mi bisogneria veder piu belle, con questa conditione, che V. S. si trovasse meco a far scelta del meglio. Ma essendo carestia, e de' buoni giudicij, e di belle donne, io mi servo di certa Idea, che mi viene nella mente." *Lettera di M. Rafaello da Urbino pittore et architetto al conte Baldasar Castiglione*, in: Lodovico Dolce, *Lettere di diversi eccellentiss. Huomini, raccolte da diversi libri, tra le quali se ne leggono molte, non piu stampate*, Venice, (1554) 1555, p. 227-228, p. 228. On this letter: John Shearman, *Castiglione's portrait of Raphaël*, in *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 38, 1994, p. 69-97. Transl. Giorgia Sassi & Elisabeth Dutton.

24 Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, *o.c.*, vol I. p. 15. "E dicono che la scultura imita la forma vera, e mostra le sue cose, girandole intorno, a tutte le vedute; dove la pittura, per esser spianata con semplicissimi lineamenti di pennello, e non avere che un lume solo, non mostra che una apparenza sola." Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite, o.c.*, p. 32.

25 Frederika H. Jacobs, *The Living Image in Renaissance Art*, Cambridge, 2005.

26 On the tradition of the "*divino artista*": Ernst Kris & Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist. A Historical Experiment*, New Haven – London, 1979, p. 38-60; Patricia Emison, *Creating the 'Divine' Artist: from Dante to Michelangelo*, Leiden, 2004.

27 On the metaphorical implications of the "stroke of the brush": Valeska von Rosen, *o.c.*, p. 309-339; Victor I. Stoichita, *'Touche', 'coup de pinceau' et création picturale chez Titien*, in *Création, Renaissance, Ordre du monde*, ed. Carlo Ossola, Torino, 2012, p. 135-152.

28 Guillaume de Lorris & Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, transl. Charles Dahlberg, Princeton, NJ, 1995, p. 271. On these miniatures: Mechthild Modersohn, *Natura als Göttin im Mittelalter. Ikonographische Studien zu Darstellungen der personifizierten Natur*, Berlin, 1997; Christiane Kruse, *Wozu Menschen malen. Historische Bregründungen eines Bildmediums*, Munich, 2003, p. 370-374.

29 Thematic studies on the "flesh" figures of the Venetian master are legion, with a vast corpus of written sources and examples, and an abundant bibliography. I will only touch on these issues in the various chapters. Cf. in particular: David Rosand, *Titian and the Eloquence of the Brush, o.c.*; Rona Goffen, *Titian's Women*, *o.c.*; Valeska von Rosen, *o.c.*; Daniela Bohde, *Haut, Fleisch und Farbe. Körperlichkeit und Materialität in den Gemälden Tizians*, Emsdetten – Berlin, 2002; Nicola Suthor, *Augenlust bei Tizian. Zur Konzeption sensueller Malerei in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Munich, 2004; Victor I. Stoichita, *Inkarnatfarbe. Ein Kunstbegriff im Spannungsfeld zwischen deutschem Idealismus und französischer Phänomenologie*, in *'Trinkt, o Augen, was die Wimper hält, …'. Farbe und Farben in Wissenschaft und Kunst*, eds. Hanspeter Bieri & Sara Margarita Zwahlen, Bern, 2008, p. 215-239; Victor I. Stoichita, *'Touche', 'coup de pinceau' et création picturale chez Titien, o.c.*; Victor I. Stoichita, *Pennello / Scalpello*, in *Le corps transparent*, ed. Victor I. Stoichita, Rome, 2013, p. 7-36.

30 See: Andreas Prater, *Im Spiegel der Venus. Velàzquez und die Kunst einen Akt zu malen*, Munich – Berlin – London – New York, 2002, p. 28-34. For an example at the court of Mantua and the painter Correggio, with bibliography: Jean-François Corpataux, *o.c.*. On Titian and procreation, on an essentially iconological level: Anthony Colantuono, *Titian, Colonna and the Renaissance Science of Procreation*, Farnham, 2010.

4
Dynastic blood

Dolce speaks in his letter of the active power of Titian's living Venus over the beholder. He evokes all the blood that a person feels growing warm and tender and stirring in his veins on seeing her: "*Vi giuro, Signor mio, che non si truova huomo tanto acuto di vista e di giudicio; che veggendola non la creda viva: niuno cosi affreddato da gli anni, o si duro di complessione, che non si senta riscaldare, intenerire, e commoversi nelle vene tutto il sangue*". In Renaissance art theory, the triggering of the movements of the soul through painting is already present in Alberti's *De pictura*: "The purpose of the painter is to obtain from a work praise, favor, and approval more than riches, a [feature] that he will certainly gain provided his painting will capture the eyes and hearts of the observers and, above all, will make [hearts] palpitate."[31] (III, 52) Alberti's Latin verb "movebit" is reflected in Dolce's Italian "commoversi", but here Dolce immediately focuses on the resulting physiological mechanism. The blood will run hot in the veins of even the most hardened person, he writes. The work imitates nature so well, it is so alive and divine at the same time, that the soul and body of the admirer, whoever he may be, will inevitably be affected. This is of course linked to the erotic power of the work.[32] The details of Venus' naked body, the view from behind, the unravelled garment on which she is sitting and the upturned golden vessel give the representation a risqué quality. The Venus was thus intended to produce an effect similar to that of a statue of Venus described by Aretino in a letter to Federico II Gonzaga dated 6 August 1527: "I believe that the most rare Signor Jacopo Sansovino will decorate your room with a Venus so real and so alive, that it fills with lust the thought of each one who looks at her."[33]

From the animation of the viewer's blood by a work of art, let us return for a moment to that of the represented figures themselves. Dolce places Titian's Venus in the tradition of living image. This invites us to read again a founding story of artistic creation, the myth of Pygmalion, where the passage from a statue of stone to a being of flesh is also described in terms of warming up and circulation of blood:[34]

> When he returned he sought the image of his maid, and bending over the couch he kissed her. She seemed warm to his touch. Again he kissed her, and with his hands also he touched her breast. The ivory grew soft to his touch and, its hardness vanishing, gave and yielded beneath his fingers, as Hymettian wax grows soft under the sun and, moulded by the thumb, is easily shaped to many forms and becomes usable through use itself. The lover stands amazed, rejoices still in doubt, fears he is mistaken, and tries his hopes again and yet again with his hand. Yes, it was real flesh! The veins were pulsing beneath his testing finger.[35] (X, 280-289)

This passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* precedes the myth of *Venus and Adonis* (X, 519-559 and 705-739). There is a particular mythological genealogy here that perhaps deserves some attention. It should first be pointed out that this relatively broad type of association is suggested by the fact that Lodovico Dolce had a perfect command of the *Metamorphoses*, since he translated them into verse in 1553.[36] Pygmalion and his animated statue have a daughter, Paphos. She gives birth to Cinyras, king of Cyprus, who then has a daughter, Myrrha, who, in turn, from her incestuous union with her father… begets Adonis. This mythological genealogy gives the blood of Adonis a fundamental dynastic charge. Adonis is born when Myrrha is transformed into a tree (fig. 6). Although this is an extraordinary birth, Ovid uses the characteristic terms of a real human pregnancy and birth:

> But the misbegotten child had grown within the wood, and was now seeking a way by which it might leave its mother and come forth. The pregnant tree swells in mid-trunk, the weight within straining on its mother. The birth-pangs cannot voice themselves, nor can Lucina be called upon in the words of one in travail. Still, like a woman in agony, the tree bends itself, groans oft, and is wet with falling tears. Pitying Lucina stood near the groaning branches, laid her hands on them, and uttered charms to aid the birth. Then the tree cracked open, the bark was rent asunder, and it gave forth its living burden, a wailing baby-boy. The naiads laid him on soft leaves and anointed him with his mother's tears.[37] (X, 503-518)

This miraculous birth must have struck Titian, if only on a subliminal level, especially since the birth of Adonis is the turning point between the myth of

Fig. 6. Lodovido Dolce, *Le Trasformationi*, 1553, p. 214, engraving detail, in: Giuseppe Capriotti (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 214

Myrrha and the myth of Venus and Adonis that Titian represents. In this connection, we should pay attention to the small sleeping *putto* in the middle ground on the left, surrounded by trees.

31 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, ed. and transl. Rocco Sinisgalli, Cambridge, 2011, p. 74-75. "Finis pictoris laudem, gratiam et benivolentiam vel magis quam divitias ex opere adipisci. Id quidem assequetur pictor dum eius pictura oculos et animos spectantium tenebit atque movebit." Leon Battista Alberti, *La peinture*, eds. and transl. Thomas Golsenne & Bertrand Prévost, Paris, 2004, p. 176.

32 On the erotic power of images in the Renaissance, see among others: Carlo Ginzburg, *o.c.*; Henri Zerner, *L'Estampe érotique au temps de Titien*, in *Tiziano e Venezia*, ed. Neri Pozza, Vicenza, 1980, p. 85-90; David Freedberg, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago, 1989, chapter I, 1-2; Paula Findlen, *Humanismus, Politik und Pornographie im Italien der Renaissance*, in *Die Erfindung der Pornographie. Obszönität und die Ursprünge der Moderne*, ed. Lynn Hunt, Frankfurt a.M., 1994, p. 44-114; Ulrich Pfisterer, *Die Erotik der Macht. Visualisierte Herrscher-Potenz in der Renaissance*, in *Menschennatur und politische Ordnung*, eds. Andreas Höfele & Beate Kellner, Paderborn, 2016, p. 177-201.

33 "Credo che messer Jacopo Sansovino rarissimo vi ornarà la camera d'una Venere sì vera e si viva che, empie di libidine il pensiero di ciascun che la mira." *Letter from Aretino to Federico II Gonzaga*, Venice, 6th August 1527, in: Pietro Aretino, *Lettere sull'arte*, ed. Ettore Camesasca, Milan, 1957, vol. I, p. 17. Transl. Giorgia Sassi & Elisabeth Dutton.

34 On these transformation effects, the seminal book is: Victor I. Stoichita, *The Pygmalion Effect. From Ovid to Hitchcock,* Chicago, 2008.

35 Ovid, *o.c.*, vol. II, p. 85.

36 Facsimile edition in: Giuseppe Capriotti (ed.), *Le Trasformationi di Lodovico Dolce. Il Rinascimento ovidiano di Giovanni Antonio Rusconi. Ristampa anastatica della prima edizione delle Trasformationi*, Ancona, 2013.

37 Ovid, *o.c.*, vol. II, p. 101.

5
A putto of words and paint

7. Titian, *Venus and Adonis*, about 1553-1554, detail of fig. 1: Cupid

In narrative terms, the *putto* is associated with Cupid, son of Venus (fig. 7). He is asleep, his slumber perhaps suggesting the forthcoming departure of Adonis. But the work presents a certain ambiguity, already prepared in Ovid's description of the newborn Adonis: "Even Envy would praise his beauty, for he looked like one of the naked loves portrayed on canvas. But, that dress may make no distinction, you should either give him a light quiver or take it away from them [the naked loves]."[38] (X, 515-518) In this respect, Titian's sleeping *putto*, whose bow and quiver are suspended from a tree, seems to act as a "condensation" figure that hints at the beauty of Adonis as a child. Moreover, by depicting the little Adonis by allusion and the adult Adonis explicitly in the same canvas, Titian engages in a dialogue with Ovid. Through pictorial means, he evokes the temporal dimension of the "perpetuum carmen" of the *Metamorphoses*. After praising the beauty of Adonis as a child, Ovid moves on to his growth into adulthood:

> Time glides by imperceptibly and cheats us in its flight, and nothing is swifter than the years. That son of his sister and his grandfather, who was but lately concealed within his parent tree, but lately born, then a most lovely baby-boy, is now a youth, now man, now more beautiful than his former self; now he excites even Venus' love, and avenges his mother's passion. For while the goddess' son, with quiver on shoulder, was kissing his mother, he chanced unwittingly to graze her breast with a projecting arrow. The wounded goddess pushed her son away; but the scratch had gone deeper than she thought, and she herself was at first deceived. Now, smitten with the beauty of a mortal, she cares no more for the borders of Cythera, nor does she seek Paphos, girt by the deep sea, nor fish-haunted Cnidos, nor Amathus, rich in precious ores. She stays away even from the skies; Adonis is preferred to heaven.[39] (X, 519-532)

For Ovid, the term "formosus" has two meanings: well formed, and beautiful. "Nuper erat genitus, modo formosissimus infans, / Iam iuuenis, iam uir, iam se formosior ipso est" (X, 522-523). Adonis is already very well formed in himself and his beauty develops to a *crescendo* through the poem. Born very beautiful, he becomes more and more beautiful at each stage of his life. In his translation-adaptation of 1553, Dolce sometimes uses the word "*bellezza*" and sometimes the word "*formato*":

> They washed him with the fragrant tears that his mother [Myrrha turned into a plant] shed. Now so rare a beauty shines in him, that no body was ever better formed, so that even envy, which produces no good, would have praised him. He is equal to Cupid, if his arrows were taken from Cupid, or if the one were clothed, and the other naked.
> But the stings and the bow do not fly as fast as time, and the days pass. Already this one, who was the son of his sister [his mother Myrrha, daughter of Cinyros] and of his grandfather [his father Cinyros] (because of the infamous error), had grown up to that age with so much beauty, which women value most and which the dearest possess, that he not only surpassed in beauty all the creatures of our sex, but also surpassed himself.[40]

Dolce reveals a particular note, as he puts more emphasis on the effects of beauty than the Latin poet. What does Titian do? Not only does he hint at the temporal dimension inherent in Adonis' growth from child to adult, but he also and above all expresses his beauty as a young man, so that he is perfectly "*formosissimus*" in painting. This characteristic obviously did not escape Dolce's notice: "For each one separately and all of them together embody the perfection of art, and the coloring competes with the design, and the design with the coloring."[41] In short, the "perfection of art" is embodied in a figure that becomes increasingly beautiful in the story itself. Titian, Ovid and Dolce are part of an emulation in which the ancient myth, its modern translation into Italian verse and painting, and the ekphrasis of the painting respond to each other in a most intense escalation and in a seemingly endless dynamic. Where does this leave us?

38 Ovid, *o.c.*, vol. II, p. 101.

39 Ovid, *o.c.*, vol. II, p. 101-103.

40 "Con l'odorate lagrime, che stilla / La propria madre, l'hebbero lauato. / Or si rara bellezza in lui sfauilla, / Che corpo non fu mai meglio formato; / In modo, che l'invidia che fauilla / Non ha d'affetto san, l'hauria lodato. / Tal è Cupido, se a Cupido togli / Gli strali; o l'un ne uesti, e l'altro spogli. // Ma non uolan così dardi e quadrella, / Come rapido il tempo, e i dì sen uanno. / Già quell, ch'era figliuol de la sorella / E de l'auo (mercè del sozzo inganno) / Era cresciuto a quella età si bella, / Che più prezzan le Donne, e più cara hanno / Ne pur uincea ciascun del nostro sesso, / M'auanzaua in bellezza anco se stesso." Following the facsimile edition in: Giuseppe Capriotti (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 219. Transl. Giorgia Sassi & Elisabeth Dutton.

41 "Ne si può discerner qual parte in lui sia piu bella, perche ciascuna separatamente, e tutte insieme, contengono la perfettion dell'arte: & il colorito contende col disegno, & il disegno col colorito." *Letter from Lodovico Dolce to Alessandro Contarini*, written around 1554-1555, in: Mark W. Roskill, *o.c.*, p. 212-216, p. 214, transl. 215.

6
Sterile Eros – Fertile Eros

In his description of Titian's *Venus*, Dolce relates a legend that pertains to the *topos* of transgressive love for statues: "for if a marble statue could, with the shafts of its beauty, penetrate to the marrow of a young man so that he left his stain there, then what should this figure do which is made of flesh, which is beauty itself, which seems to breathe?"[42] With this account, which can be found in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, of the *Venus of Cnidus* (Book XXXVI, 21),[43] Dolce draws on a founding myth of sculpture to illustrate one of the ultimate consequences of increased blood circulation in men, namely the release of seminal fluid.[44] In doing so, Dolce perhaps reveals one of the underlying purposes of Titian's painting, despite the irreducible differences between a marble statue and a painting of "flesh", between the anecdote around an ancient Venus and the story supposedly unfolding before Titian's *Venus and Adonis*. On the one hand, the lover of statues moves from a visual perception to a tactile impulse *towards* the work, and thus to a solitary and *sterile* pleasure. On the other hand, Titian's painting, because of its two-dimensional nature, limits perception to the sense of sight, but gazing on the work incites a kind of tactility, not towards the work, but between those *in front of* the work,[45] perhaps as an affinity between two people, in view of a *fertile* love.

