

Pictura et Poesis in Caraglio's Loves of the Gods

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Saturno/ Saturn.....	7
Giove in Fiamma/ Jupiter in flames.....	9
Di Giove et Io/ Of Jupiter and Io.....	11
Giove et Io in Vaccha/ Jupiter and Io transformed into a cow.....	13
Giove in pastore/ Jupiter transformed into a shepherd.....	15
Giove in Satyro/ Jupiter transformed into a satyr.....	17
Neptuno et Doride/ Neptune and Doris.....	19
Plutone et Proserpina/ Pluto and Proserpina.....	21
Parla Marte con Venere/ Mars speaks to Venus.....	23
Parla Venere sopra Adoni morto/ Venus speaks over the dead Adonis.....	25
Apollo a Daphne/ Apollo to Daphne.....	27
Apollo di Hyacintho/ Apollo speaks of Hyacinth.....	29
La Dea Diana col Dio Pan/ The goddess Diana with the god Pan.....	31
Mercurio parla a Glauros/ Mercury speaks to Aglauros.....	33
Erigone.....	35
Hercule a Deianira/ Hercules to Deianira.....	37
Parla Vulcano a Ceres/ Vulcan speaks to Ceres.....	39
Vertuno et Pomona/ Vertumnus and Pomona.....	41
Parla Cupido/ Cupid speaks.....	43
Di Venere et amore/ Of Venus and love.....	45
The literary sources.....	46
The myth.....	46
Imitation.....	49
Pictura et poesis in Renaissance prints.....	52
Conclusion.....	54
Bibliography.....	55
Primary sources.....	55
Secondary works.....	56
Appendix.....	59
Index of Figures 1-20.....	59
Other figures:.....	60

*Il poeta el pittor vanno di pare
Et tira il lor ardire tutto ad un segno
Si come espresso in queste carte appare
Fregiate d opre et d artificio degno...*¹

Anonymous poem on sixteenth-century Italian print (fig.21)

Introduction

The *Loves of the Gods* is a captivating set of engravings by Gian Giacomo Caraglio combining the verses of an anonymous poet with the designs of Perino del Vaga and Rosso Fiorentino to represent the erotic passions of pagan deities. According to Vasari, the stories of the ‘gods who transform themselves in order to consummate their loves’ were commissioned by Raphael’s assistant, known as Il Baviera, shortly after 1526.² Rosso Fiorentino contributed the designs for the story of *Saturn and Philyra* (fig.1) and *Pluto and Proserpina* (fig.8) and then abandoned the project. The rest of the series was assigned to Perino del Vaga. The project was probably carried out in the violent months following the Sack of Rome in May 1527 and was completed at some point before 1539.³ This is ironic, in a way, because the *Loves of the Gods*, although an offspring of war, were, in fact, inspired by voluptuous Venus. The twenty prints offered to the Renaissance public an explicitly erotic mythological narrative which made them immediately popular all over Europe with at least six sets of copies realised in the course of the sixteenth century.⁴ An essential part of their sensual appeal was the exquisite combination between erotic image and playful *ottava rima* verses, one of the first examples of sophisticated visual poetry in Renaissance Italy.

The *Loves of the Gods* were never ignored in art history. A significant contribution was recently made by Turner who thoroughly surveyed the existing corpus of loose-leaf, original prints and copies in museums and libraries around the world. According to his technical study, there remain several original examples for eighteen of the prints in the unnumbered first-state set and multiple examples for all the twenty prints in the numbered second state. No bound version has been found grouping the entire set together as a book.⁵

¹ ‘The poet and the painter proceed together, and share in their ardour the same goal, which is well expressed in these sheets, adorned with works of art...’ in D. Landau and P. Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, New Haven and London 1994, pp. 168, 390.

² ‘...istorie, quando gli Dei si trasformano per conseguire i fini de’ loro amori.’ Giorgio Vasari, *Le Opere*, ed. G. Milanesi, 9 Vols, Florence 1906, repr. 1998, V, p. 611, 162, 425. On Il Baviera see C. L. C. E. Witcombe, *Print Publishing in Sixteenth-Century Rome*, Turnhout 2008, pp. 32-33.

³ The date *post quem* is 1526 as this is the date inscribed on Caraglio’s *Gods in Niches*, the engraving project that Il Baviera assigned to Caraglio before the *Loves of the Gods* in Vasari (as in n. 2), V, p. 425. The date *ante quem* is 1539 when according to a letter from Pietro Aretino to Alessandro Pessente, Caraglio left Italy to work as a gem engraver in the court of Sigismund I in Poland in Pietro Aretino, *Lettere*, ed. P. Procaccioli, 6 Vols, Rome 1997-2006, II, pp. 134-35 as cited in Andrea Pietro Giulianelli, *Memorie degli Intagliatori Moderni*, Livorno 1753, p. 39.

⁴ J. G. Turner, ‘Copies after Caraglio’s *Loves of the Gods*’, *Print Quarterly*, XXVII, 2010, p. 231.

⁵ J. G. Turner, ‘Caraglio’s *Loves of the Gods*’, *Print Quarterly*, XXIV, 2007, pp. 360-61, 378-80.

Before Turner's insightful technical analysis, art historians had praised the refined erotic subject of the images, a sensual and sometimes humorous adaptation of subjects from antique sculpture and the designs of Raphael and Michelangelo.⁶ Some interpreted the erotic myths as allegories concealing a Neoplatonic⁷ or Epicurean approach to love.⁸ Others discarded the allegorical approach and denied any essential narrative structure to the myth.⁹ For most of them the myth was considered a pretext, a kind of commercial strategy, which permitted the circulation of the erotic prints within Renaissance humanistic circles without the danger of censorship.¹⁰

Overall, scholars have paid little attention to the form and function of the verses accompanying the images and no one has addressed the question of who might have written the poems. It has only been mentioned in passing that they contain occasional Petrarchan allusions and that their syntax and structure is standard for sixteenth-century Italian poetry,¹¹ a generic comment which only scratches the surface of the question. And although Turner convincingly argued that the combination of image and poetry was an integral part of the project that was carried out in the early stages of the production by simultaneously printing together two different plates, one for the image and one for the text,¹² art historians still claim that there is little connection between them.¹³ The only systematic analysis of the interplay between images and poetry in the *Loves of the Gods* was attempted as part of a study of the role of humour in the prints. It provided, however, a partial examination of the matter, ignoring six of the prints in the set and offering few examples of the verbal system of humorous expression.¹⁴

⁶ E. A. Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino. Drawings, Prints and Decorative Arts*, exhib. cat. (National Gallery of Art, Washington), Washington 1987, p. 133; A. Gnann, 'Gian Giacomo Caraglio' in *Perino del Vaga tra Raffaello e Michelangelo*, exhib. cat. (Palazzo Te, Mantua), ed. E. Parma, Milan 2001, p. 193; K. Oberhuber, 'Perino del Vaga e Raffaello', in *Perino del Vaga tra Raffaello e Michelangelo*, exhib. cat. (Palazzo Te, Mantua), ed. E. Parma, Milan 2001, p. 54.

⁷ S. Massari, *Tra Mito e Allegoria*, Rome 1989, p. XVIII; M. Cirillo Archer, *Italian Masters of the Sixteenth Century. The Illustrated Bartsch 28 Commentary*, New York 1995, p. 98; L. Aldovini, 'Gian Giacomo Caraglio. Giove and Antiope', in *Mythologica et Erotica*, exhib. cat. (Palazzo Pitti and Museo degli Argenti, Florence), ed. O. Casazza and R. Gennaioli, Livorno 2005, p. 146.

⁸ L. Schlieker, 'Humoristische Erotik in der Italienischen Graphik des 16. Jahrhunderts', Ph.D. thesis, Christian-Albrechts-Universität, Kiel 2001 pp. 38, 70.

⁹ D. O. Frantz, *Festum Voluptatis. A Study of Renaissance Erotica*, Ohio 1989, p. 123-24; M. Fabianski, *Correggio's Erotic Poesie*, Krakow 1998, p. 8; B. Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, New Jersey 1999, pp. 126, 130; M. Faietti, '...carte belle, più che oneste', in *Mythologica et Erotica*, exhib. cat. (Palazzo Pitti and Museo degli Argenti, Florence), ed. O. Casazza and R. Gennaioli, Livorno 2005, p. 95; L. Volk-Simmon, 'The Loves of the Gods', in *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, exhib. cat. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth), ed. A. Bayer, New York 2008, p. 205; S. F. Matthews-Grieco, 'Satyrs and Sausages: Erotic Strategies and the Print Market in Cinquecento Italy', in *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy*, ed. S. F. Matthews-Grieco, Surrey 2010, p. 26.

¹⁰ See notes 7 and 8 and H. Zerner, 'L' Estampe Erotique au Temps de Titien', in *Tiziano e Venezia*, (Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Venice 1976), ed. N. Pozza et al., Vicenza 1980, pp. 88; M. Hall, *After Raphael*, Cambridge 1999, p. 90.

¹¹ Cirillo Archer (as in n. 7), p. 98.

¹² Turner (as in n. 5), pp. 363-66, 373-74.

¹³ Witcombe (as in n. 2), p. 58; M. Faietti, 'Betrayals of the Gods and Metamorphoses of Artists: Parmigianino, Caraglio and Agostino Caracci', *Artibus et Historiae*, LXVIII, 2013, p. 258.

¹⁴ Schlieker (as in n. 8), pp. 14-50.

The objective of the present study is to fill this gap by re-examining the way myth, image and poetry work together in the series. In the following pages, each one of the twenty prints will be presented with a focus on its source and the interplay between image and poem. I shall be presenting the prints in their second-state, numbered order following Turner's classification of the original prints. The print of Janus (fig.22), which in the past had been listed as part of the *Loves of the Gods*¹⁵ is excluded from the present study for being signed by a different artist and with no verses underneath the image. With regards to Perino del Vaga's contribution to the project, which has been approached doubtfully by some art historians,¹⁶ all eighteen prints are attributed to him here on the basis of style and because no alternative authorship has been put forward with solid arguments. With regards to the poems, the Italian verses are transcribed and presented alongside my English translation.¹⁷ In addition to the comments following each image-text combination, notes are introduced in the body of the Italian verses to indicate similarities in the word sequences and rhyme patterns with other lyrical models to be analysed in the last part of the study.

There I shall go on to show that the myth was not just a pretext, but an essential constitutive element of the erotic prints and refute the claim that they lacked any narrative structure. I shall, then, attempt to explain why the series was valued highly during the Renaissance, by focusing on the effort put by the poet and the artists in the skilful imitation of the aesthetic canon of their time. Finally, I shall suggest that the combination of image and poetry in the *Loves of the Gods* was not an isolated case in the history of Renaissance Italian print, but instead emerged from a general practice of including verses in engravings, a creative collaboration between painters and poets which has not yet received the historical consideration it deserves.

¹⁵ For instance M. Ch. Le Blanc, *Manuel de l'Amateur d'Estampes*, 5 Vols, Paris 1854, I, p. 588; A. Bartsch, *Le Peintre-Graveur*, 21 Vols, Leipzig 1854-1876, XV, p. 75. Among recent scholars L. Dunand and P. Lemarchand, *Les Compositions de Titien Intitulées Les Amours des Dieux*, Geneva and Lausanne 1989, pp. 480-81, Cirillo Archer (as in n. 7), p. 109, Schlieker (as in n. 8), p. 42 and Volk-Simmon (as in n. 9), p. 208 include it in the set.

¹⁶ Turner (as in n. 5) p. 376; Volk-Simmon (as in n. 9), p. 206, 208.

¹⁷ The twenty poems have also been translated by Cirillo Archer (as in n. 7), pp.100-15, 203-13. On some occasions I have used her solutions.



Saturno.

<p>Chilato ha di Pitagora la vita si como spesso in altri si trasforma Et fa da se' medesimo partita. Di pria lasciando ogni costume & nome</p>	<p>crederpoua che per uirtu infima Mutasi in uiso parimente et forma Et trasfonde i athen il mio gran fallo di saturno facendomi cauallo.</p>
--	--

Fig.1

Saturno/ Saturn

Chi letto ha di Pithagora la vita	He who has read the life of Pythagoras
Si como spesso in altri si trasforma	that often he transforms himself into others
Et fa da se medesimo partita	and departs from himself,
Di pria lasciando ogni costume et norme	leaving every costume and norm of before,
Creder potra che per virtu infinita	will be able to believe that through infinite virtue
Mutassi io viso parimente et forma	I, equally, changed face and form
Et nascondesi a reha il mio gran fallo	and I hid my great mistake (phallus) from Rhea
Di Saturno facendomi cavallo,	by transforming myself, from Saturn, into a horse.

The opening print of the series focuses on the myth of Saturn and Philyra. Saturn, son of the Sky, fell in love with Philyra, daughter of the Ocean, and lay with her in her island. When Saturn's wife Rhea caught them, Saturn transformed himself into a horse and ran away.¹⁸

The image captures the moment following Saturn's transformation. The god is depicted as a horse, casting one last look at his naked lover before fleeing. The woman turns her surprised face away from the god and twists her body towards Cupid. The young god of love holds Saturn's attribute, the scythe, a gruesome symbol of time and death which is here funnily adorned with a swirling drapery. Cupid is stepping over a broken stick, an allusion to the castrated genitals which gave birth to his mother Venus, goddess of love.¹⁹

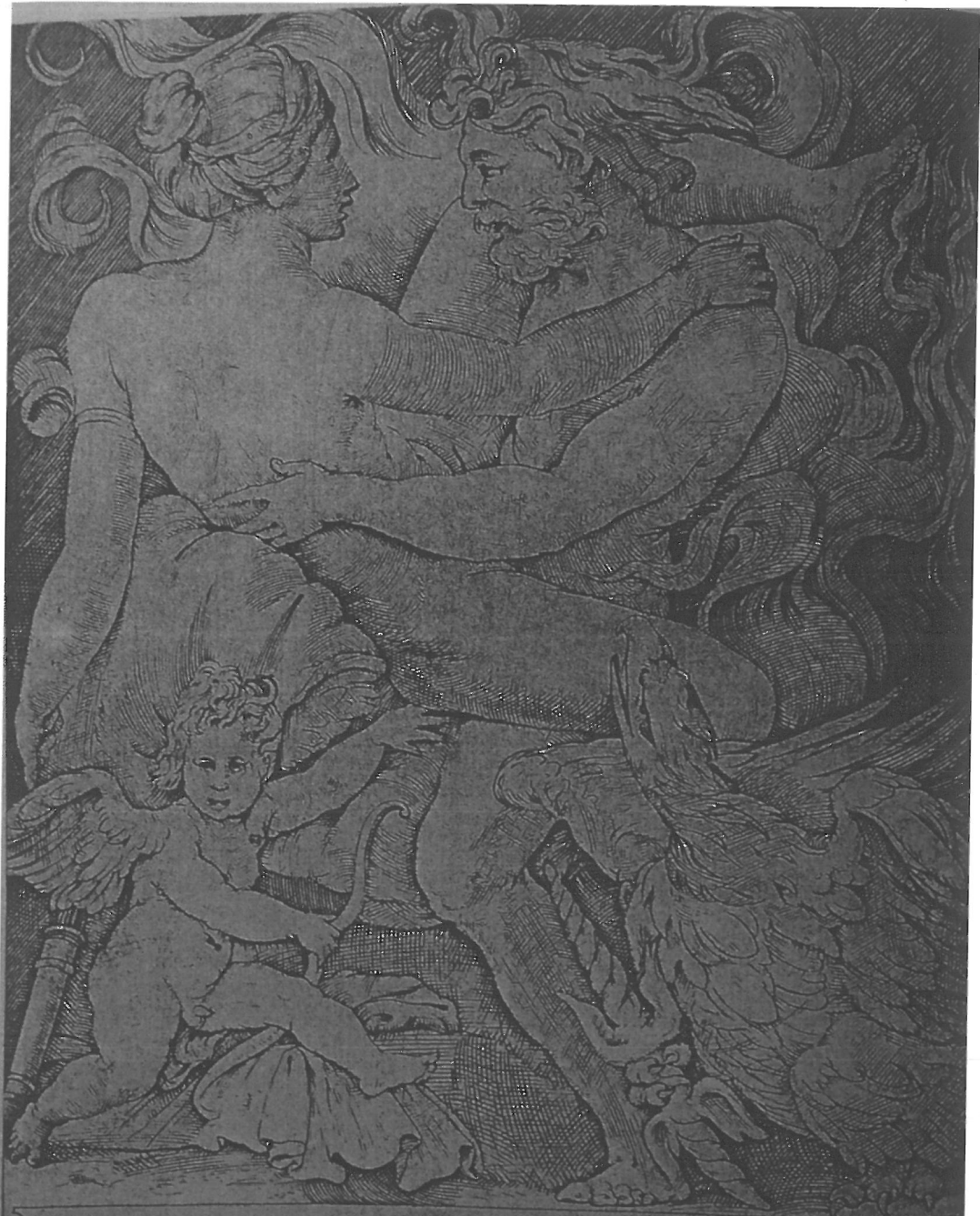
The verses open by acknowledging the reader. Saturn explains to them in first person the reason of his actions. It is his infinite virtue, comparable to that of Pythagoras, which led to his transformation and helped him hide his great infidelity. The irony is obvious: it is unbridled sexual desire -not the Pythagorean virtue- which motivated his actions.²⁰ The closing rhyme ('fallo' - 'cavallo') interplays with the image creating a sexual metaphor. The word 'fallo' means both mistake and penis in Italian. The word 'cavallo' has sexual connotations, as part of the erotic metaphorical system of the action of riding.²¹ The sexual meanings of the words are activated by the image which depicts nudity, Cupid, a horse in love and the severed phallus. As a result, the verbs indicating transformation ('trasforma', 'mutassi') can also be read as referring to a transformation in Saturn's genitals which provoke a big 'fallo', i.e. a big penis and infidelity.

¹⁸ Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, II.1230-1241; Virgil, *Georgics*, III.92-94; Giovanni Boccaccio, *Amorosa Visione*, XX.19-21 in *Amorosa Visione*, ed. V. Branca, tr. R. Hollander et al., Hanover and London 1986, pp. 82-83; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, II.676 and VI 126.

¹⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 173-206 narrates how Saturn used the sickle to castrate the Sky's genitals. They fell into the sea and generated foam which gave birth to Venus near the island of Cythera.

²⁰ Pythagoras as an example of virtue and his gift of remembering the transmigrations of his soul is mentioned, among others, in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, VIII.1-50 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV.60-479.

²¹ V. Boggione and G. Casalegno, *Dizionario Letterario del Lessico Amoroso*, Torino 2000, pp. 95, 651.



Joue in fiamma
Io, che col folgor Spauentar mi uanto
La terra, e'l cielo, et ogni grande altezza
Vanto mi trouo da chi in doglia, e'n pianto
I suoi seguaci lungamente auerza,
E'l tuo bel uiso, donna, in me' puo tanta
Ch'io corro in fiamma, et ho di cio uaghe
Hor che farete' miseri mortali
S'io preso cedo agli amorosi strali.

Fig.2

Giove in Fiamma/ Jupiter in flames

Io, che co'l folgor spaventar mi vanto	I, who boast of terrifying with lightning
La terra, e'l cielo, et ogni grande altezza	the earth, the sky and every great height,
Vinto mi trovo da chi in doglia, e'n pianto ²²	I find myself conquered by the one who has for a long time
I suoi seguaci lungamente avezza,	accustomed his followers to pain and lamentation.
E'l tuo bel viso, donna, in me puo tanto	Your beautiful face, my lady, has such power over me
Ch'io corro in fiamma, et ho di cio vaghezza	that I make love like fire and it's this I desire.
Hor che farete miseri mortali	Now what will you do wretched mortals
S' io preso cedo agli amorosi strali?	if I, captive, surrender to the arrows of love?

The starting-point of the invention is Ovid's account of Jupiter's love with Semele or Aegina.²³ Both were erotically united to the god in flames. Semele, tricked by jealous Juno, had a tragic end. She made Jupiter swear that he would make love to her in his full splendour to prove his identity. Jupiter embraced her clad in his armoury of thunderbolts and incinerated her while making love to her.²⁴

Perino del Vaga's image focuses on the exact moment of lovemaking. The couple's bodies are gracefully interlaced over a background of flames in a chiasitic position possibly inspired by an ancient sarcophagus (fig.23). The poem does not specify whether the lover is Semele or Aegina. The focus is on the description of the burning passion. Jupiter addresses the reader and his lover in first person. His speech is elegantly structured on a series of symmetrical juxtapositions: although he is almighty, he recognises his defeat by Cupid, although Cupid's followers are in pain, Jupiter is enjoying himself, if the leader of gods cannot resist love what will the mortal readers do? Jupiter's verses build on cherished conventions of Petrarchan lyrical poetry: the apostrophes 'your beautiful face, my lady'²⁵ or the sequence 'the earth, the sky and every great height'.²⁶ A fortunate coupling of the Petrarchan lyrics with the classical myth is achieved: the visual and verbal 'fire' ('folgor') and 'flame' ('fiamma') function simultaneously as Jupiter's mythological attributes and metaphors of love. Considering that the verb 'corro' is colloquially used in Italian to mean 'have intense sexual activity'²⁷ and combining it with Perino's clearly erotic image, sexual pleasure emerges as the prevalent message of the print.

²² '...de l' Italia il pianto e il duolo...' ('of Italy the lamentation and pain...'), Francesco Maria Molza, *Rime*, CXXXVII.5 in *Poesie*, ed. P. Serassi, Milan 1808, p. 185.

