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ANIMALS AS DISGUISED SYMBOLS IN RENAISSANCE ART

By

SIMONA COHEN

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BRILL

Animals as Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art

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- Chapter Five: The Enigma of Carpaccio's Venetian Ladies (published *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, April 2005, 150–184).
- Chapter Six. Animals in the Paintings of Titian: A Key to Hidden Meanings (published *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. CXXXV, 1998, 193–213).
- Chapter Seven. Titian's London Allegory and the Three Beasts of his 'Selva Oscura' (published *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2000, 46–69).
- Chapter Nine. Andrea del Sarto's 'Madonna of the Harpies' and the Human-Animal Hybrid in the Renaissance (published *Apollo*, July, 2004, 38–45).
- Chapter Ten. The Ambivalent Scorpio in Bronzino's London Allegory (published *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. CXXXV, 2000, 171–188).

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Hier beghīt die vigheli Dilexi

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den mi Ic vant bedruckenisse

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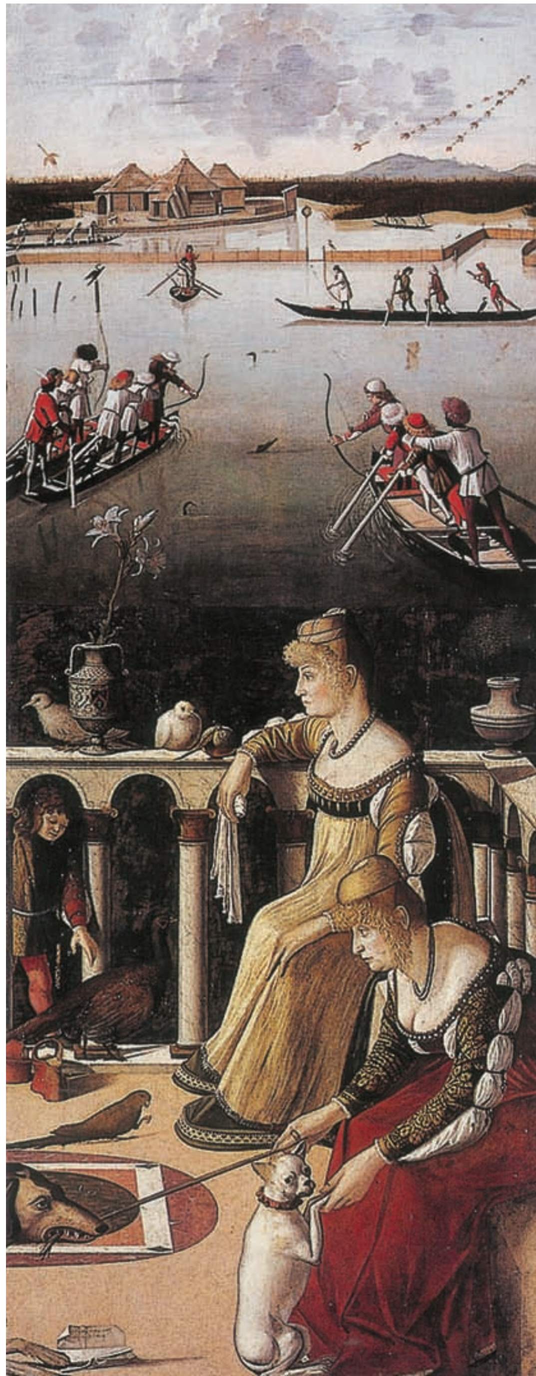

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between medieval animal symbolism and the iconography of animals in the Renaissance has scarcely been studied. A glance at the bibliography dealing with western animal iconography and its literary sources, published roughly in the last fifty years, reveals an abundance of studies focused on the medieval period and a relative scarcity of equivalent works devoted to the Renaissance. Literature on bestiaries and the bestiary tradition, studies on animals in medieval literature and art, and research on the implications of the man-beast relationship, concentrate primarily on the medieval period, ignoring the implications of subsequent continuity or change. Are we to conclude that the bestiary moralizations, as well as symbolic animal depictions in medieval sculpture, allegorical frescoes, and manuscript illuminations, had no following after the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? Judging from the lack of related studies and the sporadic references in the literature, there appears to be a tacit assumption among most scholars that Renaissance artists related to animal depictions as part of the new naturalistic perception of nature and rejected the symbolic and didactic function assigned to them for over a millennium by Christian tradition.

It is my aim to demonstrate that Renaissance artists, particularly in Italy, perpetuated the symbolic contexts of ancient and medieval animal symbolism, and to illustrate how this was disguised under the veil of genre, religious or mythological narrative and, so-called, scientific naturalism. As repeatedly demonstrated in the following case studies, this implies a reading on more than one level which, in some cases, accrues an inherent conceptual ambivalence. Basically, my contention is that animals continued to act as metaphors and similes and subtly provided the key to profound levels of meaning, which are not superficially evident to the viewer.

Traditional assumptions regarding a fundamental divide between medieval and Renaissance culture have obscured many aspects of conceptual and moral conservatism as well as deliberate archaisms, which find expression in the persistence of medieval iconography after 1400. Although the theme of continuity has increasingly occupied some of the more focused art-historical studies in the last decades, we still

lack explicit arguments that question or dispute the basic premises.[1] It appears that our perceptions of the Renaissance are influenced by assumptions and generalizations that once served to define it in terms of early modern history and characterized its art as a kind of revolutionary breakthrough. Thus we should expect to discover in art expressions of an increasingly secular as opposed to religious cultural orientation, homocentric as opposed to theocentric conceptions, and innovations of empirical science replacing authoritarian encyclopedic knowledge. In fact, tendencies towards secularity, homocentrism and empiricism have traditionally been underlined in Renaissance art-historical literature.

These traditional assumptions have often excluded art-historians from the ongoing historiographical debate regarding questions of medieval tradition versus innovation in Renaissance culture. Among the scholars who sought to define the relation of the Renaissance to the Middle Ages was Wallace K. Ferguson, who declared that 'The historians who followed in Burkhardt's footsteps must have been very happy men. They knew what the Renaissance was'.[2] Ferguson opposed those historians specializing in other fields, as he put it, 'who take the various interpretations of the renaissance more or less for granted and have been unconsciously rather than consciously influenced by them'.[3] Although more than half a century has passed since this observation, the old assumptions still pervade much of our art-historical scholarship.[4]

In 1969 Ernst Gombrich published his brilliant criticism of the Hegelian theory of *Zeitgeist* (world spirit) and the Burckhardtian meth-

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[1] For an interesting discussion of recent literature on the subject of religious versus secularizing and paganizing interpretations of the Renaissance as reflected in art, see Alexander Nagel's book review of Jörg Traeger, *Renaissance und Religion: Die Kunst des Glaubens im Zeitalter Raphaels*, *Art Bulletin*, vol. LXXXII, no. 4, Dec. 2000, 733–77.

[2] W.K. Ferguson, "The Reinterpretations of the Renaissance," in K.H. Dannenfeldt (ed.), *The Reniassance, Basic Interpretations*, Lexington, Mass., Toronto, London, 1974, 200–214, esp. 200. The reference is to Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, Basel, 1860; translated as *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, London, 1958. See also: W.K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation*, Boston, 1948 and "The Interpretation of the Renaissance," in P.O. Kristeller & P.P. Weiner (eds.), *Renaissance Essays*, Rochester, 1992, 61–73. For a medievalist approach, see Walter Ullmann, "The medieval Origins of the Renaissance," in *The Renaissance, Essays in Interpretation*, London & New York, 1982, 33–82.

[3] Ferguson, 1974 (as above), 201.

[4] C.M. Soussloff, in J. Woolfson (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Renaissance Historiography*, Chippenham and Eastbourne, 2005, 145, wrote: "unlike other disciplines formerly invoked by the term 'Renaissance studies', art history has not found a letting go of an extreme idea of the Renaissance to be particularly advantageous".

odology that postulated 'the unity of all manifestations of civilization'.[5] Gombrich, reassessing the aim of the cultural historian, suggested that 'he will not deny that the success of certain styles may be symptomatic of changing attitudes, but he will resist the temptation to use changing styles and changing fashions as indicators of profound psychological changes.[6] Gombrich called for the study of the individual and particular to replace 'the study of structures and patterns which is rarely free of Hegelian holism'.[7]

Aesthetic formalism has also been a factor in distancing Renaissance art studies from such historical debates. A recent statement that 'the Renaissance assumes a unity in the visual culture of the period, one that is often said to transcend specific geographical, historical, and linguistic boundaries in favor of stylistic coherencies, usually called formalistic',[8] exemplifies the over-emphasis on formal or stylistic methodology that has often isolated art-historical studies from historical, socio-economic, theological and other perspectives, denying the multiplicity of associations and contexts.[9]

Opposition to stereotyped interpretations of the Renaissance was set forth by some early critics, who considered the fifteenth century Renaissance of Classical Antiquity to be part of a recurrent cultural phenomenon. This stand was methodically refuted by Erwin Panofsky in his *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*.[10] Panofsky related issues of the literary and historically oriented Renaissance debate to interpretations of visual art and underlined essential criteria for distinguishing between medieval and Renaissance artistic approaches to antiquity. The studies by Panofsky and his colleagues of the German school were invaluable in elucidating the nature and innovations of Renaissance Classicism, both from a formal and iconographical point of view, but this inadvertently contributed to the undermining of medieval origins and recognition of their survival in Renaissance culture.

The tenacity of the traditional conceptions of Renaissance art may also be associated with the inextricable link that has bound the discipline

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[5] E.H. Gombrich, *In Search of Cultural History*, Oxford (1969, 1974), 1978.

[6] Gombrich (as above), 37.

[7] *Ibid*., 46.

[8] Soussloff (as in note 4), 143.

[9] See Heinrich Wölfflin, *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance*, trans. by P. & L. Murray, London, 1952. Wölfflin combined the Hegelian approach with a formalistic method.

[10] E. Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, Stockholm, 1960.

of Renaissance art-history to its early historiography. Burkhardt's conception of Renaissance art was founded on the Italian sources of the period, beginning with the proto-Renaissance perceptions of cultural history and followed by humanistic concepts of art and the artist elaborated in fifteenth century writings.[11] But his main source was Vasari's *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (1550 & 1568), in which the traditional concept of *rinascita* was applied to a vision of artistic progress, conceived as part of a cyclic historical process involving decline and death (i.e. of the 'dark ages') and rebirth.[12]

How are these conceptions of artistic progress and innovation to be reconciled with the more recent findings of scholarly studies that reveal anachronistic or retrospective attitudes and medieval conservatism camouflaged beneath innovative Renaissance forms? Gombrich's caution against the temptation to use changing styles and changing fashions as indicators of profound psychological changes is particularly relevant here. There are many cases where artistic form has undergone change while content, or so it appears, has not. It is not a question of regressive tendencies, mental conservatism, or anachronistic attitudes, that linger on alongside the innovations and eventually lose their *raison d'être*. On the contrary, we can perceive highly conservative themes and attitudes concealed beneath the most innovative formal and technical manifestations of Renaissance art. Furthermore, methods of disguising meanings, representing a deliberate challenge to the contemporary Renaissance viewer, have often misled even the more sophisticated modern viewer in his interpretations.

D.C. Allen's comprehensive work on the rediscovery of ancient and medieval allegorical interpretations in the Renaissance (1970), and Leonard Barkan's study of the pagan metamorphosis in the artistic forms of the Middle Ages and Renaissance (1986), both demonstrate

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[11] Regarding the contribution of Burckhardt and other 19th century historians, and their influence on subsequent Renaissance historiography, see D. Hay, "Historians and the Renaissance during the Last Twenty-Five Years," in his *Renaissance Essays*, London & Ronceverte, 1988, 103–32; J.B. Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing*, Oxford, 1994 and Wolfson (as in note 4).

[12] G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccelenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. by R. Bettarini & P. Barocchi, Florence, 1966–87, 8 vols. Gombrich (as in note 5), 18, notes that Burckhardt (*Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 3, iv, 30) collected 700 excerpts from Vasari's *Lives*. For an excellent study of the concepts of *renovatio*, revival and rebirth in Italian literature, see M.L. McLaughlin, "Humanistic concepts of renaissance and middle ages in the tre- and quattrocento," *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, March 1988, 131–42.

the continuing Renaissance preoccupation with occult truths that are concealed in myth.[13] Barkan emphasized that 'some of the intellectual achievements in the Renaissance revival of paganism look remarkably like their medieval equivalents' and recognized that 'where the works of Renaissance paganism do not resemble their precursors, they usually represent the fulfillment of intellectual possibilities that were born in the millennium between Augustine and the *Ovid moralisé*'.[14]

The medieval expositions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were instrumental in introducing to the Renaissance exegetical methods that sanction several levels of meaning.[15] These were similar to the conventional four levels defined for exegesis, generally comprising: a natural, euhemeristic or scientific meaning; theological meanings relating to Christ; theological meanings relating to salvation or damnation; and moralistic or tropological meaning. The methods were transmitted and popularized during the Renaissance through printings of these medieval texts augmented by new commentaries.[16] The multiplicity of interpretations, resulting in contradictions, ambiguities, and inherent moralistic ambivalence, had far-reaching implications not only for mythological illustrations, for they affected the entire approach to Renaissance allegorical depiction. It will be demonstrated that two aspects of the above, the systematic use of multiple meanings, and the preservation of traditional connotations in new, often veiled, forms, are fundamental to animal iconography in Renaissance art. Consequently, any reliable method of analysis should take both elements into account.

Among the more recent studies to demonstrate the perpetuation of animal-related medieval iconography in the Renaissance is Joanne S. Norman's exposition of the *psychomachia* tradition that continued, primarily in manuscripts, prints and tapestries, well into the fifteenth century, and her study of the fifteenth and sixteenth century procession

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[13] D.C. Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance*, Baltimore & London, 1970 and L. Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism*, New Haven & London, 1986.

[14] Barkan (as above), 17.

[15] E.G. Arnulf d'Orleans (13th c.), the anonymous *Ovid moralisé*, the *Ovidius moralizatus* of Pierre Besuire (completed ca.1340–50 and first published 1489) and the *Ovidio metamorphoseos vulgare* of Giovanni di Bonsignore (14th c., first published 1497). See Allen (as in note 13), ch. VII, 163–200.

[16] Eg. the *Ovidius metamorphoseos* of Raffaello Regio (first published 1493), *Le metamorphosi* by Niccolo di Agostino (first published 1533) and *Le trasformazioni* of Lodovico Dolce (first published 1555). For discussions and bibliography on the various Ovid commentaries and their influence on Renaissance art, see Chapter Six.

of deadly sins that closely parallels the *Etymachia* allegory with its retrospective iconography of moralistic personifications mounted on animals.[17] This material was interpreted in the context of lay spirituality, but the perpetuation of medieval doctrinal and moralistic interpretation was equally important in mythological contexts. Jane C. Nash's, in her study of Titian's mythological paintings for Philip II, demonstrates how the medieval exegetic commentaries on Ovid, with their multiple and often ambivalent meanings, were visually interpreted.[18] The studies by Norman and Nash are especially interesting for our discussion as they provide evidence of medieval animal symbolism and methods of interpreting animals that had significant implications for Renaissance iconography.

A challenging approach to the relevant debates on Renaissance iconography has been that of Bernard Aikema, in his recent book on Jacopo Bassano. Opposing the tendency to regard Jacopo merely as a provincial painter of realistic genre, Aikema interpreted his animal depictions, as well as elements of rural landscape and low-life, in moralistic terms of contemporary spirituality and evangelism. In addressing the broader context, he suggested that 'even the faithful depiction of nature in the art of the quattro- and cinquecento, could be tied to this religious movement', which would call for a revised explanation of why Renaissance art developed as it did.[19] The questions called forth by this study relate, in my opinion, to the retrospective aspects of sixteenth century spiritualism in general, and its artistic expressions in particular. In other words, were medieval sources and attitudes significant? And, more specifically, can we explain what appears to be the deliberate

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[17] J.S. Norman, *Metamorphosis of an Allegory. The Iconography of the Psychomachia in Medieval Art*, New York, 1988 and "Lay Patronage and the Popular Iconography of the Seven Deadly Sins," in C.G. Fisher & K.L. Scott (eds.), *Art into Life, Collected Papers from the Kresge Art Museum Medieval Symposium*, East Landsing, Michigen, 1995, 213–36. The literary work called the *Psychomachia*, literally "battle of the soul", was written by Prudentius in the 4th c. and profoundly influenced the allegorical depiction of man's moral conflict as a battle between personified virtues and vices. A later variant of the *Psychomachia*, the *Etymachia*, also known as *De septem apparitoribus* (ca.1332) is an anonymous preacher's handbook that appeared with illustrations, both independently and as part of an encyclopedic work called the *Lumen animae*, in manuscripts and four printed editions. The *Etymachia* illustrators depicted the sins and virtues as knights mounted on symbolic animals with additional animal attributes on their armor.

[18] J.C. Nash, *Veiled Images, Titian's Mythological Paintings for Philip II*, Philadelphia, London & Toronto, 1985.

[19] B. Aikema, *Jacopo Bassano and His Public, Moralizing Pictures in an Age of reform ca.1535–1600* Princeton, 1996, 59.

anachronism of this moralistic animal iconography? These and other related issues will be studied in the following pages from various viewpoints, sometimes with the detailed scrutiny of the magnifying glass, or else from a distance that permits a broader perspective, hopefully to reveal that which is disguised.

My first chapter, reviewing medieval sources of symbolic animal imagery in the Renaissance, will be followed by chapters focusing on animal symbolism in selected works of the period.

PART ONE

THE HERITAGE AND SOURCES

CHAPTER ONE

MEDIEVAL SOURCES OF RENAISSANCE ANIMAL SYMBOLISM

Concealing the Tracks: The Physiologus *and Bestiary Tradition*

When did animals first appear in the context of Christian literary and artistic symbolism? How were they interpreted in theological or moralistic allegories? Was there a continuous tradition that linked the early sources to Renaissance manifestations of disguised animal symbolism?

Before tackling the broader issues called forth by these questions, let us examine a case of the symbolic lion in the Renaissance. In an early sixteenth century printed book entitled *Libellus de natura animalium* (On the Nature of Animals), we learn that 'The lion when it comes down from the high mountains and feels that it is pursued by a hunter, wipes out its tracks with its tail—so God when he descended from heaven to earth, that is to the Virgin Mary, hid his tracks lest the devil should recognize his appearance'.[1] This description of the lion's behavior and the anagogical interpretation thereof originated over a thousand years before in a Greek compilation called the *Physiologus*, which dealt in a similar manner with other imaginative leonine characteristics. The two versions are amazingly alike, with one salient exception. The *Physiologus* (ca.4th c.) claims that the lion erased his foot-prints with his tail as 'Our Savior, the lion of the tribe of Judah, concealed all traces of His Godhead, when He descended to the earth and entered into the womb of the Virgin Mary'.[2] There is no sign here of the devil, whose presence became significant in later medieval exegesis. This typical example illustrates the tenacity of a literary tradition that perpetuated a way of perceiving animals in terms of established similes and metaphors,

[1] *Libellus de natura animalium*, Vincenzo Berruerio, Mondovi, 1508; reproduced in facsimile with an introduction by J.I. Davis, London, 1958.

[2] Translation by E.P. Evans, *Animal Symbolism in Ecclesiastical Architecture*, London, 1896, 81.

but nevertheless permitted the subtle transformations of meaning that reflected contemporary attitudes and concepts.

The *Physiologus* and bestiary tradition, which exerted the greatest influence on the development of animal symbolism in western culture, was basically a medieval phenomenon. The Greek *Physiologus*, which probably originated in fourth century Alexandria, is thought to have originally contained between thirty-six to forty-nine chapters, each one devoted to a real or imaginary creature, including beasts, birds, fish, reptiles and insects. The text, of purely didactic orientation, concentrated upon religious moralizations, based primarily on fanciful descriptions and fictive tales. Each of the creatures was associated either with a virtue or a vice, often supported by a biblical passage and some, such as the lion, became metaphors of Christ or Christological dogma.[3] The earliest extant miniatures illustrating manuscripts of the Greek *Physiologus*, dating from the ninth and eleventh centuries, demonstrate the importance of these precedents, of classical derivation, for subsequent symbolic animal imagery.[4] In the fifth century the *Physiologus* was translated into Near Eastern languages, such as Ethiopic, Syriac, and Armenian. Although a Latin translation probably existed by the late fourth or early fifth century, the oldest extant Latin *Physiologus* manuscripts date from the eighth century.[5]

Bestiaries were produced throughout Western Europe from the middle of the twelfth century, reaching a peak in the thirteenth and decreasing their numbers in the fourteenth century.[6] The number of chapters

[3] For discussions of the *Physiologus* and its influence on bestiaries, see R. Baxter, *Bestiaries and their users in the Middle Ages*, London, 1998, esp. 28–82 and F. McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, Chapel Hill, 1962, 15–44.

[4] The earliest extant illustrated copies of the Latin *Physiologus* are Bern, Stadtbibliothek 318 (9th c.) and Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale 10066–77 (10th c.). For a facsimile of Bern 318, see *Physiologus Bernensis*, ed. C. von Steiger and O. Homburger, Basil, 1964. For bibliography, see D. Hassig (ed.), *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life and Literature*, New York, 1999, 196, n.4.

[5] Bern 233 and Bern 611, Stadtbibliothek. Bern 233 is considered to contain the basic Latin text from which most subsequent Latin bestiaries and translations derived.

[6] Among the major sources and studies of the *Physiologus* and bestiaries, see Baxter (as in note 3); A. Carrega & P. Navone (eds.), *Le proprietà degli animali*, Genova, 1983; F.J. Carmody (ed.), *Physiologus Latinus: éditions prélimiaires, versio B*, Paris, 1939 and *Physiologus Latinus versio Y*, Berkeley, 1944; F.J. Carmody (trans.), *Physiologus: The Very Ancient Book of Beasts, Plants and Stones*, San Francisco, 1953; W.B. Clark & M.T. McMunn (eds.), *Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages: The Bestiary and its Legacy*, Philadelphia, 1989; M.J. Curley (trans. & intro.), *Physiologus*, Austin & London, 1979; D. Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries; Text, Image, Ideology*, Cambridge, 1995; McCulloch (as in note 28); F. Maspero & A. Granato,

and creatures gradually increased, encompassing new material and structural changes derived, directly or indirectly, from classical sources and medieval writings, such as Isidore de Seville's *Etymologiae* (7th c.), Rabanus Maurus's *De universo* (8th c.) and Hugh de Fouilloy's *Aviarium* (ca.1132–1152). Later bestiaries adopted material from the *Megacosmos* by Bernard Silvestris and one fifteenth century version is based on *De proprietatibus rerum* by Bartholomeus Anglicus (13th c.).[7]

About thirty percent of the bestiaries in medieval libraries were associated with texts on virtues and vices, penance and heresy, and almost the same proportion were associated with texts of sermons and lives of saints. These combinations may be taken as evidence that bestiaries were used by preachers in the preparation of sermons.[8] The increased production of vernacular bestiaries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and certain modifications in the texts that are linked to oral culture, have been interpreted in terms of their adaptation to the needs of popular liturgy as well as their widespread popularity in general. Among the popular French vernacular bestiaries, based on the Latin prototypes, were those by Philippe de Thaon (ca.1211), Gervaise (early 13th c.), Pierre de Beauvais (before 1218) and Guillaume le Clerc's *Bestiaire Divin* (ca.1210), to which may be added Richard de Fournival's *Bestiaire d'Amour* (mid 1250s) that represents a divergent secular tradition allied to love poetry.[9] Several of the French bestiaries mentioned above

Bestiario medievale, Casale Monferrato, 1999; L. Morini (ed.), *Bestiari medievali*, Parma, 1987, Torino, 1999; F. Sbordone (ed.), *Physiologus*, Milan, 1936.

[7] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, Migne, *P.L.*82, 9–728; Rabanus Maurus, *Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturae*, Migne, *P.L.*112, 849–1088; Hugh of Fouilloy, *De avibus*, Migne, *P.L.*177, 14–55; *The Medieval Book of birds: Hugh of Fouilloy's Aviarium*, ed. & trans. W.B. Clark, Binghamton, N.Y., 1992; Bernardus Silvestis, *The Cosmographia of Bernardus Silvestris*, trans. W. Wetherbee, New York, 1990; Bartholomew the Englishman, *On the Properties of Things*, 2 vols., trans. J. Trevisa, ed. M.C. Seymour et al., Oxford, 1975. See review by Hassig (as in note 21), 1–8.

[8] Baxter (as in note 3), 188–94, 211–13.

[9] See E. Walberg (ed.), *Le Bestiaire de Philippe de Thaün*, Paris & Lund, 1900; P. Meyer (ed.), "Le Bestiaire de Gervaise", *Romania*, I, 1872, 42–43; C. Hippeau (ed.), Guillaume Le Clerc, *Le Bestiaire*, 1852, Geneva, 1970; R. Reinsch (ed.), *Le Bestiaire, Das Thierbuch des normannischen Dicters Guillaume Le Clerc*, Leipzig, 1892; G.C. Druce, *The Bestiary of Guillaume le Clerc*, 1936; P. Meyer, "Les Bestiaires," *Histoires littéraire de la France*, XXXIV, 1914, 381–90. Among the modern editions of Richard de Fournival, see *Li Bestiaires d'amours di Maistre Richard de Fornival e li reponse du bestiaire*, a cura di Cesare Segre, Milano, 1957 and J.M.A. Beer, *Beasts of Love: Richard of Fournival's Bestiaire d'Amour and a Woman's Response*, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2003. The French bestiaries and their authors are discussed by McCulloch (as in note 3), 45–69.

were still copied in manuscripts of the fifteenth century,[10] but basically the tradition in France and England had ended by the late fourteenth century. This was not quite the case in Italy.

The *Bestiaire d'Amour*, which generated French imitations and inspired writings till the sixteenth century,[11] has been shown to be the most influential among the sources adopted for several Italian versions, including the *Bestiario toscano* and the *Libellus de natura animalium*. The so called *Bestiario toscano* or *Libro della natura degli animali*, which probably originated in northern Italy towards the end of the thirteenth or the fourteenth century, survives in sixteen manuscripts written in Tuscan or Venetian dialect.[12] The first thirty two chapters are derived from Richard de Fournival, while the following eighteen are related to other sources, such as the Latin *Libellus de natura animalium* and a provençal version, *De las propriotas de la animanças*, generally called the *Bestiario valdese*. The latter has been found to be a derivation from the original Latin versions of the *Libellus*, but it is interesting that the *Valdese* version is known only from two sixteenth century manuscripts (now in Cambridge and Dublin), which are presumably based on a common source now lost. The *Libellus de natura animalium* has survived in two extant fifteenth century manuscripts and two illustrated printed editions of the sixteenth century. Both of these manuscripts are of Franciscan origin.[13] In addition to the *Libellus* the second codex contains texts of theological and mystical speculation. In 1508 the *Libellus de natura animalium perpulcre moralizatus* was published by Vincenzo Berruerio in Mondovì, with the presumed attribution to Albertus Magnus. This was the first text issued by the Berruerio printing house. Vincenzo's son Giuseppe issued a second edition in Savona in 1524.[14] Both editions

[10] McCulloch mentions several extant 15th c. manuscripts of Guillaume Le Clerc and Pierre de Beauvais, 57–58, 62–63. Baxter (as in note 3), 147, lists two surviving Latin bestiaries of the 15th c. that were produced in England.

[11] See Beer (as in note 9), 165–66.

[12] For a detailed discussion and bibliography of the *Libellus* and related manuscripts, see P. Navone, Introduzione al Libellus de natura animalium, in *Le proprietà degli animali*, Carrega & Navone (as in note 6), 169–87. The text of the 14th c. *Bestiario moralizzato di Gubbio* with a study by A. Carrega, is included in the same volume.

[13] *Ibid.*, 183–84. Codex VII.AA.32, Biblioteca Nazionale, Naples, which has marginal glosses in Latin and *volgare*, bears the date 1453 and the signature of the scribe and owner, *Antonio d'Alfidena dello Terzo Ordine de S. Francesco*. Codex VII.G.21, Biblioteca Nazionale, Naples, is the product of a workshop or monastic scriptorium, bears the inscription *Pertinet ad locum S. Bernardino de Camplo*—a convent of the *frati minori osservanti* in Camplo, near Teramo.

[14] *Ibid.*, 185–86.

included vernacular translations entitled: *Il libro della natura degli animali in vulgare & Primo de la Natura de Lomo*. Each of the two editions has a different frontispiece but they both contain the portrait of Albertus Magnus at the beginning and end as well as the same series of fifty-one contemporary black and white woodcuts depicting each of the animals in an ornamented frame.[15]

The prologue of the *Libellus de natura animalium* discusses the hierarchical order of the cosmos and man's privileged place as the rational creature, produced in the image of the Creator, to whom all other creatures are subjugated. These are divided into four classes, those of birds, quadrupeds, fish and reptiles, in accordance with the hierarchical and quadripartite vision of the cosmos derived from classical zoology. Another quadripartite subdivision appears in the middle of the work, based on the four cosmic elements and their animal symbols. This theme, with the underlying dialectic approach, also found in other Italian bestiaries, derives from Richard de Fournival's *Bestiare d'Amour*. Richard was also the direct source for associating a particular animal with each of the five senses in the *Libellus de natura animalium* and the *Bestiario toscano*, although he himself took the theme from Thomas of Cantimpré's *Liber de naturis rerum* (13th c.),[16] whose own source was the *Naturalis historia* of Pliny the Elder (23–79 AD).[17] These were important precedents for the subsequent associations of animals with cosmic elements and senses in sixteenth century emblematic illustrations and prints.[18] The printed editions of the *Libellus* also contained sixteenth century interpolations, including citations from Ovid and medieval encyclopedic extracts that demonstrate a conservative and retrospective approach. The Latin *Libellus* and the related vernacular versions referred to above transmitted conceptions of animals as a key to deciphering the cosmos, with its mystical and theological connotations, for the explicit aim of moral and didactic edification.

[15] The Berruero edition was reproduced in facsimile by J.I. Davis (ed.), *Libellus de Natura Animalium, A fifteenth century Bestiary*, London, 1958.

[16] Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de natura rerum, Editio Princeps Secundum Codice Manuscriptos*, H. Boese, ed., Berlin, New York, 1973.

[17] Regarding Richard's association of senses with particular animals, see Beer (as in note 9), 50–63. Cf. Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, book XI. For the Renaissance editions, see note 80 below. Among the modern editions: *Natural History*, trans. & intro. by M. Beagon, Oxford, 2005.

[18] See S. Assaf, *Visualizing the Senses: Printed Image of the Five Senses in Northern Europe in the Sixteenth Century*, Doctoral Dissertation (unpublished), Tel-Aviv University, 2004.

It should be underlined that the publication of two Italian editions of the *Libellus de natura animalium* with vernacular translations in the sixteenth century was instrumental in bringing animal allegories, potent with accumulated connotations and moralistic implications, to a broader segment of the less educated population. Some extant bestiary manuscripts, primarily in the vernacular, were transcribed and illustrated during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Several illuminated bestiary manuscripts in Greek survive from the Renaissance; one was copied in 1585 and edited by Ponce de Leon in Rome in 1587. Latin and Italian vernacular bestiary manuscripts provided the texts for the printed editions mentioned above, which were issued in northern Italy in the sixteenth century with their contemporary woodcut illustrations.

Bestiaries may have decreased in popularity, but their influence was far from obsolete in the Renaissance. Their images, tales, commentaries, and moralizations were mediated in varied literary forms, from Dante Alighieri to Conrad Gesner, Edward Topsell, Shakespeare and Milton. They assumed varied forms in religious and secular painting, from the proto-Renaissance on, and were later popularized in single-leaf prints and book llustrations, finding new impetus with the genre of emblematic art in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

A Monkey on the Roof: Animal Moralizations in Exempla *Literature and Sermons*

The *exempla* literature, in comparison with the bestiary tradition, was a more flexible and innovative genre. How were these two currents of moral discourse combined? In what ways were the metaphoric and moralistic modes of viewing animals adapted to contemporary issues in preacher's manuals and sermons from the fourteenth century on?

Animal fables and bestiary stories were among the most popular forms of *exempla* incorporated into preacher's sermons from the first half of the thirteenth century. *Exempla* were didactic aids, geared to illustrate doctrinal or moral issues in a popular and concrete manner, which would be comprehensible and captivating for both clerical and lay audiences as well as diverse levels of society.[19] The *exempla* collections often combined bestiary lessons with secular and non-Christian

[19] See Joan Young Gregg, *Devils. Women and Jews; Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories*, Albany, New York, 1997, esp. 3–16; Larissa Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ;*

animal fables, folk tales and anecdotes; some of these were imported through cultural interchange with the Middle and Far East and Christianized by the addition of moralizations.[20] By the second half of the thirteenth century the monastic, urban, rural or itinerant preacher could draw material for his sermons from a broad selection of moral *exempla* in manuscript compilations that were alphabetically arranged with cross-references according to subjects. These were produced until the fifteenth century, contributing to the dissemination of moralized animal symbolism throughout the Christian world. From the late fifteenth century sermons were printed, making the themes all the more accessible.[21]

The association of bestiaries with sermons and moralistic texts in medieval books, their use of oral grammatical forms, vernacular expressions in the Latin text and abbreviated or partial quotations, as well as the frequent use of animal symbolism in the *exempla* literature, led Ron Baxter to the conclusion that bestiaries were used for preacher's sermons.[22] The use of bestiaries for preaching is reflected in the following reference taken from the catalogue of a monastic library: "*Libellus qui dicitur bestiarum de naturis animalium et avium et aliarum rerum quarundam, que valent ad predicandum*."[23] The fact that one *Libellus* codex belonged to a convent of the Frati Minori Osservanti and was combined with texts of mystical and theological speculation, suggests that it may well have been a product of a monastic scriptorium. Research has shown that there are variants in the text of this manuscript, in which moralizations reflect strong emphasis on ascetic-penitential practices that might be connected to San Bernardino of Siena and his mystical preaching.[24]

Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2002, esp. chapter 4: The Study of Sermons, 52–80.

[20] See Gregg (as above), 7–8; M.A. Polo de Beaulieu, "De bon usage de l'animal dans les recueils médiévaux d'*exempla*," in J. Berlioz & M.A. Polo de Beaulieu (eds.), *L'Animal exemplaire au Moyen Âge, Ve–XVe siècles*, Rennes, 1999, 147–70.

[21] Taylor (as in note 19) based her study on sermons printed in France; see esp. 53–55, 226–28 & 328–330 and E. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, Cambridge, 1979.

[22] Baxter (as in note 3), 188–90; Navone (as in note 6), 173–83. C. Segre, "Introduzione a Richard de Fournival," in C. Segre & M. Marti (eds.), *Introduzione a La prosa del Ducento*, Milano & Napoli, 1959 (La letteratura italiana. Storia e testi, vol. III); J.T. Welter, *L'"exemplum" dans la littérature religeuse et didactique au Moyen Âge*, Paris & Toulouse, 1927, repr. Genève, 1973.

[23] Segre (as above), Bd.A, p. IX, note 1.

[24] Navone (as in note 6), 177, note 31.

Among the earliest authors of the *artes praedicandi*, the Franciscan Luca di Bitonto already made extensive use of animal metaphors and similes in his sermons (written between 1220s and 1240s).[25] Like his contemporary, St. Anthony of Padua, he perceived the material world of nature as the reflection of divine knowledge manifested in creation. Both Luca and St. Anthony referred to classical animal treatises for their allegories. Ambivalence was maintained in their sermons by assigning positive and negative interpretations to the same animal, in the manner that had been prevalent since the *Physiologus*.[26] Only some creatures, such as the wolf and scorpion, were assigned exclusively negative connotations.

The metaphor of 'rapacious wolves' was repeatedly used by the Renaissance mendicant preachers Giovanni Dominici (1356–1419) and San Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444) to describe the Florentine money-lenders.[27] The 'wolf of avarice' led one to the 'house of the devil'. Dominici devised picturesque images of leaders who are 'pigs drowned in their earthly desires' and powerful men who display their vices like 'a monkey on the roof'. In his famous sermons in Florence and Siena (1424–1427), Bernardino employed the bestial image for all the evils he perceived in his society, the degrading passions of the flesh, sexual perversions, such as sodomy, the merchant sins of avarice and gluttony, and vices that infiltrated into clerical circles. In his sermons he adopted a whole catalogue of predators, such as wild boars and rabid dogs to depict such men. We shall see that such penetrating animal images of a debased society were not lost on contemporary artists in Italy and the North (Fig. 1).[28]

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[25] See F. Moretti, "Le rappresentazioni animali nei sermoni di Luca di Bitonto," *Il Santo*, XLIII, 2003, 263–93.

[26] The concept of ambivalence in *exempla* has been rejected by Gregg (as in note 19) 14, who stated that "the exemplum was required to have a single unequivocal meaning. Ambiguity in character or situation that permitted multiple interpretations would have clouded the eschatological issue at hand and diminished the drama of the tale".

[27] See N. Ben-Aryeh Debby, *Renaissance Florence in the Preaching of Two Popular Preachers; Giovanni Dominici (1356–1419) and Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444)*, Turnhout, 2001, esp. 97–103 & 118–25; F. Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons, Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy*, Chicago & London, 1999, esp. 114–19, 121, 128, 295–96; J.W. Oppel, "San Bernardino of Siena and the Dialogue on Avarice," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 30, 1977, 564–87; C.L. Polecritti, *Preaching Peace in Renaissance Italy, Bernardino of Siena and his Audience*, Washington D.C., 2000, esp. 121–22, 142–43.

[28] An aspect of this is discussed in Chapter Seven.

Fig. 1. *The Seven Deadly Sins Represented by Animals*, illumination from St. Augustine, *Le cité de dieu*, ca.1475–1480, Book 2, 19, KB, MMW, 10A11, fol.68v., Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek.

It has been demonstrated that fifteenth century preachers in northern France also adopted bestiary examples for their sermons. Three cases were presented by Hevré Martin, among them Pierre-aux-Boeufs, a Franciscan friar, theologian and eminent preacher in Paris, who adopted a mixture of animal and bird moralizations, often conveying the same ambivalent approach mentioned above.[29] Martin noted a predilection for familiar animals in Pierre's work, which he also found in a codex of sermons written by an anonymous Cistercian monk between 1440 and 1450. A third example of bestiary moralizations was demonstrated in a codex of sermons written by the Augustine friar Simon Cupersi in 1460. Each of his twenty six *exempla* animals represent either a vice

[29] H. Martin, "Un prédicateur franciscain du XVe siècle, Pierre-aux-Bœufs, et les réalités de son temps," in A. Vauchez, *Mouvements Franciscains et société française, XIIe–XXe siècles*, Paris, 1984, 107–20 and *Le métier de prédicateur en France septentrionale à la fin du Moyen Âge (1350–1520)*, Paris, 1988; Pole de Beaulieu (as in note 20), 162–63.

(e.g. the pig of ingratitude), a virtue (e.g. the bees of solidarity), or a religious concept (e.g. the vulture and the cadaver of God and the sinner). Animals that fall into traps (the hare, bird and fish) were said to symbolize the human sinner. Both Martin and Polo de Beaulieu underlined the ambivalent interpretations applied to most *exempla* animals, whose role could alternate between positive and negative, or combine both, from one fifteenth century source to another, in accordance with the function it was meant to fulfill. This fundamental ambivalence, which was rooted in the *Psychomachia* and early exegetic methods of animal interpretation, consistently characterized animal symbolism in medieval as well as Renaissance literature, as attested by various scholarly studies.[30] We will see how this supports my contention that fifteenth and sixteenth century animal images are more often than not meant to be read on several levels.

Printed sermons in sixteenth century France provide interesting evidence for the use of animal analogies to describe both preachers and their flocks. Fourteen collections of sermons by the outstanding French theologian, monastic prelate and preacher, Guillaume Pepin (1465–1553), were published between 1510 and 1656. Pepin claimed that 'morally, a good preacher can be compared to a peacock', explaining that his golden plumes signify the sacred doctrine and his terrible voice signifies the constancy of the preacher and his sharpness in reproaching vice. One of the traditional analogies he used was that of the preacher who, like a dog, should bark out against vices and bite sinners. A more graphic image served Pepin to describe the man who gets to the top quickly but whose inexperience makes him like 'a monkey, who when he climbs a tree, exposes his backside', somewhat like Dominici's 'monkey on the roof'.

Animal analogies employed to describe the preacher were not always edifying. The eminent French theologian and preacher, Aimé Meigret (ca.1485–1527?), called the pastors wolves that neglect their flock and loose their sheep.[31] There was nothing new in the idea of a wolf or a fox disguised as a preacher. Inspiration for so describing a corrupt preacher was found in *Matthew*, VII, 15: "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening

[30] See F. Morenzoni, "Les animaux exemplaires dans les recueils de *Distinctiones* biblique alphabétiques du XIIIe siècle," in Berlioz & Pole de Beaulieu (as in note 20), 171–87, esp. 178–79.

[31] Taylor (as in note 19), 206. See Aimé Meigret, In Henry Guy (ed.), "Le sermon d'Aimé Meigret," *Annales de l'Université de Grenoble* 15, 1928, 181–212.

Fig. 2. *Reynard the fox as a pilgrim*, Illumination from *Book of Hours* of Mary of Burgundy, MS.Lat.1857, f.86r, Flemish, ca.1470–1480, Austrian National Library Vienna, Picture Archive.

wolves". The wolf-preacher or fox-preacher analogy had been popular in literature and art from the thirteenth century, as seen, for example, in illuminations and sculpted choir stalls (misericords).[32] These disguised animals could also represent the ruler's misuse of power and corruption of justice, or demonstrate the hypocrisy of the heretic (Fig. 2). Other animals masquerading as preachers were also pictured in late medieval and Renaissance art, particularly in northern manuscript illuminations, either to illustrate the preacher's vices or to ridicule the kind of impotence described by Meigret (Fig. 3).

During the period of the Catholic Reformation in Italy and the inquisition of the sixteenth century, when the pulpit became a powerful means of diffusing reform ideas and affecting popular culture, we

[32] For examples, see C. Grössinger, *The World Upside-Down, English Misericords*, London, 1997, figs. 2, 159, 162 & 163.

Fig. 3. *The monkey as a monk preaching to animals*, illumination from MS.133M82, fol.114r, Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek.

find mendicant preachers reviving bestial metaphors with a new zeal. The documented sermons of Bernardino Ochino (1487–1564/5), a profoundly influential preacher who became vice-general of the Capuchin order, and of Matteo di Bascio (d.1552), a zealous evangelist of the same order, illustrate the continued use of animal imagery in a penitential context.[33] These preachers influenced not only the illiterate masses, but intellectuals, like Vittoria Colonna and Pietro Aretino, writers involved with the literature and art of their period as well as religious reform.[34]

[33] *Prediche nove predicate dal reverendo Padre Frate Bernardino Ochino*, Venezia, 1539; *I Frati Cappuccini, Documenti e Testimonianze del Primo Secolo* a cura di Costanzo Cargnoni, Perugia, 1988; C. Urbanelli, *Matteo da Bascio e l'Ordine dei Frati Cappuccini*, Ancona, 1982.

[34] See Chapter Seven.

Animal Moralizations in Medieval Encyclopedias

Medieval encyclopedic compilations provided another major source of animal allegories and *exempla*. The question that concerns us here is whether the medieval encyclopedic heritage contributed to Renaissance concepts of animal symbolism?

Among those sources that remained highly influential during the Renaissance were the *Liber de natura rerum* (ca.1230–45) and the *Bonum universale de apibus* by the Dominican theologian and preacher Thomas de Cantimpré (1201–1272?).[35] The *Liber de natura rerum* belongs to the medieval encyclopedic tradition, deriving directly from the *De naturas rerum* of Rabanus Maurus (9th c.) who, in turn, had composed an allegorized version of the twelfth book of Isidore's *Etymologiae* (7th c.).[36] He had also borrowed from classical authors, such as Pliny the Elder and Solinus,[37] the *Physiologus* tradition, more recent writers, such as Jacques de Vitry,[38] and owed much to the zoological corpus of Aristotle, translated into Latin only two decades before the completion of his *Liber*.[39] Thomas devoted about half of his encyclopedic work to fauna, which he divided into six categories. Out of the five hundred animals he cited, one hundred and sixty one were allegorized in the spiritual, moralistic or anagogical vein of biblical exegesis.[40] Thomas de Cantimpré's *Liber* was used by many later authors, including Albertus Magnus in his *De Animalibus*, Bartholomeus Anglicus in the *De proprietatibus rerum*, Vincent de Beauvais is his *Speculum naturale*, and the Dominican Jean Nider in

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[35] See note 33 and J. Block Friedman, *Thomas of Cantimpré, De natura rerum* [Prologue, Book III, Book XIX), in *La science de la nature: théories et pratiques d'études médiévales 2*, Paris, 1974, 107–152; *Thomas of Cantimpré, De natura rerum* (lib.IV–XII), L. Garcìa Ballester, ed. & trans., Granada, 1974; J. Engels, "Thomas Cantimpratensis redivivus," *Vivarium*, 12, 1974, 123–32; D. Gatewood, *Illustrating a Thirteenth Century Natural History Encyclopedia: The Pictorial Tradition of Thomas of Cantimpré's "De natura rerum" Valenciennes Ms.320*, Pittsburgh, 2000.

[36] Rabanus Maurus, *De naturis rerum, Opera omnia*, V, Migne, *P.L.*111, 217–58 (also known as *De universo*); Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, in Migne, *P.L.*82, 9–728 and *Etymologiarum sive originum*, 2 vols., ed. W.M. Lindsay, Oxford, 1911.

[37] Solinus, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, ed. T. Mommsen, Berlin, 1958.

[38] Jacques de Vitry, *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. T.F. Crane, London, 1890.

[39] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, trans. AL. Peck, Cambridge, Mass., 1990. C. Steel, G. Guldentops & P. Beullens (eds.), *Aristotle's Animals in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Leuven, 1999. See esp. B. van den Abeele, "une version moralisée du De animalibus D'aristote (XIVe siècle), *Op. cit.*, 338–54.

[40] See B. Van den Abeele, *L'Allégorie animale dans les encyclopédies latines du Moyen Âge*, in Berlioz & Beaulieu (as in note 20), 123–143, esp. 125, 129–134.

Fig. 4. Lucas Cranach, *St. Jerome in Penitence*, 1525, Innsbruck. Copyright Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum.

a moralistic *exempla* book called the *Formicarius* (1424–25).[41] Although it was not published in the Latin original during the Renaissance, a German translation of the *Liber de natura rerum* was printed in Augsburg in 1475 by Konrad von Megenberg under the title *Buch der Natur*. Herbert Friedmann identified an interesting example of Cantimpré's influence in Lucas Cranach's painting of *St. Jerome in Penitence* (1525), where two murderous harpies are shown weeping with remorse (Fig. 4).[42] He

[41] See P. Aiken, "The Animal history of Albertus Magnus and Thomas of Cantimpré," *Speculum*, 22, 1947, 205–225; J. Block Friedman, "Albert the Great's topoi of Direct Observation and his Debt to Thomas of Cantimpré," in P. Binkley (ed.), *Pre-Modern Encyclopedic Texts*, Leiden, 1997; B. van den Abeele, "Bestiaires encyclopédiques moralisés. Quelques succédanés Thomas de Cantimpré et Barthélemy l'Anglais," *Reinardus*, 7, 1994, 109–228.

[42] H. Friedmann, *A Bestiary for Saint Jerome*, Washington D.C., 1980, 223, n.99.

attributed this to an 'awareness of Konrad von Megenburg's *Buch der Natur*', but the tale appears in the first book of the *Bonum universale de apibus*, which had already been printed in Strasbourg (1472), Cologne (1475) and Paris (1506).

Another vernacular translation that enjoyed continued popularity was the Middle Dutch translation of de Cantimpré's *Liber de natura rerum* by the Flemish poet Jacob van Maerlant (ca.1235–after 1291). Entitled *Der naturen bloeme*, it has survived in eleven manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, seven of them illuminated with colorful miniatures (Figs. 5 & 6).[43]

The moral obligations of prelates and their subjects, with analogies and moralizations derived from the properties of the bees, is the subject of the *Bonum universale de apibus*. Among its *exempla* one also finds birds, farm animals and fantastic creatures, such as the unicorn and the griffon. The popularity of the treatise is attested by the surviving manuscript copies and six editions of this work printed between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries.[44] Symbolic bee themes were ubiquitous in Renaissance and Baroque iconography. Emblematic analogies similar to those found in the *Bonum universale de apibus* appeared, for example, in Alciato's *Emblemata* (1531) with the motto '*Principis clementia*' (The Mercy of the Prince), in Barthelemy Aneau's *Picta Poesis* (1552), the emblem '*non nobis nati*' (We are not born for ourselves alone), in emblem III, 90 of *Symbola et emblemata* of Joachim Camerarius (1590–1614) that reads '*Labor omnibus unus*' (To each his own work) and in Jesuit emblems, which reiterated the theme of pastoral obligation.[45]

Another encyclopedic work that remained exemplary for later authors was the *Liber de proprietatibus rerum* (ca.1230–40?) by the Franciscan monk Bartholomeus Anglicus, which included nineteen books of natural history. Extensive contributions on birds and animals are found in books

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[43] Van Maerlant attributed the *Liber de natura rerum* to Albertus Magnus. For printed editions and manuscripts of the *Der Naturen Bloeme*, see the web site of the Koninklijke Bibliothek, Den Haag (digital library), including color reproductions of miniatures from their cod. KB, 76 E 4, Flanders or Utrecht, dated ca.1450–1500.

[44] On the sources and meanings of the bee, see Hassig (as in note 4), 52–61. The *Bonum universale de apibus* was published in Strasbourg, 1472; Cologne, 1475; Paris, 1506; and Douai, 1597, 1605 & 1627.

[45] See R. Dimmler, "The Bee-Topos in the Jesuit Emblem Book: Themes and Contrast," in A. Adams and A.J. Harper (eds.), *The Emblem in Renaissance and Baroque Europe, Tradition and Variety*, Leiden, 1992, 229–45. The works of Alciato and Camerarius are discussed below.

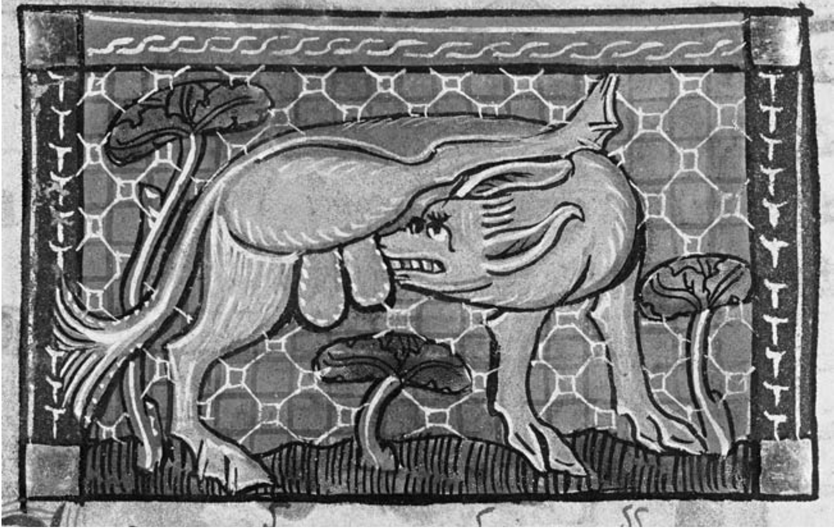

Fig. 5. *Beaver*, illumination from Jacob van Maerlant, *Der Naturen Bloeme*, KB, KA 16, fol.49v, Flanders, ca.1350, Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek.

Fig. 6. *Harpy*, illumination from Jacob van Maerlant, *Der Naturen Bloeme*, KB, KA 16, fol.75r, Flanders, ca.1350, Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek.

XII and XVIII. This highly influential compilation has survived in more than two-hundred manuscripts, some of vernacular translations, and a series of early printed editions, in Latin, French and English.[46] Manuscripts of this work were still produced in the fifteenth century and were richly illuminated.[47]

Among the late medieval writings that sustained their popularity in the Renaissance was the *Dialogus creatorum* (also known as *Contentus sublimitatis et liber de animalibus*, ca.1326), a didactic work containing dialogues between various elements and creatures of nature, including animals, as well as Aesopic fables and moralizations.[48] It was translated into two French versions in 1482, one of which appeared in three printed editions. Varied sources were adopted for the *Dialogus creatorum*, including Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* (Bk.XII), Thomas de Cantimpré's *De natura rerum*, books on animals and birds, collections of fables, biblical expositions, and the thirteenth century *Legenda aurea*, which contains more than 450 cases of animals associated with saints.[49] Animals in the *Legenda aurea* sometimes appear in symbolic or metaphoric contexts, but are more frequently employed as a means of illustrating the superhuman powers of the saint and ascetic. This late medieval source had a tremendous influence on Renaissance iconography.

The Psychomachia *Tradition and Images of Mounted Vices*

We have already noted that preachers did not necessarily have to consult bestiaries to find bestial metaphors for their sermons. Penitential literature and imagery, geared to the increasing demands of lay spirituality, provided new media for the transmission of animal metaphors in the

[46] See Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. R. Steele, London, 1983 and *On the Properties of Things, John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, De proprietatibus rerum*, critical text by M.C. Seymour, Oxford, 1975. This was published in Latin in Nuremberg (1483, 1492 & 1519), Cologne (1472 & 1483) Heidelberg (1488), Strassbourg (1485 & 1491), Lyons (1480) and elsewhere. A French translation by Jean Corbechon was first published in Lyons (1482), and an English translation of the late fourteenth century by John Trevisa was first published in Westminster (1495) by Wynkyn de Worde.

[47] E.g. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms.Fr.135 & Ms.Fr.136, 15th c.; see reproductions on the BNF web site.

[48] *Dialogus creatorum*, Bruxelles, 1985, 40–120.

[49] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Reading on the Saints*, 2 vols., trans. W. Granger Ryan, Princeton, 1993. See L. Guilbert, "L'animal dans la légende dorée," in *Legenda Aurea, sept siècles de diffusion*, (Cahiers d'Études Médiévales), Montreal, Paris, 1986, 77–94.

late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Many of these appear to be derived, directly or indirectly, from the bestiaries. In the area of Germany and Austria, handbooks for preachers, such as the *Lumen animae* (ca.1332), and the independent treatise called the *Etymachia*, with which it was combined, adopted *exempla* from natural history.[50] In the fifteenth century *Etymachia* illustrations a series of animals and birds, symbolizing virtues and vices of the soul, were appended to the traditional figures of the psychomachian allegory.[51] Mounted knights in armor in the earlier illustrations are later replaced by female personifications still mounted on their symbolic animals. But while the 'bestial' vices continued to retain their animal mounts, the virtues discarded them in the various renditions of this theme executed towards the end of the century. We will see in the case studies to follow how this juxtaposition of human and animal figures affected visual metaphors in Renaissance painting, prints and emblematic art.

A new iconographic scheme of mounted sins was established in the areas of Piedmont, Val d'Aosta, Savoy, the Hautes-Alpes and the Alpes-Maritimes, by the second half of the fifteenth century. Joanne Norman claimed that 'the procession of the seven deadly sins in late Gothic art was French and secular',[52] assigning the earliest examples to the end of the fourteenth century and the majority of the depictions to the period between 1450 and 1520 (Fig. 7). Marco Piccat, on the other hand, basing his study on a broad representative selection of frescoes from north-western Italy (primarily Piedmont and Liguria), as well as the French Hautes Alpes, Alpes Maritimes, Alps of Provence and Savoy, perceived this iconography to be an innovation of the mid *Quattrocento* pilgrimage routes of northern Italy.[53] He observed that the procession of sinners on animals reflects the religious pilgrimage as well as the celebration of actual, public cavalcades. It should be underlined that the riders are not the abstract personifications of the *Psychomachia*

[50] See J.S. Norman, *Metamorphosis of an Allegory: The Iconography of the Psychomachia in Medieval Art*, New York, 1988, esp. 181–82, 196–200.

[51] *Op. cit.*, 200–14.

[52] J.S. Norman, "Lay Patronage and the Popular Iconography of the Seven Deadly Sins," in C.G. Fisher & K.L. Scott (eds.), *Art into Life, Collected Papers from the Kresge Art Museum Medieval Symposium*, East Landsing, Michigen, 1995, 213–36, quote from p. 215.

[53] M. Piccat, "Nuovi Documenti sulla Tradizione e Ipotesi della Cavalcata dei Setti Peccati Capitali in Alta Italia," in L. Secchi Tarugi (ed.), *Lettere e arti nel Rinascimento, Atti del X convegno internazionale*, Luglio 1998, Firenze, 2000, 327–50.

Fig. 7. *Procession of the Mounted Sins* (detail), wall painting, Chapelle Notre-Dame-des-Grâces à Plampinet, Savoy, 1490 (Photo: Y. Cohen).

allegory, but rather human beings who exemplify the stages of life and contemporary social classes commonly associated with particular sins. By contrast to the famous French miniature of mounted vices dated to about 1390 (Paris, B.N.fr.400), and early French frescoes of this theme, Piccat distinguished three innovations in north Italian wall paintings.[54] The sinners have collars and are linked by a heavy chain, they are moving in the direction of an infernal cavern where demons await them, and they are tormented by diabolical creatures. Norman stated, however, that 'the chained procession of human figures on animals remained a peculiarly French phenomenon of the late fifteenth century'.[55] She stressed the influence of the lay confraternities of penitence and the central role played by the seven deadly sins in their teaching, citing trade routes as the medium of transmission from one region to another. It is significant that, despite these efforts to differentiate between supposedly French and Italian traditions, we are dealing with geographical areas which for centuries retained a cultural and artistic unity across

[54] *Op. cit.*, 333ff.
[55] Norman, 1988 (as in note 50), 230.

mountain passes and natural obstacles. This is especially true of the outlying alpine areas, which were cut off from prominent urban centers, fostering a popular culture that reflected unique conditions of existence. We might ask why the depiction of humans on animal mounts, in particular, was popularized in remote alpine chapels and small parish churches. In the peripheral rural areas and remote mountain villages, where animals were a major adjunct to human survival, supplying food, clothes and heat, and functioning as beasts of burden and transportation, the human supported by his animal would be a natural way of portraying the human-animal analogy.

The mounted animal series in accordance with the so-called *Saligia* sequence of deadly sins generally precedes as follows: *Superbia* rides a lion, *Avaritia* an ape, a dog, boar or bear, *Luxuria* a boar or goat, *Ira* a mad dog, bear, leopard or wolf, *Gula* a pig, boar, wolf or fox, *Invidia* a bear, ape or dog, and *Accidia* a donkey.[56] By comparison with the stereotyped bestiary images, the realistic portrayal of animals and riders in these frescoes is striking. We might also note the disappearance of fictive bestiary creatures that were commonly employed as symbols of sin in medieval art, notably the hybrids, as opposed to the increased portrayal of animals that inhabited the village or the surrounding mountains and forests. We have observed the same tendency to portray familiar rather than fantastic animals in the fifteenth century *exempla* literature. Despite the realistic portrayal with its contemporary overtones, however, this procession of deadly sins is still portrayed in the traditional *Saligia* sequence, conveying the classic lessons of the bestiary, promoting the human-beast analogy, and retaining the moralistic context with its late medieval penitential and didactic implications.