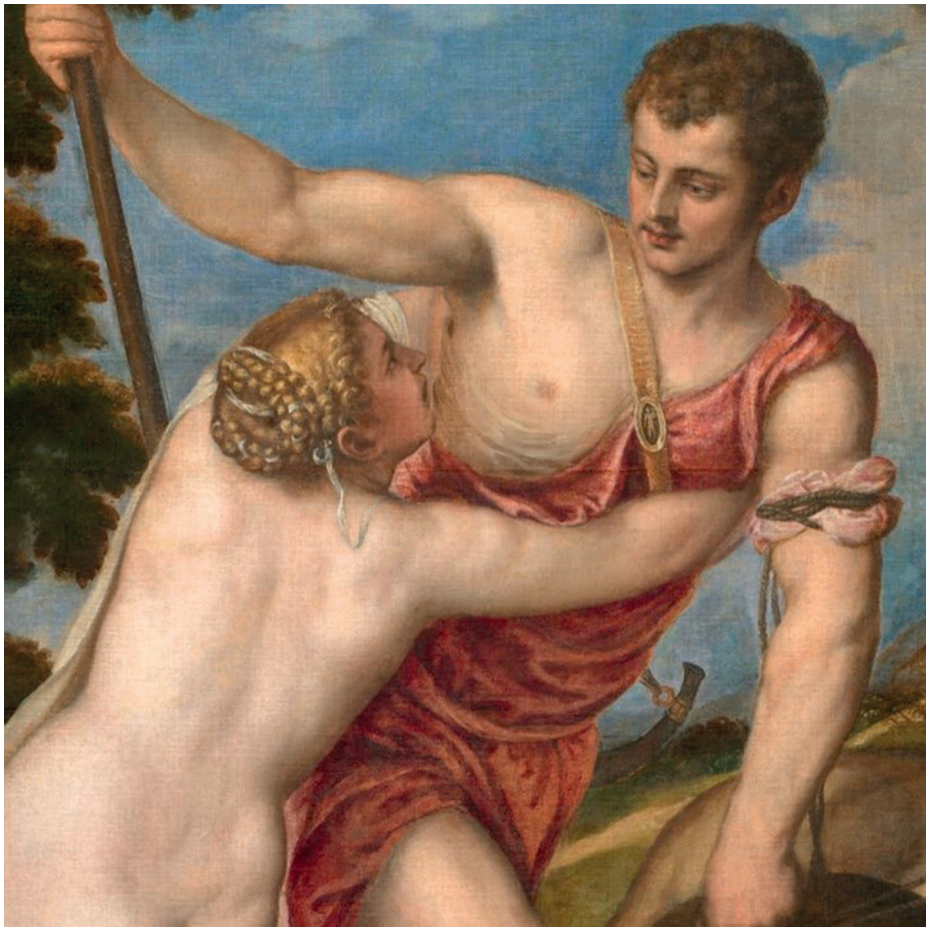
These questions about the perception of the work take on their full meaning in the light of the figures depicted and the narrative itself. We are not in the presence of a single figure, such as the statue of Cnidus, but of a couple and a landscape, as well as a small *putto*, described by Dolce as "*pargoletto Cupido*",[46] i.e. as "baby Cupid". Beyond the identification of the figures (Venus – Adonis – Cupid, even Adonis as a child), what are the deeper intentions of the work? This question takes us from the erotic effects of the image to its effects in terms of dynastic fecundity. Venus and Adonis are two ideal figures, female and male, whose beauty seems predestined to mark the descendants of the couple who contemplate them.[47] In Leon Battista Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* (written between 1440 and 1452, princeps edition in 1485), we read: "Wherever man and

wife came together, it is advisable only to hang portraits of people of dignity and handsome appearance; for they say that this may have a great influence on the fertility of the mother and the appearance of future offspring."[48] Moreover, the beauty of Adonis is special, because it comes from a certain femininity, says Dolce:

> And one sees that in the facial expression this unique master has aimed to convey a certain handsome beauty which would have its share of femininity, yet not be remote from virility: I mean that in a woman it would embody an indefinable quality of manhood, and in a man something of beautiful womanhood – an amalgam which is hard to achieve and agreeable […][49]

The arrangement of the figures is also based on a quest for balance and complementarity: male – female, standing – sitting, clothed – unclothed, etc. Furthermore, the relationship between the protagonists is characterised by weights and counterweights. Venus seduces Adonis with her beauty and holds him back. Adonis himself radiates beauty and attracts Venus. As two of the three dogs pull him, he resists by looking into Venus' eyes. The movement of the unbound dog seems to accompany Adonis' leaning and possible pivoting towards Venus.

This formal tug-of-war is all the more significant because at the level of the narrative, we experience the moment before a devastating rupture. Titian shows the knot of history as he saw it. According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, the "knot" (*δέσις*) of tragedy extends from the beginning to the part from which the turn to happiness or unhappiness proceeds.[50] Despite the proleptic insertion with Venus on her chariot in the cloud, and the visual weight of the work that draws us to the right and thus to the fatal outcome of the myth, we are still in that moment where everything is possible. This is why it is at this point that the story shifts. Adonis can choose to go hunting. Adonis can choose to stay and be united with Venus. The visual knot of the story is expressed in the intertwining of the two lovers with such subtlety and intensity that an awareness of this moment can put all external and internal senses on the alert. Are we dealing here with the fruitful moment ("*fruchtbarer Augenblick*") as, in the eighteenth century, Lessing would conceive it in his essay on the Laocoon?[51] "But only that which leaves free play to the imagination is fruitful. The more we see, the more we must be able to add in thoughts."[52] (Lessing) In any case, there is a Renaissance sensitivity to



8. Titian, *Venus and Adonis*, about 1553-1554, detail of fig. 1: Venus and Adonis

these equivocal representations. In his *De Sculptura* of 1504, Pomponius Gauricus notes: "A very elegant Greek epigram celebrates the Medea of this Timomachus, when, clearly wounded by love, avenging in the blood of her children the outrage done by their father, she seemed to want both to spare and to kill them."[53] So, in the words of Gauricus, it is perhaps more accurate to say that Titian's Adonis *seems to want both to* unite with Venus *and to* leave her.

Consider the detail of the cords around Adonis' arm (fig. 8). Here we see a certain constraint. Does this not evoke the arm of Bramante's Christ tied to the column during his scourging (fig. 9)? Unlike the flesh of Christ, however,

Fig. 9. Donato Bramante, *Christ tied to the column*, 1490-1499, oil on pannel, 93,7 x 62,5 cm, Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera

the flesh of Adonis is not compressed by the knot of rope: Adonis' cord is softened by a delicate pink silk, a mixture of red and white, which has a profane charge with its own metaphorical values. This silk and rope cuff also seems to be a symbolic form that visually "condenses" Adonis' struggle to choose between the love of Venus and the hunt. These polarities are also reflected in the death of Adonis and his transformation into a flower:

> Borne through the middle air by flying swans on her light car, Cytherea had not yet come to Cyprus when she heard afar the groans of the dying youth and turned her white swans to go to him. And when from the high air she saw him lying lifeless and weltering in his blood, she leaped down, tore both her garments and her hair and beat her breasts with cruel hands. Reproaching fate, she said: "But all shall not be in your power. My grief, Adonis, shall have an enduring monument, and each passing year in memory of your death shall give an imitation of my grief. But your blood shall be changed to a flower. […] So saying, with sweet-scented nectar she sprinkled the blood; and this, imbued with the nectar, swelled as when clear bubbles rise up from yellow mud. With no longer than an hour's delay a flower sprang up of blood-red hue such as pomegranates bear which hide their seeds beneath the tenacious rind.[54] (X, 717-737)

The mention of the pomegranate, even if only by way of comparison, is far from accidental. The pomegranate is indeed often considered a "symbol of fecundity because it is a 'bloody fruit'; but it is also of all fruits the most prolific: the ruptured rind is a quartered womb, an open vulva teeming with bloody germs."[55] Now, the pomegranate is a noble fruit, whereas Ovid speaks of a quagmire. The Latin word "*caenum*" refers to a muddy path. Bubbles rise up, so that the earth produces a flower. This is a wondrous thing in contrast to the dirty, low, brown register. A similar dynamic of opposition between high and low is found in Titian's work, by "association" and "displacement". Adonis, "*formosissimus*", dressed in red, passionate, wants to go hunting; during the hunt he will be killed by a boar. This passion seems low and vulgar compared to the other option of union with the beautiful Venus. Finally, on a poetic and phantasmatic level, the potential union with Venus is itself caught between the two poles of a fertility from below and from above, between passion and reason.

42 See chapter 3.

43 Pliny, *Natural History. Libri XXXVI-XXXVII*, ed. and transl. D. E. Eichholz, London – Cambridge, MA, 1971, p. 16-17. On love of statues, with other sources: Berthold Hinz, *Statuenliebe. Antiker Skandal und mittelalterliches Trauma*, in *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 22, 1989, p. 135-142; Robert Renaud, *Ars regenda Amore. Séduction érotique et plaisir esthétique: de Praxitèle à Ovide*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Antiquité*, 104, 1992, p. 373-438.

44 Aristotle, *Generation of Animals,* I, 19, 726b9: "[…] semen is pretty certainly a residue from that nourishment which is in the form of blood and which, as being the final form of nourishment, is distributed to the various parts of the body. This, of course, is the reason why semen has great potency – the loss of it from the system is just as exhausting as the loss of pure healthy blood […]" Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, transl. A. L. Peck, Cambridge, MA – London, 1979, p. 90-91.

45 On the multisensory dimensions of Titian's art in another context: Victor I. Stoichita, *Comment goûter un tableau ?*, in *La Renaissance décentrée*, ed. Frédéric Tinguely, Geneva, 2008, p. 83-103. I leave aside here the militant or pathological cases in which the tactile impulse manifests itself towards the canvas.

46 *Letter from Lodovico Dolce to Alessandro Contarini*, written around 1554-1555, in: Mark W. Roskill, *o.c.*, p. 212-216, p. 216.

47 Ernst H. Gombrich, *Apollonio di Giovanni: A Florentine Cassone Workshop Seen through the Eyes of a Humanist Poet*, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 18, 1955, p. 16-34, p. 27.

48 "Ubi uxoribus conveniant, nonnisi dignissimos hominum et formosissimos vultus pingas monent; plurimum enim habere id momenti ad conceptus matronarum et futuram spetiem prolis ferunt." Leon Battista Alberti, *L'architettura [De re aedificatoria]*, testo latino e traduzione a cura di Giovanni Orlandi, introduzione e note di Paolo Portoghesi, Milan, 1966, book 9, chapter IV, p. 805. English translation from: Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, transl. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach & Robert Tavernor, Cambridge, MA – London, 1988, p. 299.

49 "E vedesi che nell'aria del viso questo unico Maestro ha ricercato di esprimere certa gratiosa bellezza, che participando della femina, non si discostasse però dal virile: vuo dire, che in Donna terrebbe non so che di huomo, & in huomo di vaga Donna: mistura difficile, aggradevole […]" *Lettre de Lodovico Dolce à Alessandro Contarini*, écrite vers 1554-1555, in: Mark W. Roskill, *o.c.*,p. 212, transl. p. 213.

50 Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1455 b, in: Aristotle, *Poetics*, transl. Stephen Halliwell, Cambridge, MA – London, 1995, p. 90-91.

51 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poésie*, 1766: "[…] so ist es gewiss, dass jener einzige Augenblick und einzige Gesichtspunkt dieses einzigen Augenblickes, nicht fruchtbar genug gewählet werden kann. […]" Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon. Studienausgabe*, Stuttgart, 2012, chapter III. See also the observations of Harald Keller on the mouth of Venus: "Tizians Venus schreit: sie hat den Mund weit aufgerissen, und eine völlig Verzweifelte bietet kein schönes Profil dar. Durch den geöffneten Mund entsteht zwischen Oberlippe und kaum vorspringendem Kinn eine hässliche, herabstürzende senkrechte Partie im Kontur. Indem die Göttin den Kopf bildeinwärts kehrt, gegen den Geliebten hin, bieten sich Auge, Augenhöhle und der Ansatz des Nasenrückens in einem ungünstigen Winkel dar." Harald Keller,

o.c., p. 129-130. These lines by Keller are echoed in Lessing's lines about the Laocoon, published in 1766: "Der Meister arbeitete auf die höchste Schönheit, unter den angenommenen Umständen des körperlichen Schmerzes. Dieser, in aller seiner entstellenden Heftigkeit, war mit jener nicht zu verbinden. Er musste ihn also herab setzen; er musste Schreyen in Seufzen mildern; nicht weil das Schreyen eine unedle Seele verräth, sondern weil es das Gesicht auf eine ekelhafte Weise verstellet." Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon, o.c.*, chapter II. For an English translation: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön. An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, transl. Edward Allen McCormick, Baltimore – London, 1984.

52 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön. An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry, o.c.*, p. 19, translation modified by Elisabeth Dutton. "Dasjenige aber nur allein ist fruchtbar, was der Einbildungskraft freyes Spiel lässt. Je mehr wir sehen, desto mehr müssen wir hinzu denken können." Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon, o.c.*, chapter III.

53 "[…] elegantissimo graeco Epigrammate celebratur Timomachi huius Medaea, que uidelicet amore saucia, natorum sanguine patris iniuriam ulciscens, et seruare, et occidere uelle uidebatur, […]" Pomponius Gauricus, *De Sculptura (1504)*, ed. André Chastel & Robert Klein, Geneva, 1969, p. 252-253. Transl. Elisabeth Dutton. On this passage, with all these implications: Diletta Gamberini, *Rappresentare le lacerazioni dell'animo: archetipi letterari dell'"amphibolía" di Pomponio Gaurico*, in *I Tatti*, 23, 2020, p. 213-240.

54 Ovid, *o.c.*, vol. II, p. 115-117.

55 "symbole de fécondité parce qu'elle est un 'fruit à sang' ; mais elle est aussi de tous les fruits le plus prolifique : l'écorce rompue, c'est un ventre écartelé, une vulve ouverte grouillant de germes sanguinolents" Jacques Gélis, *L'Arbre et le fruit. La naissance dans l'Occident moderne. XVI^e^-XIX^e^ siècle*, Paris, 1984, p. 74. Transl. Elisabeth Dutton.