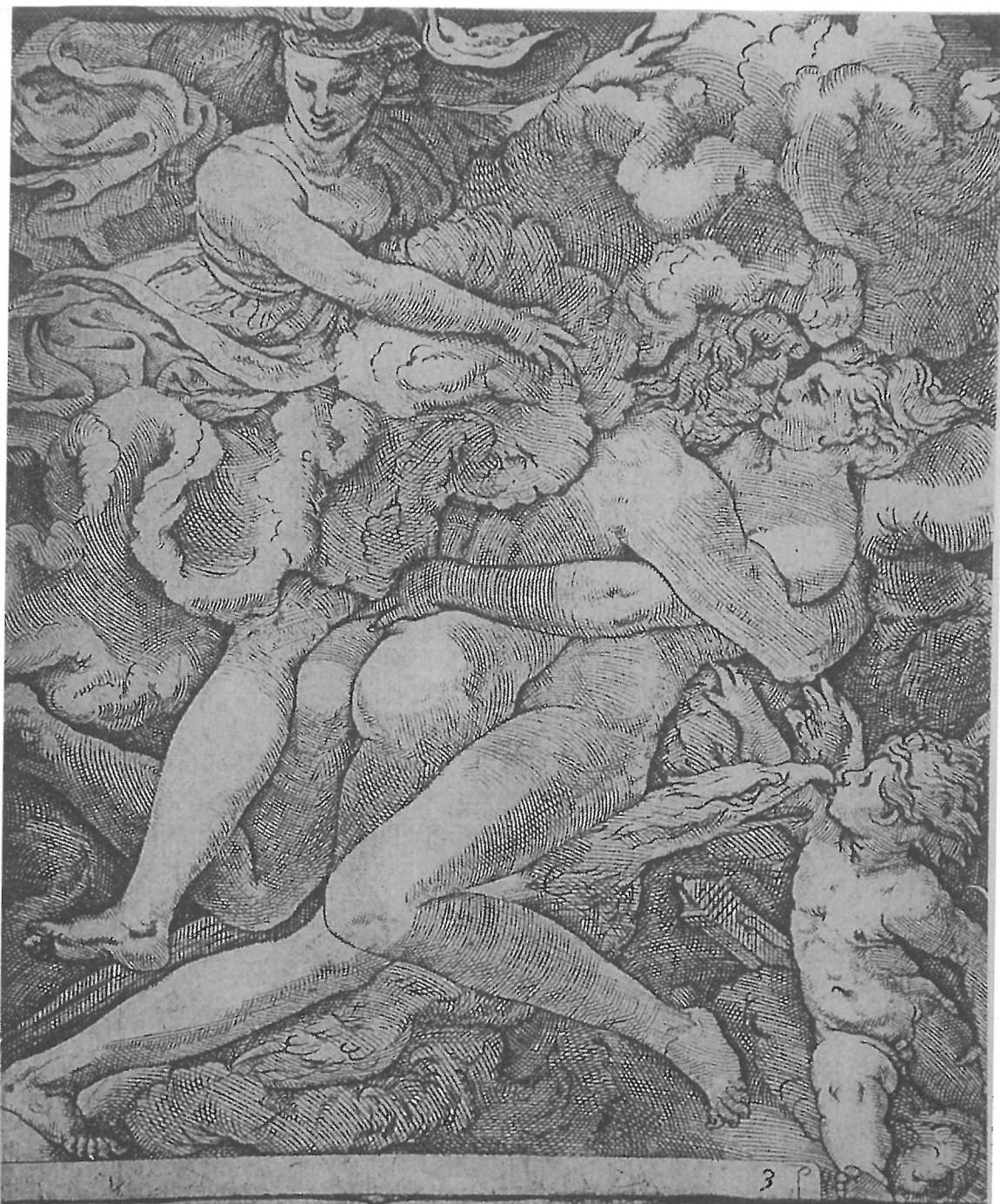
²³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, II.259-315; *Ibid.*, VII.523-618; *Ibid.*, VI.113.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, III.261-307.

²⁵ '...sol una donna veggio, e 'l suo bel viso.' ('...I saw one lady only and her lovely face.'). Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, CXXVII.14 in *Songbook*, tr. J. Wyatt Cook, New York 1995, pp. 176-77.

²⁶ 'In cielo in aria in terra...' ('In the sky, in the air, in the earth...'), Petrarca, *Rime Disperse*, XI.1, in *Rime, Trionfi, E Poesie Latine*, ed. F. Neri et al., Verona 1951, p. 601.

²⁷ Boggione and Casalegno (as in n. 21), p. 133.



Di Giove et Io.

Chi creder potra mai chel chiaro viso Non so si lodo, Giove, hor il tuo aniso
in cui si specchia et si tra stulla Giove a le spoglie che pensi a costei moue
mutarsi debba et quel splendor anciso che se pelle le dai di uacca et forma
restar, chel cielo hor a sua uoglia moue, haura con che ti metta anchor le corna

Fig.3

Di Giove et Io/ Of Jupiter and Io

Chi creder potra mai chel chiaro viso	Who will ever believe that the bright face,
in cui si specchia ²⁸ et si trastulla Giove	which Jupiter contemplates and amuses himself with,
mutarsi debba et quel splendor anciso	has to be changed and its splendour remain
restar, chel cielo hor a sua voglia move,	extinguished, which the sky now moves at its own will.
Non so s io lodo, Giove, hor il tuo aviso	I do not know if I praise now, Jupiter, your design
et le spoglie che pensi a costei move	and the disguise that you plan to put on her,
che se pelle le dai di vacca et forma	for even if you give her the skin and form of a cow
havra con che ti metta anchor le corna	she will still find a way to put the horns on you.

Ovid narrates how Juno, puzzled by a sudden, unnatural gathering of clouds started searching for her husband. Jupiter was cheating on her, making love to Io. The god understood that Juno was about to discover him and transformed his lover into a cow.²⁹ Here, the artists provide a powerful visual frame for Jupiter's infidelity, enveloping the embraced lovers, in puffy masses of clouds and depicting Io's brightness trapped within them. Cupid flies beneath the couple and touches Io's back as if warning them of Juno's arrival. A woman wearing a moon-shaped diadem is hovering over the clouds trying to see what lies underneath. This must be Juno, although the moon is not her usual attribute.³⁰

The poem is narrated by the author who describes the image and, then, questions Jupiter's actions. The verses build on the antithesis between light and darkness which opens Ovid's narration.³¹ The poet points out to the reader that Io's light will be extinguished because of her seduction by Jupiter. This could be read as a moralising allegory where Io gets punished for her involvement in Jupiter's infidelity. But a sexual metaphor is also present. Jupiter's actions provoke Io's loss of chastity and her transformation into a woman of loose morals ('vacca')³² who is prone to cheating on her lover ('metter le corna').³³ Juno's moon-shaped diadem can thus be understood as an ambiguous visual pun. On the one hand it symbolises the disappearance of light and on the other hand it interacts with the word 'horns' ('corna') and functions as a symbol of adultery.

²⁸ '...occhi lucenti,/ in cui solea specchiarsi...' ('...bright eyes which used to be contemplated by...'), Molza, *Rime*, CLXXXV.1-2 (as in n. 22), p. 210.

²⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I.601-669.

³⁰ The moon is the attribute of Diana. Diana is invoked as Juno Lucina and as the Moon in Catullus, *Carmina*, XXXIV.13-16.

³¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I.602-603.

³² 'menò in casa a cena una meretrice...la vacca grossa e la minuta tutte fuggite...' (he brought home for dinner a courtesan...having both the fat and the thin cow fled...'), Benvenuto Cellini, *La Vita*, I.29 in C. Cordié, *Opere di Baldassare Castiglione, Giovanni Della Casa, Benvenuto Cellini*, Verona 1960, p. 553.

³³ 'E non bastando di averlo caricato di tante corna che non le avrebbero portate mille cervi...' ('And it not being enough for her to have burdened him with so many horns that a thousand deer wouldn't have borne them...'), Pietro Aretino, *Sei Giornate*, ed. G. Aquilecchia, Bari 1969, p. 72 and Pietro Aretino, *Dialogues*, tr. R. Rosenthal, London and Aylesbury 1971, pp. 83-84.



Joue et Io en Vaccha

Ben ha per cui si doglia, estia cruaçiosa Pur non puo star la sua bellezza ascosa
La gelosa humone a questa uolta Che ben si uede anchor così sepolta
Che benbe ad Io la sua faccia amorosa Et anchor l'ama Joue così fiera
H'abbi gelosamente in altra uolta Com' s'hauesse humana carne uera

Fig.4

Giove et Io in Vaccha/ Jupiter and Io transformed into a cow

Ben ha per cui si doglia, e, stia crucciosa	She is right to feel pain and be tormented
La gelosa Giunone ³⁴ a questa volta	jealous Juno this time.
Che benbe ad Io la sua faccia amorosa	For even though he has jealously
Habbi gelosamente in altra volta	transformed Io's amorous face into another one
Pur non puo star la sua belleza ascosa	still her beauty cannot remain hidden.
Che ben si vede anchor cosi sepolta	For it shows well even buried in this way
Et anchor l' ama Giove cosi fiera	and Jupiter still loves her in this beastly form
Come s'havesse humana carne vera.	as if she had real human flesh.

The print is a continuation of the mythological scene previously depicted. According to Ovid, Juno after searching in vain for her husband in the heavens, hastened down to earth and ordered the clouds to disperse. Jupiter had sensed her coming and had already transformed Io into a white cow.³⁵ Perino depicted the scene faithfully. The clouds have started scattering about, obeying Juno's majestic gesture. The goddess is drawn in a twisted pose reminiscent of one of the women in Sodoma's *Mariage of Alexander and Roxana* in the Farnesina (fig.24). She is approaching Io and interrogating Jupiter. The god sits next to her, his nude torso reclined as Michelangelo's *ignudo* holding the medallion above the *Erithrean Sibyl* on the Sistine ceiling (fig.25).³⁶ His hand holds back his excited eagle, as if trying to suppress the sexual desire for his lover.

In the poem the voice of the narrator comments on the image, describing the passions triggered by Jupiter's infidelity, i.e. jealousy, pain and love. The narrator takes the part of jealous Juno and seems exasperated with Jupiter's inability to stop yearning for Perino's slurping cow, which, nonetheless, is still perceived as beautiful! The rhyme structure with the repetition of the same word ('volta') with a different meaning each time was permitted and considered as extremely pleasant in Italian Renaissance poetry.³⁷ The rhyme interacts visually with both the twisted figure of Juno (who is 'volta', turned around) and the transformed Io (whose face Jupiter has 'volta', transformed) creating a witty game on the change of appearances, the mythological and mannerist twist of forms.

³⁴ 'Vedi Iunon gelosa, e 'l biondo Apollo...' ('I saw jealous Juno and the fair Apollo...'), Petrarca, *Triumphus Cupidinis*, l.154 (as in n. 26), p. 487.

³⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, l.601-669.

³⁶ Cirillo Archer (as in n. 7), p. 100.

³⁷ Girolamo Ruscelli, *Del Modo di Comporre in Versi nella Lingua Italiana*, Venice 1559, p. 111. See the same rhyme pattern in Molza, *Rime*, V.11-14 (as in n. 22), p. 119: 'Ch' io sento voi, mia luce, altrove volta/...che di mille io v'ho sol una volta.' ('I feel you, my light, turned away from me...for I only have you once in a thousand times.').



Apollo di Hyacintho.

Nesun mincolpi, se del mio donzello pero son fatto a quel desio ribello
 le guance'io prezzo piu che gemme et oro et ardo sol per questo, et discoloro
 da poi che mi fu amor si crudo, et fello et si mi piace' ognhor la noua salma
 per quella onde uerdeggia il uago alloro chio le' concetto dogni honor la palma

Fig.5

Giove in pastore/ Jupiter transformed into a shepherd

Dolce ³⁸ cibo d' amor, dolce rapina,	Sweet nourishment of love, sweet ravishing,
Ch'io provo in questo basso et humil stato,	that I taste in this low and humble state,
Dolce mutata forma, ³⁹ et pellegrina	sweet and strange mutated form,
Quanto mi fai, piu che nel ciel beato ⁴⁰	you make me more blessed than heaven would.
Questa è ch'io provo ambrosia alma, e divina	This that I taste is a life-giving, divine ambrosia
Senza la qual non voglio esser beato;	without which I do not wish to be blessed
E pur ch' io senta tua dolceza, Amore,	and as long as I can taste your sweetness, my Love,
Parte del gregge sia, nonche Pastore.	I shall be part of the flock, rather than a shepherd.

There is no known first- or second-state print featuring the correct poem. The printer swapped plates by mistake and combined the present image with the text plate corresponding to *Apollo and Hyacinth* (fig.12). The original combination survives only in copies (fig.26). This is unfortunate because this is one of the most erotically charged word-image interplays.

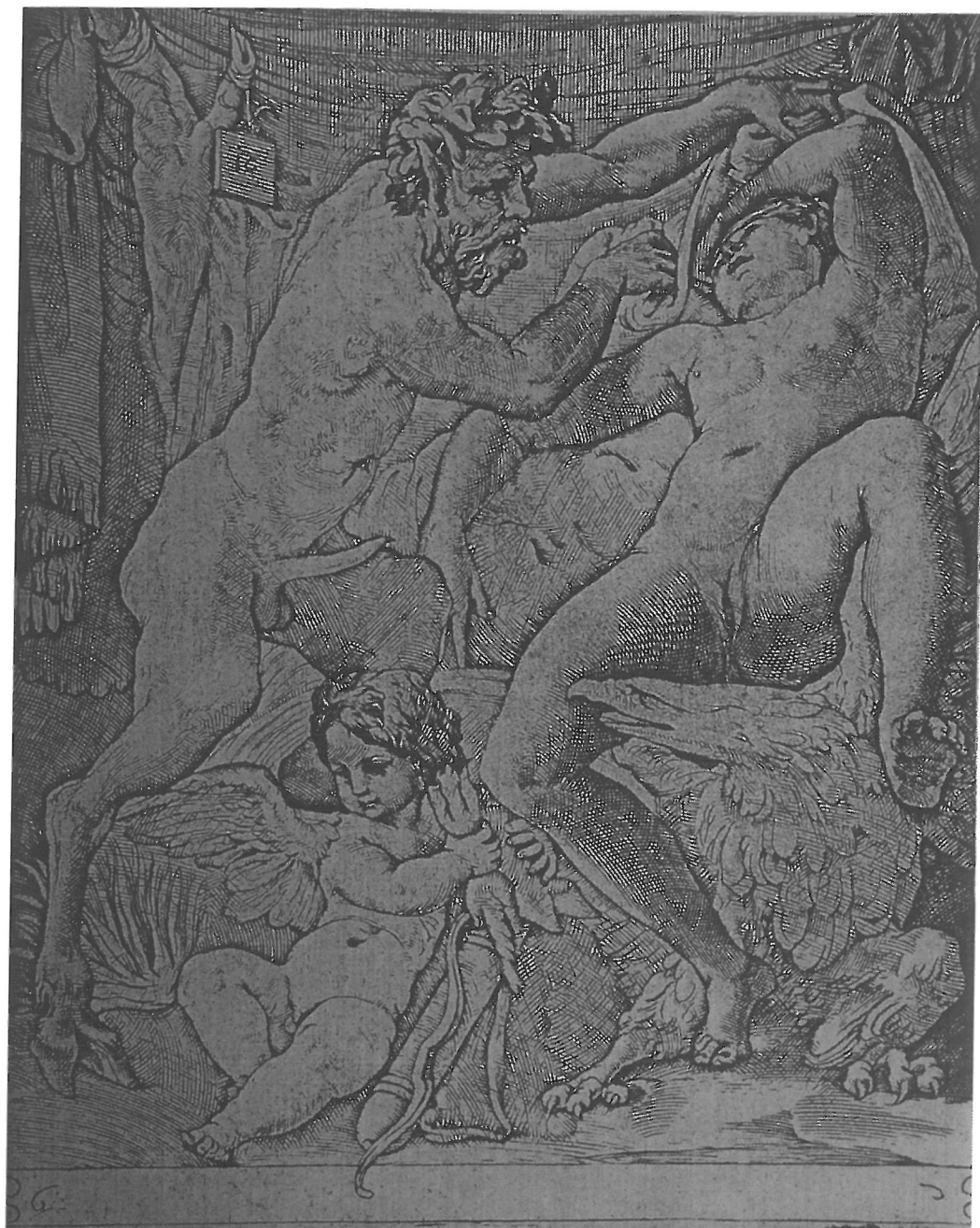
Jupiter's transformation into a shepherd in order to seduce Mnemosyne was one of the love-stories that Arachne wove on her tapestry when competing with Pallas.⁴¹ The overtly sexual image focuses on the couple's kiss and on Mnemosyne's hand pulling Jupiter towards her. Jupiter's eagle supports the god's hanging leg and holds his thunderbolt in such a way that it can also be perceived as the bird's genitals. Cupid sits on the opposite side holding his bow in front of a stick, the symbol indicating Jupiter's transformation into a shepherd. The verses are recited by Jupiter and insist on the sweetness of love he is feeling after his transformation. The repetition of the word 'sweet' ('dolce') and the deictic 'that I taste in this', 'this that I taste' ('ch'io provo in questo' - 'questa è ch'io provo') serve as a link between word and image and attract the reader's attention to the visual points of corporeal union which stimulate Jupiter's sense of taste. Once again, the provocative image activates the verbal metaphor of transformation ('sweet mutated form', 'dolce mutata forma') as an erection of the god's member.

³⁸ 'Dolce fel, dolci chiodi e dolce legno,/Dolce peso...' ('Sweet gall, sweet nails and sweet wood, sweet weight...'), Molza, *Rime*, LXIX.1-3 (as in n. 22), p. 387.

³⁹ 'Com' è mutata la tua forma vera...' ('in which way your real form is changed', Molza, *Rime*, LXIX.3 (as in n. 22), p. 151.

⁴⁰ Cfr. the rhyme structure: '...al dipartir beato,/.../Per fuggir da si vile e basso stato.' (after departing blessed...to flee from such a vile and low state.),' Molza, *Rime*, CXLV.12-14 (as in n. 22), p. 189.

⁴¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI.114.



Joue in Satyro :-

*he non puo far di Cytherea il figlio
Che n mille guise mi trasforma il giorno!
E io ch'al suo voler ratto m'appiglio
Spesso per forza a cot'al gioco torno.*

*Et ogni faccia mi riuesto e piglio,
C'empiendo'l ciel d'insamia alto et adorno,
E tanto me' da me' questi rimoue,
Che' sono al piu del tempo altri che Joue!*

Fig.6

Giove in Satyro/ Jupiter transformed into a satyr

Che non puo far di Cytherea il figlio	What is not within the power of Cytherea's son
Che n mille guise mi trasforma il giorno? ⁴²	who transforms me into a thousand forms per day?
Et io ch al suo voler ratto m' appiglio	And I who, rapt, cling to his will
Spesso per forza a cotal gioco torno.	frequently I return perforce to such a sport.
Et ogni faccia mi rivesto e piglio,	And I take up and put on every face
Empiendo' l ciel d'infamia alto et adorno,	filling the high and ornate heavens with infamy.
E tanto me da me questi remove,	And to such an extent these forms remove me from myself
Che sono al piu del tempo altri che Giove.	that most of the time I am other than Jupiter.

The story of Jupiter disguising as a satyr in order to seduce mortal Antiope was depicted on the tapestry of Arachne.⁴³ The sensual image of the sleeping fountain nymph admired by the aroused satyr of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (fig.27), 'with her lips slightly open... her thighs suitably fleshy, her plump knees slightly bent...' is a likely source of inspiration for Perino's image.⁴⁴ He could have copied Antiope's bent arm resting over her head from a real fountain statue, the *Sleeping Ariadne* of the Belvedere fountain of Julius II (fig.28) while his satyr is probably borrowing from the posture of Michelangelo's Adam on the Sistine ceiling (fig.29).⁴⁵ Perino suggestively depicts Cupid holding tight both Jupiter's insignia and his caprine leg while the eagle is playfully rubbing himself against Antiope's heel. The composition has rightly been connected to the eleventh position of the *Modi* (fig.30) where voyeurism is highlighted as an essential part of sexual pleasure.⁴⁶

Jupiter's voice declares in a paratactic chain of synonymies that the force provoking his recurrent impious transformations is the son of Venus. The sixth line and the rhyme 'piglio-appiglio' (with both terms used in Italian erotic literature to signify sexual possession)⁴⁷ clarify that this is about transformation for the satisfaction of the sexual appetite. The closing rhyme 'remove-Giove' ('removes-Jupiter') is a link to the image pointing at Jupiter's uncovering of sleeping Antiope and the exposure of her nudity to the beholder.

⁴² 'E in mille guise...' ('And in a thousand forms...'), Molza, *Rime*, XCIX.6 (as in n. 22), p. 166.