[56] The sequence of mounted animals in the 15th and 16th c. wall-paintings are summarized in charts by Piccat (as in note 53), 340, 348–349. The sequence of seven or eight Cardinal or Deadly Sins was modified throughout the Middle Ages in accordance with changing emphasis. The *Saligia* initials, representing a formula probably introduced in the 13th century, stand for *superbia, avaritia, luxuria, ira, gula, invidia and accidia*. See M.W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, Michigan, 1967, esp. 66–104.

CHAPTER TWO

RENAISSANCE NATURALISTS AND ANIMAL SYMBOLISM: FACT AND FANTASY

Progress of experimental science and the humanist revival of classical texts were two major factors in precipitating a turning point in the history of zoological literature and illustration by the late fifteenth century. Nevertheless, it will be underlined below that, while more objective ways of looking at animals were introduced, this did not necessarily entail a rejection of the allegorical tradition. There is a tendency in modern literature to overemphasize the predominance of descriptive and empirical elements in Renaissance zoological texts, based on the assumption that moralizations and religious allegory were *passé*. If we examine the more focused Renaissance naturalist studies, such as Pierre Belon's *De aquatilibus libri duo* (Paris, 1553) and *L'histoire de la nature des oyseaux* (Paris, 1555), or Guillaume Rondelet's *Libri de piscibus marinis* (Paris, 1553), this indeed seems to be the case.[1] Contemporary and later writings, however, by Conrad Gesner (1516–65), Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522–1605), Joachim Camerarius (1534–98) and Edward Topsell (1572–1625), demonstrate that the traditional allegorical approach, and moralistic conceptions of the natural universe and its fauna, maintained their popularity in encyclopedic compilations well into the seventeenth century. Before clarifying the relationship between innovative and traditional elements in the zoological literature of the sixteenth century, let us examine two contributions that represent stages of transition.

Bestiaries of the Fifteenth Century: The Monsters of Pier Candido Decembrio's De animantium naturis

In 1460 the eminent humanist Pier Candido Decembrio (1392/99–1477) presented his unique five-book bestiary manuscript, called *De*

[1] Pierre Belon, *De aquatilibus libri duo, cum eiconibus ad vivum ipsorum effiegem, quoad eius fieri potuit expressis*, Paris, *1553: L'histoire de la natura des oyseaux, avec leurs descriptions & naifs portraicts retirez du naturel*, Paris, 1555 and Guillaume Rondelet, *Libri di piscibus marinis in quibus verae piscium effigies expressae sunt*, Paris, 1554–55.

animantium naturis, to Lodovico Gonzaga, the marquis of Mantua.[2] Pier Candido was the son of Uberto Decembrio, former diplomat at the Visconti court and secretary to the bishop Pier Filargo da Candia, who subsequently became Pope Alexander V. He himself was a proficient scholar and translator, having written numerous philosophical, historical and literary works, including an imaginary elaboration of Virgil's *Aeneid*.[3]

Pier Candido Decembrio's *De animantium naturis* focused on the theme of monstrous and marvelous creatures. Some were derived from myths and legends, others from traveler's descriptions. Adopting the zoological categories of Thomas de Cantimpré, and references from Pliny's *Historia naturalis*, as well as other sources,[4] he used descriptive terminology and dropped the traditional moralizations that would later be reproduced by Gesner, Aldrovandi and Camerarius. In this respect his work has been cited as a precedent for the later development of scientific zoology, but scientific accuracy was not Pier Candido's concern, and another century would pass before such compilations contained descriptions that were based on direct observation.

Although areas were left blank for miniatures, this codex was enriched by magnificent tempera illustrations over a hundred years later. Some of the latter were influenced by the printed illustrations in Conrad Gesner's publications of 1553, 1560 and 1587, which included derivations from drawings and prints by Dürer (Fig. 8).[5] It is curious that Andrea Mantegna, who began painting at the Gonzaga court in 1460, just when the text was completed, and probably executed miniatures early in his career, was not enlisted for the undertaking. The hybrid creatures he subsequently painted in the *Triumph of Virtue* for Isabella d'Este's *Studiolo* (ca.1502, Paris, Louvre), for example, and the marine monsters in his mythological prints, attest to Mantegna's talents in this field. Decembrio's descriptions of zoological marvels and the analogous

[2] *De omnium animantium naturis atque formis*, XV & XVI c., Cod.Urb.Lat.276, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. See *Animalia Prodigiosa, elementi di storia naturale e aspetti prodigiosi in de omneum animantium naturis atque formis di Pier Candido Decembrio*, Società Storica Vigevanese, 2001.

[3] Decembrio composed his book XIII of the *Aeneid*, entitled "Liber tertius decimus Aeneidos suffectus per Petrum Candidum adolescentem" (1419). For a bibliography of Decembrio's writings, see *Animalia Prodigiosa* (as above), 25–29.

[4] *Ibid*., 11–24, for Decembrio's sources.

[5] See *Animalia Prodigiosa* (as in note 2), 48–84, regarding the extraordinary miniatures in cod. Urb.Lat. 276 and comparisons with the Gesner illustrations, as well as other visual sources.

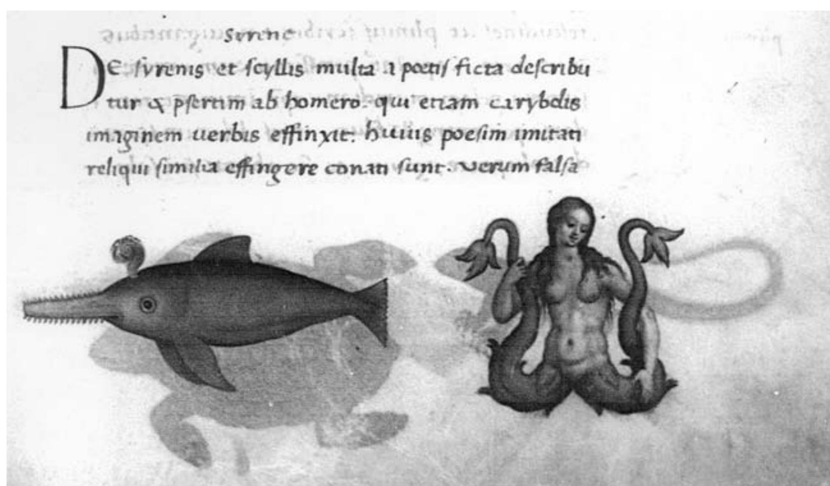

Fig. 8. *Serra e Syrenae*, Miniature from Pier Candido Decembrio, *De omnium animantium naturis atque formis*, Cod. Urbinate Latino 276, fol. 139r. Copyright Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

depictions by Mantegna represent the growing fascination with hybrid and monstrous creatures during the second half of the *Quattrocento*, and anticipate the flowering of the grotesque in the following century.

The Timid Hare and Lustful Camel: Leonardo da Vinci's Bestiary

The literary legacy of Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1517) includes an Italian bestiary in three parts, preserved in twenty-two handwritten pages of codex H (Paris, Institut de France).[6] Leonardo described eighty-seven creatures, including quadrupeds, birds, insects and fish, in concise entries derived from traditional bestiary lore. Legends are usually followed by the standard moralizations or by some popular metaphor, although in some cases the conclusion is left to the reader. Efforts to identify sources for Leonardo's bestiary text and relevant animal illustrations have been inconclusive. Luisa Cogliati Arano has suggested that, during his stay in Milan, Leonardo had the possibility of consulting the Visconti library in Pavia that contained, according to the 1426 inventory, *De animalibus*

[6] *The notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci Compiled and Edited from the Original by Jean Paul* Richter, New York, 1970, vol. II, 316–34.

by Albertus Magnus, *Liber de proprietatibus rerum* by Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De mirabilibus mundi* by Solinus, *Fiore di virtù*, *De avibus* by Hugh de Foilloy, *Bestiaire d'amour* by Richart de Fornival, and probably *De bestiis*, attributed to Hugh of St. Victor.[7]

Following my own textual comparisons, it appears to me that Leonardo used two main sources for his bestiary, both written in Italian. The first, an anonymous moralized bestiary called *Fiore di Virtù* (14th c.), has survived in several fourteenth and fifteenth century manuscripts and was issued with woodcut illustrations in early printed editions.[8] Virtues and vices serve as titles for the chapters, each one followed by the animal *exemplum*. There are salient parallels between the animal *exempla* in the *Fiore di Virtù* and those of Leonardo's bestiary. Among the less conventional tales found in both we might note, for example, the toad who lives exclusively on earth and never eats enough as a metaphor of *Avaritia*, the lamb who submits himself to everyone's will as an example of *Umilità*, the hare who fears the falling leaves as an example of *Timore over Viltà*, and the lustful but temperate camel that represents *Temperanza*.[9]

L'Acerba by Cecco d'Ascoli (1269?–1327) has been summarily mentioned by several authors as a source for Leonardo's bestiary.[10] Cecco d'Ascoli was an astrologer, mathematician, physician and poet, who taught at the University of Bologna (1322–24). He was denounced as a heretic for his defense of astrology and burned at the stake. *L'Acerba*, written in Italian, is a didactic allegorical poem covering an encyclopedic range of contents, which were probably modeled on *De proprietatibus rerum* by Bartholomeus Anglicus and the Tuscan version

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[7] L. Cogliati Arano, "Fonti figurative del 'Bestiario' di Leonardo," *Arte Lombarda*, 1982, 2, 151–60 and "Dal 'Fisiologo' al 'Bestiario' di Leonardo," *Rivista di Storia della Miniatura*, 1–2, 1996–1997, 239–248.

[8] The earliest editions of the *Fiore di Virtù* were printed in 1471, 1488 (Parma), 1487, 1488, 1490, 1491, 1492, 1493 and 1499 (Venice). See Prince d'Essling, *Le Livres à Figures Vénitiens de la fin du XVe siècle et du commencement du XVIe*, Florence, 1907–1914, vol. I, 2, 348–57 and *The Florentine Fiore di Virtù of 1491*, trans. by N. Fersin, Wash. D.C., 1953.

[9] Cf. Leonardo (as in note 6), "*Avaritia*", 317; "*Timore*", 319 & "*Umilità*", 320, "*Temperanza*", 320; and. *Fiore di Virtù*, 1953 (as above), "*Avaritia*", 42; "*Timore*", 77; "*Umilità*", 92; "*Temperanza*", 87.

[10] See Cecco d'Ascoli, *L'Acerba*, edited by A. Crespi, Ascoli Piceno, 1927 (available on web site: Biblioteca dei Classici Italiani, ed. G. Bonghi, www.classicitaliani.it) and L. Morini (ed.), *Bestiari Medievali*, Parma, 1987, 575–611.

of the *Tesoretto* by Brunetto Latini.[11] It was reproduced in numerous manuscripts and a series of printed editions until 1581, at which time it was banned by the Catholic reformation.[12] Although Leonardo may have consulted one of the manuscripts of *L'Acerba* that were located in the Visconti and Sforza collections, it seems likely that he was also familiar with the several printed editions issued in Italy before his departure for France.[13]

The application of animal symbolism to religious moralistic allegory is demonstrated in fifteen out of the eighteen chapters in *libro* III of *L'Acerba*. The first ten titles orient the reader towards the spiritual and ethical content, but starting from chapter III the titles themselves introduce the theme as well as the animal metaphors. We read, for example, '*Dell'intelletto attivo, e dell'aquila suo simbolo*' (chapter III) or '*Dei simboli di Fede, Speranza e Carità, ossia lumeria, stellino e pellicano*' (chapter IV). In chapters XI to XV '*simboli d'animali*' are organized in accordance with encyclopedic zoological categories, the changed emphasis in the title indicating that a description of the animal will precede the moralization.

The titles to the first thirty-four entries of Leonardo's bestiary appear to follow Cecco's example. We might recall that the *Physiologus* and medieval bestiaries listed the names of the creatures as titles to the chapters. Thus the entry was simply entitled *Leo* or *Chaladrius* or *Formica*.[14] Leonardo, by contrast, captions thirty-four of his entries with a concise introduction to the moralization or metaphor rather than the animal, and reverses the system in the following chapters. The first entry, called *Amore di Virtù*, precedes the tale of the goldfinch (*cardellino*), who

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[11] A facsimile edition of the beautifully illustrated, original manuscript of Brunetto Latini, *Tesoretto*, ms. *Strozzi 146*, in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, was issued as *Il Tesoretto*, Firenze, 2000. Among the modern editions is an English translation by J.B. Holloway, 1984. The *Tesoretto*, written during the author's self-imposed exile in France, reflects northern encyclopedic, literary and philosophical influences. His use of animal imagery and metaphors influenced Dante who, for example, echoed Brunetto's description of having been lost on the crossroads and meeting with "beasts, serpents and wild creatures".

[12] Manuscripts of this work that were located in the 15th c. collections of the Visconti and Sforza are: Milano, Bibl. Trivulziana, cod.1021 (illustrated by a follower of Zavattari) and Vienna, B.N., ms.2608. Among the earliest editions of *L'Acerba* were those of 1473 (Brescia) and 1476, 1487, 1501 & 1510 (Venice).

[13] The influence of the Milanese manuscripts was suggested by L. Cogliati Arano, 1982; see her article of 1996–1997 (as in note 7), 239–48, regarding early medieval animal illustrations.

[14] See R. Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages*, London, 1998, 30–33.

looks towards a sick person in order to augur his cure or turns away from him to signify his death. As suggested by the title, this serves as a metaphor for the love of virtue and the avoidance of vile or base things.[15] *Pace* is the caption chosen for the tale of the beaver (*castoro*) who, in order to be at peace, bites off his testicles and leaves them to his pursuers (cf. Fig. 5). The title *Gratitudine* introduces the legend of the hoopoe (*upupa*) bird, which broods over his old and ailing parents and restores their sight.[16]

Not only does the system of titles demonstrate the dependence of Leonardo on Cecco d'Ascoli's precedent. The sequential order of the animals is often the same, and the themes of the animal metaphors as well as the terminology are similar, though not identical. Leonardo appears to have extracted several pivotal sentences out of each of Cecco's long entries. His bestiary reads like a synopsis of *L'Acerba*, without the cumbersome didactic and allegorical elaborations typical of late medieval exegetic writing.

Few scholars have taken an interest in Leonardo's bestiary. They have no relation to his animal drawings, which are scientific studies in anatomy and movement, or to the illustrated codex, known as *codice sul volo degli uccelli* (1505), that was devoted to the flight of birds. Leonardo proceeded from observations of birds to the construction of flying machines. The fact that he saw no connection between his moralized bestiary and his life drawings of animals indicates that the bestiary was perceived by him and, assumedly by his educated contemporaries, as a literary genre. But his bestiary interpretations are reflected by symbolic animals in his paintings. Most of them are presented in unequivocal symbolical contexts, as in the *Portrait of Cecilia Galleriano with an Ermine* (ca.1483, Cracow, Museum Czartoyski) or in the *Madonna Litta* (ca.1485–90, Hermitage, Leningrad), where the Christ child holds a cardinal. The ermine, as a symbol of *moderanza* or *gentilezza* (purity), and the cardinal, signifying *Amore di virtù*, are interpreted along traditional lines both in Leonardo's bestiary and in his paintings.[17] But the fact that the ermine was also an emblem of Cecilia's lover, Lodovico Sforza, illustrates Leonardo's use of double meanings, a strategy which we also find in the floral devise on the reverse of the *Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci*

[15] Leonardo (as in note 6), 315.
[16] *Ibid.*, 316.
[17] *Ibid.*, 321 & 316.

(ca.1478–80, Vaduz, Liechtenstein Gallery) and elsewhere in his painting.[18] In most cases, however, conventional animal images, such as the lion of *St. Jerome* (ca.1483, Rome, Vatican), the lamb in the *Virgin and Child with St. Anne* (ca.1508–10, Paris, Louvre) or the swan with *Leda* (sketches in Rotterdam and Chatsworth, ca.1504), simply provided the artist with occasions to describe the beauties and intricacies of animal anatomy and movement.

Presumably Leonardo did not believe that goldfinches had supernatural prophetic powers, that beavers castrated themselves when pursued by hunters, or that hoopoe birds restore the sight of their ailing parents. Nevertheless, the greatest scientist-artist of the Renaissance, who prided himself on his empirical methodology, considered these fantastic animal tales with their appended moralizations, to be worth copying. Thus symbolism and empirical naturalism coexisted in Leonardo's art. He valued and preserved the bestiary tradition, despite its encumbering legends and ethical appendages; it did not conflict with his highly innovative scientific work on animals. Fact and fantasy existed side by side.

Natural History in the Sixteenth Century

Conrad Gesner, a medical doctor, humanist scholar and unbelievably prolific writer, was born in Zurich in 1516, one year before the death of Leonardo da Vinci.[19] Like Leonardo he was a passionate observer of nature and incessantly studied the multiple forms of flora and fauna. His four-volume *Historia animalium* (1551–58), the most widely read of all Renaissance natural histories, ushered in a new chapter in this genre.[20] It is remarkable not least for the comprehensive and methodological approach that combined precise observations of animal forms and phenomena, with a plethora of veterinarian, medicinal, culinary, agricultural, religious and philological information, as well fictional material

[18] J. Fletcher, "Bernardo Bembo and Leonardo's Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci," in C. Farago (ed.), *An Overview of Leonardo's Career and Projects Until c.1500*, New York & London, 1999, 297–302.

[19] Forty-seven of his works were published during his lifetime, thirteen more were published posthumously; see L. Braun, *Conrad Gesner*, Genève, 1990, 156.

[20] Conrad Gesner, *Historia animalium lib.I. De quadrupedibus viviparis*, Zurich, 1551; *Historia animalium lib.II. De quadrupedibus oviparis*, Zurich, 1554; *Historia animalium lib.III. De aevium*, Zurich, 1555; *Historia animalium lib.IIII. Qui est de piscu, et aquatilium animalium natura*, Zurich, 1558.

derived from the various traditional sources we have discussed above, including the bestiary. His classifications of animals and four-book division were based upon Aristotle's *De animalibus*, which was published in five Venetian editions by 1498.[21] Among his classical sources Gesner also cited Pliny, Aelian, Oppian, Dioscorides, Terrence and Plautus; Albertus Magnus was his most important medieval source.[22] It is known that Gesner copied two illustrations from an illustrated manuscript of Oppian's *Cynegetica* (ca.217 AD).[23] In his first book Gesner established rubrics for each of the eight chapters marked by the letters A to H. A. dealt with the names of the animals in different languages, B. with their geographical locations, C. with their life-styles, reproduction and life expectancy, D. with instincts and communication, E. with their use by Man, F. with their alimentary value, G. with their adaptations for remedies, and H. covered philological and etymological aspects of animal names as well as myths, proverbs, symbolism and religion.

In an attempt to define the place of fictional sources in Gesner's book, William B. Ashworth wrote the following: 'What are we to make of this barrage of folktales and myths? Why are such stories here, in a work of natural history? One might choose to believe, as many commentators have, that Gesner was simply a lousy natural historian; that for all his humanistic fervor he patently lacked the common sense to discriminate between fact and fiction. But such a conclusion makes a dangerous presupposition about natural history; it assumes that good natural history consists only of true facts, and that a natural history containing mythical or apocryphal material is somehow inferior. But perhaps Gesner did not feel that way. Perhaps he thought that a proper essay on the fox would include not only information on the fox's name, size and appearance, but also every fox folktale, every vulpine myth, every Reynardian legend that has come down to us. Perhaps Gesner believed that such tales reveal to us a great deal about the place of animals in human culture, and that one of the goals of natural history,

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[21] Aristotle, *De Animalibus*, Venetiis, 1476, 1489, 1492, 1495, 1498.

[22] Pliny's *Historia naturalis* was first published in Latin, in Venice, 1469, Treviso, 1479 & 1483 & Venice, 1491 & 1496, and in Italian in Venice, 1476 & 1481; *De animalibis* by Albertus Magnus was first published in Rome, 1478, with 15 incunabula, and at least 43 editions in the 16th c.

[23] See W.B. Ashworth jr., "Emblematic Natural History in the Renaissance," in N. Jardine, J.A. Secord & E. Spary (eds.), *Cultures of Natural History*, Cambridge, 1996, 17–37, esp. 26 & Zoltán Kádár, *Survivals of Greek Zoological Illuminations in Byzantine Manuscripts*, Budapest, 1978.

perhaps the supreme goal, is to understand the intricate web of relationships that interconnect humans and animals. Gesner used every available thread because he was trying to weave the richest tapestry possible'.[24] I have quote this passage almost in its entirety because it illuminates the issue so well.

There are several points to be underlined here. The first is that outstanding texts in the field of natural history, written in the sixteenth century by men like Gesner, who were formally educated in natural science, included material from the spheres of cultural or literary history that we would define as unscientific. The importance attached to this material as part of a compilation of knowledge reveals an attitude that imparts to literature and art a documentary value. In other words, if animal myths and fables convey attitudes towards animals, or reflect 'relationships that interconnect humans and animals', they are valid sources of knowledge. This implies that strategies of veiling and concealment, as employed in simile, metaphor and allegory, are perceived as legitimate means for transmitting truth and reality, subjective as well as objective reality. This might be compared to the way a modern day psychologist approaches a child's poem or drawing as a valid and reliable document of his attitudes and emotions.

Gesner the scholar collected information from every possible written source, but he also traveled, collected specimens, and corresponded with friends, in order to present as comprehensive a picture as possible. The second point that I would like to emphasize relates to the multiplicity of sources, approaches, and interpretations found primarily in section H of Gesner's *Historia animalium*. The epithets, metaphors, symbols, emblems, tales and proverbs, associated by Gesner with each animal, were those that concurrently found expression in visual art. Medieval books on animals, adopting exegetic methodology, had offered mutually exclusive modes of interpretation that were often conflated in artistic adaptations. This method of multiple interpretations assumed new form and content under the direct influence of classical sources, and contemporary adaptations of these in emblems and proverbs. Ashworth stated: 'it is clear that the idea of the emblem captured the very essence of Gesner's view of nature: that the natural world is a complex matrix of seemingly obscure symbols and hidden meanings, which can suddenly become clear in a burst of illumination, if only you view it from

[24] Ashworth (as above), 20.

enough different angles'.[25] Regardless of Gesner's aim, however, we will see that viewing obscure symbols and hidden meanings from different angles did not necessarily lead to a synthetic coherence. In fact, Gesner's entries are full of conflicting tales, reports and estimations of each animal, which he made no effort to reconcile.

Among the most innovative aspects of Gesner's books on animals are the illustrations. The four books, on live-bearing quadrupeds, egg-laying quadrupeds, birds and fish (1551–58), together with the posthumous book on serpents (1587), contained a total of 1,200 beautiful illustrations, mostly woodcuts. Many of the prints in the *Historia animalium* were based on original water-color studies by Hans Weiditz (ca.1500–1536), who had worked in Dürer's studio in Nuremberg (Fig. 9). In fact, Dürer's well known rhinoceros was among the many illustrations that were subsequently copied or reprinted. All are precise depictions based on careful observation; there are no illustrations of animal fables, myths or emblems. This clear-cut differentiation between fact and fancy, between objective visual depictions and fictional tales, recalls Leonardo's disassociation of naturalistic animal drawings from bestiary myths and moralizations.

The *Historia animalium* was reprinted in 1604, 1617–20, and 1669. This work was also transmitted by a condensed German version that dated from Gesner's lifetime, and an English translation by Edward Topsell, with some modifications and supplements, called *The History of four-footed Beasts* (London, 1607 & 1658).[26] The continued popularity of Gesner's work and its translations is notably in contrast to the ebbing interest in the focused zoological studies of Belon, on birds (1553), and Rondelet, on fish (1554). The latter were not reprinted or translated. Ashworth explained this as part of the tendency towards allegory and the emblematic view of animals that flourished in the last half of the sixteenth century.[27] In fact emblematic material from the earliest Italian emblem book, Alciato's *Emblematum libellum* (first issued in Augsburg, 1531) was already incorporated by Gesner (1551–1558) and subsequently by Topsell. Michael Bath has noted that 'Topsell was used more than once as a pattern book for decorative artists, and may well

[25] *Ibid.*, 23.

[26] *The History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents and Insects by Edward Topsell*, introduction by W. Ley, 3 vols., New York, 1967, is a republication of the 1658 edition that contained additional material in the volumes on serpents and insects by authors other than Gesner.

[27] Ashworth (as in note 23), 30.

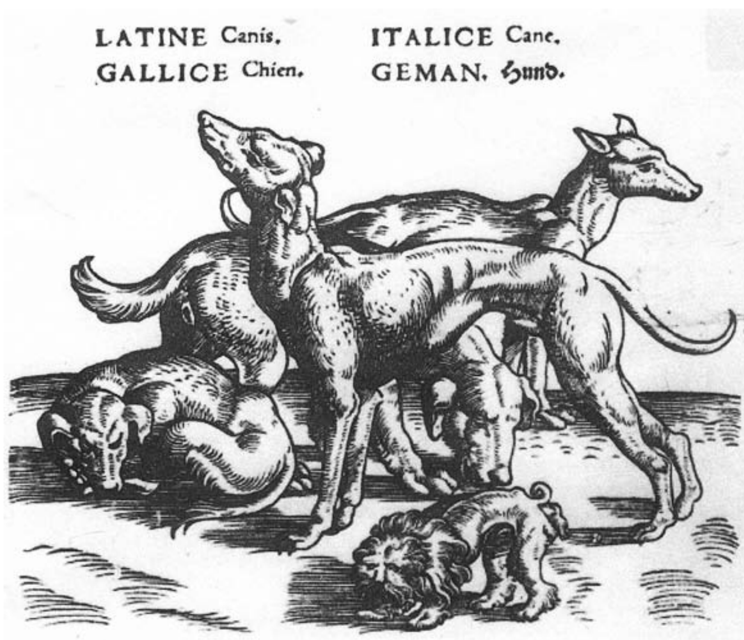

Fig. 9. *Cani*, engraving from Konrad Gesner, *Icones animalium quadrupedum viviparorum et ovirarorum*, Zurich, 1553, p. 15.
Copyright Bibliothèque Centrale du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris.

have helped to confirm the links which animals traditionally had with more strictly allegorical or emblematic subjects in decorative schemes'.[28] I found additional support in Topsell's book for my interpretation of the three animal heads in Titian's *London Allegory* as images of sins (Fig. 54).[29] In his discussion of Cerberus, Topsell explains the heads of the lion, the wolf and the dog as follows: 'Cerberus himself with *his three heads signified the multiplicity of Devils*; that is, a Lions, A Wolfs, and a fawning Dogs; one for the Earth, another for the Water, and the third for the Air: for which cause Hercules in flaying Cerberus, is said to overcome all *temptation, vice and wickedness, for so did his three heads signify*'.[30] (My emphasis).

[28] See Ashworth (as in note 23) 30–32 and M. Bath, "Some Early English Translations of Alciato: Edward Topsell's *Beastes and Serpents*," *Emblemata*, 11, 2001, 393–402.
[29] See Chapter Seven.
[30] Topsell, (as in note 26), 113.

CHAPTER THREE

EMBLEMATIC LITERATURE AND RELATED SOURCES

The Renaissance emblem, as a model for disguised animal symbolism, introduces several new characteristics, in comparison with the sources we have been discussing. Bestiaries, *exempla* literature, encyclopedic works, epics and fables were basically literary forms; illustrations were optional. When illustrations existed, as in the bestiaries, they served as visual aids or embellishments to the text but contributed nothing to the exegetic or moralistic interpretations. In the case of the emblem the image was indispensable, but it depended on a brief text, and often a title, to explicate its meaning. The interdependence of image and word, so typical of Renaissance culture, enhanced its potential as a model for the visual arts.

By the 1440s, long before the publication of emblem books, Pisanello and other medalists were creating emblematic images with symbolic animals and birds on the reverse of portrait medals. On the reverse of his bronze portrait medal for Alphonse of Aragon (Florence, Bargello), Pisanello added the inscription *Liberalitas Augusta* to his depiction of an eagle who leaves a dead gazelle to the vultures. Another medal for Alphonse, attributed to Pisanello's workshop (London, British Museum), portrays an angel/cupid on a *quadriga*, modeled on contemporary illustrations to Petrarch's *Trionfi*, with a motto extolling *Fortitudo*.[1] Among the early examples of emblems in Renaissance portraiture is the floral devise and motto on the reverse of Leonardo's painting of Ginevra de' Benci (1474, Washington, National Gallery). The complimentary relationship of text and image is also seen, for example, in Holbein's portrait of Erasmus (Longford Castle), which includes a Greek inscription from his *Adages*. Emblems were widely used in the decorative arts, court and religious festivals, printer's marks, frontispieces, and elsewhere.[2] Michael Bath has also shown how an epigram originating from Theocritus was

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[1] For these and other examples of his emblematic medals, see L. Syson, "*Opus pisani pictoris*. Les médailles de Pisanello et son atelier," in *Pisanello*, Actes du colloque, 2 vols., Musée de Louvre (1996), Paris, 1998, 377– 426, esp. Figs. 18–23.

[2] See D.S. Russell, "Emblematics and Court Culture," in his *Emblematic Structures in Renaissance French Culture*, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1995, esp. 191–94 & 206–209.

used by Lucas Cranach in his paintings of Cupid and the Bees, even before the subject was adopted by Alciato in two emblems.[3] The adoption of animal symbols and allegories from bestiaries, heraldry, fables, epigrams, and emblems, for the iconography of political propaganda in the Renaissance has been the subject of various studies.[4] Aspects of the influence of the emblematic genre as a source for disguised animal symbolism in non-emblematic art are examined in my chapters on Carpaccio's *Miles Christianus*, Titian's *London Allegory*, and the San Lorenzo *lavabo* (Chapters 4, 7 & 8).

What were the sources of Renaissance emblematic literature and how did these affect animal iconography? As we have seen in the cases of Gesner and Topsell, the categorical differentiation between Renaissance 'scientific' natural history and 'allegorical' emblematic literature, as two unrelated genres, is not always valid or consistent. In fact, diverse sixteenth century literary genres dealing with animals from different view points were variously interrelated. Animal proverbs from the *Adagiorum collectanea* (Paris, 1500) of Erasmus, for example, were used by Gesner and Topsell, and reappeared in the book on quadrupeds by Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522–1605), published in several editions after his death.[5] Animal emblems were taken by Gesner, and subsequently by Topsell, from the first Renaissance emblem book, Andrea Alciato's *Embelmatum libellus*, first printed by H. Steyner, in Augsburg, 1531 and reprinted with additions in more than one-hundred and thirty editions between 1532 and 1790.[6]

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[3] M. Bath, "Honey and Gall, or: Cupid and the Bees. A Case of Iconographic Slippage," in *Andrea Alciato and the Emblem Tradition*: *Essays in Honor of Virginia Woods Callahan*, Ed. Peter M. Daly, New York, 1989, 59–94, esp. 68–70.

[4] See e.g. L. Jillings, "The Eagle and the Frog: Hutten's Polemic against Venice," *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, March 1988, 14–26 and R.W. Scheller, "L'union des princes: Louis XII, his allies and the Venetian Campaign of 1509," *Simiolus*, vol. 27, 1999, nos. 1/2, 195–242, esp. 195, 201–205.

[5] Ulisse Aldrovandi, *De quadrupedibus digitatis*, Bologna 1605, 1616, 1621, 1637. See also his *Ornithologia*, Bologna, 1600.

[6] Among the sixteenth century editions of Alciato were those of 1534, 1539 & 1542, Wechel, Paris; 1546, Aldus, Venice; 1546 & 1547, J. de Tournes, Lyon; 1548 & 1550, G. Rouille, Lyon; 1558 & 1564, Totti, Padua. See M. Bath, "Some Early English Translations of Alciato: Edward Topsell's Beastes and Serpents," *Emblematica*, II, 2001, 393–402.

Andrea Alciato's Emblematum libellus: *Its Sources and Influence*

The *Hieroglyphics* of Horapollo Nilus and the Planudean *Greek Anthology* of Greek epigrams have been identified as important models for Alciato.[7] The *Greek Anthology* is a collection of lyric and epigrammatic poems by ancient and medieval writers. It was published in Florence in 1494 by Janus Lascaris, based on the work of the monk Maximus Planudes (13th c.). Of the one-hundred and three emblems in Alciato's 1531 edition thirty one were based on poems from this source, which contained moral instruction and were often of an ambiguous nature. But these included a relatively small number of animal images.[8]

The *Hieroglyphics* of Horapollo provided a more fertile source of animal symbolism. It was first published in Greek by Aldus Manutius in 1505 together with Aesop's fables, indicating that the former was seen primarily in terms of animal symbolism or, more specifically, animal ideograms.[9] The first Latin translation, by Trebazio Vicentino, came out in Basel in 1518. A French translation of Horapollo, made in 1529 for Louise of Savoy, bore the following dedication:

> Doncques pour mon essay et commencement mest venu entre les mains ung livre en grec lequel a fait ung aucteur nomme Orus apollo en egyptien, qui parle comment et en quelle maniere les prestres degypte escrivoient leur secretz sans lettres seulement par figures de bestes & autres choses lequel ma semble plaisant. Car il descript la nature de plusieurs bestes mieulx que aultre livre que je puisse trouver.[10]

[7] The *Hieroglyphics of Horapollo* were published in Venice, 1505; Bologna, 1517 and Paris, 1521; the *Greek Anthology* was published in 1494, 1528 and 1529. Regarding their use by Alciato, see D.S. Russell, *Emblematic Structures in Renaissance French Culture*, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1995, 113–115.

[8] In later editions of Alciato there was additional material from the Anthology. See comparative list by Denis Drysdall: http://www.mun.ca/alciato/greek.html and additional literature in the Glasgow emblem site: http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk).

[9] The manuscript of Horapollo, discovered on the island of Andros in 1419, is thought to originate from the 5th c.

[10] '*Hence for my essay and beginning, there has come into my hands a book in Greek, written by an author called Horus apollo, an Egyptian, who tells how and in what manner the priests of Egypt wrote down their secrets without letters, only through figures of beasts and other things that seem pleasant to me. It is because he describes the nature of many beasts better than any book that I have found*.' (my trans.), from Chantilly, Musée Condé, ms.682; quoted by Russell (as in note 2), 120.

Among the thirty-four editions of Horapollo's *Hieroglyphics* that appeared in the sixteenth century, several included illustrations.[11] Each of the fifty-eight books, dedicated to one or more animals, contained multiple interpretations. Michael Bath has shown that the *Hieroglyphics* of Horapollo influenced the iconography of the 'Oldest Animals', a classical theme unknown in the bestiaries that was revived by the emblem books of Alciato and Ripa.[12] The legacy of the *Hieroglyphics* of Horapollo and its approach to animal symbolism was expanded by Pierio Valeriano in his *Hieroglyphica* of 1556, which was dedicated to Cosimo de' Medici.[13]

Another favorite source for emblematists were the Aesopic fables, which dealt mostly with animals. They were widely popularized in late medieval manuscripts due to their traditional adaptability to moral teaching and social satire, and were repeatedly published in Greek, Latin, and the vernacular throughout the sixteenth century, primarily in Venice.[14] Animal fables that appeared in Alciato's *Embelmatum libellus* (Augsburg, 1531) and Achille Bocchi's *Symbolicae Questiones* (Bologna, 1555) were repeated, for example, in Mathias Holzwart's *Emblematum Tyrocinia* (Strasbourg, 1581) and Nicolaus Reusner's *Emblemata* (Frankfurt, 1581) and *Aureola Emblemata* (Augsburg, 1587).[15]

The revival of classical sources in emblematic literature, in general, and those of natural history in animal emblems, in particular, is a salient feature of the genre. Information about the world of creatures was

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[11] E.g. The edition published by Kerver, Paris, 1543 & 1551, and the one illustrated by Aloisio Zanetti, Rome, 1597, 1599 & 1600.

[12] M. Bath, "The Iconography of Time," in A.L. Bagley & E.M. Griffon (eds.), *The Telling Image: Explorations in the Emblem*, New York, 1996, 29–68.

[13] P. Valeriano (Giovan Pietro dalle Fosse, 1477–1588), *Hieroglyphica sive de sacris Aegyptiorum aliarumque gentium literis, commentarii Joannis Valeriani*, Basilea, 1556.

[14] Among the early printed editions of Aesop's Fables in Italy were the following: Rome, 1483; Naples, 1485; Verona, 1479; Milan, 1498; Venice, 1502, 1505, 1542, 1549 & 1561. For a comprehensive list, see *Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in Italy and of Italian Boooks Printed in Other Countries from 1465 to 1600 Now in the British Museum*, London, 1958, 8–9. For the collection of fables and their history, see B.E. Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, Cambridge, Mass., 1965. Regarding their medieval adaptations, see e.g. Henderson, A.C., "Animal Fables as Vehicles of Social Protest and Satire: Twelfth century to Henryson," in J. Goossens & T. Sodman, *Third International Beast Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium*, (Münster, 1979), Köln & Wien, 1981, 160–73, and J.E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within, Animals in the Middle Ages*, New York & London, 1994, chapter 4: "Animals as Human Exemplars," esp. 114–128.

[15] See E. Klecker & S. Schreiner, "How to Gild Emblems. From Mathias Holzwart's Emblematum Tyrocinia to Nicolas Reusner's Aureaola Emblemata," in K.A.E. Enenkel & S.Q. Visser, *Mundus Emblematicus*, Turnhout, 2003, 131–72, esp. 137–140.

derived from the writings of Aristotle, Pliny, Aelian, Solinus and others, and adapted to new contexts. Most of these sources, however, contained neither metaphors nor moralizations, and excerpts thereof provided the basis for imaginative elaborations and interpretations, through which they became illustrations of moral lessons.[16] Consequently, despite its obvious debt to classical learning, the animal emblem was deeply embedded in the allegorical tradition of the *Physiologus* and bestiaries. Dietmar Peil, who studied the *Physiologus* tradition in emblematic art, found that the versions ascribed to St. Epiphanius of Constantia (c.315–403) and Theobaldi (11th c.), each published in both Greek and Latin during the Renaissance, had some direct influence on emblem books.[17] He noted that examples from the *Physiologus* were quoted by Joachim Camerarius, in his *Symbola et emblemata* (Nuremberg, 1590–1604) and F. Picinelli, in his *Mundus symbolicus* (1635), both of whom also cited medieval sources. Henkel and Schöne, in their *Emblemata*, noted 'the connection of the emblematic tradition with the symbolic thought of the Middle ages embodied in the herbals and bestiaries, which transmitted a wealth of motifs to the books of emblems'.[18] But modern writers who emphasize the revival of classical sources in emblems tend to overlook the fact that authors, such as Aristotle, Pliny and Aelian, were quoted and glossed in medieval animal literature and were transmitted to the Renaissance with their allegorical appendages.

Much as been written on the influence of the first Latin translation from the Arabic of Aristotle's *De animalibus* by Michael Scot (ca.1220) and the subsequent translation from the Greek by William of Moerbeke (ca.1260–70).[19] It has been found that animals depicted in manuscript

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[16] Aelian (3rd c.), who derived material for his *De natura animalium* from many earlier Greek writers and was more concerned with amusing than with facts, did suggest moral and didactic ways of interpreting animal behaviour that influenced Christian authors. See Aelian, *On the Charateristics of Animals*, trans. A.F. Scholfield, 3 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1958.

[17] Dietmar Peil, "On the Question of the Physiologus Tradition in Emblematic art and writing," in N. Flores (ed.), *Animals in the Middle Ages, A Book of Essays*, New York & London, 1996, 103–30, see notes 12 & 13 for bibliography on these Renaissance editions of the *Physiologus*. There are two modern editions of Theobald: *Physiologus Theobaldi Episcipi—Bishop Theobald's Bestiary*, Latin text with trans. by W Barnstone, Bloomington, Indiana, 1964 and *Theobaldi 'Physiologus'*, edited with intro. & comm. by P.T. Eden, Leiden/Köln, 1972 (available online, digital version: T. Gloning, 2003).

[18] A. Henkel & A. Schöne (eds.), *Emblemata. Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI und XVII Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart, 1967, repr. 1978.

[19] See C. Steel, G. Guldentops & P. Beullens (eds.), *Aristotle's Animals in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Leuven, 1999.

illustrations of Aristotle's text between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries show influences of bestiary themes, vernacular love-poetry and traditional medieval animal iconography.[20] Even more important to the present discussion are the moralistic commentaries on Aristotle's *De animalibus*, in Latin manuscripts, probably of mendicant origin, written between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.[21] These assumed the same moral modalities as the medieval animal literature discussed above, with opposing traits given *in bonum* and *in malum*, adoption of typological, tropological and anagogical interpretations, and penitential motifs, all applied to a selection of birds and animals. Baudouin van den Abeele, addressing the question of Aristotle's supposedly secularizing influence from the early thirteenth century, stated 'En réalité, le bouleversement aristotélicien n'a empêché en rien la prolifération d'une riche littérature allégorisante sur la nature durant la période qui va de 1250 à 1350. Dans le domaine du monde animale, l'arrivée des nouveaux textes aristotéliciens est sans doute à évaluer de façon nuancée: elle a donné lieu à des discours de niveaux radicalement différents. Plus qu'une césure, elle introduit une modalité supplémentaire dans le discours médiéval sur l'animal'.[22]

Some of the beast moralizations from bestiaries and other medieval sources were reverently preserved and transmitted by emblematists, others were adapted to new contexts. With the title *Gratiam referendam*, for example, Alciato narrated the myth of the stork's familial devotion,[23] as related by many sources, including Saint Ambrose, Isidore of Seville, the *Etymachia*, Horapollo and Leonardo da Vinci. The woodcut illustration of the stork feeding its young on the rooftop in the 1534 edition of Alciato is reminiscent of this same image in Carpaccio's *Knight in a landscape*, which was painted twenty-four years earlier (Figs. 10 & 13). In 1590 Cesare Ripa, like most of his contemporary emblematists, would still repeat the story of the stork's filial devotion.[24]

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[20] See M. Camille, "Bestiary or Biology? Aristotle's Animals in Oxford, Merton College, MS 271," in Steel, Guldentops & Beullens (as in note 19), 355–396.

[21] See B. van den Abeele, "Une version moralisée du *De animalibus* d'Aristote (XIVe siècle)," in Steel, Guldentops & Beullens (as in note 19), 338–354 and Camille, *op. cit.*, esp. 378–79, who wrote: "The moralizing and fantastic aspects that I have discerned in the illustration of the Merton *De animalibus* should not be thought of as 'medieval' since these aspects continue during the Renaissance in later translations and copies of the *Historia animalium*".

[22] Van den Abeele (as above), 352.

[23] Alciato, *Emblemata*, 1531, emblem 5; 1534, emblem 30.

[24] C. Ripa, *Iconologia*, Padova, 1611, 17.

14 ANDREAE ALCIATI

tanquam victor currum aſcendit triumpha-
lem, coniunctis duobus Leonibus illum ve-
hentibus, vt ex Plin. refert Crinit. lib. 16. ca. 10.
de honeſt. diſcipli. ſignificare volens, vti fe-
rociſsimos Leones, ſic etiam plurimos ma-
gnanimos & potentes principes ſibi obedi-
re, à ſeq; victos eſſe. Notatur hic inſolentia
& ſuperbia quæ ſemper & à natura victoriæ
ineſt, vt exclamat Cicero, in Orationib. pro
M. Marcello. Quemadmodum autem in ab-
ſciſſum Ciceronis caput ignominioſè ſæuie-
rint M. Antonius & vxor eius, recitat idem
Crinit. lib. 1. cap. 8.

Gratiam referendam. v.

Aërio inſignis pietate Ciconia nido,
Inueſtes pullos pignora grata fouet.

Taliáq;

Fig. 10. *Gratiam referendam*, Stork feeding its young on the rooftop, woodcut from Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum Liber*, Paris, 1584 (also reproduced in Lyon, 1556; Leiden, 1591; Padua, 1621), Glasgow University Library, Department of Special collections, Sp Coll S.M. 20, emblem 5, A3v–A4r.

Alciato and later emblematists also followed medieval sources in assigning several interpretations to the bat, whose physiological peculiarities were derived from Aristotle and Pliny. Under the title *Aliud de vespertilione*, he repeated the traditional explanation, that the bat is half blind in the light, to indicate religious and/or moral blindness as emphasized, for example, by Isidore, late medieval bestiaries, Ulrich of Strasbourg (13th c.) and Leonardo da Vinci.[25] This explanation of the bat's blindness would be repeated in the late Renaissance, suitably transformed by the Catholic Reformation into the image of the heretic and perpetuated as such in

[25] Alciato, *Emblemata*, 1549 & 1550 editions, emblem 62.

the Baroque age.[26] Alciato's additional claim that 'it signifies debtors, who are hidden and fear judgment' seems like the kind of admonishment against avarice that one would find in a preacher's handbook.

The Symbola et emblemata *by Joachim Camerarius*

Outstanding among the late sixteenth century printed emblem books, which preserved, synthesized and enhanced the literary and moralistic traditions that we have discussed above was the *Symbola et emblemata* (1590–1604) by the Nuremberg physician and botanist Joachim Camerarius (1534–1598).[27] Jan Papy has summarized the contribution of Camerarius as follows: 'His systematic exploration of nature's flora and fauna together with its decoding of its Creator's message in the Book of Nature constitute Camerarius's emblematic focus. Besides, in his scanning Camerarius shows himself a skillfully educated humanist scholar, for he practices the typical *ars excerpendi* in 'compiling' a true storehouse of details and anecdotes of any plant, quadruped, flying or aquatic animal from the ancient and contemporary botanical and treatises by Aristotle, Theophrastus, Pliny, Dioscorides, Aelian and Oppianus, and Ulisse Aldrovandi, Conrad Gesner, Pierre Belon, Guillaume Rondelet and Salvini. Each plant or animal has been deliberately chosen, so as to exploit one or more of its characteristics in a suitable, visually, morally, or religiously oriented analogy'.[28] In each of his four volumes Camerarius provided an index of his sources that included a long list of *Autores Vetustiores*, meaning classical and medieval authors, as well as *Autores Recentiores* dealing with hieroglyphics, emblems or *imprese*, whose botanical or zoological similes were included in his collection.

His retrospective orientation in animal emblems has been illustrated by Piel in his study of the *Physiologus* tradition in emblematic art.[29] According to Piel, Camerarius made three references in his *Symbola et*

[26] See e.g. Filippo Picinelli (1604–ca.1667), *Mundus Symbolicus*, book IV, chaper LXVI "*Vespertilio*", New York, 1976, 331–332. The first Italian edition was issued in 1635; it was later published in Cologne, 1715. A modern edition of *Mundus Symbolicus* was published by Garland Publications, New York, 1976.

[27] See Joachim Camerarius, *Symbola et emblemata*, Graz, 1986.

[28] J. Papy, "Joachim Camerarius's Symbolorum et emblematum centuriae quatuor: From Natural Sciences to Moral contemplation," in K.A.E. Enenkel & A.S.Q. Visser (eds.), *Mundus Emblematicus, Studies in Neo-Latin Emblem Books*, Turnhout, 2003, 201–233, quoted from 208–209.

[29] Peil (as in note 17), 103–30.

emblemata to the fifth century *Physiologus* of Epiphanius (first published in 1587). The first reference pertains to his emblem of the eagle trying to renew itself. Quotations were provided from Aristotle, Pliny and Horapollo, all of whom had explained that when the eagle grows old, the upper part of its beak starts to curve inward until it dies of starvation. He also quoted the explanation of Epiphanius, who claimed that the aging eagle also has trouble with its eyes, flies up into the air, whets its beak on a rock, dives into cold water, and receives rejuvenation in the rays of the sun. The moralization, in accordance with Epiphanius, stated that if anyone is oppressed by the multitude of his offenses, he must rise up towards the height (his own conscience), thrust himself on the rock (the orthodox faith), weep with ever flowing water (his tears), grow warm in the rays of the sun (the heat of penitence in the community of the faithful and the holy spirit), throwing off his scales (sins) in order to be renewed. The illustration of the eagle in the *Symbola et emblemata* of Camerarius is a reversed copy of the woodcut in Epiphanius, *Ad Physiologum*, Antwerp, 1588 (Fig. 11).[30] Camerarius also quoted Saint Jerome's interpretation of *Psalm* 102, '*Thy youth should be renewed like the eagle*', in which he wrote that the aged eagle looks for a fountain in which it can moisten itself and throw off its feathers and then lift itself up to the sun, as someone who, wishing to attain the holy teaching of Christ and observe divine precepts, must strip off and wash away iniquity and wicked emotions that weigh down the soul.[31] The eagle is one of the classic examples of an avian motif that continuously preserved its basic symbolic and moralistic connotations in literature and art from antiquity till the Renaissance and beyond. The eagle carved behind a late fifteenth century lavabo in the Florentine church of San Lorenzo, for example, in addition to its explicit function as a Medici device, illustrates the traditional connection between the symbolism of the eagle's rejuvenation, as a metaphor of spiritual and moral renewal, and the water-purification ritual, as described by Saint Jerome.[32]

Following his ancient and medieval sources as well as contemporary precedents, such as *Delle Imprese* (Naples, 1592) by Giulio Cesare Capaccio (1560–1631), Camerarius depicted retrospective images of animal and birds with their traditional medieval narratives, metaphors,

[30] See Peil (as in note 17), pp. 106 & 107, figures 2 & 3.
[31] *Op. cit.*, 108.
[32] See Chapter Eight.

Fig. 11. *Vetustate relicta*, Eagle, woodcut from Joachim Camerarius, *Symbola et emblemata*, Nuremberg, 1596, centuria III, emblem no. 16, Glasgow University Library.

and moralizations.[33] We may note among these the vigilant crane holding a stone, the pelican that resurrects its young with its blood, the ermine that prefers to die rather than compromise its purity, and the virtuous beaver that castrates itself, all themes that had been adopted as veiled symbols in non-emblematic art throughout the Renaissance.[34] The vigilant crane, a motif from Pliny, Plutarch and Aelian,[35] repeated by the bestiaries, Albertus Magnus, and Horapollo, was painted by Hans

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[33] See M. Tung, "Joachim Camerarius's Symbola et emblemata: A Study of the Impresa Connections," *Emblemata*, 10, 1996 (2000), 309–344.

[34] For the emblems mentioned above, see Camerarius, 1986, *Centuria* III, emblems XXVII & XXXVII, *Centuria* II, emblems LXXXI & XCIII.

[35] Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, X, 23; Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium*, 10 and Aelian, *De natura animalium*, III, 13. See Aelian, *On the Characteristics of Animals*, English, trans. by A.F. Schofield, Cambridge, Mass.

Memling on an organ shutter, by Dürer in a Book of hours and on a Triumphal Arch for the Emperor Maximilian II, by Carpaccio in his painting of a *Knight*, and appeared on a medal of the Altdorf Academy with the motto *Officium natura docet* (Instinct teaches one's proper task), following the emblem by Camerarius (Fig. 20).[36] The virtuous beaver, as a metaphor for the spiritual man who overcomes his earthly passions, appears among the animals painted by Lucas Cranach in his *St. Jerome* of 1526 (Fig. 33, cf. Fig. 5). Camerarius was instrumental in propagating emblematic beast and bird imagery through his involvement in medal designs for the Altdorf Academy in Nuremberg (1577–1626). This important contribution has been studied and extensively illustrated by Frederick J. Stopp.[37] He found that the *Symbola et emblemata* by Camerarius was also used as a reference book by clergymen and preachers.

The Traditional and Retrospective Aspect of the Renaissance Emblem

Almost six-hundred pages of the huge compilation of *Emblemata* by Henkel and Schöne are devoted to animals.[38] Few authors have dealt with the question of why animal imagery, both literary and visual, is so predominant in this innovative humanistic genre of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Part of the answer may be found in the traditional and retrospective nature of the emblematic form in regard to its medieval precedents. It appears that most, if not all, of the animals depicted in the allegorical contexts of Renaissance emblems had precedents in encyclopedic, doctrinal, didactic or moralizing literature of the Middle Ages. Pliny's *Naturalis historia*, for example, which was one of the major classical sources used for Renaissance animal emblems, was already quoted in Greek by the *Physiologus*, and indirectly in Latin by Isidore of Seville, Rabanus Maurus, Thomas de Cantimpré, and Richard de Fournival, among others. Furthermore, early doctors of

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[36] See Albert the Great, *Man and the Beasts, De animalibus (Books 22–26)*, trans, J.J. Scanlan, Binghamton, New York, 1987, 292 and *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo Nilous*, ed. & trans. A. Turner Cory, London, (1840) 1987, II, XCVIII, 143–45; C.T. Eisler, *Dürer's Animals*, Washington & London, 1991, for the stork depiction by Memling, fig. 3.9 and Maximilian's Book of Hours, figs. 3.29–3.31. The medal was reproduced by F.J. Stopp, *The Emblems of the Altdorf Academy: Medals and Medal Orations 1577–1626*, London, 1974, 130–31. Regarding the crane and its sources in Carpaccio's painting of the Knight, see my Chapter Four.

[37] Stopp (as above).

[38] Henkel & Schöne, 1967 (as in note 18), chapter IV: *Tierwelt*, 365–948.

the Church, like Saints Basil and Ambrose (4th c.), Saint Augustine (5th c.) and Boethius (5th c.), emphasized that the world of nature and its creatures was meant to educate man.[39] Among the precedents one might note Aelian's contrast of human folly with the wisdom and virtues of animals, proposing examples of the latter as lessons for man. The concept of education through animals was consistently promoted by later medieval writers in varied literary and didactic genres. According to Alain de Lille (12th c.), 'Every creature of the world is like a book and a picture to us, and a mirror'.[40] The English theologian Thomas of Chobham (d.1236) in his *Summa de arte praedicandi*, wrote:

> The Lord created different creatures with different natures not only for the sustenance of man, but also for their instruction, so that through the same creature we may contemplate not only what may be useful to use in the body, but also what may be useful in the soul…there is no creature in which we may not contemplate some property belonging to it which may lead us to imitate God, or some property which may move us to flee from the devil.[41]

The study of God's creatures was thus conceived as a means to guide him from the literal to the symbolic, the manifest to the concealed, the temporal to the spiritual, the physical to the metaphysical. The early humanist emblematists tended to select animal allegories that were suited to their moral, intellectual and political messages, but the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought a revival of early Christian moral naturalism, readapted to doctrinal messages, among religious emblematists who were occupied with ecclesiastical reform and religious piety.[42]

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[39] See St. Basil, *Hexaemeron*, in Migne, *P.G.* XXIX, coll. 4 ff.; B. Rowland, "The Relationship of St. Basil's *Hexaemeron* to the *Physiologus*," in *Épopée Animale Fable Fabliau*, ed. G. Bianciotti & M. Salvat, Paris, 1981; St. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron*, trans. J. Savage, New York, 1961, 235–37; Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. V.E. Watts, Middlesex, 1969, 124–27; St. Augustine, *Contra Mendacium*, in Migne, *P.L.* XL, 538 and "Christian Instruction," in *Writings of St. Augustine*, vol. 4, trans. J. Gavignan, New York, 1950, 83.

[40] Alain de Lille, *De Incarnatione Christi*, in Migne, *P.L.* CCX, 579a: *Omnis mundi creatura quasi liber et pictura nobis est et speculum*. Trans. by Flores (as in note 17), Introduction, ix.

[41] Thomas of Chobham, *Summa de arte praedicandi*, ed. F. Morenzoni, Turnhout, 1988, 275; quoted by Camille (as in note 20), 355.

[42] Regarding Reformation and Counter-Reformation emblem books, see e.g.: A. Rolet, "Achille Bocchi's *Symbolicae Questiones*", in Enenkel & Visser (as in note 15), 101–30; A. Adams, "The emblemata of Théodore de Bèze" (1580), *Ibid.*, 71–99; R. Dimler, "The *Imago Primi Saeculi*; The Secular Tradition and the 17th Century Jesuit

Is the question of innovation versus tradition still relevant in a discussion of animal symbolism of the late sixteenth century? Was there a conflict of attitudes in this period of empirical naturalism? Or was there a clear division between the scientific as opposed to literary or moralistic approach? Joannes Sambucas (1531–1584), who was innovative in his reuse of traditional animal and bird symbolism in his *Emblemata cum aliquot nummis* (Antwerp, 1564), stated that nature should not be studied as a goal in itself. Arnoud S.Q. Visser has shown that Sambucas selected his themes primarily for their moral relevance and even warned against scholarly curiosity in his emblems.[43] In contrast to the usual emphasis on the scientific naturalism of the sixteenth century, José Julio García Arranz has even suggested that 'the return to ancient texts and the close attention paid to their literary and philological aspects blurred the development of empirical knowledge'.[44] He attributed the continued and extensive use of emblematic literature that derived from anachronistic traditions to the fact that its main purpose was didactic.[45]

A significant link between the symbolic approach to animals in traditional Christian allegory and that of Renaissance emblems lies in their common tendency towards ambivalence. Ambivalent animal symbolism was discussed at the beginning of my introduction in regard to the medieval *exempla* and their debt to exegetic methods of multiple interpretations. The tendency to read an animal image on several levels and tolerance of, or even preference for, conflicting interpretations was suited to the ambiguous and enigmatic aspect of the Renaissance emblem. The system of multiple interpretations based on a diversity of sources provided a stage for the scholarship and intellect of the emblematist and a challenge for the highly sophisticated reader.

Let us take an example from among the avian emblems to illustrate the complexity of the system, the diversity of sources, and the resultant ambiguity. An emblem by Joannes Sambucus depicts four different birds,

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Emblem," *Thought*, 56, 1981, 433–448 and "The Bee-Topos in the Jesuit Emblem Book: Themes and Contrast," in A. Adams & A.J. Harper (eds.), *The Emblems in Renaissance and Baroque Europe; Tradition and Variety*, Select Papers of the Glasgow International Emblem Conference, August, 1990, Leiden, New York, Köln, 1992, 229–46.

[43] A.S.Q. Visser, *Joannes Sambucus and the Learned Image; The Use of the Emblem in Late-Renaissance Humanism*, Leiden, Boston, 2005.

[44] José Julio García Arranz, "Image and Moral Teaching through Emblematic Animals", in P.M. Daly & J. Manning, *Aspects of Renaissance and Baroque Symbol Theory, 1500–1700*, New York, 1999, 93–108.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

a swan, a parrot, a nightingale and a magpie (Fig. 12). The birds, in armorial frames, accompany figures of Orpheus (Apollo?) with a lyre and Homer writing in a book. The epigram reads '*In secundus consistere laudabile quoque*' (It is also admirable to stand in the second place). The text deals with the question of poetic or musical superiority as represented by Homer, to whom the nightingale was dedicated, as opposed to Orpheus with his lyre, for whom the swan was sacred. Orpheus is said to have the first place and Homer the second although, says the author, '*it would have been more justified if they had given Orpheus the second place. For just as the parrot deserves the first place and the garrulous magpie the second, the latter [Homer] defeats the former [Orpheus]*'. The conclusion, which deals neither with music nor with animals, states: '*this symbol can refer to those who cannot hold the first place, but then quickly follow by their virtue*'. What then is the function of the birds in this emblem? Besides the fact that each was variously associated with music, Sambucas chose four birds that have a long and illustrious history in allegorical avian literature from antiquity until the Renaissance.