7
Image and imagination

The beginning and the end of Dolce's letter offer us a very suggestive theoretical key to understanding how the work was viewed at the time:

> If I were able at this time to describe Titian's Adonis to your Lordship with my words as well as you with yours, a few days ago, described to me the painting by Raphael of Urbino, I harbour the assured belief that you would say that no more perfect creation was ever conceived or painted, either by an ancient artist or by a modern one. Nonetheless, what I shall be able to adumbrate with this pen will, If I do not deceive myself, suffice to create in your fine mind an amazement of the same order as my language produced some time ago in that of the august Signor Pietro Gradenigo, so that he dreamt during the night of an excellence beyond compare; and the next day, in the desire to give his eyes corroboration here, he went to see the work and found that its impress far surpassed his imagination and my rough outline. This *poesia* on the subject of Adonis was carried out a short while back and sent by the divine Titian to the King of England. And to begin with the form, he has conceived of Adonis as being of a height appropriate to a lad of sixteen or eighteen, well proportioned, handsome and graceful in every one of his parts, with a pleasing tint to his flesh in which extreme delicacy and the presence of royal blood are conveyed. […]
>
> But all that I have worked hard to tell you here is a small intimation, compared with this painting's divinity (for no other word will do). You can count it enough that it is from the hand of Titian and painted for the King of England. You, my Lord, should hold in esteem from now on the very charming fruits of your most noble intellect – you who combine with fine literary pursuits the ornament of every choice and praiseworthy virtue.[56]

In the introduction, Dolce relies twice on the notion of imagination: firstly, when he praises the merits of the canvas by saying that no artist has ever "imagined" such a thing, and secondly, when he announces his literary description in

emulation of the art of painting. One of his first descriptions had already made such an impression on someone's mind that he afterwards dreamed about it.[57] But the next day, when that same reader saw the work in real life, its "effect" ("*l'effetto*") far exceeded his "imagination" and Dolce's "*abbozzamento*", i.e. his literary "sketch".[58] It is certainly a *captatio benevolentiae* in the conventional humble style. However, the terms "effect", "imagination" and even "dream" correspond to the philosophical vocabulary of the Renaissance, where the imaginative powers appear as a "coating of the soul".[59] These terms were also favoured at the time to explain the transmission of visual impressions from the mother to the foetus, conditioning its shape. In the sixteenth century, the seat of the imagination was located close to the external senses (fig. 10), without the other parts of the brain being separated from the imaginative power. It could even extend to the bloodstream.[60]

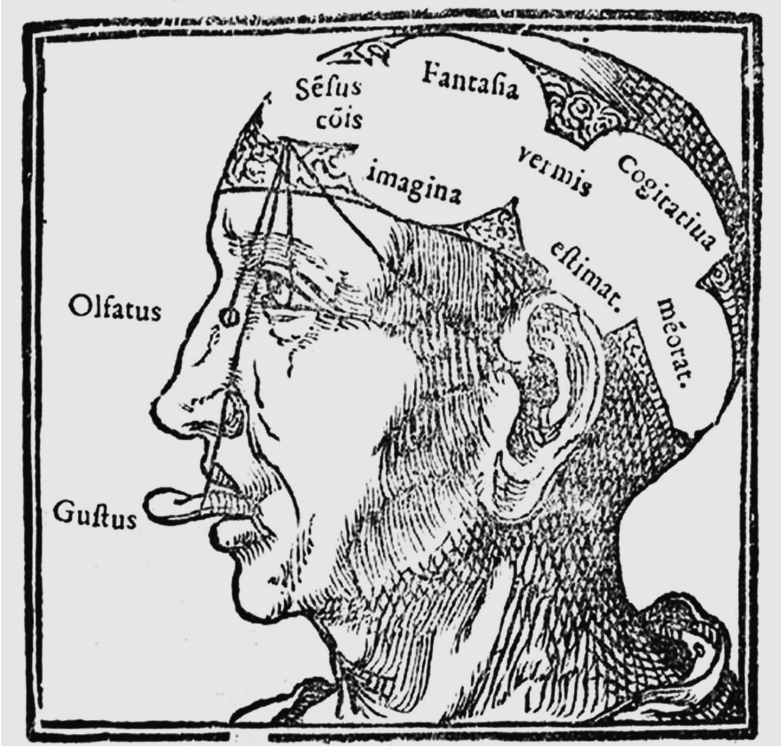


Fig. 10. [Lodovico Dolce,] *Dialogo di M. Lodovico Dolce, nel quale si ragiona del modo di accrescere e conseruar la memoria*, Venice [1562], 1575, p. 9

A recurring element in the introduction and conclusion of the letter is the mention of the artist and the commissioner, namely the "divine Titian" and the "King of England". This framework, defining the particular context of the commission, highlights both the divinity of the artist and the royalty of the commissioner. Most of the letter is devoted to the description of the masterpiece *Venus and Adonis*, so that we move imperceptibly from the "*divin Titiano*" in the introduction to the "*divinità di questa Pittura*" in the conclusion. As a physical medium, the canvas thus becomes a powerful vehicle for the artist's "divinity" and Adonis' royal blood – "*di sangue Reale*", writes Dolce. The flesh of Adonis evokes yet another context, that of his "royal blood" in the myth represented. As we have seen, this royal blood comes from his father and grandfather, King Cinyras. The genealogy of the young hero goes back at least to Pygmalion and his statue. In this mythical sculptor and the Venus divinity that brought a statue to life, Titian was faced with a most stimulating challenge. That part of the divinity that flowed in the veins of Adonis was to be reactivated and reinforced in the *Poesia* of the "divine Titian". So, against the background of Renaissance belief in the efficacy of the imagination, if Dolce speaks so insistently of Adonis' royal blood, it seems not impossible that Titian's painting was destined to mingle with the blood of the patron in one of his noblest obligations, the begetting of one or more well-formed heirs who would ensure the continuity of his House. However, this assumption must be justified with detailed evidence of historical coincidence.

56 "Se io sapessi hora cosi ben ritrarre a V.S. con le mie parole l'Adone di Titiano; come ella pochi dì sono, dipinse a me con le sue il quadro di Rafaello da Urbino: io mi do a credere indubitatamente, che voi direste; che non fu mai da Dipintore antico ne da moderno imaginata, ne dipinta cosa di maggior perfettione. Pure quel tanto, che io ne saprò ombreggiare con questa penna, basterà, se io non m'inganno, a crear nel vostro bell'animo una maraviglia tale, quale alquanto a dietro produsse la mia lingua in quello del Magnifico M. Pietro Gradenico, in guisa, che sognandosi egli la notte una eccellenza incomparabile, il giorno, che seguì, volendone certificar gliocchi suoi, andato a vederlo, trovò, che l'effetto di gran lunga avanzava la sua imaginatione, & il mio abbozzamento. Fu questa poesia di Adone poco tempo adietro fatta e mandata da divin Titiano al Re d'Inghilterra. E per incominciar dalla forma, egli l'ha finto di statura convenevole a garzone di sedici o diciotto anni, ben proportionato, gratioso, et in ogni sua parte leggiadro, con una tinta di carne amabile, che lo dimostra delicatissimo e di sangue Reale. […] Ma tutto questo, che io mi sono affatico di dirvi, è uno accennamento picciolo a rispetto della divinità (che altra parola non si conviene) di questa Pittura. Vi può bastare, che ella è di mano di Titiano, e fatta per il Re d'Inghilterra. Voi Signor mio degnatevi talhora de i frutti leggiadrissimi del vostro nobilissimo ingegno: ilquale insieme co' belli studi delle lettere accompagnate l'ornamento d'ogni virtù scelta, & lodevole." *Letter from Lodovico Dolce to Alessandro Contarini*, written around 1554-1555, in: Mark W. Roskill, *o.c.*, p. 212 and p. 216, English translation p. 213 and p. 217. Translation lightly modified by the translators.

57 On ekphrasis in the Renaissance, see among others: Svetlana Alpers, *Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's Lives*, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 23, 1960, p. 190-215; Michaela J. Marek, *Ekphrasis und Herrscherallegorie. Antike Bildbeschreibungen im Werk Tizians und Leonardos*, Worms, 1985; Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis ancient and modern : the invention of a genre*, in *Word & Image*, 15, 1999, p. 7-18.

58 On the rapport between ekphrasis and imagination: Norman E. Land, *Ekphrasis and Imagination: Some Observations on Pietro Aretino's Art Criticism*, in *The Art Bulletin*, 68, 1986, p. 207-217.

59 Robert Klein, *La forme et l'intelligible*, Paris, 1970, p. 65-88. For the idea of imagination in the artistic context of the Renaissance: Martin Kemp, *From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia': The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts*, in *Viator*, 8, 1977, p. 347-398.

60 See: Maaike van der Lugt, *La peau noire dans la science médiévale*, in *Micrologus*, XIII, 2005, *La pelle umana/The Human Skin*, p. 439-475, for a summary of the dominant conceptions in particular, p. 461-475. For an insight into the power of images on the human body in the Renaissance: Tanja Klemm, *Bildphysiologie. Wahrnehmung und Körper in Mittelalter und Renaissance*, Berlin, 2013.

8
Mary I of England

The royal blood of Adonis described by Dolce was to prove worthy of the painting's recipient, the King of England. But the King of England in question was none other than Philip of Spain, son of the Emperor Charles V. He had become King by his marriage to Queen Mary I of England on 25 July 1554.[61] The new titles of the King and Queen of England were as follows:

> Philip and Mary by the grace of God King and Queen of England, France, Naples, Jerusalem, and Ireland; Defenders of the Faith; Princes of Spain and Sicily; Archdukes of Austria; Dukes of Milan, Burgundy, and Brabant; Counts of Hapsburg, Flanders, and Tyrol.[62]

The official announcement of their regnal style refers to the "grace of God" as the ultimate source of their legitimacy as King and Queen of England. In this respect, the mythological figures of Venus and Adonis in Titian's painting are able to reflect, in the allegorical register of the time, the divine and royal character of these two English sovereigns. But what, in the eyes of contemporaries, will achieve the divine and royal character of the dynasty resulting from this union between Philip and Mary? The fruits of love and the work of the flesh. This dynastic dimension is reinforced by Titian's "*spirito divino*" and his figures of flesh, capable of bringing "the whole […] blood" of this couple of divine right to "warm" and "tender" "stirring in [their] veins" (Dolce), in the mutual gift of bodies for the consummation of marriage and dynastic procreation.

Titian's painting and its prolific powers were all the more important as this was not a marriage of love, but a marriage arranged to serve political interests, and as Mary, judged "in no way beautiful" by the Spanish side, was 37 years old, eleven years older than Philip, whose favourite passions were, according to an ambassador in 1563, hunting, tournaments and, above all, women.[63] Despite the concerns of the English side, in negotiating the marriage contract, to preserve the Queen's superiority, Philip and Mary became one through the sacrament of

Fig. 11. *A one-shilling coin with busts of Philip of Spain and Mary Tudor*, 1554, diameter: 3 cm, 5,84 g

marriage and symbolically wore the same crown. This is illustrated by a silver coin minted in their image in 1554 (fig. 11).[64] The inscription on one side reads: "*PHILIP[pus] ET MARIA D[ei] G[ratia] R[ex] ANG[liae] FR[anciae] NEAP[olis] PR[inceps] HISP[aniarum]*".[65] Here is also a reference to the grace of God, in accordance with the custom of the time. The other side is stamped with the joint arms of the bride and groom, surrounded by the motto "*POSVIMUS DEVM ADIVTOREM NOSTRUM*", "We have placed God himself as our protector".

Among the many constitutional implications of this union, the negotiations for which began in November 1553, was the marriage of a queen who was already symbolically married to her kingdom when she was crowned "*regina sola*".[66] Although Mary I was conscious of being the "wife" of her realm and the "mother" of her people,[67] her statements nevertheless reflect a strong dynastic awareness of her obligation to procreate. Indeed, in a speech to Parliament, she said: "But if as my progenitors haue done before, it might please God that I might leaue some fruit of my body behind me, to be your Gouernor, I trust you would not onely reioyce therat, but also I know it would be to your great comforte".[68] The "fruit of the body" of the Queen would thus be the legitimate heir to the kingdom, preventing power passing to her Protestant sister Elizabeth. The deeds also stipulated that in the event of the Queen's death, Philip would have no authority over England unless the couple had offspring.[69] In that case, their eldest son or daughter would be heir, and Philip would become regent until the heir reached their majority and ascended the throne. Philip's regency would allow the Habsburgs to extend their power over England.[70] The stakes were high. This circumstance illustrates the great importance of natural reproduction in a dynastic setting. Beyond the "negotiations" and the game of alliances between

the different families, it was constantly thought that everything should be done to bring forth one or more natural heirs who would ensure a legitimate lineage. The figurative and symbolic imagery displayed on *cassoni*, *spalliere*, *quadri* and other decorative elements[71] was therefore a privileged means of "actively promoting" the physical union of spouses with a view to the birth of beautiful children for the happiness of the people.[72]

The role of commissioned portraits in the wider context of a wedding should be recalled here.[73] A good example is the portrait of Queen Mary painted around November-December 1554 by Antonis Mor, a "famous Utrecht painter", as Karel Van Mander calls him in his Book of Painters published in 1604 (fig. 12):[74]

> Then, sent by the Emperor to England, he portrayed Queen Mary, the second wife of King Philip, and was rewarded with a golden chain, a hundred pounds sterling and another hundred pounds sterling as an annual salary. He copied the face of this Queen, who was a very distinguished woman, several times onto face-panels which he presented to great lords some of whom were of the Order, and to Granvelle and also to the Emperor who gave him two hundred guilders. But the story goes that he brought one of these portraits to Brussels, to Cardinal Granvelle, who sent him to the Emperor, to whom he offered it. The Emperor said: I do not hold court, I have handed everything over to my son. The painter, who therefore got nothing, returned to the Cardinal who said: leave it to me, and he went to the Emperor and praised the portrait exceedingly, and the beauty of this Princess, and asked what he had given the painter. The Emperor said: nothing, and asked what he ought to give. The Cardinal said: 1000 guilders or 300 ducats. The Emperor is then said to have made him responsible for seeing to that. This is supposed to have happened one and a half years after he left Spain.[75]

The portrait appears to have been commissioned by Charles V, who wanted to hand over power to his son.[76] The retirement did not take place until 1555, but the marriage of Philip to Mary I in 1554 was probably the turning point. The portrait was painted in the great tradition of Italian Renaissance portraits, with the subject seated, in three quarter view. It is also known that its creation was accompanied by great excitement for several reasons. The Habsburgs were happy with this new union, which would seal the alliance of two kingdoms.

Fig. 12. Antonis Mor, *Mary Tudor, Queen of England, Second Wife of Philip of Spain*, 1554, oil on panel, 109 × 84 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

Thanks to Queen Mary, England had returned to Roman Catholicism. And, to top it all off, in mid-September 1554, Mary thought she was already pregnant. The news immediately spread throughout Europe.[77] For the Habsburgs, the coincidence of all these events had a "mystical", even "miraculous" character, so that Mary Tudor was metaphorically associated with the Virgin Mary. Simon Renard, adviser to Charles V and Philip, reported to the emperor in a letter of 30 November 1554 that Cardinal Pole, Archbishop of Canterbury, had exclaimed to her: "benedicta inter mulieres, et benedictus fructus ventris tui" ("Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb"), literally taking up the words of the *Ave Maria* from Elizabeth's words of greeting at the Visitation (Lk, 1:42).[78] Antonis Mor's portrait plays on this symbolism by inserting a red rose, which is certainly the emblem of the Tudors, but which also has a Marian symbolism.[79] It is time, however, to return to the "royal" and in every respect "nuptial" painting, *Venus and Adonis* of 1553-1554, in the light of a second written source of the time.

61 Judith M. Richards, *Mary Tudor as 'Sole Quene'?: Gendering Tudor Monarchy*, in *The Historical Journal*, 40, 1997, p. 895-924, p. 909.
62 Paul L. Hughes & James F. Larkin, *Tudor Royal proclamations*, New Haven – London, 1969, vol. 2, p. 45-46. Reference in: Judith M. Richards, *o.c.*, p. 913.
63 Henry Kamen, *Philip of Spain*, New Haven – London, 1998, p. 54, 58, 90.
64 For other representations of the royal couple: Judith M. Richards, *o.c.*.
65 https://www.coingallery.de/KarlV/Phil_II_D.htm, consulted in May 2023.
66 Judith M. Richards, *o.c.*, p. 912.
67 Alexander Samson, *Changing Places: The Marriage and Royal Entry of Philip, Prince of Austria, and Mary Tudor, July-August 1554*, in *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 36, 2005, p. 761-784, p. 780.
68 John Foxe, *Actes and monumentes of these latter and perillous dayes*, London, 1583, cité in: Judith M. Richards, *o.c.*, p. 906, note 60.
69 On the contractual and dynastic implications of the marriage: Judith M. Richards, *o.c.*, p. 907*ff.*; Alexander Samson, *o.c.*.
70 Judith M. Richards, *o.c.*, p. 918.
71 For an insight, with bibliography: Andrea Bayer (ed.), *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, (exh. cat.), New York – London, 2008. However, the image was not the only way to ensure good dynastic fertility. For an overview, see: Rudolph M. Bell, *How to Do It. Guides to Good Living for Renaissance Italians*, Chicago, IL – London, 1999.
72 Foundational study: David Freedberg, *o.c.*, chapters I, 1-2. On the political stakes of the king's beauty: Hans-Joachim Schmidt, *The King's Beautiful Body. On the Political Dilemmas of Ideal Government*, in *Global Medieval: Mirrors for Princes reconsidered*, Cambridg, MA, 2015, p. 122-133.
73 Andrea Bayer (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 17-41, with bibliography.
74 On this portrait, the quotation and the subsequent development: Joanna Woodall, *An Exemplary Consort: Antonis Mor's Portrait of Mary Tudor*, in *Art History*, 14, 1991, p. 192-224.
75 Karel van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters*, ed. and transl. Hessel Miedema, Davaco, 1994, vol. I, p. 182.
76 For this paragraph, I draw on the analysis of Joanna Woodall, *o.c.*, p. 210*ff.*
77 Judith M. Richards, *o.c.*, p. 917.
78 Joanna Woodall, *o.c.*, p. 210.
79 Joanna Woodall, *o.c.*, p. 211.

