VISUAL AND MATERIAL CULTURE, 1300-1700

Edited by Daniel M. Unger

Titian's *Allegory of Marriage*

New Approaches

Amsterdam
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Cover illustration: Titian, *Allegory of Marriage*, oil on canvas, c. 1530/5, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: Daniel M. Unger.

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Table of Contents

List of Plates and Figures

Colour Plates

Black and White Figures

1. Introduction: Poetic License

Daniel M. Unger

Titan's *Allegory of Marriage* (Plate 1), in the main hall of the Louvre's sixteenth-century-painting wing, attracts little notice these days. Compared to the fame of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* in the centre of the gallery and the massive scale of Veronese's *Marriage at Cana* on the other side of the gallery, facing the *Mona Lisa*, which draw most of the visitors' attention, Titian's painting seems to fall short in terms of both its popularity and its size.

The label alongside the painting is ambiguous, reading: '*Allégorie Conjugale*, dite à tort *Allégorie d'Alphonse d'Avalos*' (*Allegory of Marriage* wrongly named *Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos*). Moreover, although the exact date of the painting is unknown, the label notes that it was completed c. 1530/5. The short explanation represents the most common interpretation of the painting today: Titian created an image of a married couple with the spouses, who were figured as Mars and Venus, accompanied by the protective divinities of marriage: Cupid, Vesta, and Hymen, bearing their respective attributes—arrows, myrtle, and a basket of flowers and fruits. The crystal ball on Venus's knees is another attribute, which together with the melancholic facial expressions of the main protagonists suggests the loss of a life. The couple is destined to be parted in the future because one of the two will leave this world.[1] Viewers reading this label might easily come to the conclusion that Titian depicted a sad and rather uncommon marriage and may experience both perplexity and astonishment, even a sense of mystery—awakening one's curiosity as if standing before a riddle. Why would Titian have created a painting of such a sad marriage and who would have wished to commission such an uncommon theme?

At the same time, the use of the term 'allegory' calls upon us to look beyond a straightforward definition of what is depicted in the painting. This vein was explored in the nineteenth century by Abraham Hume in his 1829 *Notices of the*

1 'Titien crée dans cette oeuvre le prototype du tableau de mariage, un genre qui a fait fortune à Venise. Les époux sont travestis en Mars et Vénus, accompagnés des divinités protectrices du mariage: Cupidon portant des flèches, Vesta couronnée de myrte, Hymen tendant une corbeille de fleurs et de fruits. La boule de cristal tenue par la femme comme si elle voulait y lire l'avenir et les expressions mélancoliques des personnages ont fait interpréter la scène comme une allégorie de la Séparation après le départ ou la mort de l'un des deux époux'.

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Life and Works of Titian, where he remarked on the difficulty in understanding the allegory represented in this painting.[2] Georg Gronau repeated this contention in 1900. He praised the painting, addressed its impenetrability, but admitted that: 'The importance of the picture as a work of art will in no wise be diminished when we confess we cannot explain its meaning in words'.[3] On a similar note, Hans Tietze wrote about 'the pleasing picture in the Louvre', which 'in default of a better interpretation, we must continue to call by its makeshift name, the *Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos*'.[4] David Rosand elaborated on Titian's poetics and the commissions he received from King Philip II of Spain, writing: 'Such interpretations invariably present solid iconographic credentials, but we know that every mythological theme was subject to allegorization on multiple levels; the history of Christian accommodation and domestication of the pagan tales encouraged such readings'.[5] Rosand went on to discuss the meaning of *Poesia*, noting that the artist set out to offer multiple views and understandings of a given figure or work of art, in accordance with what he referred to as 'decorum of interpretation'.[6]

Venetian painting is known for the ambiguity of the scenes produced by the city's most illustrious painters, and Titian's painting is one of many works of art representing a sophisticated culture that favoured an open approach that allowed for different interpretations. Two famous examples that belong to the category of a painterly riddle are Giovanni Bellini's *Sacred Allegory* (Figure 1.1) and Giorgione's *Tempest* (Figure 1.2), both of which have been discussed by modern scholars in poetic terms. A third example is the *Fete Champêtre* or *Pastoral Concert* (Figure 1.3), previously attributed to Giorgione but now considered to be by Titian. In addressing Giorgione's *Tempest*, almost forty years ago, Paul Barolsky and Norman E. Land encouraged art historians to be more open-minded about its artistic message and to abandon the search for a textual source. They argued that not every painting is

2 'The Allegory contained in this picture is not easy to be made out. He is in armour with his hand on the bosom of a female who is sitting, and holding in her hands a glass globe, her face turned towards a young girl crowned with laurel, supposed to represent Victory, and who appears to be rendering homage to Alphonso; a Cupid offers him an enormous bundle of arrows, and behind is a young person seen with a basket of flowers. Titian seems to have bestowed uncommon pains on this picture, which for suavity of colour and beautiful penciling cannot be exceeded. It is now in the Musée at Paris'. Hume, *Notices of the Life and Works of Titian*, pp. 80–81.

3 Gronau, *Titian*, p. 88.

4 Tietze, *Titian*, p. 32.

5 Rosand, 'Ut Pictor Poeta', p. 534.

6 Thomas Puttfarken explained Titian's *poesie* by saying that the painter chose the subject matter of his pictures himself and then sent them to his patrons. For Puttfarken, Titian's inventiveness rested on his ability to present several interpretations in a single work of art. See Puttfarken, *Titian and Tragic Painting*, p. 145.

1.1. Giovanni Bellini's *Sacred Allegory,* 1485/8, Florence, Gellerie degli Uffizi, © Photo: Ministero della Cultura, Gallerie degli Uffizi.

associated with a text and that in many works of art meaning resides elsewhere.[7] In the wake of Patricia Egan's suggestion to rename the painting at the core of this book *Allegory of Poetry*,[8] Titian's *Allegory* should be acknowledged as a poetic endeavour in which the painter decided to remain obscure and indeterminate for apparently artistic reasons in order to challenge a select audience of connoisseurs.[9] In his 1662 *Trattato dello stile e del dialogo*, Francesco Sforza Pallavicino explained the idea of poetic license by contrasting an emotional response with truth: 'Now the emotions conceal the truth; having such great strength to alter the judgments, and to make them believe one way or the other'.[10]

Poetic license permits the artist to give his own interpretation to any subject, creating new connections, new definitions, new borders, and new interactions.

7 Barolsky and Land, 'The "Meaning" of Giorgione's *Tempesta*', pp. 59–60. For the importance of oral traditions and cultural practices, see also Camille, 'Mouths and Meanings', pp. 43–58.

8 Egan, 'Poesia and the Fete Champêtre', p. 304. In fact, modern scholars associated the term *poesia* with the development of Venetian painting at the beginning of the sixteenth century. They focused on both Giorgione and Titian and scenes of landscapes with shepherds and nymphs. See Puttfarken, *Titian and Tragic Painting*, pp. 9–12.

9 On poetic license in art, see Roman D'Elia, 'Niccolò Liburnio on the Boundaries of Portraiture in the Early Cinquecento', pp. 323–350; Puttfarken, *Titian and Tragic Painting*, pp. 27–32.

10 'Ora gli affetti occultano la verità; havendo eglino sì gran forza d'alterare i giudizij, e d'inchinarli à credere più l'una parte che l'altra, che con l'espressione di questa sola proprietà'. Sforza Pallavicino, *Trattato dello stile e del dialogo*, pp. 23–24.

1.2. Giorgione, *Tempest*, c. 1506/8, Venice, Galleria dell'Accademia, © Photo: G.A.VE Archivio fotografico, *'su concessione del Ministero della Cultura – Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia'*.

Giovanni Andrea Gilio describes three types of paintings—the poetic painting, the historical painting, and the mixed painting, a combination of the two other types: 'Because it should be understood that the painter is sometimes a pure historian (*puro istorico*), sometimes a pure poet (*puro poeta*), and sometimes a mixture of the two (*a le volte è misto*). When he is a pure poet I think that it is legitimate for

1.3. Giorgione (or Titian?), *Fete Champêtre* or *Pastoral Concert*, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre), Michel Urtado.

him to paint everything that his own imagination (*capriccio*) dictates'.[11] But what about the viewers' freedom of interpretation? Are they (or should I say we) allowed to explain the painting in their/our own terms? How should we approach these poetic artworks? Do we, as art historians or cultural historians, have the license to read them in a variety of ways? The answer is, surely, yes! Variety sets the tone of early modern culture, not only in terms of style and creativity, but also in terms of understanding and analysis. This is especially true in paintings such as the one by Titian that is at the centre of the present book.

Titian's painting (inv. 754, 123 × 107 cm) consists of five figures in a rather dense composition. At the centre, an armoured warrior stands in profile, his face turned towards the viewer and his left hand on the breast of a semi-exposed female figure to his left. Although the crystal orb is placed safely in her lap, the woman holds it with both hands, her head bent and her eyes registering a contemplative, distracted gaze. Situated on the right are three additional figures: a winged Cupid with a

11 Gilio, *Dialogue on the Errors and Abuses of Painters*, p. 101. See also Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis* p. 39.

bundle of arrows, a woman crowned with a garland of myrtle, and another figure whose gender remains unclear, and who is raising up a basket of flowers. He or she is placed at the right edge of the painting, with only his or her face and hands visible. The figures all look very serious and self-involved, and do not seem to notice one another. Each of them is focused on his/her own thoughts or reflections.

A second characteristic of the painting relates to the figures and the attributes they hold, which at first glance seem to suggest their identities—an orb, a bundle of arrows, a garland of myrtle, and a basket of flowers. Moreover, the grouping of a man in armour and a beautiful woman with an exposed breast, together with a Cupid holding arrows, points to the two Olympian gods Mars and Venus. These easily identifiable attributes have led modern scholars to assume that the painting was meant to portray historical figures dressed in mythological outfits for the sake of expressing a contextualized current episode. One such explanation related to the theme of marriage. The point of departure in all these interpretations was that in order to reveal the idea conveyed by Titian and to eliminate the uncertainties regarding the depiction, one should determine the significance of the three figures on the right, which is not self-evident, for the couple on the left. There is a hierarchical relationship between the two figures on the left, who occupy most of the canvas and who were perceived to be the main characters, and the three figures on the right. It has been agreed that, apart from Cupid, it is necessary to first decipher the symbolic identity of the two personifications in order to understand the significance of the entire painting.

Titian's painting is generally believed to have been completed in 1530/5.[12] Jean Habert mentions a letter dated 11 November 1531, in which Alfonso d'Avalos wrote to Pietro Aretino that he wishes to be portrayed by Titian together with his wife and son.[13] Although this letter assumes an aspiration on the part of the marquis rather than proof of the undertaking itself, Titian's painting was seen as the portrait of this famous military figure.

This identification of the male protagonist as Alfonso d'Avalos, Marquis of Vasto, is evident in the earliest reference to this painting, which dates to the seventeenth century, more than a hundred years after its creation. In his inventory of artworks belonging to the English King Charles I, completed in 1639, Abraham van der Doort mentioned the painting, writing that 'The Picture of the Marquess Gwasto Conteyning 5 halfe figures Soe big as ye life which ju M bought aufit an Almonedo in Spaine

12 Hans Tietze writes that the painting was completed at the same time as the *Venus of Urbino*. See Tietze, *Titian*, p. 32. See also Gronau, *Titian*, p. 284; Panofsky, *Problems in Titian*, p. 126; Wethey, *The Painting of Titian*, vol. III, p. 127; Humfrey, *Titian*, p. 140; Herrmann Fiore, 'L' *Allegoria coniugale* di Tiziano del Louvre', p. 411.

13 Habert, *Le Siècle de Titien*, p. 571. See also Humfrey, *Titian*, p. 140.

bin'.[14] As suggested by Paul Johannides, one can interpret van der Doort's reference as 'owned by' rather than as 'representing', suggesting that Alfonso might have been the commissioner rather than the male figure in the painting. Almost thirty years later, in his *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et moderns*, first published in 1666/8, André Félibien reaffirmed this identification stating that the warrior in the painting is the Marquis of Vasto, accompanied by a woman and the little Amour,[15] referring to the same Alfonso d'Avalos, a general in the army of the Holy Roman Emperor Carl V. Later, in the nineteenth century, Joseph A. Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle described the painting as a visualization of the general taking leave of his wife, Maria of Aragon, on his way to fight the Turks in 1532, suggesting that d'Avalos approached the painter with this scene in mind after he returned from the battlefield. According to this account, he wanted to be depicted as taking leave of his wife in the presence of Hymen, the goddess of marriage; the personification of victory; and Cupid, a symbol of love.[16]

This explanation was still deemed valid at the beginning of the twentieth century, as can be seen in Florence Heywood's *The Important Pictures of the Louvre* (1923).[17] Although both Hans Tietze and Erwin Panofsky objected to this identification of the warrior, Walter Friedlaender attested to its legitimacy in a short article about an obscure painting that he attributed to Niccolò dell'Abbate. He suggested that the male figure in Titian's painting is touching his wife in a rather intimate way and that the painting is thus an allegory of marriage. He identified the other three figures as Cupid, Vesta (gesturing beside his bundle of tied arrows, which points to his domestication), and Hymen, who holds a basket of flowers and whose blessing is needed for a successful marriage.[18]

14 Millar, 'Abraham van der Doort's Catalogue of the Collection of Charles I', pp. 1–245, p. 16, no. 10. The *Allegory* was copied several times after it entered the collection of Charles I (Shearman, *The Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen: The Early Italian Pictures*, nos. 277 and 278, p. 261). Probably the earliest British response was from Inigo Jones, who alluded to the supplicant girl in his pen sketch in Chatsworth Album X, p. 49, no. 234. For a discussion of the *Allegory*, see Wethey, *Titian*, vol. III, pp. 127–128. The fullest and most even-handed treatment of the picture and its under-drawing is by Jean Habert in *Le siècle de Titien*, nos. 163 and 164, pp. 570–572. During his stay, Charles also acquired Titian's *Girl in a Fur wrap*, now in Vienna, from the posthumous sale of the collection of Juan Tassis y Peralta, Count of Villamediana, assassinated in 1622 (see Brown, 'Artistic Relations Between Spain and England', pp. 41–68); Miguel Falomir has suggested to me that the *Allegory* may also have come from Villamediana's collection. I would like to thank Paul Joannides for this information. See also Brotton, 'Buying the Renaissance', pp. 9–26.

15 'Vous avez veû celuy où le Marquis du Guast est representé avec une femme & un petit Amour, je ne crois pas que l'on puisse rien voir de mieux peint'. Félibien, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et moderns*, vol. I, pp. 658–659.

16 Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *Titian*, vol. I, pp. 373–376.

17 Heywood, *The Important Pictures of the Louvre*, p. 112.

18 Friedlaender, 'The Domestication of Cupid', pp. 51–52.

Louis Hourticq offered another interpretation, explaining the painting as a homage by the artist in memory of Cecilia, his deceased wife, who died in 1530. According to Hourticq, an armoured Titian stands beside his wife while Cupid with his bundle of arrows, Hymen with a crown of myrtle, and the personification of Fertility with her plate of fruit stand beside Cecilia. According to this account, Titian rendered himself in a position reminiscent of a painter looking in the mirror while depicting his own image.[19]

In his 1939 *Studies in Iconology* and again much more elaborately in his 1969 *Problems in Titian: Mostly Iconographic*, Panofsky proposed what is probably the most comprehensive attempt to explain this work, arguing that the bride and groom are depicted in the guise of Mars and Venus. Panofsky contended that the love between the two gods was acknowledged long before Titian became a painter and that the two deities were considered suitable figures for marriage chests (*cassoni*). According to Panofsky, Titian followed a tradition that can be traced back to classical times. Prior to Titian, both Botticelli (Figure 8.1) and Piero di Cosimo (Figure 8.2) depicted the two lovers with the same conclusive identifications, which pointed to a similar interpretation. In addition to the bride and groom, who are represented as Venus and Mars, the three other figures are easily identifiable and have special meaning associated with both the three theological virtues and marriage: Cupid symbolizes love, while his bundle of arrows symbolizes its unity. The young woman with her wreath of myrtle is an emblem of marital faith, and the female figure holding a basket of flowers is a symbol of hope and fertility.[20]

A more recent interpretation is the one suggested by Kristina Herrmann Fiore. Taking Carlo Ridolfi's account of the painter and the many copies that were produced through the years as her principal sources, Herrmann Fiore argues that the central idea in the painting is that of divine providence and views the orb as a symbol of 'love conquers all' (*Omnia vincit amor*). Taking into account that every figure in the painting looks serious and unhappy, she argues that the composition was meant to relate to the eternal bliss that is to be expected in the afterlife. Herrmann Fiore rests her case on two facts. The first is the Galeazzo Relogio painting in Padua, which Ridolfi saw but is now lost. Ridolfi observed a figure of a baby in the crystal orb on the knees of the main female protagonist. The second fact relates to the many different interpretations given to the painting by later copyists, who introduced variations to the original painting, further validating this interpretation, which

19 Hourticq, *La jeunesse de Titien*, pp. 226–230. See also Reinach, 'La jeunesse de Titien by Louis Hourticq (book review)', p. 395; Valcanover, *All the Paintings of Titian*, vol. II, p. 86.

20 Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 160–163; Panofsky, *Problems in Titian*, pp. 127–129. See also, Tietze, *Titian*, p. 390; Humfrey, *Titian*, p. 140. For representations of Venus in wedding paintings, see Prater, *Venus at Her Mirror*, pp. 28–31.

is based on the Neoplatonic perception of the world as represented in Ficino's writings.[21] Finally, Paul Joannides, in an earlier publication, assumes the seated female figure to be Venus, who is left behind by the man in armour as he departs for the battlefield. The painting, summarizes Joannides, is about the necessity of abandoning love, with all that it signifies, in order to embark on a military mission.[22]

The curators at the Louvre have embraced an interpretation of the painting that combines the concept of an allegory of marriage with Mars and Venus accompanied by Cupid, Vesta, and Hymen. The following chapters present new ways of seeing the painting and new interpretations by nine contemporary scholars, each of whom engages with this creative task in an original way, suggesting his/her own reading of Titian's *Allegory*.

We begin our venture with Valery Rees, who offers a point of departure for our quest to understand the different backgrounds of poetic sensibility in Titian's time. Rees sets the cultural stage for multiple readings of a single allegorical work of art such as Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* by exploring the notion of love. Having Mars and Venus as the principal protagonists in Titian's painting, it seems almost natural to look for sixteenth-century poetic expressions on love, which is what Rees outlines in Chapter 2. Rees offers a detailed account of Titian's intellectual surroundings, focusing primarily on Florentine Neoplatonic ideas about love and beauty as expressed in Venice. She sees poetic perceptions of love as a key element for understanding the artistic notions embedded in Titian's allegories. Rees' overview is followed by Mary Pardo's chapter, which addresses Titian's painting in light of Boccaccio's view of poetry and sees it as offering access to Titian's poetic process as a combination of inventiveness and fantastic reflection and realization. Pardo finds the painting to be a true poetic endeavour that focuses on the love of the Olympian gods rather than on the creation of a memorial.

The chapters by Karen Watts and Esthy Kravitz-Lurie reinforce these perceptions of the sixteenth-century intellectual milieu by offering explanations as to why Titian's painting was first titled *Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos* and why the male protagonist was mistakenly regarded as the portrait of that military leader. Watts explores the different types of armours used in the sixteenth century (for tournaments, parades, and battles). She focuses on the realistic depiction of the armour in Titian's painting, which sixteenth- and seventeenth-century men must have recognized as belonging to an infantry man (foot combatant) such as d'Avalos.

21 Herrmann Fiore, 'L' *Allegoria coniugale* di Tiziano del Louvre', p. 412. For the many copies of this painting, see K. Bender's on Academia.edu: file:///C:/Users/owner/Downloads/TIZIANOs_Allegory_of_marriage_1533_and_i%20(2).pdf. To date Bender has managed to find fifteen copies made as oil paintings, drawings, and engravings that were completed from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.

22 Joannides, *Titian to 1518*, p. 254.

Kravitz-Lurie addresses the notion of the poet-soldier of which d'Avalos was one of the most famous representatives. Both scholars show the kind of relationship that existed between Titian and d'Avalos, implying the misidentification of the main male protagonist in Titian's painting was due to the common knowledge of their acquaintance.

This first group of chapters clears the way for a new set of interpretations in terms of allegory. In this respect, Paul Joannides examines variants, copies, and adaptations of Titian's *Allegory*, tracking what might have been the painter's sources of inspiration and intentions and arguing that one may identify the principal female figures as Venus and Psyche. Joannides views the composition as a poetic interpretation of a classical tale that Titian actually depicted in another painting—*Psyche Offering Venus the Vase of Water from the River Styx*—and underscores Titian's flexibility in his representations of allegories and personifications. Daniel Unger focuses on the reflections that are evident in the painting, addressing the interconnectivity between the artist and his audience. Unger argues that Titian dialectically engages with the viewer, whose presence is represented by the blurred and shadowy figure in the crystal orb. Sara Benninga interprets the figure of Venus as the protector of peace, arguing that one can find in the painting an attempt to emphasize the fragility or ephemerality of peace.

The two final chapters engage with sixteenth-century issues that can be derived from the painting that refer to cultural phenomena. Geoff Lehman engages with the dialectic interplay between vision and touch. In this context, the visual connections among the figures and between them and the surrounding objects are inextricable from the texture and materiality of painterly surfaces. Yet, in contrast to the intimacy of touch, vision is associated with greater distance and with a process of inner reflection. This dichotomy between vision and touch also relates to the experience of the viewer, who both sees the painting and responds to it. Sergius Kodera interprets the glass orb as an external womb that transforms the entire composition into a representation of a divination. He regards the orb as a metaphor for pregnancy and the main female protagonist in Titian's *Allegory* as a scryer, who uses the crystal orb to predict the future. This reading of the painting is based on the popularity of crystallomancy at the time Titian created the painting and on the special perception of the crystal orb as an object that might contain divinatory forces.

Each chapter in the volume focuses on a different perception of Titian's *Allegory of Marriage*. Some scholars' attention is on a single figure or a single motive. Others are concerned with the entire composition and on the many attempts to imitate the painting. What enhances the present undertaking is that although the painting is not considered one of Titian's major works, it still bears the weight of numerous interpretations that add to the previous readings mentioned above. Here we see

how a single painting constructs meaning by asking diverse questions and giving attention to various facets of inquiry.

More than twenty years ago, Beatrice Rehl at Cambridge University Press initiated the publication of *Masterpieces of Western Painting*—a series of books in which each one focussed on a single, universally acclaimed European masterpiece.[23] Among the paintings she addressed were Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, Jacque Louis David's *The Death of Marat*, and Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, to name only a few. In his introduction to *Manet's Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, Paul Hayes Tucker discusses this methodological emphasis on presenting different approaches to a single work of art. He touches upon his difficulty in covering an entire range of perspectives on the painting:

> Limitation of time and space prevented the inclusion of many other voices; every project has its boundaries. This collection, therefore, does not claim to cover all of the problems the picture raises or represent all of the methods presently used by art historians. It thus does not pretend to be the last word on the subject. The number of things we do not know about the picture should be sufficient caution about the latter.[24]

As Hayes Tucker stresses in regard to Manet's painting, we, too, are limited in our knowledge about the painting and the circumstances in which it was created. However, we are fortunate enough to be able to address it in many ways, as demonstrated by the authors in the current volume.

The different attempts presented in this book thus join the earlier efforts by various art historians to solve the mystery of this painting—an erudite, yet enigmatic work of art whose layers of meaning merit more than one interpretation. As Rona Goffen suggests in the final paragraph of her 'Introduction' to *Titian's Venus of Urbino*, one of the books in the Cambridge University Press series, the definition of a masterpiece is that it always reveals new aspects of itself.[25] Taken together, the chapters in this volume represent an attempt to interpret Titian's painting based on in-depth scholarly knowledge of Venetian art and culture and they confirm the status of Titian's *Allegory* as a masterpiece. Offering different points of departure and emphasizing different factual issues, these multiple readings invite the reader to join in the game of interpretations and share the richness of early modern culture—as represented by a single artwork created by the most prolific and intriguing painter of his time.

23 Apart from the series, see also Collins, *12 Views of Manet's Bar*.

24 Hayes Tucker, *Manet's Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, p. 6.

25 Goffen, *Titian's Venus of Urbino*, p. 18.

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2. Love, Beauty, and the Human Body as a Reflection of the Divine*

Valery Rees

Abstract
Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* has a philosophical import based on the power of love and reflections of the divine and plays as well on ideas of past, present, and future. The present chapter traces the roots of these ideas to the philosophy and poetry of fifteenth-century Florence, which accorded a special place to love and beauty. According to Plato, beauty is valued for its power to engender love and to elevate the mind to the divine. Conveyed to Venice through literary texts and to Titian through the person of Pietro Bembo, these ideas can also be seen in other of Titian's works.

Keywords: Marsilio Ficino; Platonism; philosophy; love; Cristoforo Landino; Bembo

There is a dynamic tension in Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* between the gaze of the female subject, connecting her to a world or worlds unseen, and that of the male figure, who seems to engage with her, yet to be an unacknowledged presence. This subtle connection between the two main protagonists calls to the fore suggestions of allegory, and it is therefore not unreasonable to ask whether Neoplatonic ideas of allegory, linking the visible world with a world beyond, may be governing Titian's choice of representation. I therefore contribute to the debate on this painting by extending enquiry into the realm of ideas that were circulating at the time, looking at the intellectual and literary context in which this painting was conceived. This approach seeks to show Titian's contact with these ideas through a number of personal connections that brought ideas born in fifteenth-century Florence to a new and productive life in sixteenth-century

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2.1. Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1534, Florence, Gellerie degli Uffizi, © Photo: Ministero della Cultura, Gallerie degli Uffizi.

Venice. In particular, it invokes his well-known friendship with Pietro Bembo, which may be taken as a strong pointer to the likelihood of Titian's being aware of, even if not directly engaged in, the lively intellectual debates that had been taking place during the years of his development as a painter.[1] Since it has often been argued that Titian's skill lay entirely in the visual realm and that he was not greatly a man of words, it seeks to refine such a judgement by showing his engagement with the thoughts and words of others. My argument also involves consideration of two other paintings by Titian, his *Venus of Urbino* (Figure 2.1) and his *Sacred and Profane Love* (Figure 2.2), which depict relationships of love, mortality, and transcendence, ideas that were central to the revival of Platonic and Neoplatonic thinking in Florence especially in the writings of Marsilio Ficino. From an examination of these correspondences, I suggest that the *Allegory* presents a profound reflection on love, on mortality, and on the greater frame within which our lives unfold.

1 On the friendship between Bembo and Titian, see Hale, *Titian: His Life*, pp. 100–120 and passim.

2.2. Titian, *Sacred and Profane Love*, 1514, Rome, Galleria Borghese, © Photo: courtesy of the Borghese Gallery, Rome.

Intellectual and Literary Context

Amongst the leading ideas being discussed in literary circles of the early sixteenth century was the philosophy of love. This is important for any consideration of the *Allegory of Marriage* if we are to consider love as playing any part in the relationship between the figures depicted. During the Middle Ages, writers had been used to considering two kinds of love: love of God, expressed by the mystics, and courtly love, which inspired great deeds of nobility and chivalry. In the latter, a knight binds himself in devoted service to an unattainable lady, who inspires him to win glory in her name. Treatises on courtly love were still being written, such as the *Libro de natura de amore* of Mario Equicola, authored around 1496 and published in 1525 in Venice. However, the divine aspect of human love had already begun to find expression much earlier, in the poetry of Dante (1265–1321) and Petrarch (1304–1374). Their works elicited the respect of Renaissance poets, a respect often shown by continuation of the traditions they had established and even by imitation. Petrarch's sonnets for Laura showed a pure and chaste form of all-consuming love. Dante's Beatrice, also distant, and separated by death, is moved by incredible tenderness for him when they meet in *Paradiso*. There was an abundant flowering of love poetry in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It includes the sonnets of Pietro Bembo (1470–1547), and his predecessors Cristoforo Landino (1424–1498) and Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–1492), as well as the potent sonnets exchanged between Vittoria Colonna and Michelangelo in the 1530s and 1540s.[2] This outpouring continued

2 See Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*, ch. 3; Colonna, *Sonnets for Michelangelo*; Buonarotti, *The Sonnets of Michelangelo*.

through the latter part of the century, culminating perhaps in Edmund Spenser's *Fowre Hymns to Love and Beauty* published in 1596.[3]

Moreover, new treatises on love had begun to appear. Amongst the first was a highly influential work by Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), originally conceived as a commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. This work emphasized the dual nature of love and of beauty by postulating twin aspects of the goddess Venus: one was the earthly Venus, active in Nature and, with the help of her son Cupid, moving people towards the experience of love and procreation; the other was a celestial Venus, concerned with such visions of beauty that can lift the mind to an appreciation of beauty itself and thence to the source of beauty, inspiring love for that source, which is divine. This kind of love is able to carry the lover even beyond the celestial world, to the supercelestial world, the realm of 'The Good', to use Plato's term, or 'The One' as described by Plotinus, or indeed, in Christian terms, it offers the possibility of coming close to God and ultimately being absorbed in God.

Ficino's commentary, usually entitled *De amore*, was circulated in manuscript from 1469. It then appeared in print among his translations of Plato's dialogues in 1484 and was reprinted many times before the middle of the sixteenth century. In 1544 two vernacular translations appeared, one in Florence and one in Rome,[4] and French translations followed in 1541, 1546, and 1588.[5]

Ficino's commentary spurred the appearance of other works on the same theme. One of his pupils, Francesco Cattani da Diacceto (1466–1522), considered his successor, wrote three works in direct continuance of the tradition set by Ficino's dialogue. The first, *De pulchro*, a metaphysical discussion of beauty, was composed in 1496/9, while Ficino was still alive, though it was not finalized until 1514. It was dedicated initially to his colleague at the *Studio*, Giovanni Vittorio Soderini, and later to the Rucellai brothers on the death of their father, Bernardo. The second to be written, *Three Books on Love,* appeared in 1508 and three years later he added a vernacular version, intending a wider readership. It presents an elaboration of Ficino's views on the centrality of love on a cosmic scale and on distinguishing clearly between celestial and earthly, or vulgar, love and beauty. The third work, a *Panegyric on*

3 Spenser claimed to have written the first two much earlier, in his youth, but this is generally doubted. The first pair are to Love and Beauty and the second pair are to Heavenly Love and Heavenly Beauty. There are many editions of the *Hymnes*, including a new version in preparation for the Oxford Edition of the *Collected Works of Edmund Spenser*. There is also an immense literature on Spenser for which a useful point of departure can be found in Rees, 'Ficinian Ideas in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser'.

4 The Roman edition by Hercole Barbarasa da Terni has received little attention. It may have been an unauthorized translation by the editor, whereas the Florence translation was Ficino's own. Kristeller, *Supplementum*, I, p. lxxi.

5 The French translators were Gilles Corozet (Paris: 1541 and 1542, a partial translation), Jean de la Haye, a courtier of Marguerite of Navarre (Poitiers: 1546), and Guy Le Fèvre de la Boderie (Paris: 1588).

Love, appeared in both Latin and the vernacular around the same time as *Three Books on Love*, and it promoted the same enthusiasm for celestial love, defined as the desire for spiritual or divine beauty. It also promoted vulgar love, the desire for corporeal beauty, insofar as it might lead to divine beauty. The Italian version of the *Panegyric* was printed in Rome in 1526 but the *Three Books on Love* appeared in Venice only in 1561. Nevertheless, all his works circulated well in manuscript, owing partly to the development of academies in all the major cities of Italy.[6]

In Venice, Pietro Bembo's *Gli Asolani* was published in 1505. Bembo took up the question of sacred and profane love and the way in which the latter might lead to the former, including within profane love even the love of women. The view of Platonic love formulated by Bembo reached its largest audience through *The Book of the Courtier*, written by the humanist Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529). That work relates conversations that purportedly took place in the court of Urbino in 1507, in which Bembo features prominently as the chief presenter of Platonic love, based on the philosophical writings of Ficino, with their characteristic Christian overtones. It was more or less complete by 1518 although it was only published in 1528.

Among the many dialogues on love that appeared in the years that followed, several stand out as especially influential. Perhaps the best known of these is the *Dialoghi d'amore* of Leone Ebreo, published posthumously in Rome in 1535, a philosophical exploration of love, in which Philo (the lover) seeks union with Sophia (wisdom).[7] The work consists of three conversations on love, which Ebreo conceived of as the animating principle of the universe and the cause of all existence, divine as well as material. The first dialogue discusses the relation between love and desire; the second, the universality of love; and the third, which provides the longest and most sustained philosophical discussion, the origin of love. He drew upon Platonic and Neoplatonic sources, as well as on the cosmology and metaphysics of Jewish and Arabic thinkers, which he combined with Aristotelian sources in order to produce a synthesis of Aristotelian and Platonic views. The book ends with an interesting perception: Philo, the lover, is to the very end unable to hear what seems to be Sophia's plain intent, namely that in philosophy—Philosophia—they

6 Diacceto's entire output was printed in Basel in 1563 by Henricus Petri. On Diacceto, see Kristeller, 'Francesco da Diacceto' and, more recently, Simone Fellina, *Alla sculoa di Marsilio Ficino*. Diacceto read Aristotelian philosophy under Olivierio Arduini at Pisa before studying Platonism with Ficino from 1492. He later taught philosophy at the Florentine *Studio* and his concern was always to harmonize the two schools of philosophy, Platonic and Aristotelian. He therefore differs in some details of interpretation from Ficino but is nevertheless considered his faithful disciple and successor. On the Academies, see Everson et al., *The Italian Academies 1525–1700*.

7 Ebreo is also known as Judah ben Isaac Abravanel (1460/65–1520/25). The original language of his treatise is still debated, but it was written primarily for Italian Christian readers.

are already united. Philo—love in pursuit—cannot grasp that and will continue to seek endlessly for that elusive union, which for her is already a reality.

Another writer, Sperone Speroni, whose portrait Titian painted in 1544, carried early views about human love in a direction not made explicit earlier, proposing that women, too, could function autonomously in the field of love, whether romantic or Platonic.[8] His *Dialogo d'amore* and *Della dignità delle donne* were published in Venice in 1542. His assertions were strongly confirmed by Tullia d'Aragona, who had been in Venice in the early 1530s, in her own *Dialogues on the Infinity of Love* written in 1547.[9] It is in Speroni's dialogue that her character speaks the words 'As heaven is the paradise of the soul, so God has transfused into Titian's colours the paradise of our bodies'.[10]

Thus, ideas about love were very much in circulation and the subject of discussion in the period leading up to the painting of Titian's *Allegory*. How he may have connected with such ideas is worth examining in further detail.

Personal Connections

It is, in fact, possible to trace a direct trail of personal connections between Florentine Platonism and Titian's circle. It begins in Florence with Bernardo Bembo (1433–1519), father of the famous poet Pietro, but a writer of poetry himself on occasion. Bernardo was a Venetian nobleman and served as an ambassador for the Venetian state for some years before becoming *podestà* and *visdomino* of a number of Venetian dependencies. He had trained in both philosophy and law at the University of Padua and was greatly interested in literature, collecting an impressive library. Bernardo was ambassador to Florence for two periods, the first in 1475/6 and again in 1478/80. He was welcomed into the circle of Lorenzo de' Medici and also formed a close and life-long friendship with the philosopher Ficino. On the second of these extended visits, he took Pietro with him. While there, Bernardo also formed an attachment, most likely of a Platonic nature, to the newly married young Ginevra de' Benci, daughter of one of Ficino's followers.[11] It was around this time that Leonardo da Vinci painted his famous portrait of her,

8 Titian's portrait of Speroni is now in the Museo Civico di Santa Caterina, Treviso. Speroni's many dialogues present a variety of views, not always consistent.

9 On Speroni and Tullia, see Panizza, 'Platonic Love on the Rocks', pp. 215–220. Though her work was published in Venice, by 1547 Tullia was living in Florence, at the court of Duke Cosimo de' Medici.

10 Quoted in Hale, *Titian: His Life*, p. 451.

11 Garrard, 'Who Was Ginevra de' Benci?', pp. 23–56. On the closeness of the Benci family to Ficino's circle, see Ficino, *Letters*, vol. I, pp. 6 and 230, and vol. X, pp. 34 and 127–128. On Leonardo's portrait, see also Fletcher, 'Bernardo Bembo and Leonardo's Portrait'.

2.3. Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of Ginevra de Benci*, 1474/8, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, © Photo: courtesy of the *National Gallery of Art, Washington* Open Access Program.

now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (Figure 2.3).[12] Although the details of the commissioning of this painting are still unclear, the reality of an attachment between Bembo and Ginevra is not in any doubt.[13]

Their relationship was described by Cristoforo Landino, amongst others. Celebrated for his Platonizing commentaries, Landino was a close friend and confidant

12 For the general context of this painting, the Gallery's curator gives an excellent account: John Walker, '*Ginevra de' Benci* by Leonardo da Vinci'.

13 Walker, '*Ginevra de' Benci* by Leonardo da Vinci', pp. 8–20. See also Fletcher, 'Bernardo Bembo and Leonardo's Portrait'.

of Ficino and held the chair of Rhetoric and Poetry in the University.[14] He stressed the chaste nature of Bernardo's love for Ginevra:

> I sing of the chaste love of Bembo, [...] O lovely Bencia, Bembo marvels at your beauty, with which you could surpass the goddesses of heaven [...] But Bembo in astonishment marvels more at your ancient virtue, your chaste heart and your hands with the skill of Pallas.[15]

This is 'a love of which heavenly Venus herself would approve', a chaste love demanding chaste faith. He even named it as Platonic, where desire excites love for beauty, and beauty is the hallmark of the good. Ginevra herself is compared to the famous statue of Venus at Knidos by Praxiteles and to the goddesses at large:

> Venus herself sprinkles her eyes with divine glory, and all the charms of the Graces shine from her brow. When she walks you would swear that she has the step of Juno. When she has some work in hand, it is the work of Pallas.[16]

Ginevra's family was close to Ficino: in 1462 her father had given Ficino an important Plato codex which helped to further his work of translation. Another relative, Tommaso, translated Ficino's *Pimander of Hermes Trismegistus* into the vernacular and was allotted the part of Socrates in the banquet recorded in *De amore*. The relationship of Ginevra and Bernardo Bembo with all its Platonic associations must surely have left an imprint on Bembo's son, Pietro, about whose love poetry I say more shortly. But I note here the immense importance that poetry had in conveying more widely the new understanding of love and its transformative powers originally developed by the philosophers.

Another poet who wrote verses to Ginevra was Lorenzo de' Medici.[17] Although by this time he had been the ruler of Florence for more than ten years, he continued to write poetry, including love poetry both sacred and profane. Cristoforo Landino and Marsilio Ficino had been among his tutors, and he continued to engage in

14 Landino's allegorizing commentary on Dante, the fruit of many years of labour, was published in August 1481. His fully developed commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid*, incorporating the work of 25 years, appeared in 1488. His earlier *Disputationes Camaldulenses*, completed by 1472, have strong Platonic leanings which are reflected in the later commentaries. See Bruce McNair, *Cristoforo Landino.*

15 Quoted in Walker, '*Ginevra de' Benci*', Appendix III, The Poems of Cristoforo Landino to Bernardo Bembo, III, p. 28, trans. by John F.C. Richard, p. 32. Garrard dates the poems to 1480 and suggests that they were written at Bembo's own instigation: Garrard, 'Who was Ginevra de' Benci?', p. 36.

16 Walker, '*Ginevra de' Benci*', Cristoforo Landino to Bernardo Bembo, V, pp. 29 and 33.

17 Walker, '*Ginevra de' Benci*', p. 38.

philosophical debate with Ficino through his poetry.[18] In the prose *Commento* that he wrote on his own sonnets, he spoke of human love as being a 'sure sign of *gentilezza* and greatness of soul', drawing men to the exercise of virtues that are innate but hitherto only potential.[19] He also echoed Ficino's teaching, which was drawn ultimately from Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*. He called love 'none other than the desire for beauty', desire not just for an ideal of beauty but for human beauty too:

> Putting aside for the present that love through which, according to Plato, all things attain their perfection and ultimately rest in the supreme Beauty which is God, I will speak exclusively of the love that extends only to loving the human creature. [...] Even if this creature is not the perfection of love that is called the 'supreme good', at least we see clearly that [...] in human life [...] it takes the part of the good.[20]

He specified the qualities that allow such human love to be enduring and to serve as a path to perfection. He laid down two conditions: that one should have one beloved alone and that one should love that person always. This can only come about if the beloved has 'a natural perfection', under which he included natural beauty—'for love originates by way of the eyes and beauty'—but it must also include 'great intelligence (liveliness of mind), graceful habits, an elegant manner and gestures, sagacity, discernment, sweet words, love, constancy and faith'. Although visual beauty plays a key role in kindling love, he realistically pointed out that 'through infirmity or age or some other cause, the face could become sallow' and lose its beauty, in whole or in part. But these other attributes would 'remain no less pleasing to the mind and heart than beauty to the eyes'.[21]

In *l'Altercazione*, Lorenzo presented in vernacular verse the finest aspects of what he had learned from his studies with Ficino of the Latin and Greek philosophers, alongside lessons drawn from Scripture, from the examples of Christ, Mary Magdalene, and Martha.[22] Composed in 1473/4, *l'Altercazione* has a pastoral setting:

18 Lorenzo de Medici's *l'Altercazione* was considered a contribution to the ongoing debate on the primacy of intellect or will. See de' Medici, *Selected Poems and Prose*, pp. 65–95. See also, Ficino, *Letters*, I, pp. 140–147 and 216–217.

19 de' Medici, *Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 105. Thiem published the preface and first commentary, pp. 103–117.

20 de' Medici, *Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 106. For a different translation, see *The Autobiography of Lorenzo de' Medici*, pp. 35–37. The *Commento* was begun in 1473 but Lorenzo was still adding to it in 1484/6 and 1489/91.

21 de' Medici, *Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 106.

22 de' Medici, *Selected Poems and Prose*, pp. 65–95. Thiem uses the title 'The Supreme Good' for *l'Altercazione*.

the poet stops in a glade, where he listens to the wisdom of the shepherds and their dulcet pipes, but then hears the playing of an Orphic lyre and discovers Marsilio. In the fourth book, Marsilio's voice offers an important point about the role that love has to play in religious life as well:

> Yet there are two ways to reflect on God:/ In one we see him through our intellect, / And come to recognize Him by this means, / The second method is to know Him through / Desire and delight, and so achieve / a joyous consummation of our longing. / The divine Plato, phoenix to our world, / Has named the first, the sight of God, ambrosia / He calls the pleasure of this vision nectar.[23]

He added several arguments to show that the path of love is the surer:

> Love opens up the gates of paradise: / the loving soul will never err, whereas / the search for knowledge often leads to death.[24]
> The soul that is intent on knowing God / Consumes much time without much gain—the soul / That loves Him well is very soon content.[25]
> We love Him with a true and perfect love: / To know God is to drag Him down to earth; / To love Him is to soar up to His height.[26]

Although this love is not to be confused with the love of another human being, there is nevertheless a close connection in light of the fact that Christ commanded his followers to love one another.[27] This poem, on the supreme Good, ends with a plea that God, who is unbounded Goodness, Truth, and Life, should instil in us a love for beauty. It also openly acknowledges the author's reliance upon Ficino for ideas on love and beauty derived from Plato but presented in a form that could be fully consistent with Christian teachings, which was the substance of Ficino's life's work.

Apart from *De amore* (completed by 1469) and his Plato translations (published in 1484), Ficino wrote a book on the *Christian Religion* (1476) and an eighteen-book master work entitled *Platonic Theology* (1482), which resolved any doubts about the relevance of Platonic thought to Christianity. Each of these works was well known prior to publication through his lectures, his letters, and the circulation of draft versions which he continued to polish and correct up until the time they appeared in print—and even sometimes afterwards. An aspect of love that gains great significance in Ficino's writings from *De amore* onwards is the concept of a

23 *L'Altercazione*, IV, 82–90; ed. Thiem, p. 80.
24 *L'Altercazione*, IV, 118–120; ed. Thiem, p. 81.
25 *L'Altercazione*, IV, 133–135; ed. Thiem, p. 81.
26 *L'Altercazione*, V, 64–66; ed. Thiem, p. 83.
27 'As I have loved you, so you must love one another'. John 13: 34–35.

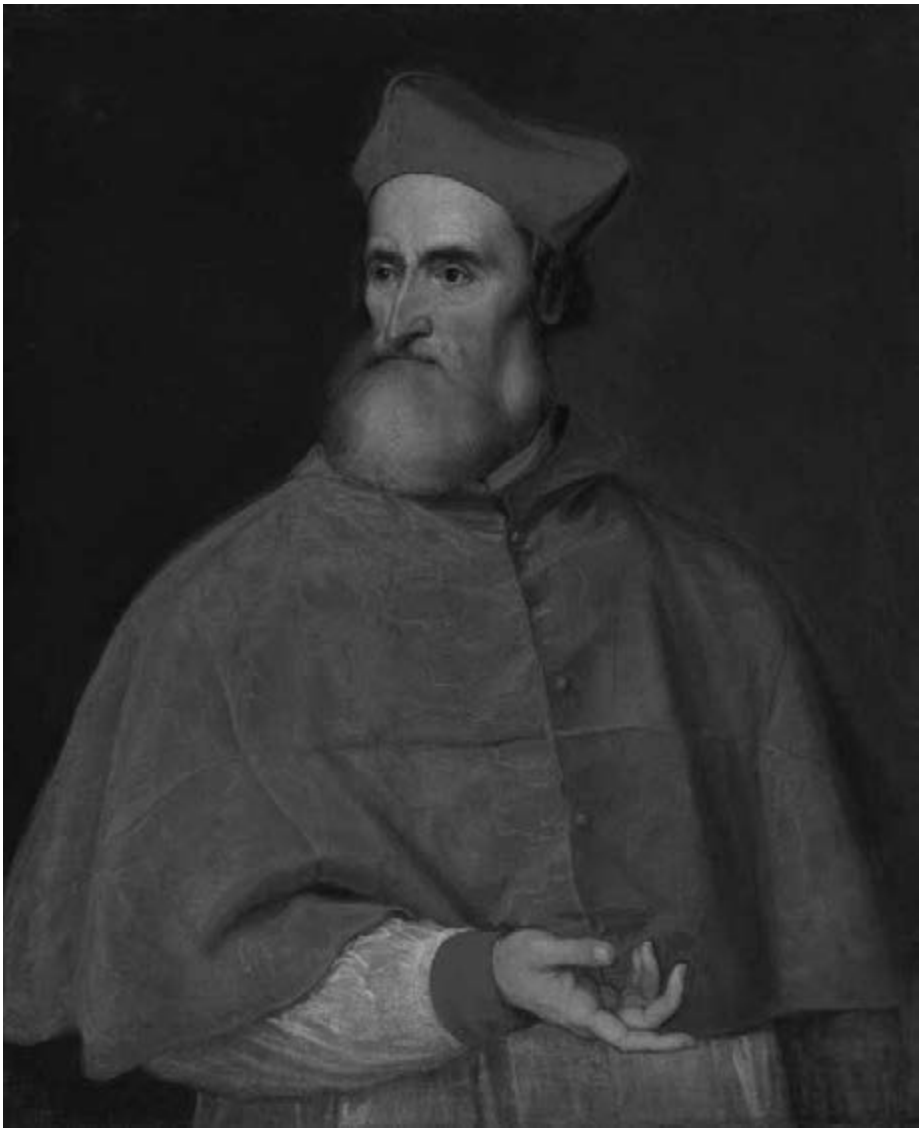
circle of love extending from God to the soul and back again—enabling human beings, if they so will it, to participate in the work of the Creator. Moreover, when divine love is kindled in the soul, the whole being can be set ablaze with such love and can be carried up to union with the divine. This concept recurs in many of his writings, often referring back to the statement of that notion in Plato's seventh letter, and it receives full expression in the lectures Ficino gave on St. Paul during the later years of his life, in 1496 or 1497.[28] Linked with this is another important notion—that the human soul acts as a mirror, capable of catching and reflecting the ray of light (which carries life and love) that is coming to it from the divine. The significance of mirrors and reflections in the painting under discussion has been noted by other contributors to this volume, as Titian loved to play with reflected images. Here it suffices to say that reflection is a potent symbol of the connectedness of the creation, linking ontological levels one with another and displaying traces of one in another.

Ficino, Lorenzo de' Medici, and Bernardo Bembo had all died by the time Titian was nine years old, but there remained a direct link in the chain of personal connections between philosophic circles in Florence and Titian in the person of Bernardo's son, already mentioned, Pietro Bembo. Even if Titian proved not to be a reader of philosophy, and we have no documentary record of his engagement in the debates of the day, he would have surely encountered the ideas that were circulating among the poets through his most dependable friend and patron, Pietro Bembo. The two first met when Titian was working in Giovanni Bellini's studio. Bembo subsequently invited Titian to come and sketch the collection of antiquities in the house in Padua that he shared with his father. He also invited Titian to come to Rome with him in 1513, although Titian decided against doing so.[29]

Pietro did not follow his father into the usual life of public service expected of a Venetian nobleman but became a poet and humanist scholar. His early sonnets are full of Petrarchan longings and he became the prime supporter for the Petrarchan style in vernacular poetry, but many of his writings have strong Platonic currents as well. Later he did enter the diplomatic arena, though not quite in the way his father had intended. In 1512, after spending time at various courts in Northern Italy, Pietro travelled to Rome. There his outstanding literary and diplomatic gifts led to his appointment as Latin secretary to the newly elected Pope Leo X, son of Lorenzo de' Medici, and a fellow lover of the classics and art. After Leo X died, Pietro returned to the Veneto, to Padua. In 1530, he was appointed librarian of St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice, as well as the city's official historian. This was the year

28 Ficino, *Commentarium in Epistolas Pauli*, pp. 4–5; an English translation is also in preparation for the I Tatti Renaissance Library, trans. by Valery Rees, forthcoming.

29 Hale, *Titian: His Life*, pp. 100, 150. Vasari records that Titian painted a portrait of Bembo around this time too, but if so it has not survived. Ibid., p. 118; Vasari, *Lives of the Artist*s, p. 449.



2.4. Titian, *Portrait of Pietro Bembo*, 1539/40, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection, © Photo: courtesy of the *National Gallery of Art, Washington* Open Access Program.

in which Titian's wife Cecilia died. In 1539, Bembo was summoned to Rome and, having taken Holy Orders by this time, was named a cardinal by Pope Paul III. Titian painted an official portrait to commemorate this event in March 1539 (Figure 2.4).

In this portrait Titian portrays his lifelong friend as an intelligent, dynamic individual. Bembo's dark eyes are bright and alert; his short grey beard is softly

2.5. Giovanni Bellini, *Portrait of a Young Man*, c. 1505, Windsor, Royal Collection Trust/ © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021.

modelled. His features are somewhat idealized and give him the appearance of a man younger than his age, which by then was just short of 70 years. Wearing a cardinal's scarlet cape and *biretta*, Bembo has his head turned to the left as he gestures to the right, a portrayal perhaps of even-handedness and careful balance.

By its composition and alignment, Titian lent this painted likeness the quality of those classical sculptures of which Bembo was so fond.

But before reaching such high status in the Church, Bembo had led another life. An earlier portrait by Giovanni Bellini, thought by some to be of Bembo in 1505/9, shows a thoughtful and far-sighted young man against a tranquil mountain and castle scene (Figure 2.5).

Bembo's main interests lay in literature. He wrote poetry in Latin and Tuscan, favouring Tuscan as the language of the future for Italy. He had collaborated with Agnolo Poliziano on the preparation of texts for the publishing house of Aldus Manutius, including a new, corrected text of the Roman playwright Terence in 1491. In 1492 Bembo travelled with Angelo Gabriele to Messina to learn Greek from Constantine Lascaris. He subsequently attended the University of Padua, while working on the preparation of Petrarch's poetry for the Aldine Press. Wherever Bembo went, he enjoyed the company of the leading humanists and scholars of his day—a habit inculcated in him by his father from an early age.

In these early years he had at least two love affairs about which he wrote in Petrarchan verse. In 1503, while on a visit to Ferrara, he fell in love with Lucrezia Borgia, newly married to Alfonso d'Este, who would shortly succeed his father as duke. Bembo's poetry and some letters from this period survive and reflect a literary elegance, with a focus on sensory details. One sonnet records the day that Lucrezia's decorous hood had slipped, revealing her glorious golden hair:

> Into that silken hoard straight winged my heart, / As might a fledgling to green laurel dart / Then go from bough to bough in his delight. / Whereat two hands, lovely beyond compare, / Gathering the loosened tresses to her nape / Entangled him within and bound them taut. / [...] Therewith the heart was torn from me and caught.[30]

Perhaps with Lucrezia's encouragement, in 1505 Bembo finally decided to publish the three-part dialogue on Love entitled *Gli Asolani* ('the people of Asolo'), mentioned above, which he had written earlier, in the closing years of the fifteenth century. A mixture of prose and verse, it portrays life at the court of Caterina Cornaro, Queen

30 Di que' bei crin, che tanto più sempre amo, / Quanto maggior mio mal nasce da loro, / Sciolto era il nodo, che del bel Tesoro / M'asconde quell, ch'io più di mirar bramo; / E'l cor, che 'ndarno or, lasso, a me richiamo, / Volò subitamente in quell dolce oro, / E fe' come augellin tra verde alloro, / Ch'a suo diletto va di ramo in ramo. / Quando ecco due man belle oltra misura, / Raccogliendo le treccie al collo sparse, / Strinservi dentro lui, che v'era involto. / Gridai ben io, ma le voci fe' scarse / Il sangue, che gelò per la paura: / Intanto il cor mi fu legato e tolto.
The sonnets were later revised by Bembo but had their origins as correspondence. See Shankland, *Prettiest Love Letters,* Item 1, 3 June 1503. Shankland's translation.

of Cyprus, who was living in exile in Asolo, some 36 miles inland from Venice.[31] The influence of this work spread rapidly, partly because it was in the vernacular. Of particular significance was the fact that, moving on from the Petrarchan model, it took Ficino's newly revived ideas about Platonic love, which were mainly about relationships between men, and extended them to relationships between a man and a woman, on the premise that women too can progress through *eros*, with its physical or sexual attraction, to the spiritual.

On leaving Lucrezia's court, Bembo went to Ferrara and eventually to Rome. There he took up with Morosina della Torre, and when Pope Leo died in 1521, he retired to Padua, to a life of scholarship, gardening, and collecting, living openly there with Morosina and their children. Leading such a life and being the author of secular works did not prevent his subsequent rise to high office in the Church.[32] Four years after Morosina died, Bembo received the summons to Rome, which prompted Titian's portrait.

Through his friendship with Bembo, even if through no other source, Titian had ready access to ideas about love, about the two forms of Venus, about the immortality of the soul, and about occult, that is, hidden, connections, even if he was not a reader of philosophical writings. These ideas had become current through the philosophers and equally through the poets in a society where intelligent conversation was highly prized and Bembo one of its chief practitioners.[33]

Titian's Response

As an indication that Titian did indeed take these ideas to heart and allow them to inform his *Allegory*, I would draw attention to two further paintings: his panel sometimes known as *Sacred and Profane Love* (Figure 2.2), which was painted as a commission in 1514, and the even more famous *Venus of Urbino* (Figure 2.1), begun perhaps in 1532, completed in 1534, but not sold until 1538—in other words, painted without a specific commission.[34] This painting is sensuous and

31 Bembo, *Gli asolani*, critical edition by Giorgio Dilemmi, and older editions are plentiful. Some early copies of *Gli asolani* bear a dedication to Lucrezia, others to a friend in Ferrara, Ercole Strozzi.

32 It is perhaps a modern perspective that might make us think otherwise. Pope Pius II had also published a racy novella—*The Tale of Two Lovers* (1444)—that reached a larger than usual readership. Such works were if anything proof of a candidate's humanist learning and credentials.

33 Anthony Colantuono goes further, indicating more precisely Bembo's philosophic intervention on details of Titian's depictions. Colantuono, *Titian, Colonna and the Renaissance Science of Procreation*, p. 263.

34 The *Venus of Urbino* was purchased by Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Camerino as a gift and a 'teaching model' or allegory of marriage for his bride, Giulia Varano. It is generally described as a portrayal of physical beauty, love, and fertility (with the dog representing fidelity and a domestic setting redolent

provocative yet, if read in the tradition stemming from Ficino, even such beauty is designed to evoke wholly pure desires.