The swan song was already associated in antiquity with death. Philostratus told how the swans sang when Phaeton died in the river Eridanus.[46] Cicero mentioned that the swan was sacred to Apollo, referring to its song at the end of life.[47] Pliny wrote that the swan emits a beautiful song when it dies.[48] Although some medieval authors associated the swan with pride and hypocrisy, Cecco d'Ascoli in *L'Acerba* described the swan as a symbol of purity, filial devotion and penitence in old age.[49] The fifteenth century *Libellus de natura animalium*, printed in the early sixteenth century, refers to the swan song as the praise of God before death.[50]

The magpie, by contrast, was notorious as a chatterbox. Ovid recounted the story of the nine haughty daughters of Pierus, who were transformed into magpies after losing a singing competition, thus

[46] Philostratus, *Imagines*, trans. by A. Fairbanks, Cambridge, Mass. & London, 1931, Book I, II, 47. A. Carrega & P. Navone (eds.), *Le proprietà degli animali*, Genova, 1983, and M. Levi D'Ancona, *Lo Zoo del Rinascimento*, Lucca, 2001, provided many of the references to birds and animals mentioned in this chapter.

[47] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, Book XI; *Opera*, Basilea, 1534.

[48] Pliny, *Naturalis historiae*, Book X, chapter 27.

[49] Cecco d'Ascoli, *L'Acerba*, edited by A. crespi, Ascoli Piceno, 1927, Book III, chapter VI, 1–34, commences: '*Il cigno è bianco senza alcuna macchia e dolcemente canta nel morire*' (available on web site).

[50] See '*cigno*' in P. Navone, *Introduzione al Libellus de natura animalium*, in *Le proprietà degli animali* (as in note 46).

50 I. SAMBVCI

In ſecundis conſiſtere laudabile quoque.

ORPHEVS lyra valebat,
Olor ſacerq́; ſemper
Fuit, ſuaue cantans.
Poſt hunc bonusq́; Homerus,
Philomela cui dicata eſt,
Tanquam loco ſecundo.
Sed rectius ſecundum
Illi locum dediſſent:
Nam vt Pſittacus meretur
Primas, loquax ſecundas
Pica, iſte vincit illum.
Hoc Symbolum referri
Ad eos poteſt, gradum qui
Laudemq́; non tenere
Primam queunt: ſed inde
Virtute mox ſequentem.

Fig. 12. *In secundis consistere laudibile quoque*, woodcut from Joannes Sambucus, *Emblemata cum aliquot nummis*, Antwerp, 1564, Thysius 1197, p. 50. Copyright Leiden University Library, Special Collections Research Center.

providing a suitable source for associating this bird with the idea of a poetic or musical competition.[51] The nightingale was famous for its sweet song. The *Libellus de natura animalium*, following various medieval sources, claimed that the nightingale kept awake in order to sing at night during the months of April and May, thus protecting the vine during its period of growth. This was said to represent the rational man, who avoids sleep in times of trouble and doubt in order to avoid falling prey to sin and the devil's noose.[52]

The parrot, famous for its ability to imitate the human voice, was said to announce the arrival of the Virgin Mary, the new Eve (as the

[51] Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, V, 298–314, 665–78.

[52] See '*rosignolo*' in *Libellus de natura animalium* (as in notes 29 & 32). Cf. "De l'usignolo", *Bestiario moralizzato di Gubbio*, in study by A. carrega (as in note 46), 149.

Archangel Gabriel), by pronouncing '*kairé*', translated into Latin as '*ave*' (the reverse of Eva). It was consequently considered a herald of the Immaculate Conception, since the Virgin was conceived by the Word.[53] The parrot was also noted in medieval encyclopedic writings for its purity, shown by the fact that the female parrot makes her nest in the orient, where it does not rain, so that it cannot be stained by mud. This metaphor of the man who safeguards his internal purity, avoiding guilt and devoting his life to God, was still repeated in the *Libellus de natura animalium*.[54]

Sambucus selected for his emblem four birds that illustrate musical or poetic talent, but he ignored the familiar moralistic and theological connotations that were traditionally applied to them. His moralization refers not to Christian virtue, but to the classical concept of *virtus*, the glory of achievement and recognition, thus conveying a secular humanist ideal. Sambucus drew his imagery, with all its accumulated connotations, from the hallowed tradition of animal symbolism but invested it with a modernized, secular significance that was personally meaningful to him. It should be underlined, however, that, without knowledge of the traditional exegetic connotations, the new implications would not be understood.

The following chapters similarly demonstrate the adaptation of traditional animal symbolism in a varied selection of innovative artistic contexts, where conservatism constitutes a fundamental factor in the dynamics of cultural and artistic evolution.

[53] On the parrot as a Marian symbol, see e.g. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, Book XII, chapter 7. Note my discussion of this theme in Chapter Five. M. Levi D'Ancona (as in note 46), 170, quoted Picinelli's statement that ambassadors are like parrots because they repeat what they are told and do not express their own opinion.

[54] See '*papagallo*' in *Libellus de natura animalium* (as in notes 46 & 50).

PART TWO

CASE STUDIES

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BIRDS AND ANIMALS OF CARPACCIO'S *MILES CHRISTIANUS*

> Be so convinced of the existence of invisible things that those things that are seen become but mere shadows, which present to the eye only a faint image of invisible realities.
>
> Erasmus, *Enchiridion*

Presumptions regarding Carpaccio's narrative approach and contemporary realism have led most scholars to regard his *Knight in a Landscape* with a literal and historical orientation (Figs. 13 & 14). Although some writers have remarked that the flora and fauna in the painting bear symbolic connotations, there has been little effort to interpret them in the framework of a well-defined iconographic context. The question of the iconographic program and its implications are still a subject of debate. At least five 'definitive' identifications of the Knight, conceived as an actual historical personage, have been put forward, often based on questionable evidence.[1]

The landscape has also been variously identified as one or another of the cities with which the presumed subject was somehow associated.[2]

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[1] For identifications and theories, see G. Perocco, *Tutta la Pittura del Carpaccio*, Milan, 1960, 70 and *L'opera completa di Vittore Carpaccio*, Milan, 1967, 106; P.J. Lauts, *Carpaccio: Paintings and Drawings*, London, 1962, 245; V. Branca & R. Weiss, "Carpaccio e L'iconografia del più grande umanista veneziano (Ermolao Barbaro), *Arte Veneta*, XVII, 1963, 40; P. Zampetti, *Vittore Carpaccio*, catalogo della mostra, Venezia, Palazzo Ducale, 1963 and *Vittore Carpaccio*, Venice, 1966; R. Goffen, "Carpaccio's Portrait of a Young Knight: Identity and Meaning," *Arte Veneta*, XXXVII, 1983, 37–48; A. Rona, "Zur identität von Carpaccio's Ritter," *Pantheon*, 1983, 295–306; H. Nickel, "Carpaccio's Young Knight in a Landscape: Christian Champion and Guardian of Liberty," *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, XVIII, 1984, 85–96; L. Konecný, "Nouveaux regards sur le jeune cavalier de Vittore Carpaccio", *Artibus et historiae*, 21, 1990, 111–24; M. Massa, "Vittore Carpaccio e la "sua" Ancona," *Notizie da Palazzo Albani*, 20, 1991, nos. 1–2, 81–88; V. Sgarbi, *Carpaccio*, Milano, 1994, 154–57. A. Ballarin, "Éléments du catalogue reportés en fin d'ouvrage: une nouvelle perspective sur Giorgione," in *Le siècle de Titien*, Paris, 1993, 678–88 (trans. from *Giorgione*, Atti del Convegno, 1979, 227–52) and J. Anderson, *Giorgione*, 1997, 314. Although I disagree with her approach (see below), Rona Goffen's article (1983) represents the one effort to methodically integrate the flora and fauna, as well as other details, into a meaningful iconographic program.

[2] E.g. in Nickel, 1984 & Massa, 1991 (as in note 1).

Fig. 13. Vittore Carpaccio, *Knight in a Landscape*, 1510. Copyright Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

Fig. 14. Vittore Carpaccio, *Knight in a Landscape* (detail), 1510. Copyright Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

Unraveling the mystery of Carpaccio's painting, if we are to judge from the literature, involves little more than identifying the male subject, who presumably was a military hero and died before 1510, at which time Carpaccio signed and dated his masterpiece on the *cartellino* at the lower left.

This chapter will attempt to reassess the question of the painting's iconography, based on the hypothesis that it constitutes, first and foremost, a moral allegory derived from the theological tradition of the *miles christianus* (Christian Knight) in medieval literature and art, imbued with new connotations under the influence of contemporary religious thought. The relationship between the main allegorical figure and subordinate themes in the landscape will be examined, and evidence from classical, medieval and Renaissance iconography will be presented to demonstrate the integrity and logic of the program. It is my contention that the portrait, assuming it is one, constitutes an element of minor importance from the art-historical point of view. In other words, the identification of the person depicted has little bearing on our capacity to interpret the theme and decipher the allegorical message. The question of the portrait will nevertheless be addressed by examining options that have not yet been explored.

The miles christianus *as Metaphor*

The theme of the *miles christianus* derives from the concept of the militant church in its broadest sense and, as such, is divorced from any specific epoch or historical situation. Its message is founded on a dualistic conception of the universe and human nature, where juxtaposed categories of good and evil, virtue and vice, body and soul and heaven and earth serve to justify the battle waged by the Christian in his pilgrimage through life. The interpretations of the *miles christianus* were not static, however, and transformations were reflections of changing historical situations.[3] Carpaccio's painting of the Knight contains several

[3] A thorough study of the subject is found in A. Wang, *Der 'Miles Christianus' im 16. Und 17. Jahrhundert und seine mittelalterliche Tradition*, Frankfurt, 1975. For other references, see: S.C. Chew, *The Pilgrimage of Life*, New Haven & London, 1973, 140–143, 357–58, n.5 & bibl.; H. Peters, "Miles christianus oder Falke und Taube. Eine iconographische Skizze," in *Festschrift für Otto von Simson zum 65 Geburtstag*, eds. L. von Grisebach & K. Renger, Berlin, 1977, 53–61; M. Evans, "An Illustrated Fragment of Peraldus's Summa of Vice: Harleian Ms 3244," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 45, 1982, 14–68 and P. Dinzelbacher, "Miles symbolicus: Mittelalteriche Beispiele

iconographic levels. The first is based on the Pauline *Epistle to the Ephesians*, where the dualistic philosophy of Christian life assumed the form of a military metaphor. The relevant passages are as follows:

> Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. (*Ephesians*, 6: 11–17)

The exhortation to the Christian soldier includes a list of *armaturam dei* that he must wear: the breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, or Word of God. A spiritual meaning is thus attached to each item of military apparel, signifying the ideals of righteousness, peace and faith, which ultimately lead to Salvation. The enemies, metaphorically described in this passage as the devil, rulers of darkness and superhuman forces of evil, will assume various guises during the medieval period. At that time they took on the concrete forms of heretics and infidels, archenemies of the Christian way of life. At the end of the eleventh century the *miles christianus* was identified with the crusader knight. In the *Liber de vita christiana*, written at that time by Bonizo de Sutri (1090–1095), rules for the secular knight followed the same basic pattern as those quoted above from the Pauline *Epistle to the Ephesians*.[4] By the sixteenth century there was a revival of the theme as an abstract metaphor with renewed emphasis on an introspective rather than a practical interpretation of the knight as an actual Christian soldier.

The *Enchiridion militis christiani*, written by Erasmus in 1501/2 and first published in Antwerp in 1503, revived this theme on the basis of

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geharnischter Personificationen," in *Symbol des Alltags—Alltag der Symbol*, Graz, 1992, 49–85.

[4] For the history and influence of the '*Militia Christiana*', see Wang, 1975 (as in note 3), 21–37.

the Old Testament, the Pauline teaching, patristic writings and medieval theology.[5] His metaphor of the Christian Soldier was meant for the layman as well as the clergy and members of religious orders. It deals with the Christian life in terms of theology, doctrine, individual piety and eschatology. As a corrective and reformist work it set forth a method of morals, where '*virtue is mortal man's mightiest weapon*'. When the *Enchiridion* was reprinted in 1509 and after as part of the *Lucubratiunculae*, the full title read: *Enchiridion militis christiani saluberrimus praeceptis refertum contra omnia vitiorum irritamenta efficacissimus et ratio quadam veri christianismi* (The handbook of the Christian Soldier, replete with most salutary precepts of much efficacy against the allurements of vice and a model of true Christianity). At the very beginning of his 'handbook' Erasmus declares that

> the life of mortals is nothing else but an unremitting warfare, according to the testimony of Job, a tried and unvanquished soldier, and that the generality of mankind is greatly deceived, their minds held captive by the flattering illusions and prestidigitations of this world.[6]

Not only do the enemy forces threaten on all sides, but

> we bear within us in the innermost part of our being an enemy more familiar to us than the members of our own household or our closest friends, and for that reason all the more dangerous.[7]

Erasmus addressed himself to every Christian when he wrote:

> Are you not aware, O Christian soldier, that when you were initiates into the mysteries of the life–giving font, you enrolled in the army of Christ, your general, to whom you twice owed your life, since he both gave it and restored it to you, and to whom you owed more than your very self.[8]

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[5] The *Enchiridion* was printed in 1503, 1509, 1515, 1516 and 1517 under the title of the *Lucubratiunculae*. The first independent edition was by Martens in Louvain, 1515. By 1518, when it was reprinted in a new edition by Froben, there were 8 printings. In the next ten years 40 editions appeared and by the end of the century there were more than 70 editions of the Latin text and many translations. For the history and an annotated translation, see J.W. O'Malley (ed.), *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 66, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1988. See also R.H. Bainton, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, New York, 1982, esp. chapters 3 & 4 and C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works and Influence*, trans. J.C. Grayson, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1991, esp. 43–55.

[6] Erasmus, O'Malley (ed.), (as in note 5), 24.

[7] *Ibid.*, 25.

[8] *Ibid.*, 26.

The metaphor of armor and weapons is repeated, with quotations from Isaiah and the Pauline writings. For the battle '*against the whole horde of vices, principally the seven deadly sins*',[9] the weapons of prayer and knowledge must be prepared. For those who are capable of receiving the sevenfold gifts of the divine Spirit '*the fruitful crop of all the virtues will sprout up together with the blessed fruits of the Spirit*'.[10] One symptom of the internalization would be the identification of the *miles christianus* with the *vita contemplativa* as opposed to his traditional association with the *vita activa*.

These spiritualized concepts introduced additional levels of meaning that were superimposed upon the militant medieval image of the *miles christianus* and found expression in Carpaccio's painting. How, if at all, was Carpaccio influenced by Erasmus? The direct involvement of Erasmus in the intellectual life of Venice during the first decade of the sixteenth century is documented and well known. Not long before Carpaccio painted the Knight, Erasmus spent several years in Venice (1506–1508/9). He became a member of the household of the internationally famous publisher Aldus Manutius together with Greek scholars like Muscurus and Lascaris. Aldus published an enlarged version of his *Adagia* in 1508. At that time Erasmus interpreted Aldus's nautical symbol of the dolphin and anchor as *festina lente*. Although we do not know whether Carpaccio knew Erasmus personally, as a respected member of the artistic establishment in Venice he would surely have been aware of his ideas and may have had knowledge of his writings.[11]

Aspects of Carpaccio's Visual Language

Both from an iconographic and a stylistic point of view, Carpaccio's version of the *miles christianus* is eclectic and transitional. He integrated diverse concepts using imagery that conflated medieval anachronisms with Renaissance innovations. Perhaps more than any other of his works, this painting reflects the influence of northern elements, primarily those of Flemish art, which are evident in the oil-painting technique, the treatment of textures and light (e.g. the metallic armor and the

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[9] *Ibid.*, 30.
[10] *Ibid.*, 40.
[11] See A. Olivieri (ed.), *Erasmo, Venezia e la Cultura Padana nel '500*, Convegno internazionale di studi storici, Rovigo, 1995.

reflections on the water), naturalistic depiction of flora and fauna, and the dominant function of the minutely descriptive landscape. One may also recognize German influence, for example, in the theme itself, the physical depiction of the knight and in certain emblematic images that appear to have originated there.

Form and content interrelate in conveying the painting's message. On one hand Carpaccio created a vision of the *macrocosmos* as viewed through a magnifying glass. He recorded his impressions of nature, in its variety of organic forms, through flora and fauna that, on an overt level, represent stages of growth and efflorescence, corruption and death—romantic reflections of beauty alongside the melancholy of transience. He organized these images within the formal pattern of diagonal recessions, pyramidal and triangular shapes, and a central trapezoid that frames the head and torso of the knight and emphasizes the center of the painting. The repeated use of oblique lines creates an erratic kinetic energy that is counteracted by the immobility and rigidity of the knight. The formal structure of the landscape is based on a typical *Quattrocento* Venetian formula that serves to impose order on multiplicity, but Carpaccio has expressed the ideal of the *miles christianus* in the succinct geometric forms of the High Renaissance. The rigidity of the knight's stance emphasizes his steadfastness in the face of obstacles, as in the words of Erasmus:

> This only comes about, I think, when a spirit imbued with the finest learning is so fortified by divine love that even 'if heaven's vault should crash and fall, He steadfast stands and unafraid'.[12]

Animals and Birds

Disguised animal symbolism was very common in Venetian Renaissance painting. Animal metaphors were derived from the Old and New Testaments, Greek and roman naturalists, early Christian and medieval ecclesiastic literature, moralistic treatises, encyclopedic compendia, bestiaries, penitential and passion literature, emblem books and myriad other sources. Christianity promoted the metaphor of human bestiality, and the association of animals with particular sins and vices was most common, but positive meanings were also transmitted by literary and

[12] Erasmus, O'Malley (ed.), (as in note 5), 36–37.

artistic tradition. Animals consequently represented dualistic concepts, such as good and evil, virtue and vice, sacred and profane or birth and death. The same animal might be imbued with positive or negative significance, depending on the context.

The Venetians, more than any of their Italian contemporaries, tended to integrate animals in religious iconography under the guise of genre motifs. Actually, these were employed to reinforce ideas or concepts in the context of metaphor or allegory. This can be illustrated in many of Carpaccio's paintings, but the prominence of animals and birds in the painting of the knight is unprecedented in his work. Most salient is the white ermine, a traditional symbol of purity and incorruptibility, on the lower left-hand side. Its message is reiterated by the motto on the *cartellino* that states *Malo mori quam foedari* (To defile is worse than to die) (Fig. 14). Nearby, three toads are camouflaged by the dense flora as they frolic in the cascade of water that flows from a spout in the hill. A typical Renaissance hunting dog runs alongside the mounted page on the left and another canine specimen, partly concealed behind the tree and hill on the right, peers out of the painting with a bizarre, enigmatic expression. A variety of animals and fowls have congregated on the banks of a river or sea behind him. There are white and brown rabbits, an eagle or vulture devouring his prey and a stag seen from the rear as he faces the water. A wader perched on a pole, a white crane or heron and a goose peacefully occupy an inlet. A beautiful multi-colored bird, probably a heron or crane, flies above them and five other birds inhabit the autumnal tree. One of these is a perched hawk; three others in flight are doves, and there is an unidentified crested red bird. Carpaccio's birds are imprecise impressions, in which characteristics of different species have been indiscriminately conflated. In all likelihood his sources included paintings, like those of Giovanni Bellini and Carlo Crivelli,[13] and prints, such as the *Bidpai* illustrations of 1478 or the *Creation of the Birds* in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* of 1493 (Fig. 15).[14] Carpaccio copied at least two of the creatures, the flying heron and the dog on the right, from drawings by Pisanello.[15]

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[13] For examples of birds and animals in paintings of saints, see M. Meiss, *Giovanni Bellini's St. Francis in the Frick Collection*, Princeton, 1964, esp. 19–23 & figs. 34–39, 43, 47, 58 & 60.

[14] C.T. Eisler, *Durer's Animals*, Washington & London, 1991, 15 & 57–63, figs. 3.18 & 3.11.

[15] Both Pisanello drawings are in the Department of Graphics of the Louvre; the heron (2502) and the dog (2432v) were related to Carpaccio's painting by B. Blass-Simmen,

Fig. 15. Attributed to Dürer (from the workshop of M. Wolgemut). *Creation of the Birds*, Woodcut from the Nuremberg Chronicle, 1493, Library of Congress, Rare Books Division, Rosenwald Collection, Washington D.C.

What evidence do we have to indicate that the animals and birds are disguised symbols? And how are they related to the *miles christianus*? To begin with, Carpaccio has adopted several well-established emblematic themes, which leave no doubt as to their symbolic contexts and moralistic intent. The first is the ermine with its accompanying motto that reiterates the message of uncompromising chastity.[16] Since these function in the painting as a device, identifying in some way the noble personage depicted, one might argue that they do not necessarily reflect upon the significance of the other animal motifs. But we have a second important emblematic motif in the form of an aerial battle between a

"Cima da Conegliano: alcune riflessioni sui disegni. Il problema dell'utiizzazione dei disegni 'memorativi' e I rapporti con l'opera pittorica," *Venezia Cinquecento*, IV, 1994, no. 8, 145–65 & figs. 9 & 11.

[16] See P. Guelfi Camajani, *Dizionario Araldico*, Milano, 1940, 57–58.

falcon and heron. This motif was used by Domenico Veneziano in his *Adoration of the Magi*, by Dürer in his illustrations for the prayerbook of Maximilian I and an engraving of battling knights.[17] It appeared in an early sixteenth century Flemish tapestry of *St. Jerome in Penitence*, as an emblem of the Altdorf Academy in Nuremberg with the motto *Nulla Salus Bello* (There is no safety in war) (1584) and again in the *Symbolorum & Emblematum* of Joachim Camerarius (Nuremberg, 1596) with the motto *Exitus in Dubio Est* (The outcome is doubtful) (Fig. 16).[18] Herbert Friedmann questioned the relevance of the latter motto to the themes of the *Adoration* and *St. Jerome in Penitence*.[19] The explanation lies not in the motto but in the basic meaning of the battle between the falcon and heron. This combination of birds represented dualism and moral conflict. As such, it suited the theme of penitence. In the *Adoration of the Magi* it probably alluded to the triumph of virtue over vice, which was the message and mission of Christ. The fact that the emblem assumed the form of a military metaphor in German iconography of the sixteenth century illustrates the growing tendency at that time to symbolize man's inner battles through images of war. The falcon and heron motif was adopted by Carpaccio to convey the moral message but, in the context of the *miles christianus* theme, it also constituted an invective against war. The knight in armor is, consequently, the bearer of an anti-war message, a message that would not be conveyed in the person of an actual military hero but rather through the allegorical concept of the *miles christianus*.

Hugh of Fouilloy (1100–1173/4), in his *De avibus*, based the interpretation of the heron on etymological evidence appropriated from Isidore's *Etymologiae* (7th c.).[20] He claimed:

> the bird is called a heron (ardea) as if to say 'high' (ardua) because of its lofty flights...for it fears rain and flies above the clouds so that it cannot perceive the storm clouds

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[17] For a study of this motif and its use by Carpaccio, see Konecný (as in note 1). A reproduction of the battling knight engraving appears in K.-A. Knappe, Dürer, Das graphische Werk, Wien & München, 1964, p. 342.

[18] See F.J. Stopp, *The Emblems of the Altdorf Academy; Medals and Medal Orations 1577–1626*, London, 1974, 126–27.

[19] H. Friedmann, *A Bestiary for Saint Jerome*, Washington D.C., 1980, 213.

[20] Hugh of Fouilloy, *The Medieval Book of Birds*, Binghamton, New York, 1992, 227–29. For the original Latin, see Hugh of Folieto, *De avibus*, Migne, *P.L.*177, 13–14. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive originum, libri XX*, 2 vols., ed. W.M. Lindsay, Oxford, 1911 and Migne, *P.L.*82, 71–728.

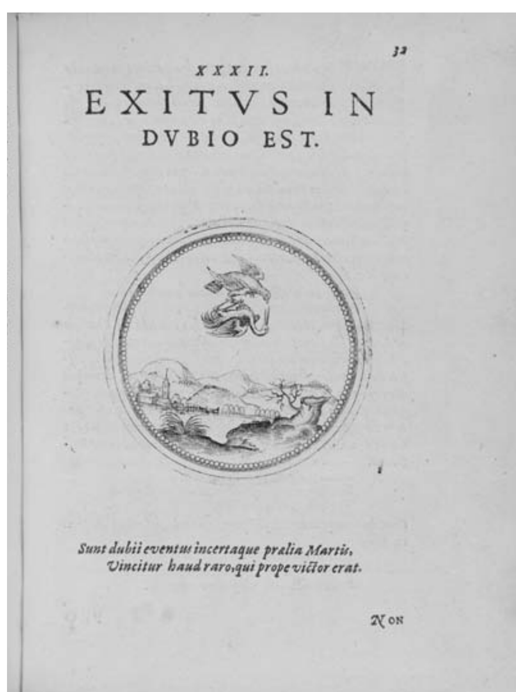

Fig. 16. *Exitus in Dubio Est*, Emblem from Joachim Camerarius, *Symbolorum & Emblematum ex volatilibus et insectis desumtorum centuria tertia*, Nuremberg, 1596, Glasgow University Library.

(Fig. 17). But unlike the *Etymologia* Hugh's *De avibus* was a moralizing book geared to a monastic public. For the moralization he quoted the following from the *De rerum natura* of Rabanus Maurus:

> This bird can signify the souls of the elect, which fearing the turmoil of this world... raise their attention above all temporal matters <and> their minds towards the clear weather of the celestial home, where they continually see the face of God.[21]

Albertus Magnus, in *De animalibus* (ca.1258–1262), added that the heron, because of its lofty flight, could prognosticate bad weather and explained that it does not fly in a flock in order to avoid the danger of hawks and other predatory birds awaiting the chance to catch its young.[22]

[21] Rabanus Maurus, *De natura rerum*, Migne, *P.L.* 111, 246.

[22] Albert the Great, *Man and the Beasts, de animalibus (Books 22–26)*, trans. J.J. Scanlan, Binghamton, New York, 1987, 200–202, Book 23, 50:20.

Fig. 17. *Heron*, from Hughes de Fouilloy's *De avibus*, MS.14, fol.68, Bibliothèque Municipale, Chalon-sur-Saône.

The heron as a symbol of sublime spirituality and piety reflected the saintliness of Giovanni Bellini's *St. Francis* in the Frick Collection (after 1475). These same qualities, as well as the prudence and foresightedness perceived in the heron, also characterized the *miles christianus* in Carpaccio's painting.

The importance of avian symbolism in traditional illustrations of the *miles christianus* has been demonstrated in an article by Heinz Peters.[23] He presented literary sources for the antinomy between the hawk and the dove in medieval art, showing them as paradigms of the opposition between the *miles* and the *clericus*. Thirteenth century illustrations of Hugh's *De avibus* depict the *miles* juxtaposed with the *clericus*, accompanied by their respective avian attributes, the hawk and the dove (Fig. 18). The identifying inscriptions clarify the message, contrasting *vita activa*

[23] Peters, 1977 (as in note 3).

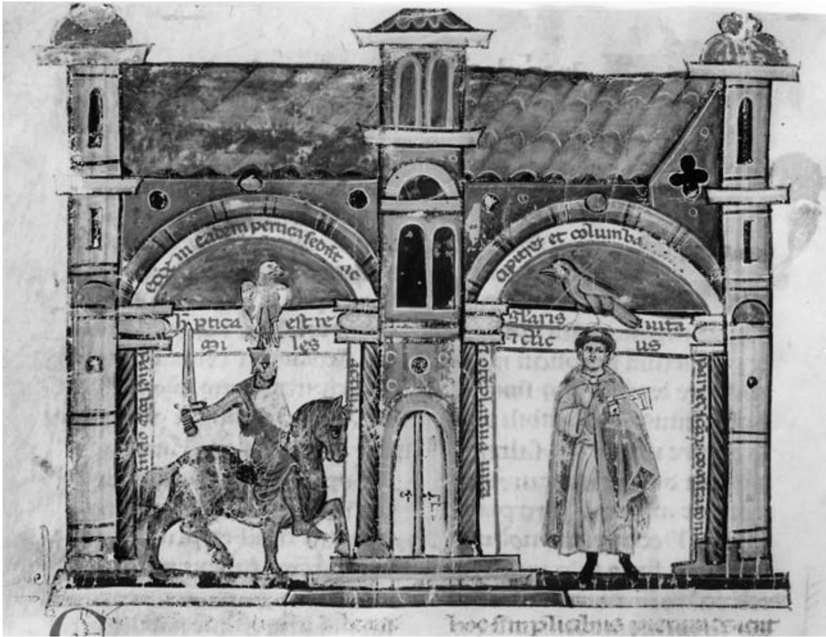

Fig. 18. *Miles and Clericus*, From Hughes de Fouilloy's *De avibus*, ca.1300, MS. Lyell 71, fol.3v.
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and *vita contemplativa* as two philosophies and Christian modes of life. The bipartite architecture of the turreted fortress with its central gate emphasizes the alternatives faced by the Christian, and the inscription *Ecce in eadem pertica sedent accipiter et columba—haec pertica est regularis vita* (Here on the same rod are seated a hawk and a dove, this rod is the Rule of life) indicate that both may convert to the monastic Rule. The bird metaphor in this moralization is clarified in the prologue:

> See how the hawk and dove sit on the same perch. I am from the clergy and you from the military. We come to conversion so that we may sit within the life of the Rule, as though on a perch. Thus have I placed the dove at the beginning of this work because the grace of the Holy Spirit is always provided to any penitent, nor does one attain forgiveness except through grace. The discussion of the hawk, by which people of nobility are represented, is added after the dove.[24]

[24] Hugh of Fouilloy (as in note 20), 117–19.

Why are bird metaphors and their illustrations suited to Hugh's moralizations? The justification in his second prologue states:

> Because I must write for the unlettered, the diligent reader should not wonder that, for the instruction of the unlettered, I say simple things about simple matters. Nor should he attribute it to levity that I paint a hawk or a dove, because the blessed Job and the prophet David bequeathed to us birds of this sort for our edification. For what Scripture means to the teachers, the picture means to simple folk.[25]

We have already noted that the combination of falcon and dove was also a means of representing moral dualism. Hugh of Fouilloy associated all kinds of virtues with the dove and described it as image of the *simplex anima*, the Church, Christ, the active and contemplative life, and the grace of the Holy Spirit '*provided to any humble person cleansed of sins*'.[26] Among the manuscript illuminations of *De avibus* we find that of the three exemplary doves combined (those of Noah, David and the Holy Spirit).[27] A thirteenth century illustration in Peraldus's *Summa de vitiis* (written ca.1236) characterized the *miles christianus* as a model of the seven Cardinal Virtues, depicting the latter as seven doves (Fig. 19).

St. Jerome used the expression *accipitre diabolo*, a metaphoric play on *accipiter* (Latin for hawk) and *accipere* (to take), to describe a rapacious or avaricious person. The wild hawk, as opposed to the tame one, was said by Hugh to be a predator, rapacious, in constant movement and an image of the devil.[28] The antinomy between dove and hawk appeared in the oldest German text of the *Physiologus* and was repeated in later editions. From approximately the twelfth century, the distinction between wild and domestic hawks permitted this bird to play a double role. Due to its popularity as a domestic pet and hunting bird among the nobility, the tame hawk acquired great popularity in courtly depictions and, consequently, became a symbol of status for the *vera nobilità*. But the rapacious wild hawk, symbol of *Avaritia* and other vices, continued to be juxtaposed with the virtuous dove in *Psychomachia* related allegorical depictions of late medieval art. According to Albertus Magnus, the *columba* has '*an uncanny alertness for the presence of all birds of prey, whether these predators attack in a tree, on the ground or in the air, in the latter instance*

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[25] *Ibid.*, 119–21.
[26] *Ibid.*, 123–27.
[27] *Ibid.*, 121–23 & fig. 3: Ter Duinen Aviary, Bruges, Episc. Sem. 89/54, p. 30.
[28] *Ibid.*, 143–47.

Fig. 19. *A Knight in Emblematic Armor*, from *Summa de Vitiis*, ca.1236, Harl.3244, fol.28r, London, British Library.

pigeons wisely fly to a place of safety'.[29] The pairing of avian species, such as hawk and dove or falcon and heron, to express moral contrasts in painting, was conventional in medieval art. The conflict between virtue and vice, austerity and worldliness, or *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* was expressed through this *topos* of bird life right up to the sixteenth century. Carpaccio juxtaposed three pigeons or doves, perhaps meant as a Trinitarian symbol, with the hawk on the same autumnal tree. They are shown in flight, as elevated and free spirits, whereas the wild hawk, perched above his potential prey, represents the vices of worldly pursuits.

The crane, depicted by Carpaccio, was fairly popular in Renaissance painting and emblematic contexts. Artists often depicted the crane

[29] Albertus Magnus (as in note 22).

standing on one foot, with the other raised and grasping a stone. Medieval writers, following Pliny, claimed this reflected their habit of holding a stone when they rested at night, as it would fall and awaken them if they dozed off.[30] One out of every ten cranes would thus guard the flock at night and the leader would be on constant lookout while the rest foraged for food during the day. According to Albertus Magnus '*These birds evince a great deal of mutual affection and desire to help one another*'.[31] Illustrations of the vigilant and sociable cranes were painted by Hans Memling on the shutters of an altarpiece, where they guarded the painting within.[32]

Another important source for the symbol of the crane in the Renaissance was the *Hieroglyphica* of Horapollo (5th c.). Two different explanations were given there. The crane could either represent '*a man guarding himself against the plots of his enemies*' or '*a man who seeks higher things*'.[33] Although first printed by Aldus in 1505, the *Hieroglyphica* was already exploited as a new source of symbolic imagery in Florence, Venice and Germany from the mid fifteenth century. Dürer illustrated the copy owned by Willibald Pirckheimer and adopted the crane and unicorn motif in the prayerbook of Maximilian I with transcriptions of the words *custodia* and *noctem* from *Psalm* cxxx: *A custodia matunina usque ad noctem speret Israel in domino* (From the watch of the morning to nightfall let Israel hope in the Lord).[34] There are other cranes in the prayerbook. Especially noteworthy in the present context is his drawing of a warrior, characterized by the watchful crane as the model of Vigilance and contrasted to Sloth as a sleeping woman.[35] Dürer symbolized the vigilance of Maximilian I by a crane in the design of his helmet and by those depicted on the Triumphal Arch. The crane subsequently appeared with moralistic mottoes, such as *Officium natura docet* (Instinct teaches one's proper task), which stressed prudence and vigilance in an emblem of the Altdorf Academy (Fig. 20). By the second half of the sixteenth century Valeriano had differentiated between

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[30] Pliny, *Libri naturalis historiae*, Venice, 1469; *Natural History*, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass. & London, 10 vols., 1979, X, xxx, esp. 59–60. Regarding the crane in emblems, see Stopp (as in note 18), 130–31 and plates 8a & 20a.

[31] Albertus Magnus (as in note 22), 292.

[32] Eisler (as in note 14), fig. 3.9.

[33] *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo Nilous*, edited & translated by A. Turner Cory, London, 1987 (repr. of 1840 edit. in Greek & English), II, XCVIII, 143–145.

[34] Panofsky, *Dürer*, Princeton, 1955, 189–190.

[35] *Ibid.*, 190.

Fig. 20. *Officium Natura Docet*, Altdorf Medal, *Epitome*, Nuremberg. Copyright Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.

the standing crane, attribute of *Custodia*, and the crane flying at night, as *Prudentia*, in two woodcuts of his *Hieroglyphica* (1556 & 1567).[36] The crane as an attribute of the *miles christianus* may be elucidated by the admonitions of Erasmus to the Christian Knight in the *Enchiridion*. Castigating mankind for entertaining illusions of peace and security although they are '*ceaselessly under attack by the armed-clad forces of vice, ensnared by so many wiles, beleaguered by so many treacheries*', he called on the Knight to

> give careful thought and consideration to the weapons that are to be employed and to the nature of the enemy with which you must join battle. Next that you have them always in readiness lest that cunning ambusher set upon you when you are unarmed and unaware.[37]

[36] Stopp (as in note 18), 130–31 and Johannes Valerianus, *Hieroglyphica sive de sacris Aegyptorum aliarumque gentirum literis*, Basileae, 1556 & 1567.
[37] Erasmus, O'Malley (ed.), (as in note 5), 30.

The vigilant crane was a metaphor of the Knight in his readiness and awareness.

The large ash-grey goose standing in front of the crane conveys some similar ideas. According to Hugh of Fouilloy, 'the goose makes known the watches of the night with the constancy of its cry'. A legend, first recounted by Livy and Pliny, and repeated by Saint Ambrose, Isidore, Hugh and others, tells how a goose in ancient Rome aroused the sleeping guards with its cry and saved the Capital Hill from being captured by the Gauls. Hugh observed from this story that '*Perhaps Divine Providence would not give us the natures of birds unless it wished them to be helpful to us in some way*'.[38] The assumption justifies a didactic approach to nature and natural phenomena that was not yet obsolete for Carpaccio and his Venetian contemporaries. For Hugh of Fouilloy the cry of the warning goose became a simile for the discerning brother who cries out when he sees negligence or ignorance and '*guards the community from being disturbed by the wayward*'. He differentiated between the wild and tame geese;

> 'the wild ones fly aloft and in order, and denote those who, far from worldly affairs, preserve an order of righteous living' and 'on the wild ones there is an ashen color, that is on those <men> who have retired from the world is the unassuming garment of penitence'.

Albertus Magnus reiterated the praiseworthiness of the goose, adding that it is associated with the spring and long life.[39]

On the rooftop in the background of his painting Carpaccio depicted a stork nesting with its young. Aristotle, Pliny and Aelian had praised the stork as a sign of returning spring, as symbol of filial piety and as the enemy of serpents.[40] Hugh of Fouilloy explained that

> they are the messengers of spring, because they show to others the moderation of the converted mind. They are the companions of society because they willingly live among the brethren.[41]

The stork was especially noted in the middle ages for its filial devotion. Saint Ambrose noted that the word for thankfulness came from the

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[38] Hugh of Fouilloy (as in note 20), 225–27. Cf. Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 5, 47; Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 5, 12, 44; Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 12, 7, 58.

[39] Albertus Magnus (as in note 22), Book 23, 6, 22: 202–204.

[40] For references to sources and literature on the stork, see: D. Cast, "The Stork and the Serpent: A New Interpretation of the Madonna of the Meadow by Bellini," *Art Quarterly*, 32, 1969, 247–57; Friedmann (as in note 19), 297–8 and Eisler (as in note 14), 43 & 88.

[41] Hugh of Fouilloy (as in note 20), 213–15.

word for stork. According to the *Hieroglyphica* of Horus Apollo, ancient Egyptian scribes depicted the stork to represent gratitude '*because the bird, when it has been reared by its parents, returns to thank them in their old age*'.[42] This same significance was preserved by the fourteenth century *Etymachia* illustrators when they assigned the stork to the personification of *Largitas*.[43] In sacred iconography the stork retained its association with filial piety and was considered exemplary in its devotion both to its young and to its parents. Albertus Magnus described how it regurgitates its macerated food in order to feed the fledglings, and attacks birds of prey in their defense. He also conveyed the legend that

> the stork tends to the needs of its parents for the same length of time that the parents had nurtured its needs during infancy. Hence the ancients revered the stork as a model of filial piety.[44]

It is probably in this context that Dürer associated Joseph with the stork in a drawing portraying *Our Lady of the Animals* (ca.1503). Leonardo claimed that the stork knows how to cure itself of illness and has moral judgment.[45] As a traditional enemy of serpents, it was conveniently associated with allegories of virtue triumphing over vice, and with the image of Christ. The stork (or heron) and serpent theme was familiar to Carpaccio's contemporaries, as evidenced by Giovanni Bellini's *Madonna of the Meadow*. It was transmitted to subsequent generations through the mediation of iconographic manuals, such as Ripa's *Iconologia* (1593).

What does Carpaccio's stork tell us about the *miles christianus*? Moral judgment, devotion and piety were central themes of the *Enchiridion*. Erasmus used the word *pius* or *pietas* over a hundred times. Reference to filial devotion is found, for example, in the quotations taken by Erasmus from the Pauline epistles:

> For you are all sons of God by faith. But when the fullness of time came, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, and that we might receive adoption as sons. And since you are sons of God, God sent the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.[46]

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[42] Horapollo (as in note 33), II, LVIII: 122.
[43] J.S. Norman, *Metamorphosis of an Allegory, The Iconography of the Psychomachia in Medieval Art*, New York, 1988, 213 & fig. 213.
[44] Albertus Magnus (as in note 22), Book 23, 24: 35–36: 213–14.
[45] See Eisler (as in note 14), 43; Friedmann (as in note 19), 297–98 and E. MacCurdy, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, New York, 1954, 1081.
[46] Erasmus, O'Malley (ed.), (as in note 5), 78; cf. Gal 3:24–6.

Why is Carpaccio's stork shown high up on the rooftop? Obviously, it is because storks are known to nest on rooftops; however storks in Renaissance art were often shown standing on the ground. St. Jerome explained that when it is said that storks fly to Asia, Asia means high (*elevans, elevata, sive gradiens, elevatio* and *elatio*)[47] and Hugh provided the moralization, saying '*he who reaches for the heights, having scorned the tumults of the world, crosses the sea and proceeds into Asia*'. Erasmus wrote *De contemptu mundi* in 1488/9 (published 1521) but contempt of the world was also a leitmotif in the *Enchiridion*. Rejection of the world and temporality was a condition for rising up to the love of spiritual things. The world was the source of all evils above which the *miles christianus* was enjoined to elevate his soul.

Major sources for animal symbolism presented in a militant context were the moralistic allegories based on the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius (5th c.). Illustrated medieval treatises of the *Psychomachia*, the *Etymachia*, which appeared as part of the *Lumen animae,* Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine* (both 14th c.), and various other sources, allegorized man's moral battle by means of personified Virtues and Vices.[48] These personifications, generally portrayed as armed and mounted knights, were each characterized by several animal attributes. In typical illustrations each knight carried a shield decorated with an animal device, he bore another animal image on his tunic, and a third served as the crest of his helmet, although occasionally one of these attributes could be a plant. His mount was the fourth symbolic animal to characterize the knight. Joanne P. Norman, in her book on *Psychomachia* iconography, compiled a summary of these attributes, taken from medieval texts and illustrations of the *Etymachia*, as well as later depictions that were based upon them. According to these sources, for example, the personification of *Superbia* has a peacock as the crest of her helmet and an eagle as the device of her shield (Fig. 21). *Ira* has a sparrowhawk as her crest and a mad dog on her shield (Fig. 22). *Castitas* has a crest of lilies. *Largitas* has a caladrius (bird) on her shield and a stork on her surcoat. *Caritas* rides a stag-like animal, called an *orasius*, bears a *coredulus* (bird) on her helmet and a pelican on her shield. *Devotio*

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[47] St. Jerome, *Liber interpretationes Hebraicorum nominum*, CC72:150, line 19; 151, line 26; 158; line 29; 159, line 10.

[48] See Norman (as in note 43) for a comprehensive study of these sources and their illustrations, including extensive bibliography, 265–311.

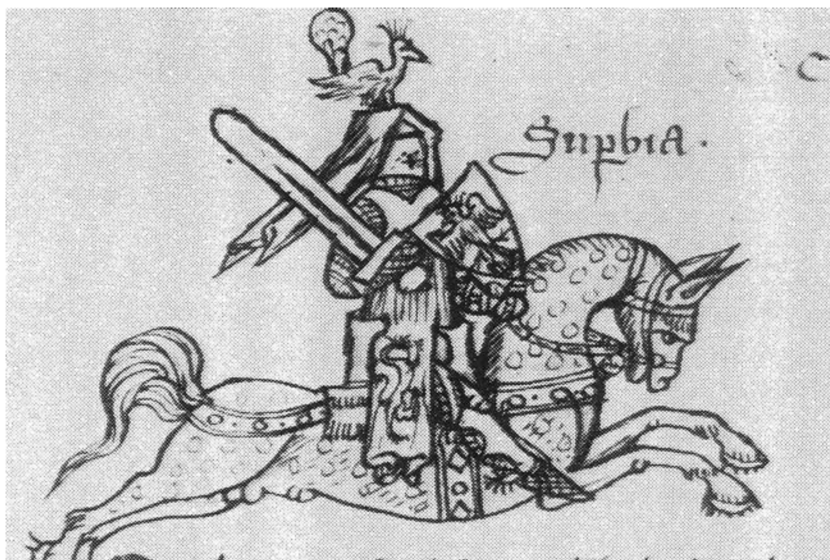

Fig. 21. *Superbia*, from *Etymachia*, 1332, MS.130, fol.106, Vorau, Stiftsbibliothek.

Fig. 22. *Ira*, from *Etymachia*, 1332, MS.130, fol.107, Vorau, Stiftsbibliothek.

has a garland of rue with a singing nightingale on her helmet and an *afno phylomene* (bird) on her shield.[49]

Most scholars have assumed that the peacock standing on the wall is a symbol of immortality, but no one has examined the bird's specific pictorial context or tried to explain its bizarre location directly above the head of the mounted page. We have seen that the peacock was the crest on the helmet of *Superbia* in the psychomachian allegory. It can hardly be a coincidence that Carpaccio placed a peacock precisely in the location of the crest that should have crowned the page's helmet. The earliest extant text of the *Lumen animae* (1332) provides an explanation. The proud display of the peacock's decorative feathers is compared to the proud man's need for fine clothes and glory.[50] Independent allegorical depictions of the battle of virtues and vices in fifteenth century manuscripts and tapestries, which no longer illustrated the psychomachian texts, still preserved the battle imagery and the traditional animal symbols. A fifteenth century illustrator depicted a tree with birds on the banner of *Caritas*, a vulture on that of *Patientia*, a pelican on the shield of *Largitas* and a peacock on the helmet of *Superbia*.[51]

Allegorizations of the peacock were derived from Scripture, patristic literature, Classical sources of natural history, medieval encyclopedic treatises and various other sources, creating an eclectic mixture of fact and fancy. These provided material for the *Liber de moralitatibus* by Marcus of Orvieto (13th c.), a preachers manual with a chapter devoted to the peacock.[52] The author used the idea of the peacock's incorruptible flesh (taken from St. Augustine),[53] converting it into an allegory of evangelical chastity and reiterating the traditional association with Resurrection. Parallel with this positive interpretation of the peacock, Marcus also quoted negative moralizations, comparing its feathers '*to the various and most deceptive vanities of the devil and his ministers who transfigure themselves into angels of light and apostles of Christ*' (as in 2 *Corinthians*, 11: 13–14). Such eclectic compendia of varied and often contradictory material were meant to provide ready-made references for moral and doctrinal issues used in sermons. The implications this kind of treatise

[49] *Ibid*., esp. 203–206, 230–31 & 246.
[50] *Ibid*., 206–207.
[51] *Ibid*., esp. 208–225, regarding the 15th and 16th c. iconography.
[52] See J.B. Friedmann, "Peacocks and Preachers: Analytic Technique in Marcus Orvieto's *Liber de moralitatibus*, Vatican Lat.ms.5935," in W.B. Clark & M.T. McMunn (eds.), *Beast and Birds in the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, 1989, 179–96.
[53] St. Augustine, *The City of God*, New York, 1950, Bk.21, ch.4, 766.

may bear for our interpretations of Carpaccio's animal symbolism lies in its exegetical method, whereby several categories or modes of interpretation concurrently applied to the same theme, lead to alternative and even contradictory meanings. Hypothetically, this means that the peacock might concurrently be used as a symbol of Resurrection and an attribute of Pride. However, Carpaccio has consistently used symbols that convey a worldly if not an explicitly negative image of the page. He is a courtly figure, wearing the peacock crest in the manner of *Superbia*, decorated in the colorful costume of the tournament, rather than the armor of the *miles christianus*, and his lance points directly to the wild hawk perched on the tree on the right hand side of the painting. According to the texts, *Superbia* exhibited an eagle as a device on her shield. As a predator the eagle might have been converted into a hawk. We have already remarked that the hawk was an attribute of the *miles*, as opposed to the *clericus*, which by the fourteenth century had become a symbol of nobility, with connotations of worldliness, power and ostentation, as well as an image of rapacity. The page riding his horse is contrasted to the knight on a rocky footpath. *Superbia*'s mount was a horse from which she would eventually fall. The conversion of Saint Paul had first been depicted as a rider falling from his horse in the mid twelfth century, thereby conflating this event with the psychomachian image of *Superbia* brought down by *Humilitas* (Fig. 23).[54] Above the mounted page is a riderless horse portrayed in the guise of a shop sign, probably a shop for equestrian accessories. This is a subtle augur of the page's downfall. At the same time it functions as a symbol of virtue triumphant, because the riderless horse retains the saddle, the stirrups, the bridle and the reins, which are symbols of Temperance.[55]

What is the meaning of the eagle or vulture? The good eagle was a traditional symbol of Faith, Prudence, Divinity and Afterlife, and was often depicted as such in sixteenth century emblematic art,[56] but

[54] See L. Eleen, *The Illustration of the Pauline Epistles in French and English Bibles of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Oxford, 1982, 39–40, figs. 43, 46, 47, 49 & 50.

[55] This is illustrated in my article: "Virtuousness and Wisdom in the Giorgionesque Fresco at Castelfranco," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, CXXVII, July–Aug. 1996, 1–20, esp. 11–12 & fig. 12. For positive moralized interpretations of the equestrian equipment, see Evans (as in note 3), 21–22, 30–31, 34–36. Only the horseshoe was related to sin.

[56] S.C. Chew, *The Pilgrimage of Life*, New Haven & London, 1973, 117, 127–28, 134, 179, 193–94 and A. Henkel & A. Schöne, *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI und XVII Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart, 1967, 757–80.

Fig. 23. *Conversion of St. Paul*, MS. Urb. Lat. 7, fol.386r (*Corinthians*), 13th c., Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

the bad eagle was the 'ill-willed captor of souls', that survived as an image of death.[57] Guilio Cesare Capaccio, in his *Delle Imprese* (Naples, 1592), repeated a prevalent myth that the eagle has one claw foot and one flat foot, concluding that it is '*armed and provided*' and takes its prey both on water and on land.[58] An earlier source of this idea may have inspired Carpaccio to place the bird devouring its prey on a log that seems to jut out from the shore over the water. Taken allegorically, the idea might be used as an antithetical analogy of the *miles christianus* who is spiritually '*armed and provided*'. The vulture is another

[57] '*In scriptura sacra vocabulo aquilae aliquando maligno spiritus raptores animarum*', Rabanus Maurus, *Commentaria in Ezechielem*, VII, xvii, Migne, *P.L.*CX, col.696; quoted by Cast (as in note 40), 256, n.28.

[58] Capaccio, *Delle Imprese*, Naples, 1592, I, fol.35r.; quoted by Chew (as in note 56), 117.

bird that might be moralized *in bono* or *in malo*. The vulture in flight signified '*him who by his ascension lifted up into heaven the human body which he assumed*', the Redeemer '*who abiding in the heights of his divinity, as in a kind of exalted flight, saw the corpse of our mortality in the abyss and betook Himself from the heights into the depths*'.[59] The vulture was sometimes associated with the high-flying eagle as '*the noblest of birds*'. Carpaccio, however, has not pictured the eagle or vulture in flight but has it perched on a log, in the act of devouring his prey. Here it seems to be a prototype of the sinner, following '*wayward men who are in the army of the Devil that he might imitate their perverse ways. It feeds upon the corpses of the dead because <the sinner> delights in the carnal desires which produce death*'. The vulture, furthermore, '*likes to walk upon the ground... because the sinner loves earthly things and longs for earthly things*'.[60]

We have seen that most of the birds depicted in Carpaccio's painting of the knight represent virtues. Birds were generally associated with spirituality and holiness. The belief in man's fundamental goodness was expressed by Saint Ambrose through the man-bird simile: '*Man is kin to the winged flock, with his vision he aims at what is most high. He flies on the oarage of wings by this wisdom of his sublime senses*'.[61] But Carpaccio has also used avian species that convey ideas of impiety and immorality. The peacock of *Superbia*, the hawk of *Avaritia* and the eagle-vulture of *carnalibus desiderus* represent the sins against which the Christian Knight must wage his inner battle. Animals function similarly as symbols and metaphors in Carpaccio's allegory of Virtues and Vices. Reference has already been made to the ermine of *Castitas* and the horse of *Superbia*.

The frog is another ambivalent creature. One literary tradition conveys a negative interpretation of this creature, derived from Virgil, the *Book of Exodus* and *Revelations*, augmented and ornamented by medieval moralizations, and transmitted to Dante and eventually to Luther.[62] A second tradition, overlapping the former, conveys a positive image that originated with Classical writers, such as Pliny and Aelian, was perpetuated in the Middle Ages and found renewed expression in Renaissance art. Pliny stated that frogs died in the winter and were born

[59] Hugh of Fouilloy (as in note 20), 119–201.
[60] *Ibid.*, 202–203.
[61] St. Ambrose, *Commentary on the Sixth Day of Creation*; quoted by Eisler (as in note 14), 57.
[62] On the frog as a symbols of evil and various sins, see Chew (as in note 56), esp. 105–203 and Friedmann (as in note 19), 217–219.

again in the spring.[63] As a symbol of Resurrection it was eventually adopted in sacred iconography of the Renaissance and subsequently in emblem books.[64] The evil and demoniacal descriptions of frogs in Scripture, however, beginning with the plague of frogs in the *Book of Exodus*, was to capture the imagination of generations. In the *Book of Revelation* (XVI, 13–14)

> three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.[65]

The idea of the '*false prophet*' was taken over by Rabanus Maurus, who said that frogs symbolized heretics, by Dante in the infernal marsh of heretical sinners, and by Luther who identified frogs with his Catholic opponents.[66] As sinners frogs were occasionally identified with *Avaritia*, as in the *Etymachia* illustrations, or with *Invidia*, as in Spenser's *Fairie Queen*.[67] Through its association with rebirth, it even became a symbol of *Luxuria*. These connotations explain its presence in Venetian Renaissance versions of *St. Jerome in Penitence.*

How then are we to explain the frogs in the spring beside Carpaccio's Knight? Perhaps Dante provided the metaphor in his *Inferno*:

> And just as frogs that stand, with noses out on a pool's margin, but beneath it hide their feet and all their bodies but the snout, So stood the sinners there on every side.[68]

Dante's infernal image of darting, croaking frogs, immersing themselves for disguise was surely familiar to Carpaccio. He adopted the frog as a symbol of evil in *Saint George and the Dragon*, painted for the Scuola

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[63] Pliny (as in note 30), VIII, xxxii.

[64] E.g. The frog appeared in the *Emblemata* of Nicolaus Reusner as a symbol of resurrection with the legend *reurrectio carnis*; see Henkel & Schöne (as in note 56), 601–602.

[65] For an illustration of this passage in a manuscript of the *Apocalypse*, Normandy, ca.1300–1325 (the Cloisters, MMA), see J.R. Benton, *The Medieval Menagerie, Animals in the Art of the Middle Ages*, New York, London, Paris, 1992, 113, pl.96.

[66] See R.T. Holbrook, *Dante and the Animal Kingdom*, New York, 1966, 211–14. On Luther's frog metaphor: R.H. Bainton, *Studies on the Reformation*, Boston, 1963, 67.

[67] On the toad as a symbol of Envy in the *Fairie Queen*, see Chew (as in note 56), 109.

[68] Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia*, *Inf.*, XXII, 25–28; trans. Parsons, in Holbrook (as in note 66), 213.

di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni during the same period of his career, but without the amphibious context. Surely that water source in the painting imbues the theme with an additional dimension. Erasmus, in the chapter of the *Enchiridion* devoted to

> the armor of the Christian militia, elaborates on the symbol of water as the divine law, the mystical river of the law that Ezekiel could not wade across . . . the wells of the law that Abraham dug, and that Isaac dug again after they had been filled with dirt by the Philistines, the twelve springs of the law where the weary Israelites recovered their strength after forty days of wandering.

After supplying further *exempla* from the New Testament, Erasmus asks:

> What is the meaning of water hidden in the veins of the earth but that the mystery is veiled by the letter? What is the meaning of water gushing forth in cascades but that the mystery is unveiled and explained?[69]

Could this mystical cascade be that in the painting, which is gushing forth from an invisible source in the earth? If so, Carpaccio has conflated two traditions by making the frog the embodiment of the sinner who, by unveiling the mystery of the law, may undergo spiritual renewal. According to Erasmus, '*that divine armour, which the poets call Vulcanian, impregnable to every dart, is acquired only from the arsenal of Holy Scripture*'.[70] Frogs shown in paintings of *Saint Jerome in Penitence* would have provided Carpaccio with visual precedents for the association of these creatures with penitence.

In my discussion of Titian's animal depictions, I will suggest that the identification of dogs with loyalty and fidelity in Medieval and Renaissance art was the exception, rather than the rule, both in sacred iconography and in moralizing secular allegory.[71] We may recall that the Greeks and Romans already gave the dog a bad name by accusing it of sexual offenses, and medieval writers, such as Bartolomeus Anglicus, perpetuated the myth of its promiscuity.[72] In the *Scivias* of Hildegard of Bingen (12th c.), the dog was said to represent one of the vices of society, that of the prelates and secular clergy, who ought to bark at

[69] Erasmus, O'Malley (ed.), (as in note 5), 32–33.
[70] *Ibid.*, 36.
[71] On the dog as a symbol of sin, see Chapters Six and Seven.
[72] For a historical review of dog symbolism, including bibliography, see B. Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces*, London, 1974, 58–66.

the enemy but fail to do so.[73] In passion literature and religious art, 'evil dogs' were attributes of treachery (as in that of Judas in the *Last Supper*) or of persecution (as the tormenters of Christ in the *Flagellation* or in versions of *Christ Before Pilatus* or *Christ Before Caiphas*).[74] In Medieval moralizing literature, they were manifestations of *Invidia* or *Ira*, because envious and angry men are like '*hounds that bark and bite*', or of *Gula*, because they snarled over bones.[75] The *Gula* context is likewise found in medieval bestiaries, which state that the dog returns to its vomit, and this was converted by Flemish artists into the image of a vomiting monk mounted on a swine with a dog licking up his spew. Sebastian Brandt used this image as a metaphor for the sinner in his *Ship of Fools* (Basel, 1494).

Faithful dogs were common in tomb sculpture, portraiture and contexts related to the latter, such as the *Scholar in his Study*, where historical personages were depicted or saints were conceived as ideal portraits. In Flemish and subsequently in Venetian art different dog species were combined in the same painting to represent diverse concepts. Memling, for example, in his personification of *Vanitas* (Museum of Strasbourg), painted a small Maltese dog on one side and two greyhounds on the other. Such juxtapositions may have been inspired by authors, such as Albertus Magnus, who noted that

> Greyhounds seldom, if ever, bark; on the contrary, they show disdain for the yelping of small dogs which bark for the sake of showing their prowess as watchdogs. Nor do they rush headlong to greet any newcomer, since they seem to regard such a flurry of activity as beneath their dignity.[76]

Carpaccio's page, on route to a joust or tournament, is accompanied by the typical hunting dog.[77] The hound, the horse and the peacock indicate his mundane preoccupations and the evils therein. As an

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[73] *Scivias*, III, visio XI, Migne, *P.L.*197, 710ff.; quoted from F. Saxl, "A Spiritual Encyclopedia of the Later Middle Ages," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5, 1942, 82–142.