9
A letter of greeting

Around 10 September 1554, a few months after the royal wedding, Titian sent a letter to Philip of Spain, now married to the English Queen, to accompany the painting *Venus and Adonis*:

> To the King of England, Sacred Majesty. My soul, accompanied by the present painting of Venus and Adonis, now rejoices with your Majesty at the new reign granted to you by God. I hope that the painting will be seen by you with those happy eyes that you used to turn towards the works of your servant Titian. And since the *Danae* that I sent to Your Majesty was seen from the front, I wanted to vary it in this other *Poesia*, and make it show the opposite side, so that the *Camerino* where they will be is more pleasing to the eye. Soon I will send you the *Poesia* of Perseus and Andromeda, which will have a different composition from these, and so will Medea and Jason, and I hope to send you, with God's help, in addition to these things, a most devoted work, on which I have been labouring for ten years already, where I hope Your Serenity will see all the strength of the art that Titian his servant knows how to put into painting. In the meantime, may the new great King of England deign to remember that his unworthy painter lives with the memory of having been the servant of so high and so benevolent a lord, and hopes through him to have acquired in the same way the grace of the most Christian Queen his consort. To which Queen may Our blessed Lord God assure together with Your Majesty many happy centuries, so that happy may be the peoples governed and ruled by Your holy and pious will.[80]

As Queen Mary announced her pregnancy in mid-September, the chronological coincidences with this letter raise a number of questions. Did Titian know that Mary believed she was pregnant when he wrote the letter? Was the work commissioned in the context of marriage negotiations? Clear answers to these questions are lacking. But the letter itself is already very rich in implications.

It is also worth recalling here the "perpetual genesis" of all works of art.[81] Works of art, even if they are part of an apparently coherent programme, can indeed be subject to semantic variability, from the moment they are conceived and even before they leave the studio. For Philip, Titian's *Venus and Adonis* is surely part of an "eroticism of power"[82] that has a certain continuity and dialectic with the first work in the series, *Danae*. Perhaps Philip had not originally commissioned the painting for a particular occasion. But during the matrimonial negotiations, Titian, while preserving and even amplifying the erotic dimensions of the work, may have continued to paint with an increasingly intense reflection on the place of Eros in a nuptial setting and on the significance of beauty for dynastic fertility.[83]

Philip of Spain was 26 in 1553 and would sooner or later marry, extend the Habsburg dynasty and appoint a successor from among his legitimate sons. The only child he had had so far was from his previous marriage to his cousin Maria Manuela of Portugal, who died shortly after giving birth. This was Don Carlos, born in 1545.[84] However, he, like other members of the Habsburg dynasty, suffered from physical deformity and other psychological disorders due to consanguinity.[85] Although the Habsburg dynasty was not in danger and Philip could count on nephews to succeed him when the time came, Don Carlos's frailty was a reminder that the King of Spain should ideally sire a son who was handsome both "externally" and "internally", i.e. physically and mentally, and who would one day be able to succeed him in the direct line. This is where art comes in.

Titian's *Poesie* can therefore be seen in the context of Philip's dynastic challenge, where, whoever became his royal wife, everything remained to be done. But for us the primary interest of Titian's letter to Philip is what it reveals about the powers of the image for the artist. From the very first sentence of the letter, we are at the centre of his thinking. "To the King of England, Sacred Majesty. My soul, accompanied by the present painting of Venus and Adonis, now rejoices with your Majesty at the new reign granted to you by God. I hope that the painting will be seen by you with those happy eyes that you used to turn towards the works of your servant Titian." The power of the work of art is immediately apparent. It becomes the physical vehicle of Titian's soul. This is part of the *topos* of *Automimesis* ("every painter paints himself"),[86] but Titian seems particularly aware of the process in this case. First, the artist's soul is expressed on the canvas

by his own hand. Second, the work, by its design and physical essence, conveys something of that soul to Philip. The hope is that his "eyes" are thus made "joyful" ("*lieti occhi*"). This ties in with the Dolce lines, which refer to the blood that must be brought to the boil. Titian anticipates Philip's encounter with his work, imagining that he will perceive the painter's soul in his absence. Titian speaks of this even before he addresses the famous question of the different viewpoints of the painted figures. With his painting, Titian wants to touch and move Philip wherever the canvas finds him. With his concept of the painting as an image or "vehicle of the soul", a kind of second garment of the spirit, Titian becomes physically and spiritually present to the new royal couple. This makes it all the more understandable that Philip regretted receiving *Venus and Adonis* damaged by the journey. On 6 December 1554, he wrote from London to Don Francisco de Vargas in Venice:

> The painting of Adonis that Titian has finished has arrived here and it seems to me that it is of the perfection that you say, although it is damaged by a fold that crosses it in the middle that was produced when he took it; you will see the solution to this; the other paintings that he makes me, hurry him to finish them and do not send them to me, but tell me when they are done, so that I can tell you what is to be done with them.[87]

The second sentence of Titian's letter, by far the best known, addresses one of the recurring challenges of all the *Poesie*. Referring to his *Danae* who "was seen from the front" – "*vedeva tutta da la parte dinanzi*", the Venetian master wanted to create variation in this other *Poesia*, "*variare*", "and make it show the opposite side, so that the *Camerino* where they will be is more pleasing to the eye" ("*più grazioso alla vista*"). The *paragone* painting-sculpture is often mentioned in connection with this difference in viewpoint. But the view from behind and the position of the head, as well as the emphasis on Adonis' chest, could also come from a creative selection of words from verse X, 558 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "Inque sinu iuvenis posita cervice reclinis" / "She laid her neck in the chest of the young man, leaning back." Although Ovid refers to a reclining Venus in the previous verse, it is possible that the terms "position", "neck", "leaning" and "breast" contributed to the inspiration for a back view and a particular intertwining of Venus and Adonis. In any case, Titian's letter brings together many

of the well-codified expressions of art theory, "*varietas*", "*poesia*", "*gratioso*", to describe a visual device in the making. It is an imaginary "*camerino*" that is intended to mark Philip's gaze. *Varietas* is an essential element of Albertian *historia*, but unlike a *varietas* within a single pictorial space, Titian speaks here of a *varietas* that must materialise from one *Poesia* to another, beyond the limits of representation. Titian develops here a global visual thought, already present in Correggio, where the elaboration of successive paintings opens itself to a synergy of different poses to multiply their effects: "*acciochè riesca il camerino, dove hanno da stare, più grazioso a la vista*". Philip and Mary did not, however, perceive the work in a purely passive way, as the theoretical thinking of the time abundantly emphasised.

80 The textual witness to this apparently lost letter can be found in: Lodovico Dolce, *Lettere di diversi eccellentiss[imi] Huomini…*, Venise, 1554, p. 229-230. "Al Re d'Inghilterra, Sacra Maestà. Viene ora a rallegrarsi con Vostra Maestà del nuovo regno concessole da Dio, il mio animo, accompagnato della presente pittura di Venere e Adone, la qual pittura spero sarà veduta da lei con quei lieti occhi che soleva già volgere alle cose del suo servo Tiziano. E perchè la Danae che io mandai già a Vostra Maestà, si vedeva tutta da la parte dinanzi, ho voluto in quest'altra poesia variare, e farle mostrare la contraria parte, acciochè riesca il camerino, dove hanno da stare, più grazioso a la vista. Tosto le manderò la Poesia di Perseo e Andromeda che avrà un'altra vista diversa da queste, e così Medea e Jasone, e spero con l'aiuto di dio mandarle, oltra queste cose, un'opera devotissima, la quale tengo nelle mani già dieci anni, dove spero che Vostra Serenità vedrà tutta la forza de l'arte che Tiziano suo servo sa usare ne la pittura. Intanto, il nuovo gran Re d'Inghilterra si degni ricordarsi che il suo indegno pittore vive de la memoria di esser servo d'un tanto alto e sì benigno Signore, e spera per mezzo suo avere medisimamente acquistato la grazia della Cristianissima Regina sua consorte. La qual Regina, nostro Signore Iddio benedetto conservi insieme con Vostra Maestà molti secoli felici, acciochè felici sì conservino i popoli governati e retti da le sue sante e pie volontà." *Letter from Titian to Philip of Spain*, written around 10 September 1554, here cited from: Lionello Puppi (ed.), *Tiziano. L'epistolario*, Florence, 2012, p. 213-214. Transl. Giorgia Sassi & Elisabeth Dutton. See also: Annie Cloulas (ed.), *Documents concernant Titien conservés aux archives de Simancas*, in *Mélanges de la Casa de Velazquez*, 3, 1967, p. 197-288, p. 227, note 2.

81 Henri Zerner, *Genèse perpétuelle*, in *Genesis*, 24, 2004, p. 21-25.

82 Ulrich Pfisterer, *Die Erotik der Macht, o.c.*.

83 On Adonis as the Renaissance husband of Venus and the nuptial symbolism of the couple: Kiyo Hosono, *o.c.*, p. 58, p. 61 and note 14, with sources.

84 For a family tree, see: Henry Kamen, *o.c.*, p. XVI.

85 Diane Bodart, *Pouvoirs du portrait sous les Habsbourg d'Espagne*, Paris, 2011, p. 111-115.

86 Among several contributions on the subject: Frank Zöllner, 'Ogni Pittore Dipinge Sé'. Leonardo da Vinci and 'Automimesis', in *Der Künstler über sich in seinem Werk*, ed. Matthias Winner, Weinheim, 1992, p. 137-149.

87 "[…] El quadro de Adonis que acabó Ticiano ha llegado aqui, y me paresce de la perficion que dezis, aunque vino maltratado de un doblez que traya al traves por medio del, el qual se desvio hazer al cogelle ; verse ha el remedio que tiene ; los otros quadros que me haze le dad prissa que los acabe, y non me los embieis, sino avisadme cuando estuvieren hechos para que yo os mande lo que se avrá de hazer dellos […]" Quoted from: Annie Cloulas (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 227. Translation Elisabeth Dutton.

10
The effects according to Dolce

As Lodovico Dolce pointed out in his *Dialogo della Pittura intitolato l'Aretino* of 1557, the linchpin of the perception of images, as it was thought of at the time, lies in the effects of the "imagination". This concept appears clearly in the context of another "paragonic" debate, namely between painting and poetry:

Aret. One may properly say that although the painter cannot depict those things which stand subject to touch (like, for example, the coldness of snow), or to taste (like the sweetness of honey), he depicts, nonetheless, the thoughts and feelings of the spirit.

Fab. A good point, sir; but these things come across to us by way of certain outward actions – often it will be in the arching of an eyebrow, the creasing of a forehead, or other such indices that the interior secrets become plain; so that in many cases there is no need for the windows of Socrates.

Aret. True indeed; and so we find this line in Petrarch: "Oft one may read the heart upon the brow." But the eyes, in the main, are the windows of the soul; and in these the painter can fittingly express every emotion there is; such as joys, pain, anger, fears, hopes and desires. Everything, however, is servant to the eye of the spectator.

Fab. I would like to add that, even though the painter is defined as a "mute poet", and though painting itself is similarly called "mute", nevertheless it works in such a way as to make it appear that the painted figures are talking, crying out, weeping, laughing and generally engaging in actions [*effetti*] of this kind.

Aret. Such indeed is the appearance; in fact, however, they are not talking or doing any of those other things [*effetti*].

Fab. Here one might solicit the opinion of your man of talent Silvestro, that excellent musician who performs for the Doge. For he draws and paints commendably, and gives us a tangible conviction that the figures painted by masters of quality are speaking, almost as though they were alive.

> Aret. This idea is plain imagination on the spectator's part, prompted by different attitudes which serve that end. It is not an effect [*effetto*] or a property of painting.[88]

After discussing the challenges of multi-sensoriality in painting, Dolce returns to the *topos* of the eyes as windows to the soul. Through them the painter can express the inner passions of the figures. This analysis allows the theorist to describe the "*effetti*" of the works, which are not only produced by the painting as such, "*e non effetto o proprietà della Pittura*", but by the imagination of those who look at it: "*Questa è certa imaginatione di chi mira*". We should also note the recurrence of the paradigm of living image in several lines, such as "*le figure dipinte da buoni Maestri parlano, quasi a paragon delle vive*". These evocations are accompanied by expressions referring to the effects of painting. The word "*effetto/effetti*" appears three times. The idea of an active form of looking beyond the work is also underlined by the expression "*Ma pur tutto serve all'occhio de' riguardanti*".

In his letter of 10 September 1554, quoted above, Titian uses the following expressions to refer to the eyes of the patron and the meaning of the vision: "*lieti occhi*", "*più grazioso alla vista*". Titian and Dolce, the painter and the connoisseur, show a great affinity with Alberti's *De pictura*. The Italian version of the treatise allows us to understand one of the theoretical roots of the Venetian's vocabulary: "*la fine della pittura, rendere grazia e benivolenza e lode allo artefice molto più che ricchezze. E seguiranno questo i pittori ove la loro pittura terrà gli occhi e l'animo di chi la mirì*" – "the purpose of painting is to render grace and benevolence and praise to the artist far more than riches. And painters will follow this where their painting captures the eyes and soul of the beholder".[89] Among the many concepts shared by Titian and Alberti, it is sufficient to mention here the term "*grazia*", "*grazioso*", which defines not only the manner of painting, but also the way in which the work is looked at and gains the favour of the patron-spectator.[90]

The writings of Titian and Dolce reveal, moreover, an imagination very close to the language of the studio and of painterly making, so that a rereading of the more concrete development of this theme in the first part of Alberti's *De pictura*, entitled "Rudimenta", is necessary:

> Then a *historia* will stimulate the observers' hearts when men who were idle will display, to the highest degree, their own activity of the mind. It derives from

> Nature, in fact – one can find nothing more covetous than her regarding [emotions] similar to ourselves – that we cry with those who cry, we laugh with those who laugh, we grieve with those who suffer. But these motions of the mind are known from movements of the body. […] And who will be able to express, then, without very great study and diligence, faces in which the mouth, and the chin, and the eyes, and the cheeks, and the forehead, and the eyebrows accord together in grief or joy? All [objects], therefore, must be scrutinized with the greatest diligence from Nature herself, and one must always imitate [those which are] more evident. And in particular one must paint the [features] that reveal more to the mind that they penetrate deeply, than [the features] which concern the eyes.[91] (I, 41-42)

Let us resume our commentary on Titian's letter here. In it he announced a forthcoming *Poesia*, before mentioning a very pious work, "*un'opera devotissima*", which he had been working on for ten years. He planned to send it to Philip of Spain, "King of England", with God's help, in the hope that "*Vostra Serenità*" would see in it "all the strength of the art that Titian his servant knows how to put into painting". It is significant that, in referring to the different view points on the bodies depicted in the *Poesia*, he immediately anchors his words in a religious context. He wishes to emphasise the "strength of art into painting", "*la forza de l'arte* […] *ne la pittura*", which he demonstrates in his pious works of art, which by analogy refers the reader to the same ambitions of efficiency that he realises in his *Poesie*. The aesthetic challenges of secular and Christian art are thus of the same nature. They have the same effectiveness on two provinces of the soul. The religious character of the letter, announced at the outset in the title "*Sacra Maestà*", is later marked by the vocabulary of a wish that the artist expresses as follows: "In the meantime, may the new great King of England deign to remember that his unworthy painter lives with the memory of having been the servant of so high and so benevolent a lord, and hopes through him to have acquired in the same way the grace of the most Christian Queen his consort." At the end of his letter, Titian heightens the dramatic tension by invoking God himself: "To which Queen may Our blessed Lord God assure together with Your Majesty many happy centuries, so that happy may be the peoples governed and ruled by Your holy and pious will." In view of the fruitful moment in the *Poesia* of *Venus and Adonis*, Titian's request to God takes on a

dramatic urgency. Venus and Adonis fail in their union of love because another passion, that of the hunt, comes between them. This is one of the deeper meanings of the myth that Titian represents. Titian recognises the great strength of the passion of a union of love, but as it encounters opposing passions. King Philip can therefore see in this painting the double sign of a menace and a salvation that is still possible. The motto of the couple "POSVIMUS DEVM ADIVTOREM NOSTRUM" indicates that the king and queen were both aware of this. However, history dictated that this request would not be fulfilled. In 1555, Philip distanced himself from Mary. The Queen, after a phantom pregnancy, remained childless until her death in 1558.