Painted before the *Allegory*, Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love* can likewise be linked to the twofold nature of love and beauty as expounded by Ficino. Although beauty and love have the capacity to ensnare the soul in worldly pleasures and ambitions, they can also draw the soul towards God. To any Renaissance viewer of Titian's panel, this allegory of the two Venuses would have been an obvious point of reference, over and above the convincing connections that have been traced in more recent times to family coats of arms and a marriage and/or to the mythical conversation between Venus and Helen of Troy.[35] It was certainly painted in 1514 for the marriage of the Venetian nobleman Niccolò Aurelio to Laura Bagarotto of Padua, whose coats of arms have been found on the sarcophagus and the silver basin. But as with so many paintings on allegorical subjects, *Sacred and Profane Love* has been interpreted in more than one way. In 1906, Leandro Ozzola saw it as a portrayal of the Olympian goddess Venus/Aphrodite haranguing Helen, Queen of Sparta, who is poised on a precipice of indecision as described in Ovid's *Heroides.* Should she stay with her husband Menelaus, the Mycenaean, or should she succumb to the advances of Paris, prince of Troy?[36] This is a persuasive interpretation, though Helen's power of choice was illusory since the decision had already been made in heaven when she was offered as the reward for the judgement of Paris, thus unleashing the Trojan War.[37]

More recently, Rona Goffen saw this painting as a social statement, 'primarily concerned with the reality of women in marriage', showing the bride as 'a fully realized individual, decisive protagonist of her own life'.[38] Erwin Panofsky's earlier Neoplatonic interpretation had been abandoned. In 1932 and again in 1939 he had described it as nothing less than 'a document of Neoplatonic humanism'—an interpretation out of favour since Horst Bredekamp's *Twilight of Neoplatonism* (1996).[39] Yet even Bredekamp accepts the influence of Neoplatonism on the poets, and everyone seems to accept the influence of the poets on the artists, so the dismissal is not as clear as it first seemed. My proposition is that even if we accept

of status), i.e., all in the domain of the earthly Venus. Her nudity leads me to question, however, whether it may not equally suggest the celestial Venus. The relationship of this painting to Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* is beyond the scope of this chapter. Giorgione, too, may have been well aware of the discussions around the earthly and the celestial forms of Venus.

35 For the marriage interpretation, see Howard, 'Sacred and Profane Love'; Hale, *Titian: His Life*, pp. 150–156.

36 See Kilpatrick, '*Sorella sacra e sorella profana*'.

37 Homer, *Iliad*, XXIV, 25–30; Ovid, *Heroides*, XVI–XVII; Lucian, *Dialogues of the Gods,* 20.

38 Goffen, 'Titian's Sacred and Profane Love', pp. 121–132; Goffen, *Titian's Women*, pp. 33–44.

39 Panofsky, 'Zum problem der Beschreibung', pp. 103–119; Panofsky, *Studies in Iconography*, pp. 150–160. Bredekamp, 'Götterdämmerung des Neuplatonismus', pp. 39–48.

this painting as an illustration of Helen's tale and a celebration of a particular marriage, our appreciation will be greatly enhanced if we bear in mind that for contemporaries, including the painter and the patron, a reading that did not exclude the two kinds of love and beauty would also be fitting, even if one does not go as far as Anthony Colantuono, who sees Bembo's philosophic intervention in details of Titian's depictions.[40]

In the case of *Sacred and Profane Love*, celestial and worldly, which here is which? Celestial Venus has no need of clothes, whereas the worldly Venus is decorously clad here and partakes of a more human nature—not that human nature is lowly in Ficino's reckoning—far from it. In a letter to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, Ficino wrote,

> [H]uman nature herself is a nymph with body surpassing. She was born of heavenly origin and was beloved above others by an ethereal god. For indeed, her soul and spirit are love and kinship; her eyes are majesty and magnanimity; her hands are liberality and greatness in action; her feet, gentleness and restraint. Finally, her whole is harmony and integrity, honour and radiance.[41]

Both human and divine love have the power to draw the soul. According to Ficino, even the earthly Venus can start the process of drawing it towards God, or it can ensnare it solely in worldly pleasures. But when Titian paints Venuses of such radiant beauty and inner poise as the naked figure here shares with his later Venus of Urbino, I cannot help thinking that he has responded to the idea of celestial love, of Dante's love that moves the stars, of Landino's pure chaste love, of Lorenzo's *amor divino*, and of Ficino's great metaphysical force that moves, inspires, and ultimately allows the human soul to reach its full potential.

If Titian's other paintings thus belong to a tradition that honours the beauty of the human form as a divine reflection and that aims through that form to evoke wholly pure desires, what can we deduce about the figures in the *Allegory of Marriage*?

The *Allegory*

Having uncovered the close web of personal connections linking Titian's circle with the writers who drew inspiration from Ficino, in which Pietro Bembo played so important a part, we can make at least three related suggestions: first, that

40 Colantuono, *Titian, Colonna and the Renaissance Science of Procreation*, p. 263.

41 Ficino, *Letters*, IV, pp. 61–63 at 63. This letter is discussed at some length by Sir Ernst Gombrich in 'Botticelli's Mythologies'.

the artist's compositions should be considered in relation to the inspirations of Florentine Platonism and its acceptance of a rich allegorical tradition from antiquity[42]; secondly, that Titian's interest in intellectual aspirations and ideals is no less significant than his acknowledged mastery of colour, composition, and brushwork; finally, that we should look for a philosophical interpretation of the *Allegory* in which love, the future, the past, and the divine all appear to be subjects of reflection.

We do not have here a particularly sensual figure: though the wife is undoubtedly beautiful and lit with an inner radiance, there is yet a suggestion of restraint and inwardness in her features. But we do have a striking play on reflections and on reminders of the world to come. There is general agreement on the straightforward classical allusions relating to symbols of love, marriage, and progeny, but the broken arrows have seemed enigmatic to some. If the scene is read as one of foretelling the future, they may indicate that the marriage will eventually be broken. However, little account has been paid to the way in which the male protagonist faces away from the focus of the main female figure's attention and is behind her, as if out of reach, as if she cannot see him, even though his presence seems close. Could it be that he is already dead? This would explain why he seems to lack the radiance and light of the other figures, and only his outer layer, his armour, reflects. The recently deceased Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici was painted in the same way by Benozzo Gozzoli in his portrayal of the procession of the Magi for the Medici chapel in 1463, facing backwards, pale and grey.[43] If the husband portrayed was already dead, it raises questions about whose marriage might be portrayed here—or whether it is the uncertainty of the future in general that is being set before us.

The *Allegory of Marriage* still holds many mysteries. Yet one thing seems clear. While Titian may not have had any formal philosophic training, poetry should not be underrated as the means by which new forms of love theory were transmitted from Florence to Venice. Ideas on love, transcendence, and the ways in which human beings relate to the world beyond were all undergoing change and transformation in ways from which Titian was not immune. My sense is that Titian was using his consummate artistry to paint what lies beyond the image obvious to the eye. His painting challenges our conventional view of the human body because he found in it a reflection of the divine. In the same way, it challenges our perception of human life, binding life and death together in a greater whole. This is allegory at its finest, taking depiction of realities in the physical world as a pointer towards far greater realities in the world we cannot see.

42 For more on this, see Rees, 'Seeing and the Unseen: Marsilio Ficino and the Visual Arts', pp. 65–69.

43 I am indebted to Dr. Angela Dillon Bussi for drawing my attention to the figure of Giovanni in this painting some years ago. It will be noted in a forthcoming publication of hers.

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3. *Amorosa visione*: Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* and the Poetry of the Half-length Format*

Mary Pardo

Abstract
The Louvre *Allegory of Marriage* reframes the 'amorous subjects' of Titian's youth in light of the artist's maturation as the favoured portraitist to Emperor Charles V and the Italian and international military elite. In this chapter, I explore Titian's processes of pictorial invention within the constraints of the half-length format. The *Allegory* adapts a poetic of devotional representation rooted in well-established convergences of literary and pictorial practice. The *Allegory*'s providentially recovered under-drawing allows for a superimposition of pictorial and critical narratives generated by the give-and-take between artist and painted object; between the latent and manifest protagonists in the painted fiction; and among the painter, his fictive personages, and the beholder drawn into an intimate exchange by the picture's abridged format.

Key Words: Invention, poetics, under-drawing, portraits of longing, Cupid-*spiritello*

Introduction

Writing to his royal patron Philip II in 1554, Titian first referred to his amorous mythologies as *poesie*.[1] The term was not calculated simply to flatter a well-

* I wish to thank Patricia Simons for keen editorial feedback and Kristin Huffman for a crucial conversation. The Library of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice proved an invaluable resource for the writing of this chapter.

1 In letters informing the king and his Paduan 'attaché' in London, Giovanni Benavides, of the completion of the *Venus and Adonis*: [to King Philip] 'And because the Danae which I had previously sent to Your Majesty, was all seen from the front, I wished in this other *poesia* to vary, and make them show the opposite side, so that the *camerino* in which they are to be located shall result more appealing to sight. Soon I will

Unger, D.M. (ed.), *Titian's* Allegory of Marriage*: New Approaches*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022. DOI 10.5117/9789463729536_CH03

educated ruler, since the phrase from Horace's *Ars poetica—ut pictura poesis* (as is painting so is poetry)—had long passed into the repertory of commonplace expressions in the artist's workshop.[2] If Titian's use of *poesia* was shorthand for the *favola* or mythological subject he depicted, it also inevitably referred to the manner of its making, its 'poetics' in the original sense of the Greek word *poiesis*. As the Ferrarese court writer and literary theorist Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio put it in his *Discorso intorno al comporre dei romanzi* (1549, published in 1554):

> And perhaps the poet is so called above all because of this [making of fictions that induce *maraviglia*]. Because this name 'poet' means none other than 'maker' [*questo nome di poeta non vuol dir altro che facitore*]. And it is not for his verses but for his subjects [*materie*] first and foremost that he is called 'poet', inasmuch as they are made and feigned [*fatte e finte*] such that they are suited and appropriate to poetry [*poesia*].[3]

By insisting that his *materia favolosa*, and not his use of verse-forms, is what makes the poet a 'maker', Cinzio conveniently 'forgot' that the very process of making is bound up with the artifice of versification (and much else), not to mention with

send you the *poesia* of Perseus and Andromeda, which will have another view differing from these, and likewise with the Medea and Jason'; [to Benavides] 'I am sending now the *poesia* of Venus and Adonis, in which Your Lordship will see how much spirit and love I know to put into the works for His Majesty'. See Ticozzi, *Vite dei pittori Vecelli di Cadore libri quattro*, pp. 312–313.

2 Chastel, 'Le *dictum Horatii quidlibet audendi potestas*', pp. 30–45.

3 Republished in Giraldi Cintio, *Scritti estetici*, Parte prima, pp. 62–63. The passage is worth quoting in full: '[Aristotle] thus taught us how that kind of lie is feigned from which is born this [effect of] the marvelous [*questo maraviglioso*]. For it can hardly be born of those things that are true and known by men to be such, as there is no marvel in what occurs often or naturally, but rather in that which seems impossible and yet is taken to have happened, if not in reality, at least in make-believe [*le finzioni*]: such as the transformation of men into trees, of ships into Nymphs, of groves into ships, the conjoining of gods and humans, and other such things which though false in themselves and impossible, are so sanctioned by use that a [poetic] composition will not please in which these fables [*favole*] cannot be read. And along with them, many other things singled out by the poet, such as tempests, battles, massacres, conquests of territory, feats of arms, embassies, speeches, contests, descriptions of landscapes, of climates, of occupations and of persons, which things—and others like them—are to be introduced by the poet with so much ingenuity that they will suit the main action and be dependent on it as if preceding or following or simultaneous with it; and with this the poet earns enormous praise, because it provides the reader or listener with a marvelous pleasure, and relieves the satiation that might come from continuous narration uninterrupted by anything that gives delight. And perhaps the poet is so-called above all because of this. Because this name "poet" means none other than "maker" [*questo nome di poeta non vuol dir altro che facitore*]. And it is not for his verses but for his subjects [*materie*] first and foremost that he is called "poet", inasmuch as they are made and feigned [*fatte e finte*] such that they are suited and appropriate to poetry [*poesia*]'. Giraldi's 'marvelous' is appropriately fronted by examples of metamorphosis. On Giraldi, see Foà, 'Giovan Battista Giraldi'.

the handling of pen and ink, the inscription of characters on parchment or paper. Not only does Cinzio's theoretical framework compartmentalize the stages of literary composition (following the rhetorical schema of invention, disposition, elocution) and occlude the actual mechanics of fable-making (the process of invention or 'discovery', elsewhere likened to devising the poem's invisible 'skeleton'), it completely suppresses the physical act of writing. But for the painter attending to Horace's analogy, it would have been the manual craft of writing that provided a natural bridge to pictorial invention as poetic process—an insight that Leonardo articulated in relation to compositional or preparatory drawing as early as in 1492, at the Milanese court, though it was likely adumbrated in Medicean Florence a decade earlier.[4]

I have no doubt that use of the term *poesia* in the letter to King Philip—written in the very decade that Aristotle's rediscovered *Poetics* was vigorously debated and incorporated into North Italian vernacular theory and practice—was encouraged by Titian's literary friends in Venice and beyond.[5] At the same time, I am equally certain that Titian's term '*poesia*' was more than a synonym for 'painted fable': it confirmed a long-established approach to picture-*making*, for which, like the more famous *Urbino Venus* of 1538, the Louvre's *Allegory of Marriage* (Plate 1) provides a touchstone.[6] In the chapter that follows, I attempt to read Titian's Louvre *Allegory* as an example of his poetics, that is to say, as a work in which the *facitore* is revealed in the relationship between 'subject' (the 'matter' of invention, but also the beholder/recipient of the invention) and image, format and image, drawing and colouring. In my opinion, the painting's uncertain genre status (a marital portrait or double portrait with personifications? A 'Neoplatonic' allegory? An allegory *tout court*?) is an outright solicitation to us as beholders to explore the features by which one might discern the painter's process of invention, in both the rhetorical and the technical sense.[7]

4 See the seminal article by Gombrich, 'Leonardo's Method for Working Out Compositions', pp. 58–63, and Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's 'Paragone'*, especially pp. 40ff.

5 See the Introduction in Weinberg, *Trattati di poetica e retorica del cinquecento*. See also Davis, 'Titian, "A Singular Friend"', pp. 261–301, for a circumstantial account of Titian's involvement with the Paduan literary circle of Sperone Speroni and Marco Mantova Benavides (influential uncle to Giovanni Benavides, recipient of Titian's follow-up letter on Philip II's *poesie*, and the artist's 'inside man' at the Spanish court). It goes without saying that the courtly diction of Titian's letters to the Spanish monarchs was provided by his skilled literary collaborators; see Hope's assessment in the 'Postface' to *Tiziano: L'Epistolario*.

6 On pictorial *poesia* in the early 1500s, see Campbell, 'Naturalism and the Venetian "Poesia": Grafting, Metaphor, and Embodiment in Giorgione, Titian, and the Campagnolas', 115ff. Campbell's analysis is centred on a different aspect of 'making' than I am addressing.

7 I am well aware that every iconological reading of the picture addresses Titian's 'invention'. By approaching this topic from the edges, as it were, I too hope to find something new to say about it. The literature on the *Allegory of Marriage* is extensive. For a useful review of the earlier bibliography, which

The Subject

I have borrowed the title '*Amorosa Visione*' from Boccaccio's youthful allegorical dream journey, a *volgare* sequence of 50 cantos in *terza rima*, composed in 1342/3.[8] Compared to Petrarch's hugely popular *Trionfi*, which it inspired, this was not one of Boccaccio's critical successes, but in the Cinquecento it was of sufficient interest to be published first in Milan in 1521 and by Giolito in Venice in 1549.[9] I was drawn to it because the title *Amorosa visione*—which refers to the 'causal principle' of the poet's dream-vision and only partially to its subject-matter—seems an appropriate label for the vast arc of Titian's 'venereal' pictures, from the earliest to the last. In using this title, Boccacio particularly affirmed the vocation of the secular poet as one of bearing imaginative witness to the *materia* of love, especially in its Ovidian guises.[10] It was in important respects a vocation embraced by Titian from his earliest pastoral, emblematic, and mythological paintings.[11]

Of particular interest in the *Amorosa visione* is the formal device with which Boccaccio stitched a gloss on its title into the body of his poem, framing the poet's creative process in relation to the reader. This gloss is of a piece with the laborious material tracing of the poem, its literal structuring, refracted by the reader's visual/mental act of decoding script. Boccaccio's device marks the threshold between the poem and its reader, and activates a kind of critical recursion, where the reading of the poem is troubled by passage through its embedded gloss.

had culminated in Panofsky's influential contribution of 1969, see the 1980 essay by Grabski, '"*Mundus Amoris – Amor Mundus*"-L'Allegoria dell'amore di Tiziano nel Museo del Louvre', pp. 43–61. Over a decade later, Habert's detailed catalogue entry summarized the state of the research (with some confusion about the picture's earliest documentation) in *Le siècle de Titien: L'âge d'or de la peinture à Venise*, pp. 570–572; and a new iconological chapter was opened by Herrmann Fiore's in-depth essays, 'Venere che benda Amore', p. 389ff., and 'L "Allegoria coniugale"', p. 411ff.

8 Eisner, 'Petrarch Reading Boccaccio: Revisiting the Genesis of the *Triumphi*', pp. 131–142.

9 See Eisner, and the Introduction to Branca, *Amorosa Visione*, vol. 3, pp. 3–21.

10 Boccaccio later produced a mature poetics in Book XIV of the *Genealogiae Deorum*, his mythographic treatise, first translated into the *volgare* by Giuseppe Betussi (published in Venice, 1547). Boccaccio's critical vocabulary differs in this late work from that of the *Visione* (though it too focuses on invention as poetic process).

11 Famous examples of Titian's youthful inventions of amorous *materia* are the *Sacred and Profane Love* (c. 1514, Galleria Borghese, Rome), the *Three Ages of Man* (c. 1513, Bridgewater Collection, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh) and the *Woman with a Mirror* (c. 1515, Museé du Louvre, Paris). With its half-length format and life-sized figures, the *Woman with a Mirror* is structurally closest to the *Allegory of Marriage* and may be considered a factor in its *invenzione*. On Titian's treatment of these themes, to which he returned throughout his career, see Joannides, *Titian to 1518*, chs. 11 and 13. Joannides notes that the patronage of Alfonso d'Este motivated Titian's exploration of the half-length format—see especially pp. 258–267 on the Louvre *Woman with a Mirror*.

In the *Amorosa visione*, the sequence of the first letter of the first line of each terzina produces three acrostic poems (two of them caudate sonnets; the third, at 25 lines, freer in form), which constitute the larger poem's continuously unfurling 'dedicatory thread'. The first sonnet, which concludes with the poet's signature, addresses the poet's lady, Maria nicknamed Fiamma (Flame), identifying her as the beloved whose courtship moves Boccaccio to the poetic invention of a dream-journey. The sonnet closes with the request that the lady be both critic and editor, a request extended into the second sonnet, where the poet admits that his wayward spirit (not just his writing) may also need emendation. I excerpt from the first sonnet:

> A marvelous thing, perhaps, the present / vision will seem to you, gentle lady, / to gaze upon, if for its novel style, / if for the fantasy of it in the mind. / Gazing upon you one day, all at once / [...] / I found myself willing with subtle / rhymes to try speaking with brevity. / [...] / I pray you, if in my utterance there be / any defect, kindly correct it, emending my lack. / Dear Fiamma, for whom my heart is hot, / he who sends you this vision / Giovanni is, [son] of Boccaccio of Certaldo.[12]

The third dedicatory poem calls upon Boccaccio's ideal readers, invoked as 'gracious virtuous spirits', fellow-lovers. Like Maria, they are invited to correct the poem's flaws, spelled out more explicitly than for the lady:

> I pray that you somewhat / lend your intellect to the amorous verses / which I was impelled to compose / perhaps too much inflamed by desirous wants: / Whether my feeble song / traps me into proffering thorns, / or is too plain or hoarse, / emend it so that I may rest content.[13]

12 The acrostic poems are printed at the end of the Milan, 1524 edition of the *Amorosa Visione*, immediately before the *Errata* section: 'Mirabil cosa forse la presente / Visïon vi parrà, donna gentile, / A riguardar, sì per lo nuovo stile, / Sì per la fantasia ch'è nella mente. / Rimirandovi un dì subitamente / Bella, leggiadra et in abit'umíle, / In volontà mi venne con sottile / Rima trattar parlando brievemente. / Adunque a voi, cui tengo Donna mia, / Et chui sempre disio di servire, / La raccomando, madama Maria: / E prieghovi, se fosse nel mio dire / Difecto alcun, per vostra cortesia / Correggiate amendando il mio fallire. / Cara Fiamma, per cui'l core ó caldo, / Que' che vi manda questa Visïone / Giovanni è di Boccaccio da Certaldo'. 'Il dolce inmaginar che 'l mio chor face / Della vostra biltà, donna pietosa, / Recam'una soavità sì dilectosa, / Che mette lui con mecho in dolcie pace. / Poi quando altro pensiero questo disface / Piangemi dentro l'anim'angosciosa, / Cercando come trovar possa posa, / Et sola voi disiar le piace. / Et però volend'i' perseverare / Pur nello 'nmaginar vostra biltate, / Cerco con rime nuove farvii onore. / Questo mi mosse, Donna, a compilare / La Visïone in parole rimate, / Che io vi mando qui per mio amore. / Fatele onor secondo il su' valore, / Avendo a tempo poi di me pietate'.

13 'O chi che voi vi siate, o gratïosi / Animi virtuosi, / In cui amor come 'n beato loco / Celato tene il suo giocondo focho; / I' vi priego c'un poco / Prestiate lo 'ntelletto agli amorosi / Versi, li quali sospinto conposi, / Forse da disiosi / Voler troppo 'nfiammato: o se 'l mio fioco / Cantar s'imvischa nel proferer broco, / O troppo è chiaro o roco, / Amendatel'acciò che ben riposi. / Se in sè fructo, o forse alcun dilecto

Boccaccio's *visione*—most of which portrays the poet's dream-self beholding a sequence of murals with vividly rendered triumphal scenes—is shadowed by these acrostic verses with their double pairing of writer-muse/author-reader, each pair engaged in critical dialogue at the boundary of the text. As Sylvia Huot notes in a brilliant analysis of the *Visione*'s acrostic verses, their critical-exegetical purpose emerges as one deciphers them against the larger verse-sequences to which they are gateways.[14] The first sonnet's first stanza, which 'brackets' the *Visione*'s first four cantos, covers—with its 25 words—the first 300 lines of the allegorical narrative[15]:

> Mirabil cosa forse la presente / vision vi parrà, donna gentile, / a riguardar, sì per lo nuovo stile, / sì per la fantasia ch'è nella mente.

As Huot demonstrates, the language of the acrostics refracts the depictions of the *Visione* in such a way that the reader is led to increasingly question the moral reliability of the dreamer-narrator and by extension the cogency of the (purportedly moral) vision itself. But it does so ironically because what makes the narrator, the poet, and the reader sceptical of that which is dreamt, written, and read is the very thing that makes the vision, any vision, possible (the *fantasia*'s action within the *mente*). Rereading the first acrostic sonnet's first quatrain, we realize that—whatever their meaning as a gloss to the first four cantos of the *Visione*—these verses adumbrate a poetics and posit the condition of poetry as an art: the marriage of *nuovo stile* (the poet's) and *fantasia* (a discrete faculty of the poet's and the reader's *mente*) produces that *mirabile vision* that is a poem.[16] Conversely, if *fantasia* requires a 'garment of

/ Porgesse a vo' lector, ringratïate / Colei, la cui biltate / Questo mi mosse affar come subgiecto. / E perchè voi costei me' conosciate, / Ella somigli'amor nel su' aspecto, / Tanto c'alcun difecto / Non v'á a chi già 'l vide altre fïate; / E l'un dell'altro si gode di loro, / Ond'io lieto dimoro. / Rendete allei il meritato alloro, / E più non dic'omai, / Perchè decto mi par aver assai'.

14 Huot, 'Poetic Ambiguity and Reader Response in Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione*', pp. 109–122.

15 Behind the single phrase 'Mirabil cosa', we are shown the poet troubled by love, falling asleep and waking in a deserted countryside where his allegorical *Guida* materializes to show him the way to virtue. Behind the phrase 'ch'è nella mente', he is enthralled (having taken the wider of two doors into a great allegorical castle) by the vision's first painted 'Triumph', of Worldly Wisdom enthroned with the Liberal Arts and the great scholars of ancient and modern times.

16 Given the *Amorosa visione*'s *terza rima* verse form and its other Dantean borrowings (the very concept of the moral dream-journey aided by a supernatural guide), Boccaccio's term '*nuovo stile*' may be a direct echo of the term *dolce stil novo*, used in Dante's encounter with the older poet Bonagiunta in *Purgatorio* xxiv, 49–57. There it qualifies Dante's contribution to the philosophical love lyric: 'Ma dì s'I' veggio qui colui che fore/trasse le nove rime, cominciando/*Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore*'./E io a lui: 'I'mi son un che, quando/Amor mi spira, noto, e a quel modo/ch'è ditta dentro vo significando'./'O frate, issa vegg'io' diss'elli 'il nodo/ch'el Notaro e Guittone e me ritenne/di qua dal dolce stil novo ch'i odo!' The *Amorosa visione* is an anti-*Commedia*: the dreamer, fixated on a sequence of depicted worldly 'triumphs', and particularly the Triumph of Love, wakes abruptly, on the brink of carnal satisfaction with his lady, after

style' before it can be 'shown' by one mind to another, the poet requires a reader, a fellow-fantasist and critic, for the *visione* to enter the world as a work of artifice. The acrostic verses of the *Amorosa visione* have the special merit of embedding these critical insights in the *testura*, the very fabric of the poem.

Turning from the literary to the pictorial arts and from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, I would not suggest that concepts such as *stile*, *fantasia*, or *maraviglia* were precisely the same for a Titian as for a Boccaccio, though these terms retained a considerable semantic stability well into the seventeenth century. The *Allegory of Marriage* owes much of its allure (as attested by the numerous copies and variants) to a 'Boccaccesque' acknowledgement—and unconcealed enjoyment—not only of its 'novel' subject, but also of the poetic constraints under which the art form itself operates. Since at least the mid-Trecento, *volgare* poetry and poetics had offered enduring strategies for representing artist and audience as experiencing a psychic convergence in the magic mirror of the imagination.[17] As a counterpart to these literary portrayals, I turn a spotlight on the painter's mechanisms for bridging the boundary between a depiction and its beholder.

The Painting: Concealed and Manifest Subjects

So what is gained by categorizing Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* as an *amorosa visione*? In the first place, it allows us to more firmly put the stress on the painter's invention, by unbinding consideration of the picture's subject from the—in this case wholly conjectural—particularities of biography and patronage.[18] In the

having stubbornly avoided the narrow path of virtue urged upon him by a female *Guida*, who is not Maria, the beloved. Boccaccio, 'moved by love's ardor', boldly ties his *nuovo stile* to a transgressive *fantasia*. As a topic in the elaboration of the 'elevated' literary vernacular, the problem of style was at the centre of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*. On *fantasia* as a faculty in the medieval psychology of perception and as a power of conception particular to artists, and especially painters, see Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics*, ch. 6 and the Conclusion. See also Agamben, *Stanze*, Parts I and III, for a succinct review of the literature on the 'fantasm' as a sensory and poetic vector. Not surprisingly, the same chapters in Summers' book provide an in-depth analysis of the relationship between literary and pictorial applications of the term 'style' between the Trecento and the Seicento: *fantasia*, *ingegno*, *stile*, *maniera* (and in time, *gusto*) come to form a constellation under the heading of what we would now call 'talent', 'natural aptitude'. But when Boccaccio wrote the *Amorosa visione*, 'style' as a critical term was still defined through the three prescribed 'levels of style' of medieval rhetorical schooling (low, middle, and high). For Boccaccio, as for his model Dante, claiming a *new* style entailed a deep shift in critical usage.

17 Gentili, *Da Tiziano a Tiziano* (1980), examines Titian's familiarity with the traditions of Renaissance poetics, but his recent discussion of the *Allegory of Marriage* in *Tiziano*, pp. 144–147, focuses on the 'who' and 'what' more than the 'how' of Titian's invention.

18 The earliest reference to the *Allegory of Marriage* seems to be in Abraham van der Doort's Catalogue of the Collection of Charles I (1639), where it is listed as a portrait of Alfonso d'Avalos, the Marquis del

Allegory of Marriage, we actually have better access to Titian's inventive process, to his formulation of a pictorial *fantasia*, than to the historical circumstances of its commission, thanks to an accident of chance and conservation: the recovery of the stupendous compositional under-drawing when the painting was transferred to a new support in 1935 (Plates 1 and 2).[19] I do not mean that the invention is in the under-drawing (though some prior stage of it is), but rather that, in the differences between two surviving pictorial 'moments' it is revealed as a *process*. The 'picture' drawn in monochrome undergirds the picture constructed with oil pigments but does not necessarily offer the blueprint for its 'subject'.

Erwin Panofsky was the first to use the difference between the under-drawing and the finished painting as a window on Titian's inventive process, though he did not call it that. His original interpretation in *Studies in Iconology* (1939) identified the subject as a marital allegory, with the spouses—in a new iconographic 'invention'—assuming the guise of an euhemerized (that is, nonadulterous, astrological) Mars and Venus supported by personified virtues.[20] When he reassessed the painting in the mid-1960s (in the posthumously published *Problems in Titian*), Panofsky recognized that in the under-drawing, the more fully armed, more self-contained 'Mars' and the absence of the eye-catching crystal globe produced a more standard pairing for a male and a female sitter. This in turn allowed him to 'explain' the (previously unknowable) changes from under-drawing to finished painting: the warrior's left hand positioned on his 'Venus's' breast, the insertion of the crystal globe, the passionate gesture of the attendant figure flanking the Cupid, and the inclusion of a fifth figure holding a basket of flowers aloft.

For these changes, Panofsky proposed an, in his words, 'unverifiable, even fanciful, hypothesis': between the drawing and the painting stages, the picture was transformed from an 'epithalamium' to an 'in memoriam' owing to the death of

Vasto, purchased in Spain. But Herrmann Fiore, 'L'"Allegoria coniugale"', pp. 416, and 419, n. 37, calls attention to Vicente Carducho's description (1633) of a Titian in the Spanish royal collection that sounds suspiciously like our Louvre *Allegory*: 'del Ticiano originales: dos cuadros del baño de Diana de diferente componimiento el uno del otro; otro cuadro, en donde Cupido da con el carcax en una bola de vidrio, que tiene una hermosa muger en las manos, en que enseña quanto debe ser el recato de la honesta muger, pues como vidrio se quiebra á qualquier golpe del amor' [*Dialogos de la pintura*, p. 155: 'original [paintings] by Titian: two paintings of Diana's bath with compositions that differ one from the other; another painting, in which Cupid strikes with the quiver a ball of glass that a lovely woman holds in her hands, by which he teaches how great should be a chaste woman's modesty, for it breaks like glass at any blow from love']. It is likely that Cupid's bundled arrows in the Louvre painting correspond to Carducho's 'quiver'.

19 Habert, *Siècle de Titien*, p. 170, cat. entry 163. A strip at the top was lost in the transfer, accounting for the difference in height from the painted surface.

20 See Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p. 160ff, and Panofsky, *Problems in Titian,* pp. 128–129. It goes without saying that the well-read iconologist is better equipped than most to see planetary conjunctions and hear Platonic echoes when standing before the painting.

either the 'groom' or the 'bride' at a time when the painting was still in the process of gestation. The man's hand on his partner's left breast as if to forestall the breaking of their bond, the fragile globe symbolizing earthly transience, the insertion of a third personification to symbolize Hope (of meeting again in the afterlife)—each modification seems to frictionlessly correlate 'natural' with conventional meanings (touch = intimacy, glass = fragility, flowers = renewal) in a subtle and profound transformation of the 'original' subject.[21] At a stroke, Panofsky provided an emotionally and narratively satisfying rationale for the solemn, even melancholy appearance of the principal figures in the completed painting and for the shift from a less to a more symbolically and emotionally charged depiction. He skilfully nudged his reader away from the late-Romantic (but also Renaissance) urge to provide identifying names ('Marquis del Vasto', 'Maria d'Aragona', 'young Ferrante') and biographical pretexts ('leaving to fight in Hungary', 'consoling a young wife who had recently given birth to an heir') for Titian's painting.[22] Without stating it outright, Panofsky's hypothesis imagines for us the artist's problem-solving trajectory ('How do I save my innovative Mars/Venus portrait-epithalamium and honour the grief of my newly widowed client?') and firmly refers it to the chapter heading for his 1960s rereading (We could as easily call it *amorose visioni*.): 'Reflections on Love and Beauty'.

Most of the subsequent scholarship accepted Panofsky's nudge away from biography and towards 'content', on the understanding that Titian's peculiar alchemy will more readily reveal itself through the study of his themes—even when our real quarry is the *colorito*/*colorire* with which he brought these themes to life.[23] At the same time, Panofsky left an avenue open for investigating the picture's 'biographical' content when he let his original designation of its genre as a double portrait 'in the guise of' stand. To the best of my knowledge, only Augusto Gentili has made a decisive (if problematic) foray along the latter path, and I turn to his conclusions further on; but first I revisit the *Allegory*'s under-drawing and re-examine it as an index of Titian's *invenzione*.

The first thing to note is the very fluency and economy of this brush drawing (Plate 2). Whether viewed for itself or as the compositional scaffolding for the painted *Allegory*, it secures a relief-sculpture-like spatial logic for the image. The under-drawing's cropped figure group and its setting are parsed in overlapping

21 Panofsky read Cupid as 'Love', and the adjacent, impassioned, personification as '(Marital) Faith'—thus providing a neat suture between the pagan 'forms' of the three subsidiary figures, and the three theological Virtues as guarantors of a good Christian marriage. See Panofsky, *Problems in Titian*, p. 129.

22 See this volume's Introduction.

23 Panofsky's personifications have been revised by subsequent interpreters, primarily by substituting mythical figures (Psyche, Proserpina) for 'embodied concepts'. The most coherent discussion of Venetian *colorito* as a 'formative process' remains Rosand's in the Introduction to *Painting in Cinquecento Venice*, pp. 1–34.

layers: Venus and Cupid establish the foreground plane, Mars occupies a second stratum beyond it, and the schematically indicated curtained wall and rectangular opening define the background plane. The spatially daring, obliquely tilted figure to the right of the Mars, framed by the schematic doorway, is placed low in the scene, as if genuflecting towards the Cupid, though its foreshortened form implies that the lower body occupies a notional plane beyond that of the Mars. At the edge of the main group, this figure is tasked with breaking across the figure-strata and activating the spatial trajectory to/from a 'world' beyond the composition's firmly structured boundaries.

Without detailed technical information, we cannot precisely correlate the underlying outline drawing with the accumulation of pictorial matter that came to cover it. It is evident that the Venus and Mars pair in the under-drawing alone provides a silhouette that is closely 'traced' in their painted counterparts; moreover, the reciprocal orientation of the Venus and winged Cupid activates a foreground narrative in both the drawn and the painted compositions. Structurally, these two figures link together the unequally apportioned 'closed' and 'open' (curtained wall versus doorway) parts of the setting and translate the geometry of the canvas' left and bottom edges into a virtual parapet across which we look into the image as a whole. In the terms of this spatial framework, the picture's *materia*, its theme, is the relationship of Venus with Cupid. In the painted version, its primacy is underscored (and modified) by the distribution of light—concentrated on these two figures, but also extended to Cupid's repositioned companion figure. In relation to the Venus and Cupid pair, Mars is both central and subordinate. Though his torso (but not his angled, turning head) overlaps the canvas' central axis, his 'recessiveness' is confirmed in the painted version by the dark armour and the filtered lighting of his face—only a shade less penumbral than the *contre-jour* of the supplementary figure with the flower basket.

In the painted version, the dominant figures are drastically requalified, as important attributes are added or modified (with attendant changes to all of the figures' poses and gestures). In particular, the warrior's left flank is completely redrawn (with the concurrent elimination of the baton that rested across his right shoulder), as is the woman's left arm. The Cupid and 'Fidelity' are entirely redesigned in this second 'moment'—Fidelity as a wholly new figure closer to the central axis, but with its face tilted away from (rather than inclined towards) the foreground, and Cupid as a significantly more compact and spatially detached figure, his left arm now bent at the elbow to support the bundled arrows borne on his right shoulder (like Mars's baton, Amor's bow is eliminated). Cupid's reshaped arm now frames both his underdrawn and painted head. The painted Cupid's delicate profile is haloed by a liquid stroke of shadow that radically pares down the silhouette of the 'under-Cupid's' convex forehead, thick neck, and broad jawline (and appears to be a bravura surface adjustment of a previous painted contour).

In my opinion the under-drawing over which these transformative changes were made was not 'invented' on the canvas-support, but was copied freehand onto it from a finalized model, a clean drawing extracted from a proper *componimento inculto* or 'wild' composition—Leonardo da Vinci's term for a revision-heavy compositional sketch.[24] If the process of graphic 'discovery' for a 'Venus/Mars pair' (or a 'Venus/Cupid/Mars trio') took place elsewhere, we need not think of the under-drawing as a customized blueprint for the painted *Allegory*.[25] The *Allegory*'s subject is only to be found in the heavily edited surface composition that we can—and always could—see, which provides all of the 'signifying' attributes (globe, arrows, crown of myrtle, basket of flowers) and gestures that make the picture seem to 'say' something particular about love. The 'fanciful hypothesis' that created a necessary—a narrative—bridge from the 'first allegory' of the under-drawing to the 'second' one of the painting surely could make way for other (equally fanciful) hypotheses. Moreover, once we call into question the under/over before/after narrative, we can look again at the under-drawing's contribution as a template for the painted image.

Augusto Gentili has taken issue with Panofsky's 'personifications', preferring to secure mythological identities for the three figures on the right side of the painting. Of the under-drawing, he has observed that the figure of the winged Cupid '*ha forse l'arco nella mano sinistra*' and no secondary attributes. He accepts Panofsky's hypothesis (and therefore his causal narrative) for the finished painting: one of the spouses has died, necessitating an adjustment in the identity of the companion figures. According to Gentili, the painted Cupid carries away his bundled arrows because the bereaved partner is no longer a target (or source, if it is the wife) of seduction.[26]

I agree with Gentili that the under-drawing's Cupid is holding a bow in his left hand. Indeed, Cupid is either offering this bow to the seated Venus by slipping one of its ends under her right hand or receiving it from her: the gesture and its agency

24 See n. 4.

25 Titian's under-drawings and *pentimenti* are discussed in Dunkerton and Spring, 'Titian's Painting Technique to c. 1540', pp. 17–21, and n. 51. The authors compare under-drawings such as the *Allegory*'s to Titian's pen and ink studies for the *Averoldi Polyptych*'s St. Sebastian (Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt-am-Main: https://sammlung.staedelmuseum.de/en/work/study-for-st-sebastian-in-the-high-altar-of-ss-nazarro-e-cel), but this seems forced, given the latter's dense, dynamic hatch-marks versus the relaxed, open ductus of the Louvre under-drawing. In my opinion, the trial-and-error stage of graphic 'invention' for the Louvre figure-pair may indeed have looked like the St. Sebastian drawing—or more likely, the splendid pen-and-ink full-figure study for the armoured portrait of Francesco Maria della Rovere (c. 1536, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence: https://euploos.uffizi.it/inventario-euploos.php?aut=Vecellio+Tiziano#opimages-52657ng11-1), with its 'surgically' adjusted contours and highly diversified cross-hatching. This is not what we find in the Louvre under-drawing, which seems to trace, rather than excavate, a finalized image.

26 Gentili, *Tiziano*, p. 146.

3.1. Titian, *Venus Blindfolding Cupid*, c. 1565, Rome, Galleria Borghese, © Photo: Scala/Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali / Art Resource, NY.

are ambiguous (Plate 2). The sidewise gaze of Mars converges with that of Venus at the point where the bow is shared—and this makes one notice the decidedly 'incomplete' hands of the Venus, so inarticulate when other features (her sober mien, her braided locks, her large pearl earring, her sensuous décolletage, the plush volume of her torso, the inviting tilt of her draped lap) are so legible. In the painted version, all of the foreground gestures are exquisitely fine-tuned: the play of tactile and visual 'touching' between Venus's 'reflective' left and 'supportive' right hand, grasping the crystal ball; Cupid's reaching gesture redirected towards his bundled arrows and the hand-to-breast gesture of the newly prominent 'Fidelity'; and Mars's now-visible left hand on Venus's breast. My point is that the unresolved features of the under-drawing produce an unascertainable subject. 'Venus' in some relationship to Cupid and his weapons, as witnessed by an armed male, is present in the drawn and painted versions, but the under-drawing's group action is inconclusive. In this sense it is truly preliminary—not a 'mythologized double-portrait', but an 'event' still in the process of becoming.

The under-drawing Cupid's action with the bow reinforces the long-standing argument that the *Allegory of Marriage* is the thematic progenitor of Titian's much later half-length *Blindfolding of Cupid*, where a bow and a quiver full of arrows are brandished by the 'nymphs' entering the scene of Cupid's chastisement (Figure 3.1). Given the bow's presence in the Louvre under-drawing, I must agree with Herrman

3.2. Titian, X-Radiograph of *Venus with a Mirror*, 1555, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Painting Conservation.

Fiore's modification of Panofsky's reading: the Louvre's seated figure is a proper Venus, not a portrait sitter *en travesti*.[27] If we see her as a 'true' Venus, the *Allegory of Marriage* more clearly reads as the *amorosa visione* of the armoured man (whether or not playing the role of Mars), pivoting to direct his gaze into the foreground's action. On further consideration, even in the under-drawing this Mars's pose is unusual for a 'marital' portrait schema.

Apart from the paired, decorously differentiated portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino (Uffizi, Florence, 1536/7), painted near contemporaneously with the *Allegory*, we do not have marital portraits by Titian, let alone portraits that place both spouses on the same surface—with the exception of the painted-over double-portrait (1540s?) that X-radiographs have revealed under the monumental *Venus with a Mirror* in the National Gallery of Art (c. 1550s; Figure 3.2).

27 Herrmann Fiore, as in n. 7, concludes that the seated woman is the funereal Venus Libitina with attributes of Providence, who descends to—possibly—usher the warrior into the afterlife. My reading of the figure is more generic, especially as I favour a non-*post mortem* interpretation.

3.3. Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Marsilio Cassotti and His Wife Faustina*, 1523, Madrid, Museo del Prado, © Museo Nacional del Prado/Art Resource, NY.

In the Washington X-ray image, the partners are side by side, but with one peculiarity that recurs in the Louvre picture: the woman appears, atypically, on the proper right side of the painting and seems to be larger than the man. As a comparison, we might consider two contemporaneous works that could legitimately be titled 'conjugal allegories', since each is a marriage picture centred on an active Cupid figure: Lorenzo Lotto's *Marsilio Casotti and his Wife Faustina* (1523; Figure 3.3) and—probably a response to Italian novelties—Conrad Faber von Creuznach's brilliant *Portrait of Justinian von Holzhausen and Anna von Fürstenberg* (1536; Figure 3.4).[28] These two double-portraits—admittedly of non-Venetian, elite merchant-class sitters—share a playful wit and a wholly conventional placement

28 Humfrey's entry on the Lotto in the Prado's website is at https://www.museodelprado.es/recurso/micer-marsilio-cassotti-y-su-esposa-faustina-lotto/6c028120-747c-4636-a2b5-9224ea9e04cb; on the von Creuznach, see Bournet-Bacot, *Le portrait de couple en Allemagne à la Renaissance*, pp. 220–222. Whereas Humfrey indicates that Italian marital double-portraits are rare and indebted to Northern European models, Bournet-Bacot notes that Creuznach's allegorized portrait was a *unicum* in his prolific career as a portraitist to Frankfurt's upper classes and was likely inspired by Italian models.

3.4. Conrad Faber von Kreuznach, *Double Portrait of Justinian von Holzhausen and His Wife Anna, nee Fürstenberg*, 1536, Frankfurt-am-Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, © Photo: Städel Museum/ARTOTHEK.

of the man on the picture's proper right, with a carefully calibrated reduction of the woman's presence in the picture surface's real estate. Further, each provides a legible script for the figures' hands, which either 'represent' Love's action of binding the couple or individually and distinctively qualify the gestures of this personified Love. By this standard, it is quite possible that Titian's painted-over Washington double-portrait was not necessarily a *marital* portrait celebrating the formal union of social equals.[29] On similar grounds it is possible, and even likely, that the Louvre *Allegory* does not present a 'marital' couple, for all that it links Venus and Cupid to a male protagonist.[30]

29 Titian's Louvre *Woman with a Mirror* of c. 1515, depicts 'unequal partners': the shadowy, mirror-bearing male companion (though on the proper right) enters obliquely from the margin in a three-quarter pose whose spatial tilt suggestively anticipates the under-drawing's 'Fidelity' in the *Allegory of Marriage*. See https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/woman-mirror. In the late 1540s, Titian did paint a half-length 'memorializing' double-portrait of Charles V and the posthumously rendered Isabella of Portugal. Though lost, it is known from Rubens's copy preserved in the Fundación Casa de Alba, Madrid: https://www.fundacioncasadealba.com/coleccion/coleccion.php?id_c=17. Charles and Isabella's figure placement follows the same hierarchy of gender as in the marital portraits by Lotto and von Creuznach.

30 *Pace* Panofsky, the assimilation of the adulterous Mars and Venus with a high-status married couple was inherently problematic. A precocious instance is to be found in the panegyric literature associating Isabella d'Este and her warrior-consort Francesco Gonzaga with the Venus and Mars depicted in Mantegna's

Painting and Subject: Formats

Cupid between the under-drawing and the painting 'phases' in the Louvre *Allegory* trades a bow for a bundle of arrows, but does he also trade a gesture of 'offering' for one of 'taking away'? This was Gentili's conclusion: someone has died, most likely the man, and Love is about to depart, taking away his ardours and making way for mythological figures that signal eternal devotion: an impassioned, regretful 'marital' Venus (Panofsky's 'Fidelity') and newly added, an (unlikely) Proserpina, Queen of Hades (Panofsky's 'Hope'), holding up flowers.[31]

I do not agree with this narrative, but I think Gentili was right to open his interrogation of the *Allegory* with the figure and actions of Cupid, or Amor, and not just because it is in this god's name that Titian's poetic *visione* may be framed. In a way, this ravishing sprite is also an emissary from *our* world who leads us into the picture's 'action', entering into the painted scene from the right edge of the picture and heading straight for the seated Venus, his gaze directed towards her hand atop the crystal globe (set at his eye-level), as well as towards a point higher up, coincident with Venus's left shoulder, where 'Mars's' fingertips are resting. Cupid's emphatic right-to-left approach is sustained by a joke on the optics of amorous fixation: the bundled arrows with their fletching aimed towards the crystal ball (their fatal points cut off by the picture's right edge) concretize the shining visual rays reflected from the sphere back at Cupid's wide-open eye—and reverse the direction of Cupid's entry. If sight of the beloved is the arrow that pierces the lover's heart, in this instance Love is harnessing the seductive power of Venus's beauty and discharging it (harmlessly, or irresponsibly?) into the space beyond the painting's right border. Gentili surrenders the *Allegory*'s little deity to the 'grieving' mood of the principals, but as our guide into the picture, Love is not so readily disarmed: as a pictorial vector, he is also enacting a logic perfected in other stories, other scenes.

Early in his career, Titian undertook a remarkable set of variations on the bust- and half-length devotional groupings favoured by Giovanni Bellini. These religious

Parnassus of 1496/7: see Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros*, ch. 4. As Campbell shows, the poetic and epistolary commentary associated with Mantegna's first picture for Isabella's celebrated *studiolo* in Mantua required careful hedging in order to control 'its potentially transgressive implication of the *marchesa* herself'. That said, Campbell argues persuasively that the tension between transgressive and didactic-moralizing readings of the *Parnassus* (which he retitles *Mars and Venus*) was deliberately engineered into Mantegna's picture. On the association of Eros/Cupid with the leisure practices of the courtly *studiolo*, see Campbell's ch. 3.

31 Gentili, *Tiziano*, p. 147, genders the flower-basket figure female because of its long hair. However, its darker skin tones (even in *contre-jour*), broad features, and distinctive snub nose are typical of the Antique and Renaissance portrayal of fauns, regardless of gender. In any case, 'Proserpina' also appears to have an Adam's apple.

3.5. Titian, *Madonna of the Cherries*, 1516, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, © Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

paintings—which tapped a particular compound of restraint and emotional vibrancy distilled over decades in Bellini's workshop—laid the imaginative (not just the compositional) foundation for half-length secular pictures such as the Louvre *Allegory*.[32] The Louvre Cupid seems to be the lineal descendant of a figure such as the little St. John the Baptist in Titian's bust-length *Madonna of the Cherries* in Vienna (Figure 3.5), particularly in his function as a 'human vector' crossing into the image from beyond the picture's right edge. In the Vienna painting, as in so many of its type, the bottom edge's importance as a boundary between worlds is doubled by an illusionistic half-parapet, with John's elbow grazing our side of the stone ledge. John's figure is brought closer to us by the touch of St. Zachary, whose hand reaches out from the picture's 'interior'.[33] The relationship to the

32 On Titian's lifelong engagement with the religious half-length image, see Nygren, *Titian's Icons: Charisma, Tradition, and Devotion in Renaissance Italy*.

33 Though autograph, the 'framing' figures of Joseph and Zachary were added by Titian to the original composition when he altered the Virgin's pose to a more strictly frontal one: see Joannides, *Titian to 1518*, pp. 241–243.

later *Allegory* is more evident in the under-drawing, where the chubby-cheeked Cupid's pudgy left arm extends from the shoulder in a manner very close to the little Baptist's. (Indeed, the *Allegory*'s sharp revision of this gesture underscores the shift in emphasis from touch to vision in the relationship between the painted Cupid and Venus).[34]

The gesture of St. John's figure is duplex: he grips a scroll in his left hand such that it unrolls towards our side of the parapet with the words '*Ec*[*ce*] *Agnus* [*Dei*]' legible. The parapet itself supports both the Christ Child and a sprig of cherries, but the interaction between John and the Virgin is not wholly explicit: with both hands, the impassioned (and amazingly sure-footed) baby Christ offers his Mother a bunch of cherries, while a second bunch in the Virgin's left hand is being given either to or by John—his right hand is hidden in the shadow of her hand. Titian set his child prophet's gestures at the seam between two 'realities', offering through him both the 'dogmatic' foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice and a suggestive hint that the 'unclaimed' cherries on the parapet between us and the Virgin's torso might be objects of reciprocal gifting, reciprocal nourishment. This carefully staged gestural 'duplicity', enhanced by the compression of the broad partial figures in their narrow pocket of space, encourages us to look again at the *Allegory of Marriage*: does Amor activate our entry into the painted fiction by taking his bundled arrows away from or by offering them to the lady/goddess? Is her grave demeanour a pose of melancholy reflection or one of readiness, awaiting Amor's delivery? Might it be that the crystal globe and the arrows are objects to be *exchanged*, or brought together?[35]

34 On the emphatic counterpoint of visual and tactile stimuli in Titian's paintings, see Hills' observations in *Veiled Presence*, pp. 189–194, with particular attention to the *Venus Blindfolding Cupid*. See also Campbell, 'Naturalism and the Venetian "Poesia": Grafting, Metaphor, and Embodiment in Giorgione, Titian, and the Campagnolas', pp. 126–130, where Titian's habitual juxtaposition of 'haptic' relief surfaces and 'optic' spatial intervals activated by the figures' gazes is interpreted in a Petrarchan key as a figuration of desire. 'Haptic' and 'optic', of course, are modern terms for characterizing modes of perceptual experience; Campbell, *The Endless Periphery: Towards a Geopolitics of Art in Lorenzo Lotto's Italy*, pp. 245–246, translates them into the Renaissance terms *rilievo* ('relief') and *prospettiva* ('perspective'), though these had a different semantic range. But it can also be argued that all illusionistic painting is 'optic', and painted *rilievo* is subsumed by *prospettiva*.

35 In the opening of Book III of Apollonius Rhodius's *Argonautica*, Venus offers Eros a marvellous ball once owned by the infant Zeus in exchange for his shooting a golden arrow at Medea so as to inflame her passion for Jason and win her magical assistance in procuring the Golden Fleece. This ball is no mere toy, but the globe of the cosmos: see Pendergraft, 'Eros Ludens: Apollonius' *Argonautica* 132–141, 131', pp. 95–102. The *Argonautica* was first printed in Florence in 1496; an Aldine edition came out in Venice in 1521, but Latin translations did not appear until mid-century. However, Apollonius's 'pictorial' narrative of Eros's bribing with the magic ball was the subject of an ekphrasis in Philostratus the Younger's *Imagines* 8, a text owned in *volgare* translation by Isabella d'Este, who loaned it to Alfonso d'Este before 1515. See Koortbojian and Webb, 'Isabella d'Este's Philostratos', pp. 260–267. Titian's first two mythologies for

3.6. Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child with Four Saints and a Donor,* 1507, Venice, San Francesco della Vigna, © Photo: Cameraphoto Arte, Venice/Art Resource, NY.

I would only suggest that the mechanism of the 'devotional parapet'—its activation of the seam at which the edge of the panel or canvas stutters back to become a threshold, where the beholder is drawn to become a 'participant'—is precisely what Titian had to master for the maturation of his half-length secular *poesie*.[36] Bellini's engagement with 'truncated' formats had educated generations of viewers to navigate the artful juxtaposition of 'perspectival' markers in what was, first of all, a radical remaking of the 'holy portrait', the icon.[37] In a late, expansive version of the type, the *Sacra Conversazione Dolfin* in San Francesco della Vigna (Figure 3.6),

Alfonso's *Camerino* were directly based on ekphrases by the Philostrati. I owe the *Argonautica* reference to Herica Valladares and Michael Sullivan.

36 Hills, *Veiled Presence*, p. 151, relates illusionistic threshold devices to Wolfgang Iser's psychologically grounded literary category of the 'fictive' in *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology*.

37 The classic analysis of 'abridged' religious narratives is Ringbom's *Icon to Narrative*; see also Goffen's 'Icon and Vision, pp. 487–518. A different understanding of these formats is to be found in Belting, *Giovanni Bellini: Pieta* and his epochal *Bild und Kult: Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (in English, published as *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*), chs. 19 and 20.

from Titian's formative years, the parapet performs the expected function of dividing our world from Bellini's *fantasia* of an Earthly Paradise, but also of providing a margin where the painting presents its maker as our interlocutor and mediator through the centrally deployed signature. The Dolfin commission was for an altarpiece in the donor's burial chapel: it incorporates a donor portrait (apparently overpainted) whose rigorous bust-length profile, set low in the left foreground as if braced to the inner surface of the parapet, is in marked contrast to the apse-like distribution of half-length attendant saints with their nuanced gestures, made more intimate in contraposition to the deep, moody landscape with its strip of gold sky (whether morning or evening, it renders a fugitive hour) and looming Dolomitic Mountains. The Virgin alone is of three-quarter length, raised—though seated—above the centre of the group. If the donor's likeness is allowed controlled access to this sacred gathering, with John the Baptist and Francis corralling it securely between the parapet and the Virgin's knees, the real donor, the real beholder centred before Bellini's signature, could be privy to the entire *visione* (even if from the outside). There may not be an emissary from the beholder's space to enter the scene by breaking across the parapet, but Saint Sebastian, set off from the penumbral group by his placement and pose, and by the wash of light that he alone shares with the Christ Child, looks out at us and offers his ravishing bare torso to our gaze. And our gaze, in turn, is affixed to his body along the track of the three foreshortened arrows that have been shot at him from 'our' space. If it seems that I am interpreting the Sebastian as capable of an erotic reading, I am, as I am suggesting that the 'logic' of the parapet is implied in Titian's *amorosa visione*.

The Subject: Marital Portrait versus Heroic Portrait versus Portrait of Desire

Thus far, I have not fully acknowledged the central figure, the armed commander whose martial attributes are even more pronounced in the under-drawing. In 1530 Titian became the favoured painter of Charles V, whom he portrayed in armour on numerous occasions, beginning with a half-length portrait, now lost, that became the blueprint for a memorable series of portraits of high-status warriors, many of them generals of the imperial armies. Such was the case for the splendid portrait of Alfonso d'Avalos now at the Getty Museum, which is datable to the same period as the Louvre *Allegory* (Plate 3). The Habsburg imperial portrait gallery in Madrid was lost to fire in 1604, but Titian's bust-length images of the emperor in armour survive in numerous official copies. I refer to a version of Titian's *Charles V in Armour* from 1547/8 (Figure 3.7) to suggest how consistent this iconography remained over a span of two decades, but especially

3.7. Titian (copy), *Portrait of Charles V in Armour*, mid-sixteenth century, Innsbruck, Schloss Ambras, © Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

because this variant combines features (the hinged shoulder pieces, elaborate elbow-guards, and armlets, and—especially—the baton of command) that are found in the Louvre warrior's under-drawing (Plate 2), and characterize him, in 1530s terms, as a modern general. In the painted version, the figure has lost the arm- and elbow-guards, and the all-important baton. He is not costumed as if for a formal portrait 'as commander'. At the same time, his left arm is now bent

3.8. Titian (copy), *Cornelia and Pompey (The Lovers)*, original c. 1510, Florence, Casa Buonarroti, © Photo: Scala/ Art Resource.

to allow its 'disarmed' hand to touch the Venus. With this intimate gesture, the warrior's persona is reimagined—though not its axial placement.