[74] See J. Marrow, "*Circumdederunt me canes multi*: Christ's Tormenters in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *Art Bulletin*, 59, 1977, 167–81.

[75] For innumerable references to associations of dogs with Envy, see M.W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, Michigen, 1952 as well as Chew (as in note 56), 97, 109–10 & 129 and K. Wilson-Chevalier, "Luca Penni's Seven Deadly Sins," *Art Bulletin*, 78, June 1996, esp. 246–47.

[76] Albertus Magnus (as in note 22), 81, Bk.22:29.

[77] *Ibid.*, 79, Bk.22:28. The description given in this passage of *De animalibus*, and identified by Scanlan with the bloodhound as described by Aelian, fits the breed of dogs

example of the *vita activa*, the hunting dog is his *alter ego*. Both the page and his dog are oblivious to the *miles christianus* and his spiritual strivings. The second dog, to the left of the knight, conveys an entirely different message. His head is turned away, but his eyes peer out at the viewer with a bizarre and cunning expression. The features have a mask-like distortion; the body is tense and ready to spring. This seems to be the 'evil dog', the embodiment of corrupting human passions that pursue the innocent soul of the *miles christianus*. Although Carpaccio's dog is an almost precise copy of one by Pisanello,[78] his evil nature is defined by the unprecedented attribute of the sword. The sword cuts right across his head, as God's Word is like a sword that cuts down sinful acts.

We have seen the horse as a traditional symbol of Pride. It accumulated additional negative connotations that have bearing on the theme of the *miles christianus.* The horse conveyed the idea of unrestrained desire, and the image of horse and rider was perceived as antagonism between body and spirit or the conquest of the sensual body by the spirit. Carpaccio's page is, consequently, the rider who has yet to subjugate his pride and passions before he can embrace the spiritual life. Perhaps Carpaccio conceived of him as the precursor of the *miles christianus* who, by contrast, walks along a narrow and stony footpath.

On the upper right hand side of the painting there is a stag approaching the water. The association of a stag with water, seen in the earliest prototypes of Christian art, derives from *Psalm* 41, 1–2: '*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*'. The stag thirsting for water was a traditional allegory of the soul seeking the source of Salvation, and the image was employed as a disguised symbol by several north Italian painters of the sixteenth century.[79] Among the other stag myths, which were very popular in bestiary illuminations, was that of the stag who devours the serpent and then rushes to the fountain to neutralize the poison. Based upon Isidore of Seville, the *Physiologus* and the medieval bestiaries, the legend reappeared in a late medieval compendium, called *De bestiis et aliis rebus* (12th & 13th c.)

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generally depicted in Venetian hunting scenes. See my references to Titian's hunting dogs, for example, in Chapter Six.

[78] See note 15.

[79] See M. Bath, *The Image of the Stag, Iconographic Themes in Western Art*, Baden-Baden, 1992, D. Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries; Text, Image, Ideology*, Cambridge, 1995, 40–51 and my Chapter Six on the allegory of the stag hunt and disguised stag symbolism in works by Correggio and Titian.

as an allegory of the penitent sinner who runs to the fountain of the Holy Scriptures and is absolved of his sins by the priest.[80] Later Renaissance sources, as in the *Symbolorum & Emblematum ex animalibus* (1595) of Joachim Camerarius, interpreted the stag's action as indicative of the destruction of crime and fraud.[81] The emblems of the stag drinking water, with the legend *Desiderio verso Iddio*, and the stag standing erect in a landscape under the sun, with the motto *Mens intenta Deo*, were printed by Ripa (1593) and Camerarius (1595) respectively.[82] Although the stag, as a ubiquitous symbol of Christian art, also conveyed many other meanings, I find the interpretations quoted above most relevant to Carpaccio's iconography of the stag as well as to the general theme of the painting. A curious feature of Carpaccio's stag is that, although it is located at the extreme right margin of the composition, it faces towards the right, that is, outwards from the painting. This is contrary to the convention, generally followed by Carpaccio, of having figures at the edge turn inwards. It has been noted that 'creatures {including stags} representing good in the bestiaries are often positioned in the upper portion of the picture space, facing right' in accordance with symbolic interpretations of position and direction. Although symbolic positions of above and below have obviously not been maintained in the painting as a whole, the eccentric presentation of the stag may represent a carry-over of this practice.[83]

Rabbits or hares (not necessarily perceived as distinct species) generally represented fertility, chastity or/and love. They were commonly adopted in Venetian Renaissance art, as elsewhere, as a symbol of the virgin birth. This association stems from the myth that this animal could procreate without a mate. It likewise represented fecundity and conception.[84] Carpaccio depicted two brown rabbits tending their offspring in his *Birth of the Virgin* for the Scuola degli Albanesi (Bergamo, Accademia Carrara) executed between 1504 and 1508, prior to the

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80 *De bestiis st aliis rebus* (On beasts and other matters), Migne, *P.L.*177:13–164.

81 J. Camerarius, *Symbolorum & Emblematum ex animalibus quadrupedibus, desumtorum, centuria altera collecta*, Nurenburg, 1595, II, xxi. This was the second book in his series of four (1590–1604). See Stopp (as in note 18), 130–131.

82 C. Ripa, *Iconologia*, (reprint of Rome, 1603 edit) New York, 1970, 101–102; Camerarius (as above) and Stopp (as in note 18), 142–43.

83 Hassig (as in note 79), 40–41.

84 See C.K. Abraham, "Myth and Symbol: The Rabbit in Medieval France," *Studies in Philology*, LX, Oct. 1963, no. 4, 589–97, including important references to source material, and Friedmann (as in note 19), 286–88, who also cited Venetian paintings that portray rabbits.

painting of the knight. Medieval writers, such as Albertus Magnus, emphasized the rabbit's timidity, gentleness and shyness. This was also repeated by Leonardo.[85] Herbert Friedmann found it difficult to explain its frequent appearance in the iconography of St. Jerome, because St. Jerome 'was neither meek nor timid' and was opposed to sensuality. He concluded that they were 'due more to the artist's love of nature than of any special meaning'.[86] As the present study has demonstrated, every one of the animals and birds in the painting of the knight fulfills a symbolic function. This constitutes no contradiction to the assumption that the artist was also expressing his love of wildlife. It is my contention that the rabbit (like the stag), because it was a hunted animal (in actual practice and in art), came to represent the gentile and innocent victim, a meaning that could be applied to Christ, to St. Jerome or to the common man pursued by carnal temptations and thus led to his tragic fate. As he was constantly threatened by the pursuit of wild beasts (both the two and the four-legged species), the rabbit was also associated with alertness and vigilance. Other connotations in Renaissance iconography include lust (a by-product of fecundity), sensuality and the sanguine temperament. It seems unlikely, however, that the motif of the rabbit, used elsewhere by Carpaccio in positive contexts, would be invested here with a negative meaning.

Flowers of Virtue

Carpaccio was as imprecise as an illustrator of flora as he was of fauna. It is probable that his inaccurate and unidentifiable depictions of flora owed more to precedents in Renaissance painting than to actual observation. This is probably true of the identifiable flowers as well. In view of this obstacle, and the fact that a comprehensive study of the flora is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief summary will be devoted to this subject simply to demonstrate its relevance to the program as a whole. As in the case of birds and animals, none of the identifiable plants and flowers was arbitrarily chosen by the artist; each one contributes to the allegory of the Christian Knight. These include the white lily, blue and white irises, columbines, violets, blue periwinkles, the arum

[85] Albertus Magnus (as in note 22), 97–98 and MacCurdy (ed.), (as in note 45), 1078.

[86] Friedmann (as in note 19), 287.

of Italy, wild berries and ivy. The spleenworth appears to be the flower on the extreme left, above the white iris, and blue cornflowers may be those on the left just above the lilies.

The meaning of the iris (L. *Iris florentina, Iris germanica*) in Christian iconography was derived from pagan mythology where Iris, goddess of the rainbow, was said to lead souls of the dead to the underworld as messenger of the gods. The flower thus came to symbolize the divine message in scenes of the Virgin, especially in that of the *Annunciation*. The various colors signified her virtues. The plant was also called *gladiolus* because the leaves are shaped like the blade of the sword (L. *gladius*), and this was likened to the metaphysical sword that pierced the Virgin's heart at the Crucifixion.[87] The iris-sword (*gladiolus-gladius*) analogy may explain its relevance to the *miles christianus* who holds 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God' (*Ephesians* 6, 17). The flower also signified purity and peace.

The white lily (L. *Lilium candidum*), commonly known as the flower of the *Annunciation* and the *Immaculate Conception*, symbolized Chastity and Virginity. According to Bartolomeus Anglicus, poets compared it to the human intellect whose end is to search for eternal things.[88] Both meanings are consonant with the ideal of the *miles christianus.*

Columbines (L. *Aquilegia vulgaris* or *Columbina*) are located to the right of the knight. The flower was named *columbina* because its shape is reminiscent of four doves. It consequently became the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Its seven blooms were related to the seven gifts of the Spirit, as in *Isaiah* II, 12: '*And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of council and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord*'.[89] As a symbol of the Holy Spirit columbines

[87] Most of the references on flower-symbolism are from M. Levi D'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance, Botanical Symbolism in Italian Painting*, Florence, 1977; on the iris, see 185–89. Other important sources consulted are: R.A. Koch, "Flower Symbolism in the Portinari Altar," *Art Bulletin*, XLVI, no. 1, Mar. 1964, 70–77; J. Williamson, *The Oak King, The Holy King, and the Unicorn*, New York, 1983, esp. 230–39 for the flora of the unicorn tapestries (ca.1515, The Cloisters, MMA); M. Levi D'Ancona, *Botticelli's Primavera*, Florence, 1983 and M. Pastoureau (ed.), *Flore et Jardins; Usages, Savoirs et Representations du Monde Végétal au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1997.

[88] Bartolomeus Anglicus, *De Proprietatibus rerum*, lib.XVII, xci; quoted by Levi D'Ancona, 1983 (as above), 84, who presents other medieval sources for the lily and other flowers.

[89] D'Ancona, 1977 (as in note 87), 105–108 presents this and other sources. The French name *ancolie*, linked to *melancholie* and the sorrows of the Virgin, was discussed by E. Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, Cambridge, Mass., I, 146, n.6 and D'Ancona, but the sorrowful connotations do not appear to be relevant to the present case.

were depicted in Renaissance versions of the *Madonna and Child*, the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, and the *Resurrection of Christ*.[90]

Violets (L. *Viola odorata*), painted by Carpaccio on the lower right hand corner of the painting, were symbols of Humility and Modesty, primarily because they are small and bow their heads. They were associated in medieval sacred literature and subsequently in Renaissance art with the Virgin and the humility of Christ in his Incarnation.[91] The theme of the *imitatio christi*, the exhortation of the Christian Knight to imitate the virtues of Christ, is a leitmotif of the *Enchiridion*.

The blue periwinkle (L. *vinca major*) is seen in the left foreground of the painting. It was considered an aphrodisiac and a prophylactic against malevolent forces, due to which it was called the *violette des sorciers* or *herbe des magiciens*. Because of its blue color it symbolized Heaven, the angels, the Virgin and Christ. In Botticelli's *Primavera* it is among the spring flowers.[92] Here it appears by the water source and may participate in its regenerative symbolism, but its association with fidelity reveals a link to the other flowers that allude to virtues. The blue cornflower (L. *Centaurea cyanus*) was also considered to have prophylactic and medicinal qualities and symbolized Christ's defeat of the devil.[93]

The Chamomile (L. *Matricaria Camomilla*) was considered by the Romans to be a benevolent plant. It became a symbol of Salvation and Resurrection in Christian art and appeared in sixteenth century emblems with the meaning of restoration of strength or rejuvenation through virtue.[94]

The various iconographic meanings attached to the oak tree reiterate the floral themes of virtue, especially those related to regeneration,

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[90] For columbines with the *Madonna and Child*, see e.g. Luini's paintings in Dijon, Vienna and Milan, the latter reproduced in D'Ancona, 1977, 106, fig. 31; for its appearance in the *Adoration*, see koch (as in note 87) and in the *Resurrection*, e.g. a German tryptych in Stuttgart (ca.1475), reproduced in A.S. Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 1993, 539, fig. 166.

[91] D'Ancona, 1977, 398–401; Koch and Williamson, 235 (as in note 87). P.G. Girault, "La langue symbolique de la flore: heritage flamand et expression dynastique dans l'oeuvre de Maître de Saint Gilles, in Pastoureau (ed.), (as in note 87) 145–176, discusses the purple iris, the wild strawberry, the columbine, violets, etc.

[92] D'Ancona, 1977 & 1983 (as in note 87).

[93] D'Ancona, 1977, 113–14.

[94] Pliny (as in note 30), 22, 26.54, claimed it restores strength to lizards and resists poison; see D'Ancona, 1977, 78–79. The chamomile plant and lizard with a revived tree stump appeared on a Gonzaga devise with the legend: *Invidiae ut virus vincas, imitare lacertam, utque chamaemelo haec, pectore te abde bono*; reproduced in Henkel & Schöne (as in note 56), 337–38.

rejuvenation and spiritual strength. Oak leaves were used for crowning victors and as a sign of civic distinction in ancient Rome, and the tree was known as an image of solidity and endurance throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance. In moralizations the oak represented patience, strength of faith, and the virtue of Christian endurance in the face of adversity. As such, it was depicted as the attribute of Job and martyred saints in Renaissance art. All of these connotations apply to the image of the *miles christianus* as Erasmus describes him. It should be noted, in addition, that the oak tree was generally depicted as the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, the tree that died with Original Sin but sprouted a new branch from which the cross of the crucifixion was made, thus auguring Salvation.[95] Carpaccio's oak has lost most of its leaves, and his *cartellino* is attached to a dead stump, but the verdant tree behind it and the ivy of resurrection are reminders of the resuscitating power of virtue.

The woodcut that illustrated the *Fior de Virtù* (Venice, 1493) already combined a monk, as a model of virtue, with the attributes of birds, animals, trees and flowers (Fig. 24). As he gathers the flowers of virtue, the monk is framed by the gate of a crenellated wall, similar to that in Carpaccio's background. This is the bastion of virtue. The peacock, however, unlike that of Carpaccio, stands high above the monk and just below the image of God, to signify Salvation.

The Problem of the Portrait

Who is Carpaccio's *miles christianus*? Most writers have considered this a portrait, but there has been little consensus on his identity. Roberto Weiss was the first to suggest that the knight was a portrait of Francesco Maria della Rovere (1490–1530), Duke of Urbino and son of Giovanni della Rovere and Giovanna da Montefeltro. This theory was cited by Guido Perocco (1960) and then by Pietro Zampetti (1963).[96] The identification was revived more recently by Marina Massa (1991), Alessandro Ballarin (1993) and Jaynie Anderson (1997). Anderson compared it with a youthful portrait in Vienna assumed to be that of Francesco Maria della Rovere. Among the problems raised by this identification is the applicability of the ermine and motto. Although Federigo da Montefeltro was

[95] D'Ancona, 1977, 250–55 and Williamson, 58–67 (as in note 87).
[96] For this and all subsequent bibliographical references in this chapter, see note 1.

Fig. 24. *A Monk Gathering Flowers*, from *Fiori de Virtù*, Venice, 1493.

a member of the Order of the Ermine (since 1483), his grandson was not, and consequently he could not have assumed its knightly insignia. A portrait of Francesco Maria della Rovere by Titian (1536, Florence, Uffizi) furthermore demonstrates that he was not Carpaccio's subject. Rona Goffen (1983) identified another member of this family, Antonio da Montefeltro (d.1508), who was the illegitimate son of Federigo and a man of arms, as Carpaccio's knight. The flora and fauna in the painting were interpreted by her to support an eschatological theme for the posthumous portrait, with emphasis on the disease and death of Antonio and a prevailing message of mourning.

Another theory was put forth by Perocco (1967), who claimed that the ermine motif and the accompanying motto were used by the Molin and Barbaro families in Venice, and identified the knight as a posthumous and idealized portrait of the humanist Ermolao Barbaro (d.1493). I have not succeeded in verifying that either of these families had the ermine and this motto as their device. Vittore Branca and Roberto Weiss (1963) compared later portraits of Barbaro with that owned by Paolo

Giovo by 1521 and identified their source in Carpaccio's St. Ursula series. A comparison of Carpaccio's Barbaro portrait with his knight clearly demonstrates that these were two different men. Helmut Nickel (1984) suggested the knight was a commander of German mercenaries in Venetian service, identifying the fortified city in the background as Ragusa (Dubrovnik). This led him to conclude that the portrait depicts Lajor II (1506–1526), King of Hungary and Bohemia, portrayed as the legendary hero Roland. The problem, recognized by the writer himself, is that Lajor II would have been four years old when Carpaccio painted the knight. He therefore argued that a date of MDXX (rather than MDX) on the *cartellino* would be more compatible with the costume, arms and armor. This would not explain, however, how a fourteen-year-old had assumed such a mature physiognomy. Agathe Rona (1983) examined the emblematic elements and linked them to the Order of the Ermine founded (1465) by Ferdinand I of Aragon, King of Naples as well as to the Aragonese device and coins. He observed that the motto of the order was *Decorum* and not *Malo mori quam foedari*. This led him to here identify the posthumous portrait of Ferdinand II, who died in 1496 at the age of twenty-eight. Lubomír Konecký (1990) focused his study on the falcon and heron, adopted both by Carpaccio and by Dürer, assuming that the latter was influenced by this painting during his second visit to Venice between 1505 and 1507. A different approach was taken by Marina Massa (1991), who emphasized the role of landscape in interpreting the theme of the painting. This writer recognized the city of Ancona in the background which, she claimed, confirmed the identity of Francesco Maria della Rovere who, after being nominated as *Capitano* by his uncle Julius II, met the Pope in Ancona in 1510.

It appears to me that none of the above theories regarding the identity of the knight have been substantiated and that alternative paths of research have yet to be explored. When the Order of the Ermine was instituted in Naples in 1465 by Ferdinand I the number of knights was fixed at twenty-seven. Actually we have evidence of thirty-two names that are included in the original list.[97] The statutes include information about the collar worn by these knights; it had a

[97] See M.G. Musco, *Intorno all'ordine dell'arnellino da Re Ferdinando I d'Aragona all'Arcangelo S. Michele dedicato*, Napoli, 1844 and Goffredo di Crollalanza, *Enciclopedia Araldico-Cavalleresca*, Bologna, 1964, 69–70, for the early history and the statues of the Order of the Ermine. The statutes are conserved in the library of the Badia in SS. Trinità di Cava

golden medallion with a white enamel ermine and the legend *Decorum*. The motto of the order was *Malo mori quam foedari*. The knights were obliged to wear the collar at least once a week and on the feast of St. Michael, their patron saint. In the initiation celebration, held in the church of the order during mass, the king or his vicar was to put the collar on the knight saying:

> l'ordine nostro vi accoglie per le vostre virtù nel suo seno, e in segno di ciò vi dona queste insegne, certo che esso ne sarà nobilitato a servizio e lode di Dio omnipotente, ad esaltazione di santa romana chiesa e ad incremento dell'ordine e della vostra fama.[98]

In battle they were supposed to wear the insignia. Hypothetically, Carpaccio's *miles christianus* could also be the portrait of a member of the order. Although one would expect to see him wearing the collar of the ermine in such a formal representation, the allegorical nature of the painting would conceivably have dictated a veiled allusion, rather than an explicit reference, to his membership in a military order. In any case, a list of the order's members in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century would be an asset to further research in this direction.

The fact that several Italian families had a device that combined the image of the ermine and the particular motto has not been explored in studies of this painting. The ermine was not very common in Italian devices and the motto was equally rare, which considerably narrows down our options to several noble families with suitable devices that were documented in emblematic dictionaries. The de Betta family of the Trentino area, for example, had on their arms the three leaves of the betta plant, three pinecones, and a white ermine. Their motto was *Malo mori quam foedari*. Curiously enough, the crest of the family was '*una coda di pavone al naturale*'.[99] It would be interesting to find the betta plant among Carpaccio's flora, but I have not succeeded in identifying it. If it is the *betonica* (L.) it probably refers to the expression '*aver più virtù della bettonica*'. The pinecones, which are not typical of the Veneto, are lacking in the painting. Although they came from the area of the Alto

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de' Terreni. Crollalanza also refers to an earlier order of the same name, which was founded by Jean IV, the Valiant, Duke of Brittany in 1365 or 1381, *op. cit.*, 68–69.

[98] Goffredo di Crollalanza (as above), 69.

[99] See Q. Perini, *La famiglia Betta di Arco Revò e Castel Malgola*, Rovereto, 1903; V. Spreti, *Enciclopedia Storico Nobiliare Italiano*, Milano, 1928–1935, vol. II. and G.B. di Crollalanza, *Dizionario Storico-Blasonico delle famigle nobili e notabili Italiane estinte e fiorenti*, 1986, vol. II.

Adige, members of the de Betta family held important administrative positions in Mantua, Piacenza and Parma. Some of the de Bettas were distinguished in military and other capacities. Another family to be considered is that of the Bianchi of Piemonte, whose arms contained stars on the upper half and the image of the ermine on the lower half.[100] The motto of this family was also *Malo mori quam foedari*. Although the noble Bianchis seems to have been very distinguished in the sixteenth century, the sea panorama in Carpaccio's painting would hardly be suited to their native location in Fossano and Pinerolo. The De Raho family, originally of Naples, settled in the area of Otranto and Lecce.[101] They were an old and powerful family. Their device was checkered with sixteen squares in gold and blue with a black ermine tail on each golden square. They too adopted the motto inscribed in the painting. Their checkered pattern is similar to that of the squire's garment and the knight's shoes, although the colors there are gold and black. There are records of many famous members beginning with the period of Frederick II. Among the outstanding de Rahos of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century was Scipione, a military commander of the Neapolitan forces at Siena; Raffaele, who in 1497 was ambassador of Taranto to Cesare of Aragon, commander of the Aragonese troops that blockaded the city; and Antonio, a famous advocate and adviser to the king who died in an accident in 1504. A prominent member of any one of these families, or a knight of the Order of the Ermine, might have been Carpaccio's subject. Without further documentation, any identification would be speculative.

Carpaccio's Message

In her book *Metamorphosis of an Allegory*, Joanne S. Norman observed that 'the complex scheme of animal and plant emblems based on the logic of allegory rather than any real natural history encouraged fan-

[100] See Spreti (as above), II, 76, including refernces to books published on the Bianchi family in the 17th century.

[101] On the de Raho family, see *Raccolta delle Vite e Famiglie degli uomini illustri del Regno di Napoli*, (Milano, 1755) Bologna, 1972, 49; B. Candida Gonzaga, *Memorie delle famiglie nobili delle provincie meridionali d'Italia*, (Napoli, 1875–1883) Bologna, 1965, 103–105; Spreti, V, 587–88 & suppl. and G.B. di Crollalanza, II, 394 (as in note 99).

tasy rather than accuracy on the part of successive artists'.[102] She could have been describing Carpaccio's *Knight in a Landscape*, but actually she was referring to the development of the *Etymachia* illustrations which, directly or indirectly, constituted a source of Carpaccio's iconography and allegorical method. Warrior virtues and vices equipped with symbolic arms and mounts, which originally accompanied the text, became independent images in the art of the fifteenth century and underwent subsequent transformations that ensured their survival in the guise of contemporary realism. In this new context, exotic and legendary animals, such as the dragon, the unicorn and the griffin, disappeared leaving behind only the indigenous wildlife of the artist's surroundings. But most significant in Carpaccio's painting is the conflation of this moralizing tradition with that of the *miles christianus.* In the psychomachian metaphor the battle between virtues and vices was represented by personified, externalized forces. The allegory of the of the *miles christianus*, by contrast, highlighted the subject who was inherent—man, any man and all men, and transformed the virtues and vices into *his* attributes. The metaphor was thus internalized.

From the whole catalogue of floral and animal metaphors that represented medieval virtues and vices, with their multiple subdivisions, Carpaccio selected those that could be integrated into a seemingly realistic, local landscape. We have seen that this semblance of realism was deliberately deceptive. The landscape became the scenic backdrop for the drama of the Christian Knight who, as we have seen, was derived from an entirely different tradition that began with a poetic simile in the Pauline writings. Carpaccio's disguised catalogue of virtues includes *Castitas* (the ermine and the lily), *Humilitas* (the violet), *Largitas* (the stork), *Caritas* (the tree full of birds and the stag), *Devotio* (the heron), *Fidelitas* (the periwinkle), *Fortitido* (the oak tree) and *Patientia* (the page's dog). The stag seeking water represents the broader concept of *Pietas*. The virtues of C*oncordia* and *Pax* are immanent in the harmony that pervades the landscape. *Discordia* is portrayed by the avian juxtapositions. The varicolored iris and the chamomile were symbols of various virtues or the concept of Christian virtue in general. Although they are well camouflaged in the benign landscape, the whole catalogue of cardinal sins are also present in this world of illusive beauty—*Avaritia*

[102] Norman (as in note 43), 232.

(the rapacious hawk), *Superbia* (the peacock), *Ira* (the mad dog), *Luxuria* (the horse), *Invidia* (the frog) and *Gula* (the eagle or vulture with its prey). Perhaps *Accidia* is represented by the wader asleep on his pole.

The similes of the knightly armor underscore the message of virtue triumphant. The helmet, ironically worn here by the page rather than the knight, was called the *galea spes salutis*.[103] The sword represented the Word of God. In the Old and New Testaments, the *bis acutus* denotes the two sides of the sword that cuts down sinful acts, or differentiates between believers and non-believers.[104] In the engravings of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the vices of the *Psychmachia* would be portrayed as seven swords trampled under the feet of the *miles christianus* (Fig. 25).[105]

Michael Evans observed that depictions of the *miles christianus* are rare before the Reformation.[106] In a sense, Carpaccio's knight mediates between the late medieval examples and those of the period of the Reformation. But the conflation of the two traditions, that of the *Psychomachia* on one hand, and the *miles christianus* on the other, appears to have had no iconographic continuity. About three years later Dürer engraved his version of the *miles christianus* in the *Knight, Death and the Devil*, but that was a totally different concept in which the *miles*, as a man of action and worldliness, was tragically doomed in the true spirit of German morbidity and fatality.[107] In later sixteenth and seventeenth century northern prints, the *miles christianus*, persecuted by mundane evils, would climb the ladder of virtues that leads to God, or would firmly withstand his personified adversaries, including *mundus* with the orb and cross on her head (Fig. 26). Carpaccio, in contrast to these, secularized and humanized his interpretation by conveying the moralizing allegory through the beauty of flora and fauna, with a conspicuous lack of explicit religious imagery. His painting conveys neither the morbidity of Dürer, nor the *contemptu mundi* of Erasmus. His practice of making veiled allusions to religious concepts demonstrates his commitment to disguised symbolism as seen in fifteenth century Flemish art, but it is also a symptom of increased secularization in Venetian iconography during the early sixteenth century. The salient red berries of the *arun*

[103] Wang (as in note 3), 25.
[104] *Ibid.*, 82–86.
[105] *Ibid.*, 95–99.
[106] Evans (as in note 3), 14.
[107] Panofsky, 1955 (as in note 34), 151–54.

Fig. 25. Hieronymus Wierix (ca.1553–1619), *Miles Christianus*,
engraving, Alvin 1234.
Copyright Hamburger Kunsthalle.

Fig. 26. Thomas Cecill, *Miles Christianus*, engraving on verso of title page in Joseph Fletcher, *The History of the Perfect-Cursed-Blessed Man*, London, 1628.

italicum, for example, probably refer to the wounds of Christ and by inference to the self-sacrifice of the Christian Knight, but there is no cross to be seen and no church in the background.

Why has Carpaccio chosen to convey concepts of the sublime and invisible through mundane reality? Perhaps it is another way of saying what Erasmus explained in the *Enchiridion*: '*visible worship is not condemned, but God is appeased only by invisible piety*'.[108] Perhaps he was also thinking in terms of a subtle analogy between the challenge presented to his viewer, to perceive what is not manifest (i.e. the inner vision), and the metaphor of God's perception as described in the *Enchiridion*:

> The eyes of the Lord do not see what is manifested externally, but what is in secret. He does not judge according to what the eyes see, nor does he make accusation according to what the ears hear.[109]

Erasmus called for the substitution of superficial cult and ceremony with '*invisible piety*' and '*spiritual sacrifices*'. Carpaccio, in his own way, rejected the signs and symbols of cult and ceremony, replacing them with visible reflections of the transitory world to indicate

> this narrow path, on which few mortals walk. But Christ himself has trodden it, and all those who were pleasing to God from the beginning of the world have trodden it.[110]

[108] Erasmus, O'Malley (ed.), (as in note 5), 81.
[109] *Ibid.*, 81. Cf. quotation from the beginning of this article, *Ibid.*, 66 and St. Jerome, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Ephesios* 5, 8, Migne, *P.L.*28, (1884) 556.
[110] Erasmus, O'Malley (ed.), (as in note 5), 57.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ENIGMA OF CARPACCIO'S *VENETIAN LADIES*

The Problem of Artistic Genre

The fragmentary state of the panel painting by Vittore Carpaccio, and the dispersion of its extant portions, the so-called *Venetian Ladies on a Balcony* and *Hunting in the Lagoon*, in two different museums (the Correr Museum in Venice and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, Figs. 27–29), have promoted various misconceptions in the art-historical literature. Hinges were originally attached to the top and bottom of the left-hand side of the painting in order to adapt it to some function.[1] The amputation of the lagoon scene in the upper background from the ladies on the terrace below came later. It cannot be assumed, however, that this was the vandalism of some eighteenth or nineteenth century art dealer; there is evidence indicating that the division dates from the Renaissance. The former misreading of the painting as an intimate family portrait is inconsistent with the original size and iconographical context as we can now tentatively reconstruct it.[2] The total height of the present painting, reconstituted from its two extant parts, measures 169.9 cm. The width of the lower section with the Venetian ladies is 63.5 and that of the lagoon scene is 63.8, the difference of only 3 mm confirming that this was the width of the entire panel from the time the hinges were attached and until the division. Needless to say, there were

[1] Regarding the restorations of the Correr painting, see S. Vedovello, "Vittore Carpaccio. Due Dame veneziane," in A. Dorigato (ed.), *Carpaccio, Bellini, Tura, Antonello, e altri restauri quattrocenteschi della Pinacoteca del Museo Correr*, Venezia, 1993, 177–85. On the more recent cleaning and restorations of the Getty panel, see Y. Szafran, "Carpaccio's 'Hunting on the lagoon', a new perspective," *Burlington Magazine*, 1995, vol. 137, 148–58. For an excellent review of the literature on this painting, including issues of iconography, dating, restoration and the matching of the two panels, see catalogue entry by E.M. dal Pozzolo, in B. Aikema & B.L. Brown, *Renaissance Venice and the North*, exhibition catalogue, Venice, 1999, 236–39.

[2] The suggestion that this is a genre-like enlargement of a portrait was made by J. Lauts, *Carpaccio*, London, 1962, 251 & cat. no. 83. The double portrait theory was elaborated by F. Polignano, "Ritratto e sistema simbolico nelle Dame di Vittore Carpaccio," in *Il Ritratto e la Memoria*, Roma, 1993, 229–51.

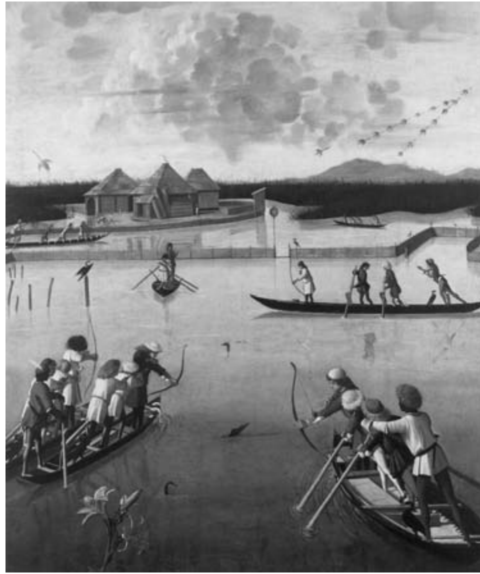

Fig. 28. Vittore Carpaccio, *Hunting on the Lagoon*, ca.1495, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum.

Fig. 27. Vittore Carpaccio, *Venetian Ladies on a Balcony*, ca.1495, Venice, Museo Civico Correr.

Fig. 29. Vittore Carpaccio, photographic reconstruction of *Hunting in the Lagoon*, ca.1495, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum (museum photograph).

no contemporary Italian portrait paintings of such huge dimensions.[3] The *Knight in a Landscape* (Fig. 13), measuring 218 by 152 cm, does not belong to the genre of portraiture but to that of moralistic allegory, as I have explained in Chapter Four. It will be demonstrated that the painting under discussion was closer, in its original form, to Carpaccio's *scuola* paintings than to any of his other works, in terms both of size and

[3] Those by Carpaccio were in the area of 40 by 30 cm maximum, with the exception of the Leonardo Loredan portrait (Private Collection, Bergamo) that measures 71 by 55 cm.

stylistic approach.[4] But was it a *scuola* painting? That theory would be hard to reconcile with the so-called letters that were originally painted on the reverse of the entire panel and can still be seen, despite damage, on that of the lagoon section (Fig. 30). *Scuola* paintings were never two-sided, as opposed to portraits, altarpiece wings, organ shutters and various domestic objects that often were.

The questions introduced above, and others to be discussed below, demonstrate the uniqueness of this work by Carpaccio. Although it does not conform to any traditional category of Renaissance painting, it does seem to conflate different genres. Is it just a question of reconstructing the missing parts to establish its proper niche—public or domestic, sacred or secular, narrative or symbolic, allegorical or biographical?

This chapter will present a new theory regarding the painting's function, context and significance. In order to reassess some of the controversial questions surrounding this painting, new evidence will be introduced and integrated with some past findings and mutually unrelated contributions. It will be argued that Carpaccio painted his Venetian ladies overlooking a lagoon for a piece of domestic furniture, which was intended as a wedding gift for a future bride. Images of moral ambivalence and multiple levels of meaning employed in this context will be analyzed, revealing the complexity and originality of Carpaccio's iconography.

The Precarious Legs of the Peacock

In the lower section of the painting Carpaccio depicted the full-length profiles of two *Venetian Ladies* on a terrace. They appear to be conscientiously ostentatious with their extravagant and noble attire and an uncommon menagerie of animals and birds that enhance the image of their socio-economic status. The most curious creature among them is the peacock, a bird that one would be unlikely to find on a fifteenth century Venetian terrace overlooking the *laguna* and which was undoubtedly selected for its symbolic value.

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[4] Although the paintings for the Scuole di Sant'Ursula and San Giovanni Evangelista were considerably larger, those of the Scuola degli Schiavoni have an average height of 141 cm and the Albanesi paintings have a maximum height of 128 cm, which makes them considerably shorter (and altogether smaller) than our reconstructed panel.

Fig. 30. Vittore Carpaccio, Letter Rack, reverse of *Hunting in the Lagoon*, ca.1495, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum.

Despite the peacock's hallowed associations in religious art, medieval sources of animal symbolism preferred to promote it as an image of vainglory. Some explained that the peacock's contrasting physical features illustrate the precariousness of vainglory and the necessity of prudence. The *Bestiario moralizzato di Gubbio* (XIIIc.), for example, states:

> Questo uccello elevato tradizionalmente ad emblema della vanagloria richiama, con il proprio atteggiamento, alla necesità di praticare la virtù della prudenza: esso si turba, proprio quando si trova al culmine dell'autocompiacimento, alla vista dei propri piedi diformi, che rappresentano le basi pericolanti su cui chi ha agito imprudamente ha elevato un edificio destinato a crollare.[5]

[5] *Bestiario moralizzato*, XLVI, in Carrega, A. & Navone, P. (eds.), *Le proprietà degli animali, Bestiario moralizzato di Gubbio/Libellus de natura animalum*, Genova, 1983, 470. Although the text is attributed to the 13th c., the only extant manuscript (Ms.477 V.E., Bibl. Naz.di Roma) has been assigned by Carrega to the 14th c., *Op. cit.*, 19. For medieval sources that refer to the deformity of the peacock's legs, see *Op. cit.*, 470–71 & 127–28.

The magnificent tail conceals deformed feet, which represent the tottering foundations that are destined to collapse. Due to the connotation of ostentatious display (described from Pliny onwards), largely defined as excessive concern with extravagant and noble dress in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the concept was applied primarily to the female sex.[6]

The symbolic function of the peacock or peahen by the balustrade (the tail was cut off together with the whole left side of the painting) seems to be enhanced by the pair of high red clogs. Besides the fact that they were the height of fashion in contemporary Venice and declare their noble status by the red color, they were also terribly difficult to walk on. We know from literary and pictorial sources that a woman who wore such clogs was constantly in jeopardy of falling and often had to be supported.[7] Could these symbolic analogies between the bird and other pictorial motifs in the painting express the doubtful morals of the ladies?

Cortegiane or Nobiltà?

Unfortunately, the iconographic interpretation proposed above, like some others that have preceded it over the past decades, is still as precarious as the peacock's legs and the red clogs. Hypothetically, the argument might be correct, but the conclusions are founded on the kind of biased and unmethodical approach that confuses rather than clarifies the issue. The implications of this and other interpretations of the peacock will be examined below.

There has been an ongoing debate regarding the social status of the *Two Ladies* ever since they were called *maliarde* (witches, sorcerers or tramps) in a guidebook of 1852 and were subsequently assigned the appellation of '*deux courtisanes*' (prostitutes) by Ludwig and Molmenti

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[6] Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, 10.22.44. See C. Brown, "Bestiary Lessons on Pride and Lust," in D. Hassig (ed.), *The Mark of the Beast*, New York & London, 1999, 61–63. The association between the peacock and the ostentatious show of the wealthy was described in G.C. Capaccio's *Delle Imprese*, Naples, 1592, chap. LXI, 14r & v. For an interesting ramification of this bird-female analogy, where Venus as '*Concupiscenza*' has chicken legs emerging from her dress, see G.J. van der Sman, "Il Quatrirego: mitologia e allegoria nel libro illustrato a Firenze intorno al 1500," *Bibliofilia*, 1989, vol. 91, no. 3, Sept.–Dec., 237–65, fig. 16.

[7] For contemporary descriptions and artistic depictions of these high clogs, see L. Lawner, *Lives of the Courtesans*, New York, 1987, 17–21 & 23–25.

in 1906.[8] Arguments in favor of these allegations have been primarily based on what I consider to be historically irrelevant and subjective judgments of the ostentatious and revealing attire of the ladies as well as interpretations of their inactivity as sloth or *acedia*, one of the seven deadly sins.[9] Santore based the courtesan theory primarily on attributes in the painting that were consistently misread or misinterpreted.[10] Thus, the potted plant that is so badly damaged in the original as to defy identification became 'a pot of myrtle, the plant sacred to the goddess of love'. The citrus fruit on the ledge was identified as the apple of Venus. The lily, which scholars had already identified in the Getty panel, was said to be 'a plant which expert horticulturists have been unable to name' but which the author identifies as *Arundo Cypria*, 'a type of reed which grew in the coastal waters of the Adriatic and Turkey' and 'takes its name from Venus' birthplace'. The additional argument that 'Venetian courtesans were reputed to have a penchant for pets', although it is probably true, ignores obvious iconographic contexts. The consistent use of animal symbolism in Carpaccio's painting and its implications will be discussed below.

A simple comparison between these feminine figures and depictions of patrician ladies in contemporary paintings by Gentile Bellini, Giovanni Mansuetti and Carpaccio himself would have sufficed to establish that the hairstyle, mode of attire, passivity and even the way of holding the handkerchief all belong to conventions of portraiture generally reserved for the upper class. One might contest this inevitable conclusion, however, by claiming that Venetian prostitutes imitated patrician ladies by adopting the same attire, jewelry and manners. Lawner, in his *Lives of the Courtesans*, describes how Venetian courtesans disguised themselves as ladies, with lavish robes of precious textiles and furs as well as the notorious high clogs.[11] Illustrations of Venetian fashions in the sixteenth century, in fact, do not necessarily differentiate between the attire of noble women and courtesans. But Cesare Vecellio, in his *Habiti antichi*

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[8] J. Selbatico & V. Lazari, *Guida di Venezia*, Venezia & Milano, 1852, 199; G. Ludwig & P. Molmenti, *Vittore Carpaccio, La vita e le opere*, Milano, 1906, 282–83.

[9] For reviews of this debate, see J. Lauts, *Carpaccio*, London, 1962, 251, cat. no. 83 and Dal Pozzolo (as in note 1), 236. The idea that the women are courtesans has been more recently upheld by C. Santore, "The Fruits of Venus: Carpaccio's 'Two Courtesans'," *Arte Veneta*, 42, 1988, 34–39 and I. Lawner, *Le Cortigiane, Ritratti del Rinascimento*, Milano, 1988.

[10] Santore (as above), 34–36.

[11] Lawner (as in note 9), 17–21.

et moderni di tutto il mondo wrote: '*e perché sono loro prohibite le perle, sono in particolare conosciute per tali [i.e. the cortigiane] quando mostrano scoperto il collo*',[12] thus illustrating how difficult it could be for them to contravene the sumptuary laws by the second half of the sixteenth century, if not before.[13] Carpaccio's younger Venetian lady is wearing a strand of pearls, but Lawner still describes them as 'Two Courtesans . . . seated on their well-furnished rooftop *altana*, surrounded by dogs, peacocks and exotic birds, idling the time between clients'.[14] It will be demonstrated below that this interpretation is totally unfounded.

The Heraldic Arms

The enigma of the ladies need not revolve about such ambiguous issues. A more objective criterion for establishing their social status is offered by the heraldic *stemma* on the ceramic vase holding the lily. Hypothetically, if the ladies are identified by such heraldry, they should belong to the nobility. My own research into the identity of the family arms does not corroborate past assumptions, but the identification nevertheless remains inconclusive.

The, so-called, Preli arms, as seen in the painting, contain a red *capriolo* (triangular band) on a blue ground with two white roses above and a white *fleur-de-lys* below. Various manuscripts that document the Venetian nobility, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, identify these arms as those of the Preli family.[15] The sources generally repeat the information given, for example, in the *Blasoni del Patriziato Veneto* (15th c.?) as follows: 'Prelij questi sono primi homini molto famosi al mestier de pescar et al tempo dela guerra de Attila vennero abitar a Venetia dove furono fatti gentil-omini da Venetia et del Gran Consiglio. Mancò

[12] C. Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il Mondo*, Venezia, (1590) 1598, 107 (Venezia, Museo Correr, St. H 34/1).

[13] Lawner (as in note 9, 22) claims that the earliest of the Venetian sumptuary laws prohibiting excessive expenditure was written in Latin at the end of the 13th c. and regards patrician marriage ceremonies. In 1512 the *Magistrato delle Pompe* (High Commission on Luxury) was established and it later collaborated with the *Provveditori alla Sanità* in regulating prostitution.

[14] Lawner (as in note 9), 25.

[15] A previous identification of the Torelli stemma, set forth by Molmenti in 1906 (as in note 9, 281), has been rejected by all recent writers. The statement in the Guidebook of the Museum that the arms belong to the Priuli has unfortunately not been corrected (*Il Museo Correr di Venezia*, Milano, 1997, 54).

questa casada in tempo di ms brun de Prelij al 1025.'[16] In Capellari's *Il Campidoglio Veneto* (18th c.), which reproduces the Preli stemma in the precise colors of Carpaccio's painting, it is stated, in addition to the above, that they came either from Malamoco Vecchio or from Istria. These and the other sources confirm, however, that the Preli family became extinct after the death of its last descendent in 1025.[17] In any case, there is no record of the Preli in the Venetian archives during Carpaccio's time.

How then do we explain that Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies* belong to a family that became extinct about 470 years before that painting was created? I suggest that the *stemma*, which is obviously over-painted with a thick layer of impasto, was either incorrectly restored after being damaged beyond recognition or was deliberately repainted to conceal the original *stemma*. Neither option has been suggested in the literature on the restorations, but the first appears to be most feasible. There are several patrician arms that bear some resemblance to those in the painting, but none are identical.[18] The *capriolo* design in other colors

[16] The following sources, which I examined, either mention the Preli as a family that was extinct after the 11th c. or do not refer to them at all: *Blasoni del Patriziato Veneto*, Museo Civico Correr, Coll. P.D. 366b, 15th c.(?); Marco Barbaro, *Geneologie delle famiglie patrizie venete*, (written 1536), Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms. It.VII.925–928 (8594–8597), 4 vols., 18th c.; Marco Barbaro, *Famiglie nobili venete*, (written 16th c.), Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms.It.VII. 935 (7428), 18th c.; *Famigle nobili veneziane*, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms.It.VII.939 (9180), 16th c.; *Breve descrizione delle nobili famiglie venete*, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms.It.VII, 105 = 7732, 16thc.; *Origini delle famiglie nobili veneziane*, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms.It.936 (9631), 16th c.; Degli Agostini, *Cittadini Veneziani*, Biblioteca Civica Correr, Cod. fondo Gradenigo—Dolphin 83/1, 83/2; G.A. Capellari, *Il Campidoglio Veneto*, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms.It. VII. 15–18 (8304–8307), 4 vols., 18th c.; V.M. Coronelli, Stati della Repubblica di Venezia, vol. 2, Venezia, ca.1670; V.M. Coronelli, *Blasone venete delineato e descritto dal P. Coronelli*, Venezia, ca.1708; V.M. Coronelli, *Arme, Blasoni e Insegne Gentilizie delle Famiglie Patrizi essistenti nella Serennisima Rep. Di Venezia,* Venezia, 1706; G.B. di Crollalanza, *Dizionario storico-blasonico delle famiglie nobili e notabili italiani*, 3 vols., Pisa, 1886–90; T. Toderini, *Alberi genealogici dei cittadini originari compilati da Teodoro Toderini nel 1876*, Venezia, *ASV, Avogaria di comun*; G. Dolcetti, *Il Libro d'Argento, Storie delle famiglie nobili e cittadine*, 4 vols., Venezia, 1922–28; V. Spreti, *Enciclopedia Storico Nobiliare*, Milano, 1928–35; G.M. del Basso (ed.), *Araldica Civica del Friuli*, Udine, 1978 and E. Morandi di Custoza, *Libro d'Arme di Venezia*, Verona, 1979. The latter presents 3 different arms for the Preli, one of which matches that in Carpaccio's painting in its present form.

[17] Despite the recent claim that the Preli are still documented in the Notarile/Testamenti catalogue of the *Archivio di Stato di Venezia* in the eighteenth century, I found no mention there of this family. A Madalena Prelle is documented in 1728, but the spelling of the name is different and we have no proof that this is the same family.

[18] The Bembo arms, for example, had a gold *capriolo* on blue ground with three roses. The Priuli had a red *capriolo* on white ground with three roses. The Damian had a red *capriolo* on blue ground with three roses.

and without floral additions was used by the Da Canal and Savorgnan families. The Da Canal family also had other arms of a different design that contained the *fleurs-de-lys*. In 1507 Bartholomeo Da Canal married a Mocenigo,[19] which is interesting because the name Mocenigo was once legible among the inscribed 'letters' on the upper back of the painting, now the reverse of the *Caccia in Valle*. The prominent Savorgnan family of Friuli owned vast territories and held important military positions in Zara, Corfu and Candia in the sixteenth century. A member of this family also married a Mocenigo in 1529, an event that postdates the execution of the painting by about 35 years but might have been recorded on the back of the painting at a later date.

The Corsi di Bartolo of Florence had a stemma that was similar to that of the Preli, with blue ground, but the *capriolo* was white and there were three red roses with no *fleur-de-lys*. Carpaccio painted a portrait (lost) of the highly esteemed poetess Girolama Corsi of Tuscany, who married into the Spanish family Ramos. Perhaps this Corsi family, about which little is known, was related to the Corsi di Bartolo of Florence. Girolama Corsi wrote a sonnet about the portrait by Carpaccio, and the artist replied in like form. She was a resident of Venice at that time and died sometime after 1509, the year Marin Sanudo made a compilation of her works.[20] Hypothetically, Carpaccio's success with her portrait might have prompted a subsequent commission from the Corsi family. Without further evidence, all this remains speculative but, if the stemma was badly damaged and consequently underwent alterations in the over painting, as appears to be the case, the options have yet to be investigated by restorers.

Copies of Carpaccio's Venetian Ladies

In 1958 G. Fiocco published the photograph of a copy of Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies* that extended the painting to the left, supposedly completing the missing portions of the panel that were cut off, according to him, in the late nineteenth century.[21] According to Fiocco the painting

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[19] See Marco Barbaro, *Libri di Nozze Patrizie*, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms.156 (=8492), 16th c.

[20] See *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Roma, 1960, vol. 29, 570–74 and *Rime di D. Girolama Corsi toscana raccolte da Marino di Lionardo Sanudo nob. Ven.*, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Cod.Il. cl.IX, 270 (=6367).

[21] G. Fiocco, "Postille al mio Carpaccio," *Arte Veneta*, 1958, 228–30, fig. 262.

belonged to Lady Aberconway, who had purchased it in 1890 from the Minerbi collection in Venice. In 1964 it was sold to a Mr. Walker. The present location of the extended copy is unknown and one can only speculate from the poor photograph regarding its date and nature. The problem lies in the numerous alterations that can be seen in the copy as opposed to the original. Neither the peacock/peahen (?) nor the clogs exist in the copy. The large dog is also missing. Other changes include the extension of the painting's right hand border to include the brocade mantle and, to the left, the addition of a coffer on the ledge and a basket of fruit on the floor.

Fiocco, in the same publication, suggested that a radiograph and technical examinations would enable him to say whether the clogs (substituted by the basket of fruit), the large dog, and other motifs missing in the copy, represent the master's original work. Radiographs have since been made as part of the restoration work carried out both on the Correr painting of the *Venetian Ladies* and the Getty Museum *Hunting on the Lagoon*.[22] Almost half a century has passed since Fiocco underlined the problem, yet the Correr findings have not been made available. Although over painting by previous restorers was said to have been removed during the 1991/2 restoration of Carpaccio's ladies, I recently found, while scrutinizing the painting on exhibition, that many areas of the painting are still covered with a thick impasto that is not at all typical of Carpaccio's technique and there is still evidence of over painting, to which I will refer below.

To complicate matters even more, the photograph of a second unidentified and undated copy was published by Pietro Scarpa in 1999.[23] He wrote of a photograph in the Fondazione Cini (Venice), which arrived there from the Berenson photo archives at Villa I Tatti (Florence).[24] The second copy (Fig. 31) also extends the painting to the left, and Scarpa assumed that it reconstructed a part of the painting

[22] On the discovery and initial cleaning of the Getty panel, see A. Busiri Vici, "Vicenda di un dipinto: la 'Caccia in valle' di Vittore Carpaccio," *Arte antica e moderna*, 24, 1963, 345–56.

[23] P. Scarpa, "Carpaccio: identificazione e proposte II: Le Dame veneziane ovvero: La Melancholia, un precedente per Dürer e Cranch," *Arte Documento*, 13, 1999, 142–49.

[24] I am indebted to Dottoressa Fiorella Gioffredi Superbi, Curator of Collections and Archives, Villa I Tatti, Florence, for kindly locating and sending the black and white photograph.

Fig. 31. Anonymous copy of Vittore Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies on a Balcony*, attributed here to the 16th c., Hollywood, Kenneth Kendall Collection.

that was still seen by Milanesi in 1878.[25] It deviates even more from the original than the Aberconway version and modifies the extension in quite a different way. The boy, the vase with the heraldic devise, the large dog, one of the doves and the parrot are all missing. A large rectangular flowerpot with a new (now undecipherable) devise and a ceramic bowl of water, depicted in this version, do not exist in the original painting or in the Aberconway copy. The *incrustazia* design on the floor is modified and the peacock is elevated to the balustrade, where the fruit is not to be seen. An extension of the floor in the foreground creates a more logical spatial effect than the lower section of the Aberconway copy or even the original, which seem to have been cut down.

The existence of these copies of Carpaccio's painting, with their alternative solutions for completing the missing left section, did not

[25] G. Perocco, in *Tutta la Pittura del Carpaccio*, Milano, 1960, 64, noted that the child in the description added by Milanesi to Vasari's text (Vasari, Vite, Milanesi edit., 1878) is recorded in the center of the picture. He concluded that at least the bottom part of the painting was still complete at that time. J.E. Kaufman (*The Art Newspaper*, 3, 1992, n.15, 11) claimed that the painting was 'cut up before the nineteenth century'.

preoccupy scholars who were focused on deciphering Carpaccio's painting in its present state, regardless of any vicissitudes the painting might have undergone.[26] One wonders whether they considered these to be later and irrelevant, variants of the masters original, exercises from some modern art academy, or even forgeries. There is no indication that recent interpreters of Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies* examined these paintings or considered them as evidence.

Perocco considered the Aberconway copy to be '*antica*'.[27] Pignatti referred to it as '*una copia tarda*' but saw it as a reliable document of the lost left side.[28] Pietro Scarpa, who published photographs of both copies in 1999, considered them to be of great documentary value '*in quanto riferentesi a un prototipo che vogliono riprodurre il più fedelmente possibile, a parte voli di fantasia dell'artigiano copista*'.[29] He did not suggest a date. This author speculated that either the copyists did not like the dog or else it was covered over by some restorer's intervention.[30] The original painting is accessible, however, and both *pentimenti* and over-painting are clearly visible even to the non-professional eye. Over-painting that was removed in restoration should be recorded in laboratory reports.[31] As for the basket of fruit, Scarpa says: '*sarebbe bello poterlo vedere ancora nell'originale di Carpaccio*!', from which one may conclude that it must have

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[26] In her study "The Fruits of Venus: Carpaccio's 'Two Courtesans'," *Arte Veneta*, 42, 1988, 34–39, C. Santoro entirely ignored the technical and historical problems as well as the existence of the Aberconway copy, which had been published in 1958 and was by then commonly discussed in the Carpaccio literature. The scholarly iconographic study by F. Polignano, with which I agree on some points, has unfortunately not taken into consideration either the results of the cleaning and restoration or the problem of the copies. See F. Polignano, "Maliarde e cortigiane: titoli per una damnatio. Le Dame di Vittore Carpaccio," *Venezia Cinquecento*, II. 1992, 5–23 (Reprinted as "Ritratto e sistema simbolico nelle *Dame* di Vittore Carpaccio," in A. Gentili, P. Morel & C. Cleri Via (eds.), *Il Ritratto e la Memoria, materiali 3*, Roma, 1993, 229–51). Scarpa (as in note 24) already remarked that the '*due copie*... *non sono note agli autori della scheda della citata mostra Correr, peraltro ben informata, ancorche insopportabile nelle sue lamentazioni veterofemministe*' (147–48, note 7).

[27] Perocco (as in note 26).

[28] T. Pignatti, "Postilla alle "Cortigiane" di Vittore Carpaccio," *Arte Veneta*, 42, 1988, 40.

[29] Scarpa (as in note 24), 144.

[30] Regarding the absence of the big dog, Scarpa wrote: '*l'unica spiegazione che possiamo dare della sua mancanza sulle copie, è che questo particolare, non gradevole agli occhi dei copisti (e dei nostri, per la verità) anche perché forse già mutilo per le decurtazioni subite della tavola era stato coperto da qualche intervento di restauro al fine di far sembrare più compiuta la composizione*' (as above).

[31] Unfortunately, I did not receive any replies either from the director of the Correr Museum or from the recent restorer of Carpaccio's Venetian Ladies despite repeated written requests for further details on the over painting and restorations.

been there. Where then is the border between the '*voli di fantasia*' and the fidelity to the original? We are given no objective art-historical criteria to differentiate. No comparisons are made to Carpaccio's other works; nor are Renaissance sources for the problematic motifs suggested. The speculations remain out of context, as does the subsequent interpretation of the painting as *La Melancholia* in the same article.

The History of the Kendall Copy

Assuming that the copies might provide further evidence, I located the old black and white photograph mentioned by Pietro Scarpa at Villa I Tatti in Florence. An inscription on the reverse states as follows: 'Ex coll: Guardi; Carr, Venice; Baroness d'Erlanger, Beverly Hills, Calif.' and 'Coll: Kenneth Kendall, Los Angeles'. There is no date on the photograph. But after locating Kendall, who was still the owner at that time (November 2001), it was possible to reconstruct a partial history of the painting. Kendall, by then an octogenarian, had sent the photograph to Bernard Berenson at Villa I Tatti in the fifties. Professor Berenson had dismissed it as 'an old copy' and it was subsequently forgotten among hundreds of photographs in the library.

The painting itself (Fig. 31) has a colorful history. Kendall was a professional restorer of paintings and a collector. He acquired the copy from the Baroness Catherine d'Erlanger, who had brought it from her *Palazzo* in Venice to Beverly Hills on the eve of the Second World War, when she was roughly in her late seventies or eighties. According to Kendall, she had purchased it from an Englishman in Venice, presumably the Carr mentioned on the back of the photograph. The Baroness was not only wealthy but also a connoisseur and purchased authentic pieces of the finest quality.[32] In the fifties she sold the painting to Kendall. He considered it to be a workshop copy.

[32] In an article on an art auction in Los Angeles her collection was compared with those of William Randolph Hearst, William Chidester and Cole Porter as examples of 'impeccable provenance'. In fact, the highest price in the auction, 74,000 U.S. dollars, was paid for two nineteenth century Italian figures from her Venetian *Palazzo*; See: J. DeWeese-Wehen, "$1.3 Million for Scott Schubach Sale," *Maine Antique Digest*, December, 1997. Among the many collectors' items and antiquities she still exhibited in her later years was a candy box full of Lord Byron's letters, perhaps from his years in Venice and at Mira (1816–19). Among her personal friends were Igor Stravinsky and other outstanding figures in the arts. She had also been a friend of Serge Diaghilev from about 1910 until his death in Venice in 1929.

What can we discover about the painting's earlier history? It appears from the inscription on the photograph that Baroness d'Erlanger had bought the painting from Carr, who was acting as an agent between families in Venice. With no further details available, it would be logical to identify him with Reverend William Holwell Carr, who was a dealer and collector in Venice. The problem is that William Holwell Carr lived a generation earlier and was active in Venice at the same time as Lord Byron, between about 1815 and 1830. In 1831 he bequeathed his extraordinary collection, including Tintoretto's *St George and the Dragon* and Rembrandt's *Woman Bathing in a Stream* to the National Gallery in London. Could it be that Kendall, recalling the story sixty years after he had heard it, omitted one link in the sequence of collectors? Hypothetically, Reverend Carr could have sold the painting to an older member of the d'Erlanger family in Venice, from whom Catherine would subsequently have inherited it.