88 "Aret. Puossi ben dire, che quantunque il Pittore non possa dipinger le cose, che soggiacciono al tatto; come sarebbe la freddezza della neve: o al gusto; come la dolcezza del mele: dipinge non di meno i pensieri e gli affetti dell'animo. / Fab. Ben dite, Signor Pietro, ma questi per certi atti esteriori si comprendono: e spesso per uno inarcar di ciglia, o increspar di fronte, o per altri segni appariscono i segreti interni, tal che molte volte non fa bisogno delle fenestre di Socrate. / Aret. Cosi è veramente. Onde habbiamo nel Petrarca questo verso. / *E spesso ne la fronte il cor si legge.* / Ma gliocchi sono principalmente le fenestre dell'animo: et in questi puo il Pittore isprimere acconciamente ogni passione: come l'allegrezze, il dolore, l'ire, le teme, le speranze, & i disideri. Ma pur tutto serve all'occhio de' riguardanti. / Fab. Dirò ancora, che, se bene il Pittore è diffinito Poeta mutolo, e che muta si chiami altresi la Pittura: sembra pure a un cotal modo, che le dipinte figure favellino, gridino, piangano, ridano, e facciano cosi fatti effetti. / Aret. Sembra bene; ma però non favellano, ne fanno que glialtri effetti. / Fab. In cio si puo ricercare il parer del vostro virtuoso Silvestro, eccellente Musico, e sonatore del Doge: ilquale disegna e dipinge lodevolmente: e ci fa toccar con mano, che le figure dipinte da buoni Maestri parlano, quasi a paragon delle vive. / Aret. Questa è certa imaginatione di chi mira, causata da diverse attitudini, che a cio servono, e non effetto o proprietà della Pittura. / […]" *Dialogo della Pittura di M. Lodovico Dolce* (1557), in: Mark W. Roskill, *o.c.*, here p. 96 and p. 98, transl. p. 97 and p. 99.

89 Leon Battista Alberti, *La peinture*, *o.c.*, p. 259. Transl. Giorgia Sassi & Elisabeth Dutton.

90 See the glossary in: Leon Battista Alberti, *La peinture*, *o.c.*, p. 324-331.

91 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, *o.c.*, p. 61-63. On the affinity between "imagination" and "excogitation", see: Martin Kemp, *o.c.*, p. 364*ff*. See also the Italian version of *De pictura*: "Per questo molto conviensi impararli dalla natura, e sempre seguire cose molto pronte e quali lassino da pensare a chi le guarda molte più che egli non vede." Leon Battista Alberti, *La peinture*, *o.c.*, p. 249-250.

11
Andromeda

Fig. 13. Titian, *Perseus and Andromeda*, 1554-1556, oil on canvas, 183.3 × 199.3 cm, London, The Wallace Collection

It is worth looking at other *Poesie* by Titian that will further illustrate the fundamental idea of the effectiveness of images, traced so far in Titian's painting *Venus and Adonis*, but now more briefly. Let us begin with one of the two *Poesie* that Titian promised Philip in his letter of 10 September 1554: *Perseus and Andromeda*, begun in the same year and completed in 1556 or, according to some, in 1559 (fig. 13).[92] Like the first two *Poesie*, *Danae* and *Venus and Adonis*, Titian painted this work from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (IV, 665-690). After beheading Medusa and performing other feats with the petrifying head of the Gorgon, Perseus fixes his gaze on Andromeda, chained to a rock. Ovid equates the visual perception of Andromeda's body with the contemplation of a statue. He adds "secondary" elements, "*Pathosformeln*" that bring her to life.[93] Hair and even tears animate this body of marbled beauty. From Perseus' gaze on this distressed body, we pass to the affectivity of this same body for Perseus: "he took fire unwitting, and stood dumb. Smitten by the sight of the beauty he sees […]": "*trahit inscius ignes / Et stupet et visae correptus imagine formae*".[94] (IV, 675-676) We witness a quasi-petrification of the hero. Perseus is as if dumbfounded by this passion which now chains him to Andromeda. The word "chain" is deliberately chosen. Indeed, in Ovid's own imagery, Perseus associates Andromeda's chains with symbolic chains that bind passionate lovers: "Oh! Those are not the chains you deserve to wear, but rather those that link fond lovers together!" – "*'o' dixit 'non istis digna catenis, / sed quibus inter se cupidi iunguntur amantes'*" (IV, 678-679).

In order to understand the magical thinking about bonding that prevailed in the Cinquecento, Giordano Bruno's *De Vinculis*, written between 1589 and 1591, would be representative. This author was fascinated by the different forms of attachment that exist in reality, and in particular by the bonds of love.[95] He saw the artist as a kind of magician who binds through the beauty he bestows on his art. These magical connections illuminate the effectiveness of Titian's works, which Dolce recognises in the fact that they make the blood of even the most hardened person boil. By recreating (and *transforming*) in pictorial language the

Trasformationi, i.e. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Titian combines mythological elements with theoretical and magical convictions about the bonds of love.[96] In addition to the Ovidian passage on the bonds of love, the chains in the foreground of the *Andromeda* thus evoke the effects of a figure capable of "captivating" the attention of the "spectator", i.e. of animating and paralysing him at the same time. Andromeda seems to emerge from the painting. By staging the body emerging from the surface of the picture, Titian reinforces the effect of a "living" and radiant beauty on the admirer of the painting, who is thus called upon to identify with Perseus himself.

Ovid's line that "she would have hidden her face modestly with her hands but that her hands were bound", "Celasset vultus, si non religata fuisset"[97] (IV, 683), is taken up in another way by Titian, who lifts Andromeda's body out of the painted surface, while her blushing and demure face turns away from us to the right. Like other figures in Titian's *Poesie*, Andromeda is completely absorbed in her drama. Instead of addressing the "spectator" directly, Titian offers her body to him as she emerges from the work.

The figure of Andromeda is relevant to the power of images in a dynastic context, as Heliodorus' *Ethiopics* (editio princeps 1534) focuses on a pictorial representation of Andromeda. Persina, Queen of Ethiopia, looks at an image of a white Andromeda during her marital union with her husband, King Hydaspe, which leads to the birth of a white child, Chariclea, to black parents.[98] Let us listen to the mother's explanation to her daughter: "But when at last I brought you forth, a white infant, so different from the Aethiopian hue, I was at no loss to explain the cause, since, in the embraces of your father, I had kept my eyes fixed on the picture of Andromeda, whom the painter had represented just unchained from the rock, and my imagination had communicated her complexion to my unhappy offspring."[99]

The royal and dynastic context and the powerful effects of a painting figure survive in Titian. Moreover, the influence of this narrative on the emergence of conceptions of the effectiveness of images on generation is well known. Since M. D. Reeve's article in 1989, the *Andromeda Effect* has been used as a *terminus technicus*.[100] From this perspective, Titian's Andromeda appears to be one of the most striking manifestations of this *Andromeda Effect*. Finally, inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (IV, 706-739), Titian depicts the fight between Perseus and the sea monster in the right-hand side of the painting. Perseus is shown

upside down, his gestures mirroring Andromeda's position. In Titian, as in Ovid, this fight is part of an opposition between the beauty of the princess and the ugliness of the monster, petrified by Perseus' shield. But there is more.

This chapter, indeed this little book, could be concluded here, but the final chapters turn our gaze to another form of the effectiveness of images, strongly present in Titian and underlying this analysis from the beginning. This other dimension is reflected in the epistolary and intellectual relations between Titian and Philip. Between the king and his painter there was an understanding, in other words an inner affinity, on another level, very different from the passions evoked by Ovid's mythological themes. It concerned the religious *effetti*, both for the *divino artista* and for the *Rex catholicissimus*. As Titian's letters show, the mythological scenes have an allegorical, religious and even mystical significance for the painter who creates them and for the king who commissions them. How does this earthly Eros meet its heavenly counterpart?

Allegorical interpretation is already at the heart of Lodovico Dolce's *Trasformationi* of 1553, his Italian translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in verse (fig. 14). Dolce's dedication to Msgr Perinotto, bishop of Arras and adviser to Charles V, contains some remarkable passages in this respect:

> What could be less appropriate for dedication to Caesar, upon whose shoulders the infinite providence of God has placed the responsibility of upholding the Christian religion, than fables, and recitals of love? […] Nevertheless, those who will take the trouble to look with discernment not at the surface of the fables contained in this book, but at the motives which brought about their invention and the ends to which they were directed by those early Masters, will see beneath the rind of fiction, all the sap of moral and sacred Philosophy.[101]

This religious line suggested to Charles V takes on its full significance with Titian and Philip. Without taking anything away from the erotic dimension of the *Poesie*, it is in this register that the opposition between the beauty of the princess and the ugliness of the monster in the *Andromeda* can be revealed as a triumph of good over evil.[102] Not only is the allegorical message not in

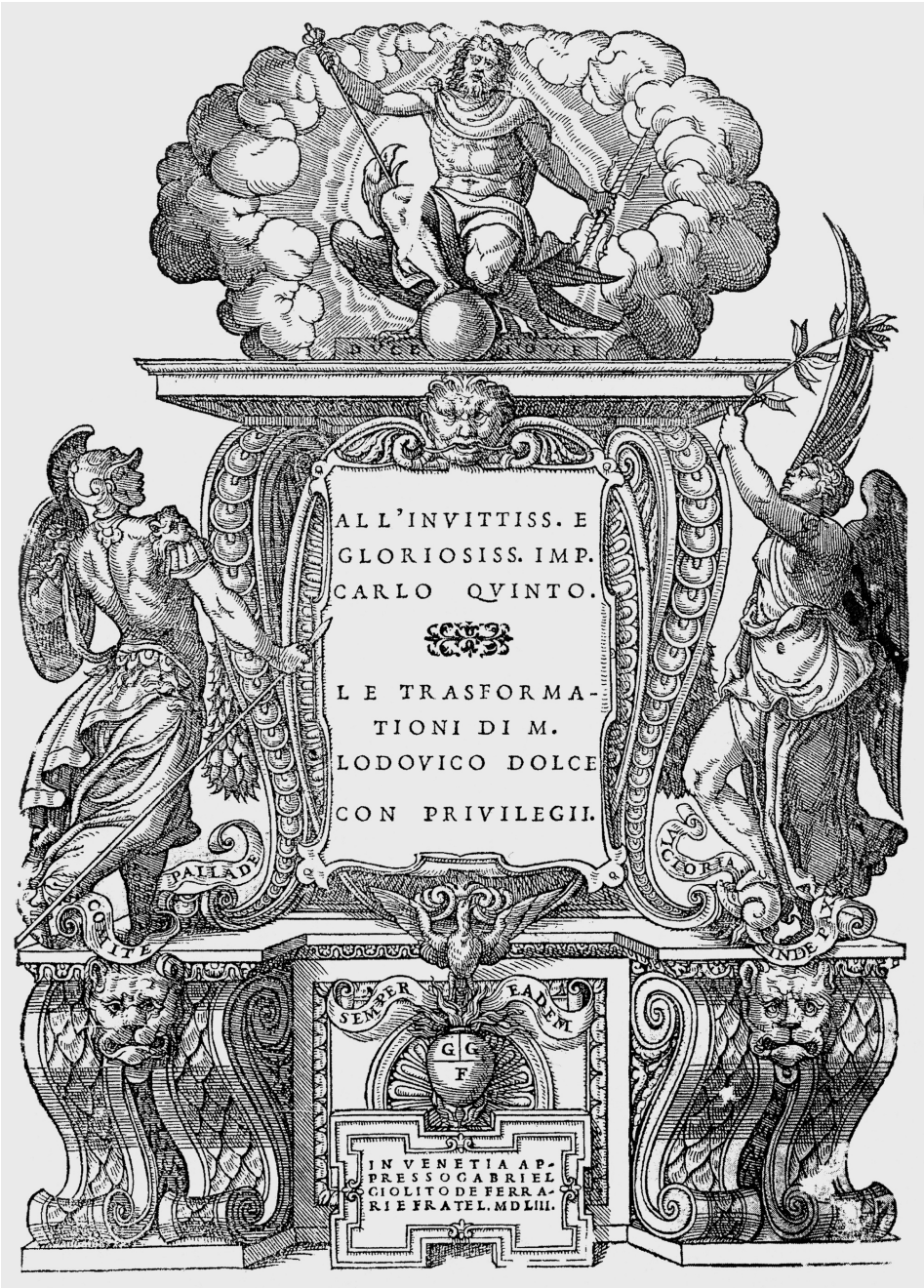


Fig. 14. Lodovido Dolce, *Le Trasformationi*, 1553, frontispiece of the first edition: Giuseppe Capriotti (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 77

contradiction with the physical appearance and even the sensuality of the bodies depicted, but it is revealed precisely through their flesh. This formal and semantic affinity is echoed in the works of art themselves. A striking example is the correspondence between Andromeda and Titian's *Saint Margaret* (fig. 15),[103] painted in 1552 for Philip of Spain. Like Andromeda, St. Margaret occupies the foreground and seems to emerge from the painting. The "swift bound"[104] (Panofsky) of the leg gives the work a double power, where iconographic and formal issues are intrinsically linked. The formal and compositional prowess of

Fig. 15. Titian, *St. Margaret and the Dragon*, 1552, oil on canvas, 210 x 170 cm, Escorial, Monastery

the leg on the "aesthetic frontier" ("ästhetische Grenze")[105] accentuates the emergence of Saint Margaret from the dragon through the strength of the cross. The same device of a body emerging from the canvas is found in the *Andromeda*, in a combat where Perseus takes the role of the Saviour, except that the emergence of the mythical princess is delayed; she is awaiting salvation. How then can we link the discourse on the physical impression of images on the soul to this moral and theological question? The analogy between the erotic level and the religious level leads us into this other effect of images that we would like to sketch out now.

92 On Titian's *Perseus and Andromeda* see especially: Harold E. Wethey, *The Mythological and Historical Paintings*, *o.c.*, p. 169-172; Erwin Panofsky, *o.c.*, p. 166-168.

93 Seminal work on these "parerga": Aby Warburg, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike. Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Renaissance*, ed. Horst Bredekamp & Michael Diers, Berlin, 1998, p. 1-58.

94 Ovid, *o.c.*, vol. I, p. 226-227.

95 See especially the three first paragraphs titled "Types of bonding agents", "Effects of the bonding agent", "How art binds". Giordano Bruno, *Cause, Principle and Unity. And Essays on Magic*, eds. and transl. Richard J. Blackwell & Robert de Lucca, Cambridge – New York, 1998, p. 145-146.

96 On these bonds or chains of love in the Renaissance: Marianne Koos, *Bildnisse des Begehrens. Das lyrische Männerporträt in der venezianischen Malerei des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts – Giorgione, Tizian und ihr Umkreis*, Emsdetten – Berlin, 2006, p. 179-187; Ulrike Zischka, *Zur sakralen und profanen Anwendung des Knotenmotivs als magisches Mittel, Symbol oder Dekor. Eine vergleichend-volkskundliche Untersuchung*, Munich, 1977, p. 61-76.

97 Ovid, *o.c.*, vol. I, p. 226-227.

98 On the anthropological, historical and chromatic issues of the story: Elizabeth McGrath, *The Black Andromeda*, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 55, 1992, p. 1-18; Wendy Doniger, *The Symbolism of Black and White Babies in the Myth of Parental Impression*, in *Social Research*, 70, 2003, p. 1-44; Victor I. Stoichita, *L'Image de l'Autre. Noirs, Juifs, Musulmans et 'Gitans' dans l'art occidental des Temps modernes*, Paris, 2014, p. 66-78.