If the illusionistic picture of devotion offered a platform for reinventing the fictive-but-real boundary between beholder and painted image, it also offered a hierarchy of 'disposition' applicable to the parsing of secular images. The Louvre *Allegory* is notably asymmetrical, even more so in the under-drawing, where the fully outlined figures ('Mars' and Venus) occupy the centre and left portions of the canvas, with Venus anchoring the foreground by entirely filling the right angle formed by the left and bottom edges of the picture. The less detailed

Cupid and 'Fidelity' are confined to the right third of the canvas. But in both the under-drawing and the painted version, as in a typical *sacra conversazione*, there is one—and only one—axial central figure: the commander/Mars. Or more properly, the commander's armoured torso, since his face, though turning back, is contained in the left-upper quadrant of the picture's surface—though the torso itself faces left, as do Cupid and 'Fidelity'. Cupid brings us into the scene with his progress along the lower edge of the canvas, as if leading us to join Venus's converging votaries. Only the commander appears to move past the group's unfolding action, though held back by his hand on Venus's breast. How might we read his pose?[38]

Joannides—who has proposed that the *Allegory of Marriage* is foreshadowed in Titian's youthful *The Lovers* (Figure 3.8), which he identifies as *Cornelia Fainting in the Arms of Pompey*, a scene of sorrowful leave-taking—reads the Louvre *Allegory* as a kind of 'Choice of Hercules':

> Some twenty years [after the *Cornelia* Titian used its theme] again in *An Allegory of Parting*, the so-called *Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos* in the Louvre. There the parting of the armoured man from, probably, Venus, embodies the theme of a necessary abandoning of the charms of love for the requirements of martial duty: the theme is the same as that of the *Cornelia*, but without personal and historic specifics.[39]

I take this last to mean that the thoroughly contemporary garb of the '*Cornelia*'s figures signifies that the ancient Roman personages were 'actual people', whereas the Louvre warrior choosing duty over pleasure engages in a symbolic action and may himself be imaginary (a personified 'Martial Duty'). I like the idea of interpreting the 'over the shoulder' pose as one of having to choose between alternatives; but is the self-abnegating outcome of the 'turn' a foregone conclusion? Or is this a portrayal of potentiality, the warrior's 'reflexive' pose denoting the act of reflection itself, rather than the positive rejection of 'pleasure' for the sake of 'duty'? The figure's

38 The ubiquity of the 'over the shoulder' pose in early Cinquecento portraiture and 'abridged' narratives is well established. A particularly ingenious instance is discussed in my essay 'The Subject of Savoldo's *Magdalene*', pp. 67–91 (and especially p. 80, on the *ritratto di spalla*). The rhetorical sources for this schema (a form of the more encompassing device of *contrapposition/antithesis*) were established in David Summers' groundbreaking 'Maniera and Movement: The *Figura Serpentinata*', pp. 269–301; and his 'Contrapposto: Style and Meaning in Renaissance Art', pp. 336–361.

39 Joannides, *Titian to 1518*, pp. 253–254. For the Windsor version discussed by Joannides, see https://www.rct.uk/collection/403928/the-lovers. In Jean Habert's entry in the *Catalogue des peintures italiennes du musée du Louvre*, p. 106, 'Allégorie de la séparation' is tentatively accepted as an alternative title to *Allegorie conjugale*. For the argument that in *The Lovers*, Titian depicted a scene from a modern *novella*, not an ancient Roman history, see Simons, 'The Visual Dynamics of (Un)veiling in Early Modern Culture', pp. 28–36.

partial 'disarming' reinforces the inherent ambiguity of his pose—in contrast to that of the high-status armoured sitters in Titian's commissioned portraits.

In my opinion, the physiognomic specificity of the partially 'disarmed' commander suggests that his is indeed a portrait likeness, the image of a 'real' person (possibly, but not necessarily a professional warrior), who is in the position of making decisions about love. I am not persuaded by Gentili's theory that it is a portrait of Francesco Maria della Rovere and that the picture is a commemorative allegory for his widowed duchess, but I do think that this pivotal figure is meant to look different in kind from its companions.[40]

In Marianne Koos's beautiful book on 'portraits of longing', we learn that the revolutionary contribution of Giorgionesque male portraits—giving substance to a spectrum of lyrical subjectivities modelled on the personae of Petrarch's vernacular poetry—was also the substrate for Titian's creation of a powerful new portrait style. Titian transformed the lyrical 'I' of Giorgionesque portraiture into a figure of masculinity congruent with Venetian patrician standards, fully 'modern' in its robust physical and emotional immediacy.[41] This immediacy, perfected by Titian throughout the 1520s in the portrayal of rising members of the Venetian intelligentsia and upper classes and the North Italian aristocracy, was then channelled into the creation of his armoured imperial portraits. But the decorum of the military portrayals depended precisely on a firm avoidance of the moody inwardness that had made the 'portraits of longing' vibrant. The *Allegory*'s worried looking and partially disarmed warrior very obviously subverts the decorum of Titian's armoured portraits, much more so than the fully armed 'commander' in the painting's under-drawing (who also appears to be a younger man; Figure 3.9).

Koos provides ample documentation regarding the crisis of self-representation faced by educated young patricians who mastered new forms of vernacular eloquence, along with experiencing the allure of a secular version of the eremitical *vita solitaria*, dedicated to scholarship and learned friendships. In Venice, even legitimate religious vocations might be in conflict with patrician political duties. But most problematic was the Petrarchan model of poetic self-creation, which amalgamated the richest possible representation of the lover's 'martyrdoms' with a bold bid for worldly glory supported by the power of literary artifice. Portraits of yearning young men, such as the *Portrait of an Archer* in Edinburgh tentatively ascribed to Giorgione, conform to a model of amorous self-absorption that directly

40 Gentili, *Tiziano*, p. 147. Since the Louvre warrior resembles none of the extant portraits of the Duke of Urbino (including Titian's), Gentili's suggestion has little traction.

41 Koos, *Bildnisse des Begehrens*, and especially chs. II and V.

3.9. Left: Titian, *Allegory of Marriage* (detail: the male protagonist), c. 1530/5, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: Daniel M. Unger. Right: Under-drawing of Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* (detail), c. 1530, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

challenged the Venetian civic discourse of patrician male responsibility.[42] As Koos has indicated, these feminized youths are often depicted with martial attributes (arrows and other edged weapons and armour) that are metaphors of both amorous vulnerability and seduction. The archer is armed to hunt the beloved, his breast shielded from love's darts: his shooting hand (with its fingerless glove) is mirrored by the polished breastplate, where it evokes Laura's mirror, which turned her into a new Narcissus, short-circuiting Petrarch's praises, deflecting the impact of his gaze.

It is no surprise that in Cinquecento Italy (but especially in Venice), the older man who aspires to the role of Petrarchan lover (or lover *tout court*) is an object of ridicule at best, moral opprobrium at worst.[43] Youth can be forgiven its ardours, but the *età matura* calls for gravity and self-restraint. Among the milder satirical

42 See https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/5535/portrait-archer; Koos, *Bildnisse des Begehrens*, pp. 176–206, 323–361, and especially 187–200, on the symbolism of the metallic breastplate.
43 See Koos, *Bildnisse des Begehrens*, pp. 216–228 and related notes on the indecorousness of loving in 'old' age.

3.10. Giovanni Cariani, *Seduction* (*Old Man and Young Woman*), c. 1515/16, St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, © Photo: HIP/Art Resource, NY.

renderings of an old man courting, Cariani's painting of a 'mismatched couple' (Figure 3.10) depicts the beloved's compliance as secured by a financial transaction, and mockingly editorializes about her real feelings (or those of the conventional viewer) with a grimacing architectural grotesque in the shadows behind her.[44]

All this is to say that in the Louvre *Allegory*, Titian, a practiced juggler of genres, may have been revisiting the (in principle outmoded) legacy of Giorgionesque 'portraits of the lover', and fabricating a poetic identity for his portrait subject that acknowledges the sitter's maturity and social vulnerabilities. In this reading, the torso garbed in armour shields the sitter's heart from social censure's 'slings

44 Cariani's painting is an evident thematic and formal precursor for Titian's (traces of a Cupid figure perched atop the oculus in the background place the whole image 'under the regard of Amor', and the convex metallic object—mirror or sphere?—in the young woman's hands is a suggestive analogue to the *Allegory*'s glass sphere).

and arrows'—armour that is not needed as protection from Cupid's 'reversed' arrows, but brightly reflects the sitter's *impresa*, his amorous 'intentions' back at the world: the articulated left shoulder piece, in particular, hauntingly mirrors the impassioned face of Cupid's adult companion. The armour's prominent highlight aims a luminous trail towards the shadowed hemisphere of the crystal ball, where it is reflected (Plate 7). The ball, in turn, reflects the viewer's space (or rather, its implied light source) in the large highlight that shines between Venus's extended thumbs. The subtle—but central—reflections in the painted image ultimately target the picture's viewer and implicitly urge that he or she take up a position as sympathetic witness to the lover's vision. I have no idea what Titian's actual message might have been, but according to my own fanciful hypothesis, it would start with: 'A man may love nobly in his *età matura*'.[45]

I remarked earlier on the shift in emphasis from touch to vision in the interaction between the little Cupid and the solemn Venus. The contrasting relationship between the under-drawing's commander and his Venus (who are adjacent without touching) is likewise reversed in the painting's 'mature lover' and *his* Venus, where the turn of his head is accompanied by the raising of his left hand to cup her left shoulder and the top of her breast. The gesture requires him to intimately brace his left wrist on her left forearm, the two left hands crossing to make a winged shape. I am struck by Titian's subtle adjustment of Venus's chemise, which in the under-drawing had left the tops of both of her breasts bare. In the painting, her right breast is entirely bare, but the left is 'protected' from the man's direct touch by the neckline raised diagonally across her left shoulder. Comparable to those religious images where the Christ Child's flesh is veiled from a saint's or even the Virgin's direct touch (Figure 3.11), the interposition of a cloth barrier strongly implies that we are witnessing a gesture of worship on this pensive lover's part. His touch, emerging from translucent shadow, is 'reversed' by that of Cupid's ravishing companion (Panofsky's 'Fidelity'), who splays her fully illuminated right hand over her own bare throat and the sky-blue scarf that drapes across her upper torso.

45 Beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, Paris Bordone, produced several half-length Mars/Venus/Cupid paintings that revisit the Louvre *Allegory*'s major components and include secondary figures akin to the 'Fidelity'. Two of these from c. 1560—apparent pendants—are in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna: in one (*Allegorie* [*Mars, Venus, Victoria und Cupido*]; Gemäldegalerie, Inv. No. 120), a youthful Mars in full armour, but with his hands bare, shares with Venus the roses proffered by Cupid (see http://www.khm.at/de/object/f90f2aca5c/); the other (*Allegorie* [*Mars, Venus, Flora und Cupido*]; Gemäldegalerie, Inv. No. 69) is closer in theme to the Louvre *Allegory*: 'Mars', a distinctively older warrior whose armour is partially removed to bare his arms, and partially veiled with a rose-coloured tunic, emphatically holds the bow and arrow away from a straining Cupid, even as Venus reclines against the warrior's helmet. This 'Mars', like the Louvre warrior, has the physiognomic specificity of a portrait: see http://www.khm.at/de/object/9c838d2e45/. As the mature lover displaying active mastery over Cupid's weapons (though Venus has power over his 'head'!), he seems to render explicit what is implied in the Louvre picture.

3.11. Titian, *Madonna of the Rabbit* (detail), 1520/30, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: RMN- Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

Invention as Subject, Invention as Process

In Paolo Pino's *Dialogue on Painting*, published in Venice in 1548 and written for the very circles that promoted Titian's 'poetic' fame, Fabio, the principal speaker, defines painting thus:

> The art of painting is the imitator of nature in its superficial aspects, and to better explain it, I will divide it in three parts [...] The first [...] is *disegno* (drawing), the second [...] is invention (*invenzione*), and the third is to be colouring [...] And because painting is proper poetry, that is, invention, which causes that to appear which does not exist, it will be suitable for us to apply some principles taken from those other poets who write [...][46]

In an echo of Book III of Alberti's *On Painting* (1435/6), Fabio specifies that *invenzione* is two-sided: painters adapt pre-existing *favole*, or more daringly, they invent (or find) their own. He then recommends for *invenzione* the literary principle of

46 Pino, *Dialogo di pittura*, ff. 16r–16v. Also see Alberti, *De pictura*, paragr. 53: 'Therefore I advise every painter to make himself very familiar with poets, rhetoricians, and with others similarly learned in letters, for these will give [him] new inventions, or will certainly aid in finely composing (*bello componere*) his [own] *storia*'.

'brevity' (*la brevità*), which is applicable to pictures in abridged formats such as the *Allegory of Marriage*. Brevity is both technical (avoiding elaborate under-drawings, which needlessly inflate the painter's labour) and compositional parsimony: 'It pleases me well if the subject is declared in few figures, adorning the works with various costumes, draperies, bindings, knot-work, friezes, veils, armour, and other whimsical and playful headwear, giving them such loveliness and gravity that the beholders are rendered full of admiration'. In the *Allegory*'s 'abbreviated' staging, the gratuitous-seeming embellishments—Venus's pearl-entwined braids and jewelled armlet, the scarves, the floral crowns, and the offerings—merge imperceptibly with the more evidently symbolic attributes: the lover's armour, Venus's crystal ball, and Cupid's bundled arrows and his wings.

In contrast to Lodovico Dolce's *Aretino* of 1557—which became a cornerstone of academic theory in the seventeenth century—Pino's dialogue appears to scramble the traditional rhetorical sequencing: there, invention (devising the work's thematic skeleton, its *favola*) stood at the origin of the work, followed by disposition (ordering its arguments), and finally elocution (elaborating its 'garment of style').[47] A closer reading reveals a different logic in Pino's sequencing of categories: he repeatedly conflates 'practice' with 'theory', the manual execution with the 'devising' of the painting, as if to convey their inseparability at the level of process. Pictorial 'invention' is not prior to drawing but originates together with it on the canvas and in the mind of the painter. When Pino's painter designs/draws his *favola*, he simultaneously undertakes mental operations, manual applications (including sketching in a range of media, also identified as 'inventions'), studio strategies (setting up models, controlling their lighting), and figural selections (grappling with the constraints of representational decorum). By placing 'Invention' after 'Drawing', the *Dialogo* suggests that it is not a prerequisite for *disegno*, but a different way of inflecting its operations. (By the same token, the *Dialogo*'s 'Colouring' echoes the precepts enunciated for 'Drawing' and 'Invention', with an atypical emphasis on 'practice', on manual facility, and on the managing of ambient illumination). When I questioned Panofsky's 'fanciful hypothesis' about the 'genetic' relationship between the *Allegory*'s under-drawing and its 'final' state, I—like most of the scholarship—accepted the premise of his interpretation (identifying a Mars/Venus pairing in the *Allegory*'s iconographic kernel, yet allowing that the work belongs to

47 *Dialogo della pittura di m. Ludovico Dolce intitolato L'Aretino*, ff. 22r ff. The *Aretino*'s 'parts of painting' are *inventione*, *disegno*, and *colorito*, discussed in that order. They implicitly assimilate design to rhetorical *dispositio*. The canonical ordering of 'parts' is presented in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, III.3. The theoretical assimilation of the first three parts of rhetoric with the three parts of painting was first fully realized in Book II of Alberti's *De pictura* of 1435/6.

the portrait genre); but I also tried to follow Pino's lead (and ultimately, Boccaccio's) in regarding the picture's invention as something occurring anew at each stage of the work's making and in the very encounter between the artwork and a beholder who is 'rendered full of admiration'.

In Titian's *Allegory*, a dazzling example of the 'imitation of nature in its superficial aspects', causing 'that to appear which does not exist' is offered at what I have called our vector into the scene in the figure of Cupid, whose sapphire- and silver-blue wing 'lifts' out from the canvas' bottom-right corner in a breathtaking display of variegated brush marks (Plate 8). These petalled strokes are visibly layered atop the picture's surface and over the melting chiaroscuro of the little messenger's shoulder. We are drawn to examine their mutually reinforcing illusions—the tenderly smooth epidermis and the feathers like an inky frost, like flecks of nacre, like overlapping blades—for how they help to engender Love itself—artful offspring of Venus and the painter's *fantasia*. In this role as the vector for Titian's invention, Cupid doubles as a *spiritello*, a sprite, his wings a figure for the airy substances (the many kinds of *spiritus*) that circulate between the bodily members, the organs of sense, and the cerebral gateway to the incorporeal soul.[48] In a continuous tradition from the Trecento to Titian's own day, air (*aria*) was the preferred term for an artist's personal style, the irreducible vehicle for the outward manifestation of his fantasy.[49] At the threshold to the *Allegory*, the poetic *invenzione* that thrills and unsettles me is Titian the *facitore* still lingering there, hiding in plain sight.

48 On the *spiritello* in Renaissance art, see Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto*. The Renaissance iconography of Cupid amalgamated classical prototypes with the personified images of 'pneumatic psychology' derived from the vernacular poetry of the High Middle Ages. See the important overview in Giorgio Agamben, *Stanze*, pp. 105–129.

49 On *spiritus* in the Renaissance discourse of artistic creation, see Michael Cole's 'The Demonic Arts and the Origin of the Medium', pp. 621–640, and especially 626–631, which discuss the representation of aerial substances (clouds, smoke, wind) as an index of 'possession' in depicted bodies and 'inspiration' in the maker of these illusions. Cole references Daniel P. Walker's *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* and the equally groundbreaking essays by Robert Klein, 'Spirito peregrino', pp. 32–64, and 'L'imagination comme vêtement de l'âme chez Marsile Ficin et Giordano Bruno', pp. 65–88; and David Summers' 'Aria II: The Union of Image and Artist as an Aesthetic Ideal in Renaissance Art', pp. 15–31. In terms of the vernacular poetic model proposed from the Trecento onwards, to the extent that the painter-poet's invention manifests in the distinctive form of his fictions (Boccaccio's *nuovo stile* is equally the *aria* of the painter's style), so this invention—regardless of 'overt' subject (and of client expectations)—also constitutes, *as* its subject, the generative give-and-take between painter and viewer.

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About the Author

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4. The Arms and Armour of Titian's *Allegory of Marriage*

Karen Watts

Abstract
This chapter demonstrates that a technical study of the arms and armour depicted in paintings can be a useful tool in iconographic interpretation. The armour in Titian's paintings—especially those of two of his commissioners, Alfonso d'Avalos and Francesco Maria I della Rovere—can reveal how patrons wished to be understood in a military capacity. The armour presented can also be shown to reference Roman as well as medieval topoi. A secondary theme is an analysis of the allegorical role of the Cupid figure. It is not possible to affirm the identity of the sitter in the *Allegory*, but a close look at Titian's armoured portraits and the military metaphors may lead to a better understanding of the painting.

Key Words: Armour, infantry, war, weapons, arrows, Francesco Maria I della Rovere

Introduction

The identification of the armoured man in Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* as Alfonso d'Avalos is controversial (Plate 6 and Figure 4.1).[1]

Alfonso III d'Avalos, Marquis of Vasto II and Marquis of Pescara VI (1502–1546), who was a commander in the army of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V,[2] also col-

1 Musée du Louvre, Paris. Titian, Italian, c. 1530/5. Inv. 754, H.: 1,23 m.; L.: 1,07 m. Provenance: unknown Spanish collection; King Charles I of England (1649); Jabach Everharderhard (1662); King Louis XIV; French royal and national collection. The Musée du Louvre currently catalogues the painting under different titles in two national museum websites: *Allégorie; dite d'Alphonse d'Avalos, marquis del Vasto* http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=22885 and also *Allégorie conjugale, dite à tort Allégorie d'Alphonse d'Avalos*. https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/joconde/000PE027119

2 Charles V (1500–1558). Holy Roman Emperor from 1519 and head of the House of Hapsburg. He was also King Charles I of Spain from 1516. His dominions included modern Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Burgundy, and Spanish territories. His successful military campaigns were directed against France in Italy (Battle of Pavia, 1525, where the French king Francis I was captured); Suleyman the Magnificent of

Unger, D.M. (ed.), *Titian's* Allegory of Marriage*: New Approaches*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022. DOI 10.5117/9789463729536_CH04

4.1. Left: Titian, *Allegory of Marriage* (Detail of the armoured man), c. 1530/5, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: Daniel M. Unger. Right: Michel Natalis, *Allegory in Honour of Alfonso d'Avalos* (engraving of Titian, detail of the armoured man), c. 1626/68, London, British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

lected art, wrote poetry and prose and commissioned paintings from Titian. The identification of Alfonso d'Avalos as the major male protagonist in the *Allegory of Marriage* was current by the seventeenth century.[3] An examination of his military career and reputation may suggest the reason he has long been considered the subject of the painting. Whilst the identity of the armoured man in the *Allegory* is

the Ottoman Empire (conquest of Tunis, 1535); and the Protestant Reformation (Battle of Mühlberg, 1547, against the Schmalkaldic League).

3 Numerous copies were made and circulated, both in oil and print form. One of the earliest was probably copied from the original when it was in the British Royal Collection: *The Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos*, copy after Titian by Michael Cross (Miguel de la Cruz), Spanish, c. 1625/49, Royal Collection, England. Inv. RCIN 402663

4.2. Left: Titian, *Charles V at the Battle of Mühlberg*, 1548, Madrid, Museo del Prado, © Photo: Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Right: Desiderius Helmschmied, The surviving 'Mühlberg' armour of Charles V, 1544, Madrid, Real Armeria. © Photo: Madrid, Patrimonio Nacional.

not easily affirmed, there is a second possible candidate in the person of another military general, Francesco Maria I della Rovere, Duke of Urbino.

This chapter focuses on analyses of the armour in Titian's portraits and how a man in armour would have been interpreted by a contemporary viewer. With even a few visible elements, a technical analysis of the armour in the *Allegory of Marriage* enables the reconstruction of the rest of the armour that is not shown or is obscured. It is important to be able to read the armour elements that are present and those that are clearly implied. A closer examination of the technical composition of the armour indicates whether a military battle armour is to be worn for foot combat or a cavalry charge.

There is a strong interrelationship between armour and art, and the study of both enriches the study of each. This is dependent on the understanding and correct interpretation of armour by the artist. Some artists, such as Mantegna and Dosso Dossi, as well as Titian, excelled at portraying armour.[4] At a court preoccupied with knightly and military matters, an artist able to produce accurate and skilful portrayals of armour and weapons would have been greatly appreciated. Titian

4 Bridgeman and Watts, 'Armour, Weapons, and Dress in Four Paintings by Dosso Dossi', pp. 20–27.

depicted his patrons' real armours and those that have survived can be compared with the paintings.[5] For example, such a correspondence is reflected in his portrait of Charles V at the battle of Mühlberg in 1544 (Figure 4.2), an unusual commemorative battle painting as neither a battle nor soldiers is shown, the successful campaign symbolized by the sole figure of the emperor in armour. Titian painted the actual armour worn by Charles V at the battle,[6] which has survived, and a close comparison shows how accurately he depicted it.[7] A contemporary sixteenth- and seventeenth-century viewer would have been familiar with militaria and capable of interpreting the nuanced differences between armour for cavalry and infantry.

Technical Description of Armour and How It Functions

Armour is divided into three categories: tournament, parade, and war. Tournament armour can generally be recognized by the extra reinforcing plates over a basic armour for jousting, whilst for foot combat it is symmetrical on a vertical axis. Parade armour is highly decorated, often with bold embossed or repoussé elements and fine inlay work, which might impede the use of a weapon in close combat. War armour, also known as field armour, is often plain with highly polished steel. It is this third category that is considered in the pages that follow.

Italian armour is known for its rounded smooth forms from the fifteenth century and repoussé work by the mid-sixteenth century. The greatest of the Italian armourers were members of the Negroli family led by Filippo Negroli.[8] Milan became the most important centre for Italian manufacture with a reputation for the production of armour of high quality. Milanese armourers exported widely throughout western and southern Europe. The armourers were organized in large

5 In 1540 Titian received a pension from Alfonso d'Avalos and an annuity of 200 crowns (later increased) from the treasury of Milan by Charles V. He was strongly associated with Venice. Not all artists could paint physiognomies or armours accurately, but Titian fully understood both and painted them accurately.

6 Charles V, suffering from gout, observed rather than actively participated in the battle on horseback.

7 'Mühlberg' armour of Charles V by Desiderius Helmschmied, Augsburg, 1544. Real Armeria, Madrid, Inv. A.165, 182, 184. *Charles V at the Battle of Mühlberg,* Titian, Italian, 1548. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Inv. P000410. It is decorated with distinctive etching and gilding that uniquely identifies the armour.

8 The workshop headed by Filippo Negroli (c. 1510–1579) eventually included four brothers and their cousins. At first, Filippo worked alone and then with his brothers. The family worked together until the end of 1551. Between 1545 and 1547, Francesco Negroli left the workshop by order of Emperor Charles V and followed him on his military campaigns. Although the workshop was based in Milan, Giovanni Pietro Negroli was its representative in Paris, where he sold the armours and other Italian imports. Another brother, Giuseppe Negroli, travelled between Milan and Paris: Pyhrr, Godoy, and Boccia, *Heroic Armour of the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 40–41.

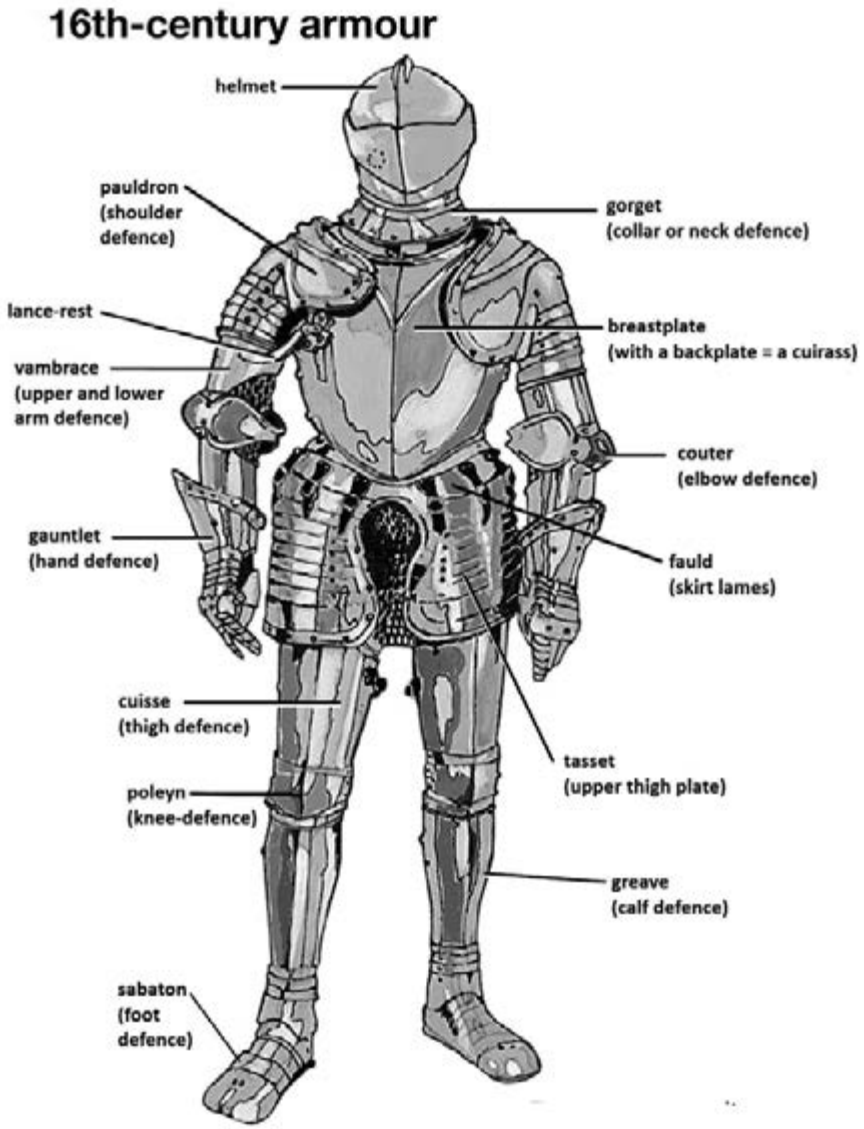
commercial companies, there was no restriction as to the number of employees and apprentices, and, above all, there was a high degree of specialization. Italian armour can be dated to within a ten-year period by an analysis of the construction and form.

A suit of armour is an articulated carapace. Made of steel, carburized iron, it had to accommodate two conflicting requirements—maximum protection and maximum mobility. The idea that a man in armour could barely move and indeed be unable to get up if knocked down is a fallacy. No man would wear a defensive garment if it made him an easy target. He had to be able to move freely. It was considered a demonstration of a knight's fitness that he could stand beside a horse in full armour and leap straight onto the saddle.[9] One known training method involved climbing a sloping ladder, hand over hand wearing full mail armour.

Until the fourteenth century, the main form of body armour was the mail shirt or hauberk worn over a linen shirt. It comprised interlocking links riveted together. Mail was a flexible defence but was a heavy sagging weight on the shoulders. It continued to be favoured, but increasingly with shorter sleeves and length to alleviate the weight. Textile or hardened leather could be worn over the mail for additional protection but at the end of the fourteenth century, these were replaced by steel plate armour worn over the mail.[10] By the mid-fifteenth century the head, the entire torso, and the limbs were protected by steel plates of varying sizes. The plates were shaped around the body with the difficulty of needing to link to each other, allowing mobility without exposing a gap. Large plates and small ones called lames overlapped each other and were connected by rivets and leathers straps. The direction of the overlap of the lames was carefully conceived to allow full articulation. All the parts of an armour were designed to move in synchronization with the wearer's muscles. A full suit of armour from its largest plates (a breastplate) down to the smallest lames (finger-scales of a gauntlet)

9 This was well known in the sixteenth century. Shakespeare, describing the young Prince Henry: *I saw young Harry, with his beaver on, his cuisses on his thighs, gallantly armed rise from the ground like feathered Mercury and vault into his seat, it was as if the angels had dropped down from the heavens to turn and wind a fiery Pegasus and witch the world with noble horsemanship*: *Henry IV,* Part 1, Act 4, Scene 1, Lines 104–106. A late sixteenth-century audience would have known that Henry leaping fully armed onto his horse was proof of a fit fighting man. This is a crucial point. Hearing this description of Henry, Hotspur suddenly realizes that he has erred, and the audience knows that Hotspur is doomed.

10 Medieval steel was a carburized iron. Armourers, like tailors, began with patterns and measurements. Every suit of armour was made to measure. The steel plates were cut and cold hammered but to shape the piece, it was necessary to work hot. The crystalline structure of steel becomes malleable with hot work and hardened with cold work. When it was taken out of the forge, the armour was black and rough. The plates were then planished to remove hammer marks, leaving a smooth surface and then began the even more laborious work of polishing. Finally, the surface was bright, and this was called 'white' armour. The surfaces could subsequently be coloured and decorated.



4.3. Nomenclature of armour parts. © Photo: Karen Watts.

could comprise more than 170 separate elements (Figure 4.3). These elements were joined together into parts, such as the arm-defence, the shoulder-defence, the neck defence, the backplate, the breastplate, etc., and there is a precise technical term for each part.

A common and continuing misconception is that battle armour was heavy. This is not so. An armour for war in the sixteenth century weighed only about 20

kg.[11] Significantly, even that was distributed over the body so that no single point bore all the weight. But wearing armour was not without its challenges. A notable problem was overheating. Some pieces were lined, and the textile underwear was padded. From the fifteenth to the sixteenth century, an arming doublet with mail was often worn under the plate armour. So, there were several layers of protection: textiles, mail, and steel. The whole offered good protection but with a serious risk of dehydration. Although as I noted above that war armour was often plain, the finer-quality war armours of commanders were often decorated with etching and even gilding. Decoration was expensive and was a mark of the owner's wealth. Etched decoration was mostly confined to the borders of the main plates. The edges of the articulating lames could be decoratively cut or scalloped. A detailed examination of the decoration is often a determining factor in distinguishing among different armours.

The Arms and Armour Depicted in the *Allegory of Marriage*

The armour depicted in the *Allegory of Marriage* is a field armour for war.[12] Despite the present darkened aspect, it was made of mirror bright polished steel,[13] which is evident by the fact that it reflects both of the female faces.

The man presents his left profile. Five parts of his armour can be seen: a mail shirt, a gorget (collar), a breastplate, a backplate, and a pauldron (shoulder defence). The sequence of dressing can be seen. The mail shirt (also known as a hauberk) is shown worn under the plate armour and over a red pourpoint (quilted and padded doublet).[14] The close-fitting riveted links of the mail shirt can be seen on the upper arm and armpit. Alternatively, full mail sleeves could have been worn, extending to the wrists, but this is clearly a mail shirt that would have covered only his torso and upper arms and during that period probably descended to the lower thighs.[15]

11 A modern soldier is trained to carry a backpack of 36 kg and indeed to run with it. In the sixteenth century, a 20-kg armour would not have been considered heavy or indeed cumbersome to wear.

12 The left and right sides of the armour are described as worn, not as seen in the left and right side of the painting.

13 A suit of armour was also known as a 'harness'.

14 The pourpoint is not an arming doublet, as otherwise a pair of points (laces) would be visible on the upper arm.

15 Mantegna, *Madonna della Vittoria*, c. 1495/6, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Inv. 369. The painting was commissioned by Francesco II Gonzaga (1466–1519) to commemorate the doubtful victory over the French troops of Charles VIII at Fornovo, near Parma, 6 July 1495. A close examination of the kneeling donor in the lower left of the painting shows Gonzaga wearing two mail shirts under plate armour covered by a textile pourpoint.

The gorget is the single most important part of a suit of armour, which cannot be worn without it. It is put on first and supports the breastplate, backplate, and arm defences, thus distributing the weight away from a single pressure on the shoulder. Constructed in two parts, it is hinged on one side and secured around the neck on the other. Each part comprises multiple lames that are joined together by rivets at either end of each one. The painting shows a vertical line of these rivets on the left-rear part of the gorget. These lames give flexibility and allow the neck and head to move freely without discomfort as is evident in the painting as the figure's head is turned fully to the left.

A breastplate cannot be worn without a backplate,[16] and both are placed over the lower part of the gorget. They are buckled to each other by a strap over each shoulder of which that on the left can be seen. With what can be seen, it is possible to reconstruct the whole. The cuirass is also secured by a waist strap, because if it was only attached at the shoulders it would flap open. Below the waist, the breastplate would have a fauld (skirt lames) to which tassets (thigh plates) would have been attached. These constructional features would have been known and understood by a contemporary viewer of the painting even though they cannot be seen.

The pauldron (shoulder defence) is the most visible element of the armour in the painting. The left can be seen and the right one is interpreted. The pauldron comprises five lames that are secured by rivets, and the central plate overlaps those above and below. This arrangement allows the shoulder to flex and the arm to fully raise and rotate. The two lames below the central one are attached to it by two internal leather straps and a vertical row of rivets in slots, which allow the flexibility needed. The rivets for these can be seen in the painting. The lowest lame would have been secured under the armpit by a strap.

It is interesting to examine those parts of the armour that are not worn and not shown. It is impossible to know whether leg defences would have been worn. However, the absence of vambraces (arm defences) is particularly significant. A cavalryman would wear full armour with gauntlets and helmet. In portraits, the helmet is sometimes not worn so that the wearer can be identified but is often placed to one side. The absence of vambraces, gauntlets and a helmet in this painting signifies that the armoured man is shown as fighting on foot in a light armour. This is an infantry armour.

The Cupid in the *Allegory of Marriage*

The *Allegory of Marriage* shows another element of arms and armour, that of the *putto*, Cupid, or *amorino* who is carrying a sheaf of arrows bound together with

16 A breastplate and backplate joined together are called a cuirass.

the feather fletchings facing outermost (Plate 8).[17] The proportions of the arrows are those for an adult. The usual iconography of Cupid shows him carrying a single arrow (rather than a bundle) and a bow. However, we get a glimpse of another piece of his military equipment in the *Allegory*: the quiver worn slung over the boy's right shoulder and down to his left waist, which supports the identification of the figure as Cupid.

Two other paintings by Titian show a complete quiver. In *Mars, Venus and Amor* (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1530), Cupid is shown flying through the air with a single arrow in his right hand, the bow in his left, and the quiver suspended as in the *Allegory*.[18] A later Titian (c. 1550) entitled *Venus and Adonis* (Plate 5) shows Cupid with his bow and quiver above his head suspended in a tree.[19]

The Cupid figure has a second allegorical role. The *Allegory* also references a theme taken from the Middle Ages. Here Titian was referencing the squire who assists the knight. In portrayals dating from the thirteenth century to the Renaissance, a young boy is shown carrying his knight's equipment, often the helmet (Figures 4.4 and 4.5).[20] The telling point is that the boy in the *Allegory* is carrying not one arrow, which is his normal identifier as Cupid, but a bundle of military arrows for use in war.[21] It is important to distinguish a knight's page from a Renaissance servant. The page carrying the helmet is a medieval trope, which would have been recognized by a sixteenth-century viewer and was cleverly merged by Titian with the Cupid persona.

The association of a classical Roman putto with a modern-dress military figure is not unusual. In another portrait by Titian, *Portrait of a General*, a winged putto holds a parade helmet with an ornamental crest in a similar position, looking up to an unidentified armed man dressed in a contemporary brigandine and mail sleeves and holding a spear (Kassel, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Schloss Wilhelmshöhe.).[22]

17 Complete arrows of this type can be seen in representations of Saint Sebastian, e.g., in the painting by Andrea Mantegna, c. 1480, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Inv. R.F.1766.

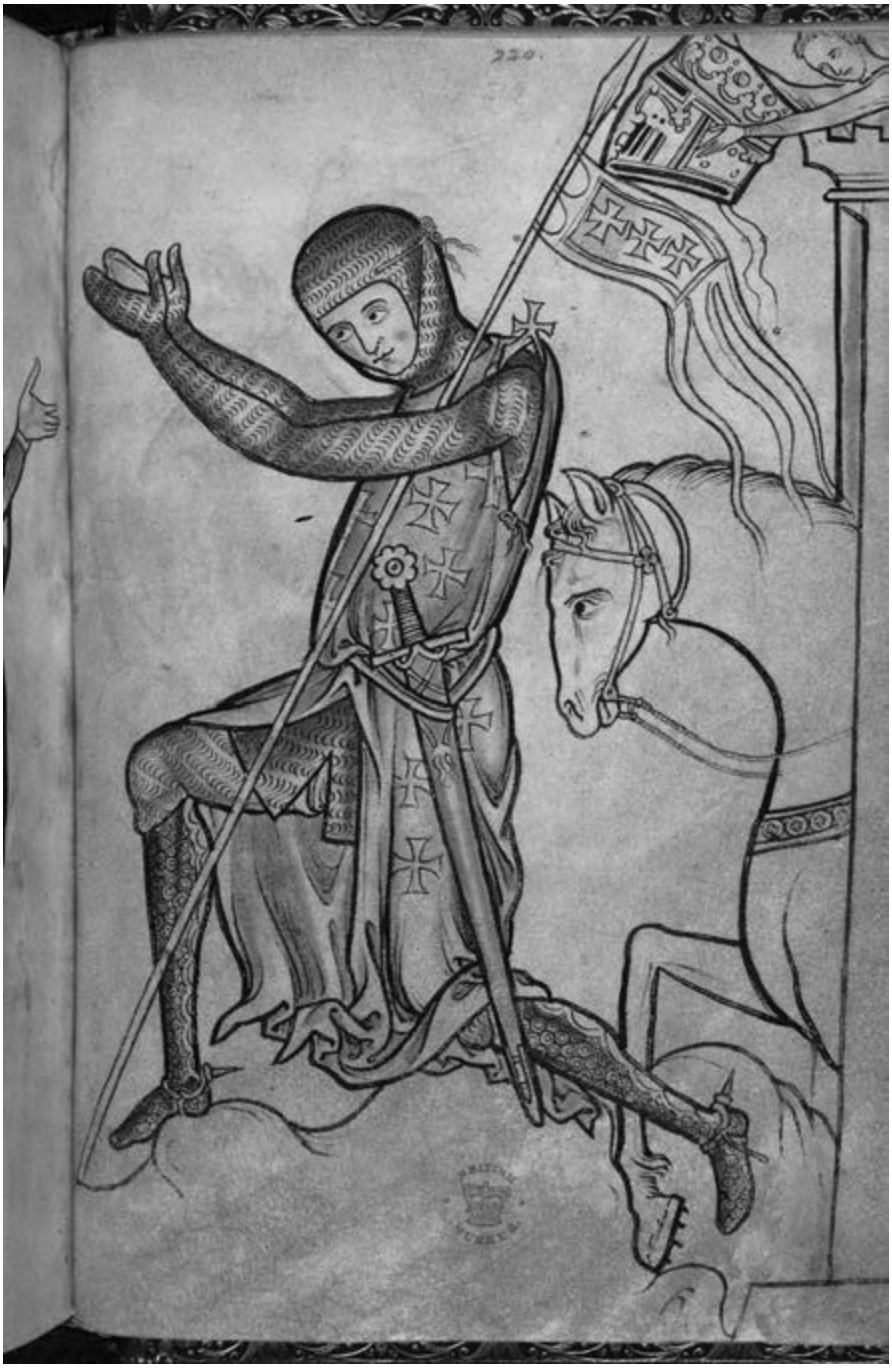
18 Titian, *Mars, Venus and Amor*, c. 1530, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Inv. GG. 13.

19 Titian, *Venus and Adonis*, c. 1550, Metropolitan Museum, New York, 49.7.16.

20 *Kneeling Knight*, Westminster Psalter, English, c. 1200. British Library, London. Inv. MS Royal 2 A XXII, and Vittore Carpaccio, *Young Knight in a Landscape*, c. 1505, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid. Inv. no. 82 (1935.3).

21 Arrows are another signifier of infantry combat as European archers always fought on foot.

22 *Portrait of a General*, Titian, Italian, c. 1552. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Schloss Wilhelmshöhe, Kassel. Inv. GK 488. The sitter has been identified as Giovanni Francesco d'Acquaviva d'Aragona, Duke of Atri: Wethey and Wethey, 'Titian: Two Portraits of Noblemen in Armor', pp. 76–96.



4.4. *Kneeling Knight*, Westminster Psalter, English, c. 1200, London, British Library. Inv. MS Royal 2 A XXII. © Photo: British Library Board.

4.5. Vittore Carpaccio, *Young Knight in a Landscape*, c. 1505, Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, © Photo: Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

The Military Career of Alfonso d'Avalos (1502–1546)

Alfonso III d'Avalos (1502–1546), Marquis of Vasto and Pescara, was a military commander in the army of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.[23] He conformed to Castiglione's image of a Renaissance courtier—literate, courteous in every sense, socially aware whilst displaying all the qualities of a military man. He collected art, wrote poetry and prose, and even appeared as the military saviour of the Italian peninsula in a sixteenth-century epic poem. He was also an important patron of the visual arts. Gaspare De Caro wrote a judicious study of his life.[24]

Born in Ischia, an island in the Gulf of Naples, on 25 May 1502, to one of the most illustrious houses in the Kingdom of Naples, which had its origins in Castille,[25] Alfonso d'Avalos was the son of Iñigo II d'Avalos, Marquis of Vasto, and Laura Sanseverino.[26] His older cousin Ferdinando Francesco d'Avalos, Marquis of Pescara V (1489–1525), mentored his early military career.[27]

At the Battle of Pavia (24 February 1525), d'Avalos commanded the infantry vanguard of the imperial army, made up of 1500 lansquenets and as many arquebusiers. With these forces, he breached a wall in the park of Mirabello, attacked the left wing of the opposing side, and then valiantly mounted a defence against the French led by King Francis I himself, and managed to hold out until the bulk of the imperial army arrived and ended the battle. For these undertakings, at the request of his cousin, Charles V appointed d'Avalos captain-general of all the infantry of the imperial army in Italy (25 November 1525), which represented the first major advance in his career.

Alfonso d'Avalos took an active part in the Hapsburg-Valois Italian Wars. In 1529 he led a force of 5000 Spanish infantrymen to Tuscany in the war for the de' Medici

23 The shortened version of his name is variously cited as Alfonso III or Alfonso II. The full title is Alfonso III d'Avalos, Marquis of Vasto II and Marquis of Pescara VI. He was the third of the d'Avalos family that was ennobled by Alfonso V d'Aragon. The first was Iñigo I (1414–1484), whose eldest son Alfonso (1465–1495) was the second, but whose younger son Iñigo II (1467–1504) was the first Marquis of Vasto. The son of Inigo II is our Alfonso, who inherited both III of the name from his uncle and II of Marquis of Vasto from his father. He inherited Pescara from his cousin Ferdinando Francesco d'Avalos.

24 Gaspare De Caro, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani,* Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, vol. 4, 1962. https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/avalos-alfonso-d-marchese-del-vasto_(Dizionario-Biografico). In Italian with a good bibliography of primary and secondary biographical sources.

25 In 1523 he married María de Aragón (1503–1568), daughter of Fernando de Aragón, Duke of Montalto. They had five children, including Francesco Ferdinando d'Avalos d'Aquino, Marquis of Pescara VII and Marquis of Vasto III (1531–1571), who is portrayed in the portrait with his father, discussed below.

26 *Dizionario biografico.* Includes sources and bibliographical references.

27 Also known as Ferrante Francesco d'Avalos: *Dizionario biografico.* There is a popular misconception that the biography *La Vita del Marchese di Pescara* by Paolo Giovio (1483–1552) is of Alfonso d'Avalos, whereas it is, in fact, of this cousin.

restoration in Florence, distinguishing himself by conquering Cortona (1529), Prato (1530), and Empoli (1530), which he sacked.

When Charles V organized his great expedition against Tunis in 1535, he entrusted the venture to d'Avalos. In direct command of 25,000 infantry and 2000 Italian, German, and Spanish cavalry, this was one of d'Avalos's greatest military successes. His subsequent military career was less prestigious, and he had a candid and often acrimonious relationship with Charles V. Despite all his other interests, he was defined by his military career, which accounts for Titian portraying him in armour. He also had a close relationship with the artistic cognoscenti, was known as an admired patron and had several works dedicated to him.[28]

It is understandable that d'Avalos was suggested as the male protagonist in the *Allegory*. As noted, he rose through the ranks to become a noted general in Charles V's army. His patronage of Titian, Charles' court artist is attested through two portraits, which I discuss below. He conformed to the ideal of the Renaissance courtier as a man of culture, literate and skilled in oratory. He also understood the value of symbolic messages in art, which can be seen in the portraits that he is known to have commissioned.

Two Portraits of Alfonso d'Avalos by Titian

I now turn to two portraits of d'Avalos by Titian: *Alfonso d'Avalos, Marquis of Vasto, in Armour with a Page* (Plate 3)[29] and *Alfonso d'Avalos Addressing His Troops* (Plate 4).[30] In both of these paintings, aside from the physical and facial features, the depiction of the armour is significant, and its quality suggests rank and power. The page holding the helmet is an iconographic link to the knight of the Middle Ages. A study of these paintings assists in the interpretation of both the male figure in armour and Cupid in the *Allegory of Marriage*.

The first painting (Plate 3) appears to be a straightforward portrait and yet it has a metaphor that references the Middle Ages. Alphonso d'Avalos commissioned the portrait from Titian in early 1533, when he was captain-general of the imperial infantry in Italy. It portrays him in contemporary field armour with a young page apparently holding his helmet. He is wearing the collar of the chivalric order of the

28 Pietro Aretino dedicated the poems *Marfisa and Angelica* and the *Life of St. Catherine* to d'Avalos. Iacopo Nardi offered him his translation of Livy.

29 Inv. No. 2003.486. Oil on canvas, 110 × 80 cm. Painted in Bologna.

30 Alfonso d'Avalos also commissioned a painting of Mary Magdalene from Titian in 1531 as a gift for his cousin's wife, the poet Vittoria Colonna, who was particularly devoted to the saint. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, has a later version of it date c. 1555/65.

Golden Fleece, a signal honour and thus one prominently displayed, at his neck over his armour.[31]

His armour, which is seen to be of the finest quality, announces the wearer's wealth and status. Not simply polished steel, it is expensively heat-blued and gilded with bands of etched ornament, all decorated to match. The original colour was a peacock-blue which, together with the gleaming gold, was a favoured Renaissance decoration for the finest-quality armours.

In the sequence of dressing, he is wearing a linen shirt whose ruffle can be seen at the neck to protect against chafing. As no mail is visible at his neck, armpits, or wrists, he is not wearing a mail shirt. However, he has a well-shaped mail codpiece. The plate armour comprises a gorget over which is worn the cuirass with full fauld and tassets and pauldrons, all in a manner similar to the image in the Louvre *Allegory of Marriage*. The painting also evidences full vambraces, extending from the upper arms to the wrists and gauntlets. As no leg defences can be seen, they can only be inferred. Pendant from the pauldrons are rondels, round disks, to protect the armpits when the arm is raised holding a weapon. The right hand rests on the hilt of his sword, which is in a scabbard at his waist.

The small page in a full mail shirt appears to be holding the helmet up, which is a persistent error in interpretation for he is merely touching it. The man's own gauntleted hand is cradling the helmet. The fingertips of his gauntlet can clearly be seen in the space between the boy's chin and along his arm to his wrist. The helmet with its peak and open-faced form is of a type known as a burgonet. The inclusion of the page, who has no practical function as he is not actually holding the helmet, is interesting. Here again, Titian was referencing the medieval squire who assisted the knight. As I noted above, the Louvre *Allegory of Marriage* also portrays a medieval squire, his pose in profile and the placement of his arm are similar in the two paintings.

There is another message in the painting that would have been clearly understood by a contemporary viewer. The self-projection of d'Avalos is not simply as a general but rather quite specifically that of a leader in the infantry as clearly indicated by his armour. First, the helmet is not a fully enclosed cavalry helmet but is open for wide visibility in close combat on foot. The vambraces have additional tightly overlapping lames on the inner arm to block a blade. Finally, a major indicator is the absence of a lance-rest on the upper right of the breastplate for it is impossible

31 Elected 188th member at the 20th chapter at Tournai, December 1531. Charles V became Grandmaster of the Order at the age of nine and strongly supported the chivalric ideals of nobility and courage. This Burgundian order of chivalry was founded by Duke Philip the Good in 1430. After the death of the last duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold, the order passed to Maximilian I and thereby to the Hapsburg family. D'Avalos's son and grandson were later elected to the order by Philip II. Francesco Maria I della Rovere was not a member, but his son Guidobaldo II della Rovere was elected in 1559.

to couch a lance under the arm without a lance-rest. The lance is the principal identifier of the cavalryman, who would engage in a charge with the lance before close combat with a sword.

In the second painting (Plate 4),[32] d'Avalos is shown addressing his troops with a page in a medieval metaphor as in the first portrait',[33] who is his own son Francesco Ferdinando d'Avalos d'Aquino, Marquis of Pescara VII and Marquis of Vasto III (1530–1571).[34] The boy looks out toward the viewer, which suggests his importance as a recognizable figure. His father is wearing a complete sixteenth-century field armour, which was real and is portrayed accurately. Pietro Aretino, who saw the nearly completed painting in Titian's studio, wrote to d'Avalos describing it: 'The metal of this armour seems so real that it is impossible to distinguish between fiction and reality. The armour gleams and shines with so many dazzling reflections that it blinds those who contemplate it'.[35]

There is a particular significance in the choice of the boy's armour. Alfonso d'Avalos's son is, uniquely, wearing Roman style armour, the only figure that is anachronistic. This is a Renaissance *alla romana* element. There are extant parade armours made at this time that imitated in steel roman muscled cuirasses and leather boots. These were extraordinary feats of embossed metalworking by the armourers. The finest example of an *alla romana* armour is that of Duke Guidobaldo II della Rovere by Bartelommeo Campi of Pesaro (Figure 4.6).[36]

In this portrait of d'Avalos addressing his troops, the other figures are all wearing contemporary field armours. Prominently in the right foreground are two figures in white armours. One wears an open-faced helmet and the other is bare headed. The latter figure is raising a staff-weapon, which has a central position in the painting and represents the finest and the most aristocratic of all the staff-weapons—the

32 Inv. No. P000417. Oil on canvas, 223 cm × 165 cm. It is also known as *Alocución del marqués del Vasto a sus soldados* ('The Allocution of Marquis del Vasto to His Troops').

33 Titian used the same medieval metaphor with the portrait of Guidobaldo II della Rovere and his son Francesco Maria II, 1553. Private collection. He is presenting himself as a man who has achieved his power with the support of his armour, and the duke and his son are literally leaning on their armour.

34 He had a successful military career as commander-in-chief of the Spanish army in Lombardy and Piedmont, governor of the State of Milan, and viceroy of Sicily. *Dizionario biografico* includes sources and bibliographical references. There is a commemorative medal of him in parade armour and wearing the Order of the Golden Fleece by Annibale Fontana, Italian, c. 1560/70, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Inv. 36.110.9.

35 Letter, 20 November 1540. Cited by Gentili, *Titien*, pp. 171–175 and translated by K. Watts from the French edition: 'Le métal de cette armure semble si réel qu'il est impossible de distinguer entre fiction et réalité. Elle luit et brille de tant d'éblouissants reflets que le regard qui la contemple en est aveuglé'.

36 For example, the *all'antica* ('in the manner of the ancients') armour of Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, by Bartolomeo Campi of Pesaro, Italian, 1546. Reale Armeria, Madrid. Inv. 19000302, A.188. 'In the manner of the ancients' is a term used to describe works of art that sought to revive the style of the classical past, especially that of ancient Rome.

4.6. Bartolomeo Campi of Pesaro, Parade Armour *all'antica* ('in the manner of the ancients') of Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, 1546, Madrid, Real Armeria. © Photo: Madrid, Patrimonio Nacional.

poleaxe.[37] The fine gilt and etched decoration on this weapon may have rendered it recognizable as d'Avalos's personal poleaxe. It is the weapon for foot combat, *par excellence*. By itself, it represents infantry reinforced by the visual representation of the infantry in the background with raised pikes and even a halberd.

Alfonso d'Avalos, the dominant figure, is shown on a raised platform or *suggestus*. He is in full field armour, cloaked and holding a commander's baton and is without gauntlets so that his hand gesture is fully comprehensible. The stance is that of a Roman general with the right hand outstretched to indicate speech (*adlocutio*), the classic pose of a general exhorting his troops on the eve before a battle.[38]

The choice of the type and the quality of the armour is again significant. Unlike in the first portrait, d'Avalos is wearing a suit of full field armour for the heavy cavalry, as is evident from the enclosed helmet called a 'close helmet' held by his son.[39] It completely protects the head and the visor has a narrow slit for sight, allowing the wearer to focus forward on a distant galloping target. It is not designed for combat with a near opponent. Aside from the absence of gauntlets, the wearer is completely armoured from head to toe. The left hand holds his commander's baton. D'Avalos is shown here as the general in charge of the entire army, not just the infantry.

As befits the later date of the portrait, this is a later armour, which can be seen in the rounded breastplate that is dipping down to a deep-bellied form that would become a peascod shape by the end of the century. Another dating characteristic is the arm defences, where the pauldrons and vambraces are now united into a single constructional element, worn as if it were one long metal sleeve. The painting does not commemorate any of d'Avalos's famous military successes such as Pavia (1525) or Tunis (1535). Rather, it was expressly commissioned as a political statement addressed to Charles V and the municipality of Milan, and it drew attention to d'Avalos's eloquence, which served to put down a mutiny of the Spanish troops stationed in Lombardy.

Alfonso d'Avalos commissioned the painting from Titian in 1539 during a trip to Venice. He was then governor of Milan and commander of Charles V's army in Italy. When he was appointed governor of Milan in 1538, he found himself constricted

37 A poleaxe (axe-hammer) was staff-weapon with a long wooden shaft and a metal head whose length allowed the user to fight on foot from a distance and to be able to withstand a cavalry charge. By the early sixteenth century, the aristocracy was also using the weapon in tournaments. Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (grandfather of Charles V) favoured this weapon and commissioned books, notably *Freydal*, that show him in combat with such a weapon. It thus became a 'noble' weapon, signifying rank and position.

38 The pose is best represented in the Augustus *Prima Porta* statue of Augustus Caesar discovered in the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta in 1863. Rome, first century CE, Vatican. Inv. 2290.

39 There are two forms of this type of closed helmet, sometimes incorrectly used interchangeably. The armet has hinged cheekpieces whilst the closed helmet has all of the elements of the face-defence (visor and bevor) attached by a single pivot pin at either side of the face.

by Charles, and this painting was probably commissioned to show that he should be trusted. Faced with a military revolt by unpaid troops, d'Avalos addressed them and dramatically offered his own son as a guarantee and so defused the situation. The *adlocutio* also exemplified the loyalty of the troops to their commander, which would make the painting a reaffirmation of d'Avalos's position as the leader of the imperial army in Italy.

The first public exhibition of the painting was in Milan in 1541, the timing coinciding with Emperor Charles V's visit, which demonstrated d'Avalos's need to impress him. This accounts for the depiction in full heavy cavalry armour, while marking the importance of the infantry. He was general of both infantry and cavalry at this point and wished to highlight his supreme command. Satisfied with the result, d'Avalos granted Titian, who delivered the painting personally, an annual pension of 50 ducats.[40]

The painting seems to have been subsequently acquired by the Gonzaga family of Mantua. The earliest clear identification was in the royal collection of King Charles I of England. After he was executed in 1649, his collection was auctioned by the Commonwealth in 1651, and the painting was acquired by King Philip IV of Spain. In 1828 King Fernando VII ceded it to the collection of the Museo del Prado. The painting had suffered significant deterioration (it is said that Felipe IV obtained it at a reduced price) but a recent restoration has improved its appearance.[41] The English provenance is interesting as the Louvre *Allegory of Marriage* was also in King Charles I's collection.[42]

Both these portraits by Titian show Alfonso d'Avalos's close relationship with the court of Charles V. Both paintings reference the Middle Ages with the presentation of a chivalrous knight with his page and both reference Roman antiquity, which features are relevant in the analysis of the Louvre *Allegory*.