According to the list on the I Tatti photograph, the previous owner of the painter before Carr was a Guardi. The Guardi family is not listed among the original Venetian nobility. We have a possible candidate, however, in the painter Giacomo Guardi (born 1764), son of Francesco Guardi (1712–93), who took over the family studio and sold many of his father's drawings to Count Teodoro Correr. Teodoro Correr left these drawings, together with Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies* and the rest of his collection, to the city of Venice when he died in 1830, at which time it entered the Correr Museum. Count Correr was a contemporary of Reverend William Holwell Carr who made his own bequest to the National Gallery one year later.

Kendall estimated that his painting was executed in the sixteenth century, more or less contemporaneously with the Carpaccio original. His conclusion was based primarily on the use of the tempera medium and the fact that it was painted on a thick poplar panel of the kind commonly used in the Venice, and elsewhere in Italy, during the Renaissance. The frame, in his opinion, was original to the panel. When he purchased the painting it was in very bad condition. The panel was split and he began by putting it together with 'bowties' on the reverse. Seeing that it had been over painted in oil with mastic that had turned yellow and presuming this to be due to a nineteenth century restoration, he removed the oil with acetone and partially repainted it 'to resemble the original'. When he removed the oil paint he saw that the bowl of water reflected a blue sky whereas the background was painted a dark green. He tried to remove the color but 'working on

that area proved rather tedious'; it did not dissolve but came off in tiny bits. He set the original flaky blue (presumably the tempera base which had now lost its glaze) with a liquid amber varnish and repainted it. All this explains the deceptively modern appearance of the painting in its present state. Kendall was not aware of the fact that Carpaccio, and the copyist, had both combined tempera and oil media. He did not take into consideration that original oil glazes were probably combined with the tempera and/or the two were actually mixed. Assuming that the background was originally a blue sky, for example, he removed the dark green of the canal behind the terrace, which can still be seen in Carpaccio's *Ladies*.

While over cleaning and over-painting have altered the Kendall painting, it still provides valuable evidence for interpreting the iconography and function of Carpaccio's painting. Kendall's attribution of his painting to the Renaissance period finds further support in the combined tempera-oil medium, of which he was not even aware. Carpaccio painted his *Venetian Ladies* panel in egg tempera and drying oils, a combined medium which, to the best of my knowledge, he did not employ elsewhere. His usual medium was oil on canvas, as in the *scuola* paintings, or more rarely oil on wood, as in his polyptych panels and occasional small Madonnas. The exceptional use of combined media on a thick poplar panel in both the *Venetian Ladies* and the Kendall copy suggests that we are indeed dealing with an authentic workshop copy or at least one of the sixteenth century. A later copyist would prefer oil to tempera medium and even a professional forger would probably know that Carpaccio painted almost exclusively in oil colors. Assigning the Kendall painting to the Renaissance, however, raises the question of why Carpaccio's original panel, produced for some function with painting on the reverse, should have been cut down at such an early date (i.e. before the copy was made).

Iconographic Evidence (I): Carpaccio's Panel

We have noted that the painting of Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies*, even after being temporarily reunited with its upper half in the Venetian exhibit of 1999 (Figs. 27 & 29),[33] has defied categorical definition

[33] See Aikema & Brown (as in note 1), 236–39.

within traditional Renaissance contexts. It has been identified as a double portrait of two rich and noble women,[34] although it in no way complies with the formal conventions of Venetian portraiture of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and, as mentioned above, it greatly exceeds conventional dimensions thereof. Instead of the close-up view of a bust-length sitter often placed behind a parapet, as in the portraits of Antonello da Messina, Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione and the early Titian, we see two full length figures in a complex spatial setting with a landscape. If we presume, as most scholars do, that the painting is no later than the first decade of the sixteenth century, and probably even earlier, there would be no precedent in Italian art for a full-length individual or double portrait.[35] I have noted that Carpaccio's full-length figure of a *Knight in a Landscape* is first and foremost an allegorical painting and not a portrait as such. Although full-length individual and paired portraits were very common in fifteenth century Netherlandish altarpieces, they were not independent portraits. Patron portraits were typically confined to the limited space and vertical format of altarpiece wings, establishing a formal precedent for the independent portraits of the sixteenth century. Van Eyck's double portrait of the Arnolfini is an exceptional example, to which I will subsequently refer.[36] But nowhere in contemporary northern portraiture is there anything remotely resembling the spatial relationship between figure and ground that we find here. Furthermore, if we visualize the missing panel that could have extended the composition to the left, we immediately find ourselves in the typical expansive framework of Carpaccio's narrative

[34] Polignano, 1992 and 1993 (as in notes 2 & 26); A. Gentili & F. Polignano, "Vittore Carpaccio. Due Dame Veneziane," in *Venezia 1993*, 74–81; S. Mason, *Carpaccio*, London, 2000, 13.

[35] Lucas Cranach's paired portraits of Henry the Pious and Catherine of Mecklenburg, Duke and Duchess of Saxony (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden Gemäldegalerie), dated 1514, is probably one of the earliest examples of independent full-length portraits; see Fig. 36.

[36] Jan Van Eyck's full-length portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his wife was referred to by Max J. Friedländer as follows: 'a problem has been solved that no painter of the fifteenth century dared to set himself again—that of placing two people, in full-length figure, side by side in a richly appointed room'; quoted from *From Van Eyck to Breughel*, vol. I, London, 1969, 12. Nevertheless, another rare example painted by an anonymous German artist (ca. mid 15th c.) shows a bridal couple in full-length (Cleveland Museum); reproduced in L. Seidel, *Jan Van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait; Stories of an Ikon*, Cambridge (U.K.), 1993, fig. 50.

vedute.[37] The same relationship between figures in contemporary dress and local scenic backdrops are typical of all his *scuola* series. In the *Arrival of the English Ambassadors at the Court of the King of Brittany* (Fig. 32), for example, the aristocratic gentlemen in the left-hand section are framed by a terrace and their height measures one third that of the painting. They function as participants in the Saint Ursula story; the fact that they might also contain the features of Carpaccio's contemporaries is entirely subordinate. Like these aristocrats, Carpaccio's Venetian Ladies are similarly located on a terrace that defines their space in relation to a much larger spatial complex. They too would have been about one-third the height of the original painting.

Animal Symbolism

Several writers have interpreted the painting of the *Venetian Ladies* as an allegory of the ideal Venetian lady, whose virtues are represented primarily through Marian symbolism.[38] The validity of this line of interpretation is not debated here, but some of the assumptions and conclusions will be questioned.

Several of the avian and animal symbols have been interpreted in the above context; most of them remain enigmatic. The parrot, one of Carpaccio's favorite birds, has several interesting connotations. Known for its ability to imitate the human voice, it came to signify Eloquence, Liberty (of expression), Prudence and spiritual virtue.[39] A Greek myth related how the parrot produced the sound *kairé*, which was translated into Latin as *Ave*, the reverse of *Eva*, signifying the pronouncement of the new Eve by Gabriel at the time of the *Annunciation*. Among the symbols of the Five Senses it represented touch, a meaning that finds indirect expression here in the way the parrot is raising its foot (as it actuality does to hold food while eating). This particular gesture of the parrot is also a symbolic reference to the Immaculate Conception and the perpetual virginity of the Virgin Mary, connoting that the conception was not physical but was received by the Word. The parrot with the raised

[37] For a diagrammatic reconstruction of the original perspective scheme, see Szafran (as in note 1), 155, fig. 18.

[38] This theme was suggested by L. Zorzi, *Carpaccio e la rappresentazione di Sant'Orsola*, Torino, 1988, 86 and Polignano, 1992 & 1993 (as in notes 2 & 26).

[39] These meanings appear in Capaccio (as in note 6), *secondo libro*, cap.LV, 108r & v.

Fig. 32. Vittore Carpaccio, *Arrival of the English Ambassadors at the Court of Brittany*, ca.1495–6 (*ex Scuola di Sant'Ursola*), Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia.

foot is depicted, for example, in Lucas Cranach's *St Jerome* (1526), where it stands facing the portrait of the *Madonna and Child*, and is thus connected 'with the most revered representative of motherhood' (Fig. 33).[40] The parrot was also said to be a prophet of the Virgin's coming and therefore was included among the animals and birds that heralded the Immaculate Conception, as seen in Dürer's *Our Lady of the Animals* (1503/4).[41] In Carpaccio's *Visitation* (ca.1503/4, Correr Museum) the parrot appears in the background and in the *Venetian Ladies* it faces the younger woman, announcing in both cases imminent motherhood. Carpaccio also introduced the parrot in non-Marian contexts as, for example, in the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni. In the *Baptism of the Selenites* by St George (1502?) the prominent red parrot alludes to baptismal Redemption. The meaning is underscored by the fact that the parrot is eating the rue plant (*ruta graveolens* L.), so-called the 'herb of grace' due to its medicinal qualities.

It is important to emphasize that the parrot, like most of the creatures on the terrace, may be used to convey both positive and negative connotations in Renaissance art. On the negative side it was associated with

[40] H. Friedmann, *A Bestiary for Saint Jerome—Animal Symbolism in European Religious Art*, Washington D.C., 1980, 280–81 (including the quote from W. Stechow).

[41] See C. Eisler, *Dürer's Animals*, Washington & London, 1991, 31–39.

Fig. 33. Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Cardinal Brandenburg as St. Jerome*, 1526, Bequest of John Ringling, Collection of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the State Art Museum of Florida.

concupiscence and flattery,[42] meanings that might be equally relevant to the ostentatious ladies on the balcony.

The peacock, as we noted above, also bears negative and positive associations. In the moralistic allegory of Carpaccio's *Knight in a Landscape* the peacock was explicitly used as an attribute of *Superbia* (Pride). Theoretically, the peacock might bear the same connotation in the present case. Its most common theological associations, however, linked it to concepts of immortality and Resurrection. Marcus of Orvieto in his *Liber de Moralitatibus* of the thirteenth century adopted the myth of the peacock's incorruptible flesh from St Augustine, together with the

[42] Chaucer replaced the mermaid by the parrot because the songs of both were reputedly related to the sin of concupiscence and flattery; see L.A.J.R. Houwen, "Flattery and the Mermaid in Chaucer's Nun's Priest Tale," in L.A.J.R. Houwen (ed.), *Animals and the Symbolic in Medieval Art and Literature*, Groningen, 1997, 80.

metaphor of Resurrection, and converted it into an allegory of evangelical chastity.[43] The majority of Renaissance paintings depicting the *Nativity* contain a peacock that symbolizes Eternal Life. It also appears in the context of fertility and conception, for example, in Carlo Crivelli's *Annunciation* (1486, National Gallery, London). Carpaccio's younger lady, as a chaste Venetian mother, would be expected to perpetuate the family dynasty, emulating the Virgin birth by assuring its immortality.

Giovanni Bellini, in his *Barbarigo Altarpiece* (1488), depicted a peacock, together with a partridge and heron, to the extreme right of the composition that focuses on the enthroned Madonna and Child flanked by saints (Fig. 34). One may speculate on whether the location of the peacock adjacent to the figure of St. Augustine is fortuitous, or is a veiled allusion to the peacock references in *De civitate dei*, held by the doge's patron saint. In any case, the promise of Doge Barbarigo's Salvation is accompanied by an allusion to the immortality of the Venetian Republic, here personified by the Madonna. Such adaptations of Marian symbolism to secular allegory were quite common in Venetian Renaissance art.

It has been suggested that what we assume to be a peacock in Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies* is actually a peahen. The peahen painted by Carpaccio in his *Annunciation* (ca.1504) for the series on the life of the Virgin in the Scuola degli Albanesi indeed resembles the large bird on the terrace. The peahen, as a symbol of fertility, would not modify the overall iconographic message. Following the restoration of the painting in 1992, however, it was said that the supposed peahen had originally been a partridge.[44] Part of the confusion probably derives from the over-painting, about which we find insufficient details in the published restoration report. In precisely the area of the peacock, peahen or partridge (?) there remains a transparent brownish wash, probably remnants of a glaze that has discolored, which modifies the original colors of the bird as well as those of the boy's attire.

In medieval literature the partridge was conceived as an archetype of deceit and cunning due to her habit of collecting eggs that she did not lay and claiming them as her own. This became a popular metaphor

[43] See J.B. Friedmann, "Peacocks and Preachers: Analytic Technique in Marco Orvieto's *Liber de moralitatibus*, Vatican Lat. Ms.5935," in W.B. Clark & M.T. Mc Munn (eds.), *Beasts and Birds in the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, 1989, 179–96; St. Augustine, *The City of God*, New York, 1950, Book 21, chapter 4, 766.

[44] Vedovello, 1993 (as in note 1), 179.

Fig. 34. Giovanni Bellini, *Altarpiece of Doge Agostino Barbarigo*, 1488, Murano, Church of San Pietro Martire, photo: Ufficio Beni Culturali del Patriarcato di Venezia.

for the devil who steals the hope of Salvation from man, though the latter eventually returns to the Church, as if to his own parent, to live under the wings of divine protection.[45] St Jerome described the thieving partridge in these terms and his Renaissance illustrators portrayed it as such.[46] An alternative association of this bird with voluptuousness and fertility would be more apt to the theme of the *Venetian Ladies*. Classical writers attributed extraordinary procreative powers to the female partridge, claiming it could conceive from the air or from the sound of the male's voice. Such myths made it an ideal metaphor of the Annunciation and Immaculate Conception, which explains its appearance in Titian's

[45] Although the partridge (Perdrix, L.) was discussed by Aristotle and Pliny, the source used by most medieval interpreters is *Jeremiah*, 17, 11. Among the medieval sources, see Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 12.6.63; Hrabanus Maurus, *The Nature of Things*, 22,6: Migne, *P.L.*111, 249 and Hugh de Fouilly, *The Medieval Book of Birds* (*De avibus*), New York, 1992, 234–36. In the 16th C. references to the Greek and Roman authors were made by P. Belon, in *L'histoire de la nature des oyseaux, avec leurs descriptions et naifs portraicts retirez du naturel, ecrite en sept livres par Pierre Belon du Mans*, Paris, 1555, book V, but he was not interested in the symbolic connotations of the partridge.

[46] St. Jerome: '*Clamavit perdrix, congregavit quae non peperit*', Melito, *De avibus*, chapter 8 of J.B. Pitra, *Analecta novissima spicilegii sollesmensis*, 3 vols., Graz, 1963, 510. For many of the partridge's symbolic references mentioned below, see Friedmann (as in note 43), esp. 131–33, 159–160, 282–4.

Annunciation at the Scuola di San Rocco. Titian later depicted it in his *Venus and Cupid with a Dog and Partridge* (ca.1550, Uffizi) with emphasis on voluptuousness, thus illustrating the inherent association of the two concepts, voluptuousness and fertility, and the inevitable ambiguity of its symbolic connotations in Renaissance art. There frequently is a narrow line dividing the 'negative' from the 'positive' significance of fertility symbols (as well as other symbols) in Renaissance art. This phenomenon warrants more attention in the case of Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies*, as elsewhere in sixteenth century iconography.

A pair of partridges appear as attributes in Vincenzo Catena's painting of *A Muslim Warrior Adoring Christ and the Virgin* (1520–25, National Gallery, London), perhaps to signify that he who hears the word of an ecclesiastical sermon abandons the devil and 'flies to the church as if to his own parent'.[47] The partridge could represent the heretic or infidel, identified here with the Muslim warrior, but it could also signify the Church, as represented by the Virgin, in its desire to save souls. The partridge, like the peacock, functioned as both a positive and a negative symbol.

Situated on the balustrade near the Venetian ladies is the dove (or turtledove), which has specific associations in Marian and Christological iconography. Carpaccio in his *Annunciation* for the Scuola degli Albanesi depicted three doves, two on the left and one on the right, sitting on the tie-rod of a biforium portal as a reference to the Trinity (Fig. 35). Another dove in flight represents the Holy Spirit at the moment of conception. But here, as in other contexts, the bird also functions as a symbol of purity and virtue. The pair of doves in scenes of the *Presentation in the Temple* illustrate the Redemption of the first-born (based on *Numbers* 18, 16–17). In Carpaccio's *Presentation in the Temple* (Accademia, Venice) the pair of doves are held by a virginal figure that follows the mother and child to the altar. In keeping with these iconographic conventions, it is reasonable to assume that the two doves beside the younger woman were intended to reflect upon childbearing and the virtue of motherhood. The dove's association with birth imagery is later demonstrated in Francesco Salviati's *Birth of the Baptist* (1538, S. Giovanni Decollato, Rome) and Siciolante da Sermoneta's *Birth of the Virgin* (1565, S. Tommaso dei Cenci, Rome). According to traditional bird lore, the turtledove is true to its mate and remains single when

[47] Hugh de Fouilloy (as in note 45), 234–36.

Fig. 35. Vittore Carpaccio, *Annunciation*, 1504 (ex *Scuola degli Albanesi*) Venice, Galleria Franchetti, Ca' d'Oro.

widowed.[48] It was likewise considered to be faithful, honorable and trustworthy. The proximity of the doves to the white lily, an attribute of the Immaculate Conception and symbol of the Virgin's purity, reiterates the Marian associations as well as the more general moralistic implications.

In the far background of the hunting scene Carpaccio depicted a flock of cranes flying in a V-shaped formation. Cranes were noted in animal literature for their mutual affection, vigilance and responsibility towards the flock. They were consequently depicted in Renaissance paintings as models of virtue. Sassetta, Cranach, Dürer and Carpaccio were among the artists to adopt the moralistic crane in religious contexts.[49] According to medieval sources, their manner of flying in a

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[48] See R. Scheibe, "The Major Professional Skills of the Dove in the Buke of the Howlat," in Houwen, (as in note 42), 107–37, esp. 112, note 14. Other connotations of the dove are found in Hugh de Fouilloy (as in note 45), 130–36.

[49] The flying cranes in formation were depicted, for example, in Sassetta's *Legend of the Wolf of Gubbio*, 1437–44, for the church of Sansepolcro (National Gallery, London) and Lucas Cranach's woodcut of the *Death of Marcus Curtius*. The crane standing on

V-shaped formation manifests their confidence in navigation, their unity, support for each member of the flock and mutual devotion. This was interpreted to mean 'discerning brothers who provide temporal goods for their brethren in common and have a special concern for each one of the community'.[50] Could the well-organized flock of cranes be a commentary on the hunters in the lagoon? It has been noted that 'a hunt on the lagoon lay behind a ritual that had been enacted since the thirteenth century and which represented a form of patrician awareness, the ritual of the *osele vedeghe*, in which the doge distributed wild birds to the members of the *Maggior Consiglio* and to his closest councilors, as a symbolic sharing of the many goods he had enjoyed'.[51] It might be noted that V-formation of the cranes is a repetition of the composition of the two boats with their rows of hunters all swaying forward in unison.

Carpaccio's two dogs are the most problematic element of the iconography. The argument that they are merely genre motifs cannot be supported either by their iconography or by their context in a symbolic menagerie. We have seen that the juxtaposition of two dog species, as seen here, was also repeated by Carpaccio in his allegorical *Knight in a Landscape* (1510). Only four years later Lucas Cranach the Elder painted his paired *Portraits of Henry the Pious and Catherine of Mecklenburg* (Fig. 36) with two contrasting dog species in a whimsical commentary on gender.[52] Similar to Carpaccio's large dog, Cranach's robust male specimen is baring his teeth and, like his sword-bearing master, is trying to look somewhat menacing. Catherine's miniature dog is really a 'pussy cat'. Her/his(?) fluffy white mane is a paraphrase to the ladies plumed *chapeau*; the ludicrous *coiffure* attests to her/his courtly station.

From the fourteenth century, canine juxtapositions were often employed to symbolically represent contrasting concepts or oppositions

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one leg and holding a stone was illustrated by Dürer in his drawings for Maximillian I (ca.1513) and in various 16th c. emblems denoting vigilance, care and watchfulness. See E. Panofsky, *Dürer*, Princeton, 1955, 189–90 and F.J. Stopp, *The Emblems of the Altdorf Academy; Medals and Medal Orations 1577–1626*, London, 1974, 130–31. For discussion and sources of the symbolic crane and its use by Carpaccio, see my Chapter Four.

[50] See *De gruibus* (of cranes), The Aberdeen Bestiary, ca. late 12th c., *Aberdeen Bestiary Project web site*, Translation & Transcription C. McLaren & Aberdeen University Library, 1995.

[51] E.M. Dal Pozzolo, in Aikema & Brown (as in note 1), 239.

[52] Another humorous juxtaposition of dog species in a gender context is seen in Jan Massys' *David and Bathsheba*, 1562, Musée du Louvre, Paris. There are many such examples in northern and Venetian art of the period.

Fig. 36. Lucas Cranach, *Portraits of Henry the Pious and Catherine of Mecklenburg*, 1514, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen.

in both religious and secular contexts. In the iconography of St. Eustace or St. Hubert, for example, painters contrasted a lively, barking or snarling dog, who confronts the mystical stag, with a smaller canine specimen, who is too busy sniffing the ground to take notice of the sacred event. Pisanello included this juxtaposition in his *St. Eustachius* (National Gallery, London), although he multiplied the number and functions of the dogs. Carpaccio had a habit of copying animals, birds and human figures from the sketches of Pisanello.[53] Pisanello's beautiful drawing of a greyhound's head may well have been the model for that of Carpaccio's large dog.[54] The latter also resembles the form and position of a seated greyhound in Domenico Veneziano's *Adoration of the Magi* (Staatliche Museen, Berlin), a painting that also contains the aerial battle and flying heron motifs derived from Pisanello and subsequently repeated by Carpaccio in the allegory of the *Knight*.

Moralistic juxtapositions of dogs were popular in northern miniatures and tapestries of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The dogs were not necessarily differentiated by species and were identified by inscriptions. In the tapestry series of the *Hunt of the Frail Stag* (Metropolitan Museum, New York), for example, labels identify the hunting dogs as corrupting human passions.[55] Canine metaphors of a more philosophical nature, deriving from classical and medieval traditions, assumed similar inscribed forms in book illustrations of the early sixteenth century and were subsequently diffused by emblem books and quasi-scientific literature.[56] Most ramifications of this process are beyond the scope of this study, but one aspect seems applicable to the problem at hand. Allegorical canine imagery was transmitted from these explicitly didactic sources to the painting media, in which the accrued

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[53] For his use of Pisanello drawings, see B. Blass-Simmen, "Cima da Conegliano: alcune riflessi sui disegni. Il problema dell'utilizzazione dei disegni 'memorativi' e I rapporti con l'opera pittorica", *Venezia Cinquecento*, IV, 1994, no. 8, 145–65. Carpaccio's St. George in the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni contains elements from the same subject painted by Pisanello in his fresco at San Anastasia, Verona. The little white dog beside the Madonna in Pisanello's fresco at San Fermo Maggiore, Verona resembles the white dog of Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies*.

[54] This drawing is in the *Codex Vallardi* 2430, f.221, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques.

[55] See A.S. Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum of art*, New York, 1993, 347–58 & 458–62 and a discussion of these themes in my Chapter Six.

[56] See K.J. Höltgen, "Clever Dogs and Nimble Spaniels: On the Iconography of Logic, Invention, and Imagination," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, XXIV, 1998, 1–36.

connotations were generally concealed under the guise of genre. We may note, for example, that a lady in court fashion holding a teeth baring dog's head illustrated the concept of *Dialectica* in a twelfth century miniature of the Liberal Arts from Herrad of Landsberg's *Hortus deliciarum*, with the inscription *argumenta sino concurrere more canino* (I allow arguments to clash in canine manner). The continuity of this particular allegorical imagery in the Renaissance and its association with the virtues of *Logica* and *Dialectica* has been demonstrated.[57] The related symbolism of the wise dog, endowed with superhuman and prophetic powers, found expression in Carpaccio's *Dream of Saint Ursula* (1495, Accademia, Venice) and *St Augustine in His Study* (ca.1502, Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni), although a preparatory drawing for the latter seems to depict a beaver, a traditional symbol of chaste spirituality and wisdom (cf. Fig. 5).[58]

What message did Carpaccio convey by the little white dog sitting on its haunches and extending its paw to the lady? Visual precedents for a noble lady fondling a dog are found in many courtly depictions of the International Gothic Style.[59] The white dog shown with a lady generally symbolized the virtue of Fidelity.[60] In Carpaccio's version the bright red collar decorated with bells invests this meaning with a specifically romantic connotation. As early as the *Trecento*, dogs were depicted in art with collars that bore aristocratic emblems and legends. An actual dog collar, described by Amadeus VI of Savoy in 1364, carried the legend FERT (fervent or ardent) in gold and represented the

[57] Höltgen's article (above) presents literary sources and excellent illustrations for the varied contexts of the canine metaphors; see fig. 1 for the *Hortus Deliciarum* miniature of *Dialectica* mentioned above.

[58] See London, British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, n.1934–12–8–1 for the St Augustine drawing. For the beaver as a symbol of chastity and of wisdom, see Aesop's Fables, Rabanus Maurus and Guillaume le Clerc. In the *Physiologus*, it also exemplified rejection of temporal goods in favor of eternal salvation; see J.J. Garcia Arranz, "Image and Moral Teaching through Emblematic Animals," in P.M. Daly & J. Manning (eds.), *Aspects of Renaissance and Baroque Symbol Theory, 1500–1700*, New York, 1999, 99 & 107, n.31. The animal in the drawing was interpreted as a polecat by P. Reutersward, "The Dog in the Humanist's Study," in his *The Visible and Invisible in Art*, Vienna, 1991, 206–225, esp. 219–20.

[59] E.g. Michelino da Besozzo(?), Musée du Louvre, inv.20592 and a drawing attributed to the workshop of Pisanello, Vienna, Albertina, inv. no.16 in D. Cordellier et al. (eds.), *Pisanello, le peintre aux sept vertus*, Exhibition catalogue, Paris, 1996, 170 & figs. 93 & 94. In both cases the lady is seated on the ground and holds a falcon on her left hand.

[60] E.g. Ripa, *Iconologia*, Padova, 1610, fig. 120.

sweet enslavement to the beloved.[61] Another connotation that may be relevant to our interpretation of the white dog and the woman was expressed in a myth. The story from the *Legenda Aurea*, still quoted in the late sixteenth century in Capaccio's *Delle Imprese*, tells that the mother of St Bernard di Chiaravalle, when she was pregnant with him, dreamt that she carried in her womb a white dog with red spots. According to the commentaries, the white dog was a metaphor for the son who subsequently fought to protect the Church, but I suggest that the implication of this archetypal fertility myth should not be overlooked.[62] Renaissance childbirth trays were decorated with images that were considered auspicious for the mother and child or were assigned magical powers related to fertility, conception and childbirth. Dogs were depicted on some of these trays as companions to ladies or participants at the scene of birth. One childbirth tray portrays a pet dog, similar in form and position to Carpaccio's white dog, being fondled by a nude little boy (Fig. 37).[63] It has been suggested that such an image was widely accepted as a childbirth talisman.[64]

Among characteristics and attitudes associated with dogs in the Renaissance were some promoted by Erasmus, usually on the basis of classical sources. In his *Adagia*, published in enlarged form by Aldus in Venice (1508), Erasmus explains the saying *catulae dominas imitantes* (a lapdog takes after its mistress). He quotes from Juvenal saying: '*You may see how lap dogs which are the darlings of rich women reflect their arrogance and wantonness and often their whole character*', adding that the adage is derived from Plato (*Republic*, book 8).[65] A similar attitude to small dogs

[61] M.L. Incontri, *Il Piccolo Levriero Italiano nell'Arte e nella Storia*, Firenze, 1956, 57–58. The expression *mettersi il collare*, meaning to take holy orders, still retains the conception of commitment and unmitigated devotion.

[62] See Jacobus da Voragine, *Golden Legend*, trans. by R. Ripperger, New York, 1969, 465; Capaccio (as in note 6), libro secondo, cap.XVII and M. Levi d'Ancona, *Lo Zoo del Rinascimento*, Lucca, 2001, 74. A parallel Buddhist myth relates that Maya, the future mother of the Buddha, dreamt that a white elephant entered her womb. The white elephant appeared as a fertility symbol as early as the *Rgveda* of the second millenium BC. The dream of Maya was depicted in relief on the famous Barhut Stupa (2nd c. BC, The Indian Museum, Calcutta).

[63] See J. Pope-Hennessy & K. Christiansen, "Secular Painting in Fifteenth Century Tuscany: Birth Trays, Cassone Panels and Portraits, *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 1980–81, XXXVIII, 1–64 and J.M. Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy*, New Haven, 1999, esp. 59–87 & figs. 64, 132 & 133.

[64] Musacchio (as above), 136.

[65] J.W. O'Malley (ed.), *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 33, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1988, 297. A connection between Carpaccio's art and the writings of Erasmus has been suggested in my Chapter Four.

Fig. 37. *Back of a Wooden Childbirth Tray*, 15th c., Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz.

can also be found in medieval sources on animals. Albertus Magnus, in his charming comparison of species, wrote:

> Greyhounds seldom, if ever, bark; on the contrary, they show disdain for the yelping of small dogs which bark for the sake of showing their prowess as watchdogs. Nor do they rush headlong to greet any newcomer, since they seem to regard such a flurry of activity as beneath their dignity.[66]

In fact, Carpaccio's painting portrays the juxtaposition of the greyhound and the small dog in such a manner as to suggest a deliberate contrast of this kind. I would even say that the visual contrast with its obvious social and gender associations borders on satire. Once again we are

[66] *Albert the Great, Man and the Beasts, De animalibus* (Books 22–26), trans. J.J. Scanlan, Binghampton, New York, 1987, Book 22:29, 81.

faced with ambivalence, implying that several levels of meaning were simultaneously adopted.

The little white dog is remarkable as the only participant in the scene who looks out at the viewer. Carpaccio used a similar ploy elsewhere. A monkey, attired as a jester, is the sole participant to face the spectator in his *Return of the Ambassadors* (ca.1495–6, St Ursula series, Accademia, Venice). As a notorious imitator, and in keeping with the concept of *ars simia naturae*, the monkey came to represent the artist and was adopted as his mocking self-portrait in literature of the fourteenth century and soon after in art.[67] Carpaccio's jester-monkey may be one of the earliest examples of the satirical dialogue between the painter, in animal disguise, and his audience. In Carpaccio's *Knight in a Landscape* an isolated furtive dog looks out at the beholder. There again he is the only participant in the painting who is aware of the viewer. While that dog, especially in view of his negative nature, is not likely to be identified with the artist, he still functions as a mediator of the painter. The same may be said for the little white dog whose piercing gaze conveys a tacit message in Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies*. Around the time that Carpaccio completed this painting, or shortly after, the anti-Lutheran satirist Thomas Murner published his *Logica memorativa* (Strasbourg, 1508, 1509), with textual references to canine language and illustrations taken from the earlier *Margarita philosophica* (Freiburg, 1503), including *Veritas* and *Falsitas* as the two dogs of Logica (Fig. 38). The bell, which is interpreted as *enunciatio* (enunciation, pronouncement) in Murner's text, is carried there in the mouth of the dog labeled *Falsitas* and in another illustration by the protruding tongue of a dog's head.[68] The tacit enunciation of Carpaccio's little white dog with his/her(?) collar and bells appears to be directed towards a specific viewer, one for whom the painting's message is relevant and who is cognizant of its various levels of meaning. The explication of a few more objects on the terrace may help characterize the patron and the intended recipient.

Signifiers and Contexts

Two paintings of Giovanna Tornabuoni painted by Domenico Ghirlandaio, approximately a decade before, have so much in common with

[67] See B. Marret, *Portraits de l'artiste en singe*, Paris, 2001.
[68] See Höltgen (as in note 56).

Fig. 38. *Margarita philosophica*, Strasbourg, 1508, 'Typus Logicae' woodcut, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nuremberg.

Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies* that it can hardly be coincidental. The first is a half-length profile portrait on panel (1488), where the lady is richly attired, bedecked with jewels and holds a handkerchief in a manner similar to that of Carpaccio's younger subject (Fig. 39). The second portrait is basically a copy of the first, albeit in full-length (ca.1490), and is located on the right hand side of a fresco of the *Visitation* in the Tornabuoni Chapel at Santa Maria Novella in Florence (Fig. 40). In both of Ghirlandaio's depictions Giovanna carries a white handkerchief in one hand in the same manner as Carpaccio's younger lady. The handkerchief attribute appears, furthermore, in Botticelli's Villa Lemmi frescoes (Louvre, Paris), painted for Giovanni Tornabuoni, father of Lorenzo, assumedly on the occasion of the latter's marriage to Giovanna degli Albizzi in 1486. It is notable that both Giovanna, who

Fig. 39. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Portrait of Giovanna Tornabuoni*, 1488. Copyright Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

is receiving gifts from the Graces, and Lorenzo, being led into the midst of the Liberal Arts, each carry this one accessory. Although it is not a common attribute of fifteenth or sixteenth century Italian portraiture, it was during that period that the handkerchief began to appear in inventories as an article of value and it has been connected with rituals of courtship and marriage.[69] Like other attributes of Carpaccio's Venetian Ladies the white *fazzoletto* is also conceived as a symbol of purity, applicable to the prospective bride and mother.

[69] For this and other interpretations, see S.S. Dickey, "'Met een wenende ziel... doch droge ogen': Women holding handkerchiefs in seventeenth-century Dutch portraits," *Nederlands Kunshistorisch Jaarboek*, Bd 46, 1995, 332–67.

Fig. 40. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Visitation* (detail), 1486–90, fresco, Tornabuoni Chapel, Santa Maria Novella.

We might assume that the high red clogs were simply fashionable accessories if they were on the lady's feet and were not so prominently displayed between the avian symbols. In the context presented above it should be recalled that various symbolic nuptial customs involving the bride's shoes, particularly red ones, were known throughout Europe.[70] But this still does not explain their proximity to the peacock/peahen (ex. partridge?) or to the parrot standing on one foot. As a second level of meaning, the moralistic interpretation of the clogs presented at the beginning of this paper, with its warning against vainglory and advocation of prudence, would be concordant with the systematic ambivalence noted in the painting.

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[70] See E.M. Dal Pozzolo, "Sotto il guanto," in *Venezia Arti*, 8, 1994, 23–36 and Musacchio (as in note 63), 130.

The citrus fruit on the ledge of the balustrade may be an orange, a lemon or something in the mandarin family. In Marian iconography citrus fruits were often interchangeable as symbols of chastity, salvation and redemption.[71] The orange blossom was the flower of the bride and the lemon, as a symbol of fidelity in love, was also connected with nuptial themes. The iconography of the Virgin under a lemon or orange tree in Venetian Renaissance painting seems to have influenced secular depictions of love in nuptial contexts.[72]

Iconographic Evidence (II): The Copies

Both copies were made after Carpaccio's painting was cut into two (cf. Figs. 27 & 31). Both introduce elements that are not found in the fragment of Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies*; therefore we have no reason to believe that the extension of space to the left, as depicted in each of the copies, actually reflects the original form. Technical evidence also indicates that all the additions were hypothetical reconstructions.[73] What can be learned from the iconographic alterations? The turtle-dove is repeated in both copies, although there is only one dove in the Kendall copy. The parrot reappears only in the Aberconway copy, its location unchanged. The greyhound was not reproduced in either copy; the small dog was copied in both, with changes in the tail position (the Kendall copy has a *pentimento* in the tail). The lily vase was repeated only in the Aberconway picture with a devise that is illegible in the photograph. The citrus fruit and the boy were also repeated only in the Aberconway picture, with their locations unchanged. The red clogs are absent in both versions. The signed *cartellino* was retained in both, but it was moved to the left in the Aberconway version. It should be emphasized that the only part that did not undergo changes is that of the two ladies themselves.

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[71] See M. Levi D'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance, Botanical Symbolism in Italian Painting*, Florence, 1977, 205–209 & 272–77.

[72] Dosso Dossi replaced her with allegorical figures under the lemon trees in his mythological *Allegory* on the theme of love (ca.1529–32, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles), which is thought to have been painted to celebrate the marriage between Ercole II d'Este and the daughter of King Louis XII of France; see P. Humfrey & M. Lucco, *Dosso Dossi, Court Painter in Renaissance Ferrara*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1998, 203–209.

[73] Szafran (as in note 1), 152.

The additions are most revealing. The Aberconway painting introduces two new motifs, a small coffer on the ledge and a basket of fruit on the pavement, partially covered with a napkin. The coffer may represent a wedding gift from the groom and probably is of the kind that contained jewelry. Larger chests were listed in the *ricordi* either as gifts of the groom and his family or as part of the bride's dowry,[74] but this kind of receptacle may be of the type held by the presumed bride in Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love* (1514, Galleria Borghese, Rome). The basket of fruit is another Marian motif, associated with fertility, as seen for example in Titian's *Virgin with a Rabbit* (1520s, Louvre, Paris), which also exhibits the white napkin in the basket.[75]

The additions to the Kendall version seem to convey similar ideas. The large flowerpot is a free rendition of a Roman sarcophagus with a devise that is no longer legible. Among the plants it contains are myrtle, laurel and clinging ivy. The myrtle, which may have appeared in the smaller pot to the extreme right in Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies* (now damaged beyond recognition), is a well-known symbol of love and marriage in Renaissance art. It is also a Marian symbol that bears virtuous connotations. The myrtle was sometimes depicted with the laurel that also connoted constancy and chastity because, as an evergreen, it was believed to preserve its foliage uncorrupted. The ivy, as an evergreen, was often adopted in religious contexts to signify eternal life. When climbing ivy or vines cling to a dead tree they signify rebirth and survival, but on a live tree they may convey fidelity and undying affection.[76] The meanings were conflated in Alciati's emblem of the vine and dead tree illuminated by the maxim *Amicitia etiam post mortem durans*.[77] Later Frans Hals used Alciati's maxim in his *Portrait of a Married Couple* (ca.1622), but had the vine wind around a flourishing tree, as in the Kendall painting. The contrast between the receptacle and its contents, between the funerary sarcophagus and the regenerative flora sprouting from within, is an example of the kind of visual metaphor that characterized Carpaccio's iconography. Similar imagery was also

[74] See B. Witthoft, "Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence," *Artibus et historiae*, V, 111, 1982, 43–59, esp. 52–58.

[75] On fertility symbolism in this painting, see S. Beguin, "A propos de la sainte conversation et de la vierge au lapin de Titien du Louvre," *Tiziano e Venezia: Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Venice, 1976*, Verona, 1980, 479–84.

[76] The above references are found in Levi D'Ancona (as in note 71), 189–93, 201–204 & 237–41.

[77] A. Alciati, *Emblemata*, Augsburg, 1531; Paris, 1542.

used contemporaneously by other Venetian painters as, for example, Titian, who transformed the sarcophagus into a fertile spring or fountain in the *Fête Champêtre* (ca.1511–12, Louvre, Paris) and in *Sacred and Profane Love* (ca.1515, Galleria Borghese, Rome).

The bowl of water placed obtrusively in front of the sarcophagus is another sophisticated allusion to the miracle of the Immaculate Conception. A story in the book of *Judges* relates how Gideon demanded a sign of God, saying

> Behold I will put a fleece of wool on the floor, and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it will be dry upon the earth beside, then I shall know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water (VI, 37–38).

Saint Augustine interpreted this gift of heaven as a prophecy of the incarnate God. St Ambrosius saw in the fleece moistened by the clouds a symbol of the Virgin womb and he explained the mystery of the dew unobserved as the Virgin's conception.[78] Among the metaphors adopted by Bernard of Clairvaux to describe the virgin was that of the fleece.[79] The fleece remained one of the symbols of the Madonna's motherhood and virginity in literature and was still depicted in northern art during the Renaissance.[80] The depiction of the bowl of water, however, is quite unique.

Reconstructing the Function of the Painting

It is now possible to integrate the fragmentary information and tentative conclusions above into a coherent analysis of the painting's meaning and function. Let us consider the following points: the allegorical content is related to marriage and childbirth; the Carpaccio panel was designed to function as a door or shutter and was attached by hinges to another (now missing) panel;[81] copies of the *Venetian Ladies* panel, after being cut down, were produced in the Renaissance; in these some of the attributes

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[78] See J. Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, London, 1912, 307–309.
[79] E. Mâle, *L'art religieux du XIIIème siècle*, Paris, 1925, 274–75.
[80] See Hirn (as in note 78), 309–310. The fleece appears, for example, in *The Virgin and child in the 'Hortus Conclusus'*, ca.1410 by an anonymous German master active in Westphalia; reproduced in J.M. Pita Andrade & M.M. Borobia Guerrero, *Old Masters, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum*, Barcelona, 1992, pl.272.
[81] Szafran (as in note 1), 152.

were changed but the women were reduplicated. All this leads me to conclude that the extant painting was created for a piece of domestic furniture that was intended as a wedding gift for a future bride. It was not uncommon for a major Venetian Renaissance artist to paint on some domestic furnishing, such as a cupboard, mirror frame, bed, wedding chest or wall paneling, not to mention smaller items, like the *deschi da parto*, already discussed above.[82] Most of this painted furniture was intended for the bedroom, where the themes of love, fertility and procreation, which we have seen, were suitable and acceptable. If the object was a wedding gift for the prospective bride and mother, the instructive metaphors and moralism would naturally be addressed to her. She would not only find messages of the exemplary behavior that was expected of her but would likewise be admonished against the moral deviations to be avoided in her new status. The iconography might consequently embody images of moral ambivalence.[83] The depiction of vice as well as virtue on objects produced for marriage and birth was not unknown, and some images were regarded as apotropaic.

Why were the depictions of the two ladies reduplicated without change despite other iconographic modifications in the copies? Hypothetically, family portraits might be copied when there was more than one beneficiary to a family inheritance. That was not the case with the Kendall copy, however, because the family arms there do not match those of the Carpaccio painting. Behind the elder lady in the Kendall version is a *stemma* of blue and white diagonal stripes, which could belong to the Calergi, the Zeno or the Contarini (although the latter usually used blue and gold) as well as to some less illustrious families, such as the Elisei, Ferro, Manolesso, Marmore or Pasqualigo.[84] In any

[82] Among the contemporary Venetian masterpieces that decorated pieces of domestic furniture, note Giovanni Bellini's four secular *Allegories* (ca.1490s) painted for a dressing table or chest and later owned by his pupil Vincenzo Catena, who left it in his will (1530) to Antonio Marsili, and Giorgione's *Judith* (ca.1503) that had a keyhole and probably was used as a cupboard door. Painted cassoni have been attributed to Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto and others.

[83] For the concept of *coincidorum oppositorum* in the arts, see S. Adams, "The Anterotica of Petrus Haedus: A Fifteenth-Century Model for the Interpretation of Symbolic Images," *Renaissance and Reformation*, 14, 1978, 11–26 and P.L. Sohm, "Dürer's Melancholia I: The Limits of Knowledge," *Studies in the History of Art*, vol. 9, 1981, 13–32.

[84] See A. Cappellari, *Campidoglio Veneto* (18th c.), ms.It.VII, 15 (8304) and Morando di Costoza (as in note 15). A second devise on the sarcophagus in the Kendall copy has been over-painted and the one on the vase in the Aberconway version is illegible from the photograph.

case, the fact that the physiognomy of the ladies was not changed, even though it was destined for a different family proves that they were not portraits at all.[85] They seem more like ideal images of the Venetian bride and a female relative, perhaps her mother, presented in a kind of generic depiction that could be reproduced for any patron on demand. Since the bride wears no ring (as opposed to her elder companion) and the marriage has, therefore, not yet been consummated, references are made to nuptial rituals, such as that involving the red shoes, and to the legal agreement executed by a notary. On the reverse of Carpaccio's painting (Fig. 30) notarial documents seem to be represented, rather than letters, as is commonly assumed. A large red seal, still seen on one of the papers, seems to confirm this. The name Mocenigo once legible on these documents may have identified the family of the groom. Dynastic family values were probably represented by the three generations, with the elder female member of the family, on one hand, and the child, on the other. The common misinterpretation of this figure as a page is contradicted by the fact that his tunic is made of the exact same brocade as that worn by the elder lady. The original colors and design of his attire are now stained by a dark brown impasto glaze that was not removed by the restorers. Perhaps this child is also meant to be perceived, like the playful boys on the *deschi da parto*, as the image of the desired male child. In fact, his physical presence, as he stands precariously half in and half out of the balustrade, is not recognized by either of the women; he seems to reflect the magical belief that the unborn child is influenced by the maternal imagination. According to traditional and contemporary beliefs in sympathetic magic, a pregnant woman should be exposed to images that mediated between the actual and the ideal.[86] Why should the image of the boy be conceived solely on a literal level, when all the other attributes function as abstractions? The boy seems to reflect a psychological state. As a figment of the young

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[85] On ideal images of women that do not necessarily represent individual portraits, see P. Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, Manchester & New York, 1997, chap. II, esp. 73–79; on meanings and contexts of the Giovanna Tornabuoni portraits discussed in this paper, *ibid.*, 64–73.

[86] Musacchio (as in note 63), ch. 5, 124ff. An interesting example of such sympathetic magic is found in the following passage from the Aberdeen Bestiary: *'Finally, it is said that the same thing happens with herds of mares, that men put noble stallions in view of those which are about to conceive, so that they can conceive and create offspring in the stallion's image…It is for this reason that people order pregnant women not to look at animals with very ugly countenances, such as dog-headed apes…'*, in *'attributes of the horse', Aberdeen Bestiary* (as in note 50).

bride's imagination or the reflection of her desires, he underlines the introspective dimension of Carpaccio's iconography.

It has been established that the painting originally comprised by the Correr and Getty Museum panels was part of a bifoliate construction. The wood is spruce, commonly used in furniture, but uncommon for north Italian panel painting. There have been speculations on the exact nature of its function, which need not be repeated here.[87] As for the missing panel, I can only make some hypothetical suggestions. A parallel depiction of the male figures, depicted as a mirror image, might have balanced the perspective design. The large dog, as a male attribute, would have been completed on that panel. An alternative would be a scene from the life of the Virgin providing a sacred prototype for the Marian symbolism. A precedent for such a layout, albeit in different format, is found in Ghirlandaio's Tornabuoni fresco cycle in Santa Maria Novella. In the *Visitation* full-length female portraits in profile, including that of Giovanna Tornabuoni with the handkerchief, are integrated into a vast panorama that focuses on the sacred event (Fig. 40). Ghirlandaio's approach is like that of Carpaccio in that sacred and symbolic imagery is invested with the semblance of contemporary naturalism. Giovanni Bellini's *Sacred Allegory* (1490–1500), with its stage-like terrace in the foreground, its *laguna* vista, and lateral profile figures that frame a sacred image, might also have inspired the design of the combined panels. But just as there was no prototype for Carpaccio's unique conception, it also had no following. Carpaccio conflated elements from diverse artistic genres in answer to the need for a new kind of painting. The semblance of traditionalism and anachronism, fostered primarily by Carpaccio's formal language, has succeeded in concealing the originality of his conceptions both here and in other works. The visual messages of the *Venetian Ladies* are those of an artist who was learned, intellectually sophisticated and had a marked propensity for wit and irony. He was also remarkable in being one of the earliest Renaissance artists to systematically utilize the ploy of ambivalent iconography, which is probably one of the reasons why the painting of the *Venetian Ladies* has been so controversial.

[87] These are reviewed in Szafran (as in note 1), 157–58.

CHAPTER SIX

ANIMALS IN THE PAINTINGS OF TITIAN: A KEY TO HIDDEN MEANINGS

> Surely he who subdues a lion is not to be considered stronger than he who subdues anger—the wild beast shut up within himself
>
> Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*

The question of disguised meanings, and particularly moralizations, in Titian's painting has been the subject of extremely conflicting opinions. According to one school of thought, represented by Philipp P. Fehl, Charles Hope, Carlo Ginzburg and David Rosand, among others, much of the iconography in Titian's secular and mythological paintings should be accepted without superimposing '*great complexity of allegorical meanings*' or subjecting them to '*the most esoteric interpretations and moralizations*', because '*there is no evidence that Titian's pictures were supposed to have any such second level of meaning*'.[1] Thus, a sensuous nude should be recognized as flagrant eroticism, or an illustration of a mythological narrative represents the translation of a literary text into visual imagery. Diametrically opposed to their approach are the interpretations set forth, for example, by Marie Tanner, Augusto Gentili and Jane C. Nash.[2] Gentili has consistently argued that despite Titian's limited formal education, he was a man of profound culture who imbued his themes with poetic, philosophical and ethical content of great originality. Tanner and Nash have studied the relationship between literary sources and Titian's visual adaptations thereof, primarily in the mythological works. Often a confusing picture is presented by the multiplicity of hypothetical

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[1] C. Hope, *Titian*, 1980, 36. See also C. Ginzburg, "Tiziano, Ovidio e i codici della figurazione erotica nel Cinquecento," *Paragone*, 29, 1978, 3–23; P. Fehl, "Titian and the Olympian Gods: The Camerino for Philip II," in *Tiziano e Venezia*, 1980, 139–47 (reprinted in his *Decorum and Wit: The Poetry of Venetian Painting*, Vienna, 1992, pp. 11529); F. Haskell, "Titian: A New Approach?", in *Tiziano e Venezia*, 41–5 and D. Rosand, "*Ermeneutica amorosa:* Observations of the Interpretation of Titian's Venuses," in *Tiziano e Venezia*, 375–81.

[2] M. Tanner, *Titian: The* '*Poesie*' *for Philip II* (Phd. diss., New York University), Ann Arbor, 1976; A. Gentili, *Da Tiziano a Tiziano*, Rome, 1988 and J.C. Nash, *Veiled Images: Titian's Mythological Paintings for Philip II*, Philadelphia, London & Toronto, 1985.

interpretations, derived from the eclectic and often contradictory source material of Renaissance pansophy and applied to one and the same painting.[3]

I propose to approach this problem by examining certain leitmotifs in Titian's paintings that appear to have either a subordinate or an incidental purpose, or else are relegated to the background where they can easily be overlooked. My purpose is to demonstrate that these images serve a key function in the iconography and have been deliberately disguised. While disguised symbolism is a common ploy in Renaissance art, the central importance of animals as a recurrent theme in Titian's work has not been recognized. Animals are portrayed in about twenty-five of his paintings, in the context of mythological, secular and religious themes. This does not include portraits with dogs.

Most of the animals in Titian's paintings belong to three main categories—dogs, stags, and scenes of the hunt, which include both of the former. When these animals belong to the traditional iconography of a theme, the question of disguised symbolism is seemingly irrelevant. In some cases this assumption will prove to be false. The emphasis in my study has been, however, on Titian's consistent use of animal themes in incongruous contexts, where their presence has no obvious explanation. I will begin with the more traditional examples of the dog and gradually progress to the more problematic themes of the stag and the hunt in order to present a comprehensive picture and to underline the common denominator which unites them. Inscribed images from other sources will be presented as evidence for my interpretations.

The Dog as a Symbol of Sin

Considering the common tendency to identify the dog as a symbol of fidelity in most Renaissance artistic contexts, including that of the female nude in Titian's painting, it should be emphasized that highly negative connotations were assigned to 'man's best friend' from the time of antiquity, and these were ubiquitous in western literature and art. Classical and Medieval sources associated the dog with sexual

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[3] See, e.g. Nash (as above) in her analysis of Titian's paintings, and for background material: D.C. Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance*, Baltimore & London, 1970 and L. Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphoses and the Pursuit of Paganism*, New Haven & London, 1986.

Fig. 41. Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi. Photograph: Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino.

offenses, promiscuity and lechery.[4] A common woman was compared to a lecherous hound. The association of the sensuous nude female and various species of the toy dog in Titian's paintings derives from the iconography of *Vanitas* or promiscuity in fifteenth century Flemish painting.[5] Toy dogs are used as attributes in Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538, fig. 41), in some versions of *Venus and Cupid with a Musician* and in his second version of *Danaë* (1553–4, fig. 42) as a symbol of female seductiveness. In his earlier *Sacred and Profane Love* (Rome, ca.1514) a dog chasing a hare in the background had already been introduced as a known variant on the theme of sexual pursuit.

A different symbolic function is assumed by Titian's' dogs in other contexts. In at least two versions of the *Last Supper* (Urbino, 1544 and

[4] See B. Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces*, London, 1974, esp. 58–66.

[5] E.g. Memling's *Vanitas* (Museum of Strasbourg), where the nude female personification is accompanied by two dogs of different species, in R. Van Marle, *Iconographie de l'art profane au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance* (1931), New York, 1971, II, fig. 95. Cf. tapestries discussed below where the personification of Vanity is likewise accompanied by various dogs that represent vices.

Fig. 42. Titan, *Danaë*, 1553–4, Madrid.
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Escorial, 1555–64) the artist portrayed the dog as an attribute of Judas. The dog as a symbol of treachery and persecution was common in Flemish art. This association was derived from glosses of *Psalms* 21 and 22 of the *Old Testament* and from narrative Passion literature.[6] It seems hardly a coincidence that Titian's *Crowning with Thorns* includes the dog to represent the theme of religious persecution (fig. 43). This painting, which was commissioned by the Flemish merchant Van Haanen in 1543, is potent with semi-disguised allusions to contemporary religious and political events.[7] This is only one example in which Titian adopts disguised animal symbolism to express attitudes towards actual contemporary issues and events in which he was personally involved. In this case, the seemingly inconsequential dog functions on two different symbolic levels. On the overt level it serves as a traditional religious

[6] See J. Marrow, "Circumdederunt me canes multi: Christ's Tormentors in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *Art Bulletin*, 59, 1977, 167–81.

[7] See F. Polignano, "I ritratti dei volti e i registri dei fatti. *L'Ecce Homo* di Tiziano per Giovanni d'Anna," *Venezia Cinquecento*, 1992, no. 4, 7–54.

Fig. 43. Titian, *Crowning with Thorns*, 1543, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie.

symbol to identify Judas as a traitor. But the protagonists of the religious drama bear the portraits of Titian's contemporaries, with Aretino in the role of Pilatus as interpreted in his own writings.[8] It is therefore reasonable to assume that, as a symbol of religious persecution, it also functioned on a second, more covert level to criticize the actual persecution by adherents of the Catholic Reformation which was threatening the traditional freedom and stability of Venice. It is significant that this painting was executed only one year before Pope Paul III sent a representative of the Inquisition to Venice, and five years before the latter began burning confiscated books in public.

In Titian's second version of the *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence* (Escorial, 1567) the unconventional appearance of a hunting dog in an inconspicuous position to the right of the main narrative illustrates how the artist was applying the symbolic connotations of the animal to a new context. As in the case of his *Danaë*, the canine protagonist was introduced by Titian only in his later version. The fact that the dog was not portrayed

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[8] On Aretino's writings, see C. Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice*, Florence, 1985.

Fig. 44. Titian, *Flaying of Marsyas*, 1570, Kroměříž, Archdiocesan Museum.

in the earlier version of this subject, executed between 1548 and 1559 for the church of the Gesuiti, but nevertheless was introduced in that of 1567, demonstrates his increasing tendency to introduce disguised moralizations.[9] One of the most incongruous uses of dog-symbolism in Titian's work is found in the *Flaying of Marsyas* (fig. 44), which he painted when he was in his eighties. The drawing of this theme by

[9] The early version (Gesuiti) was commissioned by the Venetian merchant Lorenzo Mazzolo in 1548 to be placed in front of his tomb; the later one (Escorial) was commissioned by Giambattista de Toledo in 1562. See A. Niero, "Osservazioni iconografiche in margine alla mostra di Tiziano", *Notizie di Palazzo Albani*, 1991, 20, 89–97.

Giulio Romano, which Titian took as a model for his design, does not include a dog, for it had no place in the traditional iconography of Marsyas and there were no precedents.[10] Titian, nevertheless, introduced two dogs—a toy dog that licks the martyred satyr's blood at the center bottom, and a hunting dog with a blood-thirsty expression on the right. This strange iconography can again be explained by medieval Passion literature, which states that Christ's tormentors are evil dogs that stand with their sinful feet in his blood.[11] It is significant that Titian deviated from the narrative of the musical contest, which occupied Renaissance illustrators of Ovid, and highlighted the issue of sin and retribution. He was clearly unconcerned with the cultural connotations of virtuous versus corrupt music or those of artistic hierarchies, but he was intrigued by the ethical viewpoint, espoused by Ovid commentators, whereby Marsyas was conceived as a model of audacity or arrogance.[12] Jaromir Neumann, who assumed Titian intended an underlying Christ-Apollo analogy, wrote: '*and thus the old image* [of martyrdom] *is evoked that in his suffering man follows Christ in his act of Redemption*'.[13] The interjection of the evil dogs identifies sin as the instrument and cause of suffering, of the martyrdom which indeed becomes the penance of both man and Christ, but Titian's brutal imagery appears to bear no promise of Redemption. It will be shown that the conflation of Christian moralistic symbolism with mythological narrative is typical throughout Titian's work, however his concern with the themes of sin and retribution becomes increasingly evident in the latter years. The message of despair, conveyed both by iconographic and formal means in the Marsyas painting, is analogous to most other works of his last years, to which we will return.

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[10] For the iconographic tradition of the Marsyas theme and interpretations of Titian's painting, see J. Neumann, *Titian, The Flaying of Marsyas*, London, 1962; P. Fehl, "The Punishment of Marsyas," in his *Decorum and Wit* (as in note 1), 130–49 and J. Rapp, "Tizians Marsyas in Kremsier: Ein neuplatonisch-orphisches Mysterium vom Leiden des Menschen und seiner Erlösung," *Pantheon*, 45, 1987, 70–89.

[11] See Marrow (as in note 6), 174 and notes 45–56 for sources in Netherlandish literature.

[12] Dell'Anguillara, for example, wrote: 'Quanto ad Apollo il suon di Marsia aggrada, Tanto gli spiace il suo soverchio orgoglio. E disse a lui: la tua virtu si rada. Fa ch'ammonir d'un grande error ti voglie. Per far, che'l tuo valor teco non cada, Prendi del tuo fallir teco cordoglio, E di con humil cor, come ti penti. D'haver biasmati i miei piu dolci accenti'. Le Metamorfosi di Ovidio Ridotte da Giovanni Andrea Dell'Anguilara, Venezia, Bernardo Giunti, 1584, libro IV, 208–10.

[13] Neumann (as in note 10), 23.

In all of the examples discussed so far, Titian's symbolic dogs are associated with manifestations of negative human passions or what the church explicitly defined as sins or vices. The animal as a symbol of human bestiality has a long history in the art and literature of the west.[14] Titian's most poignant adaptation of the animal-sin analogy appeared in the London *Allegory* (fig. 54), which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Stag and the Hunt

The motifs of the stag and the hunt are generally allocated to the backgrounds of Titian's paintings, where they are not easily distinguishable and bear no obvious significance in relation to the main theme. But in view of Titian's preoccupation with animal symbolism and the repetition of these particular motifs in so many contexts, it is logical to assume that the stag and hunt motifs convey some message.

The symbolism of the stag in Christian literary and artistic tradition derived first and foremost from passages in *Psalm* 41 of the *Old Testament*:

> As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? (Ps. 41, 1–2).