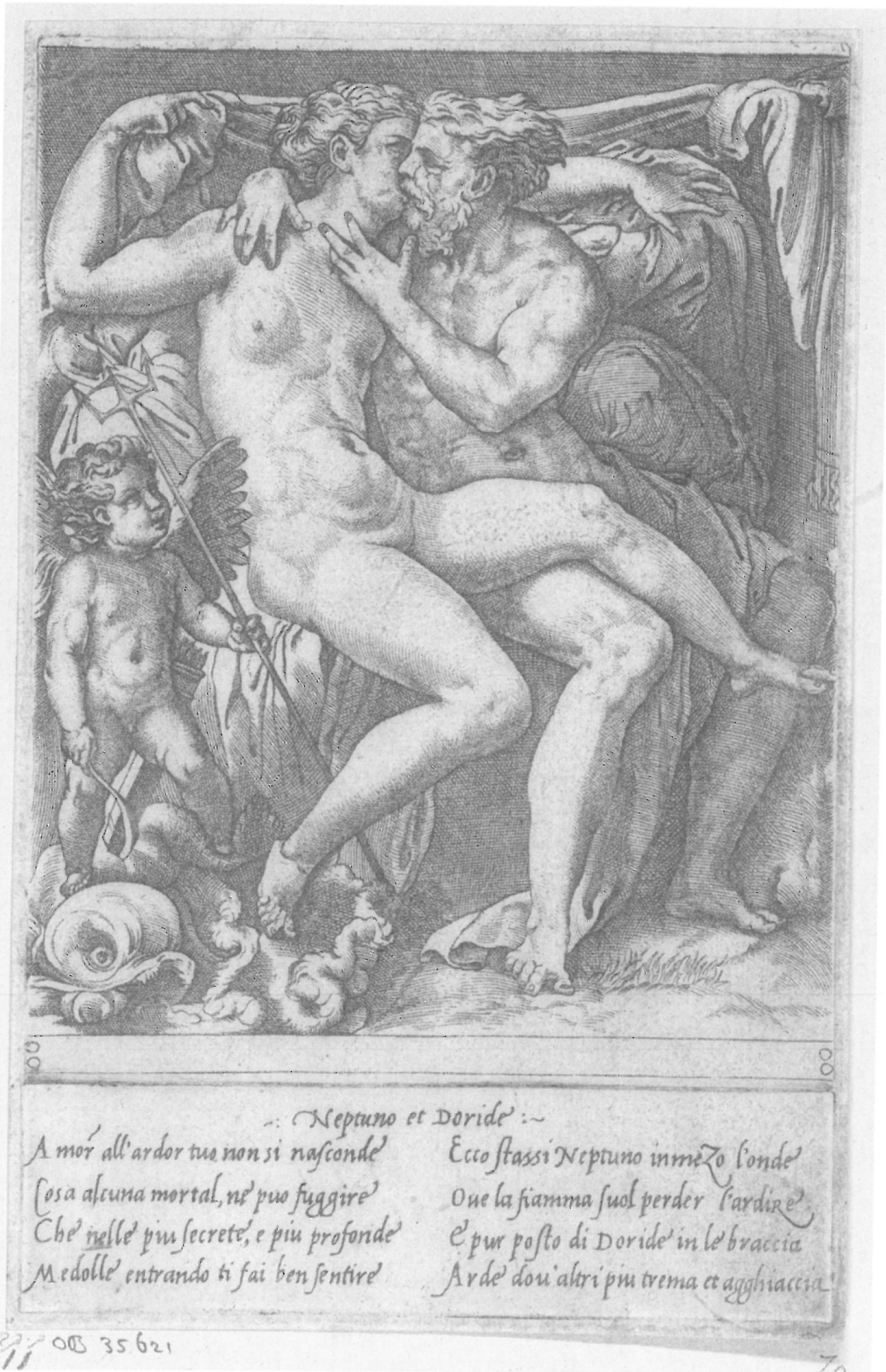
⁴³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI.111; For a variation see Boccaccio, *Amorosa Visione*, XVIII.60-69 (as in n. 18), pp. 76-77.

⁴⁴ 'Laquale alquanto teniva aperti al respirare gli labri accomodati...le coxe erano ancora debitamente pulpidule cum gli carnosu genui moderatamente alquanto ad seritracti...' in Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Venice, 1499), ed. M. Ariani and M. Gabriele, 2 Vols, Milan 1998, I, pp. 71-72 and Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, tr. J. Godwin, London 1999, p. 71. For the visual influence see Schlieker (as in n. 8), p. 30.

⁴⁵ Fabianski (as in n. 9), p. 44; Faietti (as in n. 13), pp. 261-62.

⁴⁶ Talvacchia (as in n. 9), p. 153-54.

⁴⁷ Boggione and Casalegno (as in n. 21), pp. 20, 410.



Neptuno et Doride :-
A mor' all'ardor tua non si nasconde
Cosa alcuna mortal, ne' puo fuggire
Che' nelle' piu' secrete, e piu' profonde
Medolle' entrando ti fai ben sentire
Ecco stassi Neptuno in mezzo l'onde
Oue la fiamma suol perder l'ardire
E' pur posto di Doride' in le braccia
Arde' dou' altri piu' trema et agghiaccia

Fig.7

Neptuno et Doride/ Neptune and Doris

Amor all'ardor tuo non si nasconde	Love, from your burning no mortal being
Cosa alcuna mortal, ne puo fuggire	can hide nor run away.
Che nelle piu secrete, e piu profonde	By entering in the most secret, and deepest
Medolle entrando ti fai ben sentire	marrow you really make yourself felt.
Ecco stassi Neptuno inmezo l'onde	Look! Here is Neptune in the midst of the sea,
Ove la fiamma suol perder l'ardire	where the flame usually loses its ardour.
E pur posto di Doride in le braccia	And yet, in the arms of Doris
Arde dov' altri piu trema et agghiaccia	he burns where another would tremble instead, and freeze.

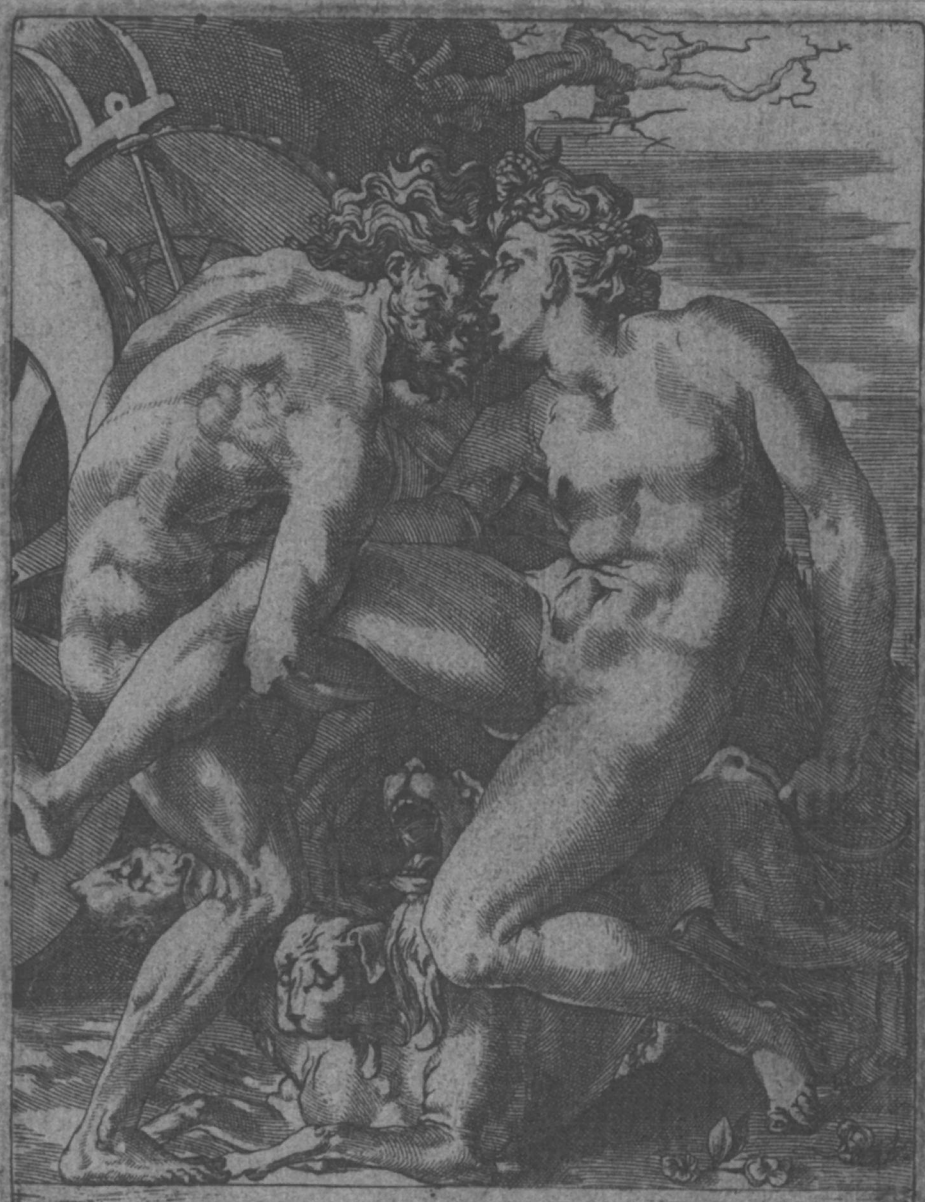
There is no identified classical source for the love of Neptune and Doris.⁴⁸ The image depicts Neptune embracing the nereid and kissing her. Doris's left leg is suggestively slung over her lover's, her hands spread out to hold the bed's curtain and, thus, exposing her nudity to the viewer. Perino has put an emphasis on imitating the timeless, idealised beauty of antique sculpture and Caraglio has succeeded in transmitting his exquisite relieflike *disegno* with a masterly combination of different textures of shadows, thickly-incised contours and contrasting blank inner areas.

The poet couples Perino's vision of the petrified eternity of a kiss with a praise of love's piercing force, entering deep in a man's marrow. This is a powerful metaphor recurrent in both Latin and Italian verse,⁴⁹ which here has evident sexual overtones. The dramatic 'ecco' of the second quatrain introduces Neptune and his lover. The paradox of the passion's burning flame not being extinguished by the freezing water derives from the commonly used antithesis between fire and ice in Petrarchan lyrical poetry and has been well adapted to Neptune's passion for the occasion.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Neptune and Doris are mentioned, however, together in Renaissance literature. See for instance *In Lode della Galea* by Agnolo Bronzino, *Rime in Burla*, ed. F. P. Nardelli, Rome 1988, p. 84.

⁴⁹ Catullus, *Carmina*, LXIV.93; Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV.66; Angelo Poliziano, *Stanze Per La Giostra*, I.41 in *Poesie*, ed. F. Bausi, Torino 2006, 145.

⁵⁰ '...con quelli occhi ella ne face/ di state un ghiaccio, un foco quando iverna?' ('...What good, then, if summers she makes ice of us, and fire in wintertime?') Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, CL.5-6 (as in n. 25), pp. 210-11.



Plutone et Proserpina.

Soto'l mio cieco et tenebroso regno Et mosi a furto glorioso et degno
 passo d'amor si adentro la scetra costei menando fra le braccia stretta
 che contra lui non hebbe alcun ritegno di cui godendo hor se facezze conte
 il carro presi, el mio tridente in fretta fuggi bella mi pare' te phlegetonce;

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Fig.8

Plutone et Proserpina/ Pluto and Proserpina

Soto l mio cieco et tenebroso regno	Beneath my dark and shadowy kingdom
passo damor si adentro la saetta	the arrow of love entered so far inside
che contra lui non hebbe alcun ritegno	that against it there was no restraint
il carro presi, el mio tridente in fretta	I quickly took my chariot, my trident
Et mossi a furto glorioso et degno	and set forth to a glorious and worthy abduction
costei menando fra le braccia astretta	holding her tight in my arms
di cui godendo hor le fatezze conte ⁵¹	and, now, taking pleasure in her manifest charms
stiggii bella mi pare, te phlegetonte,	Styx and Phlegethon seem beautiful to me.

The print draws inspiration from the myth of Proserpina's rapture by Pluto. Ovid narrates the fable in detail explaining how Venus, angry at Diana and Pallas who had revolted against her, gave the love-arrows to her son so that, after having dominated Jupiter and the deities of the sea, they could further extend their control over the kingdom of the dead. Indeed, Cupid wounded Pluto with his arrow and the god abducted the daughter of Ceres while she was gathering flowers.⁵²

The image focuses on the moment after Proserpina's abduction. Pluto is seducing her in his shadowy kingdom. Proserpina sits naked on Cerberus's back, her leg slung over Pluto's arm who is bending forward to kiss her. The moon over Proserpina's head is probably a symbol of the darkness of the underworld and not her attribute. Pluto explains in the poem how Cupid's arrow penetrated in his kingdom and caused the sudden, violent rapture. Both verses and image approach freely the myth in a humorous tone.⁵³ The words 'cieco'⁵⁴ and 'tridente' could also indicate the masculine genitals and the image of love's arrow entering deep in the shadows is an evident metaphor of sexual penetration. The phrase 'costei menando fra le braccia astretta' has various salacious meanings, among which the mildest is 'he is making love to her while holding her tight in his arms'.⁵⁵ These verbal double-entendres work well with the image, where more erotic puns can be identified. The slung-leg motif,⁵⁶ the scattered flowers as a symbol of Proserpina's lost virginity, her hand either pulling the dog's tail as an allusion to her holding Pluto's member⁵⁷ or pushing something in Cerberus's bottom and causing him to lift his foot and cry out in pain.

⁵¹ '...le conte sue fattezze...' ('...your manifest charms...'), Molza, *Rime*, XCIX.12 (as in n. 22), p. 166.

⁵² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, V.364-571.

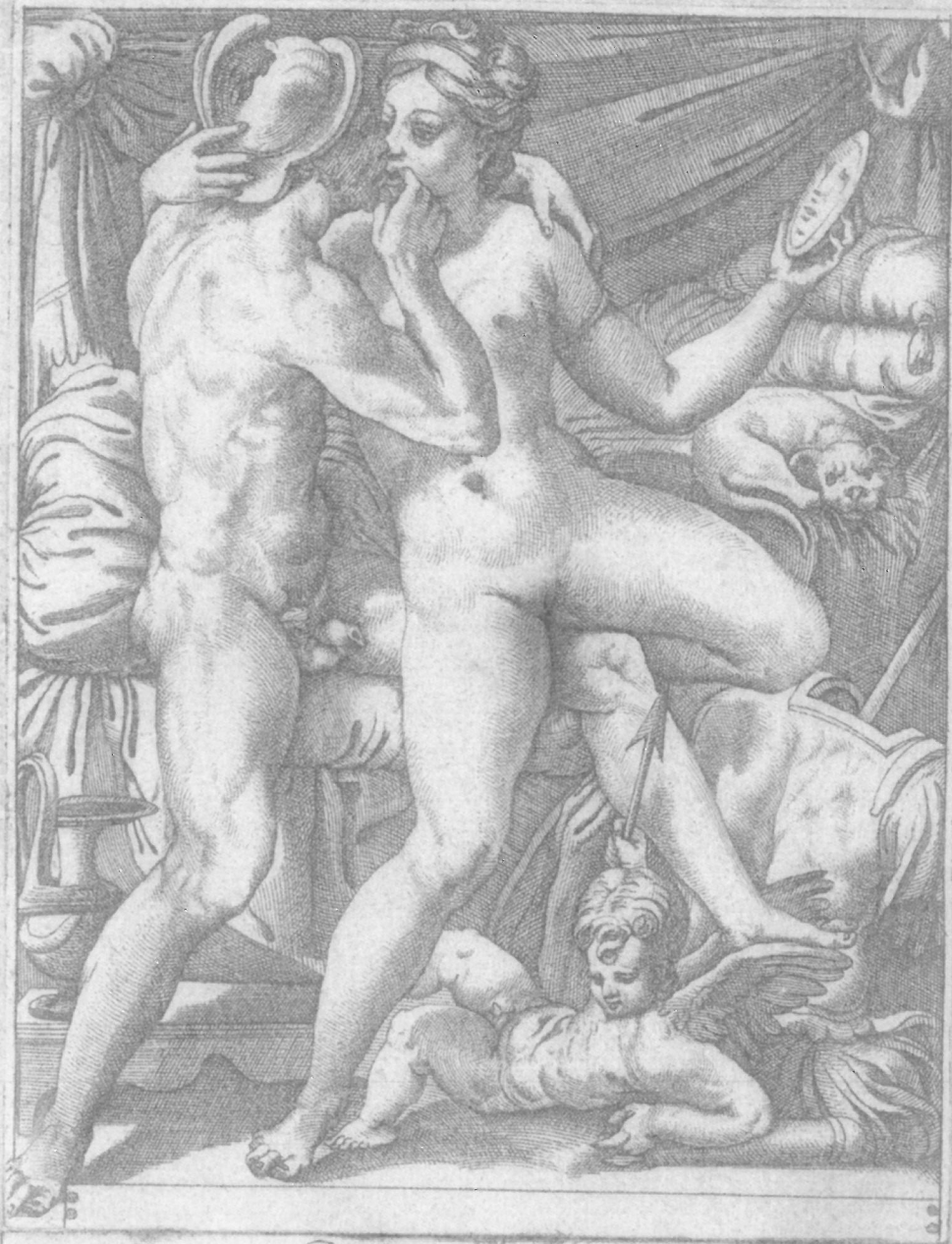
⁵³ Carroll (as in n. 6), p. 132; Schlieker, (as in n. 8), p. 25.

⁵⁴ Boggione and Casalegno (as in n. 21), p. 108.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁵⁶ For the slung-leg as a symbol of sexual intercourse see L. Steinberg, 'The Metaphors of Love and Birth in Michelangelo's Pietas', in *Studies in Erotic Art*, ed. T. Bowie, New York 1970, pp. 272-74.

⁵⁷ Aretino (as in n. 33), p. 62: '...e la donna...preso di nuovo il can per la coda, tanto lo aggirò...' ('and the woman...clutched the dog by its tail and tugged and twisted it so much...') and translation (as in n. 33), p. 73.



Parla Marte con Venere

Hor non sotto la rete' adamantina
 Che con si graue tua uergogna e scorno
 L'inuidioso fabro alla fucina
 Fece, et auolse alle tue membra itorno

Ma lieta e sciolta, la luce' diuina
 Ch'empie el mondo d'amor, il ciel adorno
 Gode pur Marte, e pasce' gli occhi suoi
 Venere' bella risguardando i tuoi

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Fig.9

Parla Marte con Venere/ Mars speaks to Venus

Hor non sotto la rete adamantina	Now not under the adamantine net
Che con sì grave tua vergogna e scorno	which to your great shame and dishonour
L' invidioso fabro alla fucina	the envious blacksmith made at the forge
Fece, et avolse alle tue membra intorno	and wrapped around your limbs,
Ma lieta e sciolta, la luce divina ⁵⁸	but divine light, happy and free,
Ch' empie el mondo d amor, il ciel adorno	fills the world with love and adorns heaven.
Gode pur Marte, e pasce gli occhi suoi	This offers pleasure to Mars, and nourishes his eyes,
Venere bella risguardando i tuoi	when he looks in your own eyes, beautiful Venus.

The print focuses on the adultery of Mars and Venus, which already in Ovid's time was one of the most famous fables.⁵⁹ Venus was married to Vulcan but she fell in love with Mars. Apollo caught the cheating couple and revealed what he saw to Vulcan. The god prepared an invisible, adamantine net and trapped the lovers during their next meeting. They were displayed naked in front of all the Olympian gods.⁶⁰ Here the image shows Mars and Venus naked, embraced and about to kiss. Cupid is lying on the ground, holding his pointed arrow, just below Venus's thigh, his wing supporting Mars's foot. The abandoned cuirass, a standard attribute of the seduced god of war, is displayed as a classicising ornament along with the antique vase, the mirror, the swelling cushions and rich hanging draperies, symbols of a world of beauty proper to the goddess of love or a rich courtesan.

The poet compares the pleasure that Mars is presently experiencing with his future dishonour. Yet, the use of positive present tense verbs in the closing quatrain ('fills with love', 'offers pleasure', 'nourishes') highlights the instantaneous gratifying effect of love. Both image and poem build on the idea of mutual love manifested as divine light reflecting itself around and entering through the lovers' eyes. The hyperbaton of the closing distich allows for a symmetrical interweaving of the syntactical elements accentuating the reciprocity. This is also achieved visually, with a beautiful alignment of the couple's limbs. The idea of Venus subduing even the most violent of gods underlies the image.⁶¹ Various moral and philosophical allusions could be read here.⁶² However, considering the image's focus on nudity and Mars's sexual gesture, the most straightforward reading is that of physical love experienced in a courtesan's chamber.

⁵⁸ '...al Ciel volasti sciolta/.../...Or lieta...' ('you flew to the heaven free...now happy...') Molza, *Rime*, CXXIII.5-7 (as in n. 22), p. 178.

⁵⁹ Ovid, *De Arte Amandi*, II.561-600.

⁶⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IV.171-189.

⁶¹ Marsilio Ficino, *In Convivium*, V.8 in *Commentaire Sur le Banquet De Platon. De L'Amour*, ed. and tr. P. Laurens, Paris, 2002, pp. 112-13. See also Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, I.31-37 and Poliziano, *Stanze Per La Giostra*, I.122 (1-4) (as in n. 49), pp. 207-08.

⁶² P. Barolsky, *Infinite Jest*, Columbia and London 1978, pp. 33-50.