As I noted earlier, it is not possible to affirm that d'Avalos is the male protagonist in the *Allegory of Marriage*'. The armoured figure in that painting is clearly a professional military man who wanted to be seen as such. There are two other *condottiere* with strong military backgrounds who are known to have commissioned portraits from Titian and could be considered as the subject in the *Allegory of Marriage*: Federico II Gonzaga of Mantua and his uncle Alfonso I d'Este of Ferrara.

On 16 April 1529, Federico II Gonzaga, Marquis and first duke of Mantua, (1500–1540), apologized to his uncle Alfonso d'Este for retaining Titian when he should have been at the d'Este court at Ferrara: *perché ha conienzo un retratto*

40 Falomir Faus, *Tiziano*, p. 186.

41 Falomir Faus, *Tiziano*, p. 186.

42 A third Titian in the same collection was a portrait of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V with his hunting dog, which is now in the Prado. Inv. P000409.

mio qual molto desidero sii finito ('because he has started a portrait of me which I greatly desire to be finished'). Federico is wearing red hose and a doublet of blue velvet with gold embroidery; a costly gold and lapis lazuli rosary is hanging from his neck. He is resting his left hand on the pommel of his sword while the right, adorned with two precious rings, caresses a Maltese dog. The portrait has been related to Federico's matrimonial intentions in 1529.[43] Titian visited Mantua with Dosso Dossi in 1519 to see amongst other art, Mantegna's *Triumph of Caesar*, but he first met Gonzaga himself in 1523. The Duke admired Titian and described him in a letter to Vittoria Colonna as 'certainly the best painter now living', adding '*e tutto mio*' ('he is quite devoted to me').[44] Federico II Gonzaga (1500–1540) is known to have commissioned Titian to paint a second portrait, in full armour, in 1530. It may have been to commemorate his elevation to duke that year. That painting has not survived.[45]

Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara (1486–1534) had a renowned military career and was also a patron of poets, notably Ludovico Ariosto, and artists such as Titian and Dosso Dossi.[46] Vasari noted that Titian's first portrait of Alfonso d'Este, painted around 1523/5, had been admired by Michelangelo, who saw it in Ferrara in 1529. Later Alfonso gave the portrait to Charles V. (It is included in inventories of the Royal Palace in Madrid of 1666 and 1686, but there is no mention of it after the seventeenth century.) The original is no longer extant but it is known through copies.[47] Titian painted a second portrait of Alfonso in about 1534, which is also lost, but there is a copy in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

Francesco Maria I della Rovere, Duke of Urbino (1490–1538)

If it is considered necessary to identify the armoured man in the *Allegory of Marriage,* then Francesco Maria I della Rovere would be a better candidate. In any case, a technical analysis of his portrait is particularly relevant to the further interpretation of the armour in the *Allegory of Marriage*.

Francesco Maria I della Rovere (1490–1538) was captain-general of the Serenissima of Venice. The nephew of Pope Julius II, he led papal troops against Romagna. He was in the employ of Florence in 1522 and of Venice in 1523. Although he fought in

43 Portrait of Federico II Gonzaga, first duke of Mantua, Titian, Italian, 1529. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Inv. P000408.

44 Gronau, *Titian*, p. 81.

45 Gronau, *Titian*, p. 81.

46 Bridgeman and Watts, 'Armour, Weapons and Dress in Four Paintings by Dosso Dossi', pp. 20–27.

47 Portrait of Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, copy after lost original by Titian, Italian, late sixteenth century, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Inv. 27.56.

campaigns against the French in Lombardy, he took no part in the battle of Pavia or the sack of Rome. Significantly, della Rovere met Charles V in 1529. His status was such that he carried the sword with which Pope Clement VII knighted Charles just before the latter's coronation. Although Della Rovere served as a Venetian *condottiero*, Charles, who controlled Naples as well as Milan and Lombardy from 1530 when Italy ceased to be the scene of struggles between the pope and the emperor and dominion by the French, had respect for him. In February 1538, Charles V, Venice, and the papacy entered into an alliance against the Turks known as the Holy League. The land forces were to have been led by Francesco Maria della Rovere and the fleet by Andrea Doria, but the former died later in that year, probably of a virus. At his funeral he was 'dressed in a quilted doublet and hose of black satin under his inlaid armour' with several helmets on the catafalque as well as his batons of command.[48]

By 1533, Francesco Maria della Rovere was purchasing paintings from Titian via his envoy Gian Giacomo Leonardi and soon started commissioning portraits of himself.[49] Titian's portrait of della Rovere (Figure 4.7)[50] depicts a contemporary suit of armour with the elements that are not visible or missing in the *Allegory of Marriage*, which is interesting as it reveals details that would have been understood by a contemporary viewer. It is not precisely the same armour as shown in the *Allegory*. We can see small differences in the decoration, for example, in the decoratively scalloped subsidiary edges of the lames as well as the bold roped turns on the main edges, which distinguish one suit of armour from another. Della Rovere's armour also has finely etched borders but its construction is close in type and date to the armour in the *Allegory of Marriage*.

The della Rovere portrait shows a full field plate armour worn over an arming doublet with a mail codpiece. The bright rivets retaining the articulating lames on the gorget and pauldrons show the same construction as seen in the *Allegory of Marriage*. The cuirass has a fauld and tassets made of multiple lames protecting the thighs. The arm defences are complete and are in two parts: pauldrons and vambraces. The pauldrons have pendant disks called rondels that protect the armpit. Each vambrace extends from the upper arm to the wrist and is composed

48 Dennistoun, *Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino*, p. 73. The original and a contemporary copy are mentioned in the archives of Pesaro and Urbino.

49 A portrait of the duke in armour as Hannibal by Titian in 1534 is known from the archives of Pesaro and Urbino as an original and a copy. One or the other can possibly be identified as a painting reputedly looted by Napoleon's army, known to have been in the possession of the art dealer Julius H. Weitzner in 1960 in poor condition, which was restored and then sold at auction in 1987. Currently believed to be in an Italian private collection, it shows a bearded, moustached man in an *all'antica* ('in the manner of the ancients') armour comprising a muscle cuirass, plumed and jewelled crested sallet (helmet), a pavise (shield) decorated with a Medusa, and a sword belt and a sword.

50 *Francesco Maria I della Rovere, Duke of Urbino*, Titian, Italian, 1536/8. 114 cm. × 103 cm. le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence. Inv. 1890 n. 926.

4.7. Titian, *Francesco Maria I della Rovere, Duke of Urbino*, 1536/8, Florence, Gellerie degli Uffizi. © Photo: Ministero della Cultura, Gallerie degli Uffizi.

of a tube for the upper and lower arm (canon) that is attached by internal leather straps to a large winged couter (elbow defence). The gauntlets are fingered and have a leather glove inside. The helmet is a burgonet with an integral peak, hinged cheekpieces, and an ornamental griffin crest with an ostrich plume. A separate piece of armour in front of it resembles a lower jaw and indeed it was designed to transform the helmet from an open foot-combat helmet to a light cavalry one. Known as a bevor or lower face defence, it would have been worn wrapped around

the burgonet with a strap. A key diagnostic element is the folded-up lance-rest on the upper-right breastplate, below the rondel.[51]

The structural analysis of the armour in this painting shows that it could have been suitable for both infantry and light cavalry. For the latter use, vambraces, rondels, a lance-rest, and a bevor attached to the burgonet would have been worn. The absence of these elements in the *Allegory of Marriage* is a clear indication that the intention there was to show an armour used solely for fighting on foot. This would perhaps support an argument for a patron who favoured infantry combat or simply one who wished to project the image of a professional military man.

Among the personal identifiers of della Rovere in his portrait are his baton of command of Venice, with a gold baton of the papacy and a silver one of Florence displayed with the crested helmet, and between them we see an image of the della Rovere forked oak branch.

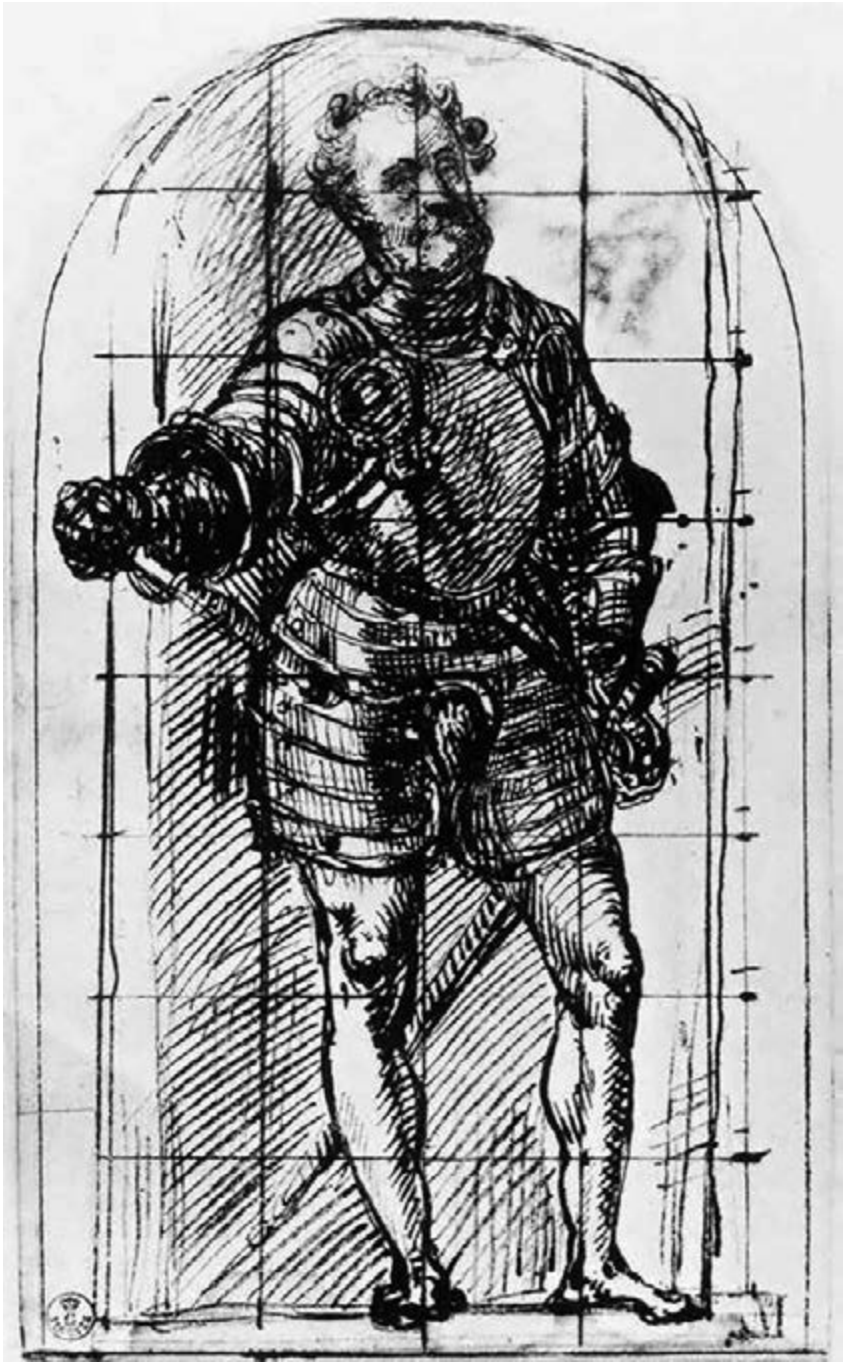
The painting was commissioned from Titian in 1636. According to Pietro Aretino, who knew the duke well, the painting is an accurate representation of both the duke and his armour. It was praised as an accurate portrait and was celebrated in a sonnet even before it was delivered to the duke. Pietro Aretino sent a copy of his sonnet (and another on the pendant portrait of della Rovere's wife, Eleonora Gonzaga) in a letter sent from Venice dated 7 November 1537. It is the letter itself that contains the best and most revealing description of the painting:

> Observing this portrait, I summoned Nature to bear witness and recognise that art had taken its place. Every wrinkle, every hair, every line proves it. The hues do not just show physical boldness; they bring out the virility of the soul. On the brightly polished surface of the armour is reflected the vermilion velvet placed behind as a background. What a superb effect is obtained by the plumes of the helmet which look real with their reflections on the shining breastplate of the noble general![52]

The armour itself was sent to Titian so that he could reproduce it accurately. He must have been commissioned early in the year 1536 as from letters dated July 1536, the duke was already concerned about the return of his armour. The dual portraits of the duke and his wife were delivered in April 1538, just a few months before della

51 As is discussed below, there are no leg defences shown with this armour. If they had been part of the armour, there would also have been a closed helmet or armet to convert it for use by heavy cavalry.

52 Cited by Gentili, *Titien*, p.162, n.78, and translated by K. Watts from the French edition: 'En le voyant, j'ai appelé la nature à témoigner et lui ai fait reconnaitre que l'art avait pris sa place. Chaque ride, chaque poil, chaque trait le prouve. Les couleurs ne montrent pas seulement l'audace physique; elles font apparaitre la virilité de l'âme. Sur la surface brillante de l'armure se reflète le vermillon du velours placé derrière comme fond. Quel effet superbe est obtenu par les plumes du casque qui ont l'air réel avec leurs reflets sur le brillant de la cuirasse du grand capitaine!'



4.8. Titian, Study for *Francesco Maria I della Rovere, Duke of Urbino*, c. 1536, Florence, Gellerie degli Uffizi, © Photo: Ministero della Cultura, Gallerie degli Uffizi.

Rovere died. It is likely that the painting was originally planned to be a full-length portrait and that Titian probably changed the format to a half figure to match the portrait of his wife in the pendant portrait.[53]

There is a preliminary drawing (Figure 4.8) that clearly shows the armour full-length but without legharness.[54] One of Titian's rare known surviving drawings for his painted portraits, it is a study of the armour. The delineation of the pose is clearly based on a model rather than on the duke himself, as the head bears little resemblance to his subject. The dual portraits reflect admirable virtues and the one of della Rovere suggests force, honour, chivalry, courage, and strength.

Although there are no surviving identifiable armours of Alfonso d'Avalos, there are two extant armours attributed to Francesco Maria I della Rovere. The armourer was the famed Italian, Filippo Negroli (1510–1579), and these were amongst his earliest known works. Indeed, Negroli's first signed work was a helmet made for della Rovere in 1532.[55] The second known armour, datable to the first half of the 1530s, was a mail and plate armour.[56] Both these armours were for parade rather than war. None of his war armours have survived.

Conclusion

A technical study of the arms and armour in paintings can clearly be a useful tool in iconographic interpretation. The armour in Titian paintings, especially those of Alfonso d'Avalos and Francesco Maria I della Rovere, reveal how a patron wished to be understood in terms of his military status. The armour portrayed in the *Allegory of Marriage* is a real armour for infantry, which may have been the reason that seventeenth-century authors identified the figure as a portrait of d'Avalos, who was well known from his other portraits. They failed to see Titian's sophistication in terms of a play between reality and allegory. The armour discussed here also referenced Roman as well as medieval topoi. It is not possible to affirm the identity of the armoured figure in the *Allegory of Marriage*, but a closer understanding

53 *Portrait of Eleonora Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino*, Titian, Italian, 1536/8, le Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. Inv. 1890 no. 919.

54 *Study for the Duke of Urbino*, Titian, Italian, c. 1536. Pen and ink on yellowed white paper, 237 mm × 141 mm. le Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

55 Pyhrr, Godoy, and Boccia, *Heroic Armour of the Italian Renaissance*, cat. no. 18, pp. 116–119. Negroli's second signed work was a matching helmet and shield for Charles V in 1533, commissioned as a result of the emperor's admiration for Duke Francesco's helmet.

56 Pyhrr, Godoy, and Boccia, *Heroic Armour of the Italian Renaissance*, cat. no. 19, pp. 120–124. The so-called 'Fame' or 'Batwing' Armour is now identified as having been made for Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, c. 1532/5. This armour was incorrectly identified as that of his father Francesco Maria I della Rovere in the earliest complete inventory of the della Rovere armoury of 1630.

of Titian's armoured portraits and the military metaphors may lead to a better understanding of this painting.

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5. '*Un disio sol d'eterna gloria e fama*': A Literary Approach to Titian's Allegory

Esthy Kravitz-Lurie

Abstract
In the early seventeenth century, Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* was interpreted as the *Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos*, the Marquis del Vasto. Yet, in modern times, scholars have agreed that the d'Avalos identification as the male protagonist in this painting is rather problematic. In this chapter, I argue that Titian's *Allegory* is a representation of a poet-soldier, probably inspired by the literary image of Julio in Angelo Poliziano's *Stanze* (1478), as well as by members of the military elite, d'Avalos's peers, whose commanders embraced the ethos of 'arms and letters' and whose poems often reflected a departure from a beloved.

Key Words: Titian, Alfonso d'Avalos, poet-soldier, Poliziano, *Le Stanze,* Vittoria Colonna.

In Titian's *Allegory of Marriage*, a man in armour is departing from his sad lady (Plate 1). He is leaving for war in gleaming armour that reflects two images: one of his lady, his muse of poetry, which is mirrored on his chest, and the image of Minerva, his guide in warfare, which seems to be mirrored on the other side of his shield (Plate 6).

Titian's departing warrior is a representation of a poet-soldier. Alfonso d'Avalos, the Marquis del Vasto, embodied this concept. He was a commander in the service of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and his frequent departures from his beloved wife, Maria d'Aragona, were documented in his poem *Anchor che col partire* ('Although in Leaving'), which was printed in 1547.[1] Despite his popularity, his story was not the exception, but rather the rule among his peers: the members of a military humanistic elite, who combined military careers with the study of the humanities

1 On the poem, see Lockwood, 'Text and Music in Rore's Madrigal', pp. 244–246.

Unger, D.M. (ed.), *Titian's* Allegory of Marriage*: New Approaches*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022. DOI 10.5117/9789463729536_CH05

and/or literary endeavours.[2] They were known for living by the ethos of 'arms and letters', a concept dealt with in Baldassare Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano*, published in Venice in 1528, where it was presented by the poet and clergyman, Pietro Bembo, who declared that arms and letters are equally important as noble accoutrements of the ideal courtier.[3] Bembo's personal relationship with Titian is discussed by Valery Rees in the Chapter 2 of the present book.

In this chapter, I interpret Titian's departing warrior as a representation of a poet-soldier by focusing on the literary image of Julio, the principal character in Poliziano's *Stanze*, who, guided by Cupid, Minerva, and Glory, turns from a poet into a soldier, leaving his muse behind and heading out for the joust. I suggest that Titian might have had Julio in mind when he depicted the *Allegory*'s male protagonist, who is leaving for war accompanied by Cupid, Minerva and Glory, the same characters that accompany Julio to the joust in the *Stanze*. Further, I argue that Titian's departing warrior was modelled on the standards represented in Titian's time by d'Avalos and his peers, who were constantly in pursuit of the virtue of excellence gained in battle. Finally, I show that the image of the sad lady in the *Allegory* was inspired by the women of this military strata, the wives and widows of Charles V's commanders, who endorsed their husbands' ethos, yet were left behind to fear the outcome of fortune and fate.

***

Le Stanze Comintiate per la Giostra del Magnifico Guiliano de Medici, printed in 1478, an epic poem written in the vernacular by the Florentine poet Angelo Poliziano, was a widely circulated text at the time that Titian painted the *Allegory*. Its heroes, Julio and his muse, the nymph Simonetta, were inspired by the real-life personalities of Giuliano de Medici (1453–1478) and the Genevan beauty Simonetta Cattaneo-Vespucci (1443–1476), the young wife of Marco Vespucci, cousin of the explorer and cartographer Amerigo Vespucci.[4] Poliziano wrote the poem to commemorate Giuliano's victory in the joust of 1475. Simonetta's premature death owing to an illness in 1476 and Giuliano's assassination in the Pazzi conspiracy two years later

2 Russell, 'Las armas contra las letras', p. 222. For more on the ethos of the perfect courtier, see Myoreli, 'La poesia aulica', pp. 351–360. Cruz, 'Arms versus Letters', p. 192; Curtius saw the glory of the Spanish Empire in the formula of *armas y letras*, claiming that 'nowhere else has the combination of the life of the muses and the life of the warrior ever been so brilliantly realized as in Spain's period of the florescence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries'. See Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 178; see also, Toscano, 'Tra corti e campi di battaglia'.

3 On the subject of 'arms and letters', see Pietro Bembo's dialogue in the first book of the Courtier, in *Castiglione*, *Il libro del* Cortegiano, I, 13–46; Albury, *Castiglione's Allegory,* pp. 64–66.

4 On the identification of Julio and Simonetta with Mars and Venus influenced by Marsilio Ficino, see Quint, *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano,* p. xx.

ended Poliziano's venture and the work was left unfinished. Jane Tylus noted that the poem's abrupt ending had frozen Julio's image for eternity as the young warrior who will forever be descending into the *campo* to do battle.[5] Titian's male protagonist seems to reflect this aspect, as he is a depiction neither of Julio nor of the real Giuliano de Medici,[6] but is rather a figure imaged on Poliziano's concept of a poet-soldier about to go off to war.

In a few passages in the first book of the *Stanze*, Julio is depicted as a poet. This aspect of his personality was mistakenly encouraged by Cupid, who annoyed with Julio's mocking the idea of love, made him fall for a beautiful nymph who appears before him in a grove where he went to hunt (*Stanze* I: 38–54). The encounter changes Julio's nature and from being a hunter and a man with free will, he becomes the prey, trapped by his own passions:

> Before you were the hunter of a wild creature;
> now a more beautiful creature has entangled you
> in her snares; before you were your own man,
> now you belong to Love. (*Stanze* I: 59)[7]

Julio's infatuation with the beautiful nymph is an inevitable stage in Cupid's plan to transform him into a warrior. According to David Quint, Poliziano's protagonist must enter the playground of Mars and Venus and master the game of Love and War in order to move from adolescence into adulthood.[8] Yet, once Julio falls for the nymph, he is in no hurry to become a warrior. According to Christina Storey: at the sight of her miraculous beauty, Julio refuses to give up his *innamoramento*, and this is what turns him into a poet.[9] Concerned with this unexpected turn, Cupid warns Venus that Julio is 'now following in his good brother's steps' (*Stanze* II: 10).[10]

5 Tylus, 'Epic's Endless Deferral', p. 84.

6 Dempsey stresses that the images of Poliziano's Julio and Simonetta cannot be disconnected from the real people, whose names and actions motivated his poem. According to Dempsey, Botticelli's imagery traditionally associated with the *Stanze*, reveals the symbolism of the poem, rather than the image of Giuliano de' Medici. Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto*, p. 157.

7 'Dianzi eri d'una fera cacciatore / piú bella fera or th'a ne' lacci involto / dianzi eri tuo, or se' fatto d'Amore' (*Stanze* I: 59). All the quotations from Poliziano's *Stanze* in English and Italian are taken from Quint, *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano*.

8 On Julio's progress from adolescence to adulthood, see Quint, *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano*, pp. xv–xx.

9 Storey, 'The Philosopher, the Poet, and the Fragment', p. 612. Farina associated a series of sonnets composed by Giuliano de' Medici on the death of a lady with Simonetta Vespucci: see Farina, *Simonetta*, pp. 117–125. On love as a domesticating force that weakens the epic hero, see Kravitz-Lurie, 'Hercules and Rinaldo', pp. 129, 132–133, 138–139.

10 'Ma 'l bel Iulio ch'a noi stato è ribello / e sol di Delia ha seguito el trionfo / or drieto all'orme del suo buon fratello / vien catenato innanzi al mio trionfo' (*Stanze* II: 10).

Poliziano figured Julio's brother, Laurel, by alluding to the image of Giuliano's brother, Lorenzo de'Medici, whose love for Lucrezia made him praise love in his poems rather than war:

> He has spread our praises throughout the world,
> never, never does he speak of anything else but
> love; while he could tell of your labour, Mars,
> the trumpets, arms, and fury of Bellona; yet he
> has wished to pen his paper only of us (of Love) and of
> that noble she, who spurs him on to write. (*Stanze* II: 8)[11]

Seeing her son's frustration, Venus interferes. She sends out her other cupid-sons, armed with bows and arrows to wound the noble young men of Florence (*Stanze* II: 16–18) and inflict them with 'a desire only for eternal glory and fame, which incites minds thus inflamed to virtue' (*Stanze* II: 19).[12] With the assistance of Pasithea (Relaxation), the wife of Hypnos (the god of sleep), she visits a dream on Julio to: 'Make him yearn to show his valour on the field' (*Stanze* II: 22).[13] In the dream, his muse is wearing Minerva's armour with the ferocious face of Gorgon (Medusa) on her breast plate. She has trapped and bound Cupid (Love) to Minerva's olive tree and broken all of his love-arrows (*Stanze* II: 27–28).

This dream is what finally convinces Julio to leave his beloved muse, who is interfering with his transformation into a warrior. Following the dream, Cupid convinces Julio that only the 'triumphal palm' achieved in battle will help him win back his beloved, who has turned against love (*Stanze* II: 31). When Julio awakes, History, Glory, and Poetry are there to assist him. Glory takes Minerva's armour from the muse and puts it on the Julio: 'She seemed to carry Julio off to the battlefield to gain victory; she seemed to strip the armour of Pallas from his lady and left her in her white gown' (*Stanze* II: 32).[14] After his first taste of combat: 'She entwined the olive and laurel around his head' (*Stanze* II: 33),[15] to mark his victorious return from his first encounter on the battlefield.

As Julio prepares for combat, Poliziano introduces his Stoic philosophy about forsaking love for the pursuit of virtue, which he contrives by the death of Julio's beloved

11 'Per tutto el mondo ha nostre laude sparte / mai d'altro mai se non d'amor ragiona / e potea dir le tue fatiche, o Marte / le trombe e l'arme, e 'l furor di Bellona/ ma volle sol di noi vergar le carte / e di quella gentil ch'a dir lo sprona' (*Stanze* II: 8).

12 'Un disio sol d'eterna gloria e fama / che le 'nfiammate menti a virtú chiama' (*Stanze* II: 19).

13 'Fa che e' mostri al bel Iulio tale imago / che 'l facci di mostrarsi al campo vago' (*Stanze* II: 22).

14 'Costei parea ch'ad acquistar vittoria / rapissi Iulio orribilmente in campo / e che l'arme di Palla alla sua donna / spogliassi, e lei lasciassi in bianca gonna' (*Stanze* II: 32).

15 'Quando era al fin del guerreggiar condutto / al campo gl'intrecciava oliva e lauro' (*Stanze* II: 33).

Colour Plates

Plate 1. Titian, *Allegory of Marriage*, oil on canvas, c. 1530/5, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: Daniel M. Unger.

Plate 2. Titian, *Allegory* (under-drawing), c. 1530/5, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

Plate 3. Titian, *Alfonso d'Avalos, Marquis of Vasto, in Armour with a Page*, 1533, Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, © Photo: Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

Plate 4. Titian, *Alfonso d'Avalos Addressing his Troops*, 1540/1, Madrid, Museo del Prado, © Photo: © Museo Nacional del Prado.

Plate 5. Titian, *Venus and Adonis*, Titian, c. 1550, New York, Metropolitan Museum, © Photo: Digital image courtesy of the Met's Open Access Program.

Plate 6. Titian, *Allegory of Marriage* (detail: the male protagonist), c. 1530/5, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: Daniel M. Unger.

Plate 7. Titian, *Allegory of Marriage* (detail: the orb), oil on canvas, c. 1530/5, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: Daniel M. Unger.

Plate 8. Titian, *Allegory of Marriage* (detail: Cupid), oil on canvas, c. 1530/5, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: Daniel M. Unger.

and her resurrection as Fortuna. Julio sees her gradually disappear: 'Enveloped in a sad cloud, cruelly taken from before his eyes' (*Stanze* II: 33).[16] He witnesses her merging into the image of Fortuna, which is described by Poliziano as an obscured spectacle, where: 'The air seemed to turn dark and the depths of the abyss to tremble; the heavens and the moon seemed to turn bloody' (*Stanze* II: 34).[17] The beloved's revival as Fortuna seems for a brief moment to please Julio: since as fortune she is no longer interfering with his destiny, but rather helping him to gain the warrior's virtues: 'He sees his nymph rise again, happy in the form of Fortune; […] he sees her govern his life, and make them both eternal through fame' (*Stanze* II: 34).[18]

Yet, Julio's satisfaction is short-lived, as Poliziano merges the concepts of love and fortune, denouncing both as obstacles in the warrior's path to victory. He exposes Fortuna's cruelty and instability (*Stanze* II: 35–36), expecting Julio to harden his heart against her advances:

> Happy he who pays no heed to her nor gives in
> to her heavy assaults, but like a rock that stands
> against the sea, or a tower that resists the north
> wind, awaits her blows with an unconcerned
> brow, always prepared for her changes!
> 'He depends only on himself, he trusts himself alone:
> not governed by chance, he governs chance'. (*Stanze* II: 37)[19]

Storey interprets this passage as '*virtu' vince fortuna*', assuring that at this stage of the poem, Julio had overcome both love and fortune in his pursuit of virtue.[20]

Having love and fortune removed from his path, Julio awakes the next day eager for combat and calls on Minerva for guidance (*Stanze* II: 41). He is now wearing Minerva's armour, which at his request, no longer carries the frightening face of Medusa, but reflects the image of his muse:

> If I saw enclosed in your armour the features
> of her who robs me of myself; if I saw the

16 'Vedea suo ninfa in trista nube avolta / dagli occhi crudelmente esserli tolta' (*Stanze* II: 33).

17 'L'aier tutta parea divenir bruna / e tremar tutto dello abisso il fondo' (*Stanze* II: 34).

18 'Poi vede lieta in forma di Fortuna / surger suo ninfa e rabbellirsi il mondo / e prender lei di sua vita governo / e lui con seco far per fama eterno' (*Stanze* II: 34).

19 'O felice colui che lei non cura / e che a' suoi gravi assalti non si arrende / ma come scoglio che incontro al mar dura / o torre che da Borea si difende / suo' colpi aspetta con fronte sicura / e sta sempre provisto a sua vicende! Da sé sol pende, e 'n se stesso si fida / né guidato è dal caso, anzi lui guida' (*Stanze* II: 37).

20 Storey, 'The Philosopher, the Poet and the Fragment', p. 613. For Poliziano's philosophy, see Branca, *Poliziano e l'umanesimo della parola,* p. 52 n. 3.

horrible face of Medusa make her so indomitable
against Love; if later my thoughts, confused by
trembling, became steady behind your shield; if
Love and you are calling me to great deeds,
show me the way, o goddess, to eternal fame. (*Stanze* II: 42)[21]

Once turned into a warrior, Julio acknowledges the role of his three helpers: Cupid (Love), Minerva, and Glory in his transition and declares his willingness to join them in combat. Despite the attempts of his beloved muse to interfere, Julio pleads for her sake—"make her humble"—as he pledges to adopt the standards of warfare espoused by his three helpers:

I accompany you, Love, Minerva, and Glory,
for your fire inflames my heart; from you I
hope to gain the lofty victory for I am all aflame
with your light; give me such aid that every
memory may be sealed with my eternal stamp,
and make her humble who now disdains us: for
yours is the standard I shall carry into the field. (*Stanze* II: 46)[22]

I suggest that Poliziano's verses were the inspiration for Titian's *Allegory* (Plate 1). The most conspicuous elements are the two reflections on the warrior's shield mentioned above. The reflection of Titian's sad lady seems to relate to the one of Julio's muse, mirrored on Minerva's armour, which he wears for the joust (*Stanze* II: 42). In line with this notion, Titian added an image of Minerva reflected on the other side of the shield, which is a deviation from the poem, where only Julio's beloved is seen on the shield. Yet it seems to indicate that Titian figured his departing warrior as a poet-soldier for whom his beloved is the inspiration for his poems and Minerva is the driving force for his excellence in the field.

Titian also seems to have borrowed the visual images of Julio's three assistants—Cupid, Minerva, and Glory—from the Stanze, who in the painting assume the same role by assisting the warrior to leave his lady. He depicted a helpful Cupid offering

21 'S'io vidi drento alle tue armi chiusa / la sembianza di lei che me a me fura / s'io vidi il volto orribil di Medusa / far lei contro ad Amor troppo esser dura / se poi mie mente dal tremor confusa / sotto il tuo schermo diventò secura / s'Amor con teco a grande opra mi chiama / mostrami il porto, o dea, d'eterna fama' (*Stanze* II: 42).

22 'Con voi men vengo, Amor Minerva e Gloria / ché 'l vostro foco tutto el cor m'avampa / da voi spero acquistar l'alta vittoria / ché tutto acceso son di vostra lampa / datemi aita sí ch'ogni memoria / segnar si possa di mia eterna stampa / e facci umil colei ch'or ne disdegna/ ch'io porterò di voi nel campo insegna' (*Stanze* II: 46).

the sad lady a bundle of broken arrows, shafts with no tips, which symbolize that love will no longer serve to keep her champion beside her. His image seems to reflect Cupid as Julio saw him in his dream, where the beloved had broken his arrows, an act that eventually eases Julio's departure from her (*Stanze* II: 27–28).

Titian's depiction of Glory as a blurred figure holding a basket with a branch of mountain laurel with red buds, seen through an open window, seems to hint at her role in the poem, where she comes 'to carry Julio off to the battlefield to gain victory' (*Stanze* II: 32). In the painting, the elusiveness of this figure, set outdoors, seems to suggest that she is passing by, and that Titian's warrior is about to follow her into his moment of victory. The content of her basket might suggest that her role is to crown the warrior, as in Poliziano's poem, where 'She entwined the olive and laurel around his head' (*Stanze* II: 33) after Julio's first taste of combat.

The painter also depicted Minerva addressing the beloved with her right hand on her heart, as if evoking the importance of her champion's departure. She is imaged as described in the *Stanze* without her armour, which Glory had given to Julio (*Stanze* II: 32).[23] A wreath made out of an olive branch entwined around Minerva's head might suggest the olive and laurel wreath in Glory's basket. Its placement seems to reinforce my contention that Titian's warrior is departing to war and will be worthy of this prize when he returns victorious.

Titian depicted the warrior's sad lady being drawn into the turbid orb of fortune on her lap, and she seems to merge with this object, as the beloved merges into the image of Fortuna in Poliziano's poem (*Stanze* II: 33–34). An earlier depiction of a female figure absorbed into a sphere was rendered by Giovanni Bellini (1430–1516). His *Allegoria della Malinconia* (or *Fortuna Incostante*) was painted on a wooden panel around 1490 (Figure 5.1) and is one of Bellini's *Four Allegories* displayed in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice. These were probably created as panels for a painted wooden chest owned by the painter Vincenzo Catena (c. 1480–1531) and are mentioned in his testament. Rona Goffen interpreted Bellini's female figure as Melancholia sailing in a rudderless boat holding Fortuna's globe on her lap.[24] Walter Friedlaender described her as the allegory of Fortuna Amoris or Incostanza, suggesting that this painting influenced Titian's *Allegory*, where

23 For a different interpretation of Cupid, Minerva, and Glory, described as Victory, Love, and Hymen, see *Crowe and Cavalcaselle, The Life and Times of Titian,* II, pp. 373–376. For an interpretation of these figures as Cupid, Vesta, and Hymen, see Friedlaender, 'The Domestication of Cupid', pp. 51–52. On these figures as Cupid, Faith, and Hope, see Panofsky, *Problems in Titian*, p. 127; Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 161–162.

24 According to Goffen, the Four Allegories are Melancholy, Truth, Perseverance, and Envy and were panels of a *restello* (chest), yet she doubts the association of these panels to the ones mention in Catena's testament. In Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini*, pp. 226–237.

5.1. Giovanni Bellini, *Fortune* (Melancholy), 1480/90, Venice, Galleria dell'Accademia, © Photo: G.A.VE Archivio fotografico, '*su concessione del Ministero della Cultura – Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia*'.

the sphere of fortune reflects either the possibility of danger or the instability of the marriage.[25]

Bellini's painting depicts a female figure seated in a rocking boat totally absorbed in a large blue sphere on her lap. Its power seems to influence the lady, making her oblivious to her children, the six little cupids that surround her. Two of them are taking the lead: one assisting her to balance the huge sphere, and the other is leading the way with his double flute. Another pair is reaching for their mother's lap, and a further two are floating in the dark water and seem to be in danger of drowning. Yet nothing of what they do draws the lady's attention, as she is fully absorbed in the sphere on her lap.

Bellini's depiction seems to have influenced Titian's sad lady, who is also absorbed in her orb of fortune, which symbolizes her lack of control over the dangers inherent in her husband's risky occupation (Plate 1).[26] The similarity between the two female figures suggests that Titian understood Bellini's lady as Melancholia, merging into the image of Fortuna by means of the sphere. He seems to have used this image to represent Poliziano's notion of this merging, replacing Bellini's blue sphere with a turbulent orb and using this obscure object of fortune to suggest the poet's description of the beloved as 'Enveloped in a sad cloud' and emerging into the image of Fortuna, as 'the air seemed to turn dark and the depths of the abyss to tremble' (*Stanze* II: 33–34).

To sum up, Titian's depiction of Julio's three helpers, Cupid, Minerva, and Glory, and his portrayal of a soldier leaving for war with the image of his muse reflected on his shield indicates that he was aware of Poliziano's conception of a poet-soldier as described in the *Stanze*. However, Poliziano's ideas were based on an earlier generation of poet-soldiers, and by the time that Titian painted *The Allegory of Marriage*, the standards of that cadre were voiced in contemporary poetry. The sonnets of the time expressed the sentiments of military commanders leaving their wives behind, the longing of these women for their absent husbands, and their fear of the turns of fortune, all of which seem to have influenced Titian's portrayal.

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Titian's representation of a poet-soldier departing from his lady was not based solely on Poliziano's ideas, but also reflects the standards of the contemporary military nobility who served Charles V. This group, which embraced the ethos of

25 For the identification of the image, Friedlaender relied on Cartari *Le imagini de i dei de gli antichi* (1615); Friedlaender, 'The Domestication of Cupid', p. 51–52.

26 Herrmann-Fiore interprets the reflection on the sphere according to Marsilio Ficino's *Le anima mundi,* as the spirit of the world. Moreover, based on Cicero's *De natura deorum*, she identifies the lady as Divina Provvidenza holding the globe and governing the world. Herrmann-Fiore, 'L' "Allegoria coniugale" di Tiziano', pp. 412–413. See also nn. 15, 21.

'arms and letters', included Alfonso d'Avalos, the most popular poet-soldier of the period, whose portrait Titian completed in 1533 (Plate 3).[27] The association between d'Avalos and Julio's literary image in the *Stanze* might have been suggested (if not by the painter himself) by his poet friends Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533) and Pietro Aretino (1492–1556). Titian's two portraits of Ariosto, the first in the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis, dated to 1516, and the other rendered in 1532 for the third edition of the *Orlando Furioso*, which was published in 1533, seem to suggest a long-lasting relationship between the poet and the painter.[28] Luba Freedman notes Aretino's friendship with d'Avalos, which was documented by Titian in *Alfonso d'Avalos Addressing His Troops* (Plate 4), where Aretino appears as one of d'Avalos's soldiers to show the poet's support for the latter's military campaign.[29]

Both Aretino and Ariosto were in d'Avalos's service, and both addressed him in their writings as the Renaissance embodiment of the poet-soldier of his time,[30] an image that Ariosto celebrated in the third edition of his *Orlando Furioso*, where he praised d'Avalos's excellence on seven occasions.[31] In *Canto* 37, he stressed d'Avalos's two vocations by comparing his valour in the field with his powerful writing skills: 'There is my lord the Marquis of Vasto; not only do his deeds furnish matter enough for the scribes of a thousand Athens, a thousand Romes, but also it is clear he means to immortalize you with his pen'.[32]

Aretino, who attended the literary salons of d'Avalos and his wife, Maria d'Aragona (1502–1568) in Naples and Milan added to the popular image of his patron as a poet-soldier.[33] In his comedy *The Marescalco*, he featured d'Avalos's

27 On d'Avalos' reputation as a poet-soldier, see Haar, *The Science and Art of Renaissance Music,* p. 245 nn. 36, 37; Lockwood, 'Text and Music', p. 245. On the identification of Titian's protagonist as Alfonso d'Avalos, see Van der Doort, *Catalogue of the Collection of Charles I*, p. 98: 10–12. See also Félibien, *Entretiens*, pp. 658–659; Samson, *The Spanish Match*, I, p. 18.

28 Rosand established the friendship between Titian and Ariosto based on the former's mythological paintings, commissioned by Alfonso I d'Este Duke of Ferrara (Ariosto's patron), suggesting that Ariosto supplied the rhetorical models for the works. He also relied on Titian's two portraits of Ariosto and on the latter's praise of Titian's skills in his *Orlando Furioso*, 33: 1–7: Rosand, '"Ut Pictura Poeta"', pp. 527–546, 530, n. 9; Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *The Life and Times of Titian,* I: pp. 176ff. and 196ff.

29 Freedman, *Titian's Portraits through Aretino's Lens*, pp. 44–45.

30 As a young commander, d'Avalos received Ariosto as an envoy from Alfonso d'Este. See Waldman's 'Introduction' in Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, p. viii. See also p. 15: 28. On Aretino and d'Avalos relationship, see Freedman, *Titian's Portraits through Aretino's Lens*, pp. 44–45.

31 Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, 15: 28, 26: 52, 33: 27, 47: 49, 53, 37: 13.

32 'C e il mio Signor del Vafto a cui no folo / Di dare a mille Athene e a mille Rome / Di fé materia bafta, ch'ancho accenna / Volerai eterne far con la fua penna' (Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, III, 37: 13). For the English translation, see Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, 37: 13.

33 Aretino frequented the d'Aragona and d'Avalos literary circles and lauded the beauty of his hostess, Maria d'Aragona: see Aretino, *Lettere sull'arte di Pietro Aretino*, p. lxxxv.

two arts, the martial and the Apollonian and placed him above all his peers with humour and grace:

> I'm telling you, a son might be born *semini eius* (of his own race), who would bring from the maternal womb some of the *pulcherrima grattia* (graceful beauty) like that possessed by Alfonso d'Avalos, whose bearing both martial and Apollonian makes the rest of us appear like apes.[34]

According to Arentino, d'Avalos's two vocations were rooted in his noble origins. He was raised by his cousin's wife, the poetess Vittoria Colonna (1490/92–1547), who taught him to write poetry and supervised his studies of Greek philosophy, Roman history, the Augustan poets, Dante, and Petrarch.[35] Vittoria Colonna's husband, Ferrante Francesco d'Avalos (1489–1525), Marquis of Pescara, was influential in Alfonso d'Avalos's military career. The Marquis had to leave his wife after only three years of marriage to join the imperial league against the French in Ravenna. Apparently, he was gone from 1512 until his death in 1525 in the battle of Pavia.[36] Alfonso followed in his cousin's footsteps, and his career was on the rise when Titian painted the *Allegory*. As a commander of the imperial forces between 1522 and 1535, he successfully led military campaigns in Lodi, Genoa, Marseilles, Pavia, and Tunis. In 1538, Emperor Charles V appointed him governor of Milan. His brilliant military carrier ended disgracefully in 1544 in the Battle of Ceresole, in which he suffered a painful defeat and lost 12,000 men. He died two years later from the wounds he received in that battle.[37]

Alfonso d'Avalos's reputation for continually leaving his wife was the subject of his sonnet *Anchor che col partire*, for which Cipriano de Rore (1515/6–1565) composed the music. In the poem, which was popular in the d'Avalos circles and was eventually published a year after his death,[38] d'Avalos described how pleased he was to go to war and that although he compared his departures from his beloved to dying, he was willing to leave her time and again in order to celebrate his returns:

34 For this quote, see Aretino, *The Marescalco*, p. 97; Aretino dedicated one of the editions of his *Marfisa*, a cavalier poem written in Mantua in 1526 and published twice, in 1532 and in 1537, to d'Avalos. See Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr*, p. 99. On d'Avalos' two vocations, see also a poem by Charles V's secretary Martirano Bernardino, in which he praised d'Avalos' bravery, poetic skills, and beauty and compared him to Achilles, Mars, Apollo, and Adonis: Toscano, 'Tra corti e campi di battaglia: Alfonso d'Avalos, Luigi Tansillo e le affinità elettive tra petrarchisti napoletani e spagnoli'.

35 On Vittoria Colonna's influence on Alfonso d'Avalos and Luigi Tansillo's poetry, see Milburn, *Luigi Tansillo*, p. 28; *Toscano, 'Due allievi di Vittoria Colonna'*, pp. 739–773.

36 Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna*, pp. 19–20; Robin, *Publishing Women*, p. 36.

37 Robin, *Publishing Women*, pp. 37–38. Maury and Larsen†, *Encyclopedia of Women*, p. 25.

38 In Cipriano Rore, *Il primo libro di madrigali*, the poet Giovanni Tommaso Cimello (1510–1590) attributed the poem to d'Avalos: in Haar, *The Science and Art of Renaissance Music*, 245, n. 37.

> Although in leaving (you) / I feel as if I'm dying / I should like to depart every hour, every moment, / such is the pleasure I feel / in the life that I acquire upon returning; / and thus a thousand-thousand times a day / I should like to leave you, / so sweet are my returnings.[39]

The ritual of leave-taking described in the sonnet reflects not only his own personal experiences, but the lifestyle of his peers, the *condottiere,* commanders and statesmen from the Spanish nobility, allies and supporters of Charles V, who went repeatedly off to war in his service. This popular subject—leaving the beloved behind—was also dealt with by the Spanish Renaissance poet-soldier Garcilaso de la Vega (1501–1536), who was a member of Charles V's guard.[40]

Anne Cruz analyses the way de la Vega related to the ritual of leave-taking in his *Elegia* (II: 100–108), noting that the poet complained of his separation from his lady while risking his life in battle. She contends that the couple evoked in the elegy alludes to Mars and Venus and that the poem highlights the poet's own fears of dying (though not in battle), but rather from his worries regarding his beloved's imagined betrayal:[41]

> Practicing to my sorrow, your [Mars's] profession, / I am by intervals diminished so that / only death will be my final reward; / and my hard luck did not allow it [death] / to overtake me fighting, / pierced by sharp and powerful steel, / so that instead I will be shattered / by seeing my sweet, beloved fruit in another's grasp, / her cruel possessor laughing at me. (*Elegia* II: 100–108).[42]

39 'Anchor che col partire / Io mi senta morire / Partir vorrei ogn'hor ogni momento / Tant'è' l piacer che sento / De la vita ch'aquisto nel ritorno / Et così mill'e mille volt'il giorno / Partir da voi vorrei / tanto son dolci gli ritorno miei': Lockwood, 'Text and Music in Rore's Madrigal "*Anchor che col partire*"', p. 244. The English translation is from Lockwood, p. 245. D'Avalos' returns to the court of Ischia between military campaigns were reported by one of the court poets, Paolo Giovio, who noted that he and his men engaged in extravagant sports to entertain the ladies of the court: see Giovio, *Notable Men and Women of Our Time*, pp. 543–544.

40 Chinchilla emphasizes Alfonso d'Avalos acquaintance with the Spanish poet Garcilaso between the years 1532 and 1536 when the latter frequented the Neapolitan Academy and met with Petrarchan Italian and Spanish poets, including Pietro Bembo, Sannazaro, Tansillo, and Bernardo Tasso. She focuses on the political alliance between d'Avalos and Garcilaso, contending that Garcilaso left the court of his patron, the viceroy of Naples Don Pidro de Toledo in 1535 to depart with d'Avalos troops: Chinchilla, 'Garcilaso de la Vega, Catullus, and the Academy in Naples', p. 67. In her essay, she emphasizes the influence of Catallus on Garcelaso's poetry and notes Poliziano's impact on Garcilaso's writings, owing to the former's knowledge of Catallus and his influence on the Neapolitan Academy (pp. 65–66). For Garcelaso's acquaintance with d'Avalos, see also Garselaso's Sonnet xx, dedicated to the Marquis del Vasto in Holmes, *The Works of Garcilasso de la Vega, Surnamed the Prince of Castilian Poets,* Sonnet xx: 346.

41 Cruz, 'Arms versus Letters', 186–205, pp. 193–196.

42 For the English translation of *Elegia* (II, 100–108), see Cruz, 'Arms versus Letters', p. 196. 'Ejercitando por mi mal tu (de Marte) oficio / soy reducido a términos que muerte / será mi postrimero beneficio / y ésta no permitió mi dura suerte / que me sobreviniese peleando / de hierro traspasado agudo y fuerte / porque me

De la Vega's and d'Avalos's poems evoke the continuing predicament of the poet-soldier, showing that the noble ethos of 'arms and letters' is constantly entwined with the desertion of a beloved.

Alfonso d'Avalos's comrade in arms Luigi Tansillo (1510–1568) articulated the idea of the ethos of 'arms and letters' by turning it into a formula that described the poet-soldier's way of life. In his *Ecloga* III, he marked the two attributes of the poet-soldier: 'the sword always by his side, the pen in hand'.[43] According to Erika Milburn, this formula was also used in the fifteenth century by the Latin poet of Greek origin Michael Marullus (1458–1500),[44] who frequented de' Medici's court in Florence between 1489 and 1494. Marullus's literary work was interrupted only by his frequent military expeditions against the Turks.

At the time of Marullus's arrival in Florence (eleven years after Poliziano abandoned his *Stanze*), his reputation as a poet-soldier was well established and he was also known in Naples and Rome, where he had published earlier works.[45] Marullus addressed the ethos of 'arms and letters' in his first epigram, dedicated to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de 'Medici: 'And the hand that wields the sword bears the books, once the sword has been laid down'.[46] His presence in de' Medici's court was documented, among other ways, by evidence of the rivalry between him and Poliziano evident in their writings.[47] Marullus enjoyed the reputation of a poet-soldier among his contemporaries. Ariosto admired his poems, as expressed in his *Orlando Furioso* (37, 8), where Marullus is mentioned as the first among the poets who favoured the ladies in their poems, together with Pontano, Bembo, Capello, Castigliane, Luigi Alamni, two Strozzis, and two Gonzagas, all 'beloved equally by Mars and the Muses'.[48]

It might have been Ariosto who introduced Titian to the ethos of 'arms and letters', to its literary representations, and to its connection to the departure from the beloved.

consumiese contemplando / mi amado y dulce fruto en mano ajena / y el duro prosesor de mí burlando'. A Boscán Elegía II, 100–108. http://fundaciongarcilasodelavega.com/garcilaso-de-la-vega/obra/elegias/elegia-ii/

43 'La spada al fianco ognor, la penna en mano': Tansillo based his poem on Garcilaso's: 'tomando ora la espada, ora la pluma (Ecloga III): Cruz, 'Arms versus Letters', p. 193; Lumsden, 'Garcilaso de la Vega as a Latin Poet', p. 337.

44 Erika Milburn compares Tansillio's lines to those of Michael Marullus: Milburn, *Luigi Tansillo and Lyric Poetry in Sixteenth-century Naples*, p. 29, n. 10.

45 Marullus was active in Giovanni Pontano's academy in Naples in 1470. He published the first edition of his Epigrams in Rome in 1487/89 and completed this work in Florence. On his literary accomplishments in Naples and his connections among the nobility, see Nichols, 'Greek Poets in Exile in Naples: Marullus and Rhallus', pp. 152–170.

46 'Quaeque manus ferrum, posito fert ense libellos. Et placet, et Musis est sine dulce nihil'. See Marullo, *Poems*, Epigram I, 5–6, p. 2. For the English translation, see above Epigram I, 5–6, p. 3.

47 On the documented rivalry between Marullus and Poliziano (expressed in Marullus Epigram 3, II) and probably based on Poliziano's derogatory remarks against Greeks in his *Miscellanea*, see Fantazzi, 'Introduction', in Marullo, *Poems* xi, xx.

48 On Marullus and Ariosto, see Fantazzi, 'Introduction', in Marullo, *Poems* x.

In *Canto* 37, he linked Marullus's generation with the younger poet-soldier, Alfonso d'Avalos, who like them also honoured the virtuosos' group of ladies in his poems (37: 13). Ariosto noted that this group of ladies was represented by d'Avalos's protector, Vitoria Colonna (37: 15–24), whose poems of love brought the image of the concerned wife left behind when her husband went off to war to seek perfection. It is entirely possible that her poems helped Titian shape his image of the sad lady in the *Allegory*.[49]

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Vittoria Colonna, to whom Federico II Gonzaga presented Titian's *Saint Mary Magdalen in Penitence* (1531), was certainly aware of the artist's great talent.[50] The poems of longing that she addressed to her husband might well have figured in Titian's depiction of the *Allegory*'s sad lady. Those poems could have been reached the painter through anyone on a long list of mutual acquaintances, Ariosto in particular, as Alfonso d'Avalos gave him a manuscript of Colonna's lyrics in a diplomatic encounter in Correggio in 1532 before they were printed in Parma in 1538.[51] The Venetian Cardinal Pietro Bembo was acquainted with both Colonna and Titian, and the latter painted his portrait when Bembo was first named a cardinal in 1539/40.[52] Bembo was very favourably impressed with Colonna's lyrics and played a major role in introducing them to the public. He helped her publish the first edition of her poems, which he included in the 1535 edition of his *Rimes*.[53]

The image of the wife left behind is well established in these poems. In 'Mentre scaldò 'l mio Sol nostro emispero', she laments her champion's valour, which drove him from her side:

> Death makes courage, / valued and famous: devouring time / which buries men's names has not insisted / on her laws, forbade venom to come near. / The brightest chivalry / could not match yours: / limitless daring drove you from my arms.[54]

49 Colonna's reputation for her poems of longing was addressed by her contemporary, the poet Bernardo Tasso, in his *Italia mia*, written in honour of her dead husband. In this poem Tasso referred to her as: 'gentle Vittoria', describing 'the untold pain she buries in her heart and vents only in her learned poems'. Edited by Ferrero, *Carteggio*, p. 220, and translated into English in Robin, *Publishing Women*, p. 7.

50 Haskins notes that this painting, now in the Pitti Palace in Florence, was commissioned by Federico II Gonzaga as a gift to d'Avalos' wife, Maria d'Aragona, but was given to Vittoria Colonna. See Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Truth and Myth*, p. 239.

51 Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics of the Italian Reformation*, pp. 25–26.

52 On Titian's acquaintance with Bembo, see Wethey, *Titian*, III, pp. 13, 23, and Wethey, *Titian*, II, p. 82. On Titian's portraits of Bembo, see Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *The Life and Times of Titian*, I, pp. 416–420; Grabski, 'Mundus Amoris – Amor Mundus', p. 26.

53 Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics of the Italian Reformation*, p. 27.

54 'When My Sun's Chariot Crossed Our Sky'. All English translations of Colonna's poems are from Moody, *Amaro Lagrimar: The Poems of Vittoria Colonna, XV*. 'E se 'l tempo vorace i nomi asconde / Sua

In 'Felice donna, a cui l'animo vinse', she wrote of her fear for his life:

> Lucky woman whose soul defeated a / mortal wound, whose noble heart shut out all / desire for life; when terror pressed in / on you, you preferred black oblivion. / When you saw his blood-soaked clothes, your mind slipped, / inward torment confused your perception, / the voice of sanity could not be heard, / and love painted the worst evil it knows.[55]

In 'Quel valor che nel mondo oggi s'intende', she pleaded with her champion to control his desire for honour, and ended by questioning the strange balance between his pursuit of fame and her anguish:

> So control your desire for / honors: I don't want, I've no need of them; / You need not dread fortune's indifference. / Or would you have me say: may your fame and / my pain keep pace, so we will be as high / as those no-one envies because they died with honour.[56]

In 'Quanto più arroge alle mie antiche pene', she pictures Fortuna's hold on the wife left behind (herself), describing it as a strange and dangerous symbiosis:

> The more Fortune violates me, the more / she deepens ancient wounds with recent fears, / the stronger am I: I sustain myself / by the strength I gain contending with her.[57]

In her study of Colonna's poems, Abigail Brundin suggests that they invite an autobiographical interpretation of their subjects owing to the Petrarchan style of

gloria a questa legge non si strinse / L' opre chiare d' altrui non ben seconde / Seguon le sue tant' alto, e sì da lunge / Lo scorge quei, che più l' ardir sospinse'. Colonna, *Rime*, A1, 43: 10–14.

55 'Lucky woman whose soul defeated'. Moody, *Amaro Lagrimar: The Poems of Vittoria Colonna, XV*. 'Felice Donna, a cui l' animo vinse / Grave dolor, ch' al gentil petto escluse / Desio di vita, e le speranze infuse / Nel cieco oblio d' ogni timor ti cinse / Del sangue altrui il sposo amato tinse / Il manto allor, che dal martir confuse / Fur le ragioni in te, le voci chiuse / Ch' Amor nell' alma il maggior mal depinse'. Colonna, *Rime*, A2, 6: 1–8.

56 'The Kind of Courage Today's World Respects', in Moody, *Amaro Lagrimar: The Poems of Vittoria Colonna, XV*. 'Frena adunqhe, Signor, l'ardente voglia / ch' al Ciel ti spinge con sì altiere scorte / che di fortuna omai non teme sdegno / Anzi cresca tua gloria e la mia doglia / Qual vita giunse a sì onorato segno / Che non invidii a sua onorata morte?' Colonna, *Rime*, A2, 2: 12–14.

57 Moody, *Amaro Lagrimar: The Poems of Vittoria Colonna*, Sonnet 14. 'Quanto più arroge alle mie antiche pene / Fortuna affanni, io dall'usato pianto / Più vigor prendo ognora: e può ben tanto / L'alta cagion che a forza mi sostiene!, Colonna, *Rime*, A2, 27: 1–4.

the lyrics, which suggests a reading of the poet's own biography.[58] Despite their personal tone, the poems represent the shared experience of women in Colonna's social circle, whose husbands were committed to the military life.