The hart or the stag, in his desire for water, signifies the soul thirsting for the true fountain of Christianity—the source of Salvation or eternal life. The passages were consequently read during the rite of baptism. Further on in *Psalm* 41 the persecution of the believer is introduced:

> I will say unto God my rock. Why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? (Ps. 41, 9).

The earliest illustrations of *Psalm* 41 already showed the theme of persecution as a stag being chased by hounds in a scene of the hunt.[15] The

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[14] See M.W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, Michigan, 1967; F. Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages*, London, 1971; Rowland (as in note 4); J. O'Reilly, *Studies in the Iconography of the Virtues and Vices in the Middle Ages*, New York & London, 1988; A. Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Medieval Art*, Toronto, Buffalo & London, 1989 and Dom Pierre Miguel, *Dictionnaire Symbolique des Animaux*, Paris, 1991.

[15] E.g. the *Utrecht Psalter*. See M. Bath, *The Image of the Stag, Iconographic themes in Western Art*, Baden-Baden, 1992, 207–44.

early glosses of this *Psalm* also adopted the idea from Roman authors, such as Pliny and Aelian, that the stag had a habit of devouring serpents. On the serpent-eating stag St. Augustine wrote:

> The snakes are your sins, destroy the serpents of sin and then you will more keenly long for the fountain of truth.[16]

The theme of human sin was expanded in the commentary by Hugh of St. Victor, who repeated the aforementioned metaphor of the hunt:

> The hind is the chaste worldly soul. The arrows are wicked desires. The huntsmen are devils, who whenever they strike vicious thoughts into our hearts from things outside it, whether through sight or hearing, or taste, or smell or touch, like huntsmen shoot the soul from afar with deadly arrows.[17]

The stag is the human soul and the huntsmen are the devils who strike us with carnal temptations by arousing the senses.

Another related tradition is based on the analogy between the stag and Christ. The following passage in the anonymous *Ovide Moralisé* demonstrates the allegorical interpretation of the *cerf privé.*

> Ore est drois que je vous devise/Que le cers privez signifie. Le filz à la Vierge Marie, /C'est li filz Dieu meismement, Qui vint pour nostre sauvement, /Que l'escripture comparage À cerf et à boischet ramage, /C'est li cers qui contre nature Devint privee creature/Et nostre creatours estoit. C'est li cers douz qui se prestoit/Et baillot à touz à tenir. C'est cil qui vault dou ciel venir/Au monde abandoneement, Et pour le commun sauvement/D'umaine nature s'offri À sacrefier, et souffri/Paine et dolour à toutes gens. C'est li cers paisables et gens/Qui par le refuge et par l'ombre De ses cors tout le inonde aombre.[18]

(Now it is necessary that I explain to you what the *cerf privé* signifies. [He is] the son of the Virgin Mary, He is also the son of God, who came for our Salvation, who scripture compares to a stag and to a free-born animal, He is the stag which contrary to nature became a captured creature, and He was our creator. He is the gentle stag who offered himself and gave himself for all to hold. It is He who desired to come from heaven, to the abandoned world, and for the common Salvation of human nature offered himself for sacrifice, and suffered pain and

[16] St. Augustine, Migne, *P.L.*36, col.465.
[17] Hughes of St. Victor, Migne, *P.L.*177, col.574.
[18] *Ovide Moralisé* edited by C. de Boer, vol. 4, Wiesbaden, 1967, 80.

sorrow for all mankind. It is the peaceful and gentle stag who by the refuge and by the shade of its antlers has sheltered all the world.)

Although there were images of the *cerf privé* in fourteenth century Italian art, the Christ/stag metaphor gained popularity in fifteenth century depictions of St. Eustace or St. Hubert gazing at the apparition of a stag with the crucifix between his antlers.[19] This stag represents the *humana Christi natura*, the form which the Lord assumed in self-sacrifice for the ultimate Salvation of mankind. In the sixteenth century, emblem-books and emblematic art continued to associate the Stag with Christ as the conqueror of evi1.[20] In view of all this it is not surprising to find that Venetian painters introduced stag themes into the backgrounds of religious allegories. Giovanni Bellini in his *Sacred Allegory* juxtaposes three stags with a centaur, which is curiously reminiscent of the Romanesque stag and centaur, symbols of purity and vice. Carpaccio, in his *Meditation on the Passion*, depicted two stags behind the meditating saints, one attacked by a spotted leopard, symbol of Vanity.

The image of the stag as a vulnerable, pursued animal inspired a more secular literary motif that is not unrelated to the religious connotations mentioned above. Petrarch, in his *Rime sparse* repeatedly used the human-animal analogy, and particularly the metaphor of the hunt, to convey amorous sentiments.[21] His Renaissance commentators interpreted his *fera* (Laura) as a deer and the black and white dogs as day and night (the pursuit of time) and these motifs were introduced into illustrations of his *Trionfi*, thus becoming diffused as themes of moral allegory.[22] In his paraphrase of the Actaeon legend Petrarch identified himself with the solitary stag, the hounds representing the passions

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[19] See Bath (as in note 15), 224–31.

[20] E.g. P. Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, Basel, 1556, chap. 3. See Bath (as in note 15), 281–94.

[21] See C.R. Davis, *Petrarch's Rime 323 and its Tradition Through Spenser* (Phd. diss.), Ann Arbor, 1973; Barkan (as in note 3), 206–15 and Bath (as in note 15), 53. On Ovid as the source of this allegorical approach, see C.A. Gosselin, *Rape, Seduction and Love in Ovid's* "*metamorphoses*" (M.A. thesis, Concordia University, Montreal), Ann Arbor, 1993, esp. 77–81.

[22] The chase of the stag or deer is depicted in the background in several 15th c. illustrations of Petrarch's *Trionfo del Tempo*; see e.g. a Florentine cassone (ca.1450) in Trieste, Biblioteca Civica and an engraving of the Florentine *Trionfi* series (ca.1460–70) in Vienna, Staatlische Graphische Sammlung, Albertina. The black and white dogs were depicted in Jacopo del Sellaio's painting of the same subject (ca.1480), in Fiesole, Museo Bandini. These are reproduced in S. Cohen, *The Image of Time in Renaissance Depictions of Petrarch's 'Trionfo del Tempo'* (unpublished Phd. diss., Tel-Aviv University, 1982), plates 57, 62 & 90.

which tormented him as a lover.[23] Imagery of the hunt used to allegorize amorous passions is subsequently found in Antonio Fregoso's *La cerva bianca* (16th c). In Shakespeares's *Twelfth Night* Orazio proclaims:

> That instant was I turned into a hart/and my desires like fell and cruel hounds, E'er since pursued me.[24]

The allegorical stag hunt became a form both for poetic expressions of love and for religious moralizations. In both cases the stag was an object of vulnerability and in each the hounds in pursuit came to represent uncontrollable and corrupting human passions which were ultimately the cause of self-inflicted suffering.

By the Renaissance period the allegorical stag hunt was well established as a metaphor of mankind, which on its journey through life, is pursued by its own moral weakness. The source of persecution had been internalized; man was no longer afflicted by exterior forces, but rather by those from within. In the art of the fifteenth century, primarily in prints, book illustrations and tapestries, symbolic elements of the allegorical chase were made explicit by the use of labels and accompanying text. The most famous example is a series of five tapestries known as *La chasse du cerf fragile* (The Hunt of the Frail Stag) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which were woven in the Netherlands in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.[25] A version of the same poem with nine painted illustrations is found in a sixteenth century manuscript of *La chasse du cerf fragile* in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (ms. fr. 25429).[26] The first scene shows the personification *Nature* setting her hound called *Jeunesse* after the stag. The text on the tapestry reads:

> Cy voiez le buissó denfance. Ou nature so chemin dresse/Et le cerf fragile hors lance. Avec so beau limyer jeunesse/Qui le met sus [?] pas ne cesse. Davoir de laproucher evie/Affin qu' en repos ne le laisse. Es bois de transitoire vie.

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[23] 'Et in un cervo solitario et vago/di selva in selva ratto mi trasformo, et ancor de' miei can fuggo lo stormo'. Petrarch, *Rime* 23, *Canzone delle metamorfosi*, lines 158–60.

[24] Shakespeare, *Twelfth. Night*, 1, 1, 21–3. On the French and German literary tradition of this theme, see M. Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love*, Ithaca & London, 1974.

[25] See A.S. Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 1993, 347–58 & 458–62.

[26] See E. Picot, "Le cerf allégorique dans les tapisseries et les manuscrits à peintures", *Bulletin de la Société Française de Reproductions de Manuscrits à Peintures*, 3, 1913, 58–60 and Cavallo (as in note 25), fig. 125. See related drawings for wall paintings (destroyed) in N. Reynaud, "La Galerie des Cerfs du Palais Ducal de Nancy", *Revue de l'Art*, 61, 1983, 7–28.

Fig. 45. *The Hunt of the Frail Stag*, Tapestry from series of *La chasse du cerf fragile*, southern Netherlands, ca.1500–25, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Bequest of Mary Stillman Harkness, 1950).

(Here you see the forest of childhood to which Nature makes her way and flushes out the frail stag with her handsome hound Youth who sets upon him and never relents in his attack so that he will have no rest in the woods of [this] transitory life.).[27]

In the second scene the stag meets *Vanité*, blowing her horn, and *Ignorance*, whose hounds are labeled *Vouloir, Haste* and *Outrecuidance* (Desire, Rashness and Overconfidence) (fig. 45). This version of the scene in the Metropolitan Museum belongs to a series of which only two fragments survive.[28] The third scene depicts the stag as he tries to throw off the scent by leaping into the water, but he is driven out of the lake by *Vieillesse* (Old Age), a huntress who afflicts him with three additional hounds labeled *Peine, Doubtace, Froet* and *Chault* (Grief, Fear,

[27] Trans. by Cavallo (as in note 25), 350.
[28] *Ibid.*, 458–62.

Fig. 46. *The Hunt of the Frail Stag*, woodcut illustration from Antonio Fregoso's *La cerva bianca*, Venice, 1521.

Cold and Heat). Finally *Maladie*, aided by all the hounds, kills the stag with her spear and Death sounds the horn. The last fragment shows the poet delivering the moral.

The illustration to Antonio Fregoso's *La cerva bianca*, printed in Venice in 1521 and 1525, repeats the first theme with a male hunter and hounds labelled *Desio* (Desire) and *Pensier* (Worry) (fig. 46). Although Titian could easily have seen that version, it is more likely that he was influenced by the northern tapestries, which he probably saw in Venetian collections or in that of his patron, the emperor Charles V

Fig. 47. Titian, *Venus and Adonis*, 1553–4, Madrid.
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at Augsburg.[29] This assumption is based on stylistic affinities between Titian's depictions of the hunt, and the hunting dogs in particular, and those of the tapestries.

Titian was a brilliant painter of canine species. This is evident in this fragment of a *Child with a Labrador*, a *Bitch and her Puppies* (Rotterdam, 1575–6) and in the *Captain with a Labrador* (Kassel, 1551) in which he painted portraits of actual dogs. By contrast, the hunting hounds in mythological scenes, like *Venus and Adonis* (1553–4, fig. 47) have a rigid stereotyped physiognomy and are grouped and posed in precisely the

[29] Regarding Flemish tapestries in the Habsburg collection, see R.A. d'Hulst, *Flemish Tapestries*, Brussels, 1967, esp. 193–202, 221ff. & 231ff. and S. Schneebalg-Perelman, *Les Chasses de Maximilian*, Brussels, 1982.

same way as those of the northern tapestries The use of models, like the *Cerf fragile* and the related *Hunt of the Unicorn*,[30] which presented the hunt in the context of a moral allegory, is visual evidence of Titian's intention.

In the early painting of *The Three Ages of Man* (ca.1511–12) we see a solitary stag in the background behind the old man with the skulls. In *Sacred and Profane Love* (1514) the hunters first appear. In *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1523–4) the severed head of the doe in the foreground alludes to the actual practice of butchering the animal as described in practical hunting handbooks, such as *Le Livre de la chasse.*[31] In *Venus with Cupid and an Organist* (1548) the almost imperceptible lone stag in the left background is juxtaposed on the right with a satyr-fountain and a peacock (fig. 48). The fountain of love, a standard motif on Renaissance *cassoni*, was associated with Venus. In the fifteenth century its resemblance to a baptismal font suggested the analogy between the source of chaste love and that of spiritual rebirth.[32] Titian's satyr-fountain is that of voluptuous love, the peacock on its rim signifying deceptive vanity by its decorative feathers.[33] This may be a deliberate reversal of the Marian peacock theme.

In each of these cases Titian is making an ethical statement in which the stag and the hunt function as symbolic leitmotifs. One can assume that such symbolic elements, like everything else in Titian's painting, evolved dynamically as a function of his incessant artistic and personal development. I am not suggesting, therefore, that any specific animal theme in his work can automatically be interpreted according to a preconceived iconographic key. As it is beyond the scope of this chapter to analyze each of the above-mentioned works, let it suffice to say that in the early works, where themes of love are prominent, Titian seems to have adopted Petrarch's solitary stag motif as the image of

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[30] See E.A. Standen, *European Post-Medieval Tapestries and Related Hangings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 2 vols., New York, 1985 and Cavallo (as in note 25) for further bibliography on the *cerf fragile* and the unicorn tapestries.

[31] See W.H. Forsyth, "The Medieval Stag Hunt," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 10, 1951/2, 203–10.

[32] See P.F. Watson, *Virtu and Voluptas in Cassone Painting* (Phd. diss., Yale), Ann Arbor, 1970.

[33] For the tradition of the peacock as a symbol of sin in moralizations, see J.B. Friedmann, "*Peacocks and Preachers: Analytic Technique in Marcus Orvieto's Liber de moralitatibus, Vatican lat. ms. 5935*," in W.B. Clark & M.T. McMunn (eds.), *Beasts and Birds in the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, 1989, 179–96. For the peacock as an attribute of Fortuna, see an early 15th c. manuscript illumination of the *Fulgentius.*

the lonely tormented lover (e.g. *The Three Ages of Man*) or as a symbol of pure, uncorrupted love contrasted to voluptuousness or eroticism (e.g. *Venus and Cupid with an Organist*). He used the hunt as a metaphor of licentious, amorous pursuit in *Sacred and Profane Love*, and an image of bestial debauchery in *Bacchus and Ariadne*. In his later mythologies, however, his preoccupation with issues of sin and penitence caused him to emphasize other connotations of the animal and hunt motifs which had been inherent from the start.

Moralizations of Ovid

Animals pervade the mythologies of Titian's later years. These illustrations of Ovidian themes, primarily from his *Metamorphoses*, include the *Pardo Venus* (or *Jupiter and Antiope*), *Venus and Adonis, Diana and Actaeon, Diana and Callisto*, the Prado *Danaë* (all attributed to the 50's), the *Death of Actaeon* (1562) and the *Death of Marsyas* (1575/6). The *Satyr and Nymph* of the 70's has been identified as *Dionysus and Ariadne*.[34]

What evidence can we find in Ovid's myths or his commentators to justify the particular interpretation of Titian's animal imagery presented in this study? Since he could not read the original Latin text of Ovid, only *volgare* recensions and commentaries were directly accessible to him. Past attempts to relate Titian's mythological paintings to these texts and their accompanying illustrations, to which I will refer later, have served to demonstrate how independent the artist was in his interpretations. Although minor and mostly insignificant iconographical details have been related to one source or another,[35] it should not be surprising to find that there is no direct or literal correlation between Titian's imagery and either the text or its glosses. I would like to suggest, however, that Titian's basic conceptions of the Ovidian fables and his personal orientation to them were, in fact, derived from the *volgare* commentaries. In other words, they served as mediators which enabled the artist to identify with the themes and to recreate them as a personal vision. Titian was affected not by the forms but rather by the spirit of the Ovid commentaries.

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[34] On the *Satyr and Nymph*, see Gentili (as in note 2), pp. 217–24 and for his identification of the *Pardo Venus* as Jupiter and Antiope, *ibid.*, 149–61.

[35] Ginzburg (as in note 1).

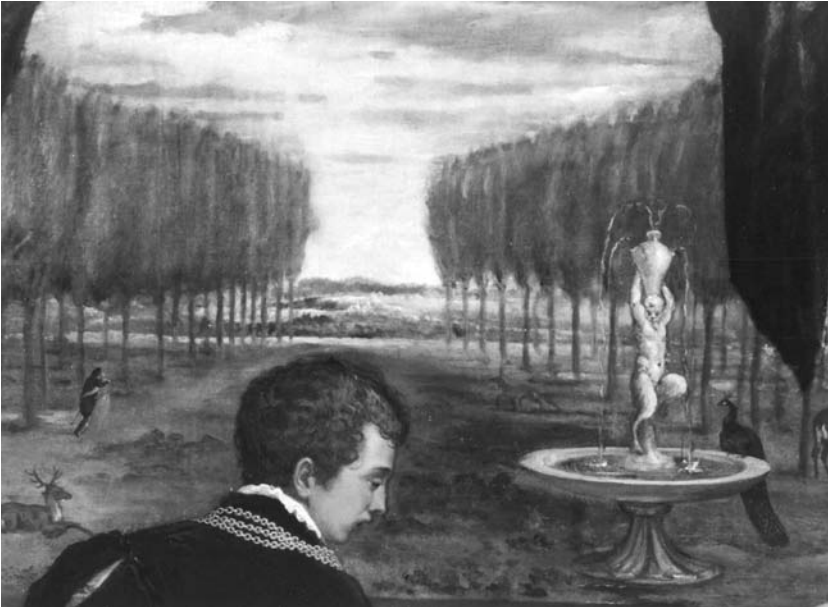

Fig. 48. Titian, *Venus and Cupid with an Organist* (detail), 1548, Madrid. Copyright Museo Nacional del Prado.

Literature on the history and development of Ovid commentaries is vast and need not be reviewed here.[36] Of primary concern are those versions of the *Metamorphoses* printed in Italy and directly available to Titian himself or to the intellectuals in his social and professional milieu

[36] See the following important studies: M.D. Henkel, *De Houtsneden Van-Mansions Ovid Moralisé Bruges 1484*, Amsterdam, 1922; E. Henkel, *Illustrierte Ausgaben von Ovids Metamorphosen*, Leipzig, 1930; F. Ghisalberti, "Arnolfo d'Orleans: un cultore di Ovidio nel secolo XII," *Memorie del R. Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere*, 24/4, 1932, 157–234; *Idem*, "L'Ovidius moralizatus di Pierre Bersuire," *Studi Romanzi*, XXIII, 1933, 5–136; *Idem*, "Giovanni del Virgilio espositore delle Metamorfosi di Ovidio," *Giornale Dantesco*, XXXIV, 1933, 1–110 (and other works by this author); J. Engels, *Études sur l'Ovide Moralisé*, Groningen, 1945 and "Les commentaires d'Ovide au XVIe siècle," *Vivarium*, XII, I, 1974,. 3–13; D.C. Allen (as in note 3), 163–200; A. Moss, *Ovid in Renaissance France, A Survey of the Latin Editions of Ovid and Commentaries Printed in France before 1600*, London, 1982; Barkan (as in note 3); C. Martindale (ed.), *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, 1988; *Ovid in Medieval Culture*, Binghampton, New York, 1989 (Medievalia, vol. 13); F.T. Coulson (ed.), *The Vulgate Commentary on Ovid's Metamorphoses—The Creation Myth and the Story of Orpheus*, Toronto, 1991 and for further bibliography: R.E. Kaske, A. Groos & M.W. Twomey, *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery. A Guide to Interpretation*, Toronto, Buffalo & London, 1988, 122–26.

who are known to have exerted some influence on him. These commentaries demonstrate the manner in which the myths were rendered palatable to the various strata of Renaissance culture, to the layman and cleric, to the commoner and aristocrat and to the non-educated as well as the learned.

The Latin commentary of Raphael Regio, professor at the University of Padua until his death in 1520, was first published in 1493 in Venice and was repeatedly printed both in Venice and Paris.[37] Originally entitled *Ovidius metamorphoseos cum commento familiari*, it was reprinted in 1510 under the name *Ovidii nasonis metamorpheosis libri moralizati* and augmented with the text of an assumedly late Roman author called Lactantius Placidus and that of a contemporary cleric from Lyon, Petrus Lavinius.[38] The edition of 1545 included passages from the *Ovidius Moralizatus* of Pierre Bersuire (written ca.1348), which had appeared in four Parisian editions between 1509 and 1521.[39] There were numerous reprints of the supplemented Regio edition, and more than 50,000 copies were sold by the time the 1586 edition came out.

In his preface to the 1493 edition, dedicated to Francesco Gonzaga, Regio explained that the myths provided *exempla* of virtues and vices, illustrating moral truths. This orientation was further emphasized in 1510 by the revising of the title and addition of moralizing texts. The annotations by Lavinius to Ovid's *Book I* adopted the four modes of interpretation which had been defined for biblical exegesis and had been applied in the fourteenth century in Bersuire's *Ovidius moralizatus* and the *Ovide moralisé*, following medieval precedents. Based on the assumption that pagan fable concealed veiled truths, they could be interpreted in accordance with one or all of the four modes or 'senses': 1. natural or physical, 2. historical, 3. tropological or moral and 4. allegorical in a spiritual or theological vein. By applying this method a variety of incompatible meanings could be justified. In the words of Ann Moss:

> For Bersuire, allegorical reading depends on *similitudo*, and the interpretation of a fable or personage will depend on likenesses which the reader can detect between elements in the narrative or description and the

[37] On the Regio editions, see (as above) Allen, 167 & 174–77, Engels, and Moss, 28–31 & 66–71, as well as Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (the 1518 Lyons edition), Garland, New York & London, 1976.

[38] Engels (as in note 36) concluded that the Lavinius commentary had such success that this was the version of Ovid banned in the *Index* of 1559 and after.

[39] See Moss (as in note 36), 68–70.

> traditional components and language (often itself highly metaphorical) of the particular allegorical sensus which is being applied... Bersuire's similitudes assume that allegorical interpretation is essentially an exercise in metaphorical thinking.[40]

We shall see how this method was applied to specific fables which Titian chose to illustrate, and how the artist adapted the metaphorical principles in his own visual imagery. It will furthermore be shown that some of the interpretations of the dog and the stag, which I have identified in Titian's paintings, were transmitted by the *Ovide moralisé* and the *Ovidius moralizatus* to the Italian commentators. In 1556, more or less contemporaneously with Titian's concentrated work on the '*poesie*', Bersuire's allegories were published by Joannes Gryphius in Venice.

The *Metamorphoseos vulgare*, allegorizations in prose written by Giovanni Bonsignori in the fourteenth century, were first published in 1497 by Lucantonio Giunta in Venice. The text and the woodcut illustrations were reprinted several times in the early sixteenth century and both were adopted, with minor changes, by Nicolo Agostino in his *Tutti gli libri di Ovidio Metamophoseos* first published in 1521 by Giunta. All four modes of interpretation were utilized, although moralizations were preferred and partially derived from Lavinius and Bersuire. Carlo Ginzburg found that the *volgare* texts and accompanying illustrations were sources for some elements in Titian's iconography previously thought to be innovative.[41] The *Trasformazioni*, translated by Titian's friend Lodovico Dolce, were published in Venice by Gabriel Giolito in 1553. Dolce, in his dedicatory letter to Charles V justified the myths for their instructive value as *exempla* of virtues and vices, as Regio had done before him. In contrast to Bonsignori's text, which is highly unsophisticated, Dolce wrote in elegant prose, but the debt to his predecessors is evident in the moralizations presented at the beginning of each book and in theological interpretations, such as those dealing with divine punishment for sinners. He dwelled on the theme of sin, and attributed each transformation to one of the traditional vices.

The last writer to contribute to this tradition during Titian's lifetime was Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara, whose translation, *Le metamorfosi di Ovidio* with brief moralizations by Gioseppe Horologgio, was first published in 1563 by Bernardo Giunti and was reprinted in 1571 and

[40] *Ibid.*, 25.
[41] Ginzburg (as in note 1), 13–17.

1584 with extended moralizations by Francesco Turchi.[42] Although the first two editions coincide with Titian's latest works and, therefore, can not have been consequential regarding attitudes formulated much earlier by the artist, it is essential to recognize that even towards the end of the Cinquecento the Ovidian fables were still perceived as veiled moral allegories.

All the above-mentioned commentators of the *Metamorphoses* shared the same assumptions—that the fables are *exempla* of virtues and vices and are veils for moral truths. This was consistently emphasized by authors from Bersuire in the mid fourteenth century till dell'Anguillara more than 200 years later. Some, like Lavinius explicitly oriented their writings to preachers. The pulpit no doubt provided an ideal stage for their popular diffusion, and such moral sermons should not be excluded as a possible source of inspiration for Titian's interpretations of the same themes.[43]

When Titian called his mythological paintings '*poesie*', he was defining their nature in traditional terms. Poetry was traditionally defined as ethics, and ethics was classified as a branch of philosophy. This was reiterated, for example, by Boccaccio in his *Della geneologia degli dei* and illustrated by Raphael on the ceiling of the *Stanza della Segnatura.* Arnulf of Orleans (12th c.) had already explained that Ovid's poetry '*is classified as ethics because it teaches us to dissolve temporal things, which are transitory and changeable; this pertains to morality*'.[44]

The man-beast metaphor is as much a leitmotif of Ovid's text as it is of Titian's paintings. Ovid's commentators unequivocally explained transformations into animals as manifestations of human bestiality. An important precedent for the Christian allegorization of the pagan myths had been established by Boethius who wrote: '*although vicious men keep the appearance of their human bodies, they are nevertheless changed into beasts as far as the character of their souls is concerned*'.[45] He compared a man driven by avarice to a wolf, a quarrelsome one with a dog, a fraudulent one to a fox, an intemperate one to a lion, a timid one to a deer, a stupid one to an ass, a volatile one to a bird and one who is lustful to a filthy

[42] For other allegorical versions of the *Metamorphoses* published outside of Italy in the later 16th c., see Moss, 44–57.

[43] The importance of sermons and their possible influence on Titian is discussed in Chapter Seven.

[44] Trans. from J.B. Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages*, Toronto, 1982, 102–104. See Ghisalberti, 1932 (as in note 36) and Nash (as in note 2), 68–74.

[45] Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, IV, iv.

sow.[46] His animal-beast similes, drawn from ancient beast fables, eventually became part of the allegorical heritage of the *Ovidius moralizatus* and the *Ovide moralisé*. Bonsignore explained that the metaphor of transformation shows how the virtuous attain immortality and the evil change into bestial forms.[47] Lavinius wrote that these teach men to avoid brutish desires and vices, and Agostino summarized this approach with the statement: '*there is not a single transformation which did not result from disregard of God or from sin*'.[48] In fact, commentators attributed each of Ovid's transformations to one or more of the cardinal sins. The fact that little had changed by the last quarter of the sixteenth century is evident from the following words of dell'Anguillara:

> The gods and goddesses, transformed into different species of animals in order to satisfy their dishonest or malicious appetites, represent men who, for great status or grave dignity, for riches or virtue, transform themselves into beasts, which means that they get hold of bestial costumes to obtain their cruel, avaricious or lascivious desire.[49]

The complexities of these allegorizations with their beast metaphors and moralistic orientation were lost on the illustrators. The woodcuts of the 1497 Bonsignori edition, repeatedly reused with minor variations, are highly unsophisticated linear depictions.[50] A sequence of episodes depicted as continuous narrative in one horizontal frame relates the bare essentials of each fable. The Agostino translation of 1521 contains woodcuts which derive from the former, with heavier contours and shading executed by parallel hatching. Some variations in iconography reflect alternative interpretations. The Latin edition of Regio which was reprinted in 1586 still contained variants of the late *Quattrocento* style,

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[46] *Ibid.*, IV, iii.

[47] Bonsignore, *Ovidio metamorphoseos vulgare*, Venetia, 1497, 141.

[48] Nicolo di Agostino, *Tutti i libri di Ovidio metamorphoseos*, Venetia, 1521, "proemio".

[49] Giovanni Andrea Dell' Anguillara, *Le metamorphosi di Ovidio*, Venetia, 1584, 165 (my trans.).

[50] On illustrations of the *Metamorphoses* in the Renaissance with references to those of the printed editions and including reproductions thereof, see: C. Lord, *Some Ovidian Themes in Italian Renaissance Art* (Phd. diss. Columbia), Ann Arbor, 1969; B. Guthmüller, "Ovidubersetzungen und mythologische Malerei Bemerkungen zur Sala dei giganti Giulio Romanos," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XXI/1, 1977, 35–68; E. Caprotti, "Le Metamorfosi illustrate nel'500 italiano," *Esopo*, 1990, no. 45 (Mar.), 11–20; P. Maréchaux, "Les métamorphoses de Phaëton: étude sur les illustrations d'un mythe à travers les éditions des *Métamorphoses* d'Ovide de 1484 à 1552," *Revue de l'Art*, 1990, no. 90, 88–103 and H. Walter & H.J. Horn (eds.), *Die Rezeption der* Metamorphosen *des Ovid in der Neuzeit: Der Antike Mythos in Text und Bild* (Int. Symposium, Hamburg, 1991), Berlin, 1995.

where each illustration is vertically divided into three unequal sections to accommodate consecutive episodes. In 1553 Dolce's *Trasformazioni* introduced 95 modern engravings with fine linear detail in a mannerist style, but even these offered no alternative to the exposition of continuous narrative. In view of the stylistic and conceptual naivety of the illustrations in general, it is inconceivable that they had any effect on Titian. In his fundamental aesthetic perception, with the harmonious depictions of spatial and temporal dimensions, psychological insights and portrayals of human drama, and in his intense personal projection, Titian's '*poesie*' belonged in a totally different category.

Animals and Ovidian Fables

Predictably, we will not find any sign of dogs or stags or scenes of the hunt in the printed illustrations, unless these are elements in Ovid's narrative. Nor are precedents to be found, to my knowledge, on *cassoni, deschi da parto* or furniture which were decorated with Ovidian fables.

A variety of symbolic animals became popular in Venetian painting of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[51] In addition to pastoral motifs, the religious works of Giovanni Bellini contain rabbits, a variety of birds, donkeys, stags and other fauna, whose meanings have hardly been explored. Cima da Conegliano and others of this generation followed Bellini in introducing similar animals in religious contexts. Carpaccio introduced stags as symbols of Christ in the backgrounds of his religious works, and we have seen the multiplication of symbolic animals in his secular paintings.[52] With the exception of Bellini's *Feast of the Gods*, however, where there are no symbolic animals, these artists did not depict Ovidian fables. If we accept the claim by Ridolfi (1648) that Giorgione painted over twenty Ovidian fables,[53] we might hypo-

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[51] See, for example, Giovanni Bellini's *St. Francis* of the 70's (New York, Frick Collection), where birds and animals (as well as symbolic plants) were still disguised as elements of the landscape, and later paintings, like the *Sacred Allegory* (Uffizi) and the *Madonna of the Meadow* (London, National Gallery), where their symbolic function was emphasized by their prominence.

[52] E.g. Cima's *Madonna of the Orange Tree* (Venice, Accademia).

[53] Carlo Ridolfi published *Le meraviglie dell'arte* (Venice, 1648; Reprint 2 vols., ed. D. von Hadeln, Berlin, 1914–24) 138 years after Giorgione's death and is the only source for most of these attributed paintings of subjects later depicted by Titian. There is no proof that they were not the works of later Giorgionesque painters or forgers. See Lord (as in note 50), 124–29.

thetically assume that he was the originator of this approach, but the known paintings by Giorgione offer no support for this assumption. It appears, consequently, that the closest extant Venetian precedents are some single-leaf engravings of the early sixteenth century picturing symbolic animals in undefined pseudo-pagan allegories.[54]

Correggio of Parma, with his paintings of *Jupiter and Io* (fig. 49) and the *Rape of Ganymede* (1531), may have been the first to depict a metamorphosis fable in which symbolic animals portray the moral interpretation. The head of a stag that has come to drink from a brook is barely perceptible in the shadows below Io as she is embraced by the cloud. This is a visual allusion to *Psalm* 41, where the stag drawn to the source is a metaphor for the soul's desire for divine love.[55] The emphatic presentation of the dog in Correggio's pendant of the *Rape of Ganymede* is an allusion to lechery. The relationship of the two paintings as a juxtaposition of divine versus sensual love is consistent with the pattern *of* '*emblematic representations in a binary system*',[56] which Correggio used in his other paired paintings to contrast heavenly with mundane or virtue and vice. The essence of the allegorical opposition is transmitted by the two animal symbols.

Correggio appears to have been one of Titian's sources for his innovative use of animals in Ovidian fables. Through Correggio he must have realized the possibilities of transmitting the moralizations by integrating animal metaphors. For Titian the message of man's moral frailty and conflict, and the tragedy of sin and retribution, were the most salient and significant aspects of the fables. How similar these concepts were to those of the *cerf fragile* with its allegory of man victimized by his own moral weakness. It was only one step further to conflate these two traditions and their respective imagery, relegating one to the background, and often to the shadows, where it served an interpretative function, much like that of the gloss in relation to the main text of Ovid.

[54] See, e.g. the engraving of Venus by Giovanni Maria Pomedelli, in Gentili (as in note 2), 109, fig. 58.

[55] See E. Verheyen, "Correggio's *Amori di Giove*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 29, 1966, 160–92, esp. 186–7.

[56] Barkan (as in note 3) who made this observation on the 'binary system' (335, note 63) failed to notice the implications in regard to these two paintings (336, n.70).

Fig. 49. Correggio, *Jupiter and Io*, 1531, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.

The Late Mythologies

The interpretation of the *Venus and Adonis* painting (fig. 47) as a moralistic allegory is consonant with that of the Ovid commentaries, specifically those of Bersuire, Agostino and Bonsignore.[57] The identification of the hunter as a sinner is found both in Bersuire and Agostino. Bersuire

[57] See Nash (as in note 2), 30–31.

adopted the metaphor of hunter and wild beasts, suggested by Ovid himself, as moral admonition against temerity or overconfidence.[58] We have seen that the sins of overconfidence, rashness and desire were represented in the second tapestry of the *Cerf fragile* series as the dogs of Vanity. The commentaries and/or the tapestries would have conveyed to Titian that the *Venus and Adonis* myth demonstrated how man was driven to self-destruction by his worldly temptations. The fact that Titian's painting accentuates the spiritual conflict faced by Adonis, an aspect conveyed neither by Ovid's commentators nor in literary reformulations of the theme, cannot be overemphasized. The underlying theme of spiritual conflict conveyed by all Titian's late mythologies should, in my opinion, be recognized as a most personal and intimate expression of the aging artist himself.

In later mythological paintings, such as the *Pardo Venus* and the three canvases of *Diana and Actaeon*, several of the *Cerf fragile* motifs are repeated. The *Pardo Venus* (executed 1540 and after) has been recognized as Jupiter's seduction of Antiope, one of the myths woven by Arachne and identified by Bersuire with the theme of deception (fig. 50). This is the only mythological painting by Titian whose formal design, with its horizontal sequence of episodes divided by a tree and suggestive of continuous narrative, is comparable to that of the printed Ovid illustrations: It also contains elements of the *Cerf fragile.* Here we find the man who sounds the hunt with his horn, the hunter whose passions are aroused, hounds in pursuit, the fleeing stag, the water source and the kill. In addition, there is a lecherous satyr accosting a sensuous nymph and another nude satyr, decorated with bacchanalian vine leaves, who sits by a maiden. An overturned amphora reinforces the connection between wine and carnal love and may also allude to the traditional vase of *Fortuna.*[59] In such a scene, Cupid aiming his bow recalls the words of Hugh of St. Victor—'*The arrows are wicked desires*'. The same idea is repeated in the text of the *Ovid moralisé*.[60] The analogy between human and animal bestiality is explicit. Underlying the images of aggression and violence, kindled by wine, lust and passions of the hunt, is the message of the *Cerf fragile.*

[58] Bersuire, Metamorphosis Ovidiana moraliter, Paris, 1509, 76.
[59] See Tanner (as in note 2), 71–2.
[60] *Ovide moralisé*, edited by C. de Boer, vol. 4, Wiesbaden, 1967, 133–34.

Fig. 50. Titian, *Pardo Venus*, 1540 & 1560, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Photo RMN.

Fig. 51. Titian, *Diana and Actaeon*, after 1559, Edinburgh, Duke of Sutherland Collection, on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland.

Fig. 52. Titian, *Death of Actaeon*, 1562.
Copyright London, National Gallery.

In the painting of *Diana and Actaeon* (Edinburgh) painted for Philip II after 1559, Titian did not depict the tragic outcome of the narrative, as he would later on, but chose to focus on dramatic confrontations which project the underlying moral connotations. Fulgentius, followed by later commentators, including Bersuire, had already interpreted the story as that of an avaricious young man destroyed by his own vice.[61] Bonsignore stressed Actaeon's penitence by claiming he recognized the 'art of hunting' as vanity and abandoned it but, having committed the sin of pride, fell from riches into poverty and became like a beast.[62]

As in the later *Flaying of Marsyas*, Titian juxtaposed two different canine species, the hunting dog and the toy dog, to serve symbolic functions (figs. 51 & 52). Apparently, the naked goddess of the hunt

[61] See Liebeschutz (as in note 33).
[62] Bonsignore (as in note 47), Libro III, viii.

Fig. 53. Veronese, *Marriage at Cana* (detail), 1562–3, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Photo RMN.

was assigned such a useless canine specimen to symbolize her feminine pride and vanity, as in Flemish images of *Vanitas*, or to identify her as the object of Actaeon's lust, as in Titian's second *Danaë*. The juxtaposition of this haughty little dog with the hunting hound of the aggressor helps to emphasize and define the essential meaning of the confrontation in terms of the uncontrollable passions by which men are driven to tragedy. The elements which convey the moral symbolism of the painting, the two dogs and the stag skull, are formally emphasized by a visual triangle that binds them together.

The Diana and Actaeon legend lends itself to moral interpretation because it contains all the basic allegorical components we have discussed—the hunt, the source, the stag and, most significantly, the idea of a man transformed into an animal as he is attacked by his own dogs—a victim of his own sins, in the *Death of Actaeon* (fig. 52) painted by Titian in his mid-seventies.

Veronese's Commentary

Titian's innovative approach to animal symbolism inspired quite a few artists, among them Veronese, who made such a subtle allusion to Titian's dogs in his *Marriage at Cana* that no one seems to have grasped its implications. In this work, executed in 1562/63 for the Benedictines of San Giorgio Maggiore, Veronese introduced many portraits, including those of Tintoretto, Titian (who was in his seventies) and himself as musicians in the center foreground (fig. 53). As opposed to his artistic friends who are actually playing their instruments, Titian is not able to play the contrabass he holds, because what appears to be his bow is also the leash by which he holds two handsome dogs. I suggest that this was Veronese's humorous way of commenting, if not on Titian's love of dogs, at least on his constant preoccupation with them as an artist. Veronese also indicated that he understood Titian's message when he directed the hand which is linked to the dogs towards an hourglass which faces the aged master.[63]

[63] For a different interpretation of the function of the hourglass in this painting, see A.P. de Mirimonde, "Le sablier, la musique et la danse dans les '*Noces de Cana*' de Paul Veronese," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 88, 1976, 129–36.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TITIAN'S LONDON ALLEGORY AND THE THREE BEASTS OF HIS *SELVA OSCURA*

There is no documentary evidence regarding Titian's so-called *Allegory of Prudence* in the National Gallery, London (henceforth *Allegory*) (figs. 54 and 55), and the interpretation set forth by Panofsky in 1955 has remained almost uncontested until now.[1] This chapter will examine the theory that what appears to be an exceptional theme actually derives from long and well-documented literary and artistic traditions. It will be suggested, however, that Titian's visual formulation of this theme is so unique that it had no direct predecessors or followers. Finally, an attempt will be made to explain why, and under what circumstances, this painting was created.

The interpretation of the London *Allegory* set forth here illustrates another aspect of disguised animal symbolism in Titian's work. We have seen that the artist's repeated use of animal themes in seemingly incongruous associations was derived from literary and artistic traditions

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[1] E. Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, New York, 1955, 146–68. For reviews of findings, interpretations, and history, as well as bibliography, see H.E. Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian*, II: *The Portraits*, London, 1971, 145–6, cat. no. 107 and pl. 211; J.G. Caldwell, "An Allegory of Good Counsel by Titian," *Commentari*, 1973, 24(4), 319–22; J. Anderson, "Pietro Aretino and Sacred Imagery," in D. Rosand (ed.), *Interpretazioni Veneziane*, Venezia, 1984, esp. 291–310; C. Gould, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Schools*, National Gallery Catalogues, London, 1987, 290–2; *idem, Titian, Prince of Painters*, London, 1990, 347–9, cat. no. 67, colorplate and comprehensive bibliography; L. Puppi, "Tiziano nella critica del suo tempo," in *Tiziano, catalogo della mostra*, Venezia, 1990, 53–56; E.J. Campbell, "Old Age and the Politics of Judgment in Titian's Allegory of Prudence," *Word and Image*, 19, 2000, 261–70; F. Pedrocco, *Titian*, London & New York, 2001, 281, no. 244; N. Penny, in *Titian*, catalogue edited by D. Jaffé, National Gallery London, 2003, no. 34, 160; S. Raman, "Performing Allegory: Erwin Panofsky and Titian's Allegory of Prudence," *Emblemata*, 2003, 1–38. Only E. Wind contested the attribution to Titian, in *Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance*, 1968, 260. For bibliography on the painting, see D. Wittke's Epilogue to the reprint of Panofsky's *Herkules am Scheidewege*, Berlin, 1997, 33–7. Campbell (2000) emphasized a connection between prudence, artistic practice and old age and related to my theories that were originally published in *Renaissance Studies* (14, 2000, no. 1). Both Raman (2003, 31–32) and Penny (2003, 160) reiterated the connection, originally made by Panofsky (1955, 198), between Titian's three animal heads and those described in the text of Giordano Bruno's *De Gli Eroici Furor* (1585).

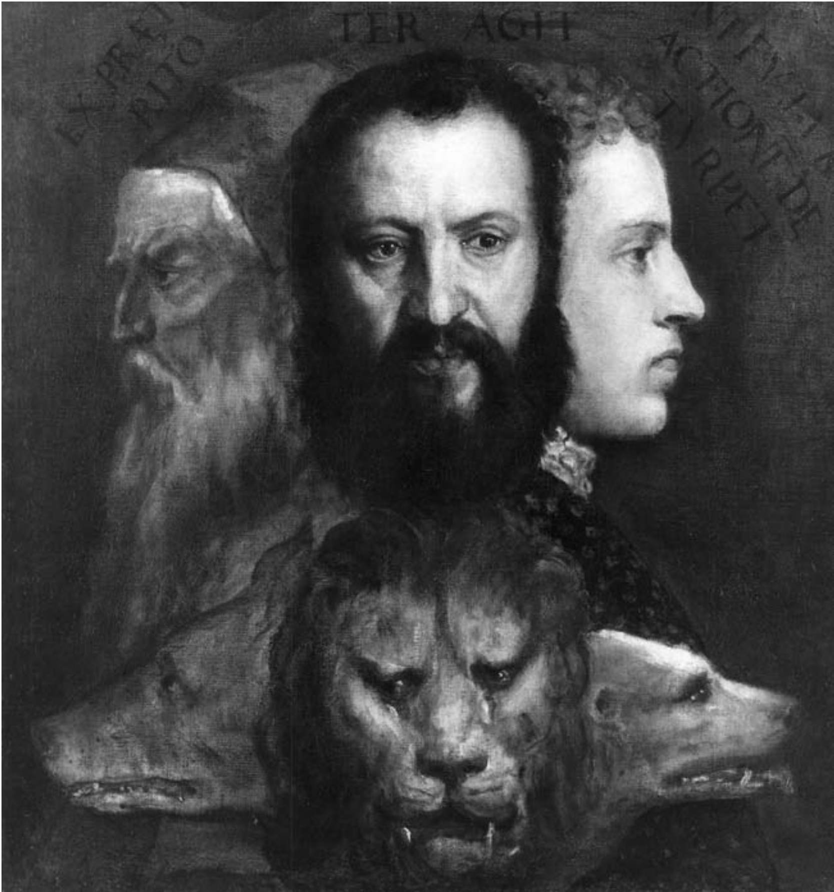

Fig. 54. Titian, *Allegory*, 1540s & 1570s.
Copyright London, National Gallery.

of animal iconography combined with the exegetic methods applied in religious and mythological allegory. The underlying moralistic orientation of animal metaphors was often utilized to reinforce veiled levels of meaning in his imagery.

An Allegory of Prudence?

According to Erwin Panofsky's theory, Titian created an allegory of Prudence by combining two previously unrelated iconographic traditions. The first tradition, represented by a tricephalous image, conveys the concept of Prudence by means of three human heads

55. Titian, *Allegory*, X-ray.
Copyright London, National Gallery.

which represent in turn past experience, present perspicuity, and future foresight. Below the human heads we see another tricephalous image comprising three animal heads—a wolf, a lion, and a dog. These are identified with the Alexandrian god Serapis, who was popularized in the Renaissance in Egyptianizing and pseudo-hieroglyphic literature. The well-known interpretation devised by Macrobius in his *Saturnalia* established a parallel moral and temporal significance, which tied the anthropomorphic and theriomorphic triads as well as the inscribed maxim into an allegory of Time and Prudence.[2] Panofsky revealed that the mediators of this theme, those who had adopted the Serapian

[2] Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, I, 20, 13ff., trans. P.V. Davies, New York and London, 1969.

creature in the late middle Ages and the Renaissance, transformed it into the three-headed serpent/dragon of Apollo, which, like Titian's theriomorphic triad, combined the heads of a dog, a wolf, and a lion. Unlike Titian, however, they attached these heads to the coils of a serpent. Apollo as a sun god also dominated the three modes of time, which Panofsky perceived as analogous to those of Prudence.[3]

Panofsky recognized that 'this very superimposition, never resorted to by any other artist, presents a problem'.[4] He concluded, nevertheless, that Titian had painted himself as the old man on the left and that the other two figures were portraits of his son Orazio and his younger relative Marco Vecellio, both of whom assisted in his workshop and were heirs to his professional and financial legacy. The painting of the three generations in an allegory of Prudence was described as 'a moving human document of his old age' that expressed his concerns for the future.

Is it possible that this hypothetical reconstruction has obscured significant iconographic associations? Before new evidence is presented, it would be useful to point out some of the weaker links in the former reconstruction. Panofsky explicated the synthesis between human and animal heads in the following way:

> On the strength of this exegesis [i.e. Macrobius] posterity took it for granted that the three animal heads of the Alexandrian monster expressed the same idea as do the human heads of different age which we encountered in such western representations of Prudence as that of the Rossellini type relief in the Victoria and Albert Museum or the Siena pavement, the tripartition of time into past, present and future [and] we can easily foresee the possibility of either replacing or combining the one with the other, all the more so as Time and Prudence were linked in iconographic tradition by the common denominator of the serpent.[5]

In other words, the shared connotation of the three modes of time was sufficient reason for combining human and animal heads in one emblematic image. If we examine this assumption in the broader context of late medieval and Renaissance iconography, it appears highly problematic. Hybrid images, combining human and animal parts had a deeply rooted negative connotation in Western art. Such composite creatures included the devil, demons, monsters, personifications of vices

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[3] Panofsky (as in note 1), 156–57.
[4] *Ibid.* 165.
[5] *Ibid.* 154–5.

as well as mythological creations, like the centaur, Minotaur, and satyr, which represented bestial instincts as opposed to, and in conflict with, human virtues.[6] The late fifteenth and sixteenth century tolerance for bizarre hybrid images, primarily in emblematic art, was reserved for concepts of an esoteric or metaphysical nature.[7]

Although it exhibits some emblematic characteristics, we will see that Titian's painting does not fall into the category of emblematic hybrid imagery. Contrary to the Serapian and Apollonian creatures, which create a fusion between the three animal heads and a monstrous animal body, Titian's three humans actually have human bodies which are depicted down to the chest area. These figures are furthermore separated from the animal triad by spatial referents; the animals placed in front are partially blocking our view of them. Furthermore, the serpentine element which is supposedly the 'common denominator' and does figure in most medieval and Renaissance versions of the Serapian or Apollonian creature is lacking in Titian's *Allegory*.

The Latin inscription in the upper part of the painting reads: *ex praeterito/praesens prudenter agit/ni futura actione deturpet* (from the past, the present acts prudently, lest it spoil future action). This has been construed as the caption to each of the tricephalous images. But the idea of repeating one and the same message by means of two parallel images and a motto seems unnecessarily redundant.

The direct relationship between Titian's imagery and emblematic literature, such as the *Hypnerotomachia Polifili* (1499) and Pierio Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica* (1556),[8] which have been cited as sources, is not as evident as has been suggested. The *Hypnerotomachia* describes an eclectic and indiscriminate conglomeration of symbolic objects which are largely divorced from their original contexts. The '*simulachro dagli Aegyptii di Serapi*', showing the three animal heads, is entwined by a serpent/

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[6] On monsters, see G. Lascault, *Le monstre dans l'art occidental*, Paris, 1973; R. Wittkower, "Marvels of the East: a study in the history of monsters," and "Marco Polo and the pictorial tradition of the marvels of the East," in *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*, London, 1977, 44–74, 76–92; P. Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters, A History of European Reaction to Indian Art*, Chicago and London, 1992; C. Leconteux, *Les monstres dans la pensée mediévale européenne*, Paris, 1993. Note Bernard de Clairvaux's invective against hybrid images or monsters in the art of Cluny (1125), quoted in F. Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages*, London, 1971, 333–4.

[7] See e.g. discussions of multiple heads in P. Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica* (Basel, 1556), Leiden, 1990, II, book 32, 398–405.

[8] F. Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Venezia, 1499), Padova, 1980; Eng. trans. by J. Godwin, New York, 1999 and Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica* (as in note 7).

dragon and posted on a standard. It is not interpreted as an allegory of Prudence, and is nowhere combined with the three human heads.[9] Valeriano, on the other hand, following Macrobius and Petrarch,[10] made Serapis a sun god who is symbolized by the serpent which entwines the image of the tricephalous animal, thus signifying that he dominates Time and Prudence—the forgotten past, the actual present, and the hope of the future. The illustration that accompanies this text shows heads of a dog, a lion, and a wolf attached to a human body dressed in armor. Valeriano explains the cosmological significance of this '*simulacro di Serapi*', who has '*per capo il gran mondo celeste*' and manifests in his limbs '*tutta la grandezza del mondo*'.[11] There is no analogy in Titian's painting to the solar or cosmic interpretation. Neither Serapis, nor his serpent, nor the bizarre figure illustrating Valeriano's text had any influence on Titian.

The idea that the three heads are family portraits, identifiable as Orazio, Marco, and Titian himself, is entirely conjectural. There are no extant portraits of Orazio or Marco for comparison. Other attempts to identify these heads as prominent men have been, in my opinion, equally unconvincing.[12]

Although, hypothetically, the heads could be portraits, and there is no reason to doubt that they were painted from models, it is highly probable that they were conceived as ideal types. The dark and bearded man in the center typifies the *Cinquecento* Venetian ideal of *Virilità*, and his likeness can be found in many paintings by Titian and Veronese.[13] The youth with his fair complexion, curly golden locks, and lavish clothes conforms to literary personifications of *Gioventù* (youth) and *Lussuria* (voluptuousness).[14] He also appears as Adonis in the various versions

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[9] For illustrations of the Serapian creature, see *Hypnerotomachia*, fols y1^r and y2^r, repr. of 1499 edition, Padua, 1980, 338–9.

[10] Petrarch, *Africa*, III, 162ff.

[11] Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica* (as in note 7), II, book 32, 398–404.

[12] See J. Hill, "An identification of Titian's 'Allegory of Prudence' and some Medici-Stuart affinities," *Apollo*, 43, 1956, 40–1; P. Meller, "Il lessico ritrattistico di Tiziano," in *Tiziano e Venezia*, Vicenza, 1980, 325–35; K. Oberhuber, "La mostra di Tiziano a Venezia," *Arte Veneta*, N.S. 4, 1993, 74–82.

[13] For the *Virilità* type, see e.g. Titian's so-called *Hannibal* (private collection, New York), with the lion head on his breast-plate and armor and Veronese's *Mars and Venus* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Later Cesare Ripa (*Iconologia*, 1593; repr. Hildesheim and New York, 1970, 506) wrote on *Virilità*: 'si dipinge con it scettro, it libro, it leone e la spada'.

[14] Ripa, *Iconologia*, 184, subsequently wrote under *Gioventù*: 'un giovine altiero, vestito di varii colori, con ghirlanda di semplici fiori, da una parte vi sarà un cane da caccia, e dall'altra un cavallo ben guarnito, e con la destra stia in atto di sparger

of Titian's *Venus and Adonis.*[15] The same two types were juxtaposed by Veronese in his *Allegory of Infidelity* (ca.1565, National Gallery, London), painted about the same time as Titian's *Allegory*, where a voluptuous nude woman is trying to maneuver between a well-dressed, golden-haired youth, on one side, and a dark and virile warrior type, on the other.

The profile of the elderly man calls for a more complex analysis, which will be undertaken below. Let it suffice to state here that the head of the old man was painted long after the other two and represents a different stylistic phase in Titian's career. The surviving self-portraits by Titian, especially the profile in the Prado (fig. 56), which is generally cited for comparison with the *Allegory*, have a penetrating, human quality and a mellowness conveyed by soft, gradated tones and sensitive chiaroscuro. Conversely, the head of the old man in the London *Allegory* is reduced to a caricature, with angular scowling features that are executed by rough and rapid brush strokes. Even the flaming red cap in the *Allegory*, which contrasts with Titian's usual black one, further emphasizes the highly expressive as opposed to the subdued character. The other heads in the painting are executed in quite a different manner. My assignation here of a later date for the head of the old man and the assumption that it is Titian's self-portrait both find support in another painting. The portrait of Titian in Veronese's *Marriage at Cana* (Fig. 53), dated 1563, which should be more or less contemporary with the London *Allegory*, bears great resemblance to the old man and even repeats the red cap.[16]

Precedents in Renaissance Art

The human and animal triads obviously represent two analogous themes or, to borrow the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of analogy, there is

danari' and adds 'La varietà dei colori significa la frequente mutatione dei pensieri, e proponimenti giovenili'. The *Passione d'Amore* (p. 378) is capable of turning men into beasts; among those mentioned is the dog and sensuality is described as a young boy with gold-colored hair.

[15] See especially the versions of the so-called Farnese type in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, both attributed to ca.1560–5, which would be shortly before the *Allegory's* completion.

[16] The identification of Titian as the contrabass player in Veronese's *Marriage at Cana* was made by Marco Boschini, *Le ricche minere della pittura veneziana*, Venice, 1674 and repeated by A.M. Zanetti, *Della pittura veneziana*, Venice, 1771. See full quotation from Zanetti in G. Piovene & R. Marini, *L'Opera Completa del Veronese*, Milan, 1968, 105.

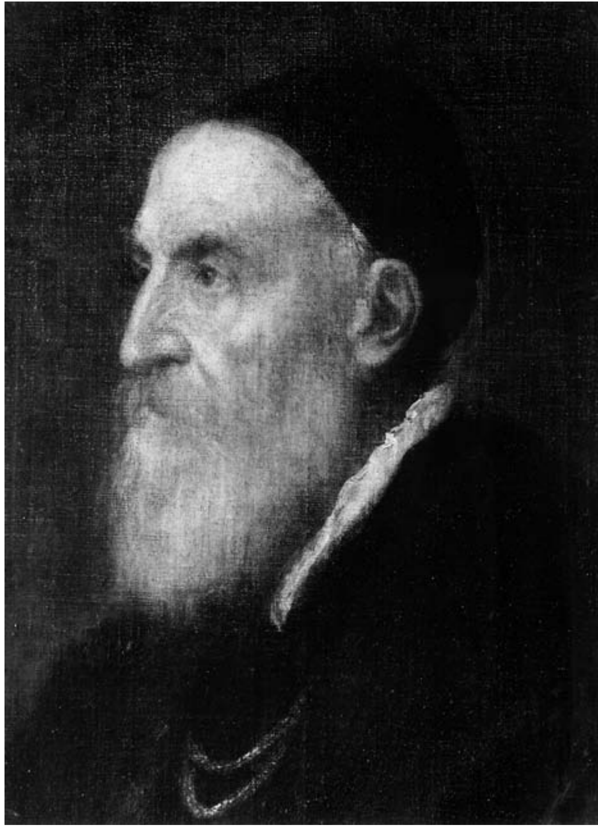

Fig. 56. Titian, *Self-Portrait*, 1567–68, Madrid.
Copyright Museo Nacional del Prado.

'a resemblance of form or function between organs essentially different'. The fact that the analogy is composed of three parallel elements exemplifies a mode of cognitive organization—tripartite structuring, which is typical, or archetypal, of Western thought and visual expression. Medieval culture was especially prone to numerical categories as a mode of abstraction, and the numerous applications of the symbolic triad are well known.[17] The human-beast analogy, organized as a tri-

[17] Among the important writings on tripartite structuring and triadic images in Indo-European cultures in general, see the writings of George Dumezil, listed and reviewed in C.S. Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology; An Anthropological Assessment of the Theories of George Dumezil*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966 and J. Gonda, *Triads in the Veda*, Amsterdam, 1976. For its expression in medieval literature and art, see

Fig. 57. Cristoforo Cortese, *St. Francis in Glory*, Paris, Musée Marmottan, Wildenstein Collection.

partite image, is so basic a formula that no sophisticated extrapolations of pseudo-hieroglyphic or cryptic, emblematic texts are necessary to make sense of it.[18]

R. Pettazzoni, "The Pagan Origins of the Three-Headed Representation of the Christian Trinity," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 9, 1946, 135–51; and E. Wind, "Pagan Vestiges of the Trinity," in Wind (as in note 1), 241–55. Tripartite structuring has been noted in regard to the classification of sins by M.W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, East Lansing, MI, 1967, 149ff., 373, and R. Newhauser, *The Treatise of the Vices and Virtues in Latin and the Vernacular*, Turnhout, 1993, 91. A. Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Medieval Art*, Toronto, 1989, 43, n.3, noted an illumination of the three-headed *Sanctitas*, who achieved perfection in a threefold way.

[18] An example of this approach is found in D. Arasse, 'Titian et son *Allegorie de la Prudence*: un peintre et ses motifs," in D. Rosand (ed.), *Interpretazioni Veneziane*, Venice, 1984, 291–310.

Let us begin with the visual evidence. The Venetian miniaturist Cristoforo Cortese executed an illumination of *St. Francis in Glory* (about late 1420s) showing the saint as he tramples three personified vices, which are antithetic to Chastity, Obedience, and Poverty, the three personified virtues above (Fig. 57).[19] Two out of the three vices support animals on their shoulders. The left figure supports the boar—the traditional attribute of *Gula* (Gluttony) or *Luxuria* (Lust or Lechery). The lady on the right holding money bags carries a wolf with his head twisted back, identifying her as *Avaritia* (Greed).[20] The central figure in armor, who has fallen on his head, is *Superbia* (Pride). The virtues are not associated with animals.