Parla Venere sopra Adoni morto ~
 mi darà, si ch'io disfiughi'l cuore' Ma tu che'l fai, che non coseni amore
 lagrime' negliocchi un largo fiume. Che incedesimamente' io me' consumi?!
 Adoni, o de le' selue' honore' Poi ch'io son giunta a tal, oferte' rea-
 hi si tosto ti fura il vital lume' Ch'io bramo per morir non esser dea

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Fig.10

Parla Venere sopra Adoni morto/ Venus speaks over the dead Adonis

Chi mi darà, si ch'io disfuoghi 'l cuore	Who will give me, so that I may relieve my heart
Di lagrime ne gli occhi un largo fiume,	a wide river of tears in my eyes,
O caro Adoni, o de le selve honore	oh dear Adonis, oh honour of the woods
Chi si tosto ti fura il vital lume?	who steals so soon your vital light?
Ma tu che'l fai, che non consenti amore	But you who did it, Love, why don't you grant
Che medesimamente io me consume?	that I may be consumed in the same way?
Poi ch' io son giunta a tal, o sorte rea	Since I've reached at such a point, oh wicked fate,
Ch' io bramo per morir non esser Dea	that I desire to die, and stop being a goddess.

Ovid narrates how Cupid, while bending over to kiss his mother Venus, wounded her with one of his arrows. As a result, Venus fell in love with Adonis, the handsome son of Myrrha. Ignoring Venus's warnings that he shouldn't be hunting wild beasts in the woods, Adonis pursued a wild boar and was lethally injured. Venus, inconsolable in her grief, transformed him into a flower.⁶³

The image captures the moment of grieving before the transformation. There is no interest in accentuating the 'pathos' of death but, rather, a formal preoccupation, an attempt to gracefully interlock the classical crouching Venus (fig.31) with the lamented body of the Christian *Pietà*. There is a certain clumsiness in the merging of the Giottesque tradition of praying angels (fig.32) with the grieving Cupid which does not permit a visual sublimation of the scene and hints at a humorous approach of the myth.

The verses are recited in first person by the mourning Venus. The slow-paced lamentation closes with the goddess's request to Cupid to become a mortal so that she can die too and stop being in pain.⁶⁴ There is a subtle sexual metaphor in the poem. The metaphor builds on the idea of death as orgasm. Venus is asking for a river of tears in her eyes (the word 'fiume' also alluding to feminine sexual fluids)⁶⁵ and is complaining that Adonis is rapidly losing his life (he is coming to orgasm) and she cannot.⁶⁶ A similar metaphor on death as sexual climax was wide-spread at the time in Arcadelt's cherished song the *Dolce e Bianco Cigno*.⁶⁷

⁶³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X.512-739.

⁶⁴ The rhyme and the image are recurrent in Italian Renaissance poetry. See for instance Angelo Poliziano, *Fabula di Orfeo*, 227-28 'E se pur me la nieghi iniqua sorte,/ io non vo' su tornar, ma chieggio morte' ('And should the Fates my just request deny, I want not life, but beg you let me die.') in C. Salvadori, P. Brand, R. Andrews (ed. and tr.), *Overture to the Opera*, Dublin 2013, pp. 66-67.

⁶⁵ Boggione and Casalegno (as in n. 21), p. 201.

⁶⁶ It is remarkable that this metaphor is constructed over Petrarch's image: 'Deh perché inanzi 'l tempo ti consume?...a che pur versi/ De gli occhi tristi un doloroso fiume?' ('why are thou using yourself up before the time is come, and pouring out a stream of tears so sad and doleful.' in J. M. Synge (tr.), *Some Sonnets from Laura in Death*, Dublin 1971, pp. 32-33.

⁶⁷ L. Macy, 'Speaking of Sex: Metaphor and Performance in the Italian Madrigal', *The Journal of Musicology*, XIV,



Apollo a Daphne.

*Invidiosa scorza a che raffretti
 chiuder il chiaro viso et desiato
 Perche piu tosto pia non aspetti
 chione furi alcu bacio in questo stato,*

*cosi dicendo et frondi et rami schietti
 In ucces' strinse del bel corpo amato
 Di cui gustando il frutto disse serua
 lusato amaro anchor questa proterua.*

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Fig.11

Apollo a Daphne/ Apollo to Daphne

Invidiosa scorza a che t affretti	Envious bark why do you rush
Chiuder il chiaro viso et desiato	to enclose the fair and desired face?
Perche piu tosto pia non aspetti	Why instead don't you wait piously
Ch io ne furi alcun bacio in questo stato,	for me to steal a kiss from her in this state?
Cosi dicendo et frondi et rami schietti	While saying this he, instead, embraced tightly
In vce (vece) strinse del bel corpo amato	the leafy boughs and straight branches of the beautiful beloved body.
Di cui gustando il frutto, dise serva	He tasted its fruit and said: This, arrogant one
L usato ⁶⁸ amaro anchor questa proterva,	still has the usual bitterness.

The well-known myth on unrequited love was recounted by Ovid. After winning Python, Apollo saw Cupid and mocked him. Wrathful, the god of love wounded Apollo with the dart generating passion and Daphne, the daughter of the river-god Peneus, with the dart provoking repulsion. Apollo started chasing the nymph and she kept fleeing from him. When Apollo was about to catch her, she cried for help and her father transformed her into a laurel tree.⁶⁹

The agonising chase of the nymph is presented to the beholder as a dynamic action *in media res*. Caraglio inventively combined a variety of incising techniques in order to create an apocalyptic atmosphere for the suffering heroes. Apollo is depicted on his last winning stride his arms slightly touching Daphne's figure. His swift run is blocked by the naked man lying on the foreground. The waves surrounding him permit his identification as Peneus. He has already granted his daughter's transformation. Her hands have become leafy boughs. Daphne and Apollo look at each other in agony, their lips open as if they were speaking.

The verses convey Apollo's speech. He asks the nymph to wait for him and, at least, let him have a kiss. The poem comes to a brief pause, the closing rhyme of the first quatrain emphasising Apollo's desire for this ('questo') human figure that can be still seen in the image. In the next quatrain, Apollo cedes the word to the poet who reveals the bitter outcome of the story, not yet fully realised in the image. The epigrammatic closure on the bitterness of unreciprocated love owes much to the anguish of Petrarch for the loss of his Laura.⁷⁰ Building on Petrarch, the concept of bitter love ('amore amaro') became one of the favourite topics in Renaissance love treatises.⁷¹

1996, p. 5. The same idea is found in Aretino (as in n. 33), p. 22: '...e in quello suo entrare credetti morire d' una morte più dolce che la vita beata.' ('And as it rammed deep into me, I felt that I was dying a death sweeter than a blessed life.' and translation Aretino (as in n. 33), p. 30.

⁶⁸ Cfr. Molza, *Rime*, XIV.4 (as in n. 22), p. 124 'cui l' usata ricchezza...' ('whose usual wealth...')

⁶⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I.452-567.

⁷⁰ Petrarca, *Rime*, VI.12-14 (as in n. 26), p. 8.

⁷¹ 'Amorem Plato rem amaram vocat. Nec iniuria quia moritur quisquis amat' ('Plato calls love bitter. Not without reason because whoever loves dies.' in Marsilio Ficino, *In Convivium*, II.8 (as in n. 61), pp. 42-43; 'non si può sì dolce frutto, come è amor, gustare senza amaritudine' ('such a sweet fruit as love is cannot be tasted without



Apollo di Hyacintho.

Nesun m'incolpi, se del mio donzello pero son fatto a quel desio ribello
le guance'io prezzo piu che gemme et oro et ardo sol per questo, et di coloro
dapo' che mi fu amor si crudo, et fello et si mi piace' ogn'hor la noua salma
per quella onde uerde et gia il uago alloro chio le concedo dogni honor la palma

Fig.12

Apollo di Hyacintho/ Apollo speaks of Hyacinth

<p>Nesun m incolpi se del mio donzello le guance io prezzo piu che gemme et oro⁷² da poi che mi fu amor si crudo, et fello per quella onde verdeggia il vago alloro</p> <p style="text-align: center;">però son fatto a quel desio ribello, et ardo sol per questo, et discoloro⁷³ et si mi piace ognhor la nova salma ch io le concedo dogni honor la palma⁷⁴</p>	<p>Let no one blame me for valuing higher my boy's cheeks than gems and gold after such a crude and treacherous love for the lady who sprouts the green foliage of the beautiful laurel.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">But I have become a rebel to that desire, and I only burn and turn pale for this one and I always like his young body, so much that I concede to him the palm of supreme honour.</p>
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The *conchetto* behind image and poem is cheerful and humorous. The print focuses on Apollo's burning desire for Hyacinth before the tragic outcome of the myth. According to Ovid, Apollo killed his lover by mistake while they were playing with the discus. The god transformed him into a flower.⁷⁵

The image captures Apollo sitting on a throne, his lyre next to him, his head crowned with laurel. He is pulling Hyacinth closer to him while on the background Cupid is engaged in bawdy actions. The verses are recited by Apollo who uses his frustrated love for Daphne as an excuse for his homoerotic infatuation.⁷⁶ The poet possibly borrows some of his themes from Ovid's Latin text and then freely transforms them: the burning desire ('et ardo') from 'longaque alit adsuetudine flammis',⁷⁷ the guilt ('Nesun m' incolpi') from 'quae mea culpa tamen, nisi si lusisse vocari culpa potest, nisi culpa potest at amasse vocari'.⁷⁸

bitterness') in Mario Equicola, *Di Natura d' Amore* (Venice 1525), Venice 1607, p. 32; 'Ora insegnaci quanto quell'altra proposta sia vera, dove tu di' che amare senza amaro non si puote.' ('Meanwhile show us how much truth there is in that other proposition, that no one can love without bitterness.') in Pietro Bembo, *Gli Asolani*, I.10 in *Prose e Rime*, ed. C. Dionisotti, Torino 1966, repr. 1978, p. 330 and English translation in Pietro Bembo, *Gli Asolani*, tr. R. B. Gottfried, Indiana 1954, p. 24.

⁷² 'Ma più che gemme ed or vuol che s' apprezze...' (But now more than gems and gold needs to be valued...') Molza, *Stanze sopra il Ritratto della Signora Giulia Gonzaga. Parte Seconda*, XXXI.7 (as in n. 22), p. 271.

⁷³ 'ond' ardo e discoloro...' ('so I burn and grow pale'), Molza, *Poesie*, LIV.12 (as in n. 22), p. 380.

⁷⁴ Cfr. the rhyme structure: 'de le cose divine aver la salma/.../intiera darle d' ogni onor la palma.' ('have the body of the divine things...to give it entirely the palm of supreme honour') Molza, *Stanze sopra il Ritratto della Signora Giulia Gonzaga*, XXXIX.4-6 (as in n. 22), p. 259.

⁷⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X.162-219.

⁷⁶ On homoerotic love as a result of the frustrated love for a woman see Poliziano, *Fabula di Orfeo*, 277-88 (as in n. 64), pp. 68-69.

⁷⁷ 'And so with long association he feeds his passion's flame.', Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X.173

⁷⁸ 'what is my fault, unless my playing with thee can be called a fault, unless my loving thee can be called a fault? ', Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X.200-01.



~: La Dea Diana col Dio Pan:~

<p>Quel casto petto, che perpetuamente S'era di pudicitia albergo fatto Et fuggiva il consortio de la gente Per non venir a qualche illecito atto</p>	<p>Hor per un leggier premio di niente Ha l'immutabil suo voto difatto Et col dio de pastor si sta Diana Mossa dal premio della bianca lana</p>
--	--

Fig.13

La Dea Diana col Dio Pan/ The goddess Diana with the god Pan

Quel casto petto, che perpetuamente	That chaste breast, which was made
S'era di pudicitia albergo fatto	an everlasting shelter of chastity
Et fuggiva il consortio de la gente	and fled from the company of people
Per non venir a qualche illecito atto	to avoid any illicit act,
Hor per un leggier premio di niente	now for the slightest award worth nothing,
Ha l' immutabil suo voto disfatto	has broken her immutable vow
Et col dio de pastor si sta Diana	and Diana is with the shepherd's god
Mossa dal premio della bianca lana.	aroused by the award of the white wool.

The tale of Pan seducing the moon by offering her as a gift the whitest wool of his sheep was probably an invention of Virgil who, as his commentator Servius indicated, altered the myth of the love-affair between the moon and Endymion, the shepherd.⁷⁹ In Italian Renaissance literature Virgil's poetic license was further exploited. Diana, the goddess of hunt, was sometimes merged with the moon and represented as breaking her chastity vows attracted by the award of the white wool.⁸⁰ Diana goddess of immaculate virtue and Pan, god of lust and amorous frenzy, were often confronted in Renaissance pastoral texts because their comparison offered attractive material for the elaboration of the *virtus-voluptas* theme.⁸¹

Perino del Vaga represents the subject as a humorous scene of rape. Pan in a complacent grin, is holding tight the goddess of chastity, proudly exposing to the beholder his aroused sexuality. An equally stimulated satyr-Cupid helps the goddess support herself against Pan's caprine thigh. Jupiter's eagle is also present underneath the lovers, a sign of divine approval of the triumphant defeat of virtue, a symbol of erotic rapture or of masculine sexual force. Pan's flute on the foreground alludes to his amorous chase of Syrinx, but could also be interpreted as a symbol of harmony derived from the union of the two opposites: virtuous Diana and vicious Pan.

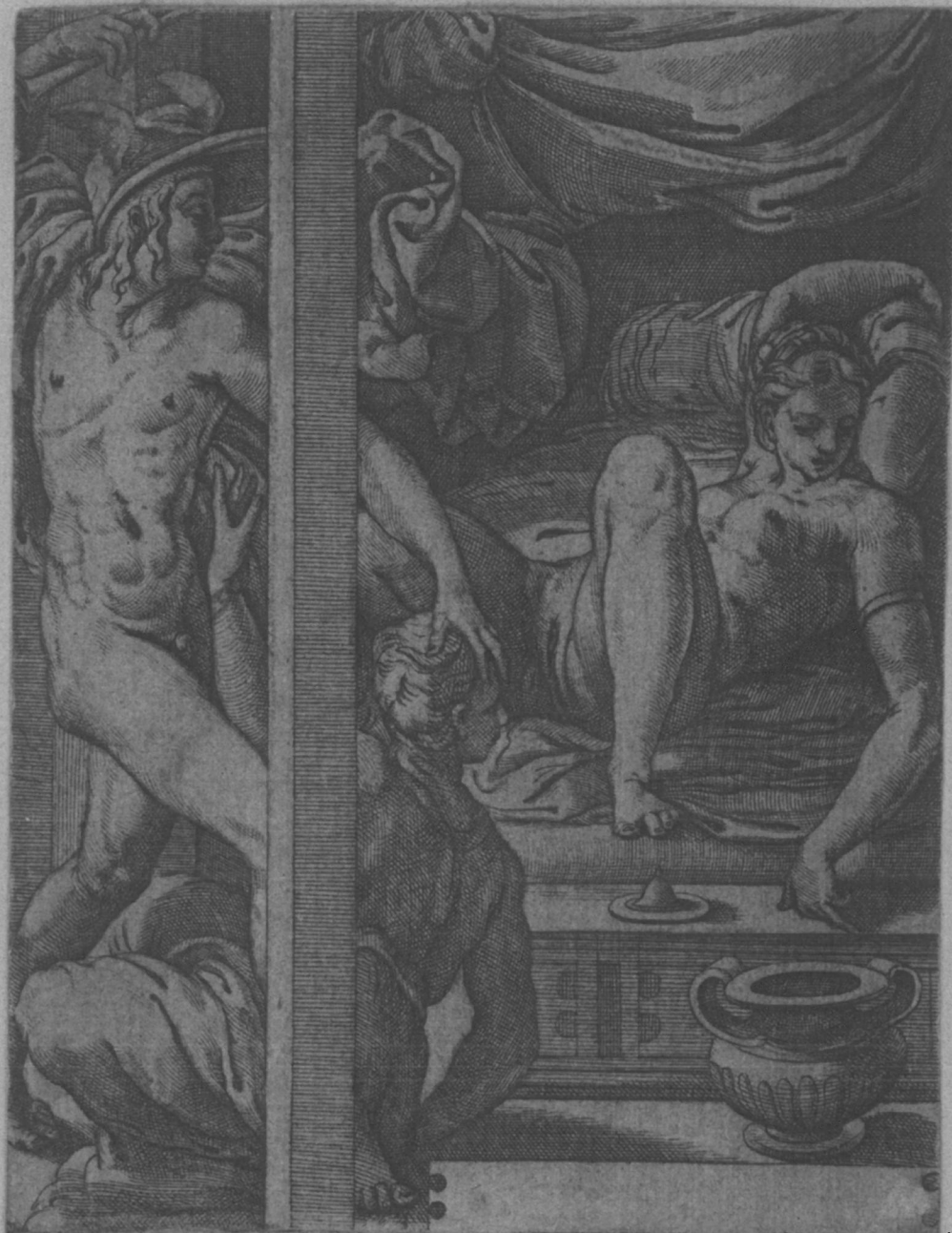
The poem focuses on Diana's loss of chastity with an insistence on words that indicate movement, change from one opposite to the other: doing and undoing ('fatto' - 'disfatto'), immutability and movement ('immutabil' - 'mossa'), the everlasting and the instantaneous ('perpetuamente' - 'hor'). Transformation as loss of virginity is an apparent metaphor here, building on the provocative image and the ambiguous closing phrase 'award of the white wool'.⁸²

⁷⁹ Virgil, *Georgics*, III. 385-393 and Virgil, *Opera* (Venice 1544), ed. S. Orgel, 2 Vols, London 1976, I, p. 118.

⁸⁰ 'Tacerò di Diana...vinta dal vago don di bianca lana...' (I will be silent about Diana, conquered by the lovely gift of white wool...) Bernardo Tasso *I Tre Libri degli Amori*, II.93 (55-58) in *Rime*, ed. D. Chiodo, 2 Vols, Torino 1995, I, p. 214.

⁸¹ Massari (as in n. 7), p. XIV.

⁸² '...si credea sballare lane francesche a dormir meco.' ('...who imagined that he was going to unpack pure French wool when he slept with me'), Aretino (as in n. 33), p. 97 and translation in Aretino (as in n. 33), p. 109.



Mercurio parla a Calistos.

Poi che sei fatta per invidia un sasso
 Ne vedi, u, l'empia uoglia ti trasporte,
 E chiuder pensi, a chi non chiude il passo
 Il crudo Re de le tartaree porte;

In sasso trasformata qui ti lasso
 Eterno esempio di si iniqua sorte,
 Ma invidia piu di me ti uince e sforza
 Ch'ella quel dentro canora, et io la scorta

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Fig.14

Mercurio parla a Glauros/ Mercury speaks to Aglauros

Poi che sei fatta per invidia un sasso	After you've been turned into a stone for your jealousy
Ne vedi, u, l'empia voglia ti trasporte,	you see where your impious desire carries you
E chiuder pensi, a chi non chiude il passo	and you thought you could block the path of the one
Il crudo Rè de le tartaree porte;	whom even the cruel King of the gates of Tartarus cannot block.
In sasso trasformata qui ti lasso	Transformed into a stone I leave you here
Eterno esempio di si inigua sorte, ⁸³	eternal example of such an evil fate
Ma invidia piu di me ti vince e sforza	but envy defeats and disempowers you more than I do
Ch'ella quel dentro cangia et io la scorza ⁸⁴	for I change but your skin and she alters your inner form.

The print spices up Ovid's myth on Mercury's infatuation with Herse.⁸⁵ The god saw the maiden in a festival of Pallas and was astounded by her beauty. He flew down to earth and went at her house. There he found Aglauros, Herse's sister, who asked him for money in return for letting him in. Pallas angry at Aglauros made Jealousy overcome her. Aglauros, tried to prevent Mercury's entrance and the god turned her into stone.

The image shows the exact moment of transformation as Mercury is entering Herse's room. The god of crossroads is depicted forcefully striding over petrified Aglauros and opening the way to her sister. Herse is lying naked on the bed, her arm resting over her head on a phallic-shaped cushion,⁸⁶ her feet spread open, provocatively exposing her nudity.⁸⁷ The lid of a vase is placed on the bed-stool, close to Herse's thighs. Its shape alludes to the cymbals, or bells held by satyrs and Maenads in Bacchic processions awakening sleeping eros with their sound and often perceived as a symbol of masculine testicles (figs 33, 34).

The verses convey Mercury's speech. He addresses Aglauros cursing her for her immoral behaviour which has caused her external transformation into stone and her internal poisoning by jealousy. Poem and image abound in signifiers of forceful penetration through blocked thresholds. The metaphor is meant to involve the external viewer, whose voyeuristic gaze is pushed back by the column on the foreground. In addition to the homoerotic look and sexually compromising position of Aglauros's head, there appears to be textual irony when Mercury tells her to look where her impious impulses have put her ('ne vedi, u, l'empia voglia ti trasporte').

⁸³ '...cruda iniqua sorte...' ('cruel, evil fate') Molza, *Canzoni*, VIII.72 (as in n. 22), p. 234.

⁸⁴ 'e mi face obliar me stesso a forza: ché tèn di me quel d' entro, et io la scorza.' ('On all thoughts else, forget myself perforce;/ That thought my being holds, and I the husk.') Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, XXIII.19-20 (as in n. 25), pp. 48-49.

⁸⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, II.708-832.

⁸⁶ Cirillo Archer (as in n. 7), p. 103.

⁸⁷ Faietti (as in n. 9), p. 95 relates the pose to the third position of the *Modi*.