Colonna was the role model for the high-ranking women of her strata, who as I noted earlier, were the wives and the widows of Charles V's commanders. Among them, were family members of the Colonna-d'Avalos's clan, including Colonna's cousin-in-law Maria d'Aragona; Giulia Gonzaga (1513–1566), the wife of Vittoria's cousin the *condottiero* Vespasiano Colonna (c. 1485–1528); and Maria's sister Giovanna d'Aragona (1502–1575), who was married to Vittoria Colonna's brother the *condottiero* Ascanio Colonna (1500–1557).[59] During the 1520s up until 1530, these ladies attended Colonna's literary salon in Ischia, d'Avalos's duchy, which she held together with Alfonso's aunt Constanza d'Avalos (1460–1541). Their salon hosted Petrarchan poets, including Paolo Giovio, Antonio Minturno, Giano and Cosimo Anisio, Bernardo Tasso, Luigi Tansillo, Angelo di Costanzo, and Bernardino Rota.[60] Throughout the 1530s, Colonna's literary enterprise was carried on by Giulia Gonzaga, who held her spiritual salon in the convent of San Francesco delle Monache in Naples, where she retreated after her husband's death. Maria d'Aragona frequented those meetings until 1538, at which time she established her own literary salon in their court in Milan, offering her patronage to many of the poets who had attended the salon in Ischia.[61]

By 1535, the suggested year that Titian painted the *Allegory*, Vittoria Colonna and Giulia Gonzaga were already widows, their husbands having died encamped with their troops, while d'Aragona sisters, Maria and Giovanna, were still married to active commanders in the emperor's army, who were mostly at war and seldom at home.[62] Colonna's poems were read and celebrated in all the forums created and frequented by these women. Despite their personal tone, 'the longing lady' of her poems could have been any one of the virtuous ladies of her strata.

Diana Robin, who studies this intriguing group of women and their literary initiatives, offers a description of their lives, noting that owing to their husbands' careers, these women enjoyed a fair degree of freedom. They ruled their courts and had rich intellectual and spiritual lives surrounded by poets and spiritual mentors.[63] Yet, the combination of their lifestyle, as described by Robin, and their constant concern for their husbands' fates, as depicted in Colonna's poems, reveal

58 On Colonna's life circumstances that led to the development of poems of loss and longing as a genre, see Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics of the Italian Reformation*, pp. 15–16.

59 Robin, *Publishing Women*, pp. 2–3; Maury and Larsen, *Encyclopedia of Women in the Renaissance*, p. 25.

60 On the literary women's salons, see Robin, *Publishing Women*, pp. 1–40.

61 Robin, *Publishing Women*, p. 36.

62 Maury and Larsen, *Encyclopedia of Women in the Renaissance*, pp. 25, 88.

63 Robin, *Publishing Women*, pp. 35–37.

the paradox of their lives, as they enjoyed the privileges that accrued to their husbands' trade and status, but lived in constant fear of their imminent deaths.

In the *Allegory*, Titian seems to have captured these ladies' inability to interfere with their husbands' lifestyle. He portrayed his sad lady with her bosom bared, resembling Venus,[64] yet despite her genuine sadness at her husband's departure, she seems numbed by the turns of fortune and unable to moderate his passion for war (Plate 1). Her depiction stands in contradiction to Titian's *Venus and Adonis* (Plate 5), where Venus is physically blocking her mortal lover from departing to his death.[65] Unlike the sad Venus of the *Allegory*, Titian interpreted this Venus practically throwing herself over Adonis, using her beauty and love to cool his passion for the hunt, which eventually (as noted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* X: 532–559, 705-709) cost him his life. The differences evident in the images of these Venuses seem to suggest that Titian represented the women of Colonna's circle reluctant acceptance of their husbands' vocation (Plate 1). His sad lady reflects their anguish at their champions' departures, their fear of the turns of fortune, and their inability to interfere with their callings.

Mirroring his lady, Titian depicted his departing warrior as not being indifferent to her sadness and yet determined to leave. He is imaged facing a slightly open door, which reflects a crack of dim light coming from the outside. As he leaves, he looks towards his lady with understanding in his eyes, while placing his open palm over her heart. This intimate gesture seems to suggest that as a poet he is conscious of her feelings but that as a warrior he is determined to leave her. Her absorption in the orb of fortune seems to be her response to his departure; it marks her submission to his standards, the unspoken covenant of their marriage, which Titian brilliantly captured in his *Allegory*.

***

In conclusion, Titian painted the *Allegory of Marriage* at a time when the most lauded poets and commanders frequented his studio to commission his work. These occasions seem to have shaped the *Allegory*, which figures a prominent recurring scene in a commander's life: departure to war. The painter's perception of a poet-soldier, the images reflected on his shield, and his three helpers seem to have been inspired by Poliziano's *Stanze*, where the hero chooses virtue over love, as he goes off into combat accompanied by Cupid, Minerva, and Glory. Yet this

64 Burckhardt describes the 'Venus' in Titian's painting as Maria d'Aragona, wife of Alfonso d'Avalos: Burckhardt, *Italian Renaissance Painting According to Genres*, p. 91. Panofsky interpreted the couple in the painting as Mars and Venus. See Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology,* pp. 160–161.

65 Over the years, Titian depicted many versions of *Venus and Adonis*. According to Wethey, the first (now in the Prado) was done when Titan visited Rome in 1545/6 and was intended as a companion to his first *Danae*: Wethey, *Titian*, III, p. 58. On the many versions of *Venus and Adonis*, see pp. 188–194.

painting also reflects the lifestyle of Alfonso d'Avalos's military strata as well as that of their wives. Ultimately, Titian's painting portrays the prototype poet-soldier in the most stereotyped act, the taking leave of his beloved. In that sense, the *Allegory of Marriage* corresponds to the many lyrics that addressed this subject and has to be interpreted within the cultural scene of the period.

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6. Psyche, Venus, Ceres and Their Friends: Titian's Remixes*

Paul Joannides

Abstract

The composition of Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* fused two earlier designs: his own *Venus Withholding Cupid's Weapons*, drawn on the original canvas, and Giulio Romano's *Psyche before Proserpine*. Titian reworked this fusion in a lost *Psyche before Venus*, probably painted in the 1530s but first documented in 1550. This much-copied picture was itself adapted, with various changes of cast and emphasis, by Titian and his studio. Towards 1560 Titian extended the composition horizontally in *Venus Blindfolding Eros* (Washington), now severely truncated, but whose full composition exists in the underlayers of Galleria Borghese's famous painting which, on its surface, was modified to show the *Blindfolding of Cupid*, not now by *Venus*, but by *Diana*, rejecting love for the hunt.

Keywords: Allegory, Diana, mythology, Psyche, Titian, Venus

Narrative and 'realistic' elements are not entirely suppressed in the Louvre *Allegory* (Plate 1) but they are minimized: Titian's pictorial choices—a format that we may justifiably call square, a predominantly profile disposition, a

* I am grateful to Daniel Unger who first prompted me to address the issues discussed here; to Matthias Wivel and Jeremy Wood for their very helpful comments on an earlier draught and to the latter, additionally, for my title; but my greatest debt is to Miguel Falomir, who alerted me to the significance of the 1558 inventory of Mary of Hungary and who sent me a version of his 'Titian, Mary of Hungary, and *Psyche*' when still in typescript (now—August 2020—published in Noelia García Pérez ed., *Mary of Hungary, Renaissance Patron and Collector, Gender, Art and Culture* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), pp. 97–108), a generosity that allowed me to make a number of corrections and additions. For the provenance of the picture and the history of interpretations of it, see Daniel Unger's introduction and the bibliography listed there. During his stay in Madrid, Charles also acquired Titian's *Girl in a Fur Wrap*, now in Vienna, from the posthumous sale of the collection of Juan Tassis y Peralta, Count of Villamediana, assassinated in 1622 (see Brown, 'Artistic Relations between Spain and England', pp. 41–68), and Miguel Falomir has suggested to me that the *Allegory* may also have come from Villamediana's collection.

Unger, D.M. (ed.), *Titian's* Allegory of Marriage*: New Approaches*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022. DOI 10.5117/9789463729536_CH06

6.1. Unidentified painter (circle of Veronese?), *Allegory*, c. 1570, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.

tightly-filled surface, a shallow depth of field, and abrupt rhythms—stress proposition above event, ideography above representation.[1] The picture was presumably a bespoke creation, commissioned by a specific client with specific demands and designed to carry a specific if still elusive message related to sortilege and the control—or abandonment—of love.[2] But notwithstanding the Louvre *Allegory*'s apparently recondite nature, another version of it was laid-in by Titian or a member of his studio—but perhaps as a 'proofing' rather than a repetition. This painting, in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Figure 6.1;

1 Thus, Panofsky interprets the supplicant girl as 'Faith by her expression and gesture' and the basket-lifter—whom he sees as female—'is identified as Hope by her ecstatic expression'; in short, Panofsky considers these figures to be personifications, not personages; he also calls the armoured man Mars, although he seems insufficiently virile and imposing to justify that identification. The glass globe, perhaps, represents Harmony, perfect in form but fragile. Whatever of this is found convincing—and to my mind it is too pat–it is evident that Panofsky saw the picture as primarily ideographic and underplayed the filiations that tether it, however tenuously, to narrative.

2 For its 'conceptual' aspect, the most obvious comparison in Titian's oeuvre is the patently ideographic *Allegory of Prudence* in the National Gallery, which Panofsky called the 'only "emblematic" picture ever produced by Titian' and aspects of whose inspiration look back, as he demonstrated, to Greco-Egyptian models. See Panofsky, *Problems in Titian*, p. 103.

oil on canvas, 95 × 127 cm.), shows the same basic composition in a 1:1.25 format. It includes the seated woman, Cupid, and supplicant girl but excludes the figure at the right—presumably a satyr but not clearly recognizable as such—raising a basket.[3]

This painting's facture does not resemble that of Padovanino, to whom it has been attributed, and an old, partial X-ray kindly shown to me by Dr. Francesca Del Torre reveals beneath the seated woman's present head an obviously Titianesque underpainting in which, paralleling the Louvre picture, her head is turned slightly outwards and her hair is enlaced with pearls. This canvas, no doubt left unfinished, was completed and overworked, probably a couple of decades later by a painter who might have come from Veronese's circle. This artist set the seated woman's face in strict profile, eliminated the pearls from her coiffure, and added an elderly bearded man at the left, who stares at the viewer and raises his left arm, his hand holding a porcelain cup above her head. What the seated woman originally supported on her lap is unknown, for X-rays are not available of that area, but on the surface, she holds a gold or silver-gilt flagon whose inclusion implies the painter's knowledge of a variant by Titian, to which I return.

II

The Louvre *Allegory* is generally treated as if it were a new invention but, in reality, it is derivative—and derivative in complex ways. This topic can be introduced by a glance at the differences between the painted surface and Titian's brush drawing on the now-detached original canvas (Plate 2). In the drawing, the figure at the right lifting the basket is missing; the armoured man places his left hand on his own heart, not on the seated woman's breast, and the young woman stands nearer the right edge.[4] There is no glass sphere: instead, the seated woman holds Cupid's bow and arrow in her right hand, turning the palm of her left hand outwards towards him as if in remonstrance. The core theme of the under-drawing, therefore, is a popular and charming 'educational' allegory that had already been treated in

3 Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian*, vol. III, no.1 variant 6, p. 129 and plate 188 as Padovanino (?); Ruggeri, 'Alessandro Varotari ditto il Padovanino', pp. 101–165, p. 138 fig. 169; Ruggeri, *Il Padovanino*, pp. 84–85. See also Wolfgang Prohaska in *Tiziano*, no. 148, pp. 434–435. The relationship of the Louvre *Allegory* to this painting and others analysed here is discussed illuminatingly by Giorgio Tagliaferro in Tagliaferro, Aikema, and others, *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, pp. 90–94, ills. 30–34.

4 Cupid's bow and arrows are hard to descry, but they become evident when one knows Figure 6.4. I am grateful to Sarah Walden for sharing her views on the under-drawing, and to Vincent Delieuvin for showing it to me in the Louvre's reserves.

6.2. Studio of Titian, *Allegory*, c. 1540, Montecarlo, Maison d'Art.

Titian's circle in the mid-1510s: Venus confiscating or withholding Cupid's weapons.[5] On the picture's *surface*, Titian abandoned the 'withholding' theme and showed Cupid *volunteering* his arrows, now bound together, to a woman who has become younger and seems no longer to be identifiable as Venus, but rather as a (virgin?) seer of some kind.

5 The Wallace Collection's *Venus Disarming Cupid*, whose colour range and, to an extent, physical types reflect Titian's work c. 1515, presumably comes from his circle. The clumsy composition and awkward articulation of Venus preclude Titian's direct participation in its design or execution, but it may have originated in some graphic suggestion by him. The theme was pursued in several drawings by Parmigianino, by Jacopo Palma in his Fitzwilliam *Venus and Cupid*, and in the *Venus and Cupid* designed by Michelangelo for Pontormo. The subject later attracted Veronese; Padovanino's *Venus and Minerva Disarming Cupid* formerly in Ponce (see Ruggeri, 'Alessandro Varotari ditto il Padovanino', p. 124, fig. 60) is a further riff on Titian's design.

The Louvre *Allegory*'s under-drawing is partly glossed by another *Allegory*, virtually identical in dimensions (Figure 6.2; 97 × 108 cm), formerly in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna and later with the Pietro Corsini Gallery.[6] Although it has been attributed to Titian himself, it is more plausibly by a member of his studio (c. 1540).[7] The poses and action of Venus and Cupid in this painting follow—with minimal variation—the under-drawing of the Louvre canvas, so the painter was familiar with either that under-drawing or, perhaps, with a painted version of the same arrangement, *plus* the surface of the Louvre painting. This canvas includes a man, perhaps a portrait, in modern civilian dress rather than armour, who offers Venus a mirror—maybe an invocation of prudence rather than a sop to vanity.[8] The figure lifting the basket is absent and the Louvre *Allegory*'s supplicant girl—arguably irrelevant to an instruction of Cupid—is replaced by a female lutenist who accompanies, but does not participate in, the action; she does not recur in any known painting by Titian and may not be his invention.[9] Presumably the ex-Vienna/later Corsini picture was also a commission, once again designed to communicate a moral no longer fully apparent.

III

The *under-drawing* of the Louvre *Allegory* and the *surface* of the ex-Vienna/later Corsini *Allegory* are, therefore, transformations and amplifications, made for undetermined purposes, of a composition of *Venus Withholding Cupid's Arrows*,

6 Formerly in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, from which it was de-accessioned in 1937; it re-emerged at the Corsini Gallery in New York in 1991: see Dabell, *Piero Corsini*, pp. 14–23, and 131–132, who firmly rejected the attribution to Padovanino tentatively proposed by Wethey (*The Paintings of Titian*, vol. III, p. 129, Variant 5, plate 187) and acknowledged still more tentatively by Ruggeri, 'Alessandro Varotari ditto il Padovanino', p. 143.

7 As argued by Tagliaferro, Aikema, and others in *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, p. 94.

8 The mirror was interpreted as a symbol of vanity by Lionello Puppi on p. 32. See Puppi, 'Volubilità della bellezza e peripezie di un volto', pp. 23–47. This man's character and role are cross-fertilisations from an earlier composition produced in Titian's orbit in which the mirror's symbolism equivocates between Prudence and Vanity: the Washington *Woman at Her Toilet*, an erotic-allegorical picture developed from the master's ideas (Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian*, vol. III, X-17, p. 212); like the Louvre *Lady at Her Toilet*, the Washington canvas (92 × 82 cm) also spawned variants such as the Northern panel offered at Christie's, South Kensington, 2 November 2016, lot 62, 102 × 74 cm.

9 She displays some similarity in type and pose to a *Lucretia* (oil on canvas, 96 × 76 cm) published by Wilhelm Suida, then in a Venetian private collection. Female lutenists, of course, occur earlier in the work of Palma Vecchio and later, for example, in that of Parrasio Michel and of Simone Peterzano. See Suida, *Le Titien*, pl. ccxxviib. For the latter, see dal Pozzolo, *L'Allegoria della Musica di Simone Perterzano*, and dal Pozzolo, 'Il primo Peterzano', pp. 117–185.

6.3. Studio of Titian, *Psyche before Venus*, c. 1540, Genoa, Durazzo Pallavicini Collection.

and they retain traces of their origin.[10] The *surface* of the Louvre *Allegory* stands at a second remove: it is the transformation of a transformation. But all these versions feed off—and had a second source in—another composition which also underwent various mutations. The most important and probably the prime example of this second source was a now lost but once much admired painting, recorded in several full-size copies. The best copy, which may be a studio repetition (Figure 6.3; oil on

10 This was one of Titian's procedures: the Vienna version of *Diana and Callisto*, whose surface differs considerably from that sent to Philip II, was painted over a brush drawing that follows Philip's painting exactly.

6.4. Unidentified Northern painter after Titian, *Psyche before Venus*, c. 1570?, Munich, Alte Pinakothek.

canvas 113 × 119 cm), is in the Durazzo-Pallavicini Collection, Genoa;[11] another, by a Northern artist, is in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich (Figure 6.4; oil on wood, 126 × 129 cm). The two are effectively square but are, respectively, around 10 and 20 cm larger in both axes than the Louvre *Allegory*,[12] and in both, the figure now lifting a

11 Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian*, vol. III, p. 128, variant 2; given to Titian and workshop by Pietro Torriti, it was downgraded by Francesco Valcanover to Padovanino. It should be noted that many paintings in the Durazzo Pallavicini collection were tailored to fit the palace's decorative scheme, so present dimensions are not necessarily the original ones. See Torriti, *La Galleria del Palazzo Durazzo Pallavicini a Genova*, pp. 76–80; Francesco Valcanover in Adorno, *Il Palazzo Durazzo Pallavicini*, no. 108, pp. 228–229.

12 Kultzen and Eikemeier, *Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen*, inv. 10390, p. 191, acquired from de Vigneux in 1792 by the Kurfürst Carl Theodore, who gave it to the University of Landshut, whence it passed to the University of Munich in 1937; they noted that a fragment of a reduction of this version was with the Arcade Gallery London in 1964, *Apollo* LXXX, no. 34, December 1964, advertisement: pl. LXXXVII, oil on

6.5. Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Breugel, *The Sense of Sight* (detail), 1617, Madrid, Museo del Prado.

metal bowl rather than a basket is unequivocally identified as a satyr. Complementing these copies and, as it were, anchoring them, is a miniature rendering of the same original in the *Allegory of the Sense of Sight* (Madrid, Prado; Figure 6.5), a collaboration between Rubens and Jan Breughel, signed by the latter and dated 1617. Jan never visited Spain, but Rubens made at least some copies after Titian during his sojourn of 1603.[13]

In this composition the place of the armoured man in the Louvre *Allegory* is occupied by a young faun with a bare torso, probably Bacchus but possibly Pan, who pulls an offering of grapes from a trellis, complementing the more earth-bound fruit proffered by the satyr. The seated woman now holds a glass flagon, a cluster of rose leaves resting on its neck. Cupid's role and placement are different: he now stands pensively behind her, leaning against her shoulder, looking towards the kneeling girl, whose action is subtly changed for although she genuflects

wood, 36 × 39 cm. I am most grateful to Andreas Schumacher for his help with both versions of the subject in the Alte Pinakothek. Other copies, with varied aspect ratios, known to me only from photographs are: (a) offered at Chiswick Auctions, 16 May 2018, lot 52 (oil on canvas 99 × 131 cm, brought to my attention by Jeremy Wood); (b) in the Sackville Collection, Knole (dimensions unavailable); (c) in the Ancaster Collection, Grimsthorp Castle (dimensions unavailable); and (d) unlocated German private collection in 1995 (oil on canvas, 110 × 125 cm, brought to my attention by Andreas Schumacher).

13 Wood, *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*, vol. I, p. 28. The five *Allegories of the Senses* are discussed by Christine van Mulders. See van Mulders, *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*, nos. 10–14, pp. 53–71.

before the seated woman, to whom she seems to have just delivered the flagon, it is less in supplication than in achievement. The older woman wears a green dress with a red sash which, winding over her near shoulder and, intersecting with the shoulder strap of her dress, creates an arch; the younger one's loose plait falls in a regular curve under her right wrist, then vertically between her breasts.

As far as one can judge from the copies, this lost painting was probably executed in the first half of the 1530s. Its subject is not immediately evident but, fortunately, we know what it was. In Mary of Hungary's posthumous inventory, drawn up in 1558, is an item which seems to have remained unnoticed and unpublished until 2010: 'un lienço grande y en el pintado la diosa Benus y Cupido detrás della, quando Siches se presentava ante Benus, con sus molduras alrededor dorados hecho por Tiçano' (a large canvas on which is painted the goddess Venus and Cupid behind her, when Psyche presents herself before Venus, with its moulded and gilded frame. Done by Titian).[14] This listing, well within Titian's lifetime, to which Miguel Falomir drew my attention, allows us to identify the lost painting with some confidence as *Psyche before Venus*,[15] an identification that is supported by four independent sources. When the erudite Cassiano dal Pozzo saw the painting in the Alcázar in 1626, he described it quite fully and thought that it was probably a '*favola di psiche*' (fable of Psyche).[16] In 1640, in Rubens's posthumous inventory, no. 11 was 'une Psyché avec une bouteille à la main, retouchée par Titian' (a Psyche with a bottle in her hands, retouched by Titian), so it appears that, as well as copying Titian's painting, Rubens also owned a variant of it. Rubens's now lost picture reappeared in 1657 in the inventory of Frans Snyders as '*Een opsieghi van Tiesian en Rubens*' (A Psyche by Titian and Rubens) valued at 200 guilders.[17] The subject is

14 Checa Cremades, *dirigido por, Los Inventarios de Carlo V y la familia imperial/The Inventories of Charles V and the Imperial family*, vol. III, p. 2914.

15 Falomir, 'Titian, Mary of Hungary, and *Psyche*': Falomir's article and mine were prepared independently and there are inevitably some overlaps and a few differences of interpretation.
Mary owned twelve Cupid and Psyche tapestries, so Apuleius's story presumably appealed to her; for her patronage see Bob. C. Van der Boogent, 'María de Hungaría', pp. 2807–2822. Whether Mary (1505–1558) commissioned Titian's painting, as Falomir believes, which would imply a date for it of c. 1550, or whether it was gifted to her, which would allow my preferred dating, remain open questions.

16 Anselmi, *Il Diario del Viaggio in Spagna del Cardinal Francesco Barberini*, pp. 231–232: '[…] un quadro pur de meze figure d'una donna con un vaso in mano, e un altra donna che pare gli si voglia inginocchiare, e far riverenza come per pigliare di sua mano il vaso con due ò tre altre figurine, che può esser qualque pezzo della favola di Psiche' (a painting also of half-length figures of a woman with a vase in her hand and another woman who seems to wish to kneel and make reverence [to her] as if to take the vase from her hands, with two or three other small figures, which might be some episode in the fable of Psyche) see also Falomir, *Tiziano*, pp. 264 and 401.

17 Wood, *Corpus*, p. 28. The phrasing in Rubens's inventory is ambiguous, but the retouching is more likely to have been his than Titian's. Of course, if this painting was misattributed in the inventories and was entirely by Rubens it could have been—and probably was—Jan Breughel's source. But if it was by

correctly—if loosely—identified in Rubens's inventory, either because he himself was erudite—few artists more so—or because he gleaned accurate information when he was in Spain. Thirdly—another reference I owe to Miguel Falomir—in the posthumous inventory of the Marquis del Carpio of 1689 was 'Otro quadro de Siquis y Cupido y Venus Senttada con un basso en la mano y uno Satiro vuelta de Espaldas y otro Satiro Levanttando una Bandeja con frutta original del Tiziano de Vara y media de Caida y dos Varas de ancho con marco Dorado y Tallado en Seiscientos Ducados' (Another picture of Psyche and Cupid and Venus seated with a vase in her hands and a Satyr turned sideways and another Satyr lifting a basket with fruit, original by Titian, a Vara and a half in height and two Varas in width, with a carved and gilded frame, [valued] at six hundred ducats).[18] Finally, when the Durazzo-Pallavicini version was purchased from one Oratio Carlo Lercaro on 13 June 1702, it was described as a '*favola di Psiche*' (fable of Psyche).[19] Thus Cassiano in 1626, Rubens in 1640, the del Carpio inventory of 1689, and the Durazzo inventory of 1702 support, if imprecisely, the identification of the picture described in Mary's inventory.

IV

It was once again Miguel Falomir who first observed that Titian's composition is based on Giulio Romano's representation of *Psyche before Proserpine* in the Sala di Psiche of Palazzo Te, executed in 1527/8, reproduced here from a contemporary, probably studio, copy of Giulio's preliminary drawing (Figure 6.6).[20]

Titian greatly admired Giulio—the single painter-contemporary of whom he is known to have made a portrait—and derived much from him, in particular from his residually Raphaelesque work of the later 1520s. In Giulio's fresco, Proserpine gives Psyche a marble vase—rather than the casket described by Apuleius—in the presence of Pluto and two frightening furies, one of whom is accompanied by Cerberus; Cupid, of course, is nowhere to be seen. But although the lunette

Titian, even in part, then it must have been acquired by Rubens before 1617, an unusually early date in his pattern of collecting—unless we assume that Rubens, having made a copy after Titian's *Psyche* in 1603, later acquired an autograph or studio version of it.

18 Burke and Cherry, *Collections of Paintings in Madrid*, vol. I, p. 850. It is unclear whether the dimensions (126 × 168 cm), which do not correspond precisely to those of any other known version, included the frame. The valuation implies that the painting was believed to be an autograph.

19 Valcanover in Cattaneo Adorno, *Il Palazzo Durazzo Pallavicini*, pp. 228–229.

20 Personal communication, developed further by Falomir. The drawing reproduced here was lot no. 55 in Phillips' London Sale, 8 July 1998; it is somewhat larger than Giulio's Louvre *modello* which measures 198 × 370 mm. See Falomir 'Titian, Mary of Hungary, and *Psyche*'.

6.6. Studio? of Giulio Romano after Giulio Romano, *Psyche before Proserpine*, 1527/8, Whereabouts unknown.

fresco offered formal inspiration for the relationship between two women, one enthroned, the other supplicant—and provides a *terminus post quem* for Titian's picture—Giulio's depiction is of a different and more alarming situation. The subject of Titian's lost painting is one that finds no precise equivalent in Apuleius's text, in Giulio's cycle, or in any other visual treatment of the story of Psyche, such as the founding—if incomplete—fresco cycle by Raphael in the Farnesina or the Master of the Die's suite of engravings after drawings by Michael Coxcie, which, in turn, partly follow lost sketches by Raphael. What Titian seems to have represented is an earlier moment in the story of Psyche: *Psyche Offering Venus the Vase of Water from the River Styx*. This episode had been depicted, differently, by Raphael in a pendentive in the Farnesina but is absent from Giulio's Sala di Psiche and from the suite by the Master of the Die.

Titian manipulated the subject so radically as nearly to obscure it.[21] At this point in Apuleius's narrative, Cupid has been banished to his chamber and should not appear behind his mother—even chastened. Nor is there any warrant for the inclusion of a welcoming committee, a satyr with a basket of fruit and Pan or Bacchus

21 The most thorough and thoughtful account of Titian's composition before that of Falomir is by Wood, *Corpus* I, App. Titian 3, pp. 287–290, with full bibliography. Wood recognized the subject as *Psyche Offering Venus the Vase of Water from the River Styx* but pointed out the obstacles to this interpretation; Mary of Hungary's inventory was published only after his book had gone to press.

with a bunch of grapes, although Pan—characterized by Apuleius as elderly—does make a sympathetic appearance earlier in the story when he discourages Psyche from suicide. Psychologically, Venus's impassivity is inappropriate at this juncture, for Psyche—thanks to Jupiter's aid—has passed a test she was intended to fail, and Venus might be expected to register annoyance and surprise, as she does in Apuleius's text and in Raphael's fresco. There are also other, less significant, discrepancies: for example, in the text and in Raphael's fresco, Psyche presents a small 'jar of polished crystal' (Apuleius) to Venus, whereas in Titian's painting it is large and bejewelled, rather in the nature of a diplomatic gift.

Clearly, Titian rewrote both his textual and his visual sources and remodelled Giulio's representation of one episode in Psyche's ordeal into another, which he then used as a platform for further inventions. What Titian appears to show is not found in Apuleius or elsewhere in Renaissance imagery: a proleptic reconciliation between Venus and Psyche in the presence of Cupid, with Bacchus/Pan and a satyr offering refreshment. In adapting the action of *Psyche Offering Venus the Vase of Water from the River Styx*, Titian was, surely intentionally, signalling the story's happy outcome: Venus's eventual acceptance of her erstwhile rival as the bride of her wayward son. It is entirely conjectural whether, in this rewriting of Psyche's story, Titian might have received advice from one of his literary friends or even have been working to a programme. But, as in other instances, Titian's individualistic approach and willingness to modify his literary sources—which purists like Raffaello Borghini considered high-handed—as well as his visual ones subsequently caused confusion.[22]

V

Uncertainty about the subject of Mary of Hungary's canvas, which passed by inheritance to Philip II and Philip III, is evident as early as in 1614, when it was recorded in the Sala de Audiencias of the Palacio del Pardo. The scribe responsible, presumably unaware of Mary's inventory, was vague about the subject and resorted to description: 'Otro lienço del ticiano en están quattro figures dos mujeres un hombre y un satire con un frutero de rosas en las manos y la mujer con un Cupido al lado en el hombro y un baso de bidrio en los manos con su marco de oro y negro'. (Another canvas by Titian in which are four figures, two women, a man and a satyr with a platter of roses in his hands and the woman with a Cupid beside her shoulder and a glass vase in her hands, with its frame in gold and black.)[23] It was inventoried again, still in the Pardo, with the same

22 Who famously attacked Titian's interpretation of *Venus and Adonis*: see Borghini, *Il Riposo*, p. 64.

23 Leiva and Rebollo, *El Inventario del Alcázar de Madrid de 1666*, p. 609.

description, in 1623,[24] and although when he saw it in 1626, then in the Alcázar, Cassiano did identify the subject correctly, in general terms and tentatively: 'che può esser qualque pezzo […]' (which might be some piece […])[25]

A decade later, in the 1636 Alcázar inventory, the painting, although described in some detail, was, as in 1614, unidentified:

> Unas nymphas. Un lienço al olio, con moldura dorada y negro, que con ella tiene de largo cinco pies, poco más o menos, y en el ai dos figures de mugeres sentadas, una bestida de uerde, con un bidrio grande en las manos, con guarnición de oro, medio de agua y a las espaldas un cupidillo echado en ellas y sobre sus maneçillas. La otra en camisa, la mano derecha puesta en los pechos y manto colorado, y detrás de ella un Sátiro con un açafate de plata alçado en las manos con unas granadas ençima, y en medio del quadro una figura de un hombre desnudo con el braço alçado a lo largo, es del mano del Tiçiano.
>
> (Some nymphs. Oil on canvas with its gold and black frame which with it (i.e. including the frame) is five feet wide, more or less, and in it there are two figures of seated women, one dressed in green with in her hands a large glass with gold mountings, half full of water, and with a small cupid leaning against her shoulders and [at a level] above her hands. The other [woman] in a shift, her right hand placed on her breast and [with] a coloured mantle and behind her a Satyr with a silver platter raised in his hands with some pomegranates on it, and in the centre of the painting a nude man with his arm raised aloft; it is by the hand of Titian).[26]

Psyche's name never appears in later inventories: in 1666, as no. 948, the painting hung in the *Bóuedas del Tiçiano*, together with some of Titian's and Veronese's most precious mythologies: 'Otra del mismo tamaño con una mujer que tiene un vaso en la mano y hay un satire y otras figures de mano de Tiziano' ('Another of the same size with a woman who holds a vase in her hand and with a satyr and other figures, by the hand of Titian) (i.e., 'vara y quarto en quadro' which, taking the *vara* as 84 cm, is a square of about 105 × 105 cm., close to both the Louvre and ex-Corsini *Allegories*) and valued at 'quatteocientos ducatos de plata' (four hundred silver ducats), an appropriate price for a Titian of that size.[27] In 1686, as no. 4089 in

24 de Azácarate, 'Inventario del Palacio del Pardo de 1623', pp. 783–794 (yet another reference owed to Miguel Falomir).

25 Anselmi, *Il Diario del Viaggio in Spagna del Cardinal Francesco Barberini*.

26 It was no. 938, then hanging in the Pieça nueva del quarto bajo delante del dormitoria de su majestad que mira al Cierço: Leiva and Rebollo, *Quadros y Otras Cosas que tienen su Majestad Felipe IV en este Alcázar de Madrid*, p. 110.

27 Leiva and Rebollo, *El Inventario del Alcázar de Madrid de 1666*, p. 609.

the Prado typescript, still in the Bóuedas, it was described in virtually the same words: 'Otra del mismo tamaño, con una mujer que hace un vaso y un satire y otras figures, de mano del Ticiano'.[28] In the 1701 inventory, in the same location it was no. 497: 'Ottra del mismo tamaño Con una mujer que tiene Un baso en la mano y Un Satiro y Ottras figures de man del Tiziano, tasada en trecientos doblones'; the price reduction parallels that of other paintings in this chamber.[29] Thus, although the painting was consistently ascribed to Titian, and consistently prized, its subject remained unspecified. According to Leiva and Rebollo, this picture is not found in the Royal Collection after 1701, and they believe it to have been destroyed in the Alcázar fire of 1734.[30] However, in the inventory of Isabella Farnese of 1747, we find, as no. 26: 'Otra de vara y media en quadro (126 × 126 cm—perhaps including the frame?) de Baco, Benus y Ceres, Copia del Tiziano' (Another of a vara and a half square of Bacchus, Venus and Crees. A copy of Titian), valued at 1500 reales. Presumably, as the inventory says, this was a copy, perhaps abbreviated, unless it was the original picture, mistakenly downgraded. In any case, this one too is lost.[31] As for the subject, it should be noted that the identity of the Durazzo-Pallavicini canvas was likewise unstable: in an inventory of 1768 it was described as a *una Stagione con Satiri* (a Season with Satyrs)—presumably an allegory of Autumn—and in 1792 as *Cerere con Bacco, ninfa e Amore* (Ceres with Bacchus, a nymph and Love [i.e. Cupid]).

VI

The *Psyche before Venus* was also produced in a second version in a marginally more horizontal orientation. Now lost, a copy of it, often attributed to Titian's studio, is owned by the Alte Pinakothek (Figure 6.7; oil on canvas, 115 × 132 cm; 1:1.14)[32] Although in this painting, which I call *Munich 2*, the slight extension in

28 Typescript of the 1686 inventory in the library of the Museo Nacional del Prado.

29 Bayton, *Inventarios Reales*, vol. I, p. 67.

30 Leiva and Rebollo, *El Inventario del Alcázar de Madrid de 1666*, p. 609.

31 Fernández, Cuesta, and Preciado, *Inventarios Reales, Colecciones de Pinturas de Felipe V y Isabel Farnese*, vol. II, p. 170, no. 26.

32 An interesting response to this picture is by Charles Lock Eastlake: '*Venus Initiating a Young Bachante*, attributed to Tizian Vecellio. […] This is a life-size group displaying fine chromatic qualities. Note the exquisite sense of colour expressed in the silver dish full of fruit held up by a satyr against the bright Italian sky. That perfect harmony is not secured is probably due to the depth of tone in the green drapery round the form of Venus, and the dazzling whiteness of her flesh, apposed as it is to the dark-skinned Bacchus, a youthful figure who stands behind. Venus herself is a sensuous-looking beauty, whose lips are too red for due relation to her complexion in its present state, but possibly the carnations have been lost in parts. The Bacchante, with her retreating forehead, presents no very attractive type of womanhood.

6.7. Unidentified painter after Titian, *Psyche before Venus*, c. 1540?, Munich, Alte Pinakothek.

width lends the composition greater stability, the difference from the square is insufficient for it to be considered a reformatting. In *Munich 2* the action of the figures is identical and the colouring is the same, but there are certain differences from Mary of Hungary's version. One of these is accounted for by a later over-painting that superimposed a tall, draped form on the vessel held by Venus, presumably to provoke speculation about what it concealed. But other features are original: the near shoulder of the seated woman is covered with a veil, she wears a bracelet on her right wrist, and the supplicant's plait is now more tightly braided and hangs

The lovely blue sky, with at least three distinct shades of colour in it, forms an excellent background to the figures, which are admirably modelled. The surface of the thick impasto is unfortunately much defaced by cracks, which a recent coat of varnish does not conceal'.: Eastlake, *Notes on the Principal Pictures in the Old Pinakothek at Munich*, pp. 247–248.

in a half-U over her upper torso.[33] It seems that this canvas was already in Munich in the late sixteenth century and, if so, then two slightly different versions of the same composition were to be found contemporaneously in the collections of different branches of the Hapsburg dynasty.[34] It is worth noting that in none of the inventories in which the two Munich copies are recorded are their subjects *ever* identified as Venus and Psyche.

A variant of *Munich 2* exists in the collection of the National Trust at Tatton Park (1298287; oil on canvas 112 x 139 cm.). Although similar to *Munich 2*, the drapery that falls from Venus's right shoulder is green, not white, and two doves—birds associated with Venus—replace Cupid's bow and quiver. The status of this painting is obviously conjectural, but if it was a product of Titian's studio, then it follows that there was a second close variant of Mary of Hungary's *Psyche before Venus* in

33 Kultzen and Eikemeier, *Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen*, no. 484, pp. 189–191. Thanks to the kindness of the staff of the Stadt Residenzmuseum in Landshut, where this painting is on loan, I was able to study it on 13 June 2017.

34 Kultzen and Eikemeier remarked that *Munich 2* was first recorded in the Munich Residenz in 1618 and, as Annette Krantz kindly ascertained, this was extended back to 1598 by Pieter Diemer, in collaboration with Elke Bujok and Dorothea Diemer: 'Ein dafel darauf *Venus* und *Cupido* mit *Flora* und zwayen *Satyris*, welche Trauben und frücht zutragen' (a painting on wood of Venus and Cupid and two Satyrs, who bring grapes and fruit) although it must be assumed that, as in other cases in this inventory, the support was misdescribed. In the commentary volume to Fickler's inventory by Dorothea Diemer, Peter Diemer, Lorenz Seelig, Peter Volk, Brigitte Volk-Knüttel and others, the authors argue that this picture was probably one of three sent by Titian in 1568/9 as gifts via Niccolò Stopio to the Archduke Albrecht, Hans Jakob Fugger and Jacopo Strada, and was identical with that intended for Fugger, which Stopio described as 'una dea Pomona, che e una bellissima donna ritratta, con varij frutti che le vengono presentati' (a goodess Pomona who is portrayed as a very beautiful woman, with various fruits that have been presented to her) but which—still according to Stopio—Strada liked so much that he kept it and instead gave Fugger a painting of a *Persiana* (see Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian*, vol. II, cat. L 28). To accept that the *Pomona* of 1568 is the painting described in 1598 entails accepting: first that Stopio misidentified the subject, and second that it passed from Strada to the Ducal collections and was then reidentified. These assumptions seem to me to be questionable, especially since existing or recorded versions of *Pomona* by Titian and his studio are very different in form from *Munich 2*. Nor does *Munich 2* look at all like a painting produced by Titian or someone in his workshop in the late 1560s. In my view, Wethey's suggestion (II, cat.60, Lost Items 1) that Strada's *Pomona* was identical with a *Young Woman with a Tray of Fruit* recorded in Prague in 1619 is more plausible. But it is interesting to speculate that if Stopio's reference to *Pomona does* apply to *Munich 2*, then Titian's composition was sufficiently elastic—or vague—to accommodate yet another subject. The painting described in 1598 is, apparently, next recorded, now as on canvas, in 1641/2 in the inventory of Kammergalerie as 'Ein Venus, doi einen Abgott in der hanndt helt, hinder ir der Cupido, dabey noch 2 figuren und ain Satyrus, der auf dem Kopf ein Kerbl mit frichten tregt, vom Titiano auf Tuech gemahlt, is hoch 4 Schuech 4 Zoll und 4 Schuech 5 Zol brait' (A Venus who holds an idol in her hands, behind her a Cupid with another two figures and a Satyr who holds a dish with fresh fruit above his head, by Titian painted on canvas…); this picture is clearly *Munich 2* and the *Abgott* implies that the vase on Venus's lap had by then been overpainted: See Kultzen and Eikemeier, *Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen*, p. 216, no. 3208 (3187). Diemer, Diemer, Seelig, Volk, Volk-Knüttel, and others, *Die Münchner Kunstkammer*, pp. 986–997.

6.8. Alessandro Varotari, called il Padovanino, *Allegory*, c. 1615, Milan, Castello Sforzesco.

which Venus's costume and Psyche's coiffure were slightly modified. But there is no indication in these pictures of any change of subject. Finally, the type seen in *Munich 2*, recognizable from the fall of the drapery over the seated woman's shoulder and the supplicant's hairstyle, was followed and adapted in a more emphatically horizontal version, rather overdecorated, in an unknown private collection; the status of this picture, which does not seem likely to have come from Titian's immediate circle, is uncertain but it is of interest in that the glass sphere from the Louvre *Allegory* reappears, transformed into a large jug, which seems to contain a small figure.[35] It may have been knowledge of this or a similar painting—recognizable from the sphere, as well the other features noted above—that inspired Padovanino's pronouncedly horizontal rendering in Castello Sforzesco (Figure 6.8; oil on canvas, 111 × 155 cm). That painting does not include the faun and satyr, but the three main figures do appear and Eros can be seen as standing within the glass sphere. Is he

35 Surviving in an unknown private collection; Kristina Herrmann Fiore seems to be the first and only author to illustrate and discuss this picture, known to her from a photograph in the Bombelli Archive. It did not fall within the purview of Angenelli and de Marchi, *Pittura dal Duecento al primo Cinquecento nelle fotografie di Girolamo Bombelli*. See Herrmann Fiore, '*Allegoria coniugale* di Tiziano', pp. 411–420, 413–414. and 419; Angenelli and de Marchi, *Pittura dal Duecento al primo Cinquecento nelle fotografie di Girolamo Bombelli*.

imprisoned? Or is he a vision? Did this Cupid originate in a painting by Titian or his studio? Or was it Padovanino's own invention?[36]

VII

A painting whose description sounds very similar to those just discussed was inventoried in Madrid, in 1666, in the Pieza primera del quarto bajo (First room of the lower floor) of the Alcázar, the king's audience chamber: 'No. 336: Otra pintura, copia del Tiziano, con una mujer que tiene una jarra d'oro en la mano y otras figures en trezientos y treynta reales de plata' (Another painting, a copy of Titian, with a woman who holds a golden pitcher in her hand and other figures, at three hundred and thirty silver reales).[37] But the similarity is deceptive for this picture included a *jarra d'oro*—a silver-gilt flagon—not a *bidrio*. It can be followed in successive inventories, with fluctuations in its value. In that of 1701/3 it was no. 225 in the same place but was transferred soon after to the Quarto cinco de la camarera (the fifth chamber of the apartment) in the Cuarto de la Reyna. In 1734, it was no. 979, among the 'Pinturas salvados del Incendio' (paintings saved from the fire); its dimensions were provided: 'vara y dos tierces de ancho y vara y media de alto', which translate to c. 126 × 140 cm, about the same as *Munich 2*, and the subject is given as '*la Diosa Ceres*'.[38] In 1747, then in the Buen Retiro, it was no. 977 'Ottro de vara y dos tterzias de ancho y vara y media de alto, de la Diosa Ceres, copia del Ticiano en mil y quincientos reales' (Another of a vara and two thirds in width and a avra and a half in height, of the goddess Ceres, copy of Titian, at one thusand five hundred reales). Recorded with a merely descriptive title in 1772, it acquired a different identity in the Buen Retiro inventories of 1794 and 1808/14, in both of which it was described as: 'Otra, copia de Ticiano con la Diosa Juno entregando el vaso de la Discordia a Pandora, de vara y media de alto y vara y dos tercias de ancho' (Another, copy of Titian with the goddess Juno presenting the vase of Discord to Pandora, a vara and a half in height and a vara and two thirds wide) (126 × 140 cm; 1:1.1), with a consistent valuation of 160 reales.[39] In 1882 this canvas was deposited in the Museum of Tarragona, whence it disappeared—presumably

36 Ruggeri, 'Alessandro Varotari ditto il Padovanino', p. 118, fig. 168 'di cronologia forse abbastanza giovanile'; see Maria Teresa Fiorio in *Amor Sacro e Profano*, no.147, p. 434. A similar painting was seen by Ridolfi in the house of Galeozzo Religio in Padua. Ridolfi interpreted the infant in platonic terms as the soul of the world: see Herrmann Fiore, '*Allegoria coniugale* di Tiziano', p. 411.

37 Leiva and Rebollo, *El Inventario del Alcázar de Madrid de 1666*, p. 350.

38 Bayton, *Inventarios Reales*, vol. I, p. 40; Leiva and Rebollo, *El Inventario del Alcázar de Madrid de 1666*, p. 350.

39 Leiva and Rebollo, *El Inventario del Alcázar de Madrid de 1666*, p. 350.

destroyed—in the fateful year 1936.[40] It seems never to have been photographed. Thus, it would appear that Titian or a member of his studio produced a variant of his *Psyche* composition, which we might call *jarra d'oro 1*, in which a metal flagon replaced the glass jug and that this was known to the painter who completed the *Allegory* in Vienna (Figure 6.1).

To complicate matters further—were they not already sufficiently complicated—another painting, rather wider, but obviously similar in subject to *jarra d'oro 1*, and presumably a Bourbon acquisition for the Royal Collection, is recorded in the 'piez vigesimo nona (que servia para comer la Reyna nrs sra siendo Princessa)' (the twenty-ninth room (which served as the dining room of our Queen when she was Princess) in the Palacio Real in 1747 as no. 58 and 18 'Otra lienzo de dos varas de ancho por vara y media de alto' c. 126 × 168 cm, (1:1.33) and described as 'Copia del Tiziano de Juno, Venus y Cupido' (Another canvas of two varas in width and by a vara and a half in height. Copy of Titian, of Juno, Venus and Cupid) (which may imply a reduction of the cast to three). But although classed as a copy, it was accorded the high valuation of 6000 reales.[41] In 1811, now upgraded to *Ticiano* and hanging in the Gavinette del Rey, it was no. 508 in the inventory of the Palacio Real, described as 'Venus tenendo una Urna' (Venus holding an urn), the key detail which establishes that it was a version of the *jarra d'oro* type rather than any of the others. This painting, which we might call *jarra d'oro 2*, is untraced after 1811, presumably removed by Joseph Bonaparte or one of his officers.[42]

Was the *jarra d'oro* composition—known in Madrid in two versions (one with the proportions 1:1.1 and the other 1.1.3) yet another representation—unrecognized in the inventories—of the story of Psyche? This is possible, of course, but a metal urn seems an unlikely container for the waters of the Styx, and there is another option.

VIII

Neither of the two *jarra d'oro* paintings in the Spanish Royal Collection has ever been linked with Psyche in Spanish sources and it is worth considering whether, in this variant, Titian once more transformed the subject of his composition. The Royal inventories present us with a choice of the main figure's identity and, therefore, of the paintings' subjects. In those of 1734 and 1747, in *jarra d'oro 1*, the seated woman is called Ceres; in those of 1794 and 1811/14, she becomes Juno and the supplicant

40 Leiva and Rebollo, *El Inventario del Alcázar de Madrid de 1666*, p. 350.

41 Fernández, Cuesta, and Preciado, *Inventarios Reales, Colecciones de Pinturas de Felipe V y Isabel Farnese*, vol. II, p. 220.

42 Luna, *La pinturas y esculturas del Palacio Real de Madrid en 1811*, p. 99.

6.9. Jacob Matham after Titian, *Allegory* (*Sine Bacco e Cere Venere friget*), c. 1590?, engraving, Amsterdam, Rijksmusuem.

Pandora. In *jarra d'oro 2* in 1747/58, the seated woman is called Venus. Although the seated woman in the *jarra d'oro* type is seen alternatively as Venus, Juno, or Ceres, the supplicant is identified only once, and then as Pandora. But this is odd since Pandora generally holds a casket, not a flagon, and Juno has no part in her story. The alternative, that the seated woman is Ceres—an identification briefly adopted for the Durazzo Pallavicini canvas in 1792—is, on the face of it, more plausible. Like Juno, she is mature, full-bodied, and stately, and one might reasonably suppose the satyr and the faun, one offering fruit, the other grapes, to be her servants. The action would therefore demonstrate the importance of nourishment to the supplicant, who genuflects before her. But since Pandora is unconnected with Ceres, another identity must be found for the 'supplicant'.[43] One obvious possibility, despite the silence of the inventories, is that she is Persephone returning to her mother from the rigours and meagre nourishment of the underworld. The flagon in this case presumably emits incense—to purify her imagination.

43 Of course, Psyche also asks for help—vainly—from Juno and Ceres during her quest, but there is no question of any vessel being passed between them.

But another, more likely, interlocutress for Ceres is Venus, and this suggestion is supported by a reversed engraving by Jacob Matham, inscribed as after Titian (Figure 6.9; 283 × 385 mm). The format, 1:1.4, is more pronouncedly horizontal than even *jarra d'oro 2* and whereas this may be Matham's responsibility, it is not impossible that Titian or his studio produced a further, stretched, version of the composition.[44] In Matham's engraving, the seated woman holds a metal urn which is emitting vapour, probably perfume.[45] At the lower right are the two doves seen in the variant of *Munich 2* mentioned above.[46] The forms of the seated woman's drapery and the plait of the supplicant, who now wears a necklace, follow that model. A familiar iconography, allegorical rather than narrative, is made explicit in the inscription *Sine Cerere et Bacho Friget Venus* (without Ceres [i.e. food] and Bacchus [i.e. wine] Venus [i.e. Love] grows cold) and this Terentian adage should, in principle, cue our reading of the print and at least of the *jarra do'oro* paintings. The characters are, of course, mythological but they are present as representatives of their specific realms, not as actors in a playlet. Fruits and grapes—that is, wine—are being gathered or presented. But how may we identify the women?

It has been noted that Matham included what seems to be a single leaf emerging from the supplicant's hair, which would identify *her* as Ceres. But Ceres *provides* sustenance and warmth; she does not *require* it; a single leaf is hardly a clear label and may be no more than a visual misunderstanding on Matham's part. Surely the seated woman, neither cold nor hungry, is Ceres, as noted in the 1734 and 1747 inventories of the lost Spanish painting, in which case the supplicant can only be Venus. To show Venus as needy is unusual, but around 1530 Titian had begun a painting for Duke Alfonso D'Este representing an encounter between Minerva and Venus: whether the theme was sense conquering or consoling sensibility is open to debate. Put aside at the duke's death on 31 October 1534, Titian returned to it three decades later and transformed it into a political allegory for Emperor Maximilian: *Spain Coming to the Aid of Religion*. Maximilian's painting is lost but

44 Strauss, *The Illustrated Bartsch*, 4, p. 195, no. 210 (185). The unfinished *Allegory of Venus and Cupid* (130 × 155 cm) in Chicago (1943–1990; Lloyd, *Italian Paintings before 1600*, pp. 248–252), which may be influenced in part by Matham's engraving, shows a seated woman, seemingly Venus, encouraging Cupid to offer arrows to the supplicant woman; they are accompanied by a faun and a satyr as in the compositions by Titian and his school. The date and authorship of this painting are controversial but, to judge only from a photograph, it does not seem to me to have much to do with Titian; I would venture the suggestion that it is a seventeenth-century Bolognese product and Jeremy Wood observes that it has points in common with the late work of Guido Reni. A variant of this canvas serves as an overdoor in the Audience Chamber of the Residenz in Würzburg.

45 This was followed, but with different fluting, in the Vienna painting.

46 Titian also considered including doves at the lower left of the ex-Rokeby version of *Venus and Adonis*: see Turner and Joannides, 'Titian's *Rokeby* Venus and Adonis and the Role of Working Templates within his Development of the Theme', pp. 48–76.

6.10. Giulio Fontana after Titian, *Spain Coming to the Aid of Religion*, c. 1558, engraving, London, British Museum.

it was engraved by Giulio Fontana probably—but not quite certainly—before it left Italy (Figure 6.10), and Titian and his studio made two replicas of it.[47]

47 The one now in the Prado was sent to Philip II in 1575; for the other, first recorded in the Aldobrandini inventory of 1603, see De Marchi, *Quadreria Doria Pamphilj catalogo general*, pp. 372–373 with earlier

There is no reason to suppose that the poses and characterizations of Minerva and Venus were much changed when they were recast as Spain and Religion, and in pose and mood Venus/Religion bears a considerable resemblance to the supplicant in the *jarra d'oro* composition. Thus, it seems that for the *jarra d'oro* type, at least, the inscription on Matham's engraving is acceptable and that the subject is Venus mendicant approaching Ceres for restoration.[48] If so, then Titian found his composition elastic enough to accommodate a third allegorical narrative.

IX

All these paintings by or after Titian and his workshop seem to date in their invention—although not necessarily in the execution(s) of the known examples—from the decade 1530–1540. Some twenty years later, paralleling his reworking of *Minerva and Venus*, Titian returned to aspects of his composition but now rethought it in cast, action, and meaning, fusing it with one of his Ur-themes, the limiting of Cupid's power, the theme seen in the under-drawing of the Louvre's canvas.

It is to two canvases, one of them among Titian's most famous, that I now turn. Both of them amplify, synthesize, and narrativize the themes seen in the paintings discussed so far. One is *The Blindfolding of Cupid*, which first came to light in England, at Stowe House, in 1739/40 and is now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (Figure 6.11). It is usually dated to the 1550s and although generally considered a studio product, areas of it seem of sufficient quality for it to be acceptable in broad terms as Titian's work.[49] Its dimensions are now 122 × 97 cm but it has lost nearly half its width as it once measured about 122 × 190 cm, that is, 1:1.6. Its original appearance can be gleaned from a rather weak and slightly narrower variant in Vienna (Figure 6.12).[50] The Washington picture, too, seems to

bibliography.

48 This discussion is much indebted to Wood's analysis in *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, XXVI*, pp. 287–292.

49 Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian*, vol. III, X–5, pp. 2017–2018 as 'Follower of Titian (Lambert Sustris?); Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, pp. 503–506. Pallucchini gave it to Titian and dated it to the early 1560s, a view he reaffirmed in *Profilo di Tiziano*. See Pallucchini, *Tiziano*, vol. I, pp. 169–170, and pls. L1, II, pp. 452–453; Pallucchini, *Profilo di Tiziano*, p. 55 and pl. XLVII. This is also the view of Giorgio Tagliaferro in which its relation to the Borghese canvas is discussed. Nothing is known of the picture's provenance before 1739. It now measures 122.4 × 97.3 cm but was originally about the same size as the Borghese canvas. See Tagliaferro, Aikema, and others, *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, p. 239.

50 KHM GG7973; oil on canvas, 123 × 156 cm; I am most grateful to Dr. Francesca Del Torre for knowledge of this painting; the differences in drapery and characterisation between the two might be due to the copyist, but also may indicate that another version once existed, presumably antedating the one in Washington, perhaps once owned by the Marqués de Laganés (see note 53).

6.11. Titian and Studio, *The Blindfolding of Cupid*, c. 1555?, Washington, D.C. National Gallery of Art. © Photo: courtesy of the *National Gallery of Art, Washington* Open Access Program.

6.12. Unidentified painter after Titian and/or Studio, *The Blindfolding of Cupid*, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.

have existed in another lost version, claimed as an autograph picture, once in the inexhaustible Spanish Royal Collection but now lost.[51] The second example is the famous painting in Galleria Borghese (Figure 3.1; 118 × 185 cm, 1:1.6), in which the action on the left is much the same as in the Washington canvas, but in which the

51 1686, no. 907. This picture, presented to Philip IV by the Marqués de Laganés in 1655, is first described in the inventory of 1686 (the relevant pages of the 1666 inventory are missing) when it was hanging on the Bobedas de Ticiano in the Alcázar as: 'Otra Pintura de las Diosa Ceres que la ofrezen differentes frutas y Venus tapando los ojos a Cupido de vara y tres quartas de ancho y vara y quarta de alto (about 105 × 147 cm), de mano del Tiçiano' (Another painting of the goddess Ceres to whom are offered different fruits, and Venus binding Cupid's eyes, a vara and three quarters in width and a vara and a quarter in height, by the hand of Titian). See Leiva and Rebollo, *El Inventario del Alcázar de Madrid de 1666*, p. 617. Consistently attributed to Titian himself, it is traceable through all the later inventories, sometimes with slightly different measurements. In 1701 it was valued rather high at 600 doblones (no. 505) and although described as 'mui maltratado' (very damaged) after the Alcázar fire of 1734, it was still priced at 6,000 in 1794, when it was hanging in the Piex de Comer (Dining Room) of the Palacio Real. It is presumably the picture inventoried in 1811 in the Gavinete del Rey (the King's Cabinet) of Palacio Real as no. 581, *Venus vendando los ojos al Amor* but, unrecorded thereafter, it must be presumed stolen or destroyed. Luna, *La pinturas y esculturas del Palacio Real de Madrid en 1811*, p. 99.

figures on the right differ in character and pose.[52] It is unanimously agreed that the Borghese canvas was painted about 1565 in the fluid style of the *Europa* and the Prado *Danae* but it is undocumented before its appearance in the collection of Scipione Borghese in 1613. Falomir has suggested that it is the 'otro quadro de la diosa Venus vendando los ojos di su hijo Cupido y otras ninfas que le traen presentes' (another painting of the goddess Venus blindfolding her son Cupid while other nymphs bring gifts) recorded, without the name of the painter, in the sale of the collection of Antonio Perez in 1585 and that it was subsequently reimported to Italy.[53] The Borghese picture, too, was replicated in a canvas recorded in the Spanish Royal Collection which may or may not be identical with one that still exists and is now in the Prado.