99 Heliodorus, *Ethiopics*, IV, 5, in: Heliodorus & alii, *The Greek romances of Heliodorus, Longus, and Achilles Tatius*, transl. Rowland Smith, London, 1889, p. 88.

100 Michael D. Reeve, *Conceptions*, in *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 215, 1989, p. 81-112, p. 82. See also: Françoise Létoublon, *À propos de Chariclée et de l''effet Andromède'*, in *Revue des Études Grecques*, 111, 1998, p. 732-734.

101 "Poi qual cosa meno si conviene a CESARE; sopra le cuis palle è piaciuto alla imensa providenza di DIO di collocare il sostegno della religion Christiana; di quello, che è lo indirizzarli favole & amori? […] Non di meno coloro, che vorranno riguardar con giudicioso occhio non alle favole superficialmente, che in questo libro sono contenute, ma alla cagione, per cui elle furono trovate da quei primi Maestri, & a che fine indrizzate da loro, vedrà, sotto la scorza di tali piacevoli fingimenti contenersi tutto il sugo della morale e divina Filosofia." Cited from the facsimile edition, in: Giuseppe Capriotti (ed.), *o.c.*, n.p. English translation from: Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods. The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, transl. Barbara F. Sessions, New York, 1953, p. 269-270.

102 For an allegorical interpretation of the figure of Perseus that goes in the same direction: Augusto Gentili, *o.c.*, p. 214.

103 On Titian's *Saint Margaret*: Harold E. Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian. Complete Edition. I The Religious Paintings*, London, 1969, p. 141-143; Filippo Pedrocco, *o.c.*, p. 224 and 246-247; Erwin Panofsky, *o.c.*, p. 49-52.

104 Erwin Panofsky, *o.c.*, p. 50.

105 Seminal book: Ernst Michalski, *Die Bedeutung der ästhetischen Grenze für die Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin, 1932.

12
To the Catholic King

Fig. 16. Titian, *The Adoration of the Trinity (The Glory)*, 1553-1554, oil on canvas, 346 × 240 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

To explain the mystical dimension of the *Poesie* further, Titian's *Gloria* seems especially significant (fig. 16).[106] Titian painted this work around 1553-1554 for Charles V, at the same time as *Venus and Adonis* for his son Philip. The completion of these two paintings even coincided to the day. It was in fact on 10 September 1554, the day the nuptial painting was sent to England, that Titian informed Charles V that he would send him his work of the Trinity.[107] In the celestial glory, the double portrait of the Emperor and his wife Isabella of Portugal can be seen (fig. 17). They are dressed in white sheets, a kind of shroud, and kneel in intense supplication. On the right, their son Philip is also shown in a three-quarter view with his hands clasped. A little lower down, Titian has also depicted himself in profile.[108] It is in this divine glory that the wish for an heir to continue the work of the Habsburg family in its future Spanish branch takes on its full meaning.[109] Indeed, at a time when a natural and legitimate son in good health was still expected, could one imagine a better expression of the intimate union between God and the dynasty of Charles V and Philip?

This sort of apotheosis of the Emperor's family in contact with the Most Holy Trinity takes us from the natural register to a supernatural world. The divine and eternal Glory casts the real and temporal princely procreation in a new light. It is therefore understandable that Titian's *Poesie*, which at first sight seem purely mythological, participate in this transcendence of human realities. This is also suggested by the expectations of Titian and Philip, and because the procreation of kings is a truly divine thing, a gift and a grace.[110] In the artist's correspondence with the king, the religious is not just a figure of speech. Titian speaks in a properly religious language and Philip understands him. When the king looks at these mythological paintings, it is not with a purely formal gaze, but a call to fecundity, of which God is the ultimate source. Without God, there is no procreation. In this encounter between the immanent and the transcendent, Titian's erotic *Poesie* thus seem clearly intended to direct the king's passions towards the beautiful and the good. The dynastic matrimonial

Fig. 17. Titian, *The Adoration of the Trinity (The Glory)*, 1553-1554, detail of fig. 16.

duty is much more than the attraction of human love,[111] since it links earth and heaven in the eyes of the king and his painter. The erotic power of the *Poesie* is not hypocritical; it is transfigured. "*Lascivi, ma onesti*", in the words of Giulio Romano, who described an apparently purely erotic painting to Federico Gonzaga.[112] Titian writes several times addressing the "Catholic king",[113] Vasari refers to the "Catholic king" in the same way in connection with Titian's *Poesie*,[114] and in several letters Titian moves seamlessly from profane to devotional painting.

The effects of art and of religion go hand in hand and these two levels are linked by a dynamic of analogy. Now, although Dolce mentions this Christian

dimension of mythological fables in his preface to Ovid's *Trasformationi*, he does not mention it in his long description of Titian's *Poesia*, *Venus and Adonis*. There is an element of virtue in Ovid, but it is not religious or mystical in the same way. Titian's *Poesie*, on the other hand, reflects a pagan renaissance in a Christian world.[115] In Titian's *Trinity*, God reveals himself in all his glory in heaven to the imperial family, which wants to place itself under his patronage on earth. In the mystical encounter arising from this longed-for union, dynastic procreation thus takes on a providential dimension. But this desire, of which Titian is the privileged witness, was not to be fulfilled any time soon, for none of Philip's first three wives gave him the longed-for successor. Indeed, after the death of Queen Mary in 1558, the Spanish king married a third time, to Elisabeth of France, who died in 1568. The children of this marriage were girls. He remarried a fourth time in 1570, at the age of 43, this time to the Archduchess Anna of Austria, his niece: she finally gave him five children between 1571 and 1580, four of whom were sons. The eldest, Don Fernando, was considered a gift from heaven at birth, especially as he was born shortly after the Holy League's victory over the Turks at Lepanto. This victory was attributed to the intervention of Our Lady of Victory through the rosary prayer. This reminds us of another example of effective imagination: the rise, after the Council of Trent, of the tradition of meditating on the Mysteries of the Rosary in the 16th century.[116]

In a complex painting, "charged with dynastic and religious symbolism",[117] Titian immortalised in 1573-1575 the providential coincidence of the Victory of Lepanto and the birth of the long hoped-for heir (fig. 18).[118] In the centre is a double portrait of Philip of Spain, who became King of Spain as Philip II in 1556, holding his newborn son, completely naked. The angel or personification of victory holds a laurel wreath in one hand and, with the other hand, presents the infant with a palm, with a phylactery bearing the inscription "*MAIORA TIBI*", i.e. "Greater things for you". In light of the grace of this fulfilled dynastic procreation, one detail is worth noting, namely the pressure of the King's fingers on the body of his child, whose genitals are on display.[119] This figurative strategy shows that it is his son, flesh of his flesh. The blood that flows in his veins is the royal blood of the Habsburgs. But there is more to it, as an engraving by Hieronymus Wierix from 1568 (fig. 19) shows us. This engraving depicts Philip facing the Lord, as if in a mirror. The engraving thus symbolises the King's desire for an ever greater likeness to Christ. The surrender to divine providence marks

Fig. 18. Titian, *Philip of Spain Offering Don Ferdinand to Victory*, 1573-1575, oil on canvas, 325 × 274 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

the King, for St. Paul, depicted in a medallion above the two figures, addresses Philip by pointing to a passage from the letter to the Romans:[120] "*NON EST POTESTAS NISI A DEO*"[121] – "All power comes from God". Below Christ we read "*DEUM TIMETE*" – "Fear God" – and below Philip "*REGEM*

Fig. 19. Hieronymus Wierix, *Dyptich of Christ and Philip of Spain* (detail), 1568, engraving, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, in: Sylvène Edouard, *o.c.*, p. 179

HONORIFICATE" – "Honour the King".[122] This is a fascinating example of the quasi-corporeal impregnation of a powerful person by an image,[123] in this case of the King opposite the image of Christ his redeemer. In this spirit, Charles V's son must have wished to pass on this conformity to Christ, the source of authentic power, to his descendants, not only through education, but already through blood, all of which also seems to be suggested by Titian's double portrait of 1573-75 (fig. 18).

106 On Titian's *Gloria*: Harold E. Wethey, *The Religious Paintings, o.c.,* p. 165-167; Caroline Schuster Cordone, *La Gloria de Titien: une image au service du pouvoir*, in *Annales d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie*, XXI, 1999, p. 25-39; Filippo Pedrocco, *o.c.*, p. 231; Michael Bierwirth, *Tizians Gloria*, Petersberg, 2002; Peter Humfrey, *o.c.*, p. 164-165.

107 "[…] Mando anchora a Vostra Catholica Maestà la sua opera della Trinità. Et nel vero, se non fossero stati i miei travagli, l'harei fornita et mandata molto prima, anchora che, pensando io di sodisfare a Vostra Maestà Catholica, non mi son curato di guastare due et tre volte il lavoro di molti giorni per ridurla al termine di moi conteno, onde vi ho posto più tempo che non si conveniva ordinariamente." *Letter from Titian to Charles V*, Venice, 10th September 1554, in: Lionello Puppi (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 209-210. See also: Annie Cloulas (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 197-288, p. 224 and her summary of the situation p. 227. See finally Titian's letter to Giovanni Benavides, Venice, 10th September 1554, i.e. on the same day: "[…] Mando ora la poesia di Venere e Adone, ne la quale Vostra Signoria vedrà quanto spirito e amore so mettere nell'opere di Sua Maestà; e fra poco manderò ancora due alter pitture, che piaceranno non meno di questa, e sariano già fornite, se non fosse stato l'impedimento dell'opera che io ho fatto a Sua Maestà Cesarea de la Trinità; e così ancora avrei fornito, come è mio debito, una Divozione per la Maestà de la Regina, la quale tosto se la manderà." In: Lionello Puppi (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 211.

108 See Cornelis Cort's 1566 engraving after the *Gloria*, where the same figure is clothed and clearly recognisable. For comparison, see Titian's self-portrait in the Prado. Finally, see Carlo Ridolfi's reference in 1648 in his biography of Titian: "[…] *e lo stesso Imperadore e l'Imperatrice con le man giunte inuolti in panni lini, tenendo à piedi le deposte Corone, e più basso si ritrasse Titiano* […]", Carlo Ridolfi, *Le Maraviglie dell' Arte ovvero le vite degli illustri pittori veneti e dello stato*, ed. Detlev Freiherrn von Hadeln, Berlin, 1914, p. 185.

109 "Les Habsbourg d'Espagne furent ainsi montrés comme les successeurs de la grande lignée d'Abraham, élue de Dieu pour fonder son peuple. Charles Quint et Philippe II inauguraient à leur tour la grande lignée des Habsbourg qui devait, non plus fonder Israël, mais délivrer Jérusalem et rassembler le peuple de Dieu. Dans ce combat pour le Bien, et l'honneur de Dieu, l'empereur et son fils furent couronnés de lauriers et leur mission fut consacrée par la présence de 'victoires' […]." Sylvène Edouard, *L'Empire imaginaire de Philippe II. Pouvoir des images et discours du pouvoir sous les Habsbourg d'Espagne au XVI^e siècle*, Paris, 2005, p. 63-64.

110 See in particular the lines dedicated to "Dynastic Continuity" in chapter VII of the well-known book: Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton – Oxford, (1957), 2016, p. 317-336.

111 This is not to mention the reading of the erotic image purely in terms of sexual instinct, for which see Charles Hope, *o.c.*, p. 119.

112 "Un altro paese con 4 figure in atti lascivi, ma onesti." *Letter from Giulio Romano to Federico II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua,* Mantua, 16th July 1538, in: Daniela Ferrari (ed.), *Giulio Romano. Repertorio di fonti documentarie/Archivio di Stato di Mantova*, Rome, 1992, vol. II, p. 781-782, p. 781. See: Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: on the Erotic in Renaissance Culture*, Princeton, NJ, 1999, p. 101-124.

113 Annie Cloulas (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 223 and 234.

114 "Le quali pitture sono appresso al Re catolico tenute molto care, per la vivacità

che ha dato Tiziano alle figure con i colori in farle quasi vive e naturali." Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite, o.c.*, p. 1293.

115 Jörg Traeger, *Renaissance und Religion. Die Kunst des Glaubens im Zeitalter Raphaels*, Munich, 1997; Jean Seznec, *o.c.*.

116 On the Rosary prayer as part of a reflection on the five senses in the Renaissance, see: François Quiviger, *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art*, London, 2010, p. 36-51. See also, for meditation on images: Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy. A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, 1988, p. 46.

117 Erwin Panofsky, *o.c.*, p. 72.

118 On this double portrait: Harold E. Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian. Complete Edition. II The Portraits*, London, 1971, p. 132-133; Filippo Pedrocco, *o.c.*, p. 302; Sylvène Edouard, *o.c.*, p. 150-151; Peter Humfrey, *o.c.*, p. 192; Erwin Panofsky, *o.c.*, p. 72-74; Victor I. Stoichita, *L'Image de l'Autre, o.c.*, p. 143-144; with an analysis of other works surrounding the birth of Philip's children: Victor I. Stoichita, *Des Corps, Anatomies, défenses, fantasmes*, Geneva – Paris, 2019, p. 181-189.

119 It is also a form of visual echo of the representations of the Christ child, God "made flesh". See: Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance art and in Modern Oblivion*, New York, 1983; Jean Wirth, *L'Image médiévale. Naissance et développements (VIe-XVe siècle)*, Paris, 1989, p. 324.

120 Sylvène Edouard, *o.c.*, p. 177.

121 See also: Sylvène Edouard, *o.c.*, p. 178. Below the portraits: the entire passage from the first epistle of Saint Peter.

122 Sylvène Edouard, *o.c.*, p. 178-180.

123 For an example of this miraculous impregnation, see: Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'Image ouverte. Motifs de l'incarnation dans les arts visuels*, Paris, 2007, p. 175. On the efficient imagination, see also: Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Le corps des images. Essais sur la culture visuelle au Moyen Âge*, Paris, 2002, p. 345-362.

13
From his most humble servant

After this incursion into the symbolic self-representation of the Habsburg family and Philip of Spain, the "Most Catholic King", let us return to Titian's *Poesie*. These paintings appear as a link in the great chain of images and representations intended to promote a perennial dynastic "incarnation", for the glory of God and the salvation of the world. In a letter dated 19 June 1559, Titian wrote to Philip, referring at once to the *Poesie* of *Diana and Actaeon* and of *Diana and Callisto*. Other *Poesie* followed, but it is the last two paintings that we will deal with, as they strongly thematise issues of fecundity:

> Invincible Catholic King
>
> I have already completed the two *Poesie* dedicated to Your Majesty, the one of Diana at the spring surprised by Actaeon, the other of Callisto pregnant with Jupiter stripped at the spring by Diana's orders to her nymphs. However, when Your Majesty wishes to have them, let him therefore command that they be sent, so that what happened with the dead Christ in the sepulchre, who went astray on the journey, does not happen. I hope that the works will be such that if any of my works ever seemed worthy of your grace, these will not seem unworthy to you. After I have sent these, I shall be fully occupied in bringing to completion the painting of Christ in the Garden and the other two *Poesie* already begun: one of Europa riding the bull and the other of Actaeon mauled by his dogs. In which works I shall likewise put all that little knowledge that God has given me and that has always been dedicated to Your Majesty's service. If you so wish, as long as the body, now weary from the burden of years, can bear it, which weight, although by itself is very great, is nevertheless miraculously, I do not know how, lightened every time I remember that I am in the world to serve you and do you a favour […].
>
> From Your Catholic Majesty's most humble servant *Tiziano Veccellio Pittore*.[124]

It is again from a religious perspective that Titian highlights pictorial creation and the projection of the self in the *Poesie*, which appear metonymically as the fruit of the artist's soul and body. We find the metaphorical imaginary of the *artista divino* in the evocation of the gift of painting, but this is extended to the ever-growing gift of the artist's self as we read the letter. For the weary limbs and weight of old age, Titian concludes, are "nevertheless miraculously, I do not know how, lightened every time I remember that I am in the world to serve you and do you a favour". Titian, conscious of having come into the world to serve the king, gives of himself to the very end in an undeniable fidelity to his vocation for his own salvation and that of his patron. God supports him in this mysterious mission, which he himself does not understand, since he writes "*non so a che modo*", these words reinforcing that of "*miracolosamente*". The extension of the artist in the work is all the more miraculous as Titian approaches his fabled age of one hundred years.[125] The mention of God discreetly suggests that the painter sees God at work in his own art made for the king. The Christian painter, who makes these *Poesie* spring from his soul and body, and the Christian King, his patron, recognise the fruitfulness of these works, which are at once a gift of the image, a gift of the artist and a gift of God. In all of this it is possible to trace the osmosis between Titian's different types of images.