Erigone

Sopra di un tronco giovanetto e schietto,
 Pendeano uue' sì leggiadre e belle
 Ch' inuitata dal lor soave oggetto
 Al uago tronco mi accostai, et elle

Ratto mutar (chi fia chi l'creda) ad petto,
 M'embra pigliar d'un giovanetto, e nelle
 Da cui fui presa, et par ch' ancho ne goda
 O dolce inganno, et amorosa froda.

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Fig.15

Erigone

Sopra di un tronco giovanetto e schietto,	On a fresh and straight trunk
Pendeano uve si leggiadre e belle	there hung such fine and beautiful grapes
Ch' invitata dal lor soave oggetto	that invited by their agreeable form
Al vago tronco m'accostai, et elle	I approached the lovely trunk and they
Ratto mutar (chi sia che'l creda) aspetto,	swiftly changed aspect (who would believe it!)
Membra pigliar d'un giovanetto, snelle,	they graciously became the limbs of a young man
Da cui fui presa, et par ch' ancho ne goda,	by whom I was taken, and he also seems to enjoy it,
O dolce inganno, et amorosa froda.	oh sweet deceit and amorous fraud.

The seduction of Erigone by Bacchus disguised as a bunch of grapes is mentioned in Ovid among the other love-stories woven by Arachne. Boccaccio explains that she was the daughter of Icarus, the first man taught by Bacchus how to make wine. He was tragically killed by his drunk compatriots. Erigone, after discovering the dead body of her father, hung herself from a tree.⁸⁸

The image shows Erigone and Bacchus sitting on the draped roots of a grape-vine. Erigone, in a pose clearly inspired by a Farnesina Venus (fig.35), looks perplexed, her arm pointing out in surprise, her lips open as she narrates her deranging experience. Her leg supported by Bacchus's panther is slung over the god's thigh. The god embraces Erigone in an affected pose, his free hand holding a swirling drapery which finds its way in between Erigone's legs.

The verses in the voice of Erigone narrate in a light-hearted, musical octave how she was lured into sitting next to some delicious grapes which, surprisingly, took the form of a young man. A funny erotic mood is created, building gradually on the contrast between Erigone's innocent narration and the strange object of her desire, the 'tronco' (the trunk but also the penis) which 'snelle mutar aspetto' (was swiftly aroused)⁸⁹ and deceived her in a most delightful way. The enjambment in the transition from one quatrain to the next achieves an instantaneous suspense, further enhanced by Erigone's parenthetical thoughts, exciting the reader's imagination who can't wait reading what happened when she sat on the 'trunk'. Here it is the poem that enhances the erotic potential of the image. Perino del Vaga used the slung-leg motif to allude to erotic activity, but did not depict it as in other prints. The image, if interpreted without the light-hearted poem would make possible a more sombre contemplation on Erigone's myth and the effects of Bacchic inebriation. Yet, overall, the print focuses on the frivolous erotic pleasures of amorous deceit.

⁸⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI.125; See also the fifth book, chapter XLII in Giovanni Boccaccio, *Peri Genealogias Deorum*, ed. Jacob Micyllus, Basel 1532, p. 143.

⁸⁹ Boggione and Casalegno (as in n. 21), pp. 596, 341.



Hercule' a Deianira .

*Dapoi che morto il fier centauro giace, a cui lontano il cuor d'amar si sface,
et del suo folle ardir paga la pena el sangue' tremar sento in ogni uena
o sol degli occhi miei desio, et pace' chel uincer senza loro homini et dei
la uaga fronte' & i begliocchi serena, deboli i stimo et senza honor trophai,*

Fig.16

Hercule a Deianira/ Hercules to Deianira

Dapoi che morto il fier centauro giace,	Ever since the fierce centaur lies dead
et del suo folle ardir ⁹⁰ paga la pena	and pays the penalty for his foolish burning
o sol de gli occhi mei desio, et pace	oh unique desire of my eyes, calm
la vaga fronte, et i begli occhi serena, ⁹¹	your lovely brow, your beautiful eyes relax
a cui lontano il cuor d amor si sfàce,	my heart is wasted from love away from you
el sangue tremar sento in ogni vena	I feel my blood trembling in my every vein
ch el vincer senza loro homini et dei	for without you, victories over men and gods,
deboli istimo et senza honor trophei,	are, I deem, insubstantial trophies and without honour.

The print is inspired by Ovid's account of how Hercules with his wife Deianira arrived at the bank of a swollen, impassable river. Hercules could use his divine strength to swim through to the opposite side but worried about his wife. Then, the centaur Nessus, appeared and offered to help Deianira. While Hercules was fighting against the waves, Nessus abducted her. Hercules killed him. The dying centaur let his poisoned blood imbue his tunic and gave it as a gift to Deianira. He deceived her by promising it could revive waning love. Deianira would later give it to Hercules, thus provoking the death of the invincible hero.⁹²

The image depicts lovely Deianira gracefully fitted in Hercules's lap, embracing the hero with one hand and holding a flower with the other in a pose borrowed from a Farnesina Psyche (fig.36). Hercules's muscular body is probably inspired by the Belvedere torso.⁹³ The centaur Nessus, lies dead. The poem opens with an explanatory reference to the image. Hercules points out that Nessus was a victim of his fervent passion and, then, praises the beauty of his lover and the invigorating effects of love (the phrase 'I feel my blood trembling in my every vein' also alluding to a sexual stimulation, especially when combined visually with Hercules's phallic club and Deianira's flower, symbol of virginity or sexual intercourse).⁹⁴ The Petrarchan lyrical verses sang by Perino's serious-looking Hercules are a humorous comment on the altering effects of love which conquers even the most powerful men. For the learned beholder, the mythological context which wants Deianira to be the one who finally provokes the death of the otherwise invincible hero introduces to the combination an element of tragic irony.

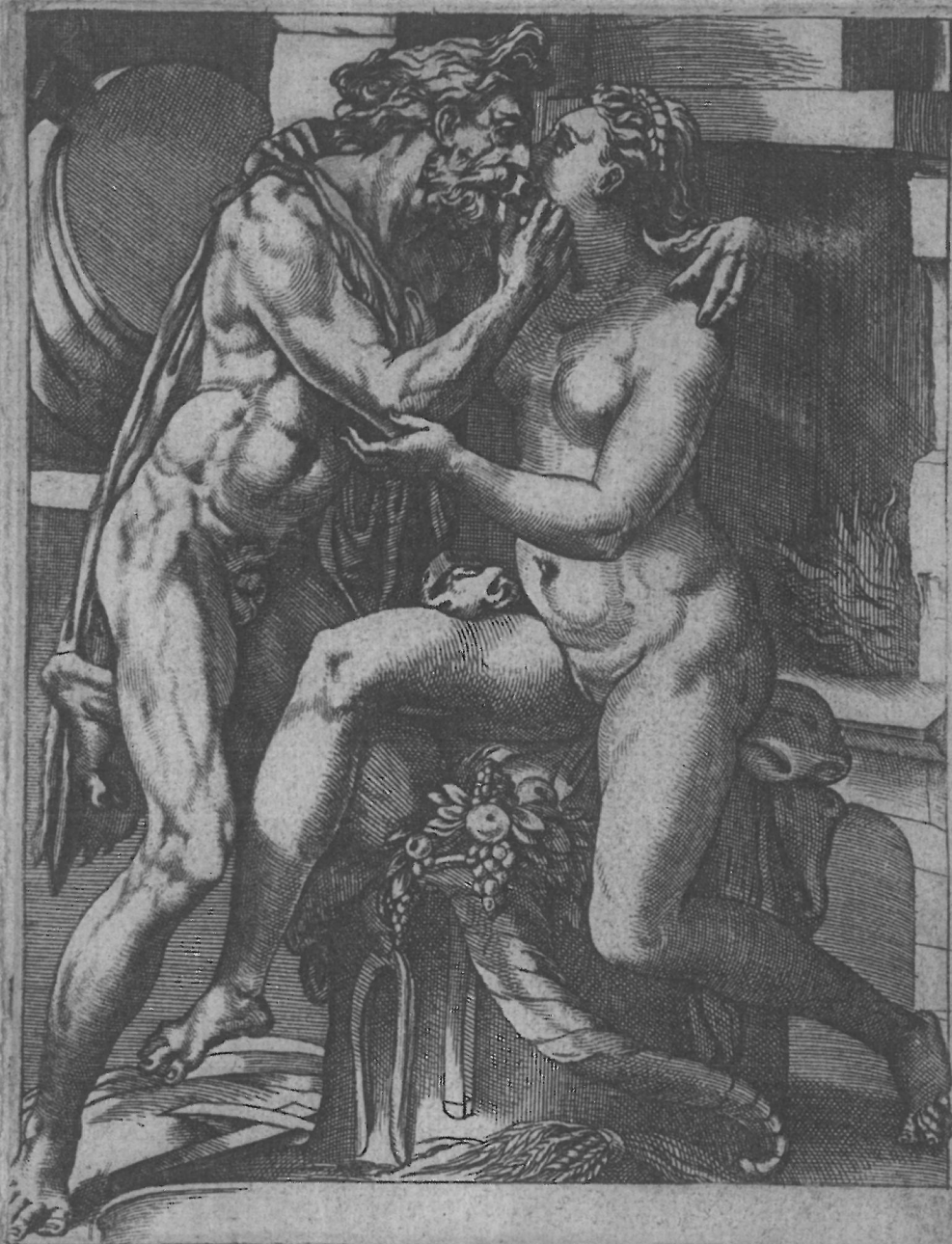
⁹⁰ 'Poichè pentito di sì folle ardire...' ('Since repentant of such a foolish burning...'), Molza, *Rime*, XXXII.5 (as in n. 22), p. 133.

⁹¹ '...che la serena e vaga fronte...' ('...the calm and lovely brow...'), Molza, *Rime*, CII.5 (as in n. 22), p. 168.

⁹² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IX.99-133.

⁹³ Schlieker (as in n. 8), p. 46.

⁹⁴ For the picking of flowers as allusive to sex see Pietro Bembo, 'Priapus', *Allegorica*, V, 1980, p. 84.



Parla Vulcano a Ceres .

*Chi crederria, che i sensi, oue' souente
 Faticosi pensier fanno dimoro,
 Et occupati alla fornace' ardente
 Stan giorno e notte a far qualche lauoro,*

*Fusse altra fiamma mai tanto possente
 Ch'hauesse loco fra le fiamme loro !
 Et pur Ceres la tua trouato ha loco
 Nel petto de Vulcano i mezzo al fofo*

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Fig.17

Parla Vulcano a Ceres/ Vulcan speaks to Ceres

Chi crederia, che i sensi, ove sovente	Who would believe, that within the realm of senses, where often
Faticosi pensier fanno dimoro,	tiresome thoughts dwell
Et occupati alla fornace ardente	and busy at the burning furnace
Stan giorno e notte a far qualche lavoro,	they are working night and day,
Fusse altra fiamma mai tanto possente	there ever existed another flame so powerful
C' avesse loco fra le fiamme loro?	which had a place besides their flames?
Et pur Ceres la tua trovato ha loco	And yet, Ceres, your own has found its place
Nel petto de Vulcano in mezo al foco	in Vulcan's bosom amidst the fire.

The print focuses on the amorous encounter between Vulcan, god of fire, and Ceres, goddess of the crops and fertility. There is no identified textual source narrating a love-affair between the two and the verses accompanying the image acknowledge from the very beginning the unusual coupling ('who would believe that...'). However, a reader of Virgil could possibly interpret the union of Vulcan with Ceres as an allegory of agricultural fertility, the crops being burnt to bake bread or to allow the land to rest.⁹⁵

The image shows the naked gods kissing in front of a burning furnace. Ceres's attributes are depicted beneath her legs while Vulcan's blacksmith tools are also present on the foreground. The verses sing the burning passion that overwhelmed the gods. As in the case of *Erigone*, it is the poem which enriches the image with sexual connotations, highlighting the otherwise mild visual eroticism (the phallic cornucopia suggestively placed between Ceres's legs,⁹⁶ the slung-leg motif, Vulcan's fingers touching Ceres's mouth). The words 'pensier'⁹⁷ and 'fiamma' are double-entendres for 'masculine sexual desire' while the word 'fornace' can also signify 'vagina'.⁹⁸ The adjectives 'burning' and 'powerful' further enhance the erotic metaphor of Vulcan's busy forge where day and night everyone is occupied with sexual intercourse and where Ceres finds her place besides Vulcan, who has the most 'powerful flame' of all.

⁹⁵ Virgil, *Georgics*, I.84-96; Virgil, *Aeneid*, I.174-79.

⁹⁶ Volk-Simmon (as in n. 9), p. 208.

⁹⁷ 'Una femmina v' era che panieri vendea di fiche tutte elette e buone/ ond'io là corsi pien d' altri pensieri...' ('there was a woman who was selling figs in baskets, all good and well-chosen/ so I ran there full of other thoughts...', Molza, *Capitolo De' Fichi* in Francesco Berni et al., *Il Secondo Libro delle Opere Burlesche*, London 1724, p. 32 and Boggione and Casalegno (as in n. 21), p. 397.

⁹⁸ '...ma volendomi mettere la pala nel forno...' ('...but just as he was thrusting his bread-shovel into my oven...') in Aretino (as in n. 33), p. 98 and translation Aretino (as in n. 33), p. 110. For the metaphor of working night and day as sexual intercourse see the god Priapus happy to work night and day in his garden with his sickle in Del Mauro, *Capitolo in Lode di Priapo*, 266 in Francesco Berni et al., *Il Primo Libro delle Opere Burlesche*, London 1721, p. 214.

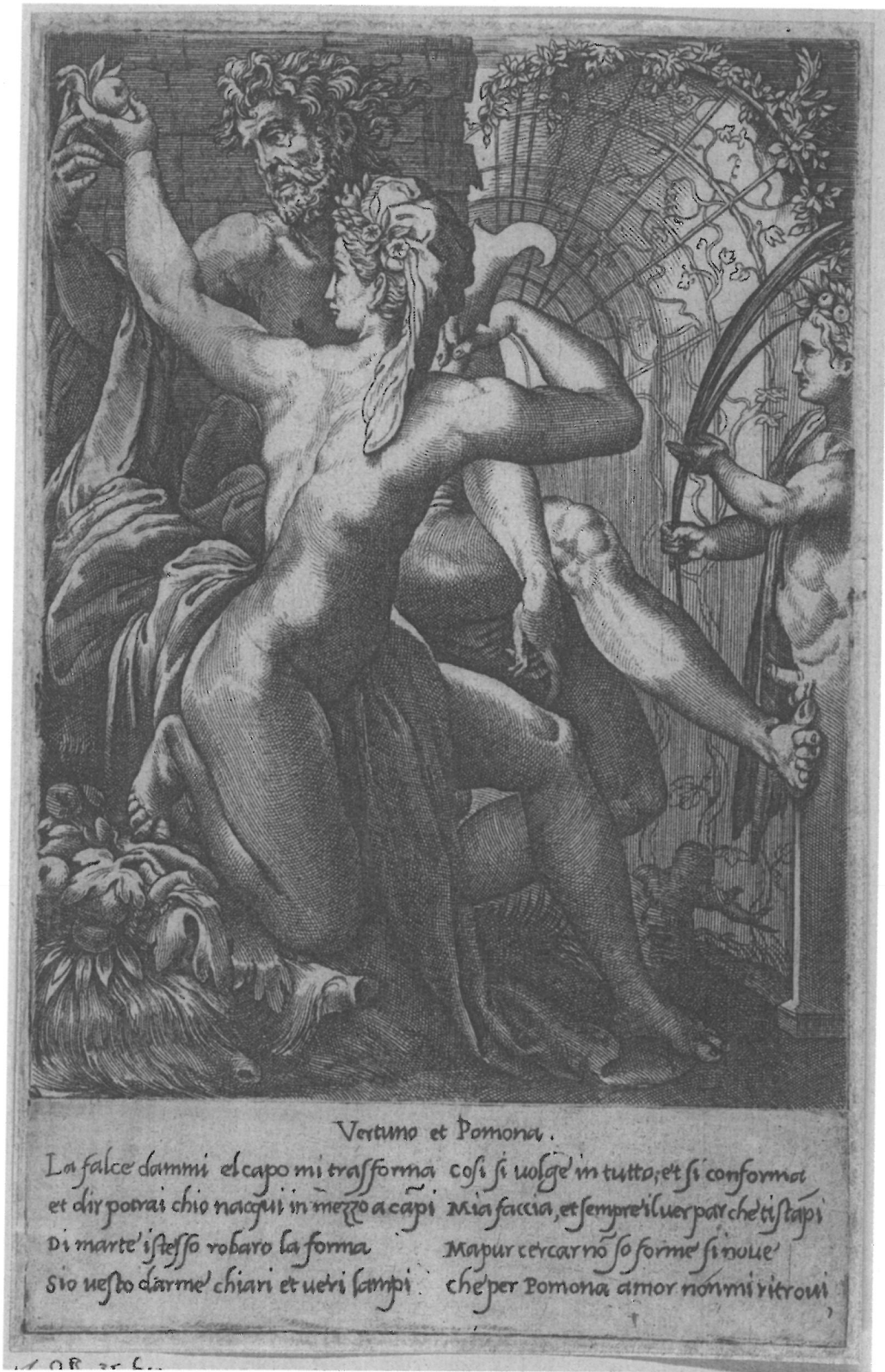


Fig.18

Vertuno et Pomona/ Vertumnus and Pomona

La falce dammi, el capo mi trasforma	Give me the sickle, transform my head
et dir potrai ch io nacqui in mezzo a campi	and you may say that I was born in the fields.
Di marte istesso robaro la forma	I will steal the very form of Mars
Sio (suo) vesto darne chiari et veri lampi	his garment will give me, real bright rays.
Cosi si volge in tutto, et si conforma	That's how my face turns into all things and takes their shape
Mia faccia, et sempre il ver par che ti stampi ⁹⁹	and still it is the true form that seems to be pressed on you.
Ma pur cercar non so forme si nove	Indeed I know not how to search for forms so new
Che per Pomona amor non mi ritrovi ¹⁰⁰	that will not make me feel love for Pomona.

Ovid narrates how a god of the fields named Vertumnus fell in love with Pomona, a minor Roman goddess of the gardens. In order to be able to approach her, he kept changing forms. In the end, he managed to seduce her, after revealing his real, attractive form.¹⁰¹

The image focuses on the happy ending of the myth. Pomona has let Vertumnus in her garden. They sit next to a statue of Priapus, another Roman god of fertility, easily recognisable from his conspicuous phallus. Perino del Vaga's preparatory drawing survives (fig.37) and reveals the extreme care he put into staging the composition and creating strong chiaroscuro effects with the red chalk to enable Caraglio bring forth the relief of these impressive nudes.¹⁰² The influence of Michelangelo has already been noted by scholars¹⁰³ and, indeed, the charm of this print derives from the ability of Perino to release the *terribilità* from Michelangelo's poses and present them with a joyful grace. Francesco Salviati took note of Perino's adaptation and further recycled Pomona's posture in the *Birth of Adonis*, a print attributed to Enea Vico (fig. 38). The rhythmicality of the gestures holding and offering things to one another is echoed on the poem's lively exhortations to the beholder to give to Vertumnus what he asks for. The words 'dammi' ('give it to me'), 'falce' ('penis'), 'capo' ('glans'), 'campi' ('vaginas'), 'vesto' ('vagina') all bearing double sexual meanings.¹⁰⁴ The poet seems to be familiar with Priapean poetry, especially Ovid's *Potrei Velatamente*.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Cfr. the rhyme structure: 'Del ciel abbracci cosi larghi campi,/Che spegni di fortuna e tuoni e lampi,/.../E l' ombra sol, con che la terra stampi...' ('Embraces of the sky so vast areas, that thunder and lightning are bereft of luck...and only the shadow which it impresses on earth...') Molza, *Poesie*, LXIII.2-6 (as in n. 22), p. 384.

¹⁰⁰ 'Ma pur sí aspre vie né sí selvagge/ cercar non so, ch' Amor non venga sempre...' ('Yet no path can I trace so savage, wild,/ But Love comes pressing on; he follows still...') Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, XXXV.12-14 (as in n. 25), pp. 70-71.