In both pictures the seated woman seems to be in dialogue with the winged infant—recast as Anteros—who leans against her. She now takes a more active role

52 The version in Madrid, probably but not certainly acquired by Philip IV, was 1686, no. 906: 'Otra pintura de siete quartos de largo y vara y quarta de alto (about 105 × 147 cm), de una Venus tapando los ojos â Cupido, de mano del Tiçiano, y está junto a la puerta que sale al Parque' (Another painting of seven quarters in width and a vara and a quarter in height of a Venus binding Cupid's eyes, by the hand of Titian, and it is joined to the door [presumably as an overdoor] that opens to the Park). Leiva and Rebollo, *El Inventario del Alcázar de Madrid de 1666*, p. 616, n. 1. Leiva and Rebollo point out that while the canvas recorded in 1686 is also described in the inventory of 1701, it is not traceable later. They express doubt that 1686-906 is identical with Inv. 2557 [formerly MNP 3865] now in the Prado, as Wethey thought and consider that that painting may be a late entry in the Spanish Royal Collection. See Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian*, vol. III, no. 4, copy and variants 3, p. 131. The fullest discussion of Inv. 2557 (oil on canvas, 121 × 185 cm, some 15 cm higher and 47 cm wider than 1686-906) is by Alessandra Zamperini, in Puppi, *Tiziano, L'ultimo atto*, pp. 427–428. If Inv. 2557 could be proven to be of the later sixteenth century, then it might be either the canvas owned by Perez (see note 55) or, if he possessed the original, a copy of that made before it left Spain; but if it is of the seventeenth century, as most scholars have accepted, then it must have been executed directly from the Galleria Borghese *Blindfolding of Cupid* and have been, as Leiva and Rebello suspected, a late arrival in Spain. It may well be, as Zamperini noted, by a Flemish painter and it is worth remembering that Van Dyck executed a copy of the Borghese picture which remained in his possession until his death and which was recorded in Vienna in 1644. See Wood, 'Van Dyck's *Cabinet de Titien*', pp. 680–695. esp. 690 and 695. It is notable that 1686-906 and 1686-907, while varying a little in height, are consistent in width and about 40 cm narrower than the Borghese canvas and the Washington canvas in its original state. Whether this is inaccurate measurement, a narrower original format or, perhaps, trimming to fit some decorative scheme is conjectural.

53 Falomir, *Tiziano*, pp. 264–265, 401–402. For the 1585 sale of the Antonio Perez Collection, see Delaforce, 'The Collection of Anonio Pérez, Secretary of State of Philip II', pp. 742–751. Falomir notes that the painting could have been purchased from Perez's sale by Philip II's advisor, the Madrid-based Paolo Sfrondati, the uncle of Paolo Emilio Sfrondati Pallavicini, Cardinal of Santa Cecilia, from whom the Borghese probably acquired the picture. However, the phrase 'ninfas que le traen presentes' would also fit the painting presented to Philip IV by the Marqués de Laganés in 1655: see note 53. The Borghese painting was recently discussed by Andrea Bayer, who lists and addresses the most significant earlier bibliography. See Bayer, *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, pp. 330–332. Much of what follows relies on Herrmann Fiore, '*Allegoria coniugale* di Tiziano'.

6.13. Titian, *The Blindfolding of Cupid*, (X-ray image), c. 1565, Rome, Galleria Borghese.

and rather than instructing Anteros's brother Eros, a subversive agent of physical passion, attempts to incapacitate him.[54] He will be unable to target either the woman who is blindfolding him or her companions.[55] The action returns us to the under-drawing of the Louvre *Allegory* and the surface of the ex-Corsini picture but in a more dramatic mode, one enriched by the presence of Eros's more docile twin, promoter of friendship rather than erotic love, who looks on pensively. Of course—as Titian knew well—the blindfolding of Eros, intended as a precaution, has perilous consequences: no longer able to select his targets, he will now launch his shafts at random.

When the Washington painting was intact, the figures in the right-hand portion were described as the Graces but this was evidently a misunderstanding.[56] In the surviving section of the canvas, the truncated figure nearest Venus is far from elegant and fully clad; and from the copy neither of the other two plausibly qualifies as a Grace. In short, the right-hand side of the Washington painting was very different from the right-hand side of the Borghese painting, which features two nymphs. But

54 The relevant sections of Francucci's poem are transcribed and analysed by Herrmann Fiore, 'L' *Allegoria coniugale* di Tiziano del Louvre e le derivazioni, connesse con *Venere che benda Amore*'.

55 Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 165–169, provided an overcomplex interpretation whose simplification he accepted in *Problems in Titian*. See Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, pp. 78–80; Panofsky, *Problems in Titian*, pp. 130–137.

56 Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*.

X-rays reveal that the composition of the Washington picture *underlies* the surface of the Roman picture, so the *scheme* of the former, as well as its physical execution, precedes that of the Borghese (Figure 6.13).

The earliest secure mention—and discussion—of the Borghese canvas was in a poem by Scipione Francucci, where it is called *Venus Blindfolding Cupid*, and although some later inventories and visitors' accounts equivocate about the subject, this interpretation is very widely accepted. That in the Washington painting the leading actress *is* Venus—mature, bejewelled, and conscious of her physical charms and not averse from displaying them—can hardly be doubted. Although she binds Cupid's eyes, this expedient is no more than temporary: her amorous potential is evident. But when the canvases in Washington and Rome are compared, a doubt arises: are the leading actresses identical? They are very different in age and character: one approaching thirty, voluptuous, experienced and the other, under twenty, fresh, virginal, her hair unbound. But if not Venus, whom might the young woman be? The nymphs arriving from the right surely offer a clue: the nearer one holds a quiver; her hair hangs loose and her left breast is bare; the second holds a bow and although her hair is up, it is not elaborately coiffured and her costume is light and airy, undecorated and unencumbering, the strap across her shoulder no doubt suspending an unseen quiver against her right hip.[57] Panofsky thought that the bow and the quiver were Cupid's, but they are much larger than the weapons seen in the under-drawing of the Louvre *Allegory* and on the surface of the ex-Corsini painting and are designed for a nymph-size, not a child-size, archer. In any case, had the nymphs confiscated Cupid's weapons, they would surely be stationary; as it is, they are entering the visual field and bringing a bow and full quiver with them as offerings to the seated woman. They will soon be put to a use very different from that of love, for it is the hunt that is insistently invited by the wooded and rolling landscape.

Such features imply that in the Borghese canvas the dominant figure is not Venus but Diana, virgin and huntress. A further argument in favour of Diana is her tiara, which terminates in an efflorescence of tiny crescents (Figure 6.14). The meaning of the action is surely that she has rejected the possibilities of love in favour of her female companions and the pleasures of the hunt.

Of course, in the two paintings that Titian sent to Philip II in 1559, Diana is represented differently: more mature, fuller-bodied, wearing her hair up. But Titian's characterizations are neither stable nor dutiful and in the two Diana subjects it was necessary to show her power and anger; for dramaturgical rather than for iconographical motives it was to Venus—or even Juno—that she was assimilated. But the reverse does not occur: in Titian's work, where she can securely be identified,

57 Francucci names them as Dori and Armilla, but it is unclear why; they have not been otherwise identified; 'Armilla' reminded both Panofsky and Wind of Diana.

6.14. Titian, *The Blindfolding of Cupid*, (detail), c. 1565, Rome, Galleria Borghese.

Venus—inherently unvirginal—is *never* assimilated to Diana. A more relevant comparison for the Borghese painting is Titian's *Diana and Actaeon* (Figure 6.15), in which Diana is purely huntress: slim and elongated, her right breast bared, her hair controlled by a filet for ease of movement, her bow inexorable.

If the Borghese painting represents *Diana Blindfolding Eros*, it must be seen as a deliberate transformation of Washington's *Venus Blindfolding Eros*, whose composition, to repeat, lies beneath its surface and therefore has precedence: the two are adjacent visualizations of adjacent themes, playful subject-shifts of a kind familiar from Titian's treatments of single figures such as *Pomona* and *Salome* or *Salome* and *Judith* and *Herodias* and, of course, from the allegories and narratives discussed in this chapter.[58] But this provokes a further speculation: might the Borghese and Washington compositions—and the two recorded in Spain in 1701, displayed in the same room of the Alcázar—have been conceived as pendants, complementary blindfoldings, one by Venus in the service of the harvest and the other by Diana in the service of the hunt? Harvesting and hunting are activities of autumn and emblematic of estate life. Such a pairing would have been a subtle and witty extension of Titian's

58 See Joannides, 'Severed Heads and Shifting Identities', pp. 11–23.

6.15. Titian, *The Death of Actaeon*, c. 1559 onwards, London, National Gallery.

penchant for thinking in groups and series. Might he have intended them to be placed opposite one another, above portal openings, respectively, onto cultivated ground and open country, perhaps at the facing terminations of an enfilade?

We are familiar with Titian's thematic equivocations and with emotional—and iconographic—shifts in his versions of 'Venus' with an Organ (or Lute) Player. But following variations in the antecedents and successors of the Louvre *Allegory* reveals, probably more directly than any other series by Titian, the painter's willingness to remake, remix, and reinterpret multifigure compositions with a freedom approaching collage and to shift freely among diverse visual modes: ideographic, allegorical, narrative.[59]

59 As Humfrey notes, 'One of the most striking and original developments in Venetian painting of the early sixteenth century was the new freedom with which the formal and expressive characteristics associated with particular pictorial genres were transferred from one to another'. The opening paragraph

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of Humfrey's essay can be recommended as a succinct account of this phenomenon. See Humfrey, 'A New Half-Length by Palma Vecchio', p. 73. A loose parallel for the kind of compositional manipulation discussed here is found in Andrea del Sarto, who used the same composition for his *Charity* in Washington and his allegorical *Holy Family* in New York.

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Masolino (London 1993); *Titian to 1518: The Assumption of Genius* (New Haven 2001); *Michel-Ange, Ecole, Copistes, Inventaire des Dessins Italiens* (Paris 2003); *Drawings by Michelangelo and His Followers in the Ashmolean Museum* (Cambridge 2007.) His exhibition catalogues include: *Michelangelo and His Influence*, an exhibition of 68 drawings for the Royal Collection, shown in United States and the United Kingdom between 1996 and 1998; *Raphael and His Age: Drawings from the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille*, an exhibition of 57 drawings shown in the United States and France in 2002–2003, and *Late Raphael*, co-curated with Professor Tom Henry, which was shown at the Prado and the Louvre in 2012–2013.

7. Art and the Double Meaning of Reflection in Titian's *Allegory of Marriage*

Daniel M. Unger

Abstract
A small yet significant detail in Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* may add new dimension to what still remains an ambiguous painting. It relates to the crystal orb, which Titian rendered as a mirror, where one can discern a blurred reflection of a person. The orb loses its transparent nature, the image concealing what should have been seen behind it. This detail, complemented by additional reflections of two female figures on both sides of the warrior's armour, are at the core of this chapter. They accent an interconnectivity alluding to a sophisticated visual expression of the intellectual roles of the painter and his viewer. With his rendition of this orb, Titian was emphasizing the dual meaning of the word 'reflection' (*riflessione*).

Keywords: Titian, allegory, reflection, mirror, crystal orb

Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* or *Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos* (Plate 1) features a small but nonetheless significant detail that may add a new dimension to a painting whose meaning remains ambiguous, as is evident by its title.[1] This detail relates to the crystal orb, which Titian rendered as an opaque, reflective surface, where one can discern a blurred and shadowy reflection of a person with a long, hawk-like nose, sunken eyes, and a white collar (Plate 7). This face, which is distorted as it takes on the convex shape of the orb, appears to belong to someone who is standing in front of the painting, beyond its frame.[2] The reflected image conceals what should have been visible behind the orb—the arms of both the woman who is holding it and of the warrior, as can be seen for example in another painting by Titian, the *Salvator Mundi* in the Hermitage (Figure 7.1). Here Christ's hand and

1 See Introduction.

2 For the distortions reflected in a convex surface, see Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, p. 131.

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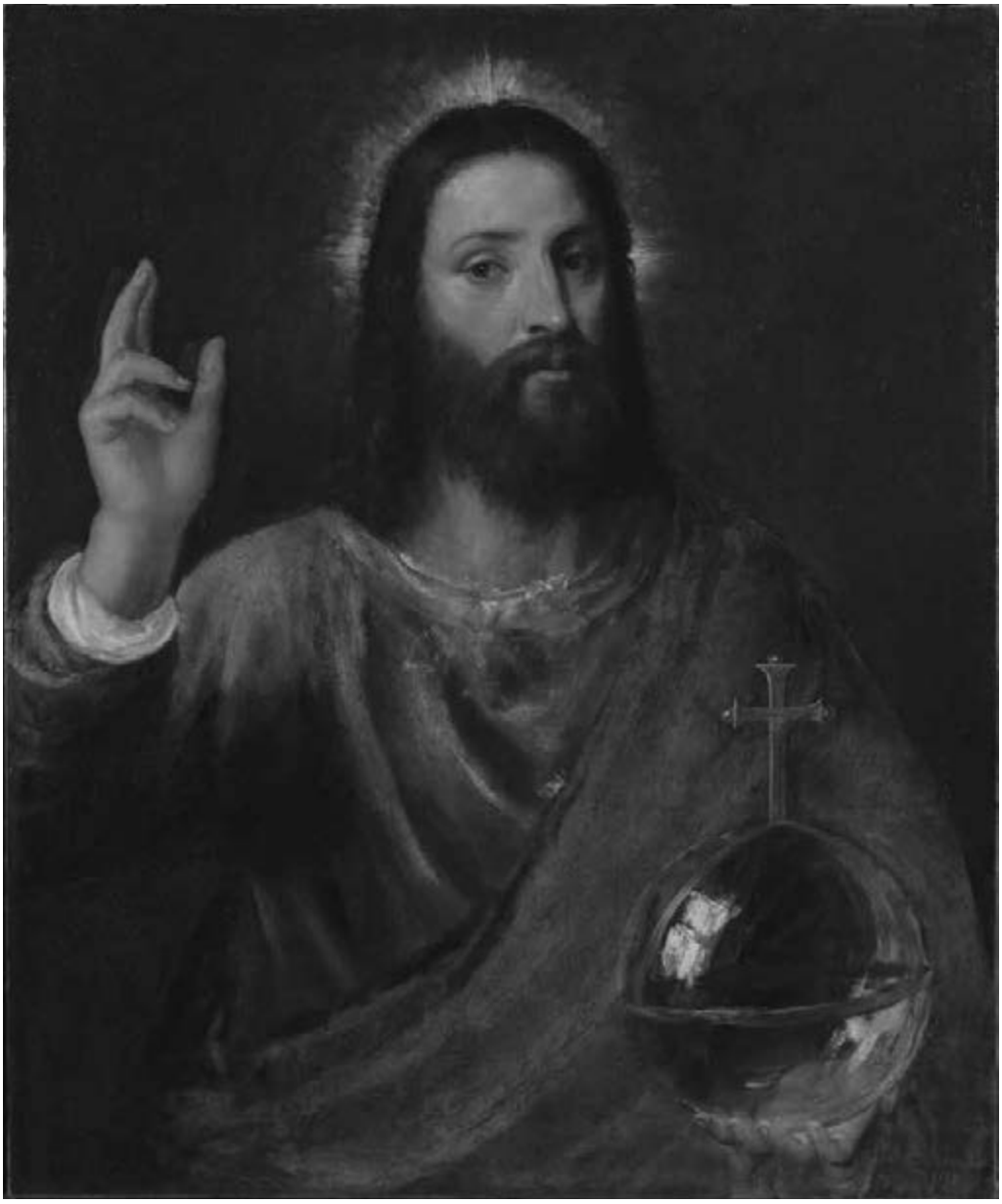

7.1. Titian, *Salvator Mundi*, c. 1570, St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, © Photo: The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Inna Regentova.

garment are visible beyond the sphere. The shadowy imperceptible reflection of a face may add meaning to the painting and elucidate its significance from the painter's perspective.

Over the centuries, Titian's *Allegory* has engendered a range of different interpretations. Yet although the crystal orb has been taken into consideration, the reflected image has garnered very little attention from art historians, with the exception of Kristina Herrmann Fiore's mention of a reflected female face.[3]

For Joseph A. Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle, the crystal orb is a symbol of humanity's perishable nature.[4] For Walter Friedlaender, it is meant to emblemize the uncertainties of fate and especially the awaiting dangers that might destabilize a young couple's marriage.[5] For Georg Gronau, the crystal ball signifies the transient nature of all things,[6] whereas Louis Hourticq wrote about its fragility and the ease with which it can be broken, like marriage itself.[7] Erwin Panofsky saw the fragility of the glass as addressing the theme of vanity, which explains the gloomy disposition of the two main protagonists.[8] For Panofsky, the crystal ball is significant as emblematic of the entire argument that is visually manifested in the painting: the stability of marriage depends on the well-being of both partners. Jòzef Grabski has noted that all the compositional lines lead to the orb, emphasizing its importance.[9] For him it has a central disposition as it symbolizes the entire universe. Venus, who holds the sphere on her knees, dominates the world, so love conquers the cosmos (*mundus amoris*).[10] Thus, the sphere is the symbol of the completeness of matrimonial love, which is a separate and unique entity.[11] Herrmann Fiore, who, as noted, identifies a female figure in the orb, similarly relates its meaning to the subject of love, and sees the orb as a symbol of *Omnia vincit Amor* (love conquers all).[12]

In what follows, I would like to focus on the image reflected in the orb as a point of departure for reading the entire painting. I argue that Titian added this largely overlooked detail not only to dialectically engage with the viewer whose presence is reflected in the orb, but also to make a point concerning the role of the painter as an engaging intellectual and the role of painting as his mode of communication.

3 Herrmann Fiore seems to follow Carlo Ridolfi's identification in his 1648 *Marvels of Art*, where he mentioned a painting that he saw in the home of Galeazzo Relogio in Padua. He described it as a picture of 'a woman with bare arms holding on her knees the globe of the world within which appears a small child'. See Herrmann Fiore, 'L' *Allegoria coniugale* di Tiziano del Louvre', p. 411. See also Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell' arte, overo le vite de gl'illustri pittori veneti, e dello stato*, p. 180. For the English translation, see Conaway Bondanella, *The Life of Titian*, p. 122.

4 Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *Titian*, vol. I, p. 373.

5 Friedlaender, 'The Domestication of Cupid', p. 52.

6 Gronau, *Titian*, p. 88.

7 Hourticq, *La Jeunesse de Titien*, p. 230.

8 Panofsky, *Problems in Titian*, 128,

9 Grabski, '*Mundus Amoris – Amor Mundus*', p. 45.

10 Grabski, '*Mundus Amoris – Amor Mundus*', p. 51.

11 Grabski, '*Mundus Amoris – Amor Mundus*', p. 55.

12 Herrmann Fiore, 'L' *Allegoria coniugale* di Tiziano del Louvre', p. 411.

The blurred and shadowy figure reveals that the painter's mission is not to compete with nature by copying it but rather to express something that is beyond it and transcends mere imitation. He added a stand that emphasizes the love of painting in a Neoplatonist terminology, where the reciprocity of love is expressed by a reflectiveness of the one by the other and vice versa. This reflectiveness is addressed more than once in the painting, but above all and most significantly, in the orb, where the reflection is of someone beyond the painting's frame.

The indeterminate reflection in the orb is a *non-finito* rendition of a figure who is looking at the painting, and who thus belongs to both the painter's and the viewer's worlds. By blurring the boundaries between the represented world and those perceiving it, Titian invited his viewers into the portrayed scene. This form of engagement, as suggested by Tom Nichols, which became central to his painterly approach,[13] is further reinforced by two other, clearer, and more prominent reflections: the image of the woman holding the orb is reflected on the warrior's cuirass and the area of his shoulder reflects the woman crowned with a garland of myrtle (Plate 6).[14] Although the faces of these two women are clearer than the one reflected in the orb, they are nevertheless foreshortened and distorted. Although both these figures face a point within the painting, their reflected bodies are directed towards the viewer's plane and do not correspond to the position of the portrayed figures. Moreover, their gazes—like that of the male protagonist—seem to focus on something beyond the frame.

There is thus an important difference between the two reflections on the armour and the one on the orb: whereas the warrior's armour reflects images of two female figures that are positioned within the painting's frame, the orb mirrors an image of someone situated beyond it. It is as if both the warrior and the two reflections in his armour are looking out towards the figure reflected in the crystal orb. Thus, the reflected image on the orb may serve, to use an Albertian notion, as the viewer's 'admonisher'—offering a suggested angle for observation.[15] In terms of a Hans Belting perception, the gaze here becomes the medium through which the painting can be examined.[16] The reflected image in the orb directs the viewer towards the painter's own point of view, thus adding another layer of understanding to our reading of the entire composition.

Other early works by Titian similarly depict blurred and shadowy images reflected off an armour or a mirror. One example is in his early representation of *Young Woman at the Toilet* (1512/15), where he depicted a woman, carefully holding her hair with

13 Nichols, *Titian*, p. 45.

14 For the reflections, see also Grabski, '*Mundus Amoris – Amor Mundus*', p. 45.

15 For a discussion of the concept of an 'admonisher', see Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 78. See also Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, pp. 72–76; Grafton, 'Historia and Istoria', p. 58.

16 Belting, *An Anthropology of Images*, p. 28.

7.2. Titian, *Young Woman at the Toilet*, 1512/15, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre), Franck Raux.

her right hand, reflected in a mirror being held by a man standing right behind her (Figure 7.2). The painting's main protagonist is seen in the mirror from her back.

These witty games of gazes anticipate Titian's *Venus at Her Toilet with Two Cupids* (1552/5), in Washington's National Gallery of Art (Figure 7.3). Venus turns her face to her left where a cupid is holding a mirror so that she would be able to look at herself. We also see her reflected image, which appears to be gazing out of the

7.3. Titian, *Venus at Her Toilet with Two Cupids*, 1552/5, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, © Photo: Digital image courtesy of the *National Gallery of Art, Washington* Open Access Program.

painting's frame. Although Venus herself is not looking at the viewer, her gaze, as reflected in the mirror, is directed there. She is not looking at her own image as one would expect, but rather is focusing beyond it.[17] Titian's *Allegory* similarly creates a connection between the viewer's plane and that of a reflected figure's

17 Cranston, The Muddied Mirror, p. 23.

7.4. Titian, *Self-Portrait*, 1550/62, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, © Photo: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie / Jörg P. Anders.

gaze,[18] yet there the viewer him/herself is also represented in the painting. There are two reciprocal gazes: the painting being viewed from within itself thus becomes a sophisticated exploration of the interconnectivity between the painted figures

18 Prater, *Venus at Her Mirror*, pp. 25–28.

and their viewer. It imposes an active role on the painting which is like a standing mirror that reflects the images of changing viewers, mirroring a different image every time, depending on who is standing in front of it.

The blurry figure in the crystal orb anticipates another blurry image that has received careful consideration in modern scholarship on Titian's work. In his 1550/62 self-portrait (Figure 7.4), today part of the Gemäldegalerie Collection in Berlin, the painter created a clear distinction between his sharp gaze and the detailed rendition of his face and the unfinished depiction of his hands in order to point to his role as a painter.[19] A similar division involving different degrees of representational clarity is evident in the three reflections in the *Allegory*: that of the seated figure is the clearest and the one reflected in the orb is the haziest. These varying degrees of clarity seem to correspond to the different meanings embodied in the painting—the seated figure thus appears as the one central to interpreting the allegory of marriage, whereas the figure in the orb, as I argue, appears to address the allegory of painting. This theme has been suggested by Paul Joannides, who addressed the painting as such and wrote: 'There the painting of the armoured man from, probably, Venus, embodies the theme of a necessary abandoning of the charms of love for the requirements of martial duty: the theme is the same as that of the *Cornelia*, but without personal and historic specifics'.[20]

Almost unnoticed reflections of the type seen in Titian's *Allegory* have precedents in other Italian Renaissance paintings. In his famous *Madonna and Child with Saints* (1472; Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan), Piero della Francesca added a reflection of a vaulted window to the armour of Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino. The duke is positioned on the right, in front of the saint, kneeling in profile with his hands clasped together in a gesture of prayer. A second example is Raphael's famous *Leo X with Two Cardinals* (1518), where Raphael's own reflection can be seen in the rounded top of the pope's bronzed chair (Figure 7.5). The blurry figure seems to be carrying a palette in his left hand, while pointing the brush in his right hand towards an easel, with a window visible on his right. As is the case in his Stanza della Segnatura, here, too, Raphael was playing with space and borders.[21]

Like Piero della Francesca and Raphael before him, Titian may be seen as attempting to extend the boundaries of the painting and to challenge the limits of interpretation. In this instance, as in Raphael's case, what comes to mind at first

19 See for example Campbell's '[…] creative process of *colorito* […]': Campbell, 'Old Age and the Politics of Judgment in Titian's *Allegory of Prudence*', p. 266.

20 Joannides, *Titian to 1518*, p. 254.

21 Unger, 'The Pope, the Painter, and the Dynamics of Social Standing in the Stanza della Segnatura', pp. 285–287.

7.5. Left: Raphael, *Leo X with Two Cardinals*, 1518, Florence, Gellerie degli Uffizi. Right: detail from Raphael, *Leo X with Two Cardinals*, © Photo: Daniel M. Unger.

glance is that the image in the orb might represent the painter himself. It should be stressed, however, that Titian's reflection is not a self-portrait. Titian is believed to have incorporated many self-representations into his paintings,[22] mostly later

22 Modern scholars ascribe to Titian many paintings in which he added his own portrait. Jaromir Neumann suggested that the head of Midas in *Apollo Flaying Marsyas* is a self-portrait, although S.J. Freedberg believed that the resemblance between Midas and Titian was generic. Another self-portrait is the figure of St. Job in front of the Madonna in the *Pietà*, the last painting completed by Titian. To this list, Luba Freedman adds Titian's portrayal of himself as John the Baptist in *Salome*, as the Pharisee in *The Tribute Money*, as St. Matthew on the ceiling of Sta. Maria della Salute in Venice, as Nicodemus in the *Entombment* (1559), and as St. Jerome in his last *Pietà*. In a recent publication, Freedman adds another reference to the list—a figure on the left in the *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence* in the Gesuiti Church in Venice. Lionello Puppi and later also Erin J. Campbell identified Titian as the old man in the *Allegory of Time Governed by Prudence*. For the various identifications of Titian in his paintings, see Neumann, *Titian*, p. 19; Brown, *Titian: Prince of Painters*, exh. nos. 67, 76, 77; Freedberg, 'Titian and Marsyas', p. 54; Freedman, *Titian's Independent Self-Portraits*, p. 50; Freedman, 'Titian's Self-Portrait Drawing as Demonstration of

in life,[23] but in all of these compositions, his likeness is rather clear.[24] It also seems plausible that the reflected image in the orb represents an unidentified viewer. That the image is not clear may suggest that the painter wanted to represent a generic notion of a viewer rather than a specific person.

The image reflected in the crystal orb may be a sophisticated visual expression of the intellectual roles of the painter and his viewer. Unlike other famous painters of his time, such as Michelangelo, for example, Titian never publicly communicated his artistic ideas in any form other than painting.[25] In this context, it is worth considering the double import of the word 'reflection' (*riflessione*), which means both an image in a mirror and a thought. This word, which derives from the Latin *reflectere*, was used in both senses in Titian's time. Moreover, an early use of the word '*reflexio*' in the double sense of the term is present, for example, in the works of the thirteenth-century theologian St. Thomas Aquinas, who wrote about cognitive abilities and the visibility of knowledge in the human mind.[26]

The double meaning of this term in relation to painting was noted by Jonathan Unglaub in his discussion of Poussin's self-reflection in *Tancred and Erminia*

His Art', p. 50; Campbell, 'Old Age and the Politics of Judgment in Titian's *Allegory of Prudence*', p. 263; Roman D'Elia, *The Poetics of Titian's Religious Paintings*, pp. 82–83; Nichols, *Titian*, p. 8.

23 If the image in the orb is indeed a self-representation, it is the earliest one known to us today. It precedes Leone Leoni's medal of Titian dated to around 1537, which is considered the earliest representation of the painter: Woods-Marsden, 'Titian's Self-Images', p. 90.

24 As acknowledged by Joanna Woods-Marsden ('Titian's Self-Images', p. 98), the aquiline nose and white collar are the best-known characteristics of Titian's self-representations. These can be seen, for example, in *Virgin Suckling the Child with Saints Titian and Andrew and Tiziano Vecellio as Donor*, in his two known self-portraits, and in a recently discovered drawing of the painter in profile, which David Rosand identified in 2009 as completed by Titian as part of his preparation for the Prado self-portrait. The image of Titian in *Virgin Suckling the Child with Saints Titian and Andrew and Tiziano Vecellio as Donor* was identified by Giorgio Vasari in his 1568 version of *Le vite de'più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*. Titian is positioned on the left, kneeling while holding a crook. Two other important features that are typical of Titian's self-representations do not correspond with what we see in the orb: the first is his known preference for depicting himself either in profile or in three-quarters (Woods-Marsden, 'Titian's Self-Images', p. 91). Moreover, although the reflected figure's direct gaze at the viewer seems almost obvious for a self-portrait, it was not typical of Titian. The second feature is Titian's use of a skullcap; Luba Freedman notes that he always depicted himself as wearing one. A skullcap is also evident in Veronese's celebrated *Marriage at Cana*, where the old painter is depicted as a musician with a white beard and a hawk-like nose. For Titian's hawk-like nose, see also Freedman, *Titian's Independent Self-Portraits*, pp. 20 and 39. For the identification of the drawing as a self-portrait, see Rosand, 'Titian Draws Himself', p. 68. See also Brown, *Titian: Prince of Painters*, exh. no. 65. For the identification of Titian in Veronese's *Marriage at Cana*, see Rosand, 'Titian Draws Himself', p. 66.

25 Roman D'Elia, *The Poetics of Titian's Religious Paintings*, p. 6.

26 'Sed quia intellectus supra seipsum reflectitur, secundum eandem reflexionem intelligit et suum intelligere et speciem qua intelligit' Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 85, a. 2. 'Since the intellect reflects upon itself, through the same reflection it understands both its knowing and the notion by which it knows'. For the English translation, see Counahan, 'The Quest for Metaphysics', p. 566.

(1630/1; Hermitage, St. Petersburg).[27] According to Unglaub, Poussin's painting is reflective 'in every sense of the term: in its physical mirroring, poetic exegesis, and self-searching'.[28] Titian's painting can be viewed as a similar attempt to accent the painter's reflective abilities in both senses of this term—from the perspective of both his skill at rendering images that appear as close as possible to nature and his capacity for intellectual thought, self-consciousness, inner observation, and inspiration. One may thus apply to Titian the observation that Rona Goffen makes in her book on Giovanni Bellini, where she notes that, 'Mirrors were associated with self-knowledge in art and literature'.[29]

There is a clear difference between Titian's depiction of his five main figures and the rendition of the three reflected images. The principal protagonists are outlined clearly, whereas the reflected images are deformed. Titian, it seems, made a conscious distinction between two levels of artistic representation. Once again, what comes to mind is a notion put forth by Alberti, who thought of painting as a reflection of nature when he attributed its invention to Narcissus, who was merely contemplating his image in the water. Painting, wrote Alberti, is similar to 'what is presented on the surface of the water'.[30] In another reference, Alberti drew an analogy between a painting and an open window, where he delineated the true nature of a painting: the window represents a frame where an imaginative narrative (*historiae*) is to be depicted. The window was chosen for its spatial feature and for the point of perspective drawn by the position of the viewer.[31] For Alberti, a successful painting should be judged by being placed in front of a mirror, for it is only through the reflection in a mirror that what is deformed in a painting will be manifested clearly.[32]

Alberti referred to three utterly different elements—water, a window, and a mirror—to explain what constitutes a good painting. Water and a mirror are both reflective, whereas a window is transparent. In the case of his *Allegory*, Titian played with the transparent character of the glass orb by turning it into a mirror, and the

27 In an intriguing article, Jonathan Unglaub draws a distinction between two utterly different forms of self-representations—one that is meant to mirror the world as it is and another that is meant to present an idea which goes beyond the mere imitation of nature. Caravaggio exemplified the first form of self-representation and Poussin exemplified the second. Unglaub focuses on what he conceives as a self-reflection of the painter in Vafrino's armour, in Poussin's *Erminia Finding the Wounded Tancred* (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg). In this regard, Titian's *Allegory* anticipates Poussin even though the reflected image, as I argue, is not that of the painter himself. See Unglaub, 'Poussin's Reflections', p. 511.

28 Unglaub, 'Poussin's Reflections', p. 505.

29 Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini*, p. 331.

30 Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 64.

31 For the metaphor of the window, see Masheck, 'Alberti's "Window"', p. 35; Friedberg, *The Virtual Window*, p. 32; Grave, 'Reframing the "Finestra Aperta"', pp. 49–50.

32 Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 83. See also Nygren, 'Fra Angelico's San Marco Altarpiece and the Metaphors of Perspective', pp. 25–32.

shining metallic armour similarly becomes a reflective surface. Yet rather than have both of these surfaces clearly reflect what is positioned in front of them, Titian blurred the images as if they are seen in the undulating surface of a body of water.

This critical approach towards nature adds a new dimension to the painting, pointing to an intellectual process in which the painter becomes a critical translator rather than an imitator of nature. In doing so, Titian was practicing what Lodovico Dolce would express in words more than twenty years later: 'So the painter should try not only to imitate nature, but to surpass it'.[33] As a witty thinker who is capable of playing with different levels of clarity that accord with different reflective modes and meanings, the painter conceives a picture that is closer to the truth than a mirror or a duplication of nature.[34]

Titian was known in his day as the most truthful of painters in terms of his reliance on nature and his ability to imitate it, and Mary D. Garrard mentions both Lodovico Dolce and Pietro Aretino's declarations in this regard.[35] Referring to Titian, Dolce wrote in his *Dialogo della Pittura* or *L'Aretino* (1557) that 'nature made him a painter'. Dolce added:

> [Titian] has shown in his works no empty gracefulness, but a palette which is properly appropriate; no artificiality of ornamentation, but a mastery concreteness; no crudity, but the mellowness and softness of nature. And the highlights and shadows in his creations always contend and interplay with one another, and fade out and decrease in the very same way as nature itself has them do.[36]

In a letter to Dolce dated 7 October 1539, Aretino referred to Titian as 'revered by Nature herself, of whom his paintbrushes are the rivals in beauty and liveliness'.[37]

33 'Deve adunque il Pittore procacciar non solo d'imitar, ma di superar la Natura'. Roskill, *Dolce's 'Aretino' and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, pp. 130–131.

34 In the preface to his *Lives* (1550, 1568), Giorgio Vasari noted that the inventor of painting was Gyges the king of Lydia, who saw his own image shadowed on a wall and outlined it with charcoal. In this instance, Vasari managed to confuse three different descriptions by Pliny. Pliny credited the king of Lydia with the invention of ball games and also claimed that painting was invented by the drawing of a shadow on the wall, yet without noting who invented it or describing this first painting as a self-portrait. Although Vasari's book was published after Titian created his painting, it reveals that Pliny's account of the birth of art was familiar in sixteenth-century Italy. The ambiguousness of Titian's shadowy figure in the crystal orb shows a visual awareness of Pliny's remark. See Hall, *The Self-Portrait*, p. 123.

35 Garrard, '"Art More Powerful than Nature?"', pp. 241–242.

36 'Non ha dimostro Titiano nelle sue opere vaghezza vana, ma proprietà convenevole di colori: non ornamenti affettati, ma sodezza da maestro, non crudezza, ma il pastoso e tenero della Natura: e nelle cose sue combattono e scherzano sempre i lumi con l'ombre, e predono e diminuiscono con quell'istesso modo, che fa la medesima Natura'. and 'la Natura lo fece Pittore'. Roskill, *Dolce's 'Aretino' and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, pp. 184–185.

37 Caldecot Chubb, *The Letters of Pietro Aretino*, p. 153 (letter 71).

In a letter to Titian himself, Aretino described a view from his window that he found to be exceptionally beautiful. In the last paragraph, he wrote: 'By my faith, if you had painted what I describe to you, you would have turned men stock-still with the same astonishment that confounded me when I looked upon the scene that I am telling about, and realized that its wonder would not last'.[38] Giovanni Battista Armenini, who seems to have appreciated Titian, did not write much about his art in his *De' veri precetti della pittura* (1586). Still, he perceived Titian as a painter 'who has surpassed everyone in the imitation of everything from nature'.[39]

Other discussions of Titian, however, described him as a painter whose art was sublime, transcending the mere imitation of nature. Sperone Speroni, a humanist who had a rich correspondence with Aretino and whose portrait was painted by Titian, identified the painter as early as in 1537 (published in 1542) as someone who painted beyond nature.[40] He wrote:

> Titian is not a painter, and his virtue is not art but a miracle; and it is my opinion that his colours are composed of that marvellous herb which, when Glaucus tasted it, transformed him from a man into a god. For truly his portraits have in them a *non so che* of divinity, such that, as the paradise of souls is in heaven, so it seems to me that in Titian's colours God placed the paradise of our bodies; which are not painted, but sanctified and glorified by his hands.[41]

Titian seems to have reacted to this perception by addressing the relationship between painting and nature in his personal impresa with the motto '*Natura potentior ars*' ('Art is more powerful than nature'). As stressed by Hans Tietze and others, Titian's dictum redefines the role of a painter by adding more layers of information than the mere representation of nature to his art: like the bear in the impresa moulding his formless cub, the painter shapes what he sees in nature into art. That bear image is a symbol of the work of the artist.[42] Titian's impresa was

38 Caldecot Chubb, *The Letters of Pietro Aretino*, p. 197 (letter 99).

39 '[…] il quale per contrafare il naturale d'ogni cosa, ha superato ogniuno […]': Armenini, *De veri precetti della pittura*, p. 192. For the English translation, see Armenini, *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*, p. 260.

40 For the portrait of Sperone Speroni, see Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian*, vol. II, cat. no. 98a; Humfrey, *Titian*, p. 195.

41 'Titiano non è dipintore, non è arte la virtu sua, ma miracolo. ho oppinione, che i suoi colori sieno composti di quella herba maravigliosa, laquale gustata da Glauco d'huomo in Dio lo trasformò. Et veramente li suoi ritratti hanno in loro un non sò che di divinità; che come il cielo è il paradiso dell'anime, cosi pare che ne suoi colori Dio habbia riposte il paradiso de nostril corpi, non dipinti, ma fatti santi, et glo rificati dale sue mani'. For the English translation, see Pardo, 'Artifice as Seduction in Titian', p. 58. See also Freedman, *Titian's Portraits through Aretino's Lens*, pp. 30–31; Nygren, *Titian's Icons*, pp. 17–18.

42 Tietze, 'Unknown Venetian Renaissance Drawings in Swedish Collections', pp. 183–185; Rosand, '*Ut Pictor Poeta*: Meaning in Titian's Poesie', p. 536; Pardo, 'Artifice as Seduction in Titian', p. 84; Nichols, *Titian*,

published in 1562 by Battista Pittoni in his *Impresa di diversi prencipi*, alongside a text by Dolce, which describes the triumph of art over nature. We may speculate that Titian was implying that art should be considered beyond the order of nature. This last idea is manifested in the *Allegory*, which may be regarded as an earlier reference to this same perception in reaction to the so-called competition between art and nature. Titian remains consistent in his perception of what constitutes art. As Mary Pardo suggests, this same perception is evident in another painting by Titian—*Venus of Urbino*—dated to 1534 (Figure 2.1).

Una Roman d'Elia shows how Titian used classical imagery and rhetoric to deliver and emphasize the religious convictions expressed in his paintings, so that his religiosity coloured the shapes of his figures.[43] Thus, truth for Titian was a matter of faith that went beyond nature. It was perhaps for this reason that he evolved from searching for the truth in nature to searching for a truth that he believed existed beyond nature. In his impresa, Titian expressed a view of nature as a vehicle that can be organized towards expressing truth. His stylistic evolution, which has been described by Virgilio Malvezzi, among others, as having developed from precision to vagueness, may parallel a progression towards a quest for truth that comes at the expense of natural accuracy.[44]

pp. 118–119. Mary D. Garrard suggests the idea is that art and nature are complementing one another, and one should read the motto: 'Nature is a more powerful art'. See Garrard, '"Art More Powerful than Nature?"', p. 247; Roman D'Elia, *The Poetics of Titian's Religious Paintings*, p. 192, n. 53. The idea of shaping one's body by caressing is also present in Gabriele Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* (1582). Paleotti mentions the she-wolf licking Romulus and Remus that was engraved on Aeneas' shield, as described by Virgil. See Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre et profane*, Book 2, ch. 2. This idea that a painting by Titian is superior to nature was posited by Sperone Speroni, who wrote in reference to Titian: 'it is better to be painted by him than to be produced by nature'. ('egli è meglio l'essere dipinto da lui che generato dalla natura'.) See Leushuis, *Speaking of Love*, pp. 98–99. See also Puttfarken, *Titian and Tragic Painting*, p. 47.

43 Roman D'Elia writes about Titian's many representations of St. Sebastian and especially the role played by the discovery of the Laocoön in shaping the saint in the Resurrection Altarpiece at Santi Nazaro e Celso in Brescia. See Roman D'Elia, *The Poetics of Titian's Religious Paintings*, pp. 27–36.

44 'Titiano forse il più famoso Pittore, e senza forse fra' più famosi, tal'hora dipinse con tante, e così diligenti pennellate, che parve quasi volesse far numerabili i capelli, e tal'hora si contentò grossamente le pitture di pochi, e rozzissimi colpi figurare. Spettatore intelligente di così diversa maniera, nell'una riconoscerà il vago della femina, nell' altra il robusto maschile; quella passarà con lode, in questa si fermarà con ammiratione; sentirassi dalla delicata soavemente inclinare, dalla rozza violentemente rapire'. Malvezzi, *Considerationi con occasione d'alc luoghi delle vite D'Alcibiade E Di Coriolano*, pp. 12–13. 'Titian, perhaps the most famous of painters, and certainly among the most famous painted at times with so many and such diligent brushstrokes that it almost seemed as if he wished to make each and every hair countable; and at times he was content to rough in his paintings with few and very rough strokes. The intelligent observer of such diverse styles will recognize in the one the charm of the feminine, in the other robust masculinity. The former will be given passing praise; the latter will hold one fast in admiring contemplation: one will feel oneself gently attracted by the delicate, violently seized upon by the crude'. For the translation, see Sohm, 'Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism from Michelangelo to Malvasia', p. 797.

Another aspect that can be deduced from Titian's use of reflections in the *Allegory* relates to the love of painting. His three reflections might have been inspired by Marsilio Ficino's visualization of love with the help of a mirror. In his *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, Ficino drew an analogy between 'reflection' and 'love'. He used a mirror as a sophisticated instrument that reflects love. He who is reflected in the other is compelled to love the other: 'A lover imprints a likeness of the loved one upon his soul, and so the soul of the lover becomes a mirror in which is reflected the image of the loved one. Thereupon, when the loved one recognizes himself in the lover, he is forced to love him' (II: 8).[45] In his *Dialogo d'amore*, Speroni followed Ficino and posited the idea that a lover acquires the characteristics of the one he loves, in both body and soul. His Tullia d'Aragona says, 'The lover (as I believe) is really a portrait of the thing he loves'.[46] She explains that the two will eventually be united in a single work of art, and that their alliance (marriage) symbolizes the process of artistic creation that consolidates these two components into a single, unified whole.[47]

From Ficino and Speroni's points of view, the two female figures reflected on the warrior's armour in Titian's painting are bound to love the warrior. But what about the figure that is reflected in the orb? Who is the object of his love? Is it directed towards what the orb stands for? Or could it be a representation of the love of reflection itself, which stands for Alberti's notion of painting as a reflection of truth and nature? It would be safe to assume that it represents both the love of creating a painting and the love of viewing it.

The crystal orb might also represent the Earth, as does the crystal ball held by Christ to symbolize his dominion over the world. As noted by Chiyo Ishikawa, Juan de Flandes' *Christ Calming a Storm* (1496), which images Christ and his disciples in a boat on a stormy sea, Christ's left hand holding an orb that rests on his knee, is one example of this motif.[48]

45 Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, p. 146.

46 'L'amante (come a me pare) é propriamente un ritratto di quella cosa che egli ama'. Speroni, *Dialoghi*, p. 23. There is an elaboration on p. 25: 'L'amante in somma, si come amante, ch'egli è, è il ritratto della cosa ch'egli ama: il quale amante puo essere persona d'intelletto, & costumi cosi perversi, che a guisa di tela mal unta, non riceverà intera la dipintura d'Amore; o lei ricevuta, stranamente di diritta in torta tramuterà'. See also Pardo, 'Artifice as Seduction in Titian', p. 57; Leushuis, *Speaking of Love*, pp. 93–98 and 102–103.

47 'Et oso dire, che si come il dipintore con colori, & coll'arte sua ritragge il sembiante dalla persona; & lo specchio illustrato dal Sole, ritragge non solamente il sembiante, ma il movimento dello specchiato; cosi la cosa, che si ama, con lo stile d'Amore nella faccia, & nel cuor dello amante, se, & ogni sua cosa, così dell'anima, come del corpo, va ritraggendo'. Speroni, *Dialoghi*, p. 23. 'And I dare say that as the painter portrays the person's appearance with colors and with his artifice; and the mirror illuminated by the sun portrays not only the appearance, but the movement of the one mirrored; so the thing that is loved, by means of love's stylus, portrays itself and all that belongs to it, soul and body, in the lover's face and in his heart'. For the English translation, see Pardo, 'Artifice as seduction in Titian', p. 57.

48 Ishikawa, 'Spanish Art and Science in the Age of Exploration', p. 31.

In conclusion, Titian created a remarkably dense composition, with five figures who do not seem to notice one another as they focus on their own thoughts or reflections, appearing rather sad and lonely for an *Allegory of Marriage*. Yet the reflection of the two female figures in the armour, as well as the mirror-like orb, seem to enhance a connectivity that otherwise is lost. The reflections thus gain importance as a means of visualizing the entire composition as a statement made by the painter about his trade. The double meaning of the term 'reflection', and the different degrees of clarity within the painting, emphasize that art is truer than a mere imitation of nature. In the reflected image that can be seen in the mirror-like orb, Titian alluded to Ficino's perception of a mirror as an instrument that reflects love. It is a presentation of the love of reflection itself, which stands for Alberti's notion of painting as a reflection of truth and nature. It represents both the love of creating a painting and the love of viewing it.

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8. Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* as an 'Allegory of Peace'

Sara Benninga

Abstract
This chapter interprets Titian's painting as an allegory of peace, integrating the mythological account of Mars and Venus with a political symbol of balance, as represented by the sphere held by the female protagonist. The mythological story of the love affair of Mars and Venus as told by Lucretius, Statius, and Plutarch, and the visual representations that followed this tradition are discussed as the sources for Titian's painting. Contrary to previous readings of the glass sphere as a symbol of transience or inconsistency, it is discussed here as a sign of balance in relation to an iconographical precedent. This new reading of Titian's *Allegory* is strengthened by the consideration of its influence on successive allegorical paintings of peace.

Key Words: Allegory of peace, Titian, Rubens, Venus and Mars, Montefeltro, sphere

The identities of the male and female protagonists in the *Allegory of Marriage* (Plate 1) have been much discussed and debated. In his famous interpretation of the painting, Erwin Panofsky ruled out the identification of the man in armour as the Marquis d'Avalos. According to Panofsky, the man and woman in Titian's painting are no other than the mythological figures of Mars and Venus, as construed in a late antique tradition in medieval mythography, in which their union produced a daughter named Harmonia (harmony). Such mythological depictions were often used as models for double portraits, so although we do not know the subject of the portrayal, Panofsky assumed that the painting is also a portrait in mythological disguise.[1] He grounded his interpretation on two kinds of texts: The Neoplatonic reading of the union of Venus and Mars and the astrological reading of the Venus-Mars myth. According to latter, the coming of the month of April (signified by

1 Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 161–163.

Unger, D.M. (ed.), *Titian's* Allegory of Marriage*: New Approaches*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022. DOI 10.5117/9789463729536_CH08

Venus) after the month of March (signified by Mars) is a sign of Venus's mollifying force over the ferocious Mars, as expressed in the accounts of Lucretius's *De rerum natura,* and Statius's *Thebaid*, to which I return shortly.[2]

In identifying the protagonists as Venus and Mars, Panofsky set the tone for future investigation and interpretation of the painting, although two components remained enigmatic— the male figure's gesture and the glass sphere. I contend that these two features establish the principal subject of Titian's painting as the fleetingness of peace in the context of the Venus and Mars mythology, stressing the insecurities of peace rather than the 'happy union' and the joint production of harmony.[3] This interpretation is an innovative one in relation to the Renaissance precedents depicting the love of Mars and Venus and relies on textual sources other than those informing earlier paintings of the subject. In what follows, I review the mythological sources for the Venus and Mars love affair and their iconographic precedents.

The myth of Venus and Mars's love affair was recounted by both Homer and Ovid, who stressed the illicitness of the affair, described it as secretive and shameful, and focussed on Hephaestus's (Vulcan's) clever ploy to catch the lovers using an invisible bronze net.[4] However, another myth concerning the two gods was their begetting of Harmony, told by Plutarch in *De Iside et Osiride* (Isis and Osiris) and revived by Renaissance humanists, such as Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino, which became central in the Renaissance imagery that predates Titian's *Allegory*.[5] In Botticelli's *Venus and Mars* (Figure 8.1), the two gods are depicted after the act of love. Mars is fast asleep and satyr infants are playing with his armaments. Venus, dressed as an Italian lady, is gazing at him as he sleeps. Botticelli depicted the gods in accordance with Ficino's understanding of Venus's mollifying power over Mars, which, as I noted above, was found to be based on astrological observations:

2 Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p. 164.

3 Titian's focus on a fleeting moment emphasizes his unique ability to portray intermediary states. Most recently, Christopher Nygen has analysed this special ability in Titian's religious paintings. See *Titian's Icons: Tradition, Charisma, and Devotion in Renaissance Italy*, pp. 77–107.

4 Homer, *Odyssey* 8:329–335; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4:186–189.

5 Pico della Mirandola wrote: 'And since in the constitution of created things it is necessary that the union overcomes the strife [...] for this reason is it said by the poets that Venus loves Mars, because Beauty, which we call *venus*, cannot subsist without contrariety; and that Venus tames and mitigates Mars. [...] Venus was placed in the centre of heaven next to Mars, because she must tame his impulse which is by nature destructive and corrupting [...] and if Mars were always subordinated to Venus [...] nothing would ever perish': in Wind, *Pagan Mysteries* pp, 88–89; Della Mirandola spoke of the 'twofold nature present in our souls, by one side of which we are raised on high to the heavenly, and by the other side plunged downward into the lower, through strife and friendship or through war and peace': 'On the Dignity of Man', in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, p. 230; Marsilio Ficino wrote: 'Mars is outstanding in strength among the planets, because he makes men stronger, but Venus masters him. [...] Venus, when in conjunction with Mars, in opposition to him, or in reception, or watching from sextile or trine aspect [...] often checks his malignance': *Commentary on Plato's Symposium,* V: viii, pp. 176–177.

8.1. Sandro Botticelli, *Venus and Mars*, 1485, London, National Gallery.

As the month of April succeeds March, Venus has the power to overcome Mars's rapaciousness. Ficino wrote 'When Mars is dominant at the birth of a man, Mars bestows upon him greatness of soul, and a temper; if Venus comes next, she does not check that virtue of a great soul given him by Mars, but she does suppress the vice of temper. Hence, she seems to master and appease Mars, "but Mars never masters Venus"'.[6] Thus Venus's watchful gaze expresses her dominance over the sleeping Mars.

In accordance with Neoplatonic philosophy, the love between Venus and Mars was ideal and heavenly,[7] which is clearly seen in Piero di Cosimo's rendition of *Mars and Venus* (Figure 8.2), where there is a similar meeting of opposites. Mars lies fast asleep on the right, while Venus gazes at him and Cupid looks up to the sky. The rabbit, symbol of fertility, is perched behind Venus's legs and two doves coo in the foreground. Di Cosimo fashioned the love of Venus and Mars as one of opposites which, in accordance with the Italian humanists' understanding of the term, produces harmony. The basis for this understanding was Plutarch's definition of harmony, as expressed in *De Iside et Osiride:* 'The beliefs of the Greeks are well known to all [...] they rehearse a legend that Concord is sprung from Aphrodite and Ares, the one of whom is harsh and contentious, and the other mild and tutelary'. Moreover, Plutarch mentions Heraclitus's conviction that war is 'the Father and King and Lord of All'.[8] The idea that harmony could only be the outcome of the merging of opposites, the basis for existence being war, was adopted by the Renaissance humanists and became the basis for the Italian Renaissance depictions of Venus

6 Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium,* p. 177; Gombrich, 'Botticelli's Mythologies', pp. 46–47. See also: Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, pp. 81–88. For the classical attributes of Mars in sixteenth-century Italy, see Freedman, *The Revival of the Olympian Gods*, pp. 166–167.

7 Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 163–164.

8 Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris,* p. 48.

8.2. Piero di Cosimo, *Venus and Mars*, 1505, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie.

and Mars.[9] The paintings of Botticelli and Di Cosimo clearly align with the idea of the Venus and Mars union as harmony.

One further important precedent is Francesco Cossa's fresco *Allegory of April: The Triumph of Venus* in the Palazzo Schifonia, Ferrara (Figure 8.3). On the uppermost part of the fresco, Venus is riding in her chariot. Facing her, on his knees, is the figure of Mars, who is chained to Venus's throne.[10] This capture visualizes Mars succumbing to Venus's charms and is based on the calendrical succession of April after March, as well as on the Renaissance perception of the leading role of the planet Venus over Mars.[11]

In regard to the paintings mentioned above, one should add the accounts by Lucretius and Statius. As opposed to the notion first mentioned by Heraclitus, and later quoted by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, that war is the initial state of nature and together with Venus, is thus a prominent component in the establishment of harmony, Lucretius envisioned a peaceful future rule by Venus alone.[12] Statius stressed the fleetingness of the Mars-Venus love affair and emphasized the short-term influence of Venus on Mars and the latter's overruling passions. As opposed to the notion of harmony between Venus and Mars, the accounts of Lucretius and Statius stress the dominant role of Venus.[13]

9 For the humanist discussion, see Wind, *Pagan Mysteries,* pp. 85–86 and 88–89.

10 Wind interpreted this as an expression of the 'fetter of love', alluding to the iron net made by Vulcan to trap Venus and Mars. See *Pagan Mysteries,* p. 89.

11 Baumstark, 'Ikonographische Studien zu Rubens Kriegs und Friedensallegorien', p. 178.

12 'According to Heraclitus, nature was begotten from war, that it was on this account repeatedly called "strife" by Homer, and that it is not, therefore, in the power of natural philosophy to give us in nature a true quiet and unshaken peace but that this is the function and privilege of her mistress, that is, of holiest theology': della Mirandola, 'On the Dignity of Man', p. 231.

13 Panofsky read these sources into the astrological interpretation of the myth, tying them into his interpretation of the 'happy union', *Studies in Iconology*, p. 164.

8.3. Francesco Cossa, *Allegory of April: Triumph of Venus*, Ferrara, Palazzo Schifanoia.

Lucretius opened *De rerum natura* with an ode to Venus: 'O mother of the Roman race, delight of men and god, Venus most bountiful'.[14] Venus is the generative force of nature and the mistress of peace; she does not have a male counterpart, though she is the one who lulls Mars:

> Make in the meantime brutal acts of war in every land and sea be lulled to sleep. For only you can succour humankind with tranquil peace, since warfare's savage works are Mars's dominion, mighty lord of arms, who vanquished by the eternal wound of love throws himself oft upon your holy bosom and pillowing his shapely neck, looks up and, gazing at you, feeds his hungry eyes, Goddess, with love and lolling back his breath hangs on your lips. As he lies resting there upon your sacred body, come, embrace him and from your lips pour out sweet blandishments, great lady, and for your Romans crave the calm of peace. […] For perfect peace gods by their very nature must of necessity enjoy, and immortal life, far separate, far removed from our affairs. For free from every sorrow, every danger, strong in their own powers, needing naught from us, they are not won by gifts nor touched by anger.[15]

In Lucretius's lines, Mars gazes at Venus and he is vanquished, succumbing to her loveliness. He 'feeds his hungry eyes' and 'lies resting' upon her body. In this passage Lucretius gave voice to his belief that peace is a higher challenge than war. According to *De rerum natura*, human civilization did not begin in a golden age but rather in a brutal struggle.[16] Thus, the achievement of peace was to be guarded and

14 Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe* 1:1–2.
15 Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe* 1:29–49.
16 Greenblat, *The Swerve*, pp. 191–192.

prized. Such a perception was at odds with much of the Florentine-based political thought, as seen in the writings of Machiavelli, who regarded pleasure (*voluptas*) as emasculating and a threat to the manly *virtue* in a prince. According to Machiavelli, such dangerous pleasure was created in times of peace and eventually led to the corruption of the people, and he saw idleness and the pleasures of feasting as two of the main causes of such debasement: 'A wise prince ought to observe some such rules, and never in peaceful times stand idle, but increase his resources […] so that if fortune changes it may find him prepared to resist her blows'.[17] Conversely, for Lucretius, the basis for peace was in the idea of pleasure and his poem begins by naming Venus *voluptas,* a 'delight' of men and gods ('*hominum divomque voluptas*').