The motifs of divine inspiration and of the embodiment of ideas are deployed against the background of already well-known metaphors relating to *mimesis*. Dolce writes, for example, in his *Dialogo* of 1557: "For Titian, as I said, moves in step with nature, so that every one of his figures has life, movement and flesh which palpitates."[126] The effectiveness of Titian's paintings thus increases in proportion to the degree to which his figures are assimilated to living nature. The challenge of recreating nature is echoed by Giorgio Vasari in his *Vita* of the Venetian master in 1568:

> All these pictures are in the possession of the Catholic King, held very dear for the vivacity that Tiziano has given to the figures with his colours, making them natural and as if alive. It is true, however, that the method of work which he employed in these last pictures is no little different from the method of his youth, for the reason that the early works are executed with a certain delicacy and diligence that are incredible, and they can be seen both from near and from a distance, and these last works are executed with bold strokes and dashed off

> with a broad and even coarse sweep of the brush, insomuch that from near little can be seen, but from a distance they appear perfect. […] it is known that they are painted over and over again, and that he returned to them with his colours so many times, that the labour may be perceived. And this method, so used, is judicious, beautiful, and astonishing, because it makes pictures appear alive and painted with great art, but conceals the labour.[127]

The apparent brushstrokes and repaintings contribute to the animation of the painted figures ("*parere vive*").[128] This life in turn veils the artist's fatigue. But by showing the artistic process and the technique of creation ("*mostrare di fare il pratico*"), Titian also suggests something of the imaginary "fabrication" of these "living" bodies, that is to say, of their inner or even "anatomical" constitution. His *Poesie* are thus populated with animated figures, the fruit of a long and laborious "gestation", with patience, constancy and perseverance. From there, it is only a short step to feel a form of identification of the Venetian master with the Catholic King, even in the very act of procreation of living beings.[129] The act of painting as engenderment survives as it were in Marco Boschini's "procreative" vocabulary in the second half of the seventeenth century: "Titian was truly the most excellent of all those who painted: for his brushes always gave birth to expressions of life."[130]. Titian's *Poesie* therefore certainly allude to the Latin "*poesis*", with reference to *Ut pictura poesis*,[131] but perhaps also to the artist's labour to realise in his painting the living body in its power of life and fecundity. This is why the word "*poesia*", which Titian uses several times, also seems to correspond to the Greek meaning of "to make", "to realize". These phantasmatic interactions between making, art and the living generate a space conducive to the powers of the image and the imagination over nature.

124 "Invittissimo Catholico Re / Ho già fornite le due Poesie dedicate a V. Mtà., l'una di Diana al fonte sopragiunta da Atheone, l'altra di Calisto pregna di Giove spogliata al fonte per commandamento di Diana dalle sue ninfe. Però, quando pererà a V. Mtà. di averle, quella comandi per cui elle se le habbiamo a mandare, acciò che di quelle non avvenga quello che avvenne del Christo morto nel sepolcro, il quale si smarrí per viaggio. Spero che l'opere saranno tali che se mai cosa alcuna delle man mie le è paruta degna della sua gratia, queste non le pareranno indegne. Dopo l'haver mandato queste, mi darò tutto a fornir il quadro del Christo nell'horto et l'altre due poesie già incominciate: l'una di Europa sopra il Tauro, l'altra di Atheone lacerato dai cani suoi. Nelle qual' opere io metterò medesmamente tutto quel poco di sapere che Iddio mi ha donato et che è stato e sarà sempre dedicato a i servigi di V. Mtà. se cosi le piacerà fin ch'io reggerò queste membra per il carco degli anni homai stanche, il qual peso benché da sé sia gravissimo, nondimeno mi si alleggerisce non so a che modo miracolosamente ogni volta ch'io m'aricordo d'esser vivo al mondo per servirla e farla cosa grata. […] Di Vra. Mtà. Catholica humilissimo servo Titiano Veccellio Pittore." *Letter from Titian to Philip of Spain*, Venice, 19th June 1559, preserved in the Archives of Simancas, cited from: Annie Cloulas (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 233-234, p. 233. Transl. Giorgia Sassi & Elisabeth Dutton.

125 On the artistic issues in the age of Titian: Philip Sohm, *The Artist Grows Old. The Aging of Art and Artists in Italy, 1500-1800*, New Haven – London, 2007, p. 83-103.

126 "[…] egli [Titiano] camina di pari con la Nattura: onde ogni sua figura è viva, si muove, è le carni tremano." *Dialogo della Pittura di M. Lodovico Dolce* (1557), in: Mark W. Roskill, *o.c.*, p. 184, English translation p. 185. See also: p. 188 and 190. On this subject, see especially: Valeska von Rosen, *o.c.*.

127 "Le quali pitture sono appresso al Re catolico tenute molto care, per la vivacità che ha dato Tiziano alle figure con i colori in farle quasi vive e naturali. Ma è ben vero che il modo di fare che tenne in queste ultime è assai diferente dal fare suo da giovane. Conciò sia che le prime son condotte con una certa finezza e diligenza incredibile e da essere vedute da presso e da lontano, e queste ultime, condotte di colpi, tirate via di grosso e con macchie, di maniera che da presso non si possono vedere e di lontano appariscono perfette; […] non è così il vero e s'ingannano, perché si conosce che sono rifatte e che si è ritornato loro addosso con i colori tante volte, che la fatica vi si vede. E questo modo sì fatto è giudizioso, bello e stupendo, perché fa parere vive le pitture e fatte con grande arte, nascondendo le fatiche." Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite, o.c.*, p. 1293-1294. English translation from: Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, *o.c.*, p. 794.

128 On the theoretical implications of this passage: Valeska von Rosen, *o.c.*, p. 309-332.

129 An essential chapter on this subject in the Renaissance: Ulrich Pfisterer, *Kunstgeburten. Kreativität, Erotik, Körper*, Berlin, 2014, p. 46-62. In relation to Titian: Nicola Suthor, *o.c.*, p. 15-20, p. 18.

130 "Tiziano veramente è stato il più eccellente di quanti hanno dipinto: poiché i suoi Pennelli sempre partorivano espressioni di vita." Marco Boschini, *La carta del navegar pitoresco. Edizione critica con la 'Breve istruzione' premessa alle 'Ricche Minere della Pittura Veneziana'*, ed. Anna Pallucchini, Venice – Rome, 1966, p. 711. Transl. Giorgia Sassi & Elisabeth Dutton.

131 Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis. The Humanistic Theory of Painting*, New York, 1967; André Chastel, *Le DICTUM HORATII QUIDLIBET AUDENDI POTESTAS et les artistes (XIII^e-XVII^e siècle)*, in *Fables, formes, figures*, Paris, 2000, vol. 1, p. 363-376; Ulrich Pfisterer, *Künstlerische potestas audendi und licentia im Quattrocento: Benozzo Gozzoli, Andrea Mantegna, Bertoldo di Giovanni*, in *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 31, 1996, p. 107-148. See also the uses of the term "*poesia*" by Vasari in the first edition of his *Lives*, in: Harald Keller, *o.c.*, p. 24-25.

14
Diana and her mysteries

Fig. 20. Titian, *Diana and Acteon*, 1556-1559, oil on canvas, 184.5 × 202.2 cm, London, The National Gallery – Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland

In his letter of 19 June 1559, cited above, the first *Poesia* mentioned by Titian is *Diana and Actaeon* (fig. 20). The myth relates that Actaeon catches sight of Diana bathing. She reacts by turning him into a stag. Ovid describes this scene in these lines: "*quas habuit sic hausit aquas vultumque virilem*" – "what she had she took up, the water, and flung it into the young man's face" (III, 189) […] "*dat sparso capiti vivacis cornua cervi*" – "she caused to grow the horns of the long-lived stag, stretched out his neck" (III, 194) […] "*additus et pavor est* […]" – "she planted fear within his heart."[132] (III, 198) The consequences for Actaeon are therefore both spiritual and corporeal. Titian, true to his promise to depict bodies from different viewpoints, represents the moment when Actaeon's gaze surprises the goddess. Entering this sacred place, Actaeon is touched by what he sees. He is deeply affected. Titian's image of this scene will affect Philip of Spain similarly when he looks at the painting. The effect of the painting is both physical and spiritual. Titian thus once again "surpasses" the Ovidian text in creating such effective poetry that the "spectator" is touched, even transformed, directly by these figures of flesh, where Diana needed water in Ovid. In this light, Titian's streams of water become a symptom of the work's powers on several levels: water/purifying work, water/fecundating work, etc. The origin of this power is physical (the "painting of flesh"), compositional, erotic, and, bridging the religious dimension of the *Poesie*, also symbolic and allegorical.

Titian adds a black female figure alongside Diana. This presence in such a work contributes to the exaltation of the senses,[133] but it will also be an example for us of how form and content are constantly enriched, right to the very heart of the works' fertile power.[134] Indeed, the presence of a black body in a work of art from the Cinquecento intended for a dynastic imagination cannot be explained simply by strictly formal aspects. Certainly, there is the story of the Ethiopians, and in chapter IX of Ambroise Paré's *Des monstres et prodiges* of 1573, the fruit of a direct impregnation, resulting from the observation of a black body on generation, is even illustrated by an engraving (fig. 21).[135] But these beliefs are

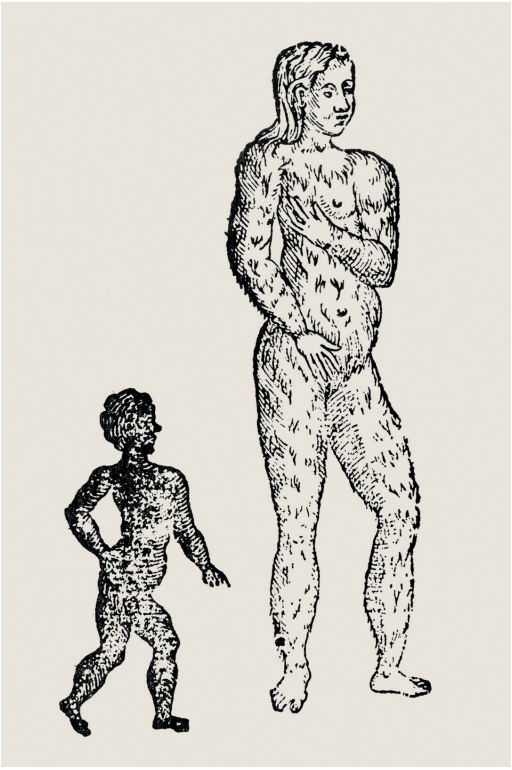


Fig. 21. "Figure d'une fille velue, et d'un enfant noir, faicts par la vertu imaginative", in: Ambroise Paré, *Des monstres et prodiges,* 1573, fig. 26, p. 36

generally more complex and nuanced, and even more so the theoretical and philosophical status that has been attributed to them over the centuries. A book written by King Philip's physician, for example, provides a unique perspective on the perception of images in the dynastic context of the second half of the sixteenth century. This important written source suggests that Philip was aware of the risks of a purely formal impregnation, but that he was also aware of a more attenuated or subtle form of effectiveness. This is the *De Sacra Philosophia* of Franciscus Vallesius Covarrubianus, published in 1587. Vallesius dedicated this work to his patient Philip. Chapter XI contains ancient anecdotes about the powers of the imagination on generation. At the same time, Vallesius highlights a fundamental point which, in his view, distinguishes human generation from that of animals, namely that the human soul is divine and separable from matter:

> […] It is first of all evident that imagination and procreation are the actions of the same living being, whether they arise from the same soul or from several; and yet, because the faculties from which they arise arise from the same substance, to which all actions originally relate, their affinity is such (as is also that of all the other faculties which govern the animal) that they excite each other to actions and passions. It follows that when the reproductive organs are full of seed, the imagination overflows with licentious fantasies because of the vicious nature of the body; and conversely, when the imagination wallows in licentious ideas because the mind is ill, the imagination and the faculty of engendering are so intimately connected that the reproductive organs, moreover, even without overflowing with seed, swell and are stimulated. […] So what is efficient in the seed is efficient in the soul, and what begets begets rather in function of the soul, since it is a question of "doing"; but procreation begins with the formation of the body, since it is a question of "enduring" and "receiving". The efficient force of the mother, which is above all that of the soul, is therefore transmitted to the body of the offspring. The offspring logically takes from the mother what is in her, following her soul rather than her body; and this is transmitted to the body of the offspring rather than to its soul. Just as logically, what existed spiritually in the mother is found physically in the body of the child. Therefore, a black animal will be born from a white animal that represents something black to itself, rather than a black animal that represents something white to itself. From these principles, it becomes evident that this power and efficiency of thought exists rather in beasts than in men. For as the human mind is divine and separable, it meditates many thoughts without recourse to the body; and when this is the case, being less attached to it, the affections it inflicts upon it are less. Animals, therefore, are far more capable than we are of experiencing this power of imagination in reproduction; for this reason, what is said of sheep, animals which feel absolutely nothing, is quite in accordance with the nature of things.[136]

Vallesius' nuanced distinction offers us a privileged way to understand in greater detail how the effectiveness of the image was conceived and experienced at the time. The formal, stylistic, material, and even iconographic, symbolic and allegorical stakes of the works are jointly proposed to the soul of the viewer. But the real content and effects of an image depend not only on the sensitivity and imaginations of the various people who look at it, but also on their own wills

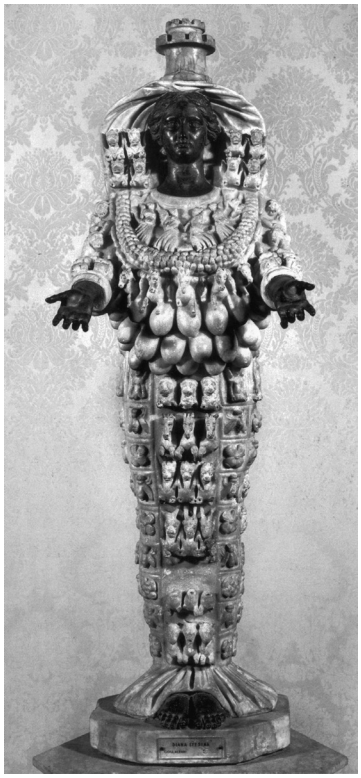


Fig. 22. *Diana of Ephesus*, Roman copy of a hellenistic type, black and white marble, Rome, Musei Capitolini

and intentions, on the "divine and separable human mind" (Vallesius). The "spectator" can thus be affected, even "captivated" by the images, but he is not always totally subjected to them.[137] In this sense, Titian's *Diana* and the effects of her "dissimilar double"[138] on Philip could have been the object of a reading that was at times more erotic, at times more mysterious. On this second level, perhaps there was an allusion to the type of the black and white *Artemis of Ephesus* (fig. 22),[139] goddess of nature and symbol of fertility? The way in which the figure of Diana is both veiled and unveiled brings us close to Heraclitus' aphorism "Nature loves to hide".[140] This coincidence contributes to the evocation of a chaste Diana, protector of the secrets of nature, of which human procreation is perhaps one of the best kept.

132 Ovid, *o.c.*, vol. I, p. 137-139.

133 Ulrich Pfisterer, *Das Geschlecht der Wilden – Bartholomäus Sprangers erotische Neue Welt in der Sammlung Rudolfs II.*, in *Natur, Geschlecht, Politik,* eds. Andreas Höfele & Beate Kellner, Paderborn, 2020, p. 245-270, p. 248.

134 On the relationship between a white body and a black body in art, see among others: Victor I. Stoichita, *L'Image de l'Autre, o.c.*, p. 24-31.