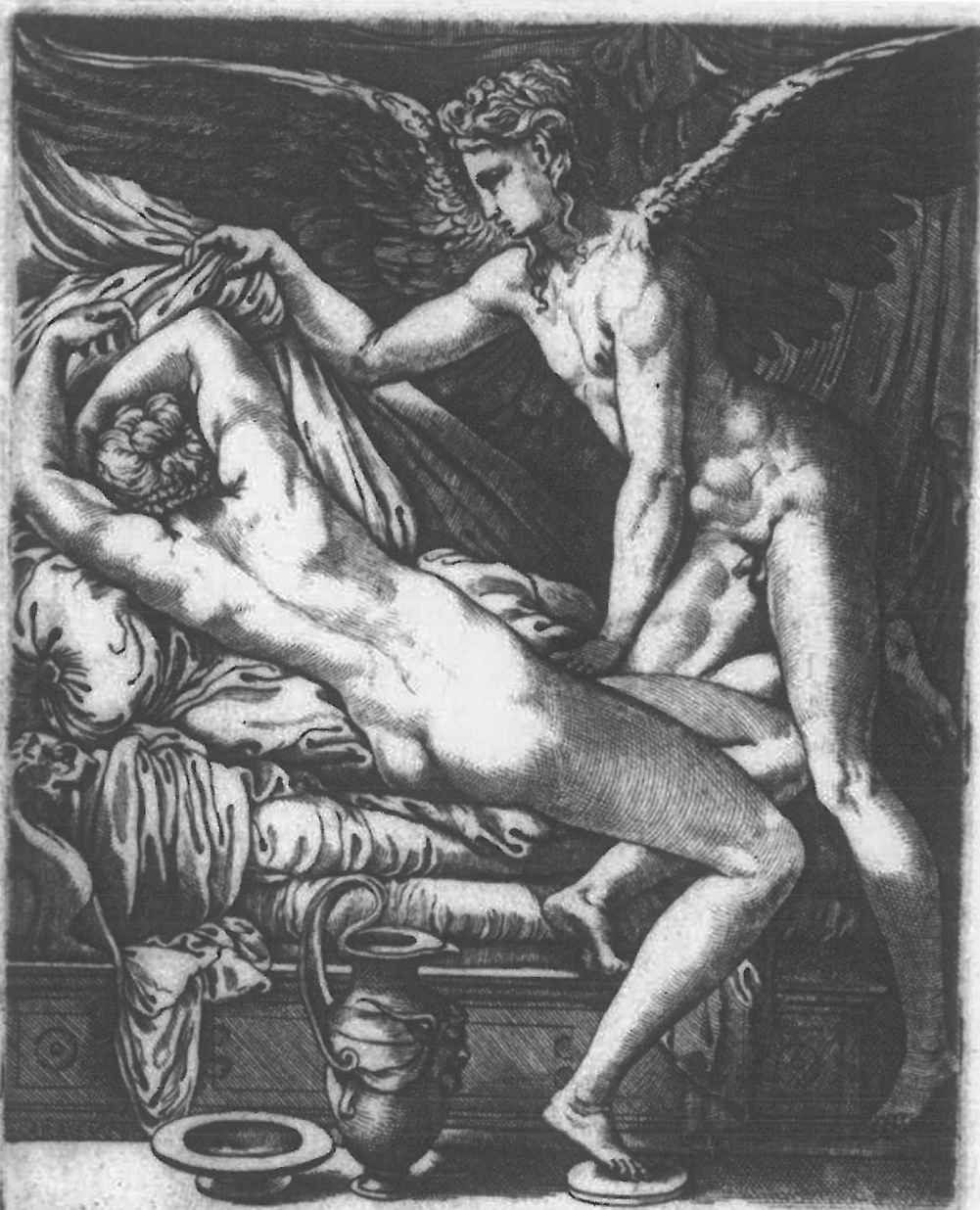
¹⁰¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIV.623-771.

¹⁰² P. Pouncey and J. A. Gere, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. Raphael and his Circle*, 2 Vols, London 1962, I, pp. 95-96.

¹⁰³ A. Gnann, *Roma e lo Stile Classico di Raffaello 1515-1527*, exhib. cat. (Palazzo Te, Mantua and Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna), ed. K. Oberhuber, Milan 1999, p. 400; Talvacchia (as in n. 9), p. 153.

¹⁰⁴ Boggione and Casalegno (as in n. 21), pp. 150-52, 179, 82, 78, 618.

¹⁰⁵ 'Obscure poteram tibi dicere: "Da mihi...da mihi, quod cupies frustra dare forsitan olim..."' in P. Fedeli, *I Versi di Priapo*, Torino 1992, p. 46 and 'Covertly I might say to thee, "Give me what thou...Give to me thou wilt, perchance,



~: Parla Cupido: ~:

S a me' son fatti i strali miei rubelli, Qual herba trovarò, che mi diuelli
Et di mia propria mà mestro i piago; Dal cuor si cara, e si celeste' imago;
Se tanto il viso ponno, e gli occhi belli Dimp' uoti porgete' a questa: io ppo
Di T' siche' che piu' d'altro no' mi appago; Amanti; ch'io son vinto; e cio no' nego

Fig.19

Parla Cupido/ Cupid speaks

S'a me son fatti i strali miei rubelli	If my arrows have rebelled against me
Et di mia propria man me stesso impiago;	and I wound myself with my own hands,
Se tanto il viso ponno, e gli occhi belli	if Psyche's face and beautiful eyes are of such value to me
Di Psiche: che piu d' altro non m' appago;	that I cannot anymore be satisfied with anything else,
Qual herba trovarò, che mi divelli	what herb shall I find that will uproot
Dal cuor si cara, e si celeste imago; ¹⁰⁶	such a beloved and heavenly image from my heart?
Dunque voti porgete a questa: io prego	So please, lovers, I beg you, make vows for my heart
Amanti; ch' io son vinto; e cio non nego.	for I'm defeated and I do not deny it.

The print draws its subject from *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius, which narrated the adventures of the beautiful mortal Psyche and the love-sufferings of Cupid. The moment represented in the image could be the first night Cupid approaches sleeping Psyche to consummate their relationship.¹⁰⁷ According to the story, Psyche was not allowed to see Cupid in order to protect their secret love. Perino's drawing reveals his great admiration and detailed study of the frescoes of Psyche's loggia in the palace of Agostino Chigi. The nude body of Psyche is a slightly altered version of the figure of Omphale in the *Banquet of the Gods*, faithfully imitating even the circular mirror-like base where her right foot is resting (fig.39).¹⁰⁸ Perino's version, however, appears to have been admired as a work of art on its own right, an anonymous drawing in the Uffizi reproducing his reclining nude (fig.40).¹⁰⁹ The antique source of the reversed reclining nude is a much-copied Roman relief known as 'il Letto di Policleto' (fig.41).¹¹⁰

In the poem, Cupid addresses the readers as 'lovers' and begs for their empathy because he is conquered by the love of mortal Psyche. The verses draw attention to the theme of vision ('Psyche's face and beautiful eyes', her 'celestial image') and this interplays with both the literary source and the image. The reader cannot see the praised face and eyes of Psyche, Psyche is not allowed to see Cupid and Cupid is covering her so that he may not be discovered by her.

vainly long to give in time to come..." ' in L. C. Smithers and Sir Richard Burton (tr.), *Priapeia*, Ware 1995, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶ Cfr. the rhyme structure: 'Santa, sacra, celeste e sola immago,/...Ma l' alma, che di ciò, non d' altro appago,/ ..., ch'io mi struggo e impiago. ('Saint, sacred, heavenly and unique image...But my soul I only satisfy with this and nothing else, so I suffer and hurt myself.')

¹⁰⁷ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, V.4-12.

¹⁰⁸ Cirillo Archer (as in n. 7), pp. 111-12.

¹⁰⁹ The drawing was published by Talvacchia (as in n. 9), pp. 136-38. She believes, without any solid argument, that it copies a lost drawing by Giulio Romano, which could have inspired the present print by Perino.

¹¹⁰ P. P. Bober and R. Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, London 1986, 2nd ed. 2010, p. 139 cited in Cirillo Archer (as in n. 7), pp. 111-12.

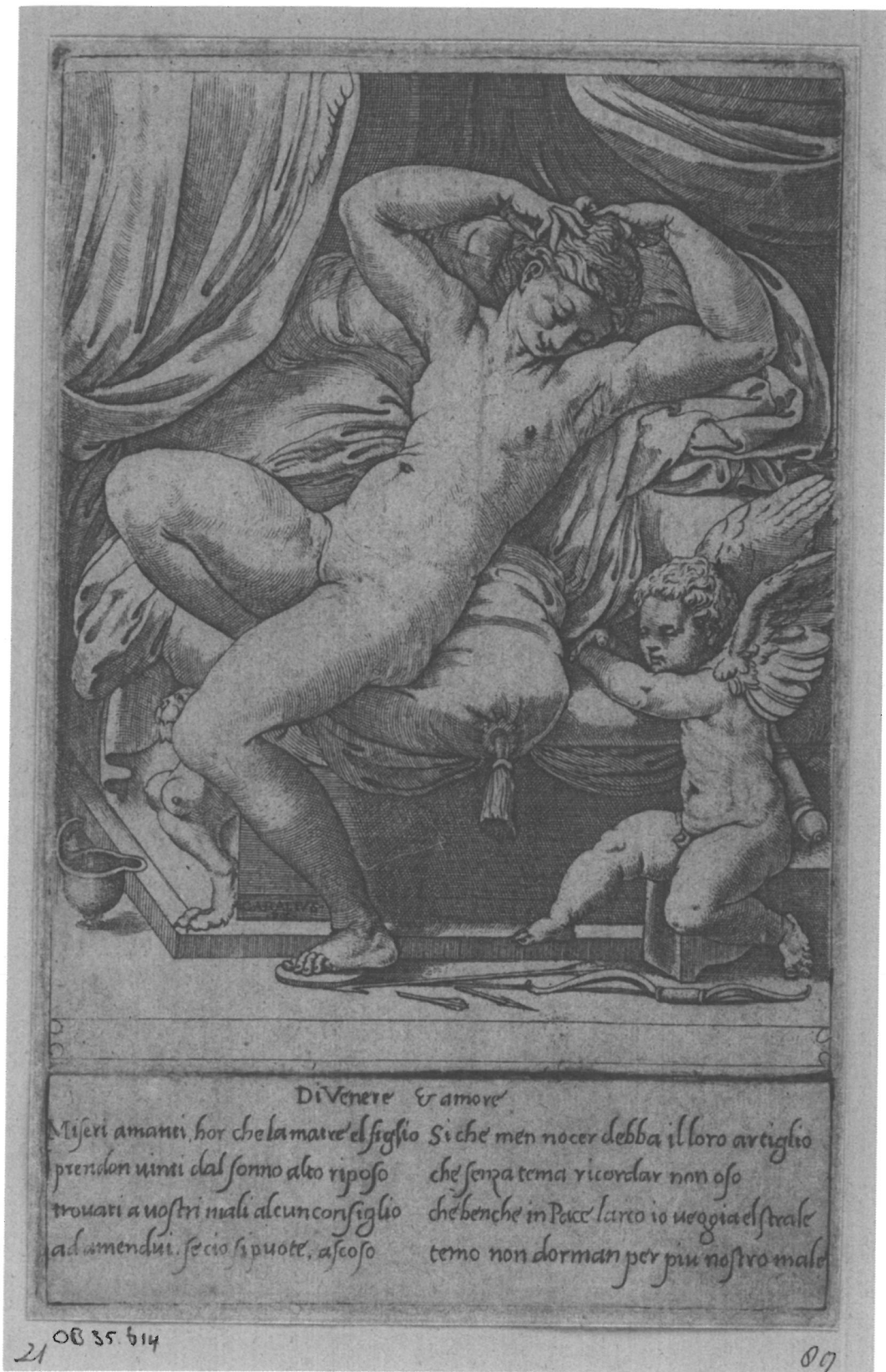


Fig.20

Di Venere et amore/ Of Venus and love

Miseri amanti, hor che la matre el figlio	Wretched lovers, now that the mother and son
prendon vinti dal sonno alto riposo ¹¹¹	defeated by sleep, are deeply resting
trovati a vostri mali alcun consiglio	find some remedy to your misfortunes
ad amendui, se cio si puote, ascoso	hidden, if this is possible, to both of them,
Si che men nocer debba il loro artiglio	thus may their claws do less harm
che senza tema ricordar non oso	and I don't dare remember them without dread
che benche in Pace l arco io veggia el strale	for even if I see their bow and arrow lie in peace
temo non dorman per piu nostro male	I am afraid that they sleep to our greater misfortune.

The closing print of the series does not represent a specific myth. Venus is depicted lying naked on her bed replicating in reverse the pose of Psyche from the previous print. Cupid is sleeping on her side, supported by a stool at the corner of the bed. His bow lies on the ground and one of his arrows is broken.

The poet addresses the reader: now that Venus and Cupid are asleep they must find a secret remedy to escape from love's fearful claws.¹¹² This is the only time that it is declared by the poet that he sees an object depicted on the image. The poet sees the bow and the arrow lie in peace ('in pace l arco io veggia el strale') and, simultaneously, the reader sees the objects in the image. Interestingly, the arrow that they see points in the direction of the name of Caraglio, his signature placed at the lower margin of the bed. This is certainly not a coincidence, and one might further consider whether it was accidental that Caraglio included his signature in three of the images where there is a marked invitation for voyeurism (figs 6, 19, 20).

The insistence on the evilness of Venus and Cupid ('mali', 'male') and the fear that they cause ('tema', 'temo') is ironic. Venus and the lion's head are smiling as if mocking the agony expressed by the verses. Multiple metaphorical meanings may be offered as an epilogue to the beholder. This is the end of a journey of sensual gratification within a dream of Venus and Cupid or just sleep overcoming the tired lovers.

¹¹¹ 'Vinto dal sonno...' ('defeated by sleep...'), Molza, *Stanze Sopra Il Ritratto Della Signora Giulia Gonzaga. Parte Seconda*, III.5 (as in n. 22), p. 264.

¹¹² 'Ben sapeva io che natural consiglio,/ Amor, contra di te già mai non valse;/ tanti lacciuol, tante impromesse false,/ tanto provato avea 'l tuo fiero artiglio.' ('I knew well that no natural remedy, Love, would ever be able to defeat you, so many traps, so many false promises, I had a long experience of your fierce claws...'), Petrarca, *Rime*, LXIX.1-4 (as in n. 26), p. 97. The image of love's claws derives from Guittone di Arezzo in Equicola (as in n. 71), p. 7.

The literary sources

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is the mythological source which inspired fourteen out of the twenty prints of the *Loves of the Gods*. Two of the remaining six prints probably derive from Virgil's *Georgics* (figs 1, 13), one from Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* (fig.19) and three are original re-interpretations of classical mythology (figs 7, 17, 20). By the 1520s all these sources were available in printed editions in Italian translation: since 1497 a medieval vulgar prose version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* had circulated;¹¹³ the Italian text of *The Golden Ass* was published as *Apulegio volgare* in 1518¹¹⁴ and Virgil's *Georgics* were printed in a loose Italian translation entitled *Libro chiamato ambitione* by Bastiano Foresi in Florence c. 1482.¹¹⁵

It has to be considered, however, that most of the myths which inspired Caraglio's engravings were a familiar cultural reference for the Renaissance literati. Apart from the ancient texts, the artists who created the *Loves of the Gods* had also access to a variety of contemporary literary sources for their own elaboration of the classical myths. By the beginning of the sixteenth century poets like Bernardo Tasso, Niccolò da Correggio and Angelo Poliziano had treated mythological subjects in Italian verse with great success.

Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione* and Petrarch's *Trionfi* were both decisive for this reawakening of interest in classical mythology and its incorporation in Renaissance lyrical poetry as early as the fourteenth century. In both Petrarch's *Triumph of Love* and in the *Amorosa Visione* mythological couples were enumerated within the description of a supernatural vision and this narrative technique had a strong impact on the organisation of visual and literary mythological themes.¹¹⁶ The narrative technique was also adopted in the *Loves of the Gods*. The independent mythological love-stories were enumerated in a sequence following in broad terms the genealogy of the classical gods within a kind of 'triumph' of Venus and Cupid, their print closing the series as a *primum mobile*.

The myth

Overall the approach to the myth in the *Loves of the Gods* is consistent with the sources. In the cases where there is no identified literary source, the invention blends existing mythological elements in a non transgressive manner which respects the essential mythological properties. In the case of figure 17, for instance, both Ceres and Vulcan are depicted with their standard attributes: the cornucopia and the blacksmith's tools next to the burning furnace. The only novelty is their love-affair. Otherwise, when a specific myth is represented, the print presupposes the identification of the mythological storyline by the

¹¹³ E. Blattner, *Holzchnittfolgen zu den Metamorphosen des Ovid: Venedig 1497 und Mainz 1545*, Munich 1998, pp. 3-6.

¹¹⁴ Haig Gaiser, J., *The Fortunes of Apuleius and the Golden Ass. A Study in Transmission and Reception*, New Jersey 2008, p. 185.

¹¹⁵ C. Kallendorf, *A Bibliography of the Early Printed Editions of Virgil 1569-1850*, New Castle 2012, p. 262

¹¹⁶ See V. Branca's introduction in Boccaccio (as in n. 18), pp. XXIII-XXVI.

beholder and, thus, freely develops the purely erotic aspect of the plot, zooming into the representation of passion. The indication of space is reduced to a generic internal or external staging and all the visual and textual components direct the attention to the nude bodies and their gestures.

The passions and psychological alterations provoked by love are the prominent message carried by the narrative in the verses. Yet the special charm of the combination of image and verse is that it permits more imaginative interpretations. The explicit erotic nature of the images -exposing genitals and even depicting sexual intercourse- activates sexual metaphors in the text and directs the reader into recognising a wealth of sexual double-entendres. While two prints employ transformation to signify the altering feelings of jealousy or contempt (figs 14, 11), six prints include a metaphor of transformation as erection (figs 1, 2, 5, 6, 15, 18) and two prints use the metaphor of transformation as loss of virginity (figs 3, 13). Then, four prints represent dynamic penetrating movement as sexual intercourse (figs. 7, 8, 14, 17) and one uses the subtle metaphor of death as orgasm (fig.10). Once the sexual meanings are activated, the effect of isolated visual puns is enhanced and the animals appearing in the image are converted into symbols of unbridled physical passion - especially the eagle, which apart from being Jupiter's attribute, may be clearly interpreted as a phallic symbol in accord with other Renaissance visual representations (fig.42).

Apart from the purely sexual metaphors, several Petrarchan tropes operate in the text, ingeniously superposing the Petrarchan discourse of love on the erotic voices of the gods and heroes of classical antiquity. In some prints this has a marked embellishing effect, as in the case of figure 2 where love is presented as a burning, all-consuming passion, or figure 7 where love's ardour is so strong that cannot be extinguished by the freezing ocean. In others, it creates humorous effects, through irony, as occurs in figure 16. The ironic use of Petrarch was not foreign to Renaissance humour. Nanna in Aretino's *Sei Giornate*, while being a nun, received a curious little present which combined lofty Petrarchan love verses with a prayer-book full of salacious erotica.¹¹⁷

It is, most probably, the Petrarchan element which lured Massari and other scholars into reading Neoplatonic ideas in the series.¹¹⁸ This interpretation should be approached with caution because the prints clearly focus on physical love with no concern for the intellect. Even the idea of virtue is humorously subverted right from the beginning, with the ironic reference to Pythagoras. Schlieker's association of the sensual love represented in the *Loves of the Gods* with the Epicurean *De Rerum Natura* is probably more befitting given Lucretius's vivid descriptions of lustful human embraces.¹¹⁹ Now, whether the Renaissance reader would have read Neoplatonic or Epicurean allegories would have depended on their background and the context of contemplation. A less philosophically-driven public would have laughed with the sexual allusions and just

¹¹⁷ Aretino (as in n. 33), p. 42-43.

¹¹⁸ Massari (as in n. 7). For Petrarch and Neoplatonism see N. A. Robb, *Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance*, London 1935, pp. 17-56.

¹¹⁹ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, IV.1037-1120 and Schlieker (as in in. 8), pp. 69-70.

superficially discussed the series, if at all, in tune with the fashionable court rhetoric on the effects of love, as portrayed in Pietro Bembo's *Gli Asolani* (1505) or Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528).¹²⁰

In addition, the elegant Italian courtiers would have recognised in the *Loves of the Gods* a spreading artistic vogue of the times: the use of mythological loves for the decoration of private relaxation and entertainment spaces. At the beginning of the Cinquecento the passions of Venus and Pan penetrated in the Vatican as decorations for Cardinal Bibbiena's bathroom.¹²¹ The Archbishop of Cyprus frescoed his garden walls with stories of satyrs and fauns.¹²² But it was the rich banker Agostino Chigi who revolutionised the art scene of Rome by commissioning Raphael and his *bottega* to paint his palace's loggia (the actual Farnesina) with the love adventures of Cupid and Psyche. There, even more eloquent sexual innuendo was tolerated, such as Giovanni da Udine's fruits which were playfully praised by Vasari for their grace and realism (fig.43).¹²³ In this last example as in the homoerotic chin-chuck gesture of Jupiter and Cupid (fig.44) sensuality was coupled with humour to increase the entertainment and, perhaps, compensate for the embarrassment provoked by the open display of sexual meaning.¹²⁴

The *Loves of the Gods* transferred to the new medium of print this light-hearted, humorous representation of the mythical passions entertaining the beholder with the display of a variety of antique fables and gratifying the senses with the exposure of exquisite nudes. In those turbulent years marked by political instability, constant wars and recurrent epidemics of plague, even a therapeutic function could be recognised in these erotic mythologies, a means of psychological release of sexual tension and fear of death.¹²⁵ Through the identification with the fictitious gods they offered a vehicle for forgetting troubles and, in a way, safely re-enacting and purging passions.

The analysis of text and image demonstrates that both Caraglio and the poet wanted their audience to cross the borders of the artistic world, dynamically engage and even identify themselves with the protagonists of the erotic pagan fables. Visually this was achieved by the nudes captured in close-up views, their bodies often cut-off by the picture's frame (figs 3, 8, 10, 11, 14, 19) or even crossing over it and interacting with the scroll (figs 6, 9, 15-17), thus blurring the borders between the real, external world of the viewer and the internal representational world. Verbally this was accomplished through a variety of techniques.

¹²⁰ On the *Courtier* and philosophy see J. Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, Rome 2004, pp. 493-509.

¹²¹ H. Dollmayr, 'Lo Stanzio da Bagno del Cardinal Bibbiena', *Archivio Storico dell'Arte*, III, 1890, p. 273.