The second classical source, unaccounted for in the Renaissance depictions of Venus and Mars discussed above is Statius's *Thebaid.* This account stresses Mars's need to hurry back to war:

> Her tears the god mighty in war endured no longer but transferred his spear to his left hand and without delay leapt down from his high chariot, took her within his shield, enclosed her in an embrace, and soothed her with affectionate words thus: 'O you who are my respite in time of war, my sacred pleasure, and the only peace my spirit knows, you who alone have such power over gods and men as to face my weapons with impunity and bring these stallions, even neighing in the midst of slaughter, to a standstill and tear the sword from this right hand. […] But do not, I implore you, my dear one, let your heart entertain the ultimate fear: since no power to change these things is granted me. […] I will be present and will assist the arms of my kindred. Then will you see me raging far and wide over the bloody plain […] this is my entitlement and the Fates do not forbid it.[18]

Mars speaks of Venus as his 'respite' from war and his 'sacred pleasure', but he does not fully succumb to the goddess; he will always return to war, as that is his fate. Thus, in Statius's account, the affair between Venus and Mars is short-lived, owing to Mars's uncontrollable passion for war. Botticelli, Di Cosimo, and Cossa gave no clue as to such a reading, as Mars is depicted either fast asleep or chained to Venus's throne, thus strengthening the reading of Venus and Mars as lovers who engender harmony.

In Titian's painting, Mars is neither fast asleep nor chained to Venus. He is autonomous, and portrayed in a three-quarter pose, planning to turn away and leave Venus

17 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 73. See also: Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness in the Renaissance', p. 137; Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, pp. 308–309.

18 Statius, *Thebaid* 3:291–317. Svetlana Alpers was the first who brought attention to Statius as an important source on the subject: 'Manner and Meaning in Some Rubens Mythologies', p. 293.

8.4. *Imperial Group as Mars and Venus*, marble, 120–140 AD, Paris, Musée du Louvre.

behind. As describe by Lucretius, Mars gazes at Venus, signifying his longing for her and her dominance but apparently turns away. Panofsky interpreted this gesture as part of the 'happy union', contending that it is found in a Dutch painting of the *Betrothal of Jacob and Rachel* and in Rembrandt's *Jewish Bride*. However, these paintings succeed Titian, and therefore could not have been examples for Mars's gesture in Titian's rendition. Perhaps a more likely source for Mars's pose is the second-century sculpture of Venus and Mars, which was then in the Borghese Collection in Rome and is now in the Louvre (Figure 8.4).[19] Venus is dressed and Mars is naked. Her right hand is on his chest and she is attempting to remove his sword along with its belt. However, this disarmament is fleeting, much like Mars's rest in Venus's arms. He already has one hand on his sword, and he is not looking at her. In Titian's *Allegory*, Mars has a hand on Venus's breast in a similar fashion to her gesture in the Roman sculpture. Moreover, unlike the antique precedent, Mars is fully dressed and Venus is partly uncovered.

Another antique precedent involving Venus and Mars can be seen in a Roman terracotta relief showing the gods turning towards each other (Figure 8.5). Venus, who is fully dressed, lifts her garment with her right hand and she gazes at Mars, trying to tempt him. He is naked and is turning his head towards her but is clearly planning his departure, with one hand on his sword and the other on his shield. That they are parting is also clear from the position of their bodies, with their knees turned in opposite directions.[20] Moreover, in this instance it is clear that Titian has countered the antique depictions: Venus reveals her breast and Mars is fully dressed, so their roles are reversed: Mars is asking to stay, while Venus, gazing at the glass sphere in her hands, shows no interest.

With this I come to the second enigmatic part of the painting, namely, the glass sphere. The orb held by Titian's female figure alludes to the fleetingness of the love affair of Venus and Mars and, thus, of peace. In this, Titian's painting is a new interpretation of the concept of peace, which became a model for seventeenth-century artists' renditions of the subject, Rubens among them.

Whereas earlier scholars interpreted the sphere as a symbol of the fragility of fortune or the instability of fate, they did not associate this fragility with the idea of war and peace. Liesolette Möller based her interpretation on the iconography of the sphere as a symbol of vanity and earthly transience, incorporated by Titian into a mythological-Christian setting. The female figure, embodying Prudence, is concerned about the threats of Chance, symbolized by the fragility of the glass sphere. Not the armoured male, who tries to help with the gesture of his hand; nor

19 Van der Meulen, *Rubens Copies after the Antique,* cat. 99, fig. 175; Miesel, 'Rubens's Study Drawings after Ancient Sculpture', pp. 311–326. This sculpture was famously copied by Rubens and is also known through a drawing he made of it.

20 The relief was known during the fifteenth century, but not its exact whereabouts. See Bober, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture,* cat. 23.

8.5. *Venus and Mars*, terracotta antefix, 1st c. BC–1st c. AD, New York, Metropolitan Museum.

the Christian virtues of Hope and Faith, seen beside her; nor the mythological god of love can help moderate these threats. However, as opposed to the precedents noted by Möller in which the sphere as a symbol of worldly transience is usually bigger than the figures themselves, who either climb into it or stand upon it, in Titian's *Allegory* it is small and held firmly by the principal female protagonist.[21]

21 Möller, 'Die Kugel als Vanitassymbol', pp. 168–171.

Another interpretation in this vein was posited by Walter Friedländer, who understood the sphere as a symbol of the uncertainty of fate and saw it as symbolizing possible danger to the stability of marriage.[22] He based his interpretation on Giovanni Bellini's *Fortune* (Figure 5.1), where putti are holding a large sphere. However, in Bellini's painting, the sphere is balanced on Fortune's knee, where it is precariously kept stable with the help of one of the putti. Again, this pose is quite different from that of the female figure in Titian's painting.

A female figure holding a sphere in a position similar to the pose in Titian's painting is found in the work of Giovanni Cariani, a contemporary Venetian painter (Figure 3.10). A young lady, finely dressed, is approached by an old, bearded man, who has just placed a money pouch on the table, coins spilling out of it. The young woman, her right hand on a glass globe on the table, is looking at the man. Behind her, a Bacchic relief shows a winding vine and a face of what seems to be a drunk bacchant with an open mouth. According to Jòzef Grabski, this painting was a precedent for Titian's *Allegory*, as he interprets the globe as a sign of the world of love, *mundus amoris*, which is controlled by Venus.[23] The globe is set diagonally to the circular window in the top-right corner of the painting, revealing the clouds and sky, which creates a clear distinction between the heavenly realm of the sky and the earthly one symbolized by the globe in the woman's hand. The negative import of the sphere is emphasized by the nature of the amorous relationship: the man and woman are depicted as a clearly unequal couple, seen in the significant age difference between them and the money pouch on the table.[24]

One of the main differences between the sphere in the paintings discussed above and the one in Titian's *Allegory* (Plate 7) is that in the latter the female figure is holding the sphere in a tight grasp. Whereas it would be reasonable to interpret it as a symbol of chance, fortune, or earthly existence, those representations were often characterized by an amplified uncertainty. The orb was juxtaposed with other geometric elements, emphasizing its instability. For example, in a grisaille fresco by the school of Mantegna, Chance (Occasio) is seen standing on a sphere, thus expressing instability, as opposed to Constancy (Constancia) standing on a firm, square socle to the left (Figure 8.6).[25] According to Wittkower, such images were linked with the idea of chance as passing, needing to be grasped, but also

22 As opposed to Panofsky, Friedlander reads the figure behind Cupid as the goddess Vesta, the goddess of the hearth and matrimonial chastity, who looks out for the stability and endurance of marriage. Behind her is Hymen, god of marriage. Walter Friedlaender, 'The Domestication of Cupid', p. 52.

23 Grabski, '*Mundus Amoris – Amor Mundus*', pp. 57–58.

24 On the subject of unequal lovers, see Stewart, *Unequal Lovers: A Study of Unequal Couples in Northern Art*.

25 Wittkower, 'Chance, Time and Virtue', p. 318.

8.6. School of Andrea Mantegna, *Occassio and Poenitentia*, 1500, Mantua, Palazzo ducale.

as synonymous with sin. An engraving by Raimondi (Figure 8.7) clearly shows this tendency: a Herculean male, representing Virtue, chastises Fortune, a nude female holding a rudder, who has two small balls under her feet, emblematic of her instability.[26]

To conclude so far, the sphere held by the female figure in Titian's *Allegory* has been interpreted as being related to the world of chance and fortune, and to the instability of that world. Earlier depictions of a sphere suggested its relationship to the fickleness of fate, the transience and/or corruptibility of human love, and the inconsistencies of fortune. In most of these previous works, the sphere is situated in a precarious position, emphasizing the fragility that it represents. However, in Titian's *Allegory* it is tightly held by the female figure and, according to many

26 Wittkower, 'Chance, Time and Virtue', p. 319.

8.7. Marcantonio Raimondi, *Virtue as Domitor Fortunae*, engraving, 1510, Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts.

interpreters, is portrayed in the context of the myth about the love affair of Mars and Venus.

One of the rare precedents of a sphere used in the context of a political allegory is found on a medal that was cast for Federico da Montefeltro in 1468 (Figure 8.8). Mars and Venus are symbolized, respectively, by a suit of armour and a sword on the left, a tassel and an olive branch on the right, and a globe is set between them. The tip of the sword and one of the olives on the branch both touch the sphere.

8.8. Clemente da Urbino, *Eagle with Spread Wings Supporting Devices*, bronze medal, 1468, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art.

Above, left and right, are the signs of the planets Mars and Venus, with that of the planet Jupiter in the middle.[27] Below, Jupiter's eagle spreads his wings, signifying Montefeltro's reign. Thus, the medal symbolizes the power of a ruler to balance war and peace. Whereas the ruler is identified with Jupiter, the globe is one of the symbolic elements expressing the delicate balance.[28] The inscription reads: '*Mars ferus et summum tangens Cytherea tonantem Dant tibi regna pares et tua fata movent*' (Brutal Mars, Cytherean Venus, who touches the god of thunder (Jupiter), give you your reign and move your destinies).

27 Venus's sign is composed of a circle with a downward facing cross. Mars's sign is an upwards pointing arrow with a downward facing cross. Both have a small star next to their symbols.

28 Tervarent, *Attributs et Symboles dans l'art profane 1450–1600*, p. 5, fig. 1.

8.9. Peter Paul Rubens, *Allegory of Peace*, 1629/30, London, National Gallery.

As the sphere in this instance is a clear symbol of balance tied to the ruler's reign, Titian's use of a sphere points to the painting being a political allegory. However, unlike the Montefeltro medal, in which the sphere is between the emblems of Venus and Mars, in Titian's painting it is held by the female figure. Thus, Titian, like Lucretius before him, turned Venus into the protectress of peace, and the *Allegory* was the first visual example of the goddess in that role.

This proposed reading is further strengthened when we consider the paintings that were influenced by the *Allegory*. During the seventeenth century, Titian's painting was in Charles I's collection and was surely viewed by Peter Paul Rubens during his trip to England in 1629 in connection with the negotiations between the English and the Spanish crowns. Rubens was an admirer of Titian, and we find influences of the latter's work throughout Rubens's oeuvre. It was during that same trip that Rubens saw Titian's *Lady in Fur*, which he used as a model for his famous *Het Pelsken*. During his stay in England, Rubens painted the *Allegory of Peace* (Figure 8.9), which he presented as a gift to Charles I in an effort to convince the king of the benefits of signing a peace treaty with the Spanish Crown. In *Allegory of Peace*, Mars, who is so prominent in the examples predating Titian, is no longer the central figure. There are two women in the centre, Pax and Minerva—one naked and squirting milk and the other clothed—suggest pleasure and virtue, and in this composition they are allies. However, when the choice is between war and peace, the path of pleasure is preferable to that of hardship. In the

threat posed by Mars to the realm of Pax, Rubens reframed the Bacchic pleasures seen in the painting as positive and in need of Minerva's protection.[29]

Although the composition was based on the painting *The Temptations of Youth* by Rubens's teacher Otto van Veen, the positions of the central female figure, Pax, and that of Mars are based on Titian's *Allegory*. With braids wrapped around her head, Pax's hairdo is very similar to that of the woman in the *Allegory*. Pax tilts her head to the left, just like Titian's Venus, and looks down in the direction of Pluto, as Titian's Venus looks pensively at the glass sphere. In Rubens's painting, Mars is clearly being pushed away from the peaceful scene, so that he does not trouble it. His position is also based on Titian's figure of Mars, though it is more extreme. Mars gazes enviously towards Pax and her entourage, so his face is turned to his left and his body is turned to his right. Whereas Titian's figures are half-length, Rubens's are full but the comparison of the two paintings clearly shows how Rubens based the positions of Pax and Mars on Titian's Venus and Mars. Through this comparison we may assume that Rubens, too, understood Titian's painting as a scene of departure in which the female protagonist is the focal point of the composition and the male is secondary.

In his *Venus and Mars* (Figure 8.10), Rubens's reliance on Titian's example is even more explicit, which suggests that the former clearly understood the latter's painting as a leave-taking scene. There, Venus and Cupid are in the foreground. Venus's hairdo is even more similar to the one in the *Allegory*, with a braid interlaced with pearls wrapped around her head. She is squirting milk into Cupid's mouth, and her gaze is focused on him. Mars is standing behind the two, looking enviously in their direction; his gaze toward the stream of milk aimed at Cupid suggests his unrequited longing. Venus does not show him any sign of affection and he is clearly turning to leave, taking one last look. As in his *Allegory of Peace*, the positions of Venus and Mars are based on those in Titian's *Allegory*.

To conclude, Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* depicts Venus's central role as a peacekeeper. As opposed to Renaissance visual precedents, Titian did not portray the theme of harmony begotten through the lovers' affair, but rather based himself on of the work Lucretius and Statius, which stress Venus's centrality and Mars's ever-resurging passion for war. The enigmatic position of Mars's hand on Venus's breast can be traced back to a reversal of the position found in ancient sculptures of the pair, and thus represents a gesture made on the verge of departure. The glass sphere held firmly by Venus is a symbol of balance, now guarded only by her, as is evident in comparison with the Montefeltro medal. Thus, Titian created an innovative formulation of peace centred on the figure of Venus. He thus set the stage for Rubens's representations of peace, in which Mars loses his prominent position and the figures are clearly modelled after the *Allegory*.

29 Martin, *The Flemish School*, pp. 120–121; Heinen, 'Rubens's Pictorial Peacekeeping Force', p. 47.

8.10. Peter Paul Rubens, *Venus*, *Mars and Cupid*, 1630/35, London, Dulwich Museum.

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9. Vision and Touch in the *Allegory of Marriage*

Geoff Lehman

Abstract
Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* depicts an equivocal moment of intimacy through a network of visual and tactile interactions. This dialectic of touch and vision evokes a range of embodied experiences that, through empathetic identification, also implicate the viewer and define a phenomenology of viewer response. Furthermore, the interplay of optical and haptic values invokes Titian's painterly practice itself, mediating between the picture as window and the brushstroke as touch. The interpretive possibilities of this dialectic culminate in the crystal sphere, a discrete object receptive to human touch that also relates abstractly to the scattering of light in space, suggesting a more radical phenomenology of intimacy that transcends the limitations of bodily Gestalt and the separation between picture and viewer alike.

Keywords: Intimacy, phenomenology, linear and painterly, the oneiric in art, viewer response

Intimacy

Vision and touch are the terms of a dialectic that lies at the foundations of modern art history, in the optical and haptic values of Riegl and the painterly/linear opposition of Wölfflin.[1] This dialectic was also prominent in Renaissance art theory and was frequently thematized in Renaissance pictures. Few Renaissance artists explored the relationship between the tactile and the visual more movingly or elaborated its implications more eloquently than Titian, especially in his late works.[2] The visual and tactile interactions that define the figural composition of

1 See Riegl, *Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie* and Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*.

2 There have been a number of studies published in the last few decades that focus on the central role played by the tactile and by the evocation of touch in Titian's art. See, for instance, Carabell, '*Finito* and

Unger, D.M. (ed.), *Titian's* Allegory of Marriage*: New Approaches*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022. DOI 10.5117/9789463729536_CH09

Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* (Plate 1)—an interpersonal dynamic among five figures that is articulated by a circuit of expressive, receptive, withdrawn, or isolating gestures—is accompanied by a more direct appeal to the viewer in its evocation of embodied experiences and their accompanying states of mind. Attention to the interplay of vision and touch in the *Allegory of Marriage* provides the basis for an understanding of the painting that is attuned to its phenomenological and affective dimensions. This is a mode of interpretation distinct from iconographic or allegorical approaches, not to mention historical or contextual ones—indeed, coexistent with them, but more responsive to the work's pictorial specificity. On one level, the depiction of tactile and optical experiences in Titian's painting is a means of expressing an ambivalent moment of intimacy shared by a couple, in which those around them also participate, articulating the emotional complexity of their relationship in pictorial terms. At the same time, however, appeals to vision and touch provoke reflection on the character of Titian's painterly practice itself in relation to the subject matter it creates—and beyond this, they inform our understanding of the dynamic between the viewer and the work of art as a whole.

The structural and gestural centre of Titian's painting is the crystal sphere (Plate 7). Although offset from the picture's geometric centre, it is multiply enframed and thus presented to us as central: the main female figure grasps the sphere from both above and below, a framing that is echoed on a larger scale by the encircling forms of the two principal protagonists. Even the band around the woman's right arm and her carefully braided hair, intertwined with a string of pearls, subtly reinforce the feeling of enclosure. Furthermore, the way the sphere interacts visually with the bundle of sticks held by Cupid—with, among other possible readings, its metaphoric allusion to sexual intercourse—calls attention to the primary compositional division of the picture, its dialogue of left and right sections. Still more importantly perhaps, the sphere is centred gesturally, since the woman's cradling of the sphere with both hands is an intensification of similar gestures that evoke touch elsewhere in the picture: those of the man in armour, of Cupid, and of the female figure facing her. Likewise, its reflective and refractive surface, receptive to light and projecting luminosity in all directions, universalizes the prominence of gazes, reflections, and illumination that characterizes the *Allegory of Marriage* as fully as do gestures of touch. Indeed, the cooperation and conflict between vision and touch provide the basis for the painting's affective power and its spiritual—if not allegorical—meaning.

Non-Finito in Titian's Last Paintings'; Bohde, *Haut, Fleisch und Farbe: Körperlichkeit und Materialität in den Gemälden Tizians*; Suthor, *Augenlust bei Tizian: Zur Konzeption sensueller Malerei in der frühen Neuzeit*; Cranston, *The Muddied Mirror: Materiality and Figuration in Titian's Later Paintings*; and Loh, *Titian's Touch: Art, Magic, and Philosophy*.

In Erwin Panofsky's reading of the picture from *Studies in Iconology*, the sphere represents harmony and even alludes, more specifically, to the goddess Harmonia, daughter of Venus and Mars, with whom Panofsky identifies the two principal figures.[3] Without discussing the merits of this iconography—which seems plausible enough, though hardly conclusive and unsatisfyingly limiting for such an enigmatic picture—there is another sense, a phenomenological one, in which harmony may be embodied in the sphere: it crystallizes a harmony between the two distinct, even opposed, senses of vision and touch.[4] In its reflecting and refracting of light, as well as in its eye-like form, the glass sphere evokes vision—and more specifically, in calling our attention to the trajectories of light rays, it alludes to the gazes that criss-cross the space of the picture. In the precise rendering of its surface, however, as well as through our bodily empathy with the female protagonist's gentle but firm gesture of grasping, the sphere simultaneously evokes touch. Moreover, just as the spherical form of the eye gives a metaphorical resonance to this embodiment of the visual, so too is the experience of touch concretized and made visible in the woman's gesture, as she touches its surface delicately but resolutely with all ten of her fingers. Her cradling of a sphere that reflects everything around it seems to connote a desire to see and to know more fully, even the desire for a universalizing vision. Indeed, Gustav Hartlaub has argued that she is an allegory of Prudence, with the sphere substituting for the mirror in which Prudence, according to her traditional iconography, contemplates her own reflection.[5] Further, although one can imagine this female figure contemplating the images reflected on its surface, perhaps just before or just after the pregnant moment we see here, her principal relationship to the sphere in this very moment is in fact tactile. Associations with vision and with touch coexist harmoniously in this charged interaction, joined together in the depiction of embodiment and yet proposing irreducibly different modes of interacting with the world. However, this sensory harmony in a moment of embodied experience has a more profound significance as well: both vision and touch contribute to an articulation of intimacy—an intimacy that is palpable, no matter how melancholic or ambivalent it may be.

A sense of harmonics—an interplay between two contrasting terms to create a unity—pervades every part of the *Allegory of Marriage*. Moreover, it is in the harmonic articulation of the pictorial surface as a whole that the painting's elaboration

3 Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 160–164. Panofsky attributes the identification of the sphere with harmony to Otto Brendel (see the later publication: Brendel, *Symbolism of the Sphere*).

4 Here and throughout, I have in mind harmony in the ancient Greek sense: *harmonia* being the joining of irreducibly different things into a single whole, like the rim and spokes of a wheel. See Ilievski, 'The Origin and Semantic Development of the Term Harmony', on this notion of harmony and its premusical origins in the Greek tradition—most notably, with respect to shipbuilding in Homer.

5 See Hartlaub, *Zauber des Spiegels*. Cf. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (1603), cxxxvii ('Prudenza').

9.1. Titian, *Allegory of Marriage* (with harmonic divisions), c. 1530/5, Paris, Musée du Louvre, © Photo: Daniel M. Unger, modified by Geoff Lehman.

and problematizing of intimacy begins. Its division by a notional vertical axis into unequal sections in a proportion of 2:1 (Figure 9.1)[6]—in musical terms, the ratio of the octave—articulates a dialogue between the expressive extroversion of the right section, concretized in a trio of intense gazes, and the melancholic introversion embodied by the (perhaps conjugal) pair on the left. The relatively greater compression of the right section contributes to its heightened dramatic energy, just as the more ample left section accommodates the contemplative psychological space of its

6 Dividing the canvas horizontally just above the crystal sphere and the female protagonist's upper hand also creates a musical ratio—this time of 3:2 (a fifth)—between the upper and lower parts (see Figure 3), with the grasping of the sphere and the sexual metaphor of Cupid and his arrows below and the circuit of gazes, gestures, and human interaction above. However, the importance of this compositional division is less evident than the vertical division of 2:1, and there is a danger of imposing too much geometry on a picture whose harmonies are more intuitive than mathematical.

pair of figures. The painting's mood arises primarily from that couple's inwardness, which is in fact a *shared* introversion—shared in that the two of them are together in this feeling even if, ironically, it constitutes a withdrawal from togetherness.

The picture conveys, subtly and intuitively, the intimate experience of a shared psychological and emotional space between two people who neither speak nor make eye contact with each other. This is, however, an unstable or uncertain intimacy. Is the gentle touching of the woman's breast—or more precisely, and more subtly, of the drapery just covering it—by the man in armour perceived by her as sexual intimacy or as invasiveness? Is her inwardly directed subjectivity a withdrawal from him or a reflective attentiveness on this moment of sensation and the tender feeling accompanying it? The introversion of this ambiguous moment is also reflected in the gazes of the two figures, which not only diverge but seem, indeed, not to focus entirely on any outside object at all: in contrast to the trio on the right, here the eyes of both figures convey an inwardly directed state of mind and subtly suggest an imaginative withdrawal that does not, however, entirely lose visual contact with other figures (the woman with Cupid, the man with the viewer). Thus, the coexistence of vision and touch in an affectively—and indeed sexually—charged moment of interaction between these two figures conveys the co-presence of emotional engagement and psychic withdrawal, the former associated primarily with touch and the latter with vision. The common associations of touch with proximity and vision with distance arise naturally, of course, from the specific experiences to which each of these senses gives rise.[7] These are associations that are well grounded in phenomenological terms.

Vision provides the most compelling experience of action at a distance. In the Renaissance, vision was thoroughly associated with both scientific knowledge and the perception of an intuitive infinity: the farthest possible extension beyond the body is achieved by the disembodied, perspectival gaze.[8] Perspective frames the gaze as a metaphor for unbounded (scientific, imaginative, or erotic) curiosity but also founds an epistemology that goes beyond the metaphorical, as it provides the basis for observation of a potentially infinite physical world.[9] However, touch as an

7 Cf. the following passage from Machiavelli's *Prince*: 'Men in general judge more by their eyes than by their hands because seeing is given to everyone, touching to few. Everyone sees how you appear, few touch what you are': Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 71. Here the suggestion is that the proximity of touch leads to knowledge while the distance implicit in visual perception is conducive to deception. Note that the dedicatory letter that opens *The Prince* offers a pictorial metaphor—specifically a perspectivist one—for this game of perceptions (*The Prince*, p. 4), indicating the possible role representation played for Machiavelli in this understanding of the senses.

8 On infinity and perspective, see Damisch, *The Origin of Perspective*, pp. 377–389. On the gaze, perspective, and disembodiment, see Belting, *Florence and Baghdad*, Chapter 6, pp. 211–261.

9 See Lehman, 'Leonardo, Van Eyck, and the Epistemology of Landscape'.

experience which by its nature simultaneously involves exploratory engagement and active receptivity—the sensation of being touched necessarily accompanying the activity of touching—brings embodiment to the fore. This experience of touch is one of the defining characteristics of flesh.[10] Thus, the female protagonist's withdrawn and melancholic expression (Plate 6) may equally indicate a thoughtful detachment or a full embodiment—in the latter case, withdrawing from the distractions of vision and of the more remote objects it brings to awareness, to live within the sensation of touch, of touching and being touched. It is the picture's depiction of embodied experience, particularly in its principal female figure, that engages the complexity of the vision/touch dialectic. Touch creates intimacy, but vision contributes to it in turn: the unfocused gaze of the female protagonist reinforces the intensity of the experience of touch she shares with her male counterpart, whether that be a sensitivity to the warmth of erotic contact or a recoil from a moment, however subtle, of sexual aggression. Likewise, her gesture of reaching out to touch the sphere accompanies the inwardness in her eyes to indicate a state of distracted contemplation. In other words, there is also an exchange of the usual associations, with touch accompanying psychological distance and vision indicating interpersonal closeness.

If one considers the broader dialogue between the left and right figural groups, the main female figure is in perfect counterpoint with the young woman facing her, whose gaze, fixed longingly—even reverently—on the woman opposite, is fully absorbed in an external object while her right hand touching her heart conversely signifies withdrawal into herself. In the affective register this gesture indicates devotion,[11] but it also associates inwardness with touch rather than with vision. In other words, the female protagonist's outwardly directed gesture of touch and inwardly directed gaze are placed in dialogue with a reversal of these roles in her counterpart, who gazes reverently outward while gesturing to her heart (her inner being) with her hand. Here a dialectical interplay is at work in which the different associative possibilities of vision and touch are explored in the context of embodied experience. What are really at stake here, though, are the affective associations of these ephemeral embodied states. Although this discussion of 'dialectical interplay' might suggest the analytical precision of a diagram, the interaction feels extraordinarily natural: it is an emotional relationship between two women expressed in gestures that operate just below the level of conscious intention. Indeed, this counterpoint of gestures is also a counterpoint of emotions, with contemplative melancholy encountering passionate devotion. The roles each

10 See Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, pp. 106–150.

11 Panofsky cites this gesture along with the expression of devotion on her face in support of his interpretation of the figure as Faith, more specifically as Marital Faith: Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p. 161.

of these emotions can play in intimacy make this dialogue integral to the mood of the picture as a whole.

In the case of the man in armour, intimacy with his female counterpart is revealed in his gesture of touch, and yet his body language and contemplative expression suggest immanent separation—a transient moment of farewell.[12] His gaze, like that of the woman he is paired with, seems primarily inward in nature, but there is also a suggestion of attention to the viewer there: he seems almost to look in our direction and yet somehow not quite connect. This inflects the subtle dynamic of intimacy and separation in our direction and across the picture plane, as his gaze suggests a (psychological) departure into our space, while the hint of a reciprocal visual connection with the viewer helps draw us, affectively, into their circle. Indeed, necessarily invisible within the world of the picture, we are also its principal visual interlocutors, the ones for whose eyes it offers itself up as something to be seen.[13] His armour, however, creates distance in its very tactility—reflective of light and mirroring the faces of the two women who flank him—ironically reinscribing the active gaze and a distancing self-reflexivity, for which the mirror stands as a metaphor at precisely this spot of heightened haptic evocation. Furthermore, the tactile vividness of the armour's impenetrable surface further reinforces the feeling of distance, in counterpoint with the intimate invitation of flesh. By being brought into the dialogue, our response to a picture is rendered analogous to the interpersonal relationships depicted within it: the encounter with art enriches our understanding of ordinary experience and, conversely, our remembered experiences of interpersonal interaction shape our interpretation of the work of art.

In the *Allegory of Marriage*, the roles of vision and touch in interpersonal experience are addressed in a particularly pointed way. There is a tension—or more precisely, a harmony—between vision and touch as acts of sensory perception that bring objective knowledge of both distant and proximate things, on the one hand, and these same senses as embodied experiences that give rise to carnal and psychological intimacy, or conversely to physical separation and psychological distance, on the other. This difference between the purely sensory and the fully embodied is articulated emblematically, but also quite viscerally, in the right third of the picture. For Panofsky, the three figures arranged vertically within this

12 It is likely because of this valedictory mood, more than for any other reason, that a narrative involving the male protagonist departing for war has sometimes been identified here, or even an allusion to his death (i.e., that it is a posthumous portrait).

13 Cf. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 16, where, analysing *Las Meninas* and considering the determinative role of the viewer, painter, or sitter on our side of the picture plane, he refers to 'the necessary disappearance of that which is [the picture's] foundation—of the person it resembles and the person in whose eyes it is only a resemblance'.

narrow space represented the three theological virtues: hope, faith, and love.[14] Iconographically this makes sense, given their attributes. However, the specific visual and tactile qualities of the paint surface itself, and the way these material qualities correspond to the subject matter they depict, suggest another possible dimension of Christian meaning. The blue and white of the sky above the upper figure echo the colours of Cupid's wings (Plate 8), and at the same time there is a contrast between the diaphanous indeterminacy of the broadly painted cloudy sky, on the one hand, and the visceral tactility of the thick brushstrokes that form the feathery wings of Cupid, on the other. This is once again a dialogue between distance and proximity: the cloudy sky is the only part of the picture that represents unbounded space, a realm only available to vision, while the feathers on Cupid's wings seem, of all the objects in the picture, the ones closest to the picture plane and to us. It is as if we could reach out and touch them, giving their tactility—as much that of the paint itself as of the depicted feathers—a surprisingly literal quality.

The upper figure's lifting of the basket, her gaze heavenward, and the dematerializing quality of the cloudy sky itself suggest a desire to transcend the earthly realm, with the roses, materially present yet delicate and ephemeral, poetically evoking an intermediary stage in this dematerialization. This upward spiritual movement suggests a Christianized Eros, the yearning for the kingdom of heaven that is associated with the virtue of hope.[15] By contrast, the earthbound and markedly human (yet still ultimately divine) Cupid—whose earthiness is reinforced, even overdetermined, by the heavy bunch of sticks he carries—invokes agape, even if obliquely and in a Neoplatonic register: agape as the Word made flesh, the embodiment of divine love in the incarnate human Christ. To be sure, there is a deep irony in the contrast between the playful and sexual character of Cupid and the compassionate and spiritual dimension of agape, and I have no intention of proposing a specific iconography here; rather, these are associations arising from the character of the respective figures and, with respect to the carnal aspect of agape, from the use of the medium itself. What is most essential about this contrast though, and a foundation for further interpretation, is its juxtaposition of disembodied sense perception (the imaginative power of pure opticality) and embodied experience (Cupid in the flesh), with all its phenomenological implications. Between these two figures stands the interlocutor with the principal female figure, the young woman with the yearning gaze and self-reflexive gesture, both contemplative and carnal, mediating between the extremes articulated by her companions.

14 Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 161–162.

15 Cf. I Corinthians 13:9–12. Cf. also the *locus classicus* for Platonic eros in the Renaissance: *Symposium*, 210a–212a. English translation in Plato, *The Symposium*, pp. 272–274. For a Christianizing reading of the eros of the *Symposium*, see Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, Book 4, Sections 51–70.

Before leaving this section of the picture, with its highly suggestive group of figures, I should note that erotic love of an earthly variety joins in this dialogue as well: as alluded to above, the orientation of the bundle of sticks shouldered by the god of Love with respect to the yonic sphere the woman holds makes an allusion to sexual intercourse virtually unavoidable, even if the overall tone of the picture may not encourage this as a primary reading. (In this role, Cupid takes on a fully pagan significance, as opposed to the Neoplatonizing Christian one of 'the Word made flesh'.) The inclusion of this form of love, however, does seem appropriate here—at least as a subtext, and one that is ultimately in harmony with the rest of the picture, given its exploration of an intimacy that is not only poignantly emotional but also markedly carnal.

Invocation

The passages of paint that mimetically depict the feathery texture of Cupid's wings in the lower right corner of the *Allegory of Marriage* are at the same time an impasto of thick brushstrokes.[16] The dialectic between visibility and tactility is thus also at work self-reflexively, rendering Titian's painting technique itself an explicit object of interpretation. At the picture's centre we find an emblem of painting's mimetic power: the reflective surface of the male figure's polished armour with its reflections of the two flanking female figures (Plate 6).[17] In Vasari's famous story about Titian's teacher, Giorgione makes a painting that outdoes sculpture by using reflection—including reflection in armour—to show all sides of a figure, as sculpture in the round does.[18] If Vasari's story is to be believed, the *Allegory of Marriage*, with its reflections and its concomitant commentary on the

16 On this dual quality of Titian's brushwork, in which the mimetic and the material (the literally tactile) are closely intertwined, see Rosand, *The Meaning of the Mark*, Chapter 1: 'Stroke of the Brush', esp. pp. 78–84.

17 Cf. Alberti, *Della pittura*, II, 26, where Alberti metaphorically defines painting as the (self-)reflection on the surface of the water upon which Narcissus gazes. English translation in Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 64.

18 Here is the relevant passage from Vasari: '[Giorgione] painted a male nude with his back turned; on the ground there was an extremely limpid fountain of water in which Giorgione painted the reflection of a front view; on one side was a burnished breastplate that the man had removed in which his left profile was reflected, since the polished surface of that armour revealed everything; on the other side there was a mirror which contained the other profile of the nude figure; this was a most beautiful, clever, and fanciful work, by which he hoped to demonstrate that painting actually requires more skill and effort and can show more of nature in a single scene than sculpture'. Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, p. 303.
Cf. Pater, 'The School of Giorgione', p. 99, and the nuance that Pater brings to the retelling of this story, emphasizing the ephemerality of the passing moment evoked by such a picture, with its shimmering and insubstantial reflections—a nuance relevant to the visual character and valedictory melancholy of the *Allegory of Marriage*.

art of painting, may even constitute a subtle response to Giorgione's picture. The *paragone* between painting and sculpture, when marshalled to the defence of painting's superiority, emphasizes painting's mimetic power, its capacity to create illusion. Consider how Leonardo da Vinci described the *paragone* in a passage from his notebooks: 'Sculpture reveals what it is with little effort; painting seems a thing miraculous, making things intangible appear tangible, presenting in relief things which are flat, in distance things near at hand'.[19] Reflecting the faces of the two women—and specifically the parts of the faces that are turned away from the viewer—the man's armour not only reinforces the picture's emphasis on the power of vision but also, in the spirit of the *paragone*, invokes painting's power to represent three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface, not only through perspective but also transcending the fixed viewpoint of perspective, in showing an object from multiple sides.

The other reflective surface, the crystal sphere, suggests an optical experience that, in certain ways, is still closer to the spirit of Leonardo—for instance, when he describes the power of the eye: 'Who would believe that so small a space could contain the images of all the universe? [...] Here the forms, here the colours, here all the images of every part of the universe are contracted to a point'.[20] The image of a global reflection at the centre of the *Allegory of Marriage* invokes the depiction of a universe within a small space, a testament to the unlimited imaginative power of pictorial representation and an elaboration, in terms of subject matter, of the geometrical infinity that Renaissance perspective offers—a striking affirmation of painting's unlimited mimetic power.[21] At the same time that it suggests this Leonardesque optical universe in miniature, however, the sphere also reflects and refracts light rays in all directions, a dispersal of light that counteracts the stable Gestalt of images produced mimetically in a mirror, like those visible in the armour above and emblematized by Alberti's Narcissus

19 Ashburnham II, 24, 25 (Institut de France, Paris). The English translation above is from Leonardo, *Notebooks*, p. 196.

20 Codex Atlanticus 345v/949v (Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan). The English translation above is from Leonardo, *Notebooks*, p. 105.

21 With respect to the infinity of potential objects afforded to vision, with its limitless extension, and to the infinite range of potential subject matter painting can likewise depict, the following passage from Leonardo's Codex Urbinus (Urb. 40 [Vatican Library, Rome]) is also relevant: 'The art of painting includes in its domain all visible things [... the painter] can depict mists through which the shapes of things can only be discerned with difficulty; rain with cloud-capped mountains and valleys showing through; clouds of dust whirling about the combatants who raise them; streams of varying transparency, and fishes at play between the surface of the water and its bottom; and polished pebbles of many colours deposited on the clean sand of the river bed surrounded by green plants seen underneath the water's surface. He will represent the stars at varying heights above us and innumerable other effects whereto sculpture cannot aspire'. Leonardo, *Notebooks*, p. 194.

metaphor—a challenge to the conventions of Renaissance art theory to which I return below.

However, as David Rosand has argued, even paintings within the Renaissance perspectival tradition, in which the picture is conceived as a transparent opening into a fictive three-dimensional space, inevitably invite a doubled form of perception, as imaginative engagement with the depicted space is accompanied by an awareness of the literal painted surface.[22] In the case of Titian's approach to painting, the dialogue between these coexistent modes of perception is exceptionally charged, given its emphasis on the visible brushstroke and the thick layering of oil paint. Not only can we read Cupid's wings either as feathers or as paint, as mimetic illusion or as literal surface; the materiality of the paint itself appeals to the sense of touch as fully as does the illusion of solid objects.

Indeed, the simultaneous appeal to vision and to touch that appears everywhere in the *Allegory of Marriage* creates another kind of intimacy in which both these senses play a part: that of the viewer with the painting as picture and as painted surface. Here too, in the realm of the medium itself and its relationship to the subject matter it depicts, there is a constant dialogue between the haptic and the optical: just as vision, through the power of illusion, gives us access to imagined experiences of tactility and texture (flesh, crystal sphere, armour, feathery wings), so, too, conversely, does the literal tactility of paint reveal itself as the basis of this visual experience. Rhyming with its subject matter, in which gestures of looking and touching play such a central role, the picture's medium invites us to engage with this dialectic of space and surface, encouraging reflection on the role optical and haptic values play in Titian's painterly practice—in other words, making the interplay between the picture as window and the brushstroke as touch explicit.

Perhaps the most eloquent and magisterial response to Titian's painterly style is Velázquez's *Las Hilanderas* (or the *Fable of Arachne*) of c. 1656/7 (Figure 9.2).[23] Since the mid-twentieth century, the subject matter of the painting has generally been recognized as the story of Arachne, the human tapestry weaver of humble origins who engages in a contest with Minerva, the divine patron of the art herself.[24] With Titian's *Rape of Europa*, which Velázquez knew from the Spanish royal collection, standing in for

22 Rosand, *The Meaning of the Mark*, p. 51. On this issue with respect to (representational) painting more generally, see also Wollheim, *Art and its Objects*, Essay V: 'Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation'.

23 For recent discussions of *Las Hilanderas* and bibliography on the painting, see Alpers, *The Vexations of Art*, pp. 133–262, Knox, *The Late Paintings of Velázquez*, pp. 59–117, and Suthor, *Augenlust bei Tizian*, pp. 165–187.

24 The story of Arachne appears in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI, 1–145. English translation in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Loeb ed., vol. 1, pp. 288–299. The identification of the picture's subject matter with Arachne first appeared in print in Harris, *The Prado: Treasure House of the Spanish Royal Collections*, p. 8, and was further elaborated in Angulo Iñiguez, '*Las Hilanderas*'.

9.2. Diego Velázquez, *Las Hilanderas*, c. 1656, Madrid, Museo del Prado, © Photo: Wikimedia Commons, uploaded by Enrique Cordero.

Arachne's tapestry at its centre (Figure 9.3), *Las Hilanderas* makes its engagement with Titian's art explicit, and its profound reflection on the art of painting is thus framed, at least partially, as a response to Titian.[25] Velázquez's picture, structured by a movement into depth that is also—literally and metaphorically—an elevation, brings two distinct pictorial worlds into meaningful interaction.[26] Further, the relationship between these two tightly interwoven pictorial realms generates a wealth of interpretive possibilities. This is equally true whether we understand this relationship as a narrative progression (the foreground depicting the beginning of the weaving contest between Arachne and Minerva and the background its climax);[27] as a scene of storytelling in a tapestry workshop, with the story being told (that of Arachne) enframed by the world of the storytellers reciting it; or as a depiction of painting itself as the fusion of craft and

25 See Knox, *The Late Paintings of Velázquez*, pp. 61–65.

26 Note that while the principal structural division of the pictorial space in the *Allegory of Marriage* is between the left and right sections, in *Las Hilanderas* it is between the foreground and the background. Indeed, depth—and thus perspective space—plays a much more important role in the creation of meaning in Velázquez's picture, whose means of dividing the two sections also makes the self-reflexive principle of reframing central to the picture's interpretation.

27 See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI, 53–69, 129–145. English translation: *Metamorphoses*, Loeb ed., vol. 1, pp. 292–293 and 296–299.

9.3. Titian, *The Rape of Europa*, 1559/62, Boston, Isabella Stewart Museum, © Photo: mAEjhHviHv8lFg at the Google Cultural Institute.

art. Interpreting the subject as a scene of storytelling, the background would be an imaginative projection on the part of the storyteller, her audience, or both. One might even imagine the five figures in the background scene as projections of the analogous five figures in the foreground, a visual metaphor for the identification of both author and audience with the work of art and a figuration of immersive engagement. In this way, part of the complexity of the framed narrative structure in *Las Hilanderas* would be that it combines self-reflexivity—the frame calling attention to the central scene *as* a work of art—with immersive experience, the fullest possible affective participation in the artwork, emblematized in the figural doublings. In addition to defining the two poles of a spectrum that constitutes the possibilities of viewer/listener response, this also provides a meaningful commentary on the structure and the poetic mode of the painting's narrative source, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with its multiple layers of framed tales and its elaborate scenes of storytelling.

To return to the third possibility suggested above—the representation of craft and art as components of painting—references to the materiality of the artistic

medium and to workshop practice are spun out copiously in the foreground, painted in a realist mode, while the illusionistic, imaginative, and even transcendent power of art appears in the visionary mode of the background scene, with Titian's *Rape of Europa* as its focus. We may, following Charles de Tolnay, see an ascent from mundane craft to high art in the movement from foreground to background, with Titian affirmed as the representative of the latter—of an art that transcends craft.[28] However, in view of the character of Titian's approach to the art of painting, as we have been discussing it with respect to the *Allegory of Marriage*, both of these realms, the material and the visionary, seem equally important for understanding Titian's art—and Velázquez's. As Giles Knox has argued, the tactility of oil paint on canvas and the specific activity of a workshop practice in which Titian sometimes painted directly with his fingers[29]—the fullest realization of tactile intimacy between artist and painting—find their analogy here in the spinning of wool and the winding of thread that occupy the foreground.[30] Likewise, painting's relation to the intangible and the spiritual—its power to signify and to evoke—is revealed in the background scene of a mythological painting (Titian's) with its circle of viewers, an explicit depiction of attentive immersion in the presence of a work of art, with its potential for an interpretive, affective, or imaginative response. This harmony between materiality and meaning, between immanence and transcendence, even finds expression in Velázquez's painting technique—and, more intangibly, in the nature of the world it depicts—since the whole painting, with its loose and quasi-impressionistic brushstrokes, suggests threads continuously weaving through space, while its luminosity, especially in the background, creates the impression of an ephemeral vision.[31] With all its emphasis on the material conditions of the work of art, *Las Hilanderas*, in its visionary intensity, provokes a dreamlike immersion in

28 See Tolnay, 'Velázquez' *Las Hilanderas* and *Las Meninas*', pp. 21–38.

29 As Marco Boschini puts it: 'ed il Palma mi attestava, per verità, che nei finimenti dipingeva più con le dita che co' pennelli'. Boschini, *Le ricche miniere della pittura veneziana*, p. 712.

30 In Knox's reading, in contrast to that of Tolnay, it is the physical process of making that is in the ascendant, since he reads the picture as an affirmation of the artist's hand as the source of creative power, a challenge to the emphasis on the idea and on intellect in Renaissance art theory, from Albertian *istoria* and Vasarian *disegno* up to the Spanish art theorists of Velázquez's time: Vicente Carducho and Francisco Pacheco. See Knox, *The Late Paintings of Velázquez*, pp. 17–33 and 65–87. Unlike either Tolnay or Knox, I am inclined to see in the painting an equilibrium between the intangible and transcendent aspects of art, on the one hand, and its material presence born from manual process, on the other—an equilibrium that, among other factors, gives the picture its oneiric character.

31 This makes for an interesting comparison to Velázquez's more or less contemporaneous and closely related picture *Las Meninas*, with its proliferation of rectangular forms, frames, and windows: if *Las Meninas* affirms the importance of the frame and the window metaphor for *representation*, *Las Hilanderas* by contrast emphasizes the thread-like and interwoven character of continuous brushwork in *painting*. *Las Hilanderas* thus foregrounds the material and the phenomenological, while *Las Meninas* focuses on the mimetic and the ontological. Given that these two pictures are so closely related (note that Rubens's

the picture's world that is both intimate and disembodied. This oneiric dimension emerges as if suspended between the opposite poles of craft and art, materiality and signification—engaged neither with interpretation in the intellectual sense nor with awareness of the picture's literal materiality. Entering the realm of daydreams, art here manifests an important aspect of its peculiar and unique power.[32] The profound interdependence of the haptic and the optical in Velázquez's picture contribute to its dreamlike character—witness the hanging threads being wound by the figure on the right, so vividly material yet resembling threads of pure light, or the solid wooden spinning wheel on the left, whose movement generates such subtle and even ghostlike optical effects. Considered separately, the virtuosity of brushstrokes in these details, on the one hand, or the power of illusion they generate, on the other, can provoke reflective detachment and admiration; as a holistic experience they contribute to the representation of an intangible and elusive moment of lived experience, evoking a vivid feeling of embodied presence and a dreamlike disembodiment in equal measure.

Although this discussion of Velázquez's painting may seem like a digression, *Las Hilanderas* in fact provides a unique commentary on the problems at stake in the dialectic of vision and touch that is so central to the *Allegory of Marriage*. In its sensitivity to the interplay of tactile and optical values, to their constitutive role in painting's ontology, and to the part each of them plays in the connection—reflective, affective, embodied, or oneiric—between a work of art and its viewers, *Las Hilanderas* invokes concerns central to Titian's painterly practice. In the *Allegory of Marriage*, as we have seen, these concerns are evident both in the picture's subject matter—where vision and touch play a crucial role in defining human relationships—and in its explicit appeal to optical and haptic experiences as a means of forging an intimate relationship with the viewer.

Implication

Offering a global reflection—an allusion to the sphere of vision and an assertion of vision's power—the glass sphere at the gestural centre of the *Allegory of Marriage* unites the worlds on both sides of the picture plane within the purview of its reflective opticality.[33] However, unlike the reflection on a flat mirror surface, or

painting of Arachne appears dimly over the head of the painter in *Las Meninas*), this difference itself provokes reflection on the art of painting.

32 Cf. the understanding of daydreams in relation to art (specifically poetry) in the context of a phenomenology of the imagination, in Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*.

33 Much of this section of this chapter is indebted to ideas developed by Anna Zakelj in her BA thesis, 'The Sphere: Possibilities for Dissolution in Titian's *The Allegory of Marriage*', and shared with me over the

9.4. Titian, *Annunciation*, 1562/4, Venice, San Salvatore, © Photo: Didier Descouens, modified by Geoff Lehman.

9.5. Titian, *Annunciation* (detail: vase with flowers), 1562/4, Venice, San Salvatore, © Photo: Didier Descouens, modified by Geoff Lehman.

even on the convex surface of the male protagonist's armour, both of which provide vision with a mimetic double of the object reflected, the sphere does not show us a picture but instead glitters with luminous highlights, a translucent form suspended between transparency and reflectivity. Thus, we can also conceive of the sphere as an object receiving luminous signals from every side and reflecting them in turn, omnidirectionally—irrespective of the separation between worlds defined by the

course of numerous conversations. In particular, her thesis explores the interpretive possibilities of the sphere in Titian's painting as an object that scatters light rays rather than as a reflecting surface producing a coherent image—specifically its implications, through empathetic identification, for an understanding of the body in relation to space that radically challenges the mode of self-awareness defined by Gestalt. Thus, the general orientation of the pages that follow and significant aspects of the reading I propose here are inspired in large measure by her insights and by her highly original interpretation of Titian's picture.

picture plane. In this sense, in its optical relationship to the world, the sphere does not just reinforce, through reflection, the conditions of figure against ground and of bodies within space—that is, of Gestalt. It also calls attention to the conditions of light itself: light as the convergence and scattering of rays rather than as the source of images on the retina or on the surface of a mirror.

In this relationship to light, reinforced by the female protagonist's surrounding tactile embrace, the sphere crystallizes the phenomenological character of the pictorial world it reflects, a world in which vision and touch are unified within a phenomenology of embodiment that transcends the reflective self-awareness of the body as an object in space, an awareness reinforced—even, according to psychoanalytic theory, established—by a glance at one's image in a mirror.[34] This phenomenology speaks to the experience the picture evokes for subjects on both sides of the picture plane. As the emblem of an embodied subjectivity, the sphere thus implicates a different kind of viewer than mimetic mirror reflection does, which (understood in perspectival terms) emphasizes the plastic forms of bodies and the measurable distances between them. There is indeed an irony in the fact that precisely in calling attention to the disembodied and omnipresent qualities of light, the reflecting globe at the picture's centre implicates a more fully embodied and phenomenologically focused experience of painting—and, for those within the picture as well as for its viewers, of the world.

The spherical reflection is a motif familiar from other works of Titian and his circle. In the *Annunciation* Titian made for the Church of San Salvatore in the 1540s (Figure 9.4), the vase with flowers in the lower-right corner offers just such a reflection (Figure 9.5). Here we find a detail highly charged, and even overburdened, with meaning: a distillation of the Virgin's theological significance and of the human drama in which she is caught up, as well as an emphatic juxtaposition of linear and painterly styles, placed conspicuously between the Virgin and the picture's framing edge as the closest object to the viewer.[35] In this position, the vase appears as the final stage in a downward and rightward compression from the heavenly splendour of the Holy Spirit and angels descending through the clouds (an invasion reinforced by the rather domineering Gabriel) to the ambivalently receptive Virgin and then to her iconographic emblem: the vase with flowers. The juxtaposition of styles in this emblem—the Flemish precision and clarity of

34 Cf. Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function'.

35 The vase opens itself to multiple iconographic possibilities. As part of the Virgin's iconography, the vase symbolizes her chastity. Given the inscription below the vase ('*ignis ardens non combvrens*'), this motif also likely refers to the burning bush in which God appears to Moses as an Old Testament figure for the Virgin. On this iconography and its relationship to Titian's handling of paint, see Rosand, *Painting in Sixteenth-Century Venice*, pp. 51–56, and Rosand, 'Titian and the Eloquence of the Brush'.

the vase contrasted with the painterly exuberance of the flowers[36]—crystallizes her conflicted response: a coexistence of lucid receptivity with fear, of innocent chastity with passion, and of humility before the transcendent with ecstatic sexual intimacy.[37] The uncertainty of the Virgin's feelings at this moment is reminiscent of the ambivalence in the female protagonist of the *Allegory of Marriage*, albeit dramatically magnified in its intensity with respect to the couple's nuanced emotional relationship in the *Allegory*. The fact that this ambivalence cannot be resolved in either picture—normative theological readings notwithstanding in the case of the *Annunciation*—contributes substantially to the affective power each exerts upon a responsive viewer. In an abstracted form, the double nature of the reflecting sphere (or spherical vase) visualizes that emotional contradiction: it is a compact form, appealing to touch, that brings the entire world together into a single reflection on its surface; at the same time, it scatters light in all directions in a way suggestive of ecstatic expansion. Thus, the dialectic of inward and outward, of emotional recoil and openness to an Other—whether that be gentle receptivity or ecstatic submission—finds subtle expression in the character of the reflecting sphere or vase itself. In the *Annunciation*, the contrast between the closed reflective form of the vase and the flamboyant flowers above, which seem almost literally to burst into flame as if charged with sexual passion, articulates this dialectic in an emphatic form—but this opposition is, in fact, already present, albeit more subtly, in the double orientation of the vase's own relationship to light.

In its omnidirectional reflectivity, the vase in Titian's *Annunciation* implicates the viewer or worshipper standing before the altar, witness to this human and cosmic drama. The affective and theological implications of this moment of the Incarnation touch us directly—it is to our lives that the picture speaks. Moreover, we participate multiply in a harmony of contrasting terms: psychologically, in the

36 In addition, invoking the Flemish painters of the early Renaissance and in stylistic contrast to the rest of the canvas, the vase engages the dialectic of tactile and optical values, expressed in terms of the materiality of paint and the transparency of pictorial representation that is so central to the *Allegory of Marriage*. Here the dialectic is at play in an emphatically stylistic register, in the contrast between what Wölfflin would describe as linear versus painterly styles, the former associated with the haptic and the latter with the optical (though Wölfflin probably would not concede that Titian's work, made in the Renaissance rather than the Baroque period, could be truly painterly). Reinforcing the self-reflexivity of this explicit juxtaposition of styles is the presence of Titian's signature on the stairs just below. Cf. the similar pairing of exuberant brushstrokes depicting fire and artist's signature on the grill in the San Lorenzo altarpiece.

37 Cf. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, pp. 49–56, on the different kinds of affective responses displayed by the Virgin in Renaissance Annunciations, considering them in relation to categories established in sermons of the time. Although by displacing meaning to a verbal/textual source, Baxandall's reading, however illuminating in other ways, may not fully do justice to the nuances of interpretation, and of affective response on the part of the viewer, that arise from the phenomenological aspect of the direct encounter between viewer and picture in a painting such as Titian's.

ambivalence of humble receptivity and passionate intensity; phenomenologically, in the interplay between tactile and visual appeal; and ontologically, in the necessary co-presence of viewer and picture in a shared dialogue. In the *Fete Champêtre* (Figure 1.3), a painting traditionally attributed to Giorgione but now commonly ascribed to Titian,[38] the reflection of light from our space on the glass pitcher suggests the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of the viewer within a harmony whose fragile stability threatens to come apart at any moment.

The woman holding the pitcher is part of a group of four figures that defines a structural equivalent to musical harmony, as four irreducibly different parts are joined together to make a unity, their differences defined by opposition: stringed instrument versus wind instrument, singing versus (instrumental) playing, female versus male, standing versus seated, urban versus rural, noble versus common, etc. Like the *Allegory of Marriage*, with its similar dialectical unity, this is a picture about harmony that is defined by a visual harmonics—that is, its subject matter (musical performance) and its pictorial means (a dynamic structural harmony) reinforce each other.[39] However, the woman with the pitcher also partially separates herself, literally and thematically, from the group: pouring water into the fountain, her gesture opens up the experience of music to natural sounds—sounds that, nevertheless, are ultimately irreducible to music—just as the landscape behind her expands the intimate *locus amoenus* of the emergent genre of pastoral to include the unbounded perspectival space suggested by the horizon. As in the *Allegory of Marriage*, the spherical object's reflection of a seemingly specific light source coming from our space is embedded within an omnidirectional relationship to light and thus its implied inclusion of the viewer through reflection carries an equivalent complexity of address. As in the *Annunciation*, the reflecting globe seems to sit right at the picture plane and situate us, through the laws of reflection, on the other side of that plane, even as it implicates us, and our act of looking, in the omnidirectional network of light rays that transcends such separation. Although this may be a relatively innocuous detail, it rhymes with the analogous implication of the viewer—a simultaneous inclusion and exclusion—in the far

38 On the attribution of the picture, see Brown, Ferino-Pagden, et al., *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian*, cat. 31, pp. 168–170.