A related version of this theme was executed just a few years later by the Sienese painter Sassetta for the central panel of the Borgo San Sepolcro altarpiece (Fig. 58).[21] The female figure on the left, resting on a boar and regarding herself in the mirror, is once again *Luxuria*. In the centre lies an armed warrior who has fallen on the lion of *Superbia*, and on the left a nun grasps her money bag in a press which is supported by the familiar wolf of *Avaritia*.

Although this particular iconography is associated with *Quattrocento* Franciscan art, and is related to Franciscan literary sources,[22] a similar animal triad still associated with vices reappeared in a different context during Titian's time. Agnolo Bronzino, borrowing from a design by Francesco Salviati, repeated the animal theme in his cartoon for the *Justice Liberating Innocence* tapestry, executed in 1545 for Duke Cosimo I (Fig. 59).[23] The wolf, the lion, and the dog (who replaces the boar), accompanied by a hissing serpent, are the vices that threaten Innocence. Here Justice rather than St. Francis, accompanied by Father Time revealing

[19] Regarding Cortese and his *St Francis in Glory*, see S. Cohen, "Cristoforo Cortese Reconsidered," in *Arte Veneta*, 39, 1985, 22–31 and G. Canova, "Miniatura e pittura in età tardogotica," in *La pittura nel Veneto: Il Quattrocento*, Milan, 1989, 193–222, esp. 200–1.

[20] The wolf was believed to have no joint in his neck and was therefore unable to twist it. This was interpreted in bestiaries and depicted in art as a symbol of the stiff-necked or stubborn sinner.

[21] Other versions of *St Francis in Glory*, where the saint tramples personified vices, were painted by Taddeo di Bartolo (Pinacoteca, Perugia,) and Saturnino Gatti d'Aquila (Congregation of the Carità, Norcia), but both omitted the animals. For reproductions of these, see B. Berenson, *Sassetta*, Paris, 1948, figs. 28–30.

[22] This iconography may be related to St Bonaventura's *Speculum animae* (13th c.), where he describes *Luxuria, Superbia*, and *Avaritia* as the main branches of the tree of vices from which other capital sins emerge.

[23] See Salviati's Uffizi design in J. Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora in the Palazzo Vecchio*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993, fig. 102 and ref. 161.

Fig. 58. Sassetta, *St. Francis in Glory*, ca.1437–44, Florence, Berenson Collection, Reproduced by permission of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Truth, is triumphing over the vices. Cortese and Sassetta had conveyed the idea of man's spiritual victory over his own vices; Bronzino's vices are external forces threatening the integrity of Florence, while Cosimo as Justice is the *deus ex machina.*[24] Additional sources were adopted and

[24] For a different interpretation of the three animals in Bronzino's tapestry designs, see J. Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art*, Princeton, 1984, 286.

Fig. 59. Agnolo Bronzino, *Justice liberating Innocence*, tapestry, workshop of Jan Rost, ca.1545, Florence, Palazzo Pitti. Photograph: Soprintendenza per I Beni Artistici e Storici di Firenze.

reinterpreted in Bronzino's transformation of the animal theme; most important among these was the famous imagery from Dante which must be considered in relation to Titian's *Allegory*.

The Beasts of Dante's Inferno

Symbolic associations between the image of three threatening beasts and concepts of moral transgression were popularized by Dante's allegorical trilogy, if not before. The *Divina Commedia* opens with the famous passage: '*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita/mi ritrovai per una selva*

oscura/che la diritta via era smarrita'.[25] Dante, lost in a dark forest, finds his escape barred by three beasts which appear in succession. The first, '*una lonza leggiera e presta molto/che di pel maculato era coperta*', is interpreted as a leopard or an ounce, symbol of *Luxuria*. The second, a lion '*con la testa alta, e con rabiosa fame/si che parea che l'aer ne temesse*', is the image of *Superbia*. The third is the she-wolf of *Avaritia*, '*ed una lupa, che di tutte brame/sembrava carca con la sua magrezza/e molte genti fe'gia viver grame*'.[26] A *Trecento* commentary written shortly after Dante's death called these the most common vices.[27] They are the same three encountered in the St Francis paintings and in Titian's *Allegory. Luxuria* could be represented by a spotted leopard, a dog, a peacock, or even a scorpion, and *Superbia* by a lion or a horse whose rider has fallen, while *Avaritia* was consistently associated with the wolf. The animals might change but the same three vices were repeated.

The obstacles described by Dante, which correspond to the division of sins in the *Inferno*, are not external but those within, and have been interpreted by medieval and modern commentators as irrational spiritual obstacles to purgatory and redemption.[28] The images, imbued with mythical connotations, belonged to the literary and visual tradition which preceded Titian's recapitulation of the theme.

The Mirror of Human Morals

In the middle Ages and Renaissance it was often said that man becomes a beast when he has lost his reason.[29] Ecclesiastics argued that lower

[25] The following translations were made by J.A. Carlyle, *La Divina Commedia*, London, 1938: '*In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost*'. (*Inferno* I, 1–3).

[26] '*A Leopard, light and very nimble, which was covered with spotted hair*' (*Inferno* I, 32–3). '*He [the lion] seemed coming upon me with head erect, and furious hunger; so that the air seemed to have fear thereat*' (I, 46–8). '*And a she-wolf, that looked full of all cravings in her leanness; and has ere now made many live in sorrow*' (I, 49–51). On the leopard's spots as a sign of sin, and these animal symbols in general, see Ripa, *Iconologia*, 294–5, under *Libidine*; R.T. Holbrook, *Dante and the Animal Kingdom*, New York, 1966, 86–126 and Bloomfield (as in note 17), 200. The spotted shirt of the young man in Titian's painting may be a reference to the spots of the leopard.

[27] *L'Ottimo Commento della Divina Commedia, testo inedito d'un contemporaneo di Dante citato dagli Accademici della Crusca*, Pisa, 1827.

[28] P. Piehler, *The Visionary Landscape; A Study in Medieval Allegory*, London, 1971, ch. 7, writes of the animal symbols as 'certain not fully identified forces of his subconscious mind'. If this sounds anachronistically Freudian, cf. notes 29 and 32 below.

[29] For example, Walter Hilton, in his *Scale of Perfection* (late 14th c.) II, ch. 14, 275ff.,

animals were created to serve as objects of contemplation for moral instruction. In other words, they embodied qualities in which man could perceive the reflection of his own sins.

The subject of animals exemplifying human traits has been thoroughly discussed in the literature and only those precedents explicitly pertaining to the human-beast analogy will concern us here. The common denominator of such analogies, whether they are in the Bible, in Greek or Roman natural histories, in medieval bestiaries or encyclopedias, in patristic exegesis, in popular beast fables, or in Renaissance allegorical literature, is the moralistic intent.[30] The passage in the *Book of Jeremiah* which inspired Dante's beast allegory had been the theme of medieval commentaries long before. It reads as follows:

> Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay him, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities; every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces, because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.[31]

Regarding this passage, Garnerus of St Victor (12th c.) wrote: '*Bestiae nomine mens irrationabilis designator*'.[32] Bernard Silvestris (Tours, 12th c.), in his commentary on the *Aeneid*, claimed that 'beasts signified the nature of man transformed by vice'. He described 'the lustful pigs, the deceitful foxes, the gossiping dogs, the surly lions, the wrathful boars, the greedy wolves, the sluggardly asses', concluding that 'all of these

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typically stated that men by sin turn themselves into the likeness of beasts. The proud man becomes a lion, envious and angry men become hounds, the covetous become wolves, and so on. In the late fifteenth century Pico della Mirandola, in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, wrote of the '*unreasoning drives of the many sided brute, the passionate violence and anger of the lion within us*'. In his *Heptaplus*, he stated: '*Between the rational part...and all that is corporeal in us...there is an intermediate sensual part which we share with the brutes*'. Irrational drives, he said, are common to man and beasts and '*often drive us to a brutish life*' (Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man, On Being and the One, Heptaplus*, trans. D. Carmichael, Indianapolis, 1965, 117–25.

[30] See Bloomfield (as in note 17); F.D. Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, MA, 1971; B. Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces*, London, 1974, especially Introduction; J. O'Reilly, *Studies in the Iconography of the Virtues and Vices in the Middle Ages*, New York & London, 19**??**

[31] *Jeremiah* V.6.

[32] Migne, *P.L.*193, col.197. The whole passage reads: '*By the name beast is meant the irrational mind, as it is declared through Moses: If a beast set foot on the mountain, he will be stoned to death. For the mountain is properly the loftiness of contemplation and the beast the irrational mind*', trans. Piehler (as in note 28), 114.

dwell among temporal goods just as, on the other hand, the occupation of the just is in heaven'.[33]

Another commentator on Jeremiah's prophesy, Hugo a Sancto Caro (Huc de Saint Chers, 13th c.), explicitly established the analogy between the three vices and the Three Ages of Man by making Sensuality, Pride, and Greed (i.e. the leopard, the lion, and the wolf) characteristics of youth, middle age, and old age.[34] All the elements of Titian's *Allegory* are already associated there. The allusion to the Three Ages of Man was probably implicit in Dante's beast allegory as well. Holbrook suggested that it was not by chance that Dante met the leopard (or ounce) before the lion and the wolf 'for the *Divina Commedia* condenses the vicissitudes of life into a few days and thus the three beasts seem to follow one another as youth is followed by manhood and manhood by old age'.[35] Except for the substitution of the dog for the ounce, Titian retained the same sequence of animals/sins and Ages of Man.

A cross-section of the animal images presented in the literary and visual representations thus far discussed illustrates the continuity of this triadic formula throughout the centuries (Table 1). The fact that several animals were interchangeable as symbols of Luxuria is characteristic of the literature, which was not always consistent in associating a certain animal with a specific sin. Thus the lion could be Pride as well as Wrath; the dog could be Lust, Vanity, Fraud, or Envy; the wolf could be Greed, Violence, Incontinence, or Hypocrisy (and therefore symbol of heretics), and so on.

Table 1. Comparison of animal/sin triads.

Source	Avaritia	Superbia	Luxuria
Huc de St. Cher's Comm. on *Jer.* V.6	Wolf (1)	Lion (2)	Leopard (3)
Dante, *Inferno* I	Wolf (3)	Lion (2)	Leopard (1)
Cortese, *St. Francis*	Wolf (3)	Lion (2)	Boar (1)
Sassetta, *St. Francis*	Wolf (3)	Lion (2)	Boar (1)
Bronzino, Tapestry	Wolf (1)	Lion (2)	Dog (3)
Titian, *Allegory*	Wolf (1)	Lion (2)	Dog (3)

[33] *Commentum Bernardi Silvestris super sex libros Eneidos Vergilii, Guilelmus Reidel* (Gryphiswaldae, 1924), 62. Trans. by Piehler (as in note 28), 115.
[34] See Holbrook (as in note 26), 93.
[35] *Ibid.* 98.

Among the many Renaissance sources that perpetuated these symbolic associations was the *Hieroglyphica* of Valeriano, which was cited by Panofsky and others for its presentation of the Serapian creature, without reference to the many passages in which the same animals are related to the traditional categories of human sins.[36] Valeriano does not connect the latter passages with the tricephalous image, but he constantly makes the human-animal/sin analogy, referring, for example, to men who are transformed into evil wolves and to those, with the head of a boar or an ass, representing Ignorance.[37] Ripa's *Iconologia* and other emblematic compendia of the late sixteenth century provide ample proof that the medieval animal symbols were still mirroring human morals in Western iconography. The theme also received renewed impetus in moral philosophy, political theory, and literary allegory throughout the Renaissance.[38]

Elements of the Visual Tradition

Sassetta, in his *St Francis in Glory* (ca.1437–44) portrays personifications of vices superincumbent on their animal symbols (Fig. 58). Titian's human heads are similarly superimposed on the heads of animals. Both are related to the human-animal analogy which found visual expression in the Middle Ages. The moralistic allegorical literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries abounds in pictorial descriptions of vices riding their symbolic animals in procession (Fig. 7), or confronting a pilgrim on a spiritual journey, or occasionally combating mounted virtues in the tradition of the *Psychomachia*, to illustrate the battlefield of man's sou1.[39] There was also the theme of vices on symbolic chariots, where visual images closely followed the literary sources. These images of the mounted vices were diffused primarily by manuscript illuminations, tapestries, and prints. The illumination by Cortese is an

[36] Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica* (as in note 7); see chapters on the lion (book I), the dog (book V) and the wolf (book XI), as well as extensive reviews of other animal symbols.

[37] *Ibid.*, books IX and XII.

[38] For example, Machiavelli: '*uno principe necessitato sapere bene usare la bestia, debbe di quelle pigliare la golpe e il leone*' (Since a ruler, then, must know how to act like a beast, he should imitate both the fox and the lion, for the lion is liable to be trapped, whereas the fox cannot ward off wolves), *The Prince*, trans. R. Price, Cambridge, 1988, ch. 18, 61. Cf. Pico della Mirandola, *Dignity of Man.* On literary allegory, see my discussion of Ovid commentaries in the Renaissance in chapter II.

[39] See O'Reilly (as in note 30), esp. 59ff.

interesting reversal of the image, where the personification carries the animal instead of vice versa (Fig. 57).

One would naturally wonder where Titian got the idea of depicting bodiless animal heads to express this theme. He did not have to go far. Two fourteenth-century capitals of the Palazzo Ducale in Venice were similarly carved, each portraying a traditional series of vices by nine large heads of animals devouring their prey. The dog, the lion, and the wolf are identified by Latin inscriptions on one of the capitals and are clearly recognizable (Fig. 60). Personified vices on another capital are represented in full figure with the usual attributes.[40]

The fact that this iconography persisted in Renaissance Venice is demonstrated, for example, by an engraving attributed to c.1470–80, in which seven identical female personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins are differentiated solely by means of the animal heads that decorate their shields (fig. 76).[41] There we find the dog-head associated with *Invidia* and the wolf-head with *Ira*, while the full-figured lion belongs to *Regina Superbia*. In 1521 Cesare Cesariano was still using the motif of animal heads to portray sins and vices. His annotated edition of Vitruvius, published at Como, contains an 'autobiographical woodcut' which shows the artist himself among a multitude of bodiless heads, most of them animal, symbolizing the transgressions that are obstacles to his redemption.[42]

Another element of Titian's *Allegory*, the association of the Ages of Man with moralistic animal symbolism, also followed a visual tradition. Parallels between stereotyped stages of life and the animals which represented them in a satiric vein are often found in Renaissance engravings. The combinations are not always consistent, primarily because the number of ages varies, and due to the fact that the Ages of Man were also related to humors, planets, the zodiac, and so on, which

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[40] See A. Manno, *Il Poema del Tempo; I Capitelli del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia. Storia e Iconografia*, Venezia, 1999, esp. 109–10, 130–37. A twelfth-century illustration of the chariot of *Avaritia* from the *Hortus Deliciarum* shows vices in the form of animal heads superimposed on human busts. Among these are the heads of the dog and the wolf; see Katzenellenbogen (as in note 17), pl. XXXVI. For a detailed discussion of sculpted animals heads as representations of Vices, see my Chapter Eight.

[41] This print was paired with one depicting personifications of the Virtues, without animals; See A.M. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving*, Nendeln, 1970, I, 250–1 and IV, pls. 397 & 398.

[42] The woodcut is reproduced in M. Winner, "Michelangelo's *Il Sogno* as an example of an artist's visual reflection in his drawings," in H.C. Smyth (ed.), *Michelangelo Drawings*, Hanover and London, 1992, 236, fig. 9.

Fig. 60. *Capital of the Vices*, Venice, Palazzo Ducale, original 1340–55; copied 1871–72. Author's photograph.

were already linked to their own animal symbols. Consequently, the dog, usually assigned to Youth, could be linked to a later stage of life because of its association with Melancholy.[43] The lion, on the other hand, was always an attribute of mid-life, which is characterized by virility and military prowess as well as *Superbia* and *Ira*. The rapacious wolf comes later because, according to sources, Avaritia is common to advanced age.[44] There are many precedents for the specific parallels used by Titian.

Titian and Moral Allegory: The Problem Defined

Titian's visual allegory deals with Christian conceptions of sin in relation to the stages of human existence and to the dimension of time.

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[43] For examples of the Renaissance age/animal analogy in prints, see R. Van Marle, *Iconographie de l'art profane*, New York, 1971, II, 153–66, figs. 188 and 189. For the dog as a representation of Youth, see fig. 183. Regarding the association of temperaments and animals, see R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, and F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, New York, 1964.

[44] See e.g. Ripa, *Iconologia* (as in note 14), 32.

The basic thematic components—sin, stages of life, and temporality, are interwoven into a visual complex that has yet to be explained in the context of what we know about Titian and Venetian culture of the 1560s. The inscription, which has often been conceived as a caption to the picture, presents an additional problem.

Perhaps the first key to the many enigmas of this painting lies in the head of the old man. It has already been noted that its style and technique are different to those of the other two heads. The two younger heads were executed in a more harmonious technique, with smooth areas of color and softly gradated shadows. This is the style found in many of the commissioned portraits by Titian that were executed between 1540 and 1545. Around 1545 he became freer in his portrait technique, replacing the earlier rigidity of well-defined color areas and subdued plastic modeling with increased chiaroscuro and luminosity. In addition, the Flemish-type portrait inscriptions placed above the head of the subject, or occasionally to one side, which may be compared to the *Prudentia* inscription here, are most common in Titian's work of the 1540s and rarely appear afterwards. It has also been noted that those heads conform to ideal types.

The head of the old man, by comparison, is executed in rough, fragmentary brush strokes that give the impression of a spontaneous and unfinished sketch. The angularity and harshness of the features, accentuated by the more spontaneous technique, creates a sense of disjunction, further emphasized by the fact that the elder head is not aligned with the other two. In 1966, during the restoration of the painting, X-rays revealed that Titian had painted the elderly head we see today over an earlier version, and in doing so had slightly altered its position (Fig. 55). The animals, which are executed in the same style as the elderly head, did not exist in the earlier version and were added at the same time. Their style, especially the somber chromatic effects built up of multicolored brush-strokes, is typical of Titian's later years and can be compared to works like the *Apollo and Marsyas* and the *Pietà*.

From this evidence, we can tentatively conclude the following. The painting was begun in the 1540s when Titian was in his early to midfifties, but the head of the elder executed at that time was subsequently covered over, and the elderly head of the final version as well as the animals were painted more than twenty years later, when Titian was in his seventies. The modification of the old man's head, after so many years, can logically be explained if we assume it is a self-portrait; but we have more than a hypothesis. In Veronese's *Marriage at Cana* we

probably see Titian in his seventies—an old man with rigid, angular, and sunken features that clearly resemble those painted by Titian in the *Allegory* (Fig. 54). At the same time one can recognize the parallels with his earlier self-portrait (Fig. 56), which also has the same moustache, beard, and cap, and presents the identical viewpoint.

It is here suggested that the original version of the painting contained three human heads representing the Three Ages of Man, with the inscription elucidating its moralizing message in accordance with contemporary traditions. Two major elements of the final version were missing at that time—the self-portrait of the artist and the beasts. Consequently, it must be assumed that, in the final version, these two elements were interconnected in a new conception that fundamentally altered the original pictorial statement. When Titian harshly sketched his own features as the image of *Avaritia*, it must have been an act of self-accusation and remorse. Perhaps this partially explains why we can compare his shriveled likeness to the unbiased impressions of another artist rather than to the complacent self-portraits of Berlin and Madrid.

Why should Titian depict himself in a moralizing allegory which proclaims that man is a sinner? Can the final version of this painting be reconciled with what we know of Titian the man and the artist? The image of Titian which has been educed primarily from his correspondence is one of a pragmatic man, concerned mainly with monetary recompense and the economic security of himself and his family. It has been assssumed that Titian was largely dependent in literary matters on Pietro Aretino, who was his friend, publicist, manager, and intellectual adviser, all wrapped in one. But we haven't a shred of evidence from contemporary sources regarding his religious beliefs, philosophy, ideas about art, or personal interests. In the following pages I will nevertheless attempt a hypothetical reconstruction of Titian as a man who found himself confronting issues of sin and penitence in his old age.

Titian, Sensuality and Sin

The theme of human carnality was implicit in Titian's art, primarily in his interpretations of secular and mythological themes. These paintings expressed an unreserved passion for the physical beauties and pleasures of life. His canvases abound in expressions of full-blooded sensuality, lust, and violence. There is a fundamental lack of consensus in modern

scholarship regarding iconological implications in these works. Some perceive the various versions of *Venus and a Musician* or those of the *Danaë*, for example, as philosophical or moralizing allegories; others reject the learned allegorical interpretations and are convinced that the eroticism of Titian's art should be taken at face value.[45] It has been noted that a considerable number of mythologies also contain scenes of the hunt, where savagery and violence and analogous allusions to lechery and sexual aggression derive a semblance of respectability from their association with a classical source. Nevertheless, the imagery itself contains evidence of the fact that Titian was consciously dealing in his art with manifestations of amorality. Titian adapted the image of the dog, as symbol, to religious, secular, and mythological contexts in such disguised forms that it may easily be dismissed as an element of genre irrelevant to the theme. The function of the dog as a symbol of persecution, castigation, or treachery is familiar in Christian religious art, and its increased popularity in sixteenth-century Venice was partially due to Flemish influence.[46] Titian allied the dog to Judas as a symbol of treachery in versions of the *Last Supper*, as Tintoretto, in some cases, would do after him.[47] A similar meaning applies to the hound, symbol of Christ's tormentors, in the *Ecce Homo* painted for the Flemish merchant Van Haanen (fig. 43) and the hunting dog which inconspicuously enters the scene of the *Martyrdom of St Lawrence* in the Escorial (1568).[48]

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[45] Regarding the spirituality of Titian and the moralizing aspects of his mythological works, see A. Gentili, *Da Tiziano a Tiziano. Mito e allegoria nella cultura veneziana del Cinquecento*, Milan, 1988, esp. 149–246 and "Tiziano e il non finito," *Venezia Cinquecento*, 11/4, 1992, 93–127, esp. 125–6. For an opposing view, see e.g. C. Hope, "Problems of interpretation in Titian's erotic paintings," in *Tiziano e Venezia*, Vicenza, 1980, 111–24 and other articles in the same volume listed under the title "La Donna, l'Amore e Tiziano," 41–135.

[46] For a thorough study of this theme, see J. Marrow, "*Circumdederunt me canes multi*: Christ's Tormentors in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *Art Bulletin*, 59, 1977, 167–81.

[47] For example, Titian's *Last Supper* (before 1544), Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino, the later workshop rendition (1557–64) in El Escorial, Monastery of San Lorenzo and Tintoretto's versions of the *Last Supper* at San Stefano (1576) and San Giorgio Maggiore (1591/2). A depiction of the dog in other versions of this theme by Tintoretto may assume different connotations, as in the case of the *Last Supper* at the Scuola di san Rocco (1578/81), where the animal is associated with beggars who are worthy to receive the charity of the Lord, an idea inspired by *Matt.*, 15, 26–27.

[48] See F. Polignano, "I ritratti dei volti e i registri dei fatti. L'Ecce Homo di Tiziano per Giovanni d'Anna", *Venezia Cinquecento*, no. 4, 1992, 7–54. Significantly, the dog and the horse, the latter symbolizing unbridled passion, are lacking in the earlier version of the *Martyrdom of St Lawrence* in the Gesuiti.

The same idea was adapted by Titian to the late version of the *Diana and Actaeon* myth, where the image of a man with the head of a stag attacked by hunting dogs is iconographically related to the persecution of virtue (fig. 52).[49] We have seen the motif of a stag attacked by hunting dogs assigned to the background of Titian's mythological scenes, such as that of the *Pardo Venus* (fig. 50),[50] where it is placed behind the satyr accosting a voluptuous nude. Here the hunting dog is associated with violent passion and lust but, as a counterpart of the satyr, he may also retain the connotation of treachery.

Beginning with the *Venus of Urbino* (1538, fig. 41), Titian executed a series of voluptuous, reclining nudes; each one with a tiny dog at her feet.[51] A comparison of this particular iconography with other examples of the same miniature canine species in Titian's paintings shows that he consistently used this motif as a symbol of eroticism.[52] In several of his mythological paintings the hunting dog and the toy dog both appear, each assuming a different function. In the Edinburgh *Diana and Actaeon* (1556–9) hunting dogs are the logical attributes of Actaeon, but Diana's toy dog seems out of place in the mythic landscape.[53] By combining a violent hunting scene with one of sexual assault, he was juxtaposing two manifestations of bestiality, using two symbolic canine species.

Among the other symbolic animals used by Titian in disguised forms, we find, for example, the horse as symbol of unbridled passion in his youthful *Sacred and Profane Love* (Rome) and the goat and leopard fleece of *Luxuria* in the *Nymph and Shepherd* (Vienna) of his later years.

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[49] The stag or hart represented Christ, as in the legends of St Eustace or St Hubert. The stag attacked by a dog often represented virtue pursued by evil. See M. Bath, *The Image of the Stag*, Baden-Baden, 1992, 215–33. For the use of the stag in Titian's painting, see my Chapter Four.

[50] Regarding the chronology and theme of this painting, see Gentili (as in note 46), 149–61.

[51] This includes the *Danaë* of 1553–4, *Venus and Cupid with an Organist* (1545–48), *Venus and Dog with an Organist* (ca.1550), all in the Prado.

[52] Cf. *Diana and Acteon* (1556–59) and the *Diana and Callisto* (ca.1566), both of Edinburgh. Cf. Flemish examples, such as Memling's *Vanitas* (Strasbourg), where a nude temptress is accompanied by two different canine species which parallel those of Titian's erotic works.

[53] In the version of the story by Nonnus, in *Dionysiaca* v, a copy of which existed in Venice, Actaeon's actions are described as 'the wild daring of a lovesick man'. Driven by passion like a wild beast, he is transformed into one. The dog represents the erotic leitmotif. See M. Tanner, "Chance and Coincidence in Titian's Diana and Actaeon," *Art Bulletin*, 56, 1974, 535–50.

Deer and rabbits are often found in pairs in the shadows of his erotic paintings.

In the *Flaying of Marsyas* (Kroměříž) of his last years, the reintroduction of two different canine species is significant.[54] It has been observed that the image of the evil dog that stands with its feet in the martyr's blood derives from passion literature.[55] Whether or not one accepts the identification of Midas as Titian's self-portrait, the intensity of his interpretation suggests a strong personal identification with its message.

Many years earlier, in 1548, the theme of four condemned sinners had been commissioned from Titian by Mary of Hungary during his stay in Augsburg. Probably under the influence of Michelangelo's sinners of the *Last Judgement*, which he had seen two years earlier in Rome, Titian depicted the eternal punishment of Tityus, Sisyphus, Tantalus, and Ixion in Tartarus.[56] The theme of sin and retribution was explicit. By magnifying the figures to monumental proportions and creating daring, close-up perspectives, Titian, in his fifties, had already given powerful expression to his own involvement with the theme.

Titian and the Catholic Reformation

Transformations discernible in the works of Titian's last decade can be linked to his artistic decline and the anxieties of impending death. His *ultima maniera* has also been treated as an immanent stage in his aesthetic evolution. Without minimizing the importance of these factors, I suggest that Titian was also reacting to the religious upheavals in his immediate environment, upheavals that affected every aspect of Venetian culture and to which no one was immune. The meaning of Titian's *Allegory* cannot be fully understood without viewing it in this context.

Titian's mature career coincided with the events of the Catholic Reformation, the Council of Trent, and the establishment of the Inquisition. In the early years of the sixteenth century there had been religious stirrings in Venice and issues of spiritual renewal were being discussed by adherents of reform. Many Venetian aristocrats had studied

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[54] See J. Neumann, *Titian: The Flaying of Marsyas*, London, 1962 and Gentili (as in note 46), 117–24.

[55] See Marrow (as in note 47), 174, notes 45 and 46.

[56] Only the canvases of Tityus and Sisyphus survive. See E.H. Wethey, *Paintings of Titian*, London, 1971, III, 61ff. and pls. 99–102.

at the University of Padua, where Erasmian ideas were popular. Most of Erasmus's writings were published by Venetian printers, notably by Aldus Manutius and Gregorius de Gregoriis.[57] These provided inspiration for preachers and served as the basis for teaching in Venetian schools and elsewhere. It has been emphasized that Venice, partially due to her borders with German lands and her position as a mercantile city, was not only exposed but was actively receptive, 'possibly more than any other city on the peninsula—to Reformation ideas'.[58] With the rise of aristocratic power and despotic rule throughout Italy, Venice was considered the bastion of republican freedom, with a reputation for social and cultural diversity and tolerance. It became a haven for men who believed that only there was it possible to realize religious reform. After the sack of Rome, in 1527, some prominent churchmen found refuge in Venice, and the city became a meeting place for spiritual reformers, on the one hand, and upholders of orthodox Catholicism, on the other.[59]

By the 1540s, however, heretical ideas of reform in Venice had spread to such an extent that Paul III and members of the curia initiated repressive measures. In 1544 the pope sent Monsignor Giovanni della Casa as nuncio to Venice to represent the Holy Office of the Inquisition there. He initiated a series of arrests, trials, executions, public spectacles of abjuration, and banishments. In 1547 Doge Francesco Dona appointed patrician magistrates to co-operate with the inquisitors in heresy trials.[60] This breach of the Venetian policy of tolerance and liberty was justified by the necessity to combat threats to Venetian stability posed by dissenting heterodox elements. The Venetian printing press, which had been the vehicle for liberal humanism for the past seventy years, and more recently diffused the new vernacular literature as well as that of religious reform, was now used by orthodox Catholic polemicists.[61] Della Casa had begun burning confiscated books in the San Marco

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[57] See S. Seidel Menchi, *Erasmo in Italia, 1520–1580*, Turin, 1987, esp. 33–6.

[58] See J. Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies. Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1993, 25.

[59] See A. Jacobson Schutte, *Pier Paolo Vergerio: The Making of an Italian Reformer*, Geneva, 1977 (Italian edition, Rome, 1988); A. Niero, "Riforma cattolica e Concilio di Trento," in *Cultura e Societa nel Rinascimento tra Riforme e Manierismi*, Firenze, 1985, 77–96, and *idem*, *Libri, idee e sentimenti religiosi nel Cinquecento italiano*, Modena, 1987.

[60] See Martin (as in note 59), ch. 2, 51–70.

[61] See P.F. Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540–1605*, Princeton, 1977 and Martin (as in note 59), 76–81, including additional bibliography.

square and near the Rialto in 1548. A year later he published his *Index* of prohibited books.[62] The pulpit was a powerful means of diffusing reform ideas, affecting popular culture and popular devotion both in the early years and later, during the worst inquisitorial oppressions. The most influential preacher in Italy in the 1530s was Bernardino Ochino of Siena, whose nine sermons presented in Venice in 1539 had a profound affect not only on the general public but also on intellectuals, like Pietro Bembo, Vittoria Colonna, and Pietro Aretino.[63] Aretino came to hear Ochino at Santi Apostoli, wrote of him in great admiration, and subsequently corresponded with the preacher.[64] Ochino, after having left the *frati minori osservanti* for the Capuchin order, had become their general and held the highest position in the Franciscan reform. He preached a primitive form of Franciscan observance based on extreme poverty, simplicity, austerity, and penitence. In 1541 fifteen of his sermons were printed in Venice, including those heard by Aretino and perhaps Titian, whose religious and professional associations with the Franciscans are well known. We have first-hand evidence regarding the powerful influence of Ochino's sermons on Titian's direct circle, especially on Aretino.[65] We will see that several of the leitmotifs used by Ochino in his sermons can also be found in the completed form of Titian's *Allegory*, painted about twenty years later. His influence may have been direct or mediated by Aretino, but it is also possible that the ideas had become relevant to Titian much later as he grew older and penitent.

In his first sermon in Venice (1539) Ochino had spoken of '*homo animale*', saying '*un uomo carnale e come una bestia, non capisce quelle cose the sono de Dio*'.[66] He called for penitence that begins with introspection—

[62] On the *Index* of 1549, see Grendler (as above), 76–89 and Martin (as in note 59), 79.

[63] On Bernardino Ochino, see I Frati Cappuccini, *Documenti e Testimonianze del Primo Secolo, a cura di Costanzo Cargnoni*, Perugia, 1988, III, 2115–91. On Aretino's involvement with the reform movement, see C. Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice, Researches on Aretino and his Circle in Venice 1527–1556*, Florence, 1985; M. di Monte, F. Mozzetti, and G. Sarti, "Pietro Aretino 1992. Proposte e propositi," *Venezia Cinquecento*, II/4, 1992, 139–161, and *idem, Pietro Aretino nel cinquecentario della nascita, Atti del Convegno* (Roma, Viterbo, Arezzo, Toronto & Los Angeles, 1992) Rome, 1995.

[64] Cairns (as in note 64), ch. IV, and P. Aretino, *Lettere*, Milano, 1960.

[65] Cairns (as in note 64), ch. IV, esp. 81ff.

[66] *Prediche nove predicate dal reverendo Padre Frate Bernardino Ochino*, (Venezia, 1539), *and Prediche predicate dal R. Padre Fra Bernardino da Siena dell'Ordine de' Fra Capuccini* (1541). For sermons, see *I Frati Cappuccini*, *Documenti e Testimonianze* (as in note 64), 2179ff.

a recognition of one's own sins: '*Noi vogliamo reformar questo uomo carnale, e però ti bisogna la prima cosa cognosciamo il peccato nostro perché initium poenitentiae cognitio peccati*'.[67] He said it was better to reads one's own conscience than to read confessor's manuals. In expressions such as '*specchiarsi*' and '*occhio vivo del spirito*' he used the image of the mirror to express the knowledge of one's sins and defects. In an earlier sermon presented at Lucca (1538) Ochino had several times referred to sins with the tripartite temporal distinction of '*i peccati nostri passati, presenti e futuri*'.[68] According to Ochino, *specchiarsi* signified the self-recrimination necessary for spiritual renewal and salvation. It seems to me that all these elements are reflected in Titian's *Allegory.* Man in the image of a beast (i.e. the self-portrait/beast analogy) is the sinner who contemplates his past, present, and future transgressions, as if they were reflected in a mirror.

Matteo da Bascio was another Capuchin preacher, whose call for radical spiritual renewal had lasting effect in Venice, even after his death there in 1552. As an itinerant preacher, whose raging voice was heard in the streets, piazze, and markets of the city, Matteo revived the fundamental themes of Franciscan moral and penitential teaching. Numerous contemporary sources describe his zealous invectives against sinners. He imitated medieval preaching by using simple and crude language and direct emotional effects. He would instill in his audience the terrors of hell by repeating over and over '*all'inferno i peccatori, all'inferno chi tiene la robba d'altri, al inferno li bestemmiatori, all'inferno i carnali vitiosi*' and so on.[69] One passage of his invectives says that those who think they can emend their sins when they are old and frail, when they are no longer capable of sinning, they will go to hell.[70] When Titian painted his *Allegory*, Matteo da Bascio had been dead for over a decade, but his message was still very much alive.

From the mid 1560s, when Titian was in his seventies, the tribunal increased its activity more than ever. In 1565 about eighty people were denounced as heretics in Venice. In 1566 when the notorious Dominican inquisitor Michele Ghislieri became Pope Pius V, he sent Giovanni Antonio Facchinetti as his nuncio to eradicate heresy in Venice. Fac-

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[67] *Ibid.*, 2180.
[68] *Ibid.*, 2169.
[69] *Ibid.*, 2105–15 and C. Urbanelli, *Matteo da Bascio e l'Ordine dei Frati Cappuccini*, Ancona, 1982.
[70] *Ibid.*, no. 5613.

chinetti instigated degrading spectacles of public penance and public punishment. Many Venetians reacted by going underground. In 1551 a large network of Anabaptists had been exposed in northern Italy, including Venice and Padua. Additional evidence from the 1560s indicates that Nicodemism and Anabaptism were not exceptional phenomena in Venice.[71] How do we know that these tempestuous events actually affected Titian and his art? There is no written documentation regarding Titian's convictions or personal interest in reformatory movements, but it can be shown that Titian was right in the midst of the controversies and upheavals during the last forty years of his life and that the people with whom he was intimately associated were actively involved. The idea that reform conceptions were expressed in some of Titian's paintings is not new, but the assumption that there are related artistic expressions of his own soul-searching process has yet to be explored.

In 1534 Titian's close friend Aretino began writing a series of religious works.[72] We have already noted his subsequent admiration for Ochino. By 1543 Aretino stopped writing sacred works out of fear of the Inquisition, but a new edition of those he had published earlier was put out by the Aldine press in 1551. It has been suggested that religious sentiments found in these writings had direct expression in Titian's paintings, especially in the *Ecce Homo* of 1543 where, according to one theory, there are portraits of Ochino, Aretino, and Alfonso d'Avalos.[73]

For the last forty-six years of his life Titian's most important patrons were the Habsburgs. Charles V was the secular leader of the battle against Protestantism. After meeting him for the first time in 1530, Titian was at the court in Augsburg in 1547 to paint the equestrian portrait, as the emperor celebrated his victory over the Protestant League. Between 1551 and 1554 the emperor commissioned Titian to paint the *Trinity* (Prado). The theory that this painting was conceived in response to anti-trinitarianism appears convincing.[74] The Trinity demonstrates Counter-Reformation iconography dictated by Charles V. If Titian included his self-portrait behind the Habsburg portraits, as

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[71] See D. Cantimori, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento e altri scritti*, Torino, 1992, esp. 42–81 and Martin (as in note 59), 99–146.

[72] Cairns, *Pietro Aretino* (as in note 64), 69.

[73] Polignano (as in note 49).

[74] See C.S. Harbison, "Counter-Reformation Iconography in Titian's *Gloria*," *Art Bulletin*, 49, 1967, 244–6.

it would appear from the copy engraved by Cornelius Cort (1566–7), then we can presume he was motivated to express his own personal religious sentiments. We know that the Trinity was among the few paintings that Charles took with him when he retired in 1556 to the monastery at Yuste, and that he contemplated the painting in his last hours as *El Juicio Final* (The Last Judgment). It does comply with the traditions of *Last Judgment* iconography, at least with the upper half where the elect are depicted before Christ and the Virgin. It appears from this painting that Titian, who was already in his sixties, was thinking of his own redemption.

The Theme of Penitence in Titian's Late Works

Paintings explicitly or implicitly dealing with sin and penitence are among the most personal and original works of Titian's late years. Among the explicit themes of penitence are the *St Mary Magdalene* (lost), the *St Jerome* (Madrid and the Escorial), and the *Pietà* (Venice) for his own tomb, which also includes the penitent figure of St Jerome, that of the artist himself, and the pelican which symbolized the '*pentimento de' peccati*'.[75] Scenes of mortal punishment include those of martyrs, like the *St Lawrence* completed in 1567 (Escorial) and the later *St Sebastian* (St Petersburg) and *Crowning with Thorns* (Fig. 43), as well as a few mythological episodes, like the *Flaying of Marsyas* (fig. 44). The latter, which was one of his last works and had no replicas, has often been recognized as a very personal declaration by the artist.

The Nymph and Shepherd (Vienna), with its stylistic affinities to the *Flaying of Marsyas*, was among the late autograph paintings left in the artist's studio after his death. There is a clearly retrospective quality in the theme of the shepherd with his flute and his amorous companion, which recalls the Arcadian works of his youth and especially the *Three Ages of Man* of about 1515 (Edinburgh), where the same tree stump appears to the right of the composition. After sixty years Titian again took up the theme of an amorous couple, not with the classical detachment of his youth, but with the anxieties of old age. The goat that devours the last branch and the leopard pelt (cf. the flayed Marsyas), both attributes

[75] See Ripa, *Iconologia*, 391. On Titian's tomb, see C. Hope, in J. Onians (ed.), *Sight and Insight, Essays in Art C. Culture in Honour of E.H. Gombrich at 85*, London, 1994.

of *Luxuria*, together with the tree stump of Death, transform what was once a praise of life into a lamentation of its loss.

Initium Poenitentiae Cognitio Peccati

Although the inscription explicated the theme of the original painting as an allegory of Prudence, its function in the completed version is not clear. Could Titian have left the inscription to imply that man, by virtue of prudence, could overcome his bestial nature? Perhaps the virtuous temporal motto was now meant to be perceived in ironic juxtaposition to Ochino's '*i peccati nostri passati, presenti e futuri*', a leitmotif that aptly describes the three animal heads with their parallel between sins and Ages of Man. Alternatively, we might examine the theory that some unknown restorer uncovered the inscription after it had been painted over by Titian in his final version.[76] We can be sure only that after twenty odd years Titian, no longer interested in his earlier theme and impelled by his inexhaustible capacity for renewed perception, saw in the tripartite composition the nucleus of a new visual idea. The painting was transformed into a unique personal expression of the failing artist and, hypothetically, the penitent sinner who at the end of his life found himself in a *selva oscura* and feared that he had lost the path to Purgatory.

[76] I am indebted to Dr. Doron Lurie, curator and chief restorer at the Tel-Aviv Museum of Art, for this suggestion.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ANIMAL HEADS AND HYBRID CREATURES: THE CASE OF THE SAN LORENZO LAVABO AND ITS SOURCES

Almost every aspect of the marble *lavabo* (*lavamano*), in the Florentine church of San Lorenzo, has been a subject of controversy in art-historical literature (figs. 61–66). Besides the questions of attribution and dating, opinions have diverged regarding the homogeneity of its parts, its original form, function and location, and the extent of later interventions and their causes. Considering the uniqueness of the *lavabo*'s ornate and complex sculptural decoration, it is curious that little has been said about its iconography. The combined representations of animal heads and composite or hybrid creatures, which are the salient motifs, appear to have no parallel on any Renaissance *lavabo*. It will be argued, nevertheless, that they symbolically convey the concepts embodied in the liturgical rite, in general, and attitudes towards sin and penance, in particular. We shall see that the fundamental question of visual meanings and their implications, which has not been adequately addressed in the literature, bears significance for a more integral approach to the controversial problems mentioned above and calls for a retrospective study of contexts and prototypes that will elucidate the significance of this sculptural monument. These issues will be the focus of the present chapter.

Italian Renaissance *lavabi* in church sacristies were, for the most part, simple marble structures composed of an unadorned basin supported on a stem and base. In contrast to these the San Lorenzo lavabo is composed of four distinguishable elements. A lower oval shaped marble basin is carved with images of two female hybrids and a lion's head (figs. 62 & 63). Above this basin is a smaller one that is decorated with two animal heads—those of a wolf and a dog, that protrude from the sides (figs. 64–66). The familiar heraldic arms, a diamond ring, a ribbon with the motto *SEMPER*, and an oak garland on the rim, all refer to Medici patronage. This smaller, rounded basin emerges from the interior of the oval one on a stem that is flanked by two dolphins. The third element is a conical structure that tapers towards the top, then

Fig. 61. *Lavabo*, Florence, Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo, ca.1460s–80s. Photograph: Florence, Kunsthistorisches Institut.

Fig. 62. *Lavabo*, San Lorenzo, detail of basins. Author's photograph.

Fig. 63. *Lavabo*, San Lorenzo, detail of hybrid female. Photograph: Florence, Kunsthistorisches Institut.

Fig. 64. *Lavabo*, San Lorenzo, detail of wolf's head and Medici arms. Author's photograph.

Fig. 65. *Lavabo*, San Lorenzo, detail of wolf's head. Photograph: Florence, Kunsthistorisches Institut.

Fig. 66. *Lavabo*, San Lorenzo, detail of dog's head. Author's photograph.

expands and terminates in the form of a spiral cover. Large bat wings enveloping the cone seem to be attached to entwined headless serpents and leonine legs. It has been suggested that this conical structure was not part of the original *lavabo*. When it was inserted in the upper basin it's lower section, including the serpentine heads, was cut down. The forth element consists of the marble inlaid wall slab that is assumedly a later addition. The original porphyry *tondo*, which constitutes the center of the wall slab, was replaced by the present *tondo* of green marble that is composed of five pieces. The marble carvings depict the well known Medici devices of an eagle holding a diamond ring, a ribbon inscribed *SEMPER* and an oak wreath that frames the green marble disc. A porphyry border frames the entire *lavabo* structure.

Unresolved Issues

A brief review of the written sources, historical background and controversial issues will precede my discussion of the iconography. The earliest reference to the *lavabo* is the *Memoriale* (1510) of Francesco Albertini, who was canon of San Lorenzo for several years and an artist in his own right.[1] His mention of 'il lavatorio del Rossello' led researchers to attribute the *lavabo* to Bernardo Rossellino (1409–64) or his brother Antonio (1427–79), both sculptors noted for their Florentine tomb monuments. Conversely, sixteenth century sources, the so-called *libro di Antonio Billi* and the *Codice Magliabecchiano*, stated that '*un vaso di lavare le mani*' in San Lorenzo was the co-product of Donatello (1386?–1466) and Andrea del Verrocchio (c.1435–88). Vasari repeated this in his 1550 edition of *Le Vite* but omitted it in that of 1568.

Modern scholarship exhibits a total lack of consensus on these attributions, although most writers accepted the hypothesis that several different hands contributed to the *lavabo*'s heterogeneous style. Gunter Passavant found the lower basin with the harpies and the 'vase' rising over it to be homogeneous in style but rejected the idea that it was created as a hand-basin in a sacristy, suggesting that the core elements may originally have been part of a secular, figure-crowned fountain that was re-cut to modify it from a free-standing monument to a wall

[1] For discussion of documentation, dating and attributions, see A. Butterfield, *The Sculptures of Andrea del Verrocchio*, New Haven & London, 1997, cat. no. 1: 4, 9–12, 201–202, plates .7, 8 & 10.

fountain.[2] Based on a statement by Vasari, he also presented the hypothesis that this may be the marble pedestal with harpies made by Desiderio da Settignano for Donatello's bronze David. Charles Seymour, on the other hand, considered the *lavabo* to be 'the first work in marble that we can contribute with some confidence to Andrea [del Verrocchio]', consequently rejecting the attribution to Antonio Rossellino.[3] He also disagreed with Passavant's suggestion that it was conceived as a free-standing fountain, arguing that it was probably made for the *Sagrestia Vecchia* in the 1460s as a commission from Piero de' Medici. Vasari indeed mentioned that '*in una delle stanzette che mettono in mezzo l'altare della detta sagrestia* [...] *in un canto un pozzo ed il luogo per il lavamani*'.[4] Alessandro Parronchi attributed the constituent parts of the present *lavabo* complex to three different sculptors and to three essentially unrelated stages of work.[5] According to his theory, the original *lavabo*, comprising the two superimposed basins, was the work of Donatello from the 1440s, roughly the period of his *altare maggiore* in the Santo at Padua. The marble and porphyry inlaid wall slab is identified as part of a tomb designed by one of the Rossellino brothers for Giovanni de' Medici, the son of Cosimo il Vecchio, who died prematurely in 1463, a year before his father. The Rossellino tomb became superfluous when Piero died in 1469 and the joint tomb was created for the brothers by Verrocchio in the arch between the *Sagrestia Vecchia* and the chapel of the saints Cosmos and Damian in 1472. The combining of the tomb slab and *lavabo* is presumed to have taken place soon after 1472. The last addition, according to this theoretical reconstruction, was the conical 'column' adorned with entwined serpents and bat-wings—a fragment of Desiderio's base for the statue of David (there identified as Mercury), which was struck by lightening in 1511 and was subsequently adapted to the recomposed *lavabo* complex, probably in 1515. Andrew Butterfield concedes that 'Albertini's attribution to [Antonio] Rossellino cannot be easily dismissed', adding that the attribution to him of the lions and harpies 'is supported by comparison with documented work

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[2] G. Passavant, *Verrocchio*, (trans. From German by K. Watson) London, 1969, 41–42.

[3] C. Seymour, *The Sculpture of Verrocchio*, London, 1971, 116–118, fig. 129.

[4] Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccelenti architetti, pittori e scultori*, 1568, ed. G. Milanesi, Firenze, 1878–85, vol. II, 370.

[5] A. Parronchi, "Per il lavabo della Sagrestia Vecchia," *Labyrinthos*, 17/18, 1998/90, 21–36.

by the artist'.[6] Accepting an earlier attribution of 'the falcon' to Verrocchio, he assumes that a joint undertaking between Rossellino and Verrocchio, as the former's assistant, must have preceded 1481, when Verrocchio was first documented as an independent artist. The wall wreath 'of inferior workmanship' is assigned by Butterfield to Giovanni Scarpellatore (1481), although the latter is cited in the San Lorenzo documents as the stonemason in charge of church repairs, who was involved in disassembling and reconstructing the lavabo due to deficient plumbing. In regard to preceding theories this author concluded that 'there is no proof to support any of these contentions'.

In all of the bibliography regarding the San Lorenzo lavabo there have been few attempts to decipher the iconographic program. Following Erwin Panofsky's interpretation of Titian's so-called *Allegory of Prudence* (fig. 54), Parronchi focused on the three animal heads and identified them as an allegory of time.[7] This interpretation was presented out of context, in my opinion, with insufficient literary or visual evidence to support it. These contentions will be elaborated below in the context of my iconographical analysis. Some other incomprehensible identifications illustrate the fallacies that derive from insufficient visual examination of the art work itself. Thus we have a description of a 'curious decorative repertoire (harpies, dolphins, dragon and lion heads)'. While dragon heads have explicitly not been discovered by other writers, and only one lion head is visible, the projecting heads of a dog and a wolf are not even mentioned. In another recent publication we read of two wolf heads which, despite the salient differences in the physiognomies of these animals, are said by the author to be identical.[8] These are called evil predators representing the cruelty of mankind. Other interpretations that follow are based on unrelated and arbitrary Biblical quotations, with no attempt to substantiate the approach or integrate the material.

There are innumerable precedents for the animal heads and hybrid creatures of the San Lorenzo lavabo, primarily on medieval baptismal fonts but also on *lavabi*. In order to interpret the iconography, the specific context and background of this imagery must be revealed.

[6] Butterfield (as in note 1), 201–202.
[7] E. Panofsky, "Titian's Allegory of Prudence," *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Garden City, New York, 1955, 146–68; Parronchi (as in note 5).
[8] L. Lorenzi, "I mostri del lavabo marmoreo di Andrea Verrocchio," *Antichità Viva*, XXXIII, no. 4, 1994, 43–52. The same far fetched ideas were repeated in Lorenzi's *Devils in Art, Florence from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, Florence, 1997, 80–81.

The Lavabo and Font

The *lavabo* was a ritual hand-washing vessel, traditionally located in vestries or sacristies during the medieval and Renaissance periods.[9] In both Eastern and Western Catholic rites, it was used by the officiating priest before, and sometimes after, celebrating the holy Liturgy. This ceremonial act, while it originally included a pragmatic function, was one of purification in a moral and ethical sense. It was generally accompanied by the following verses from *Psalm* 25 that open with the word *Lavabo* in the Vulgate translation, and define the inherent association between purification and sin: 'I will wash [*lavabo*] mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord... Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men. In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me and be merciful unto me.' (*Psalm* 25, 6 & 9–11). The basic Christian tenant that man is a sinner and in need of redemption is thus conveyed in the word *lavabo*, said by the celebrant at mass before the hand-washing ritual.

The *lavabo* is related to the baptismal font in both form and liturgical function. The font shares with the *lavabo* some of its fundamental symbolic connotations, as a receptacle for holy water utilized in a purification and sanctification rite.[10] The ritual connotations are of primeval origin and were shared in one form or other by most archaic cultures. In ancient Jewish tradition, purification by immersion in water, lustral rites involving proselytes, and even the hand-washing ceremony, as witnessed by the New Testament story of Pilatus, are just a few of the relevant precedents. Beyond the more obvious, universal connotations of the purification ritual as a means to eradicate impurity and sin, are the appendages of the later Medieval Christian guilt culture, with its particularly pessimistic perception of human nature. It will be shown that animal images, in general, and those on the water receptacles, in particular, were essential in conveying this perception.

In the New Testament we read: 'Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost' (*Acts* 2, 38). Christ ordered the apostles to preach and baptize throughout the

[9] See '*lavabo*', *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. IX, New York, 1910; online edition, 2003 by Kevin Knight: http://newadvent.org/cathen/09044b.htm.

[10] See 'baptismal font' and 'baptism' in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. II (as above).

world in order to redeem from sin, as an act of salvation. During the late medieval period there was increasing emphasis in baptismal doctrine and liturgy on the struggle between good and evil. This struggle, conceived as that of the soul with the devil, or as the inner battle of the *psychomachia*, where virtues and vices were the chief protagonists, was depicted on fonts predominantly through symbolic animal imagery. Even when the moral victory was represented by an archetypal image, such as Daniel in the lions den, or an Apocalyptic vision, such as that of St. Michael fighting the dragon, the forces of evil and sin were represented by actual or fantastic animals. The traditional *psychomachia* personifications of Virtues and Vices without animals, which were still depicted in manuscript illustrations, monumental sculpture, and other media during the late medieval period, were rarely shown on fonts or ritual hand-washing equipment.

Animal Depictions and Metaphors of Sin

Animal depictions are ubiquitous in the sculptural decorations of Romanesque, Gothic and proto-Renaissance fonts located throughout Europe. Although the number of extant decorated *lavabi* is quite small in comparison with baptismal fonts, the two types are interrelated in terms of form, function and symbolism, and in their parallel utilization of animal imagery. This unique group of animal depictions, has never been systematically studied, to my knowledge. While this chapter will concentrate on the theme of animals as symbols or metaphors of human sin, it must be stressed that not all of the animal images on these monuments fulfill the same iconographic function. Occasionally positive symbolic associations can be shown to exist alongside the negative ones, based upon the complexities of traditions that merge and overlap in medieval animal symbolism, but these cases appear to be comparatively few in the specific context of fonts and *lavabi*.

We have seen examples of animal similes and metaphors derived from the myriad sources of the Christian heritage.[11] Most of them

[11] On the *Physiologus* and bestiaries, see (among others): F. McCullough, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1960; M.J. Curley, *Physiologus*, Austin & London, 1979; J.L. Schrader, *A Medieval Bestiary*, New York, 1986; W.B. Clark & M.T. McMunn (eds.), *Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages: the bestiary and its legacy*, Philadelphia, 1989; D. Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries*, Cambridge, 1995; L.A.J.R. Houwen (ed.), *Animals and the Symbolic in Medieval Art and Literature* (*Mediaevalia Groningana*; 20), Groningen, 1997; R. Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages*, London, 1998; D. Hassig (ed.),

promoted the metaphor of human bestiality, based on the premise that immorality reduces man to an inferior and degraded state, transforming him from a human into a beast. The idea of this metamorphosis served not only as a moralistic metaphor but reflected the fear of what was conceived to be a psychological process to which all men, having been conceived in sin, were prone from birth.

It has been noted by scholars that the amount of animal depictions in various artistic media and in monumental art, in particular, greatly increased from the twelfth century on. Various explanations have been set forth, based upon changing concepts of the respective natures of humans and animals and their similarities, the revival of naturalistic Classical sources, renewed interest in and popularization of animal *exempla* in the moralistic sermons of the preaching Orders and in social criticism, exposure to animals imported from the East, and actual interaction with animals.[12]

In his discussion of the conspicuous part played by symbolic animals on church furniture and in ecclesiastical architecture in the eleventh and twelfth century, E.P. Evans made the following comment: 'It was deemed a hard hit at the devil, and a masterly stroke of pious policy, to press beasts of evil omen and Satanic significance into the service of the church, and force them to assist at the celebration of holy offices'.[13] The famous protest of Bernard de Clairvaux (ca.1125) against the human-animal monstrosities in the church expressed the indignation 'that the Christian mysteries should be degraded and vulgarized by being clothed in what he deemed the foul and tattered vesture of pagan allegory'.[14] The ceremony of baptism indeed conserved vestiges of pagan ritual, including exorcism. Furthermore, the widespread belief in the magic power of images and the efficacy of occult practices in appeasing and subduing malignant spirits may well have been a factor in the visualization of vile beasts and hybrid creatures in the process of spiritual purification.

The Mark of the Beast: the medieval bestiary in art, life, and literature, New York, 1999. For an important source of the Italian bestiary tradition, consulted in the present study and others of this book, see A. Carrega (ed.), *Bestiario moralizzato di Gubbio* & P. Navone (ed.), *Libellus de natura animalium*, in *Le proprietà degli animali*, Genova, 1983 (Testi della cultura italiana; 5). A *volgare* version of the *Libellus de natura animalium* was printed by Berrurerio in Mondovì, 1508 & in Savona 1524, with an attribution to Albertus Magnus.

[12] See J.E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within, Animals in the Middle Ages*, New York and London, esp. ch. 4: "Animals as Human Exemplars," 103–28.

[13] E.P. Evans, *Animal Symbolism in Ecclesiastical Architecture*, London, 1906, 179.

[14] See Evans (as above), 180–81.

Interpreting the Animals

Which animals were depicted on receptacles for ritual purification? Can systematic programs of animal imagery be identified? Are the animals depicted in association with iconographic themes or in formal contexts that elucidate their significance? And does the iconography call for several levels of reading?

My examination of fonts and *lavabi*, decorated with animal images between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries, has revealed several patterns.[15] Specific animals, birds and animal hybrids are frequently repeated. These are usually shown as bodiless animal heads or animal masks and are depicted in high relief or as three-dimensional sculpture. In some cases, they are grouped with one or several human heads; in others, animal and human heads are juxtaposed. The heads are generally located on the exterior or border of the basin, as in the case of the San Lorenzo *lavabo*, or on the stem of the base below. These heads should be differentiated from another type of depiction, sometimes found in relief on the basin or stem of the same font, where complete animal and birds figures are enveloped in decorative vine scrolls in the tradition of early Christian carvings, mosaics, and manuscript illumination. The form and iconographic message of these decorative images is clearly in contrast with the sculpted heads.

It has been demonstrated in the previous chapters that animals were subject to a multiplicity of interpretations, frequently characterized by a fundamental ambivalence, which originated in the *Physiologus* and was furthered by exegetical methods adapted to religious, secular and mythological contexts in the medieval period.[16] We have seen how several diverse and even conflicting modes of interpretation could simultaneously be applied to the same narrative and to the protagonists thereof. Considering the amount of literary sources on animal symbolism that was available and the diversity of approaches they called forth, it is no wonder that the same animal could represent contrasting concepts and might, for instance, serve as an *exemplum* for either a virtue or a vice. This is particularly salient in the case of the lion, one of the most frequently depicted animals on fonts and *lavabi*, as elsewhere

[15] See note 17 below for the list of fonts and *lavabi* studied here.

[16] See e.g. "Narrative in the *Physiologus*", in Baxter (as in note 11), 29–62. On methods of allegorical interpretation: D.C. Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance*, Baltimore & London, 1970.

in Romanesque and Gothic art. In view of this ambiguity, my initial approach will be to examine the iconographic context, as seen in the animal groupings, contiguous scenes and occasional inscriptions on the object itself.