¹²² Giovanni Battista Armenini, *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting* (Ravenna 1586), ed. and tr. E. J. Olszewski, New York 1977, p. 268.

¹²³ Vasari (as in n. 2), VI, p. 558. P. Morel, 'Priape à la Renaissance. Les Guirlandes de Giovanni da Udine à la Farnesine', *Revue de L'Art*, LXIX, 1985, p. 14.

¹²⁴ Macy (as in n. 67), p. 9.

¹²⁵ S. Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros*, New Haven and London 2004, pp. 20-21.

Two voices alternate throughout the series: the external narrator and the internal characters described in the prints. Both voices acknowledge the presence of the readers (figs 1, 20). This directly places them inside the action as synchronic fellow witnesses. The use of the present imperfect creates an effect of continuous time flow, thus, reinforcing the synchronism.¹²⁶ The exhortations to the readers to comment or reflect on what is witnessed and the abrupt changes of voice within the same octave further enhance this dynamic, theatrical effect. It is tempting to imagine the *Loves of the Gods* being recited by an intimate company of friends, entertaining themselves with the jokes and sexual allusions as they would when singing madrigals. The male viewpoint certainly prevails in the series.¹²⁷ Yet feminine voices are also represented in figures 10, 15. One wonders whether these roles would be played by courtesans.

Imitation

The question why the *Loves of the Gods* were not censored and did not shock Vasari who only praised them for their excellent execution and graceful design has been treated in detail only by Talvacchia. Her thesis that it was the gloss of mythological subject matter which made them an acceptable form of visual enjoyment is only part of the picture.¹²⁸ Talvacchia drew her conclusions by comparing the *Loves of the Gods* to *I Modi*, another erotic set of engravings executed around 1524 by Marcantonio Raimondi after Giulio Romano's drawings of a variety of positions of love-making (fig.30). According to Vasari the set provoked the wrath of the Pope who imprisoned the engraver. What is worse, the poet Pietro Aretino accompanied the images with poems and the combination resulted appalling to both eyes and ears.¹²⁹ It is true that Aretino's straightforward description of sexual intercourse and Giulio Romano's positions left no room for graceful double-entendres and learned mythological allusions. The *Modi* with its blatant realism subverted the social norm whereas the *Loves of the Gods* continued an already established practice of using erotic mythology for private entertainment.

In reality very little is known about the *Modi* and the causes of Raimondi's imprisonment. The tendency of scholarship to limit the discussion of the *Loves of the Gods* to a comparison with the *Modi* has drawn attention away from a more global analysis. It is scarcely mentioned that Anton Francesco Doni, the Florentine writer who possessed the *Loves of the Gods*, considered them to be the work of the most worthy engravers of his time. He kept the set together with highly-valued prints after Raphael such as Bandinelli's *Martyrdom of St Lawrence* and the *Massacre of the Innocents* and was proud about it.¹³⁰ As Vasari he also focused on the skilful and graceful execution of the series with no mention to the erotic content. It can thus

¹²⁶ B. A. Uspensky, 'Structural Isomorphism of Verbal and Visual Art', *Poetics*, V, 1972, pp. 5-39.

¹²⁷ Zerner (as in n. 10), p. 88.

¹²⁸ Talvacchia (as in n. 9).

¹²⁹ Vasari (as in n. 2), V, p. 418.

¹³⁰ Anton Francesco Doni, *Disegno* (Venice 1549), ed. M. Pepe, Venice 1970, p. 53, first cited in A. Petrucci, *Panorama Della Incisione Italiana. Il Cinquecento*, Rome 1964, p. 100.

be claimed that the *Loves of the Gods* were not perceived by contemporaries as a toned-down derivative of the *Modi* but rather as an independent product of excellent artistic *disegno*. This admiration is not unjustified especially when one takes into consideration that the artists and the poet of the *Loves of the Gods* followed one of the most honoured practices in Renaissance art - imitation.¹³¹

The series borrowed formal elements from the inventions of Raphael in the palace of Agostino Chigi and several of Michelangelo's poses in the Sistine Chapel. The prints also recycled compositional structures from ancient sarcophagi and antique Roman reliefs. As noted by Armenini, Perino del Vaga was especially gifted in copying the antique mythological subjects and then combining them with his own inventions so that it would be impossible to tell his sources.¹³² He, apparently, followed the same pattern in his drawings for the *Loves of the Gods*. As remarked by Vasari the merit of Caraglio was that he faithfully interpreted Perino's designs. The engravings of the series were skilfully executed to bring forth Rosso's and Perino's nudes in a manner reminiscent of antique sculpture. The lack of spatial depth and the close-up rendering of the couples made the series look like the monochrome facades of Polidoro da Caravaggio and Maturino, which imitated the linear rhythmicality of the friezes in Roman arches and the Trajan column.¹³³ The black and white medium of print proved to be ideal for imitating these chiaroscuro effects of antique sculpture and adding to the series the lustre of the venerated Roman marble friezes.

In a similar way, the twenty poems were composed with a special consideration towards the imitation and elaboration of established lyrical models. The verses were written in *ottava rima*, eight hendecasyllables rhyming abababcc. The *ottava rima* was the form used in the fourteenth-century chivalric poems and in fifteenth-century popular erotic or satirical songs such as those by the Venetian Lorenzo Giustinian. It was Pietro Bembo who raised the artistic status of the form, by publishing his *Stanze* in 1507 while working as a secretary for Pope Leo X in Rome. The *Stanze* were innovative in that they enveloped Petrarchan discourse in the popular musical form of the *ottava* in elegant vernacular Italian.¹³⁴ The poems in the *Loves of the Gods* imitated Bembo's fashionable approach to the Petrarchan sonnet. In them Petrarch's syntactical and verbal conventions were liberated from the seriousness of the sonnet and transformed into light-hearted rhythmical love themes.

The poems of the series, in spite of their sexual allusions and jocose spirit, did not imitate carnival songs or the popular burlesque poetry of Burchiello nor did they feature the provocative realism of Pietro Aretino. Furthermore, they were less coarse than the humorous poetry elaborated by Francesco Berni and his circle.

¹³¹ For an interesting approach to the Renaissance practice of imitation see I. D. Rowland, *The Culture of the High Renaissance*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 193-244.

¹³² Armenini (as in n. 122).

¹³³ For the relieflike style of these artists see Hall (as in n. 10), pp. 73-79.

¹³⁴ Bembo's inspirational model for a re-evaluation of the *ottava rima* was possibly Boccaccio's *Filostrato*. For a brief overview of the *ottava* see A. Limentani, *Struttura e Storia dell' Ottava Rima*, Florence 1961. On Bembo's *Stanze* see C. Dionisotti's introduction (as in n. 71), pp. 31-32.

When read without the accompanying image which activates the sexual metaphors, most poems appear as a light-hearted, somewhat terse imitation of the style of Petrarch and lyrical poets such as Poliziano or Bernardo Tasso. The poet is preoccupied with form, using enjambments and complex syntactical inversions in order to manipulate rhythm or alternate voices in the same octave. This livens up the inevitable paratactic syntax deriving from the hendecasyllable's autonomy and the structure of the *ottava*. Occasionally, there even emerges a familiarity with the Latin version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Latin Priapean poetry.

The style and language are coherent in all twenty poems and various verbal and syntactical schemes are repeated throughout with many interesting parallels to the vernacular poetry of Francesco Maria Molza. The Modenese poet was born in 1489 and died in 1558 from syphilis. According to his contemporaries he was victim of a prolific erotic activity which stupefied even Aretino.¹³⁵ Molza spent his formative years in the splendid Rome of Julius II and Leo X, writing mostly Latin verses on mythological love inspired by his real-life passions.¹³⁶ After a stay in Bologna in 1525 he returned to Rome and was there during the Sack. This event affected him profoundly and had an impact on his later poetry. He also appears to have encountered financial difficulties as is revealed by his attempt to sell his library to Ercole Gonzaga.¹³⁷ His situation improved only after 1529 when he entered in the service of Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici. He was a friend of all major literati of the first half of the sixteenth century, including Aretino and Bembo. And although he developed a polished Italian lyrical style, he also had close ties with the circle of Berni and even contributed to the group some burlesque *capitoli* such as the one for the salad.¹³⁸

His reputation as one of the best poets of the Cinquecento was firmly established after the 1530s so it would not be unthinkable to consider a less serious, experimental collaboration in the *Loves of the Gods*;¹³⁹ this would have served as a temporary financial aid to overcome the difficulties of the Sack and would have offered him an opportunity to anonymously practise writing in Italian verse, using a style close to that proposed by Bembo. As gleaned from Vasari, Molza was a friend of Perino del Vaga and he also seems to have known Caraglio as they are mentioned together in a letter of Pietro Aretino.¹⁴⁰ Even though, there seems to be some connection, in the absence of documentary evidence, this shall only be considered as a tentative approach to the issue of the poems' attribution with a view of attracting attention to the issue.

¹³⁵ F. Pignatti, 'Molza, Francesco Maria', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, LXXV, Rome 2011, 451-60. For Molza's *intrighi Venerei* see Aretino, *Lettere* (as in n. 3), I, pp. 296-98.

¹³⁶ F. Baiocchi, 'Sulle Poesie Latine di F. M. Molza', *Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, XVIII, 1905, pp. 12-13.

¹³⁷ D. E. Rhodes, 'A Book From The Gonzaga Library At Mantua', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVII, 1954, pp. 377-78.

¹³⁸ Berni (as in n. 98), pp. 365-72.

¹³⁹ On the 1520s as a period of experimentation for Molza see R. Fedi, 'Uno Sconosciuto Sonetto di F. M. Molza', in *Forma e Parola. Studi in Memoria di Fredi Chiappelli*, ed. D. J. Dutschke et al., Rome 1992, p. 350.

¹⁴⁰ Vasari (as in n. 2), V, p. 620. Aretino (as in n. 3).

Pictura et poesis in Renaissance prints

The anonymity of the poet in the series is not a case apart. The signature of the poet was almost never included in Renaissance prints combining image and verse. When this popular practice emerged in the second half of the Quattrocento, popular poems were engraved together with the image and the public was expected to recognise their provenance, as in the case of the *Triumphs* by Petrarch and the *Prophets and Sibyls* with verses from the *Saccre Rappresentazioni* by Feo Belcari (fig.45).¹⁴¹

In the sixteenth-century, poems started to be invented for the sole purpose of accompanying an image. The reason for the absence of the poet's signature in these prints may be two-fold: either the print was commissioned for circulation within a closed circle of clients, who already knew by word of mouth the identity of the poet; or the poets used the print as a medium for experimentation and for making ends meet while at the same time protecting their reputation and reserving their signature for books. In some cases it could have been the artist or the engraver contributing the verses, as reveals Malvasia for Giulio Bonasone's *Loves, Rages and Jealousies of Juno* (fig.46).¹⁴² In turn, some prints with simple verses could have also been invented by someone without any poetical skill at all, such as the *Ship of Fortune* or Bonasone's *Loves of the Gods* (figs 47, 48). It is hard to believe, however, that an *amateur* poet would have produced the inspired poems in the *Fury*, the *Allegory of Creation* or the *Fable of Love and Psyche* (figs 49, 50, 51). A systematic analysis of the corpus of Renaissance visual poetry is required in order to obtain a better understanding of this type of creative collaboration between poets and visual artists. This will not only provide art historians with textual evidence on how artistic images were experienced by contemporary poets. It will also throw more light on the broader practice of image-word interplay in Renaissance print.

Combining text with image was not unknown before the print. Besides illuminated manuscripts, words were also inserted in religious paintings with different functions: help with identification of the saints or commissioners; evoke a prayer or a hymn; convey speech to the sacred figures; explain the scene or simply embellish it. In secular painting words made their appearance in medieval frescoes in the form of moralising epigrammatic speech included within the *tituli* underneath legendary or historical figures or as eulogies beneath Renaissance portraits imitating the inscriptions on classical sculpture (fig.52).¹⁴³

During the sixteenth century a more dynamic kind of interplay made its appearance. Poets and other humanists started appending tablets with poems on antique statues. The trend probably started with Cardinal Oliviero Carafa who established the tradition of an annual poetry competition on the feast day of St Mark. Roman poets were invited to pin their poems on the statue of the Pasquino exhibited at the corner of his

¹⁴¹ S. Colvin and A. M. Hind, *Catalogue of Early Italian Engravings Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, 2 Vols, London 1910, I, pp. 137-38.

¹⁴² Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice: Vite De Pittori Bolognesi*, 2 Vols, Bologna 1678, Vol I, p. 79.

¹⁴³ D. A. Covi, *The Inscription In Fifteenth-Century Florentine Painting*, New York and London 1986, pp. 69-192.

palace. In the same years, the erudite circle of the Luxemburgian humanist Johann Goritz started celebrating annual gatherings during which poetry was recited and appended on the statue of the *St Anne, Virgin and Child* by Jacopo Sansovino.

There are many more instances of poets writing for sculptures in those years. As Wren Christian has shown, some of these poems reflect the Renaissance trend of the *paragone*, the contest between sculpture and poetry, with poets attempting to overcome sculpture in expressivity. Others rather evidence the power of the image compelling artists to make statues speak, to animate them.¹⁴⁴ They all show that the poets of the Cinquecento found particularly interesting the interplay between the verbal and visual art systems.

With the advent of print, illustrated books, woodcuts and engravings proved to be the ideal medium for experimenting with the numerous possibilities offered by the image-word interplay. Reality could be displayed with enhanced truth-value as a catalogue or guide with images portraying cities, costumes or historical figures. In the same way, artistic invention, the Albertian *istoria* could be enlivened in books such as the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* and visual poetry engravings such as the *Loves of the Gods*.

When one stops to consider how poetry and painting are brought together in Caraglio's prints, it becomes apparent that the revival of the Horatian formula 'ut pictura poesis'¹⁴⁵ in art theory of the second half of the sixteenth-century had been long preceded by artistic practice. Poetry was not competing here with painting for the most vivid imitation of nature. It accompanied painting as a nobler sister art, offering her authority to the image and interplaying with it in order to grant the beholder a more vivid experience of the erotic antique fables.

Under this light, it seems possible to think that Doni had acquired the *Loves of the Gods* not only for their high aesthetic value but also because they could serve as a source of inspiration for his own *pictura et poesis* experiments. In his book *I Marmi* published in Venice around 1553 his text is accompanied by woodcuts carefully fitted into the page so that the reader may simultaneously see reflected in the image what he reads. In the part called the 'Ragionamento della Poesia' his character Baccio sees a small book of images and poems and his friend Giuseppe explains to him how the words combine beautifully with the image to speak about love.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ K. Wren Christian, *Empire Without End*, New Haven and London 2010, pp. 188-95; D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, Chicago and London 1989, pp. 352-54.

¹⁴⁵ 'as is painting so is poetry'. For an overview of the question see R. W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis. The Humanistic Theory of Painting*, New York 1967.

¹⁴⁶ Anton Francesco Doni, *I Marmi*, Venice 1552, pp. 84-87.

Conclusion

The *Loves of the gods* were a valuable source of inspiration not only for writers like Doni but also for painters. Antal, Dunand and Lemarchand and more recently Koshikawa have all identified a wealth of visual citations from the *Loves of the Gods* in the paintings of Vasari, Correggio, Titian, Tintoretto and in the work of many other Northern European masters.¹⁴⁷ Rembrandt possibly also owned the *Loves of Gods*. In the 1656 inventory of his possessions a book with erotica by Raphael, Rosso, Anibale Caracci and Giulio Bonasone is mentioned as number 232.¹⁴⁸

If many questions still remain open regarding this influential series of visual poetry, it is clearer now why it was so appreciated during the Renaissance and why it is of particular interest to the art historian today. If most scholars have hitherto seen in the *Loves of the Gods* a catalogue of graceful nudes, humorous variations on themes displayed on Roman antique sarcophagi and the most recent artistic breakthroughs, I have attempted to show that the verses accompanying the images were equally refined and inventive in their imitation of established models of lyrical poetry. The explicit visual eroticism was dynamically experienced by the Renaissance beholder with sing-song *ottava rima* verses, building on favourite Petrarchan themes and pregnant with sexual double-entendres and humoristic puns. In this experience the myth was not a mere pretext for avoiding censorship but a polysemic narrative platform for *pictura et poesis* to build on. Poets and painters joined forces to engage their public in a vivid re-enactment of the bittersweet passions of love within the fictitious world of erotic pagan myth.

¹⁴⁷ F. Antal, *Classicism and Romanticism*, London 1966, pp. 55-56, 74, 84; Dunand and Lemarchand (as in n. 15), pp. 546-64, 593-698; M. Koshikawa, 'Echi delle Stampe Erotiche di Jacopo Caraglio nella Pittura Veneziana', in *L'Arte Erotica del Rinascimento* (Atti del Colloquio Internazionale Tokyo), ed. M. Koshikawa, Tokyo 2009, pp. 71-80.

¹⁴⁸ K. Clark, *Rembrandt and the Italian Renaissance*, London 1966, p. 203.

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Appendix

Index of Figures 1-20

- Fig. 1:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Saturn*, engraving after Rosso Fiorentino, I state, 214 x 135 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.609), Artstor Digital Library.
- Fig. 2:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Jupiter in flames*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, II state, 212 x 135 mm., Istituto Centrale per la Grafica, Rome, Italy (Fondo Corsini, 5923, Vol. 26 M30), Massari (as in n. 7), p. 152.
- Fig. 3:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Of Jupiter and Io*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, II state, 212 x 135 mm., Istituto Centrale per la Grafica, Rome, Italy (Fondo Corsini, 5925, Vol. 26 M30), Massari (as in n. 7), p. 155.
- Fig. 4:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Jupiter and Io transformed into a cow*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 216 x 135 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.610), Artstor Digital Library.
- Fig. 5:** *Jupiter transformed into a shepherd*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, II state, 213 x 135 mm., Istituto Centrale per la Grafica, Rome, Italy (Fondo Corsini, 5927, Vol. 26 M30), Massari (as in n. 7), p. 158.
- Fig. 6:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Jupiter transformed into a satyr*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, II state, 212 x 135 mm., Istituto Centrale per la Grafica, Rome, Italy (Fondo Corsini 5928, Vol. 26 M30), Massari (as in n. 7), p. 159.
- Fig. 7:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Neptune and Doris*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 212 x 134 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.621).
- Fig. 8:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Pluto and Proserpina*, engraving after Rosso Fiorentino, I state, 220 x 140 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.616).
- Fig. 9:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Mars speaks to Venus*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 212 x 136 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.617).
- Fig. 10:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Venus speaks over the dead Adonis*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, II state, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna (C.625 [1399]), Artstor Digital Library.
- Fig. 11:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Apollo to Daphne*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 218 x 138 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.618).
- Fig. 12:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Apollo speaks of Hyacinth*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 218 x 138 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.618).
- Fig. 13:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *The goddess Diana with the god Pan*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, II state, 205 x 132 mm., Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, Rome, Italy (Fondo Pio 1144 [34858] vol IX), Massari (as in n. 7), p. 172.
- Fig. 14:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Mercury speaks to Aglauros*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 211 x 134 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.615).
- Fig. 15:** Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Erigone*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 215 x 136 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.613).

Fig. 16: Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Hercules to Deianira*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 213 x 136 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.602), Artstor Digital Library.

Fig. 17: Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Vulcan speaks to Ceres*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 213 x 134 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.611).

Fig. 18: Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Vertumnus and Pomona*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 214 x 135 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.612).

Fig. 19: Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Cupid speaks*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 218 x 135 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.619), Artstor Digital Library.

Fig. 20: Gian Giacomo Caraglio, *Of Venus and love*, engraving after Perino del Vaga, I state, 213 x 135 mm., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (RP-P-OB-35.614).

Other figures:



Fig. 21: Master of the Die after Perino del Vaga, *A panel of ornament with a woman holding a vase in the centre*, 1532, engraving, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 22: Justinianus (?), *The Loves of Janus*, c. 1550, engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.
Dunand and Lemarchand (as in n. 15), p. 481.



Fig. 23: *Bacchic Symposium 'Ara Grimani'*. *Maenad and Satyr on bed and another satyr with raised arm*, 2nd century BC, late Hellenistic relief, Archaeological Museum Venice.
Bober and Rubinstein (as in n. 110), p. 137.



Fig. 24: Giovanni Antonio Bazzi (known as Sodoma), *The Marriage of Alexander the Great and Roxana* (detail), 1519, fresco, Villa Farnesina, Rome.

C. L. Frommel (ed.), *The Villa Farnesina in Rome*, 2 Vols, Modena 2003, I, p. 232.



Fig. 25: Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Ignudo*, 1508-1512, fresco, Sistine Chapel ceiling, Vatican, Rome.

Artstor Digital Library (photographed before the 1980-1990 restoration).



Fig. 26: Pierre Milan-René Boyvin, *Giove in Pastore*, c. 1550, engraving after Gian Giacomo Caraglio after Perino del Vaga, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. Dunand and Lemarchand (as in n. 15), p. 449.