39 The picture has often been interpreted in an iconographic, and specifically, allegorical register: as an allegory of poetry, Egan, '*Poesia* and the *Fête Champêtre*'; an allegory of painting, Bardon, *Le Concert champêtre*, vol. 2, pp. 101 and 126–135; or as an allegory of musical inspiration, Frings, *Giorgiones Landliches Konzert*, pp. 97–101. See also Brown, Ferino-Pagden, et al., *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian*, pp. 168–170, on these allegorical readings. In my view, however, the visual character, mood, and spirit of the picture, as with the *Allegory of Marriage*, suggest something quite different from the specificity and relative detachment (i.e., reliance on an external text or cultural tradition) of an iconographic approach. It seems rather to invite us to participate in the improvisatory, relational, and musical mode of its pictorial universe in a more open-ended process of meaning creation.

more thematically and phenomenologically significant musical concert itself, a circle opened out towards us by the position and gestures of the standing nude. This is an opening that threatens to shatter the fragile harmony of the circle it defines in its receptivity to the scattered sounds and sights of nature's boundless realm—and of the viewer's world.

In the *Allegory of Marriage*, the gestures of inclusion embodied in both reflections—sphere and armour—not only establish a dialogue between viewer and picture but also invite us to join the group of figures on the other side of the picture plane, to become a part of their interconnected dialogue of glances and gestures. If the picture establishes a transient intimacy among its five figures, one always threatened with the shadow of detachment, departure, and loss—that is, one open-ended enough to allow (self-)reflection and withdrawal to enter as part of the collective experience—it is also one shared with the viewer. We participate affectively in the experience of warmth, detachment, desire, and melancholy that we see depicted among the figures through our reception of subtle cues to join their circle. As in the *Fete Champêtre*, this appeal to the viewer is compositional as well as emotional: indeed, the structural openness of the figural grouping reinforces its appeal to empathy. Above the sphere, and near the painting's literal centre, lies the triple reflection in the male figure's armour: the faces of the two principal female figures—whose gestures, gazes, and states of mind form a counterpoint—are joined by the brightest patch of light in the entire painting, nonspecific and brilliant, which is evidently coming from our space.

The power of art to represent the world mimetically is made manifest in the pictorial surface of the armour that reflects the two faces, but that surface also bends outward in the middle to suggest something more abstract in the glowing white light of the central reflection: the relation of painting to light itself. Or perhaps even here we could say: the relation of painting to visuality and tactility themselves, given the armour's tactile presence and power, and the appeal of both the armour and its reflections to an embodied viewer. Indeed, what this detail concretizes in its implication of light on our side of the picture plane is the manner in which the intimacy at work throughout the picture, grounded in a network of visual and tactile interactions, implicates the relationship between picture and viewer—and between the experience of art and a broader field of life experience, within which the encounter with art forms a small but significant part. However, it is in the second reflection—that of the sphere—that a markedly different kind of relationship between figures and their environment is implied.

In Francesca Woodman's *Untitled* (Figure 9.6), a black and white photograph dated to 1976—one among many she took that year in a dilapidated house in Providence, Rhode Island—we see a woman whose bodily disposition, like that of the woman grasping the sphere in the *Allegory of Marriage*, centres on the graceful, centripetal

9.6. Francesca Woodman, *Untitled*, 1976, gelatin silver print, Providence RI, Woodman Family Foundation © Photo: licensed by the Artists Rights Society.

gestures of her arms, each curving back towards her own body in a way that suggests a specific nuance of embodied experience. While her left hand stretches out to touch her leg but actually makes contact with wallpaper—like the man in armour's left hand touching the drapery covering his female companion's breast—indicating an ambivalent tactile awareness of the contours of her own body, her curled right arm grips an object with all five fingers just as the woman in Titian's painting does. Whereas through a scattering of light the sphere in the painting inflects that gesture into the surrounding space on all sides, in Woodman's photograph the object—a conch shell—continues and intensifies the centripetal spiral of the figure's arm. Nevertheless, the relationship of the figure with the surrounding space is analogous to that of the female protagonist in the *Allegory of Marriage* with her

spatial realm: a counterpoint of outwards expansion, imaginatively merging with the environment, on the one hand, and intimate closure through tactile interaction with an object, on the other.

In the case of Woodman's photograph, however, the fusing of the figure with the surrounding space emerges from a much more pervasive disintegration of the Gestalt of figural form. As is characteristic of many of Woodman's photographs from this series, the ambiguous placement of the figure in the marginal space between the torn wallpaper and the rough wall surface thoroughly breaks down the contours of the body.[40] The occlusion of the head by the upper framing edge contributes to this effect, suggesting not so much a decapitation as a disintegration of form, through the interplay of hair, shadow, and uncertainty of contour—precisely at the site where identity is normally established and where we might seek an expression of the figure's subjectivity. Furthermore, the throughgoing ambiguity, to the point of abstraction, of the lower part of the photograph contributes markedly—in the spatial disorientation it creates—to the erosion of any distinction between figure and ground, undermining perspectival space itself.[41] The combined effect of the head's occlusion, the spatial ambiguity of the image's lower section, and the interplay among figure, wallpaper, and wall, in its radical deconstruction of Gestalt, suggests an intuitive experience of embodiment that is emancipated from a conception of the body as a bounded three-dimensional form.

Indeed, here we perceive—and participate in—a phenomenology of embodiment that imaginatively expands beyond the limitations of plastic contour to fill the room space like the wallpaper itself. On the one hand, this characteristic of Woodman's work evokes a state of daydreaming like the one we might recognize in the female protagonist in Titian's painting: a disembodied oneiric freedom to occupy space from any and every point one can imagine. At the same time, however, this conversely speaks to a thoroughly embodied attentiveness, a sensitivity to touch that even inflects vision towards the condition of the haptic: a form of perception active equally in all directions and from any site on the body, and one whose activity produces a feeling of intimate contact with all of one's surroundings at once. This is an identification with one's environment that would be elided by the awareness of bodily form and spatial situatedness given by a perceptual experience in which vision is ascendant.

For sure, in the *Allegory of Marriage*, any implication of this more expansive relationship of subjectivity to its environment is counter-balanced by the harmonious forms that define both the picture's surface composition and its subject

40 For other contemporaneous photographs by Woodman that depict a similarly ambiguous relationship between the body and room space, see Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, pp. 88, 105, 107–109, 113, and 135.
41 This is especially striking since Woodman achieves this in a medium that, technically speaking, produces images in strict mathematical perspective.

matter of bodies disposed gracefully in space. It is this kind of harmonious and discrete form—figure *against* ground—that Woodman's photograph so thoroughly and eloquently deconstructs. However, to return to the painterly aspect of Titian's practice (the brushstroke as touch, or rather as the complex interaction of visible touches that Velázquez celebrates in Titian), perhaps its divergence from a more linear and bounded style suggests a transformed experience of the contours of form. The relatively open and painterly boundaries among objects in the *Allegory of Marriage* do not undermine coherent form in the emphatic manner of Woodman's photograph, but they do suggest flesh rather than surface contour per se. What is at stake here is not flesh in the sense of its tactile appeal—that is, as experienced from the outside—but rather flesh as experienced from within, expanding outwards from a vital centre of energy to interact with the world, emanating heat into the environment like a gradual evaporation. To return once again to Leonardo, we are in the realm of infinitesimal changes and continuous transitions that he theorized about, in paint and in words, and that has come to be known as *sfumato*.[42] (Although it is important to note that in the case of Titian, the artist's interaction with his medium was very different, based as it was on a network of colour touches rather than an infinitesimal variation of tonal values.)

This intuitive sense of a moment of lived experience, a feeling of oneness with one's environment that is both immersive and reflective—felt through heightened attentiveness to sensation, epitomized by touch, just as it is realized imaginatively in a state of daydreaming inwardness—profoundly informs the humanity of the woman holding the sphere as an ensouled body. Must this not, inevitably, also shape the viewer's relationship to the picture? Indeed, with a certain attentiveness on our part, it is possible to respond to the picture's invitation more intimately than the Albertian metaphor of picture as window—a window through which we look, defined by our gaze from a certain distance—would allow. The reflection in a mirror, such as the one on the back wall of *Las Meninas* or of Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Wedding*, implicates the two realms, ours and the picture's—divided by the picture plane and defined by perspective—within a *spatial* continuity. The *phenomenological* unity grounded in a feeling of connection with every part of one's environment, however, implicates the viewer in a way that resonates more fully with the female protagonist's experience—a unity for which the picture plane as boundary is no more inviolable, ultimately, than the boundaries of form that define Gestalt. This is an imaginative participation, surely, but one that nevertheless gives a more embodied sense to the viewer's encounter with the work of art than the one implied

42 Cf., for instance, *Codex Atlanticus*, fol. 278r and fol. 784v. Leonardo, *Notebooks*, pp. 115 and 260. For interpretations of *sfumato*, particularly in relation to the infinitesimal, see Nagel, 'Leonardo and Sfumato', Arasse, *Leonardo da Vinci*, pp. 119–120, and Fehrenbach, 'The Paradox of the Point'.

by the perspective paradigm ascendant in Renaissance art theory. The experience Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* offers us is not only moving, evocative, and immersive but it also carries broad implications for our understanding of the power of art. The theoretical work the picture enacts is, in one sense, broadly relevant to Titian's workshop practice in the latter part of his career; it emerges from the artist's approach to paint as fully as Leonardo's ideas about space, bodies, and the infinitesimal emerge from the hands-on practice of *sfumato*. In this picture, however, with the experience of a tactile attentiveness that constitutes an expansive sensitivity to one's environment pictured at its very centre—in the woman's relationship to the crystal sphere—the issue is made self-reflexively visible just as it is affectively intensified. Indeed, the sphere itself, in its relationship to the female figure that touches it, stands as a metaphor for the painting's relationship to the viewer, and by extension for the power of the artwork to implicate us—imaginatively, affectively, and phenomenologically—in the specific universe it creates.

In view of the veiled but powerful invitation offered by the figures themselves and by the human world they embody and enact, the connection the picture establishes with the viewer is more than sensual or theoretical. Indeed, there is a sense that, in the picture as a whole, we encounter a living presence—that the intimacy we see depicted also extends, by analogy, to an intimacy between the viewer and the work as part of a palpable and vital encounter.[43] This operates, of course, on the level of the depicted subject, with the illusion that we are in the company of a group of living figures made alive for us, and thus immortal, by the art of painting.[44] However, the experience of encounter arises in a more viscerally phenomenological sense as well, in the real presence of the work of art and the affective depth of its dialogue with us. This affective dialogue draws upon the emotional expressiveness of its human sitters and their interactions among each other and with us. More obliquely, however, in the mysterious crystal sphere that reflects the light around it but with which the woman who grasps it, in her tactile response, establishes more than a merely visual relationship, we find the power of painting in microcosm. Indeed, it constitutes a visionary realm that is also a real object in our space, and a presence that implicates us in sympathetic response—whether embodied, oneiric, affective, or reflective. The ambivalence with respect to intimacy and detachment that holds among the figures in the *Allegory of Marriage* mirrors our ambivalence as responsive viewers, simultaneously immersed in its deeply human world and reflective about the picture as artifice and object of interpretation—daydreaming with it while

43 Cf. Steinberg, 'Velázquez' *Las Meninas*', p. 54, speaking of *Las Meninas*: 'The picture conducts itself the way a vital presence behaves. It creates an encounter'.

44 Cf. De Grummond, 'VV and Related Inscriptions in Giorgione, Titian, and Dürer', with its related discussion of art's claim to living presence in portraits by Titian and other artists of the Venetian milieu.

perceiving the immediacy of its presence, in harmony with its embracing circle and unsettled by its instabilities. Titian's painting is in equal measure a visionary apparition and a touching co-presence within the world we inhabit.

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10. Of Crystal Orbs and Divinatory Mirrors: The Vicissitudes of Pregnancy and Artistic Agency in Titian's *Allegory of Marriage**

Sergius Kodera

Abstract
This chapter focuses on the large transparent orb resting on the lap of the central female figure. In exploring the suggestions made by Hartlaub, and later by Grabski, I suggest that Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* depicts a contemporary ritual of crystal gazing. I historicize some of the salient natural philosophical, magic/theological, medical, and political aspects that formed a backdrop for such divinatory tools and the rituals in which they were used. In particular, I explore the magical qualities of rock crystal and similar divinatory tools in scrying, and the imbrications between such rituals and pregnancy. I suggest that the *Allegory* imbricates a ritual of scrying with a particular conception of the power—and limits—of a visual representation.

Key Words: Titian, crystallomancy, mirrors, pregnancy, courtesans, imagination

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the large transparent orb resting on the lap of the central female figure in Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* (Plate 7). I start with a few hypotheses that guide my reading of the painting. First, I follow some earlier claims that the work represents a ritual of divination: to be more precise that the painting is a rendering of the magical art of scrying or crystal gazing. Erwin Panofsky proposed

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that the *Allegory* relates to procreation, sex, and the precarious state of the female pregnant body.[1] Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub maintained that the couple in the *Allegory* was trying to foretell the future, probably to find out the shape, the sex, or fate of their child (or of some other event). Generally, people engaged in such rituals to foretell the future or to discover an unknown past. Yet, as opposed to Panofsky and Hartlaub, my observations suggest a highly ambivalent mode of pictorial representation of such rituals and its ramifications for pregnancy and the shape and character of a future child in a maternal womb. (In particular, I suggest that the orb in the *Allegory* is a highly aesthetic representation of the creative powers attendant on a maternal womb.)

As evidence for these suggestions, I highlight some of the salient philosophical, magic/theological, medical, political, and gendered aspects that form the backdrop to crystallomancy and its relationship to similar divinatory tools, such as mirrors, reflecting surfaces, and water and the relationship between these rituals and the bodies of pregnant women, who often acted as scryers. In the first part, I highlight the salient role of the transparent orb as a metaphor for pregnancy in the *Allegory* and the highly ambivalent, even ironic, mode in which the painting negotiates and represents crystallomancy. The second section deals with court cases against female scryers, sometimes courtesans, in sixteenth-century Venice and the German lands. Here, I explore the rituals involving crystal balls and the creeds associated with this manic art. The third part describes the ways rock crystal was perceived in influential patristic and Renaissance philosophical texts—the cosmological and eschatological ideas ascribed to crystals. These attributions encouraged the use of crystals for divinatory purposes, as well as their function as liminal objects between life and death.

In my reading, the *Allegory*'s visual representation of an act of scrying astutely doubles the ambivalent qualities of crystals as liminal objects. Moreover, it conveys a specific understanding about what happens during the act of scrying to a particular conception of the powers—and limits—of visual representation. This leads me to suggest that the *Allegory* may be read as a form of *mise en abyme* that renders the limits (and the powers) of the representational techniques of the painter's art, as well as those of the art of the scryer visible.

Jòsef Grabski has argued that a crystalline orb is a complex iconographical object because it represents the cosmos and its crystalline spheres. Among many other similar representations, he points to Titian's *Salvator mundi* (Figure 7.1). That painting shows a cross-bearing transparent orb, reminiscent of the glass orb in in the *Allegory*. Originally the sphere of rock crystal signified Christ's royal power over God's creation. Grabski concludes that Titian wanted to represent the

1 Panofsky, *Problems in Titian*, pp. 127–128.

closed microcosm of a perfect marriage and the virtues that are cultivated by an exemplary couple.[2]

To start with, the Church persecuted individuals who engaged in rituals of divination. The representation of a woman with a bare breast could well represent a Venetian *cortigiana* in the act of scrying: a mistress with her noble protector in the back, that is, a female persona with a highly ambiguous social status.[3] Indeed, this contention becomes plausible if we follow Grabski and compare the *Allegory* to another almost contemporary painting, Giovanni Cariani's *Tentazione* (Figure 3.10). The *Tentazione* depicts a man questioning a female scryer. The male figure is a (proverbial) elderly lecher, whose gaze and posture imply his sexual desire for the young attractive scryer, and the theme of illicit sex is quite explicit.[4]

The subject of scrying could have been appropriated in very different contexts: it may be indicative of perfect matrimonial harmony or of adultery. Moreover, both the *Tentazione* and the *Allegory* suggest that engagement in such divinatory techniques was not necessarily a lower-class phenomenon; both paintings portray wealthy men in the company of attractive women. As Anne Christine Junkerman has convincingly argued, it might have been difficult for contemporary Venetian men to decide merely by the apparel whether they were looking at a courtesan or a noble lady. To clarify some of these aspects, in what follows I historicize such a scrying ritual and the properties ascribed to rock crystal, the material that was the medium or, as we shall see, the container of such visions. These data lead me to suggest that the *Allegory* explores some crucial aspects of contemporary rituals of scrying that emerged from court statements with amazing precision; it also translates these practices into an idealized, albeit a highly ambivalent, visual representation that encompasses both procreation and the limits of vision.

In the *Allegory*, the transparent orb is not figured as a crystal sphere but rather as a comparatively cheap, yet ingenious imitation of rock crystal. The painting depicts a glass ball, a hollow and fragile sphere—most probably soda glass from Murano—a material that was called *cristallo* because of its virtually completely translucent quality, which had been produced in Venice from the middle of the fifteenth century.[5] As it was easy to produce, *cristallo* was often used in place of

2 Grabski, 'Mundus Amoris – Amor Mundus', p. 57 and passim.

3 On bare breasts as visual representations of contemporary Venetian prostitutes in Titian's day, see Henry, 'Whorish Civility and Other Tricks of Seduction in Venetian Courtesan Representation', pp. 115–117 See also Junkerman, 'Bellissima Donna' pp. 335–336, 367; Ruggiero, 'Marriage, Love, Sex', pp. 21–22; Moulton, 'Illicit Worlds', pp. 496–497.

4 Grabski, 'Mundus Amoris – Amor Mundus', pp. 57–58; for a discussion of Cariani's *The Courtesans' Salon* (1519), see Henry, 'Whorish Civility and Other Tricks of Seduction in Venetian Courtesan Representation'.

5 Dillon, *Glass*, pp. 200–216; McCray, *Glassmaking in Renaissance Venice*; Schechner, 'Between Knowing and Doing', pp. 148 and 153–154.

rock crystal: actually, such glass orbs were the prime forms that emerged in the process of free-blowing when the glass-blower shaped the blob of liquid glass.[6] Such glass orbs were sometimes used as allegories for Vanity, as for instance in Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Delights*.[7] We have to turn to the *Allegory* once again to have another close look.

A Close Reading of the Imagery of the *Allegory*: The Four Senses, Pregnancy, and Divination

The central figure in Titian's *Allegory* is the woman seated on the left holding an orb on her lap. That the orb is fragile and made of glass but not heavy can be deduced from the way she is holding it, her ten fingers gently stretched out over it. The surface of the ball is slightly uneven, reflecting a few lights and the face of a man with a cocked hat.[8] It is important to note two facts about her because they are significant factors in interpretations of the painting: first, her protruding abdomen indicates that she is pregnant and, second, her right breast is bare. It seems as if Titian emphasized her attempt to shield her perceptions against the onrush of sense-impressions created by the other figures in the painting. What seems most threatening is the distracted touch of the armoured man, who is about to turn away from her. According to the popular understanding of mantic practice, being pregnant makes her a perfect candidate for a scryer. Women in general were believed to be extraordinarily susceptible to exterior influences. (See also below, the section on historicizing rock crystal and divination from reflective surfaces).[9] The future is in her hands, as it is in her womb.

I take the four figures surrounding the main female protagonist to be allegories of four different 'sense impressions'. To recount them in their traditional hierarchy: Cupid rushing towards the glass orb, in danger of smashing it, so it is unclear if he sees it, is a representation of sight; the female figure in the centre seems to be singing, so she embodies sound; the woman with the basket within which one finds roses symbolizes smell; and the man in armour, placing his hand on the seated woman with the orb signifies touch. Amor's projectiles become an allegory for the intrusive gaze: vision entails the emission of *spiritus*, very fine particles of the most refined blood from the beholder's eye. His or her intent look can infect other men

6 Perran, 'The Tradition from Medieval to Renaissance', pp. 67–92.

7 Möller, 'Bildgeschichtliche Studien zu Stammbuchbildern II', p. 157; on the topic of the glass orb as a symbol of vanity, see also Bergström, 'De Gheyn as a Vanitas Painter'.

8 As Daniel Unger, 'A Painter of Pain', pp. 36–37, has observed, Titian here, like Parmigianino in his famous self-portrait, projects an anamorphic *autoritratto into* the glass orb.

9 Boehm, 'Kristallomantie', col. 581, 583–584.

or women with love or—in the case of the 'evil eye'—with disease (*fascinatio*). During the Renaissance, this idea was propounded in Petrarch's love poetry, and the contemporary Neoplatonic tradition developed an elaborate medical haematology. Laid out in a few pages of his *Commentary on Plato's Symposium,* Marsilio Ficino's (1433–1499) succinct synthesis of the gaze, both of love and of the evil eye, became almost canonical during the sixteenth century.[10]

Through a typically Renaissance Platonic mode, the *Allegory* also visually renders the ambiguous effects of hearing. Drawing his inspiration from the magical Orphic Hymns, Ficino maintained that song is a more powerful medicine than common drugs, just as righteous speech leads to true wisdom and salvation.[11] Accordingly, the singing or speaking female figure here represents the salubrious effects of hearing. However, listening also may instil erroneous and dangerous images in a beautiful guise, as in a mirror that distorts images. According to Plato, the Sophists forged such contorted reflections of truth. Tricking their audiences, they turned what was good and real (and hence beautiful) into what was bad and unreal (hence, ugly) and vice versa (*Republic*, 596C). Together with a passage from the *Sophist* (239D–240B), this idea of the mirror became decisive for subsequent Neoplatonic theories of the image. Here Plato maintained that mirror images fall under the same category as the products of any other artist: they are deceptive images resulting from an imprint of a form that is ontologically superior and thus more real. The term 'fabrication of images' (*eidolopoia*) denotes not only the formation of a reflection in a mirror, but all kinds of artistic production (*Timaeus*, 46A; *Critias*, 107B).[12] This leads me to suggest that the *Allegory* visualizes false or erroneous speech through the twisted reflection of the speaking/singing woman's head in the man's armour. Her disfigured mirror image is like the distorted (and hence deceptive) echo of true speech. As we shall see in the next section, this suggestion is corroborated by Renaissance Neoplatonic physics, which explained mirror images in analogy to echoes, that is, as phenomena pertaining to resonance.

The physical effects of smell, represented by the woman at the top right, are again depicted in their full ambivalence. According to Ficino, clean air, in different degrees of refinement, alive and sentient, fulfils the important function of unifying the entire creation because it serves as a ubiquitous mediator between the realm of the body and the abode of the mind. According to a commonly shared belief, fragrant smells—caused by the emission of tiny particles of odorous substances and emanating into clean, dry, and sunny air—were usually highly salubrious,

10 Ficino, *De amore* pp. 246–249 (*De amore* 7, 4) on which, see Parigi, 'Oculus fascinans'; Stewart, *The Arrow of Love*; Hub, 'Aristotle's "Bloody Mirror" and Natural Science in Medieval and Early Modern Europe'. On Ficino's ideas on blood, see Kodera, *Disreputable Bodies*, pp. 113–132, and below.

11 Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 358 (*De vita* III, 21) cf. Kodera, *Disreputable Bodies*, p. 162.

12 See also Plato, *Res publica* (596d–e) and *Sophist* (239d); *Hermetica*, p. 62; Allen, *Icastes*, pp. 26–30.

whereas the stench from polluted (thick and moist) air, was the bearer of infection and disease.[13] I suggest that the *Allegory* visualizes this contrast between salubrious and dangerous odours by the woman's holding her fragrant basket against the background window. Against its threateningly dark and sulphur-yellow sky, her posture implies that she is trying to counterbalance the onrush of malignant humours, moist, thick, and pestilent air.[14]

To an even greater degree, touch implies physical, 'carnal' contact. The couple represented in the *Allegory* has (or had) an intimate relationship. According to common understanding of the period, the male impresses his form onto the female body, impregnating her with his form. The female's body is exposed to touch in its full ambiguity. It is visualized in its brutal form in the man's armour, that second skin made of metal;[15] yet the male figure extends the fingers of his left hand over the woman's left breast. Although a patronizing and possessive gesture, it also seems intended as an expression of tenderness and sensual intimacy, a mirror image of her fingers' caressing touch on the glass orb. His bare left hand, proverbially connected to the heart, is touching her left breast—the seat of her heart. In contemporary understanding, the heart was the place where the hottest part of the blood, the pneumatic sperm, originated; it was also the region from which the motions of the soul were propagated throughout the individual body by the medium of *pneuma*/*spiritus*, which was ejaculated or emitted. But again, as with the other representations of the senses in the *Allegory*, touch is ambivalent: it need not be a gesture of tenderness but could also represent an act of repulsion; we have already noted that the man's second skin reflects the woman's image, darkly,[16] yet his heart is shielded from the impact of her face. This suggests an imbalance, since the exchange of *spiritus* between the two main protagonists is one-sided: she receives his imprint, whereas hers is pushed back. Curiously, she seems to be left alone in this situation. Caught in a defensive attitude, she appears to be just as tired from gazing into the glass orb as from her pregnancy. She tries to shield the fragile glass orb with her hands—as though it were her abdomen, as though it contained her child.

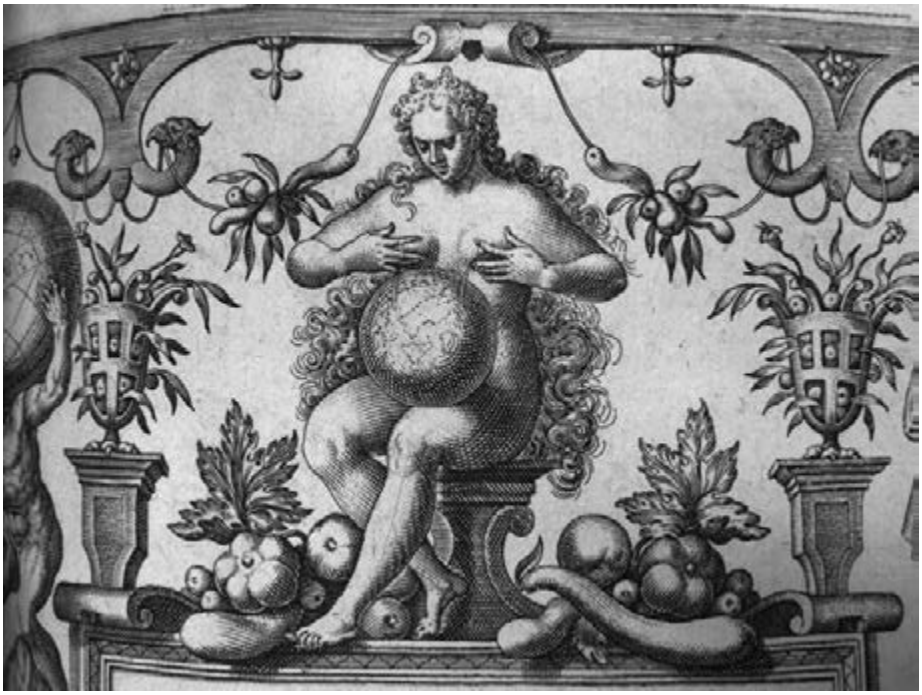
Evidence for the crystal orb/womb analogy comes from a parallel visual tradition that allegorized Mother Nature as a seated female figure holding a large orb on her lap (Figure 10.1). This illustration, which was probably executed by Jacques de

13 Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, pp. 222–224 (*De vita* II, 18); Kodera, *Disreputable Bodies*, pp. 161–170.

14 Renaissance doctors prescribed fumigations to treat infertile women; in order to cure the matrix, they burned odorous substances close to the vulva. Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade*, p. 23.

15 Springer, *Armour and Masculinity in the Italian Renaissance*, p. 163.

16 This is also evocative of the Pauline '*videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate tunc autem facie ad faciem*' 1. Kor 13, 12. On the connections between this famous passage with kaptomancy and the exhortation 'have faith love, and hope' that immediately follows in Paul's sermon, see Hartlaub, 'Tizians Liebesorakel und seine Kristallseherin', pp. 227–228. See also Hartlaub, 'Antike Wahrsagungsmotive in Bildern Tizians'.



10.1. Frontispiece of Charles de l'Écluse, *Exoticorum libri decem* (detail) 1605, Vienna, University Library, © Photo: Sergius Kodera.

Gheyn the Younger (1565–1629), is a detail in the frontispiece of a compendium of exotic plants and animals. The motif goes back to a miniature by Gaspare Romano, who used it in 1470 as an illustration for a codex of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*.[17] Milk is flowing from the woman's breasts, dropping on the spherical object. This image is quite clearly a representation of the globe, as is evidenced by the outlines of the western part of the European continent on the surface of the object. Again, we see here a striking parallel in postures and iconography to the *Allegory*.

I suggest that the fragile glass orb serves as a placeholder for the future child and that the woman holding it is protecting the fragile translucent orb from the onrush of exterior sensual influences—from an impact to which she is particularly sensitive because she is pregnant. Owing to her pregnancy, she is susceptible to all sorts of outside influences that might eventually leave a visible imprint on the child. The

17 Cf. Ulrich Thiele, 'Die Naturalisierung Weiblicher Geschlechtsattribute', in Maurice Saß and Iris Wenderholm, eds., *Mutter Erde: Vorstellungen von Natur und Weiblichkeit in der frühen Neuzeit.* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2017), pp. 64–67; Wolfgang Kemp, *Natura: Ikonographische Studien zur Geschichte und Verbreitung einer Allegorie,* Ph.D. Dissertation University of Tübingen, 1973, 18f.

four figures surrounding her represent sensual impressions and her synesthetic experience in all its ambivalence.[18] The way this sensual experience affects her has a bearing on her pregnancy, which condition makes her an especially gifted scryer.[19]

Scrying as a Social Practice in Sixteenth-Century Venice and Augsburg

The notion of scrying as a social practice leads me to suggest that the *Allegory*, which refers to scrying from transparent or semi-transparent objects, such as glasses or crystal orbs, represents the divinatory instrument in its full ambivalence. During the first half of the sixteenth century, despite severe ecclesiastical censure, crystallomancy seems to have been a widespread (if ill-reputed) practice among the European social elite. This divinatory technique was employed for many different purposes: to see what was happening in distant parts of the world, to find treasures, and, of course, to predict the future, as well as to derive insight into things past or difficult to know.[20] In analogous and no less material ways, the maternal womb constituted a future in economic terms: the promise of children and a pledge for the continuity of a lineage. In her *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe*, Lyndal Roper describes how in the 1530s, one member of the powerful Fugger family seems to have employed a female scryer.[21] Even though this took place in a different cultural environment, it occurred close to the time that Titian painted the *Allegory*.

Drawing on original documents, Roper unearthed the court proceedings against Anna Megerler (including her depositions), whom the Augsburg town authorities tried on charges of crystallomancy in 1564. The defendant claimed that she had worked for Anton Fugger (1493–1560), one of the most prominent merchant capitalists of his time, maintaining that it had been her late patron who taught her how to use a crystal ball for divinatory purposes.[22] The defendant claimed to have thus provided Fugger with much important intelligence about his subordinates and his business acquaintances in distant parts of the world. Megerler also deposed that

18 Stoichita, *Des corps*, pp. 245–270, has pointed to very similar modes of visual representations of synaesthetic experinces in Carpaccio's *Miracle of St. Augustine* (1502).

19 In analogous ways, children were protected by different kinds of apotropaic amulets that shielded the senses of sight (an eye), hearing (a bell), and smell (capsules of incense), cf. Stoichita, *Des corps*, pp. 188–197.

20 See Boehm, 'Kristallomantie', col. 578–594. Grafton, 'Divination: Towards the History of a Philological Term', p. 55; Láng, 'Unlocked Books', p. 222.

21 Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, p. 133.

22 Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, p. 126.

Fugger had given her the instruments, which had held two spirits that had been enclosed into the orb by a powerful sorceress and that these errant and condemned souls had belonged to executed criminals.[23]

Mergeler's deposition is especially interesting because it testifies to the extent to which such beliefs were shared across different European cultural environments. Crystal gazers quite frequently claimed that they were merely using an instrument that had been produced by more powerful sorcerers who had banished these spirits into the crystal balls. At least some scryers believed that the special capacity of these solid orbs to visualize events in distant space or time was not due solely to their special visionary capacity but also to a ghost, often a damned soul of an individual who had died an untimely death. Crystals had to be inhabited by such a *parhedros,* a demonic spirit that would direct the show, as it were.[24]

For the scryers in the sixteenth century, this line of argument of course had the advantage that they could thus deny a direct connection with such evil spirits; they were just interviewing them.[25] Megerler's trial reflects contemporary practices: a powerful patron, himself allegedly well versed in scrying, employs a woman in order to teach her this divinatory art. Roper observes that one aspect of the relationship between this defendant and her powerful patron remained unexplained and unquestioned by the authorities: her special capacities and the services she had offered were 'occult, special and private'.[26] These furtive meetings obviously had all the characteristics of an illicit sexual relationship. In that respect it is interesting to note that scrying was usually done by experts, that is, mediums: mostly young boys, but pregnant women were also considered especially capable scryers.[27]

The belief in the evil spirit in the crystal had an uncanny affinity to the unborn child in the maternal womb. I suggest that the *Allegory* can be read as an ingenious visualization of these contemporary imbrications among crystal orbs, the maternal womb, illicit sex, ghosts, and pregnancy. The *Allegory* would then represent a wealthy patron who uses a pregnant scryer in the very act of divining, while she is being exposed to contradictory sense impressions.

Yet, to what extent does Mergeler's case translate into the beautiful visual representation in Titians' *Allegory*? In contemporary Italy, prostitutes of all kinds 'regularly used a wide range of love magic to hold their clients and lovers'.[28] Moreover, in the texts of erudite Renaissance authors concerned with magic, prostitutes

23 Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, p. 130; Láng, 'Unlocked Books', p. 222.

24 On the origin and meanings of the term *parhedros* in classical antiquity, see Graf, *Gottesnähe und Schadenzauber*, pp. 99–101 and 207.

25 Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, p. 133.

26 Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, p. 124.

27 Boehm, 'Kristallomantie', V, col. 581, 583–584; Láng, 'Unlocked Books', 173.

28 Ruggiero, 'Witchcraft and Magic', p. 480.

were regularly credited with the power to infect the mirrors they used with their disreputable mores. That is, there were links among divinatory objects such as mirrors, sexuality in general, and prostitution in particular.[29]

An example much closer to Titian's environment was the court case against Veronica Franco, one of the most often profiled Venetian courtesans of her day. The accusation against Franco, which was heard by the Venetian Holy Office in 1580, included an allegation that she had practiced divination with the help of an *inghistera* (a long-necked glass carafe without a handle); the easily available, inexpensive Murano glassware was filled with holy water. The magical ritual, which seems to have been very common in contemporary Venice, was generally not engaged in by one person alone. Often, the action was directed by a wise woman in the presence of several virgins, boys, and/or pregnant women, who actually did the scrying. Most of these diviners seem to have believed that during the ritual a white angel (or in other cases an old man or a king) would appear in the glass carafe. That spirit would tell the scryer (or at times all the participants) where a lost or a stolen object (along with the thief at times) or even a lost treasure was to be found. Franco admitted to having participated in such a ritual as a young woman when she was pregnant.[30]

I suggest that the *Allegory* incorporates some important elements of these illicit practices of divination. The accounts of these rituals allow us to discern the functions of the other figures in the painting: namely, to participate and help in the act of scrying, a task that Titian ingeniously translated into the actions of four senses: sight, sound, smell, and touch. Moreover, these *inghistieri* or carafes were not only of the same material as the one imaged in the *Allegory*, that is, *cristallo*; they also had a strikingly similar form, were easily available, and were, in principle, ordinary household objects.

This leads me to propose that the visualization of these rituals in the *Allegory* condenses several aspects of contemporary scrying into one idealized image, namely: (a) the tradition of using crystal globes and the idea that ghosts were locked into these objects; (b) the representations of fertile Mother Earth and her association with pregnancy; and (c) a specific ritual of scrying that was common in contemporary Venetian culture. Yet, the watchword in the *Allegory* is ambivalence: an ambivalence represented in the depiction of a glass orb: not rock crystal, but

29 On the associations of prostitutes with love magic and divination in sixteenth-century Venice and on the precarious status of courtesans, see Ruggiero, 'Prostitution', pp. 158–159 and 169; Ruggiero, 'Boundaries of Eros' pp. 33–35, 39. For a *locus classicus* on prostitutes infecting mirrors, see Agrippa von Nettesheim, 'De occulta philosophia', pp. 176–177 (lib. I, cap. 48).

30 I wish to thank Guido Ruggiero for directing me to this and other similar cases. See Ruggiero, 'Binding Passions', pp. 46–47; Rosenthal, 'Honest Courtesan', pp. 164–165 and 171–172. See also Barnett, 'Food and Religious Identities', pp. 193–194.

rather a product of Venetian art, a reflecting object that mirrors not an imprisoned demon but the artist's face.[31]

Historicizing Rock Crystal and Divination from Reflective Surfaces

The belief that a mighty sorcerer—with the intercession of the devil—had the power to incarcerate a soul into a crystal or a ball was confirmed by an influential set of religious allegories, which were epitomized in the representations of Jesus holding a crystal orb.[32] Thus, it became a symbol of sovereign power over the entire creation. Grabsky points to the crystal orb as a model of the cosmos:[33] according to medieval peripatetic cosmology, the planets moved on fixed, crystalline, and thus mathematically predictable spheres, the whole universe being a finite gigantic globe with the earth at its centre.[34] Yet these shiny orbs were not mere representations: by dint of their material affinity with the skies, they were 'little worlds'.[35]

Two important biblical texts deal with crystals in this respect: the Book of Ezekiel and the Revelation of John. In his vision of the throne of God, central to Jewish mysticism and magic, Ezekiel wrote about a crystal orb with a terrible aspect, which was surrounded by four creatures. This reading of Ezekiel's vision in turn allows an analogical reading of Revelation IV: 6, where John talks of a 'sea of glass' (*mar vitreum*) in view of the throne on which Christ the Judge is sitting.[36]

In the Christian tradition, both these biblical passages are related to divination because they are prophetic visions of the godhead and of things to come. Moreover, St. Jerome explained that the crystal signifies or embodies the denser, that is, 'frozen' waters of creation. To bolster his claim, he referred to Pliny and the Greek tradition, in which rock crystal was thought to be tightly compressed, solidified water, just as the word *crystallos* signified frozen water. St. Jerome noted that all life emerges out of these waters, which are the heavens. He believed that these vitalizing waters protect all the animals living under the heavens, just as baptism protects human beings. He further established a chain of associations among

31 For a sophisticated account of the ambivalences surrounding the representations of female bodies in the period, see Junkerman, 'Bellissima Donna', and Stoichita, *Des corps*, pp. 31–39.

32 Boehm, 'Kristallomantie', V, col. 585.

33 Grabski, 'Mundus Amoris – Amor Mundus', pp. 53–54.

34 Grant, *Planets, Stars, and Orbs*, pp. 103–104 and 189–193 and passim.

35 For a later, but analogous, identification between model and represented object, Spiller, *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature*, pp. 28, 47.

36 Revelation 4:6 '*et in conspectu sedis tamquam mare vitreum simile cristallo*'. Revelation 15:2 '*vidi tamquam mare vitreum mixtum igne*'.

creation, baptism, cosmology, and mirific water that crystallizes into translucent stone.[37]

In a similar way, St. Gregory the Great explained that the crystal in Ezekiel stands for the heavens and the heavenly powers. Moreover, he was apparently concerned enough to explain what he perceived as puzzling—even contradictory—in the prophet's vision, namely that the crystal was 'frightening'. He claimed that this is the case only for us as mortals, since the object is a figuration of the judgement of Christ at his Second Coming. Moreover, the crystal also stood for Jesus, whose body, while he walked on earth, was as watery and as mutable as ours. Gregory contended that it was only later that Christ condensed into rock-hard crystal to become the formidable judge on Judgement Day.[38]

The beautiful and at the same time terrifying object refers to the state of our souls after death, when they crystallize either into eternal beatitude or into damnation. In theological discourse, the crystal sphere is thus a liminal object endowed with contradictory qualities: at once solid and liquid, it is a symbol of the creation of the world in Genesis and at the same time—rock-hard—of the Final Judgement: the beginning and the end of days, simultaneously of life and of death, beauty and terror, and fluidity and order. Rock crystal thus figured as an uncanny trope for embodiment. These religious ideas were echoed in the popular creed that a soul can be locked into a crystal orb, that is, into an object that had once been the fluid origin of life. The Church Fathers' ideas intersected with, and perhaps even fostered, the popular use of crystals as divinatory objects; both social spheres—the ecclesiastic and the popular demi-world of scryers—provide a context for understanding the ambivalent role of the representation of the glass orb—that image of a crystal sphere—in the *Allegory*.

Divination with Mirrors

With these theological contexts in mind, it is less surprising that, in their resemblance to the shape and alleged matter of the celestial sphere, crystal orbs qualified as privileged tools for a godlike vision—and hence for divination.

In the medieval and early modern understanding, all reflecting surfaces could be used for divination: the surface of water, polished stones and metal lenses, stained glass, even polished fingernails, and as we saw in the case of sixteenth-century

37 St. Jerome, Commentariorum in Ezechielem prophetam libri XIV, in *Patrologia latina*, vol. 42, cols. 15–419, 28–30. (Lib, I ad vers. 22) See also St. Jerome's Letter LXIX. To Oceanus, *Patrologia latina*, vol. 22, cols. 659–660.

38 Gregory the Great, *Homilarum in Ezecheliem prophetam libri II*, in *Patrologia latina* vol. 76, col 785–1072 at cols. 849–850 (Lib. I, 7)

Venice, glass carafes filled with water.[39] What unified this genus of mirrors was their shiny surface and their capacity to reflect images. In the contemporary understanding, *cristallo* belonged to the larger category of mirrors together with other transparent and/or shiny materials such as polished metal or stone and the reflecting surface of water.[40]

Mirrors have the capacity to render things visible and thus can enhance the light they reflect. Evidence for such claims came from objects that belonged to the class of mirrors, such as burning glasses. Notably, at least since Classical Greek times, crystals had been used to light tinder, and in the Christian tradition the Easter fire was lighted with a piece of rock crystal.[41] Later on, spectacles (a thirteenth-century invention) produced further evidence for these capacities of mirrors.[42] Moreover, mirrors create laterally inverted images,[43] an observation that supplied evidence for their perturbing capacity to process or change the object they 'receive'—a quality that was partly enhanced by their irregular surfaces, which were at that time usually made of polished metal.

If mirrors *transformed* images, could they also *retain* the forms they received? This idea was articulated in the Neoplatonic tradition of the Renaissance. In that context, a passage in Plotinus (translated into Latin by Ficino) was frequently quoted, translated, and discussed during the sixteenth century.[44] Plotinus used specular reflection as a metaphor to explain how the material world is born by a soul that is attracted to a material body. The context was the animation of statues, a theurgic practice of the ancient Egyptian priests and a hotly debated issue in Titian's day:

> And I think that the wise men of old, who made temples and statues in the wish that the gods should be present in them, looking to the nature of the All, had in mind that the nature of soul is everywhere easy to attract, but that if someone were to construct something sympathetic to it and able to receive a part of it,

39 For a good summary, see Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* [1585], vol. 2, pp. 1088–1096 esp. p. 1092; Besterman, *Crystal Gazing*, pp. 1–8; Boehm, 'Kristallomantie', vol. V, col. 579. For a discussion of the magic mirror excavated in 1999, dating from the sixteenth century near Mecklenburg, which includes a piece of rock-crystal, see Láng, 'Unlocked Books', pp.170–171.

40 The idea that the mirror would capture and retain a portion of the supernatural was perhaps influenced by medieval ideas about of a stainless 'mirror of divine providence': see Bernhard Silvestris, p. 57 (*De mundi universitate* lib. 2, ch. 11).

41 This practice again testifies to the theological connotations of rock-crystal. See Olbrich, 'Kristall', vol. V, col. 576, and the excellent overview in Galau, 'Kristall', vol. XXII, cols. 125–132.

42 On spectacles, see Ilardi, *Renaissance Vision from Spectacles to Telescopes*.

43 Boehm, 'Kristallomantie', vol. V, cols. 586–587.

44 For Ficino's commentary on that passage, see Plotinus, *Plotini … operum philosophicorum omnium libri LIV in sex enneades distributi*, fols. 161v–162r.

> it would of all things receive soul most easily. That which is sympathetic to it is what imitates it in some way, like a mirror to catch a form.[45]

Mirrors, like all other forms of matter, are traps for higher forms. They retain, 'catch', souls.[46] We may conclude that in the theological, philosophical, and popular understanding(s) of Titian's day, 'mirrors' were—potentially dangerous—liminal objects. They were tropes for embodiment. With this in mind, we can now understand how the glass orb, that curved mirror in Titian's painting, may be a signifier of pregnancy. In Plotinus's footsteps, Ficino provided a highly sophisticated exposition of what happens during the process of reflection, when a mirror 'catches' a form:

> Light falls into an essentially compact, smooth and bright body; it stops, collects itself, and immediately 'recovers' in that body; it becomes stronger and, above all, more harmonious than before. Thus unified, it is again reflected in the opposite direction, where it reverberates (*resultare*) onto the opposite wall, creating (*procreat*) a bright light there. And it reverberates not only in other [things] but in like manner also in the eyes. And it is therefore never broken, but unfolds itself first, then rebounds, and conjoins (*explicat, replicat, applicat*). Moreover, this action of light seems to be in both places at once. In a similar way, the visual ray in touching anybody may find it agreeable to solidify, invigorate and to rebound. And once [the rays] have bounced back from the mirror, the objects appear as if veiled (*obtectus*). They are [...] the forms of the illuminated things that produce rays at the surface of the mirror, which then reflect the objects so violently back into the eyes. And Theophrastus and Plato add that from these figures of objects certain illuminated images are emitted which are called *idola*. Therefore, the species that proceeds from this image is called in the diminutive *idolon*. That is, a little specimen of a species, as it were, which derives from a more perfect species; these are therefore much weaker *idola*, as it were, that are invisible when they are entering the body of the mirror; subsequently they present themselves to the eyes in a more stable and corroborated form; and they therefore proceed to the eye, just as the vital ray [emitted by the eye] jumps over to them. And in this way the idols proceed not only from spiritual but also from material things, sometimes in the medium of light to the eye, sometimes to the other senses; and above all they recuperate in our imaginative spirit [i.e., *phantasia*], where they subsequently reveal themselves to us, acting in us according to the occasion (*materialiter*).[47]

45 Plotinus, *Enneads*, IV, 71; *Enneads* IV, 3, 11.

46 Kodera, *Disreputable Bodies*, pp. 65–73.

47 Ficino, *Opera omnia*, pp. 1816–1817 (*In Theoprastum de somniis*, ch. 33).

This dense passage is very interesting for its detailed account of the process of reflection. Moreover, Ficino used the verb *resultare* (literally: to spring back, reverberate, re-echo, rebound) to describe the reflection of light in the mirror. A similar parallelism between sound and image is to be found in Aristotle.[48] Like sounds, the *idola* shake the mirror. Specular reflection is thus conceived in analogy to echo: a kind of resonance that results from the physical impact of visual or acoustic rays, the transmitters or media of *idola*.[49] In analogy, Ficino observed that the cord of a guitar resonates, 'moves on its own' if the same chord is struck on an instrument nearby: this ultimately Neopythagorean idea became one of the commonplaces in sixteenth-century texts on natural magic towards establishing the universal nexus between ontologically higher and lower forms of being in the order of creation.[50]

Ficino's intricate combination of observation and metaphysical speculation argues that mirrors do not merely reflect images in a diminished or dimmed way, but that the reflected forms, which he calls *idola* (little images), can become reinvigorated and stronger in that process. He specified that *idola* are entities verging on the threshold between the intellectual and the physical realms. In analogy to the mysterious powers of mirrors to enhance light, he explained that *idola* (in the form of invisible rays) can enter a body surreptitiously, recover there, and develop an immense force.[51] The *idola* are at once the medium and the content of the faculty of *imaginatio/phantasia*; they are the tools of the soul for acting upon its own body as well as on the outside world.[52] He maintained that *idola* have an uncanny power to shape and to govern bodies.

Accordingly, Ficino believed that vision entails an exchange of material particles. In his immensely influential *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, *De amore*, he explained this in the following way: The visual ray, made of *pneuma/spirits*, the subtle, most refined part of human blood, imperceptibly condenses or impacts on the mirror, reinvigorates there, and is thrown back with potentially greater force than before. This set of beliefs was corroborated in a passage in Aristotle's

48 Aristotle, *De anima*, 419a–b.

49 Ficino's analogy between acoustic and optical phenomena is reminiscent of the configuration in the Ovidian myth of Narcissus and Echo. For a concise overview that brings mirrors, statues, echoes, and magic together, see Ficino, *Opera omnia*, p. 1388 (*Epitome in Apologiam Socratis*).

50 Ficino in Plato, fol. 222 r. Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, pp. 328–331 (*De Vita* III, 15.), pp. 336–339 (*De Vita* III, 17); pp. 360–361 (*De Vita* III, 21). On Ficino and acoustic phenomena, see Vanhaelen, 'Ficino on Force, Magic, and Prayers'; Ficino, *Theologia Platonica*, vol. 4. p. 134 (*Theologia* 13, 2).

51 On imperceptible phanstamata, see Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 322 (*De vita* III, 16).

52 On the order of the soul, see Park, 'The Organic Soul'. On Ficino's ideas about the human imagination, Giglioni, 'The Matter of the Imagination'; Giglioni, 'Coping with Inner and Outer Demons'; Ficino, *Theologia Platonica*, vol. 4, pp. 134–148 and 212–214 (Theologia Platonica 13, 2, 11–23 and 13, 5, 4). See also Ficino in: Allen, *Icastes*, p. 275, ll. 15–22.

Problemata, according to which the intense gaze of a menstruating woman could stain a very fine mirror with drops of blood.[53]

Catching a cold, for instance, is thus conceived as a sort of infection with imperceptible, but material *idola*.[54] An important corollary to this complex of ideas was that all acts of sensory perception function in analogous ways: all sense 'impressions' entail physical contact, 'infection', or impregnation with forms. In receiving the stamp of an *idolon*, a body may change its shape—especially if it is of a subtle, soft, or malleable quality and hence capable of receiving a form. Human bodies have dangerously porous boundaries. 'Speculation' in this sense means that the mirror receives and 'begets' images (as Ficino used the word *procreare* in the above quote); speculation was thus tied to 'conception' and to childbirth in a number of ways.[55]

The relevance of these ideas to our subject—a pregnant woman and the orb-mirror in Titian's *Allegory*—is evident. We are confronted with a series of ideas that outline a mechanics of perception; seeing as well as hearing and all other sense impressions have a distinctly material quality. They may physically change a body when it is exposed to them. Once they have arrived at one's imaginative spirit, the *idola* become virulent. The mirror here is not merely a reflecting surface; the *idola* enter into its body, a body with a life of its own. In short, *idola* have a spermatic power. This includes works of fine art, as well as the images evoked by reading or by hearing music, which may physically affect the beholder.[56]

The act of mirroring becomes a powerful and uncanny metaphor not only for the act of childbirth: in a patriarchal discourse, the son was to be the mirror image of his father, who impressed his image onto the female mirror, the matrix, just as a mirror was impressed by a form.[57] Embodiment here was conceptualized as the (more or less) perfect replication of a stable and eternal, and therefore male, form. The tensions inherent in these complex negotiations (to use Greenblatt's term) over patriarchal lineage are most clearly observable in cases when they do *not* work. As so often, Shakespeare synthesized these transactions among mirrors, fathers, mothers, and sons in a most succinct way. In *Richard III*, the Duchess of York bemoans the death of her husband and of two of her sons in the following words:

53 Kodera, *Disreputable Bodies*, pp. 131–171; Hub, 'Aristotle's "Bloody Mirror" and Natural Science in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', pp. 31–71.

54 Notoriously contagious inflammations of the eye (such as keratoconjunctivitis epidemica) provided some empirical evidence for this set of ideas. See Kodera, 'Giovan Battista Della Porta's Imagination', p. 124.

55 Ficino, *Theologia Platonica*, vol. 4, p. 190 (*Theologia Platonica* 13, 4, 5/6).

56 Kodera, 'The Art of the Distillation', pp. 145–146.

57 On the medical history of the idea that the son is the image of the father, see Park, *Secrets of Women*, p. 142. The notion of *imaginum* was a fundamental category in medieval thought as a realization or enactment of a form in matter, just as the divine creation is an image of God and the son an image of his father: see Wirth, *L'image medievale*, p. 13 and passim.

> I have bewept a worthy husband's death, / And lived by looking on his images: / But now two mirrors of his princely semblance / Are crack'd in pieces by malignant death, / And I for comfort have but one false glass, / Which grieves me when I see my shame in him.[58]

Here the image (princely semblance) of the husband becomes reflected in three mirrors/sons: two of them adequately reflect their father before breaking and the third while not breaking renders only a distorted version of the original image, embodied in the play's protagonist. In this false glass, the mother's shame comes to the fore. It is *her* defect that caused Richard to be such a nasty character, that he is such a distorted image of his father. Something went wrong during the process of impregnation, and as usual it was the mother's fault: she had somehow been a distorted mirror, her miscreant son indicating her shame. In short: what happens in the pregnant woman's womb is the great predicament of all patriarchal societies.[59] Turning again to Titian's *Allegory*, I suggest that the painting not only brings together all of these ideas but stages the very predicament of pregnancy and speculation—the translation of acoustic phenomena into images and vice versa. The pregnant female protagonist mirrors all these varied but analogous sense impressions, the *idola*, as she is exposed to their contradictory effects. Her imagination is like a mirror; her uterus, with her future child in it, is another mirror, one that is directly impressed by the mother's *imaginamenta*.

Conclusions

We have come full circle: my proposed meaning is that one image imposes itself upon another, and vice versa. The analogy between mirror and uterus is hardly a one-way street; artistic and anatomical representations of different objects—wombs and crystal balls—coincide, and they enter into unstable relationships with theology and theorems from contemporary natural philosophy, as well as court depositions in connection with divination with mirrors.

In the literal and the metaphorical sense, Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* could be seen as a burning glass focusing these interlocking creeds, practices, and theorems. In this reading, the painting depicts the reverberation, reflection, and resonance of sensual impressions in a remarkable synopsis. I have suggested that the glass orb resting on the woman's lap is a highly aestheticized and influential visualization of

58 Shakespeare, *The Life and Death of Richard the Third*, act 2, scene 2, 48–50.

59 Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade*, pp. 128–142; see also Park, *Secrets of Women*, pp. 98–99 (on lineage and medication) and p. 141 on autopsies responding to these dynastic interests, as well as the comments on Park in Foscati, '*Nonnatus dictus quod caeso defunctae matris utero prodiit*'.

her matrix. Thus, her internal organ is represented in a peculiar form of doubling: it is both in her belly and exteriorized, sitting on her lap, so she is displaying part of a body as an object. That object serves as a signifier for anxieties about the stability of lineage, the future, the vicissitudes of life in general: boy or girl, animal or monster? That is beyond the control even of the mother.

Titian's highly ambiguous imagery has the effect of staving off horror and at the same time focusing the curiosity of the male gaze on women's bodies, in particular the womb, which is the harbinger of the future and the source of greatest patriarchal anxiety.[60] Without a doubt, images of women's entrails and uterus were highly problematic in terms of accepted mores and aesthetic standards,[61] and the same was true of the objects they represented, which Park has aptly described as the 'ultimate secret'.[62] It is, thus, no coincidence that Titian's visualization of the uterus is represented as a divinatory tool. Crystal balls are liminal objects: both solid and fluid, massive and fragile, empty and full, they are signifiers of embodiment. Inseminated by sorcerers, they can become the permanent habitats or prisons of errant souls, just as the uterus/mirror is inseminated by a male form.

As appropriate to his subject, Titian's mode of representation remains characteristically ambiguous, even ironic. The *Allegory* does not show us a crystal orb but rather an image of it—*cristallo*—and the artist quite cheekily leaves his imprint, his face, on the glass orb. The simultaneous viewing of these two images entails a double view, a complex series of translations. The magic ball is an object in which male scrutiny of the reproductive female organs may dwell and in which the unquenchable desire to predict and control the future will be reflected again and again.

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60 See Park, *Secrets of Women*, p. 249, for qualifications of Jonathan Sawday's claim that anatomy implies a science of seeing, an active male gaze confronting a passive female subject.

61 For an introduction to the history and varying perception of anatomical images, see Kemp, *Spectacular Bodies*.

62 In her groundbreaking study, Park, *Secrets of Women*, p. 181ff. has demonstrated that the uterus was an 'ultimate frontier of the [16th century] physician's understanding of anatomy'. On the postmortem uterine sectioning of women, see Foscati, '*Nonnatus dictus quod caeso defunctae matris utero prodiit*'.

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Index

References to illustrations are in *italics*
References to colour plates are in **bold**
References to Titian's *Allegory of Marriage* are listed under *Allegory of Marriage*.

This book offers nine new approaches toward a single work of art, Titian's *Allegory of Marriage or Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos*, dated to 1530/5. In earlier references, the painting was named simply *Allegory*, alluding to its enigmatic nature. The work follows in a tradition of such ambiguous Venetian paintings as Giovanni Bellini's *Sacred Allegory* and Giorgione's *Tempest*. Throughout the years, Titian's *Allegory* has engendered a range of diverse interpretations. Art historians such as Hans Tietze, Erwin Panofsky, Walter Friedlaender, and Louis Hourticq, to mention only a few, promoted various explanations. This book offers novel readings and suggests new meanings toward a further understanding of this somewhat challenging painting.

Daniel M. Unger specializes in the History of Early Modern Italian painting. He is a faculty member at Ben-Gurion University, Israel. His recent book *Redefining Eclecticism in Early Modern Bolognese Painting: Ideology, Practice, and Criticism* was published by Amsterdam University Press in 2019.

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