135 Ambroise Paré, *Des Monstres et des prodiges*, ed. and transl. Jean Céard, Geneva, 1971, p. 35-36. "Les anciens qui ont recherché les secrets de Nature ont enseigné d'autres causes des enfants monstrueux, et les ont referez à une ardente et obstinee imagination que peut avoir la femme ce pendant qu'elle conçoit, par quelque objet ou songe fantastique, de quelques visions noctures, que l'homme ou la femme ont sus l'heure de la conception. Cecy mesme est verifié par l'authorité de Moyse, où il monstre comme Jacob deceut son beau-père Laban et s'enrichit de son bestial, ayant faict peler des verges, les mettant à l'abreuvoir, à fin que les chévres et brebis regardans ces verges de couleurs diverses formassent leurs petits marquetez de diverses taches: par-ce que l'imagination a tant de puissance sus la semence et geniture, que le rayon et charactere en demeure sus la chose enfantee. Qu'il soit vray, Heliodore escrit que Persina, Royne d'Ethiopie, conceut du Roy Hydustes, tous deux Ethiopiens, une fille qui estoit blanche, et ce par l'imagination qu'elle attira de la semblance de la belle Andromeda, dont elle avoit la peinture devant ses yeux pendant les embrassemens desquels elle devin grosse. Damascene autheur grave, atteste avoir veu une fille velue comme un Ours, laquelle la mere avoit enfantee ainsi difforme et hideuse, pour avoir trop ententivement regardé la figure d'un sainct Jean vestu de peau avec son poil, laquelle estoit attachee aux pieds de son lit pendant qu'elle concevoit. Par semblable raison Hippocrates sauva une Princesse accusee d'adultere, par-ce qu'elle avoit enfanté un enfant noir comme un more, son mary et elle ayans la peau blanche, laquelle à la suasion d'Hippocrates fut absoulte, pour le portraict d'un more semblable à l'enfant, lequel, coustumierement estoit attaché à son lict. D'avantage, on voit que les connins et paons qui sont enfermez en des lieux blancs par vertu imaginative engendrent leurs petits blancs."

136 "Imprimis constat imaginationem & generationem eiusdem esse animantis actiones, sive ab eadem anima fluant sive à diversis: atqui, quia facultates, à quibus fluunt eiusdem sunt suppositi, ad quod actiones omnes referuntur primo, tanta sympathia eorum est (ut & aliarum omnium facultatum, quibus gubernatur animal) ut mutuo sese ad actiones permoveant, & passiones. Hinc fit, ut cùm genitales partes semine redundant, imaginatio libidinosis scateat phantasmatis, ob corporis vitium: rursum etiam, ut cùm ob morbum animi imaginatio in rebus libidinosis volutatur, genitales partes, & si alioqui non redundarent, turgeant, & irritentur, tantus est imaginationis & genitricis facultatis consensus. […] quod ergo effectivum in semine, est ab anima, & quod generat, secundum animam potius generat, siquidem id facere est: generari verò à corpore formando primùm incipit, siquidem id pati est, & accipere. Transfert ergo vim effectivam generantis, quae animae praecipuè est, in corpus rei generandae. Consentaneum est ergo ut ea potius deferat ex generante, quae illi secundum animam insunt, quàm quae secundum corpus, eàque in corpus potius rei generandae transferat, quàm in animam. Igitur consentaneum etiam, ut in corpore geniti corporaliter fiat, quod in generante

erat spiritualiter. Quapropter fiet, ut ab albo animali, nigrum cogitante, nigrum generetur, potius quàm à nigro, cogitante album. Ex dictis facile constat, vim hanc & efficaciam cogitationis, in brutis potius esse quàm in hominibus. Hominum enim mens divina cùm sit, & separabilis, multa meditatur sine instrumento corporali, atque cum corporali instrumento utitur, ut illi minus haerens, minores illi infigit affectiones. Itaque hanc imaginationis vim in prole permutanda, multo magis licet experiri in animantibus mutis, quàm in nobis: quo fit, ut quod de ovibus, animalibus insensatissimis, narratur, fit naturae rerum maximè conforme." FRANCISCI VALLESII, *De iis, quae scripta sunt physice in libris sacris, siue de sacra Philosophia, Liber singularis*. Ad Philippum Secundum Hispaniarum, & Indiarum Regem potentissimum. Cum privilegio. Augustae tavrinorum, Apud Haeredem Nicolai Beuilaquae, MDLXXXVII (1587), p. 98-99 and 100-101. On this source, see: Jean-Jacques Meunier, *Croyances des Anciens au sujet des effets de l'imagination sur les femmes enceintes*, Bourges, 1940, p. 21 and Michael D. Reeve, *o.c.*, p. 89-91. Transl. Kevin Bovier & Elisabeth Dutton.

137 See: Wolfgang Ullrich, *Tiefer hängen. Über den Umgang mit der Kunst*, Berlin, 2013, p. 13-32.

138 Victor I. Stoichita, *L'Image de l'Autre, o.c.*, p. 29.

139 Marie Tanner, *Chance and Coïncidence in Titian's Diana and Actaeon*, in *The Art Bulletin*, 56, 1974, p. 535-550; Mary D. Garrard, *Brunelleschi's Egg. Nature, Art, and Gender in Renaissance Italy*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London, 2010, p. 225-226 and p. 282-294; Phyllis Pray Bober & Ruth Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists & Antique Sculpture. A Handbook of Sources*, London, 1986, no 48.

140 Pierre Hadot, *Le voile d'Isis. Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de Nature*, Paris, 2004.

15
Epilogue
Callisto and Titian's Bear

Fig. 23. Titian, *Diana and Callisto*, 1556-1559, oil on canvas, 187 × 204.5 cm,
London, The National Gallery – Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland

The counterpart to the *Poesia* of *Diana and Actaeon* is the *Poesia* of *Diana and Callisto* (fig. 23). In his letter of 19 June 1559, Titian announced this painting to Philip of Spain in the following terms: "Calisto pregnant with Jupiter stripped at the spring by Diana's orders to her nymphs". Titian's use of large sheets highlights the body of this nymph, who has been impregnated by Jupiter. The depiction of a pregnant woman is so exceptional that special attention must be paid to it. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid dedicates two verses to the stripping of Callisto: "*una moras quaerit: dubitanti vestis adempta est / qua posita nudo patuit cum corpore crimen*" – "she only sought excuses for delay. But her companions forced her to comply, and there her shame was openly confessed."[141] (II, 461-462) Callisto's flanks are "framed" by a skilfully orchestrated strategy of unveiling and display. Her belly is exhibited. The resemblance of this device to certain anatomical plates of undressing female figures invites us to imagine the natural process that takes place inside the body (fig. 24). Surrounded by four nymphs and two sheets, however, Callisto is revealed by others. The flesh of the belly is rendered in large flat areas (fig. 25), like a *non-finito*, which stands out from the other parts of Callisto's body and the skin of the other nymphs. It is enough to observe the contrast between the heroine's navel, reduced to a large spot on a growing belly, and the smaller navel of the nymph with one foot in the water. Pregnancy in itself conveys ideas of fertility. The landscape and the water poured by a *putto* contribute to the expression of this abundance.[142] There is also the nymph in profile on the left. Although she is not "iconographically" pregnant, her belly stands out clearly against the cloth removed from Callisto, as if to express the potentiality of the female body to give birth. In this way, the pregnancy in Callisto's belly is powerfully imposed on the imagination of the "spectator" (fig. 26). This visual discourse on gestation and fertility is a particularly eloquent manifestation of the fertilizing power of Titian's *Poesie*, which does not exclude an allegorical interpretation of the myth of Callisto in the tradition of the moralized Ovid,[143] for example as an image of the union of

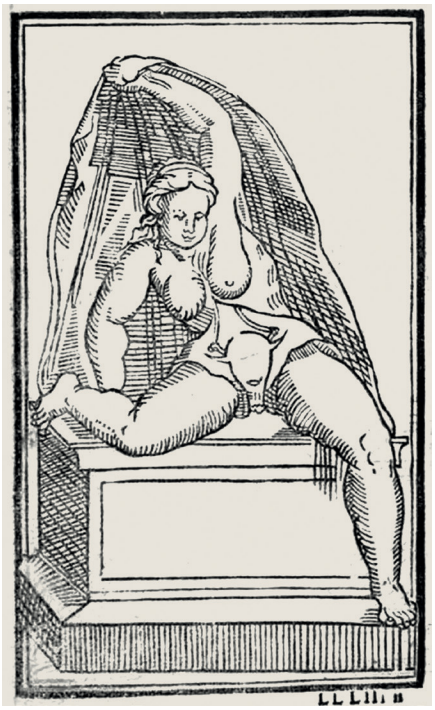


Fig. 24. Anatomy of the uterus, in: Jacopo Berangario da Carpi, *Commentaria cum amplissimis additionibus super Anatomia Mundini*, Bologna, 1521, fol. 225 v. and 336 r

Christ with humanity (Jupiter taking on the forms of Diana in order to unite with Callisto). Nature, myth and religion can also intersect here to contribute to an effectiveness on both the soul and the body of Philip and his successive wives, who must also have seen these works.

Titian also places the group formed by Callisto and the nymphs in dialogue with the "Diana-Artemis" group in the other *Poesia*: both groups are situated at the edge of their respective works. Callisto's unveiling of her pregnancy in the one painting is matched, in the other, by Diana's surprise and her companions' gestures of modesty. This play of formal correspondences beyond the borders of the two canvases also has repercussions on their respective contents. Pregnant Callisto increases the fertility value of the *Poesia* of *Diana and Actaeon*, while the group "Diana-Artemis" allows us to measure the immense scope of nature's secrets in Callisto's womb, i.e. the gestation of a new being. In Callisto's womb,

Fig. 25. Titian, *Diana and Callisto*, 1556–1559, detail of fig. 23

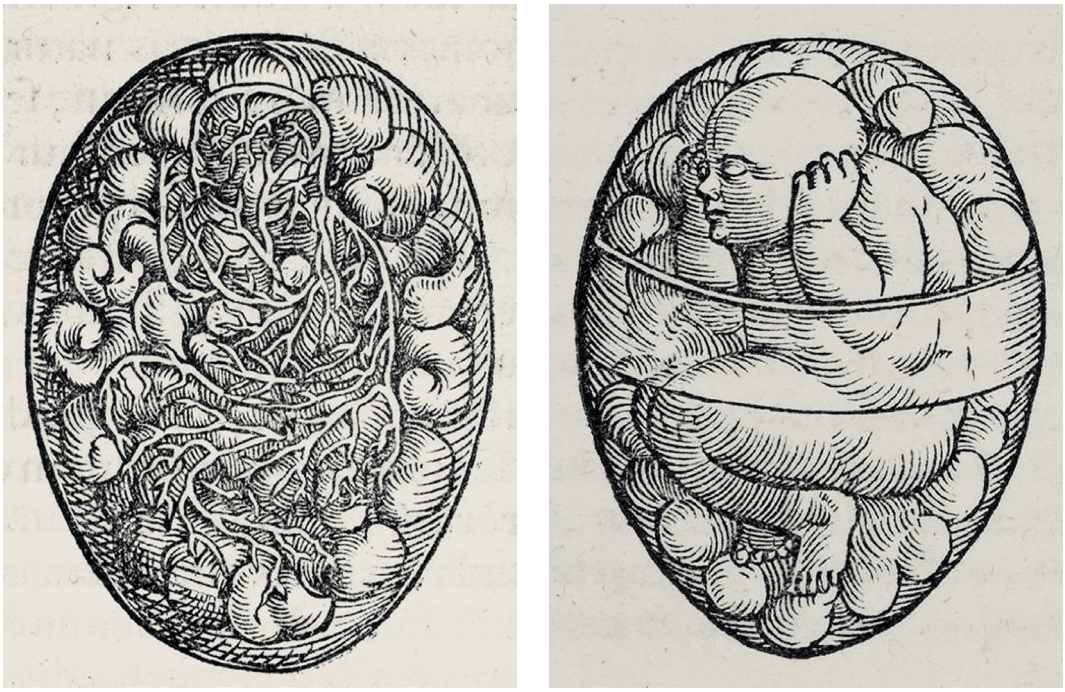


Fig. 26. a. and b. *Formation of the fœtus*, in: Jacob Rueff, *De conceptu et generatione hominis*, 1554, Strasbourg, taken from a compilation of seven drawings illustrating the development of the human embryo, in: Laurent 1989, fig. 8

human and pictorial engendering meet in a remarkable way. The analogy between creation and procreation is not limited, however, to metaphors in which the "brushstrokes" are equated with "nature's strokes". The works actually assume a form of efficiency over nature. The coincidences raised in the pages of this little book take a final emblematic turn here. Juno metamorphoses Callisto into a bear. But the bear, which was thought to finish shaping its cub only after giving birth, is Titian's emblem.[144] In the *Imprese di diversi prencipi, duchi, signori, e d' altri personaggi et huomini letterati et illustri* by Battista Pittoni "*Con alcune stanze del Dolce che dichiarano i motti di esse imprese*", there is indeed a representation of a mother bear perfecting her cub by licking it, accompanied by the motto "Natura potentior Ars", "Art is more powerful than nature" (fig. 27). In the first edition, dated on 6 October 1562, the few verses in praise of Titian appear when the relevant title page is turned:

DEL S. TITIANO PITTORE.
Molti in diverse età dotti Pittori,
Continuando infino a tempi nostri,
Han dimostro in disegni e bei colori,
Quanto con la natura l'arte giostri:
E giunti furo al sommo de gli honori,
E tenuti fra noi celesti Mostri.
Ma TITIAN, mercè d'alta ventura,
Vinto ha l'arte, l'ingegno, e la natura.

From the S.[eigneur] Titian, painter. Many different ages of versed painters, continuing to our own time, have shown by designs and colours how art competes with nature to reach the pinnacle of honours and hold among us celestial masters. But Titian, highly gratified by fate, defeated art, talent and nature.[145]

Titian is indeed this maternal bear who shapes flesh and blood beings, not only in painting, but also in the real world, to which the *Poesie* also belong. We have thus gradually progressed from an artistic emulation, at the beginning of our study, to a dynastic emulation, where art and nature interpenetrate in the highly symbolic and religious field of Monarchic Procreation, in a continuous dynamic with the Monarch's Two Bodies,[146] the mortal and the immortal.

Fig. 27. NATURA POTENTIOR ARS, Titian's *impresa*, in: Battista Pittoni, *Imprese di diversi prencipi…*, Venice, 1562, n. p.

141 Ovid, *o.c.*, vol. I, p. 93.

142 On this motif, which is also found in *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*: Waldemar Deonna, *Fontaines anthropomorphes. La femme aux seins jaillissants et l'enfant 'mingens'*, in *Genava*, 6, 1958, p. 239-296.

143 Marek Thue Kretschmer, *L'Ovidius moralizatus de Pierre Bersuire. Essai de mise au point*, in *Interfaces*, 3, 2016, p. 221-244, p. 236.

144 On this emblem, see especially: Valeska von Rosen, *o.c.*, p. 290-292; Daniela Bohde, *o.c.*, p. 322-325; Nicola Suthor, *o.c.*, p. 15-20; Mary D. Garrard, *o.c.*, p. 206-211.

145 Battista Pittoni, *Imprese di diversi prencipi, duchi, signori, e d'altri personaggi et huomini letterati et illustri*, Venice, [1562], penultimate *impresa*. Transl. Giorgia Sassi & Elisabeth Dutton. See also the critical edition by Charles Davis (ed.), *Imprese di diversi principi, duchi, signori, e d'altri personaggi et huomini illustri di Battista Pittoni pittore vicentino. Con Alcune stanze, sonetti di Lodovico Dolce* (Venedig 1602) (Fontes 33), ein digitales Faksimile, Heidelberg, 2009.

146 Ernst Kantorowicz, *o.c.*. The analogy with Kantorowicz's classic book is clear, but it is presented here in more inclusive terms.

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Colophon

Studies in Iconology accepts original and interdisciplinary contributions in the broader field of art theory and art history. The series addresses an audience that seeks to understand any aspect and any deeper meaning of the visual medium along the history of mankind in the fields of philosophy, art history, theology and cultural anthropology.

This little book is the result of a thorough rewriting of a digression from my habilitation thesis, with a new rhythm and a new tone. I wrote the major part of this thesis in 2015-2016 while supported by an "Ambizione" grant awarded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. The thesis was approved by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Fribourg in 2017. It is now published by Droz, completely revised and without digressions, under the title *L'Image féconde. Art et dynastie à la Renaissance*.

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