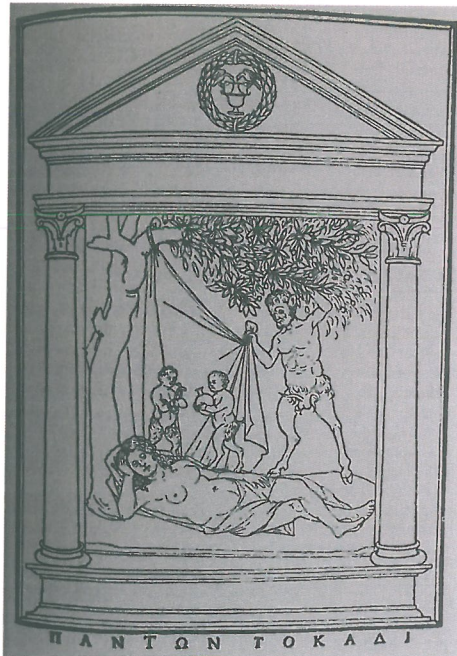


Fig. 27: ΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΤΟΚΑΙ, 1499, woodcut illustration from the book *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. Colonna (as in n. 44), p. 73.



Fig. 28: *Sleeping Ariadne*, 2nd century AD, Roman Statue, Galleria delle Statue, Vatican, Rome.
Bober and Rubinstein (as in n. 110), p. 125.

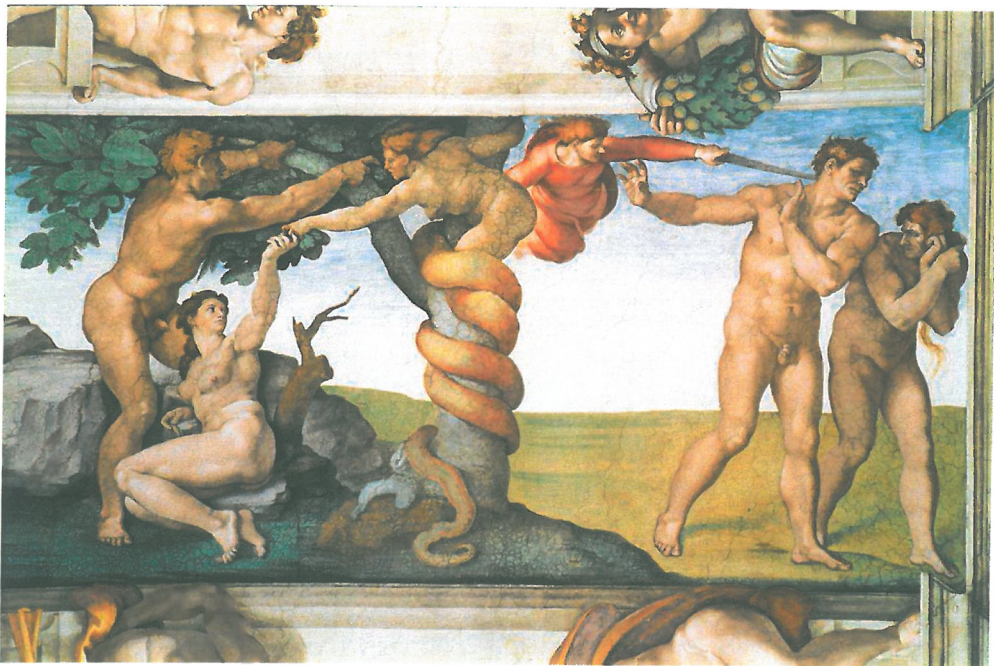


Fig. 29: Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve*, 1508-1512, fresco, Sistine Chapel ceiling, Vatican, Rome (photo after the 1980-1990 restoration).

Artstor Digital Library.

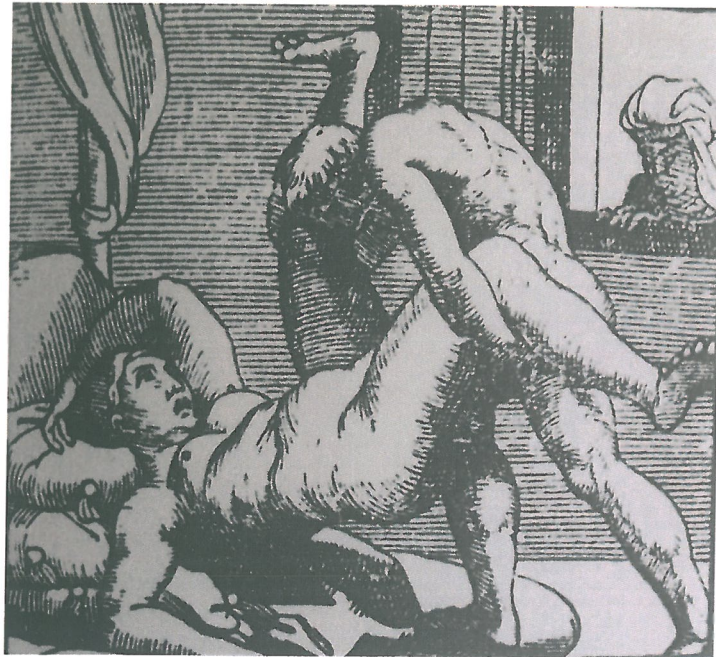


Fig. 30: *I Modi* (position 11), 1527-1550, woodcut after Marcantonio Raimondi after Giulio Romano, private collection, Geneva.

Talvacchia (as in n. 9), p. 37.



Fig. 31: Doidalsas of Bithynia, *Crouching Venus*, Roman copy of original of 3rd century BC, Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome.

Artstor Digital Library.



Fig. 32: Giotto di Bondone, *Lamentation Over the Dead Christ*, 1303-1306, fresco, Arena Chapel, Padua.
Artstor Digital Library.



Fig. 33: Anonymous Italian, *Allegory on Copulation*, fourth quarter of fifteenth century, engraved copper plate, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

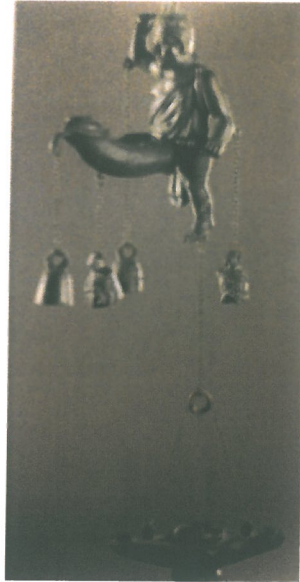


Fig. 34: Lantern, second half of first century AD, bronze, Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei, Pompey. O. Casazza and R. Gennaioli, *Mythologica et Erotica*, exhib. cat. (Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti Florence), Livorno 2005, p. 217.



Fig. 35: Raphael and workshop, *Venus shows Psyche to Cupid*, detail from the vault of the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche, 1518, fresco, Villa Farnesina, Rome.

C. L. Frommel (ed.), *The Villa Farnesina in Rome*, 2 Vols, Modena 2003, I, p. 65.

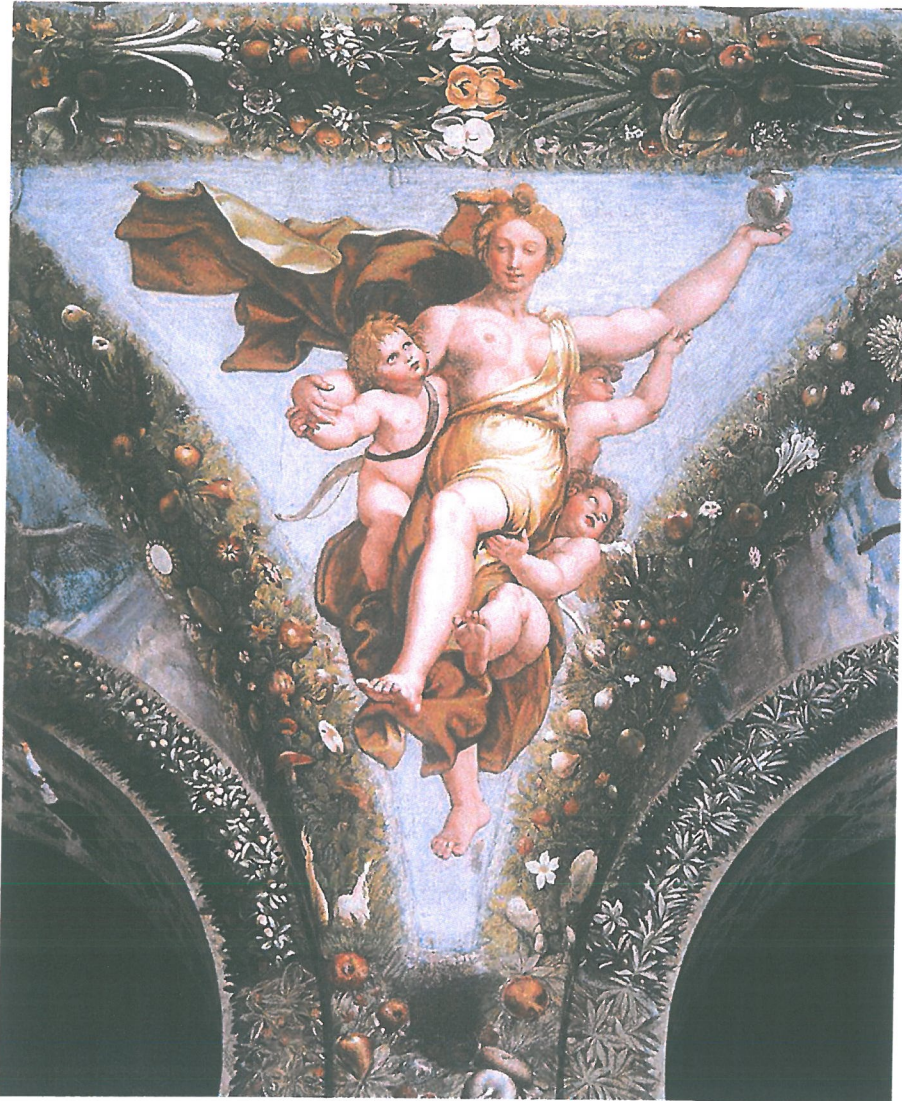


Fig. 36: Raphael and workshop, *Psyche*, detail from the vault of the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche, 1518, fresco, Villa Farnesina, Rome.

Artstor Digital Library.

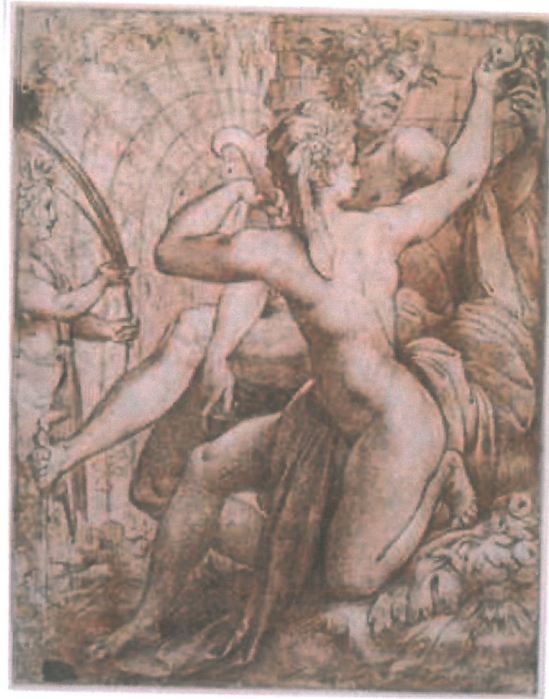


Fig. 37: Perino del Vaga, *Vertumnus and Pomona*, c. 1527, drawing, red chalk with lines indented, The British Museum, London.



Fig. 38: Enea Vico, *Birth of Adonis*, 1544, engraving after Francesco Salviati, Istituto Centrale per la Grafica, Rome.

Massari (as in n. 7), p. 275.

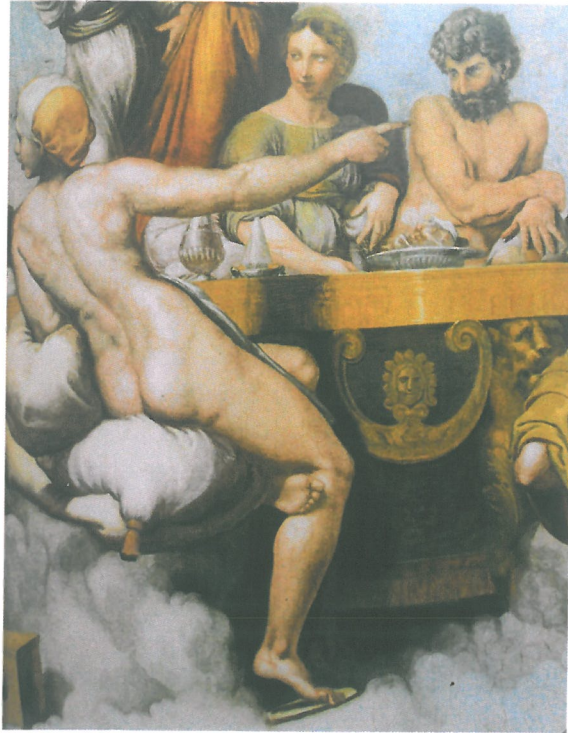


Fig. 39: Raphael and workshop, *The Banquet of Gods*, c. 1516-1517, fresco detail, Villa Farnesina, Rome.
R. Varoli-Piazza, *Raffaello. La Loggia di Amore e Psiche alla Farnesina*, Rome and Milan 2002, p. 289.



Fig. 40: Anonymous, *Psyche*, first half of the 15th century, drawing, pen and ink over graphite, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.
Talvacchia (as in n. 9), p. 137.



Fig. 41: *Bed of Polycletus*, 16th-century copy, Roman relief with Hellenistic figure types, private collection (formerly J. Hewitt)

Bober and Rubinstein (as in n.110), p. 139.

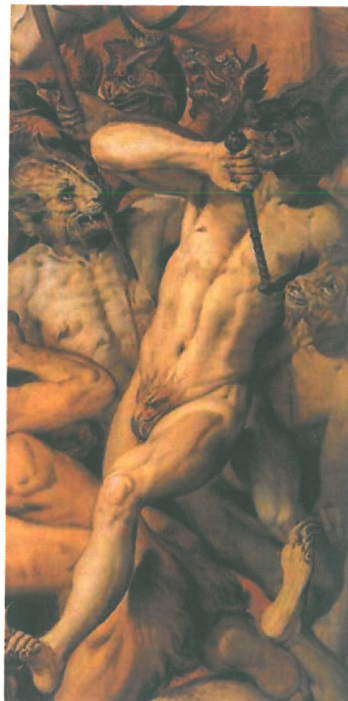


Fig. 42: Frans Floris, *The Fall of the Rebellious Angels* (detail), 1554, oil on panel, Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp.

Web Gallery of Art



Fig. 43: Raphael and workshop, *Fruit Garland*, detail from the vault of the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche, 1518, Villa Farnesina, Rome, Italy.
Artstor Digital Library.



Fig. 44: Raphael and workshop, *Jupiter and Cupid*, detail from the vault of the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche, 1518, Villa Farnesina, Rome, Italy.
Artstor Digital Library .



Fig. 45: Francesco Rosselli after Baccio Baldini, *The Prophet Haggai*, 1480-90, engraving, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

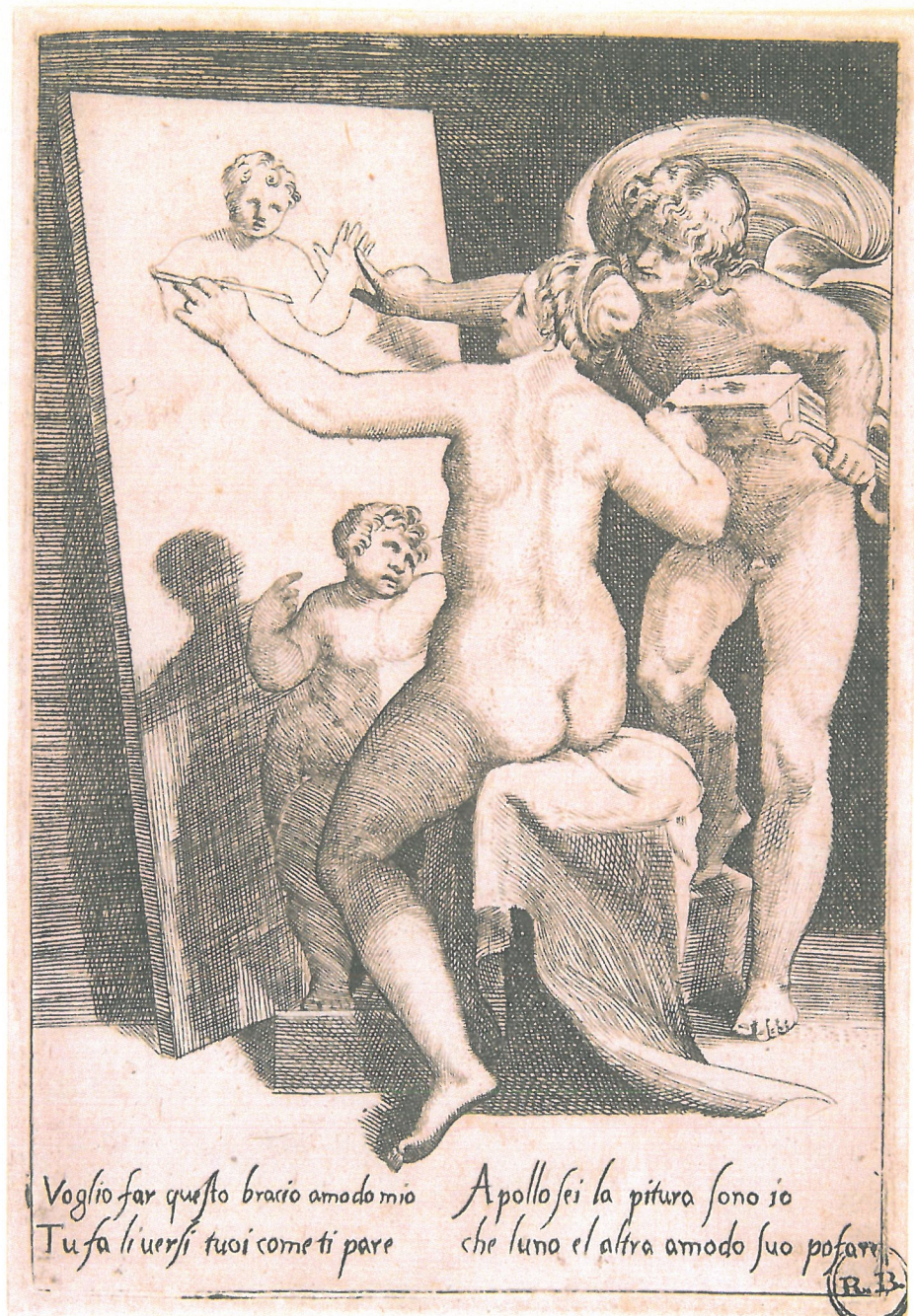


Fig. 46: Giulio Bonasone, *Loves, Rages and Jealousies of Juno. Triumph of Juno*, 1531-1576, engraving, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 47: Anonymous Florentine, *The Ship of Fortune*, 1460-1470, engraving,
The British Museum, London.

(‘i mi laso portare alla fortuna sperando alfin daver buona ventura’)



Voglio far questo braccio amodo mio
Tu fa li uersi tuoi come ti pare

Apollo sei la pitura sono io
che luno el altra amodo suo posare

Fig. 48: Giulio Bonasone, *Loves of the Gods. Apollo and Allegory of Painting*, 1531-1560, engraving, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 49: Gian Giacomo Caraglio after Rosso Fiorentino, *The Fury*, ca. 1524, engraving, The British Museum London.



Fig. 50: Enea Vico, *Allegory of Creation*, ca. 1540, engraving, Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, Rome. Massari (as in n. 7), p. 271.



Fig. 51: Master of the Die after Michel Coxie, *The Fable of Cupid and Psyche*. Cupid airborne gleeing from Psyche, 1530-1560, engraving, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

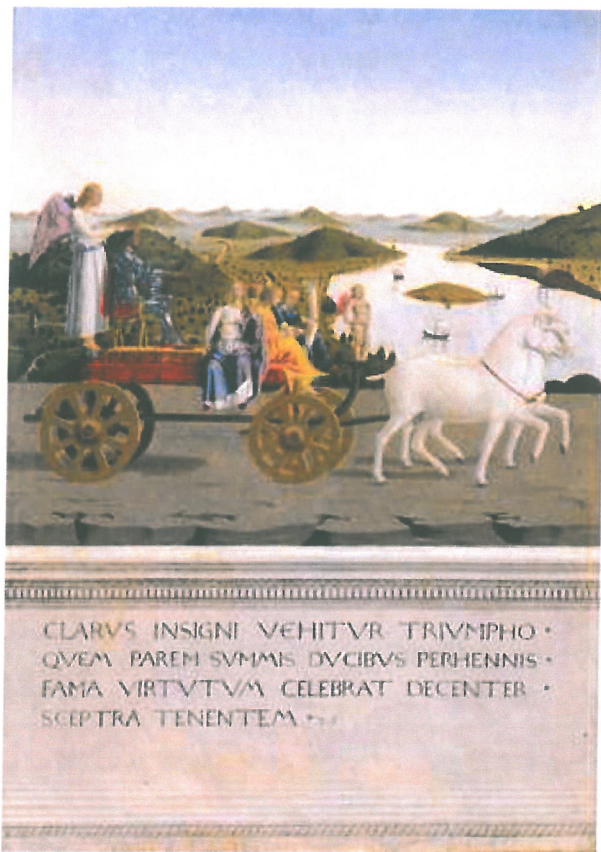


Fig. 52: Piero della Francesca, *Triumph of Federico da Motefeltro and of Battista Sforza*, 1465-66, tempera on panel, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.