Additional evidence can be adduced from the physical context of animals, represented primarily as heads or masks in North European and Italian monumental art. Generally speaking, animal heads are not depicted on areas of the church, such as the portal, which are reserved for sacred iconography. They are normally delegated to marginal locations, both on the exterior and interior of the church, notably on corbels and capitals, in monumental Romanesque sculpture throughout France, Spain, England, Germany and in certain areas of Italy, especially Apulia and Tuscany. This study will be primarily concerned with the Tuscan examples, particularly those in the areas of Pisa and Lucca, where naturalistic animals, in general, and naturalistic animal heads, in particular, are a dominant element of monumental sculpture. The façade of the Basilica of San Michele in Foro, Lucca (begun 1143), for example, contains a veritable bestiary in intarsia and stone, including naturalistic animal heads below the arches of the upper loggias, but not on the lower facade or portal. It is hardly a coincidence, as we shall see, that heads of a dog, a wolf and a lion are prominent there, as in the San Lorenzo *lavabo* created three centuries later. Other relevant comparisons can be made with sculpted capitals of the Pisa-Lucchese school, such as the fine Gothic example with large heads of a wolf, lion, donkey and man conserved in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Pisa (Fig. 67). The animal heads studied here are not exclusive motifs on fonts and *lavabi*, but particular connotations are elucidated by their context on these objects.

In order to view the problem in its broader context, it would be helpful to establish which animal images were generally depicted on these receptacles. A random sample of sixteen fonts and three *lavabi* were studied for their examples of animal imagery. These represent geographical and chronological cross-sections, as they originate from the areas of modern Denmark, Sweden, England, France, Spain and Italy, and span a period of about 250 years.[17] The identifiable animals

[17] Some of the fonts and *lavabi* in the following list were taken from the database sampling of 45 records in the *Baptisteria Sacra* (BSA) Index, Iter, 2001: www.library.utoronto.ca/bsi/frames_database.html (nos. 1, 2, 5, 12, 13, 16, 17 & 18). Others were cited in the literature or were subjects of my own studies. See the classical study

Fig. 67. *Capital with Heads of Wolf, Lion, Donkey and Man*, 13th c., Pisa, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo. Author's photograph.

that reappear in combined iconographical patterns on these objects are the lion (10 times), the ram (7 times), the dog (6 times), the wolf (3 times), the ox (3 times), ape (4 times), the pig (twice), goat (twice), the eagle (4 times), the falcon (twice) and the griffon (4 times). The horse, donkey, mule, antelope, owl and perhaps a bear, each appear at least once. In addition to the griffon motif, there are at least nine fonts in this group that contain hybrid animal and bird forms, including dragons,

of fonts by F. Nordstöm, *Mediaeval Baptismal Fonts; An Iconographical Study*, Stockholm, 1984, which includes nos. 6, 14 & 19 below. The Italian fonts and *lavabi* were studied *in situ*. Unless otherwise indicated, the references are to baptismal fonts: 1. Mahamud Burgos, Sp., Chapel of San Miguel Arcángel 12th–13th c.; 2. Cantoral de la Pêna, Palenzia, Sp. 12th–13th c.; 3. ex. Cloister of St. Denis (now Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris) Fr., lavabo, 1180, 4. Cloister of the Cistercian Abbey of Villers, Fr., lavatorium, 15th c.; 5. Cherbourg (Manche), Fr., Eglise de la Trinité, 14th c.; 6. Lucca, It., San Frediano, last quarter of the 12th c.; 7. Pistoia, It., San Giovanni in Corte, 1226; 8. ex. Veneto (?), It. (now Madrid, Museu Archeologico Nacional), late 11th–early 12th c.; 9. ex. Veneto (?), It. (now Madrid, Museu Lázzaro Galdiano), 12th c.; 10. Parma, It., baptistery, c.1196; 11. Pisa, It., baptistery, 1246; 12. Kilpeck (Hereford, Worcester), UK, Parish Church of St. Mary & St. David, 12th c.; 13. Toller Fratrum (Dorset), UK, Parish Church of St. Basil, 12th c.; 14. Stafford, UK, St. Mary's church, 12th c.; 15. Munkbrarup (Schleswig-Holstein), Gr., former Parish Church, 12th c.; 16. Kirkeby (Bornholm), Dk., c.1200–1225; 17. Fole (Gotland), Sw., 13th c.; 18. Skane, Sw., Church of Ostia Nobbelov, 12th or 13th c.; 19. Barlingbo (Gotland), Sw., 12th c.

a harpy, a satyr and a chimera. Two of these fonts depict serpents. The Barlingbo (Gotland) font has four birds with enlarged heads on its base.[18] These include a hawk and an owl. The enlarged owl head may ultimately derive, albeit indirectly, from Ovid's version of the Rape of Proserpina, where he is said to be 'a harbinger of woe for mortals'. According to Ovid, Ceres transformed the informer Aesculapius into a screech-owl, a bird of evil omen and herald of impending disaster, causing his head to increase in size in proportion to his body.[19] This is just one example of the kind of negative connotations assigned to the enlarged or bodiless animal-head. It should be emphasized, however, that most of the above mentioned creatures, regardless of their form, have predominantly negative connotations in classical and medieval literary sources and in the artistic iconography of the period. The salient examples are those of the dog, wolf, ape, pig, goat, donkey, mule, serpent, owl, falcon, and hybrid creatures.

Among the significant north Italian precedents, for example, is a Romanesque font of Dolomite stone located in the Museu Archeológico Nacional, Madrid (Fig. 68).[20] Besides the plant motifs, fantastic animals and birds, which are richly carved in low relief on the basin and shaft, four sculpted animal heads are seen to protrude below the upper rim of the basin in much the same manner as the dog and wolf heads on the San Lorenzo lavabo. These heads may be identified as a ram, a lion a dog and an eagle. Two of these animals are identical to those of the lavabo. A battle between an animal and a bird is carved on the basin in between the animal heads. On the shaft of the font fantastic animals are alternated with peaceful animals and birds. The contrasting images of combating animals opposed to peaceful ones appears to convey the theme of the *psychomachia* opposed to spiritual salvation. The animal heads in their proximity to the combat motif further define the battle of the soul in terms of sin.

We may assume that the consistent use of animal heads in conjunction with other motifs and religious themes served a specific iconographic purpose, which somehow defined or interpreted the practical and symbolic function of the object on which they are depicted. In other words, the selection and form of the animal motifs was not arbitrary,

[18] See Nordström (as above), 91, fig. 54.
[19] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, V, 130, trans. by M.M. Innes, Baltimore, 1955.
[20] See A. Franco Mata, "Una Pila Bautismal Romanica Italiana en el Museo Lazaro Galdiano," *Goya*, no. 219, Nov./Dec. 1990, 130–35.

Fig. 68. *Romanesque Baptismal Font with Animal Heads*. Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional. Photograph: Archive National Archeological museum.

but was dictated by the iconographic and physical context, establishing these ritual water receptacles as a category apart.

The Wolf

The wolf as a medieval and Renaissance symbol was entirely pejorative and consistently appeared in association with several of the Deadly Sins. Biblical sources that contrasted docile lambs with ferocious wolves inspired the image of the flock of Christ threatened by the enemies of the Church, the devout man subject to torment and suffering, or the hypocritical prelate and false prophet cast as the wolf in sheep's clothing.[21] Among the earliest authors of the *artes praedicandi*, the Franciscan Luca di Bitonto, who wrote sermons between the 1220s and 1240s, used the wolf as the image of the wicked prelate, who is actually the devil

[21] On the wolf, see B. Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces*, London, 1974, 161–67; F. Maspero & A. Granata, *Bestiario Medievale*, Casale Monferrato, 1999, 257–65, and M. Levi d'Ancona, *Lo Zoo del Rinascimento*, Lucca, 2001, 157–59.

catching the fish (souls) that live in baptismal waters.[22] The wolf's prime identification as a rapacious animal found expression in numerous myths and fantasies. It was also associated with the devil and witches.

One of the chief wolf metaphors was that of the avaricious man. The association of the wolf with the sin of *Avaritia* was a leitmotif of classical antiquity, promoted by Doctors of the Church, scholastics, medieval writers on moral allegory, Italian proto-Renaissance authors, mendicant preachers, and political theorists. The wolf of *Avaritia* sustained its popularity in Renaissance emblem books and drama. Due to the dynamic nature of the concept of *Avaritia*, however, its connotations and metaphoric adaptations fluctuated in accordance with the modifications of socio-economic conditions and moralistic priorities. The use of animal *exempla* in sermons between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries appears to have been a major factor in promoting the wolf image of *Avaritia* at that time.[23] Socio-economic upheavals, the shift from an agrarian to a mercantile economy, the amassing of wealth and its public display, and the practice of usury were major factors in highlighting the concept of Avarice or Cupidity as a major Capital Sin, primarily between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Besides paying his role as the prototype of Avarice, the wolf was likewise associated with Luxury, Gluttony, Anger and Envy. Consequently, he was depicted as the mount of these personifications in various Renaissance series of mounted sins.

Precedents for the depiction of the wolf-head are ubiquitous in Tuscan sculpture of the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. We find it as a repetitive motif among the animals on the font of the baptistery of Pisa (1246).[24] Two wolf-heads are juxtaposed with two griffons, on one font panel, and combined with a monkey, mule and donkey, on another (fig. 69). The wolf-head, devouring his prey was also sculpted on a capital of the Palazzo Ducale, Venice (1340–55) (fig. 60), where eight rapacious animal heads (those of the wolf, lion, fox, griffon, pig, dog, cat and bear) represent the eight Capital Sins.[25]

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[22] See F. Moretti, "Le rappresentazioni animali nei sermoni di Luca di Bitonto," *Il Santo*, XLIII, 2003, 263–93, esp. 275.

[23] See J.W. Oppel, "San Bernardino of Siena and the Dialogue on Avarice," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 30, 1977, 564–87; N. Ben-Aryeh Debby, *Renaissance Florence in the Preaching of Two Popular Preachers*; *Giovanni Dominici (1356–1419) and Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444)*, Turnhout, 2001, esp. 97–103 & 118–25; R. Newhauser, *The Early History of Greed*, Cambridge, 2000.

[24] See A. Garzelli, *Il Fonte del Battistero di Pisa*, Pisa, 2002, pl. Va, fig. 36.

[25] See A. Manno, *Il Poema del Tempo, I Capitelli del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia, Storia e*

Fig. 69. *Baptismal Font*, detail, Pisa Baptistery, 1246. Author's photograph.

The Dog

The dog was conceived as an ambivalent creature from classical antiquity and till the Renaissance. On one hand, it was praised for its faithfulness, wisdom, vigilance, prophetic vision, curative abilities, and magic powers of fertility. On the other, it was associated with sexual promiscuity, anger and avarice.[26] Medieval culture adopted the predominantly negative attitude to dogs that was reflected in the Old and New Testaments and was perpetuated by early Church doctors, such as Rabanus Maurus, who perceived them as images of the Jews, the tormentors of Christ, sinners, the devil, and heretics, and symbols of the abomination of the Lord.[27] Medieval passion literature described Christ's tormentors as 'evil dogs that stand with their sinful feet in his blood'.[28] As such they exemplified the traitor, which often explains their

Iconografia, Venezia, 1999, 109–110, figs. 17, 17/1, 17/2, 17/8. See also 128–29 for additional animal/sin depictions on the capitals of the Palazzo Ducale.

[26] On the dog, see Rowland, 58–66; Maspero & Granata, 91–94; Levi d'Ancona, 72–76 (as in note 21).

[27] Rabanus Maurus, *De universo*, VIII, in Migne, *P.L.*, vol. 111, col.224° & vol. 112, col.883A.

[28] See J. Marrow, "Circumdederunt me canes multi: Christ's Tormenters in Northern

presence in late medieval and Renaissance narrative paintings where an act of treachery was depicted. The association of the dog with the devil survived in medieval tales and popular belief. St. Athanasius, for example, described the devil lancing his pack of dogs against St. Anthony. The dog, as representative of the sinner in general, was popularized in the oft repeated story, taken from the book of *Proverbs*, of his return to his vomit. In moralizations, such as that of the twelfth century Aberdeen Bestiary (Aberdeen University, MS. 24), this was used as a metaphor of the wicked man who reverts to his sins after confession.[29] The same story was also used in other bestiaries to illustrate Gluttony. It was later converted by Flemish artists into the image of a vomiting monk, mounted on a swine (another image of Gluttony) with a dog licking up his spew. Sebastian Brandt used this image as a metaphor for the sinner in his *Ship of Fools* (Basel, 1494). The canine snarling over his bone was another image of Gluttony that originated in medieval moralizations and was subsequently ubiquitous in Renaissance art.

In the series of Capital Sins the dog most frequently represented *Luxuria, Avaritia, Ira* or *Invidia.* The conception of his licentious nature originated in Greece, where the dog was associated with corrupt sexuality, and the very word *kion* was applied to prostitutes. Medieval authors, such as Bartolomeus Anglicus, referred to canine promiscuity and lechery. This association was perpetuated in medieval moralizing literature and survived as an artistic theme during the Renaissance. The image of the dog as a metaphor of Avarice appeared, for example, in the *Summa de vitiis* of Peraldus (ca.1236), which was published in Basel in 1469.

Pliny had already described the dog as a quarrelsome animal, citing a Roman proverb that states 'A dog bites the stone that is thrown to it'.[30] A classical fable, that was conserved and illustrated in the bestiaries, told of the dog crossing a river with some meat in his mouth who, upon seeing his reflection, let it fall into the river in the hope of catching another bone.[31] This signified that foolish men will relinquish what they already have in order to obtain some unknown object. Medieval

European Art of the Lat Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *Art Bulletin*, 59, 1977, 167–81.

[29] The Aberdeen Bestiary, 12th c., fol.19v, Aberdeen University Library: http://www.clues.abdn.ac.uk:8080/besttest/alt/translat/trans19v.html.

[30] Pliny, *Nat. hist.*, XXIX.32.102, English trans., Cambridge, Mass., 1938–62 (Loeb Classical Library).

[31] See e.g. the Aberdeen Bestiary, fols.19v–20r.

moralizing literature presented dogs as manifestations of *Invidia* or *Ira*, because envious and angry men are like 'hounds that bark and bite'. In a late medieval manuscript of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, *Invidia* is depicted as a monk riding a hound and carrying a sparrow-hawk. Another manuscript illustration of the *Etymachia* shows *Ira* mounted on a horse, with a dog on her shield and the sparrow-hawk as her crest (Fig. 22).[32] Censure of the clergy is again found in the *Scivias* (12th c.) by Hildegard of Bingen, where the dog is said to represent vices of the prelates and members of the clergy who should bark at the enemy but fail to do so.[33]

We have already noted the dog devouring his prey among the sins on the fourteenth century capital of the Palazzo Ducale, Venice (Fig. 60). An earlier example of this motif can be seen on a baptismal font at Fole, Sweden (13th c.), which also depicts a man holding a barking dog on a leash (*Ira*?) and an animal, probably a bear, masquerading as a bishop.[34] Sculpted dog-heads also appear alongside sin-related animals on the thirteenth century font of the Pisa baptistery (Fig. 69).[35] On one panel two dog-heads on the horizontal axis are combined with the head of a fool (or madman?) and that of a donkey on the vertical axis (Fig. 70).

The Lion

Lions are ubiquitous as symbolic beasts and are interpreted both positively and negatively in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Contrary to the wolf and dog, the king of the beasts was integrated into sacred iconography, basically as a symbol of Christ and an image of his Resurrection, his vigilance and his divine nature. The opening chapter of the *Physiologus* identifies Christ with the lion of Judah, as a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophesy, based on a quotation from *Genesis*.[36] Christ's concealment of his divinity is compared there to the lion that covers its tracks to avoid capture. The belief that the lion slept with its eyes open was related in the *Physiologus* to Christ's divine watchfulness,

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[32] See J.S. Norman, *Metamorphosis of an Allegory; The Iconography of the Psychomachia in Medieval Art*, New York, Bern, Frankfurt, Paris, 1988, fig. 8.
[33] Hildegard von Bingen, *Physica*, in Migne, *P.L.*, vol. 197, coll.1265–1348.
[34] See reproductions in *Baptisteria Sacra* site (as in note 17).
[35] Garzelli (as in note 24), pls. IIb, IVb, VIIIa; figs. 29 & 30.
[36] See Baxter (as in note 11), 37–39.

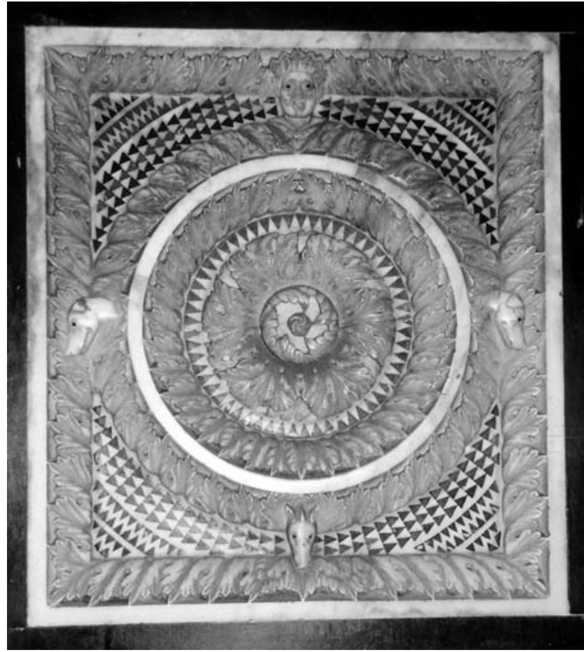

Fig. 70. *Baptismal Font*, detail, Pisa Baptistery, 1246. Author's photograph.

based on the passage: 'Behold he who guards Israel neither slumbers or sleeps' (*Psalm*, 120, 4). It also related the tale of the lion cubs that were born dead and brought to life by their father on the third day as a metaphor of Christ's Resurrection. These interpretations were repeated by St. Augustine and Rabanus Maurus, in the bestiaries, the *Legenda Aurea*, and in numerous other sources.[37] The allegorical themes were illustrated in the bestiaries and inspired the beast's symbolic depictions in monumental art. In ecclesiastical architecture he reassumed his archaic position as guardian of the sacred space on portals and windows.

The negative moralizations were likewise based on traditional conceptions and misconceptions of the beast's nature and habits that were supported by Biblical passages. The lion could represent the devil, the Antichrist, mockers of Christ, the heretics that rebel against God, sin-

[37] St. Augustine, in Migne, *P.L.*38, col.1210; Rabanus Maurus, *Allegoriae in Sacram Scripturam*, in Migne, *P.L.*112, col.903A; *De Universo*, *P.L.*11, col.218D & 219D; Jacobus da Voragine, *Golden Legend*, trans. R. Ripperger, New York, 1969 (St. Lucas Evangelist, 18 Oct.).

ful men and tyrants. As a moralistic symbol it was associated primarily with *Superbia* (Pride), the vice of misappropriated power and status, and occasionally with *Ira* (wrath).[38]

In the case of the lion, with all of its ambivalence, we are dependent upon specific contexts for iconographic interpretation. The font formerly in the Munkbrarup parish church, Germany (12th c.) depicts a man being devoured by a lion with the inscription *Salve me ex ore leonis* (*Psalm* 22, 21).[39] A more or less contemporary font from St. Mary's church at Stafford, England bears the inscription *Discretus non es si non figus, ecce leones* (You are a fool if you do not flee; beware the lions) and employs lions as supports for the basin.[40] The inscriptions and images refer in this context to the ultimate goal of baptism as salvation of the soul; the lions symbolize the devil or Antichrist, as referred to by Rabanus Maurus and others. The lion here is the ferocious beast lying in ambush, an image of the devil stalking his prey. A passage of the New Testament warns: 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour' (*Peter* I, 5:8). Benedetto Antelami (late 12th c.) interpreted the theme of *salve me ex ore leonis* as a rapacious lion clutching his prey as he supports the basin of the font (Parma baptistery). Folke Nordström connected beasts eating lambs and human beings on the bases of baptismal fonts with the struggle between good and evil waged over the still un-baptized child that dominated the baptismal ceremony. In the font of San Giovanni in Corte, Pistoia (1226/28), sculpted by Lanfranco Bigarelli of Como, the heads of a lion and a ram are juxtaposed with those of two youths. This was followed by Guido Bigarelli, who carved lion heads on five out of the sixteen panels decorating the font of the Pisa baptistery (1246).[41] These lions were juxtaposed with the heads of ladies, in one case, and eagles, in another.

The moralistic battle between the lion and his human prey, conceived in the context of Salvation, assumed visual expression on fonts in biblical or mythological scenes. This is demonstrated on one the

[38] On the lion, see Rowland, 118–123; Levi d'Ancona, 146–51 and Maspero & Granata (as in note 21).

[39] The Munkbrarup font is to be included in the full database of the Baptisteria Sacra (as in note 17).

[40] This is mentioned and explained by Nordström (as in note 17), 131–32.

[41] For the fonts of Pistoia and Pisa, see Garzelli (as in note 24). On lion imagery in the baptistery, see M. Chiellini Nari, *Le sculture nel battistero di Pisa: temi e immagini dal Medioevo, i rilievi del deambulatorio ospedaletto*, (Phd. Dissertation) Pisa, 1989, 106ff.

Fig. 71. *Baptismal Font*, Lucca, San Frediano, last quarter of the 12th c. Author's photograph.

most unique Tuscan fonts, that of the church of San Frediano, Lucca (last quarter of the 12th c.), which contains two superimposed basins and a sculpted *baldacchino* supported on columns (Fig. 71).[42] The large inferior basin is carved with stories of Moses, including the passage of the Red Sea (i.e. a scene of Salvation), while the smaller superior basin is decorated with a row of animal masks, interspersed with some human heads of sinister character, such as that of the madman or fool and a monstrous three-faced image (Figs. 72 & 73). The animal heads, including those of a multiple-headed sheep and forbidding lions, are equally sinister. Their monstrous nature seems to connect them with French precedents, probably transmitted via northern Italy. It is interesting to note that these sinister animal and human heads all served as spouts for the passage of the water from the upper to the

[42] See P. Campetti, "Il battistero di San Frediano di Lucca e la sua ricostruzione," *Dedalo*, 1926–27, 333–52 and Nordstöm (as in note 17), 107, fig. 63.

Fig. 72. *Baptismal Font*, Lucca, San Frediano, detail. Author's photograph.

Fig. 73. *Baptismal Font*, Lucca, San Frediano, detail. Author's photograph.

lower basin. On Niccolo and Giovanni Pisano's Fontana Maggiore at Perugia, dating roughly to the same period, eight animal heads (including the lion, lioness, wolf, horse, ox and boar), which jut out from the upper basin, function similarly as waterspouts. The connection of the baptismal font with the contemporary Tuscan secular fountain, evident in aspects of form and iconography, is demonstrated by these symbolic animal heads in their practical context. The concept of purification was symbolically demonstrated in each of theses cases by the flow of water through the sinister image as it passed from the upper basin into that below. Although the lion-mask was the prototypal spout image on fountains of all periods, we find it depicted on the baptismal font as one of the sinful creatures.

Other Animal Representations of Sin

Besides the animals discussed above, the majority of animals depicted on fonts and *lavabi* convey explicitly negative connotations. Common examples are the ram, donkey, ox, goat, bear and pig.

Like other fertility symbols, the ram came to represent lasciviousness in medieval and Renaissance moralizations.[43] Traditionally used for fertilization of the flocks, it symbolized the procreative forces of nature and assumed the role of a male fertility symbol in myths and later in emblems.[44] It could represent the lascivious sinner or symbolize the vice of *Luxuria*. On early fonts and *lavabi* the ram was frequently depicted in association with the lion, the dog and the wolf, occasionally with an ape, horse, pig, donkey, bear, goat or rapacious bird. On one panel of the Pisa font two rams are juxtaposed with horses (Fig. 69); on another a horse and ram are juxtaposed with two men. The horse frequently bore the same connotation of lasciviousness.

The ape was presented in the *Physiologus* and subsequently as a form of the devil. During the Romanesque period the ape came to represent the deformed and degenerate man and exemplified human

[43] For the following animal interpretations, in addition to the above bibliography (as in note 21), see Online: "The Bestiary, 1998, by S. Tucker, for the ram: http://ww2.netnitco.net/users/legend01/ram.html.

[44] In Cartari's *Le imagini degli Dei delli Antichi*, Venice, 1571, the ram, depicted as a symbol of lust, accompanies the herm and wild man.

self abandonment to sins of the flesh.[45] It played a major part in the human-animal parody as expressed in fables, moralistic sermons, popular shows of performing animals and artistic depictions. The fact that the ape was eventually transformed into the sinner, victim of the devil, rather than the embodiment of the devil himself, demonstrates the process of internalization illustrated in animal symbolism of the late medieval period. From the end of the thirteenth century the ape again underwent a transformation, becoming an image of the avaricious man or the usurer. In a late illustration of the *psychomachia* theme *Avaritia* is depicted riding an ape.

As the mirror of human sinfulness the ape was also associated with *Luxuria*. There are many depictions of this animal in Romanesque monumental art and we might recall that Bernard of Clairvaux found it necessary to condemn 'those unclean apes' that were so prolific in Cluniac art. On a *lavabo* from the cloister of Saint Denis (1180, now in the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris) we find the ape depicted in the company of the lion, the ram and the wolf.[46] The ape also appears among the seven beasts carved on corbels of the *lavatorium*, around the lavabo itself, at the cloister of the Cistercian Abbey of Villers (15th c.).[47] It appears that the seven Capital Sins are represented there and, although some of the animals are damaged beyond recognition, we can identify the pig and ape, a goat or ram, several quadrupeds (including perhaps a lion or dog), a griffon and other hybrids. As we have noted, several different animals were interchangeable as images of particular sins, and it is possible that in some cases explicit identifications were not considered necessary. A panel of the thirteenth century Pisa font, mentioned above, combines heads of the ape, wolf, mule and donkey.

The donkey, goat, ox, bear and pig, which appear as sculpted heads in marginal locations of Romanesque monumental sculpture as well as on the fonts and *lavabi*, also convey negative meanings. The *physiologus* presented the wild ass, together with the ape, as representations of the devil.[48] The doctors of the church associated the donkey or ass with the

[45] In H.W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, London, 1976, see esp. ch.II: "The Ape as the sinner," 29–71.

[46] On the St. Denis lavabo and its animals depictions, see Janson (as above), 55–56.

[47] See T. Coomans, "Le Grand Lavatorium du Cloître de L'Abbaye de Villers au XVe Siècle," *Revue Belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art*, LXII, 1993, 19–36.

[48] See Baxter (as in note 11), 48.

gentiles (i.e. non Christians) and Jews, and specifically with the stupidity of the Jews. Honorius Augustodunensis perceived the ass is a symbol of the gentiles and the ox as the sinful Jews.[49] As a moralistic symbol the donkey was associated primarily with stupidity, stubbornness and laziness, and occasionally with lasciviousness. Among the seven capital sins it represented *Accidia*. Although the ox had many positive connotations in late antiquity and in Judeo-Christian tradition, it was also a symbol of the devil and of heretics and, as mentioned above, was associated with Jews as sinners in late medieval writings.

The goat in Judeo-Christian tradition symbolized the damned, as demonstrated in the description of the Last Judgment, where Christ as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats (*Matthew*, 25; 32–41). The Jewish scapegoat ritual (*Leviticus* 9, 15) was often conceived as a prefiguration of Christ's sacrifice in atonement for sins,[50] but a parallel tradition emphasized the animal's function as a symbol of the sinner.[51] The goat represented *Luxuria* as one of the capital sins.

In the Bible the bear symbolized divine anger. From the early medieval period it was conceived primarily as diabolic, often conceived as the devil himself. As an exemplum of sin in late medieval and early Renaissance sources, the bear was associated with Gluttony due to his famous love of honey, with Lust due to his supposed libidinous tendencies, and occasionally with Anger. In fifteenth century *Etymachia* illustrations the bear served as the mount of *Luxuria*,[52] a function it still maintained in some sixteenth century depictions, despite the fact that most Renaissance artists preferred to adopt the ancient tale of the unformed cubs licked into shape by the she-bear as a metaphor of the artistic process.[53]

The pig, boar or swine was conceived in Judaic tradition as an unclean animal and was associated in Christianity with baseness, filth, wicked-

[49] Honorius Augustodunensis, *Speculum Ecclesiae, De Nativitate Domini*, in Migne, *P.L.*172, col.818.

[50] For passages in the Physilogus and Bestiario moralizzato (13th c.?), which compare the wild goat to Christ, see Masper & Granata (as in note 21), 95ff.

[51] See Levi d'Ancona (as in note 21): "*capra*" and "*capretto*", 76–78, for early Christian and Renaissance sources describing the goat as symbol of sin and the sinner.

[52] See Norman (as in note 32), 202–208 for animals associated with each of the Capital Sins, including the bear as the mount of *Luxuria*, in the *Etymachia* illustrations.

[53] This tale was known from Pliny, *Nat. hist.*, VIII.54.126 and was most popular in the bestiaries. See e.g. the *Bestiario Moralizzato*, XVIII (as in note 11), 465, where the tale is used as an analogy to the baptismal rite employed by the Church to spiritually restore the human soul to its 'nature' after its deformation by Original Sin.

ness and voracity. Rabanus Maurus claimed the pig bemired himself in mud as the sinner with his sins.[54] Influenced by Classical sources, it became the standard image of Gluttony in medieval and Renaissance literature and art.[55] In the *Etymachia* illustrations and processions of the Seven Deadly Sins it served as the mount of Gluttony and an attribute of Sloth. As the attribute of St. Anthony, it signified that the saint had overcome the sins of Gluttony and Lust. The pig was also considered lecherous, had associations with the devil and was identified with the Jewish persecutors of Christ. A wild boar could represent sin in general, or madness, and medieval images of boar-hunting signified the destruction of sins. These symbolic meanings were perpetuated in Renaissance emblem books, prints and painting.

Hybrid Creatures

The human-animal hybrid creatures on the lavabo of San Lorenzo follow a long tradition of hybrids on receptacles for ritual purification. There are griffons, satyrs, harpies, chimeras, and myriad animal and human-animal combinations depicted on fonts and *lavabi* between the twelfth and the fifteenth century throughout the West.

The theme of ambiguous creatures in Renaissance art, and the propagation of negative attitudes towards combined manifestations of human and animal forms, will be further elaborated in the next chapter.[56] In medieval sources we find that the concept of hybridization was related in various ways to abnormal or sinful behavior. In the Aberdeen Bestiary, for example, there is repeated censuring in regard to both animal and human interbreeding. In the discussion of the mule, it is said that the great grandchild of Esau 'was the very first to have herds of mares covered by asses in the desert, so that as a result new animals were born of many sires—against nature'.[57] It also mentions that 'wild asses were also put to she asses and the same kind of cross-breeding was obtained', admonishing the various types of 'adulterous interbreeding', through which man obtained new species *contra naturam*. In the same passage pregnant women are warned 'not to look at animals

[54] Rabanus Maurus, *Allegoriae in Sacram Scripturam*, *P.L.*112, col.1061D.

[55] See Rowland, 37–42 and Levi d'Ancona (as in note 21), '*maiale*': 160 & '*porco*': 184–85.

[56] Salisbury (as in note 12), ch. 5: "Humans as animals," 137–59.

[57] The Aberdeen Bestiary (as in note 29), fol.23r.

with very ugly countenances, such as dog-headed apes'. The Aberdeen Bestiary describes hybrid dogs called '*licisici*, wolf-hounds, because they are born of wolves and dogs, when by chance these mate'.[58] The negative connotations of such mating between different species and of the cross-breeds that are thus produced promoted attitudes towards actual animals, such as the mule and the ass.

Late medieval and early Renaissance literature and art frequently portrayed human-animal hybrids. At that time the association of human-animal metaphors and hybrid imagery with conceptions of sin found new artistic expression, and psychologically linked physical transformations of mythical metamorphosis were revived and reinterpreted.[59] Increased internalization of the metamorphosis myths and the popularity of human-animal metaphors in literature and art reflected introspective tendencies of religious experience that were promoted by the mendicant orders.

The rediscovery of the human-animal hybrid in the fifteenth and sixteenth century Renaissance of classical antiquity was a direct source of artistic inspiration. A new ambivalence resulted from the rediscovery of the classical hybrid, as in the case of the Renaissance sphinx, associated with the myth of the enigma, that represented both wisdom and ignorance.[60]

The harpy was a monstrous female demon that became a Christian image of the harlot and conveyed moralizations of sin, penitence and remorse in Renaissance literature and art. A conflation of types is already found in Dante (*Inferno*, canto XIII, 10–12 & 90–102), where the 'uprooted' soul of the man who has committed suicide falls into a wood and takes root as a tree and 'the harpies feeding on its leaves, cause pain and for the pain an outlet'. Dante revived the demonic classical harpy as a tormenting female monster, but in the *Inferno* it also shrieked in lamentation and its punishment caused the sinful soul to lament.

[58] *Ibid.*, fol.20r.

[59] On the exegetical methods of the *Ovid moralisé* and interpretations of metamorphosis, see J. Engels, *Études sur l'Ovide moralisé*, Groningen, 1945 and "Les commentaires de Ovide au XVIe siècle," *Vivarium*, XII, I, 1974, 3–13; Allen (as in note 16), 163–200; L. Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism*, New Haven & London, 1986.

[60] In Alciati's *Emblemata liber* (Augsburg, 1531) the personification of Ignorance was depicted as a sphinx, with a girl's face and torso, bird's feathers and lion's claws. See my discussion of the Renaissance sphinx and harpy in Chapter Nine.

Most of the hybrid creatures mentioned above were characterized as feminine personifications of bestial and inhumane nature. Carl Gustav Jung regarded the sphinx as 'a theriomorphic representation of the libido', assuming that 'the libido so repressed is the animal instinct that has got repressed'. He described the sphinx as 'a monster with the top half of a beautiful maiden, and a hideous serpent below', corresponding 'to the mother imago, above the lovely and attractive human half; below the horrible animal half, changed into a fear-animal by the incest prohibition'.[61]

The griffon is exceptional among the hybrid images of the ritual water receptacles in that it is not feminine. It has the face, beak, talons and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion. Occasionally it has a serpentine tail, as those of the San Lorenzo hybrids, which represents its evil nature. In antiquity it was actually believed to exist and to bear the combined qualities of the eagle and the lion. Of all the hybrids, the griffon was probably the most ambivalent due to the conflicting interpretations assigned to its combined elements. On the positive side, its dual nature became a metaphor for the divinity and humanity of Christ, and it represented his Resurrection.[62] The ancient legend of the griffon as the mount of ascent to the sky, as described in the Romance of Alexander (11th c.), was depicted on a capital of the Cathedral of Bari. As the medium of ascent and a guardian figure, the griffon was carved on Roman sarcophagi, some of which were reused for medieval burials (as at the Camposanto in Pisa), and it survived as a symbol of spiritual apotheosis on classical Renaissance tombs. The guardian function was also preserved on the facades of some medieval churches.

What then is the connotation of the griffon on a *lavabo* or font? Combining the rapacity of the eagle and the ferocity of the lion, the griffon could represent an evil, demoniac or heretic person; he might also be the Antichrist, the devil, or one who persecutes Christians.[63] The griffon fighting other animals frequently conveyed the *psychomachia*

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[61] C.G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation, Collected Works*, vol. 5, London, 1956, 178–82 (nos. 261, 264–266).

[62] On the griffon, see Levi d'Ancona (as in note 21), 142. For reference to this creature on the Pisa font, see below, note 64.

[63] Isidore of Seville described the griffon's hatred of horses and his violent hostility against man, citing it among the ferocious beasts that actually exist: *Etymologiae* XII, I, Eng. trans. by P.K. Marshall, Paris, 1983. In the interior of the Pisa baptistery the griffon is depicted assailing a horse on a console, a scene found also at Pavia, Ferrara Cathedral and elsewhere in the sculpture of the Tuscan Romanesque.

theme, but by the thirteenth century it became a favored image of *Avaritia*'s rapaciousness. On a panel of the font of the baptistery of Pisa, for example, two griffons on the horizontal axis are juxtaposed with two wolves on the vertical axis.[64] Thus griffons and wolves, as we have seen, can both be identified with *Avaritia*.

Combined Animals/Sins: Renaissance Precedents

There are several fundamental questions relating to the iconography of the San Lorenzo *lavabo* which we might now address. How can we explain the selection of these three particular animals, to the exclusion of others, on a fifteenth century *lavabo*? Is there evidence for the continued depiction of animal heads as representations of sins in Renaissance iconography? Are there contemporary sources for the moralizations represented by this imagery? And how, if at all, is the iconography related to Medici patronage in the fifteenth century? The answers to these questions are interrelated, as will be demonstrated in the discussion below.

In several German and Bohemian manuscripts of the early fifteenth century an image of *Frau Welt* is shown as an amalgamated female personification. She is composed of a human head, torso and arms but each of her animal appendages represents one of the capital sins. In one illustration, dated 1414, heads of a mad dog and a voracious wolf, respectively inscribed *Ira* and *Gula*, occupy the center of the composition and seem to emerge from the torn sack of *Avaritia* with its cascading coins (Fig. 74).[65] The peacock feathers on *Frau Welt*'s tiara illustrate the vice of *Superbia*. *Luxuria* is inscribed as an ornament on her chest and is symbolized by a gold cup. *Accidia* is inscribed on her useless, hanging arm. Huge bat-wings probably represent *Invidia* (as explained below). The head of an inverted dragon inscribed *Mors* is shown chewing the single avian claw, marked *Vita*, upon which *Frau Welt* is precariously standing. Several elements anticipate the San Lorenzo composition. These include the two prominent heads of the dog and wolf, paired and identified as specific capital sins, the bat wings as additional signifiers of sin, the adoption of a human-animal hybrid to personify the

[64] Garzelli (as in note 24), pl.Va & 66–68.

[65] See F. Saxl, "A Spiritual Encyclopedia of the Later Middle Ages," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*s, vol. 5, 1942, 83–134, esp. 126–27 & figs. 31a–d.

Fig. 74. *Frau Welt*, Illustration from Ms. Clm 8201, fol.95R, 1414, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

seven worldly sins, and the inverted *draco-serpens* head, which represents the destruction of sin by death.

The Triad

In the study of Titian's Allegory, it has been demonstrated that symbolic images of the wolf, lion and dog (or an equivalent animal) were often combined as a triad of the three major capital sins, *Avaritia, Superbia* and *Luxuria* in early Renaissance art. These are the same three images found on the San Lorenzo lavabo. A triad of animals/sins, as opposed to a series of seven or eight, was the salient motif in the opening passage of Dante's *Inferno* (*Divina Commedia*, canto I, ca.1307–20), which was widely

Fig. 75. Dante, *Divina Commedia, Inferno* I, Venice (Matteo di Codeca da Parma), 1493, woodcut.

illustrated in manuscripts and in the early printed editions (Fig. 75).[66] Dante described 'a leopard light and nimble, which was covered with spotted hair' to represent *Luxuria*, a lion who 'seemed coming upon me with head erect, and furious hunger, so that the air seemed to have fear thereat' as the beast of *Superbia*, and 'a she-wolf, that looked full of all cravings in her leanness; and has ere now made many live in sorrow' as that of *Avaritia*.[67] These three threatening beasts barred his way in the dark forest, on the crossroads of life. We have confirmation from

[66] See P. Brieger, M. Meiss & C. Singleton, *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, 2 vols., Princeton, 1969. The *Divina Commedia* was printed in nine editions between 1472–1497, with woodcut illustrations from the 1480s. By 1596 thirty-nine editions had been published, all of them in Italy, with the exception of five Lyon editions, the latter printed between 1547–1575.

[67] Translations by J.A. Carlyle, *La Divina Commedia*, London, 1938.

a commentary written shortly after Dante's death that these were considered the three most common vices.[68] The fact that in Dante's triad the dog was replaced by the leopard (or ounce) as an image of *Luxuria* probably reflects the penchant for decorative exotic animals that were being imported from the East for aristocratic patrons, as illustrated in many *Quattrocento* paintings of the *Adoration of the Magi*.

Dante's tripartite structuring of the sins of the world was also an adaptation of Aristotle's division of evil dispositions and was a direct borrowing from Peraldus' *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus* (ca.1236), which likewise included animal metaphors, such as the dog and ground mole of *Avaritia*.[69] The *Summa de vitiis* was composed of three sections, and discussions of individual vices maintained the same tripartite structure. In St. Bonaventura's *Speculum animae* (13th c.), *Luxuria, Superbia* and *Avaritia* are described as the main branches of the tree of vices from which other capital sins emerge.[70]

In addition to the Dante illustrations, the tripartite animal/sin image was also proliferated in fifteenth century Italian art through Franciscan iconography, which drew inspiration from contemporary preacher's manuals and their moralizing sermons, as in Cristoforo Cortese's depiction of St. Francis trampling the triad of personified sins (fig. 57).[71] It is probably not a coincidence that Sassetta painted his *St. Francis in Glory* (fig. 58), with personifications of the same three vice, in Siena, where San Bernardino (1380–1444) had recently been preaching. The use of bestial metaphors was central to Bernardino's preaching, as it was to his predecessors, St. Anthony of Padua and Luca di Bitonto (mid 13th c.), and to his contemporary Giovanni Dominici (1356–1420).[72] Regarding vices that can be found in animals, St. Bernardino cited 'lust

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[68] See *L'Ottimo Commento della Divina Commedia, testo inedito d'un contemporaneo di Dante citato dagli Accademici della Crusca*, Pisa, 1827.

[69] See R. Newhauser, *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues in Latin and the Vernacular*, Turnhout, Belguim, 1993, 91–92 and M. Evans, "Peraldus's *Summa* of Vice," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 43, 1982, 14–16.

[70] Bonaventura's *Speculum animae* was included in Robertus Caracciolus, *Sermones quadagesimales de peccatis*, Venice, 1490. His *Opuscula* was printed in Strasbourg, 1495.

[71] On the illustrations of St. Francis with the triad of animals/sins, see Chapter Seven.

[72] On San Bernardino and Dominici, see Ben-Aryeh Debby (as in note 23); F. Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons*, Chicago & London, 1999, esp. 114–119, 121 & 128 and C.L. Polecritti, *Preaching Peace in Renaissance Italy, Bernardino of Siena and His Audience*, Washington D.C., 2000, esp. 89, 121–22, 142–43. On Luca di Bitonto and St. Anthony of Padua, see Moretti (as in note 22).

in the donkey, dog and pig; cruelty in the lion; avarice in the wolf', using precisely those animal *exempla* depicted by Sassetta.[73] It is notable how he used the following animal similes in a sermon: 'Detractors too are beasts of prey who consume their victims. Like rabid dogs, their bloody mouths hang open, crazy to bite. Their mouths stink like those of lions who devour other creatures. They are like bloodsuckers, flies in the ears of dogs. Like birds who feed on snakes, they enjoy eating evil things. And like pigs, they happily put filth in their mouth.' (Siena, 1425).[74] Both Bernardino and Dominici listed Avarice as the worst of the three cardinal sins typical of the Florentines. Vices of money lenders and usurers, the so-called *lupi rapaci*, constituted a central theme in their sermons. The image of the nun with the money bag is an interesting moral satire, aimed at contemporary clerics, but its roots go back to Prudentius, who already used the wolf metaphor of Avarice and described the woman hiding money bags in his *Psychomachia*. While the subject of avaricious and fraudulent prelates was indeed a burning issue, it also followed a long literary and artistic tradition. The selection of a nun is particularly revealing in its misogynistic connotations, as it conflates the avaricious female of the *Psychomachia* with the popular satire of the fraudulent cleric.

Renaissance Animal-Heads

In the Franciscan paintings discussed above a personification of sin was combined with the complete figure of an animal. The depiction of bodiless animal heads to represent visual metaphors of sin continued, as it began, primarily in sculpture rather than painting. There are, however, some examples in prints that appear to mediate between the three-dimensional medieval precedents and various Renaissance interpretations of the theme. We have already noted the dog and wolf-heads of the *Frau Welt* illustrations. In a Venetian engraving of the Tree of Vices, assigned to about 1470–80, the magnified *Regina Superbia* with her lion, as the source of all vices, is flanked by female personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins (Fig. 76). The sins are identi-

[73] Bernardino, *Opera Omnia*, Quaracchi, Collegio San Bonaventura, 9 vols. 1950–65, IX, 429 & B.32.

[74] *Le prediche volgari*, ed. Ciro Cannarozzi, 2 vols., Florence, 1958 (Siena 1425).

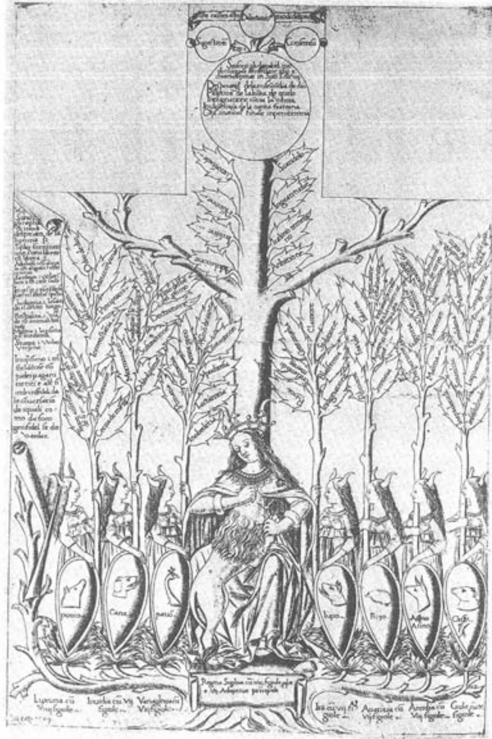

Fig. 76. *Personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins and the Tree of Vices*, Venetian engraving, ca.1470–80, London, British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.

cal, horned females and contain no other identifying visual attributes besides the animal heads on their shields, which serve to identify each one. A woodcut illustration in the *Fioretto de cose nobilissime*, published in Venice in 1508, personifies *Virtus* as a nude female trampling seven animals (sins), visible only as heads that protrude from the ground beneath her feet (Fig. 77). The sinful menagerie is basically the same as that of the medieval sculptures, comprising a wolf, boar, donkey, lion, peacock, dog and goat (?). The late Renaissance survival of the animal triad of capital sins has been demonstrated by Titian's *Allegory* in the National Gallery, London (Fig. 54).[75] Some years later the Elizabethan

[75] See Chapter Seven.

Fig. 77. *Allegory of Virtue Trampling the Vices*, woodcut illustration from *Fioretto de nove cose nobilissimi*, Venice, 1508.

clergyman Edward Topsell, in *The Historie of Four-footed Beasts* (printed in London, 1607 & 1658), remarked that the three heads of Cerberus 'signified a multiplicity of Divels' and belonged to a lion, a wolf and a fawning dog. But the classical Cerberus, which Hercules brought out of Hell, had three canine heads. What Topsell seems to have described was the triple-headed animal of Apollo (ex. Serapis), as described by Petrarch in his *Africa* (1338), with heads of the dog, the wolf and the lion. As Panofsky long ago noted, however, Petrarch's image was 'free from all moralizations', and the heads represented 'the fleeting times'. So when Topsell claimed they 'signified a multiplicity of Divels', he was conflating several images and their meanings, indicating that in the sixteenth century, and probably long before, the moralization of the

three combined animal heads had clearly been reinstated in literature and art.[76] Perhaps these are the devils conceived by St. Augustine as those which control Man before he is liberated through baptism.[77]

The Tuscan Tradition

We have repeatedly referred to Tuscan baptismal fonts decorated with animal heads. A traditional Tuscan style of decorative panels with large rosettes characterized the original twelfth century baptismal font in the Florentine baptistery of San Giovanni, which was mentioned by Dante in the *Divina Commedia* and subsequently destroyed in the sixteenth century. Based on its surviving elements, it was assumedly the model, both in form and decoration, for the font in the baptistery of San Giovanni in Corte, Pistoia by Lanfranco da Como (1226), which in turn influenced the extant octagonal font in the baptistery of Pisa by Guido Bigarelli da Como (1246). Although the remnants of the early Florentine baptistery font slabs contain aniconic decoration, those at Pistoia and Pisa display the moralistic iconography in which paired animal and human heads are juxtaposed to symbolize the spiritual battle and path to Salvation. The Pisan font depicts the familiar menagerie of sin-related creatures that we have discussed above—the ram, horse, ox, bear, monkey, wolf, mule, donkey, goat, griffon, dog and lion (as heads only), metaphorically juxtaposing them with a typology of human heads, as seen in the earlier north European prototypes.

Another more sculptural artistic tradition, related to northern models, is represented by the font at San Frediano, Lucca with its series of animal-head spouts on its upper basin (Figs. 71–73). The Fontana Maggiore, Perugia (1277–78), which was modeled on earlier baptismal fonts and cloister fountains, retains the three-dimensional animal head-spouts that jut out from the upper stone basin, similarly portraying the theme of vices. Despite the diverse styles and influences, both the

[76] Several authors, as discussed in Chapter Seven, have repeated Panofsky's claim that the three animal heads are not moral symbols but are based on a temporal conception found in Giordano Bruno's *De Gli Eroici Furori* (1585); cf. Panofsky (as in note 7), 161. But Topsell's interpretation of them as 'divels' demonstrates that this animal triad was still conceived in terms of vice or sin during Titian's lifetime, and after.

[77] *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia*, see Migne, *P.L.*11, 102–111 for references to St. Augustine on baptism as related to the devil and remission of sins.

decorative and the sculptural traditions of Tuscan fonts and public fountains preserved the same iconography of animals as sins or vices, and would continue to do long afterwards. Even late Renaissance fountains of a classical nature conserved some of the medieval font features. Tribolo's Fountain of the Labyrinth of (ex Villa di Castello, now Villa della Petraia) is a case in point with its octagonal basin and animal-head spouts added by Pierino da Vinci (c.1559).[78]

The Iconography of the Lavabo

Having charted the traditions of animal imagery on ritual objects of purification, both in its broader European context and in its specific Tuscan ambiance, let us now reexamine the San Lorenzo *lavabo*.

It has here been assumed that the three animal heads constitute a triad. We note, however, that the lion-head at the center of the lower basin is separated from the wolf and dog heads that protrude from the sides of the upper basin. When one faces the lavabo, the lion is seen *en-face*, but the other two animal heads are seen in profile. The lion-head is also larger than the other two and appears to be depicted as a spout image. My initial argument in favor of the triadic conception is based on the observation that the paired animal-heads in isolation would be iconographically incomplete. Furthermore, we have consistently seen the triad of the three Capital Sins represented by these very same animals in Italian literature and art, both before and after the creation of the lavabo. While the lion-head is typical of Roman and Renaissance fountain spouts, it is not carved as a spout on the lavabo. Why then is the lion differentiated in size, form and position? I suggest that the answer lies in the iconographical tradition of *Superbia*. St. Augustinus claimed '*Initium omnis peccati superbia*' (cf. *Eccl*, 10, 15; cf. I *John*, 2, 16),[79] and, due to its conception as the source of all other vices, the image was consistently isolated and elevated (figuratively) above the seven or eight Capital Sins. Thus we find personified *Superbia*, depicted in full figure with an identifying inscription, in the center of an engraved Romanesque hand-washing basin from Germany, probably used for

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[78] See B.H. Wiles, *The Fountains of Florence; Sculptors and their Followers from Donatello to Bernini*, Cambridge, Mass., 1933, figs. 39, 40–44, 46, 47–49.

[79] *De civitate Dei* XII, 6. See W.M. Green, "*Initium omnis peccati superbia.* Augustine on Pride as the First Sin," *University of California Publications in Classical Philology*, 13, 1949, 407–3.

ritual purification.[80] Significantly, the sins that are depicted on the periphery of the basin appear only as heads with their hair standing on end. We have seen this well-known image of the madman or sinner on the font of San Frediano in Lucca (Fig. 72). We have also noted another example of *Superbia*'s dominant and magnified position in the Venetian engraving of the late *Quattrocento* showing the tree of the Seven Deadly Sins (Fig. 76).

We might further note the position of the lion's head between the two hybrid creatures. The latter are characterized by their female heads, leonine paws, bat wings, and serpentine tails that intertwine beneath his head and actually connect with the lion's mane. What are the specific components of this figure, and what message do they convey? The imposing bat wings, which are depicted both on the hybrid figures and on the upside-down monster above, are significant here. The bat is most apt as a borderline figure, whose composite nature, conceived as 'neither beast nor bird', further accentuates the sinful connotations.[81] The bat was described in the Bible among the abominable and repugnant fowls, which are not to be eaten (*Leviticus*, 11, 13–19). In analogy to the above quoted prohibition of *Leviticus*, Rabanus Maurus interpreted the bat to represent a mistake that must be avoided.[82] Its Latin name *vespertilio*, deriving from *vesper* (evening), encouraged its medieval association with nocturnal darkness and with the devil. Dante was instrumental in forging bat-wings to the figure of the devil in Italian art. In his description of Lucifer, he wrote:

> Ah, how great a marvel it seemed to me when I saw three faces on his head; one in front, and that was red, the two others joined to it just over the middle of each shoulder and all joined at the crown...Under each came forth two great wings, of size fitting for such a bird, sails at sea I never saw like these; they had no feathers but were like a bat's...(*Div. Comm., Inferno*, XXXIV, 37–50)

Florentine painters of the *Trecento*, such as Giotto (in the Cappella degli Scrovegni, Padua, 1314), Nardo di Cione (in the Strozzi chapel at Santa Maria Novella, Florence, 1350–55) and Andrea Orcagna (in Santa

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[80] W. von Schäfke, "*Initium Omnos Peccati Superbia*; Beobachtungen zu zwei neuerworbenen romanischen graviierten Bronzeschalen im Kölnischen Stadtmuseum," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, XLVII, 1985/86, 157–75.

[81] On the bat, see the *Bestiario moralizzato di Gubbio* (as in note 11), 464 ('*nottola*'); Maspero & Granata, 347–52 ('*pipistrello*') and Levi D'Ancona (as in note 21), 182–83.

[82] Rabanus Maurus, *Allegoriae in Sacram Scripturam* , in Migne, *P.L.*112, col.1077B.

Croce, Florence, ca.1350), as well as Dante illuminators, followed his description in visualizing the figure of Lucifer in Hell. By the fifteenth century most Florentine devils had bat wings.

Because of its supposed blindness in sunlight, the bat also represented those who cannot see the truth, being either heretical or stupid or, in a more philosophical vein, it indicated the inaccessible knowledge of God. The thirteenth century *Bestiario moralizzato di Gubbio* referred to the bat as 'an emblem of those lost in the darkness of sin, who refuse to show themselves to those who could take care of their souls'. A similar idea, related to our context, is found in a sixteenth century emblem of Joachim Camerarius that connects this creature with the guilt and penance of sinful people who escape the light.[83] Leonardo da Vinci wrote: 'the bat, so it is said, due to its uncontrollable lasciviousness does not observe any one universal mode of lasciviousness, thus masculine with masculine, feminine with feminine, if by chance they come together, practice their coitus'.[84] He also related to the bat's avoidance of light, explaining that it represents vice that cannot coexist with virtue. This creature was also connected to the sin of *Invidia*, which probably explains the bat wings of *Frau Welt* in the German illustrations discussed above. In view of all this, we may conclude that the bat wings accentuate the diabolic nature and sinfulness of the feminine hybrid on the San Lorenzo lavabo.

It is notable that the female hybrid on the San Lorenzo lavabo does not conform to any standard classical type and actually derives, despite its antique appearance, from the fourteenth century iconography of Geryon, in illuminations of Dante's *Inferno*, canto XVII. Dante's Geryon is not the mythical figure of Virgil's poetry; he is guardian of the usurers and personifies fraud and, as such, is an instrument of moral criticism explicitly aimed at Dante's Florentine contemporaries. Dante described him with 'the face of a just man, so gracious was its outward aspect, and all the rest was a serpent's trunk; he had two paws, hairy to the armpits, and the back and breast and both the flanks were painted with knots and circlets'. Dante's illuminators of the fourteenth and early fifteenth

[83] J. Camerarius, *Symbolorum et emblematum ex volatilibus et insectis*, Frankfort, 1596, 89.

[84] '*Il pipistrello per la sua sfrenata lussuria, non osserva alcuno universale moda di lussuria, anzi maschio con maschio, femina con femina, siccome a case si trovano insieme, usano il lor coito*.' (ms. H, I 129). See J.P. Richter, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, compiled and edited from the original manuscripts*. 2 vols., London, 1970; vol. II, 321, no. 1234; also 315–34 for additional animal moralizations by Leonardo related to the bestiary tradition.

Fig. 78. Dante, *Divina Commedia, Inferno* XVII, The Usurers; Descent on Geryon, mid 15th c. miniature by Priamo della Quercia, MS. Yates Thompson 36, 30v, London, British Museum.

centuries, having little knowledge of classical hybrids, depicted variants of Geryon as a fantastic *Trecento* monster (Fig. 78).[85] And although they attempted to follow Dante's literary description, some of the illustrators gave Geryon a female face.[86] In fact, the traditional personification of Fraud that survived from late antiquity until the late Renaissance was characterized as a female creature that concealed her malignant nature behind a lovely benign face. The misogynic connotations conveyed by feminine hybrids in antiquity are, consequently, reiterated in these figures. Details, such as the 'knots and circlets' (incised on the sculpted bat wings), the 'serpent's trunk' and the 'two paws' reflect Dante's influence in the lavabo iconography, and yet the benign feminine face

[85] Brieger, Meiss & Singleton (as in note 66), vol. I, 136–38; vol. II, pls. 195–206. For further interpretaions of Geryon, see J. Block Friedman, "Antichrist and the Iconography of Dante's Geryon," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 35, 1972, 108–22.

[86] *Ibid.*, pls. 199a & 206a.

of Fraud and the bat wings had already been adopted by his illuminators from other contemporary visual sources in order to emphasize the dehumanizing effects of sin.

We might question the choice of this particular image for the lavabo. While the use of the animal heads was anachronistic and represented a deliberate revival of traditional medieval symbolism, Dante's Geryon was a familiar symbolic image, with moralistic implications that reflected highly controversial issues in fifteenth century Florence. The preoccupation, during this period, with issues of usury and malpractice in contemporary commerce and financial transactions is documented in the vehement attacks of both secular and ecclesiastical writers, especially in Florence. The censuring of Avarice, as the greatest of evils, was a major theme in the works of early humanists, such as Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459) and Leonardo Bruni (1396–1444), mendicant preachers, like Dominici and San Bernardino of Siena and prelates, like Antonino Pierozzi (1389–1459), who was the prior of San Marco and subsequently the Archbishop of Florence.[87] Even the mendicants themselves were under attack for their supposed hypocrisy in not practicing the rule of poverty that they preached. The symbolic image of the female Geryon conflated the evils of Avarice and Luxury, the latter being an exclusively feminine sin, while both were conceived as expressions of fraud. We may conclude, therefore, that the two female hybrids reiterated the basic themes expressed by the two animal heads above, employing a familiar image whose message would be explicit, legible and meaningful to a fifteenth century viewer. The upside-down monsters in the uppermost section of the lavabo, which repeat the large bat wings, lion legs and serpentine tails, relate the two sections both iconographically and stylistically. They are descendants of the ubiquitous winged monster and *draco-serpens* of late medieval and early Renaissance art.

The San Lorenzo Lavabo and Medici Patronage

The discussion of Medici patronage will commence with several observations, based on my examination of the *lavabo in situ*. The uppermost

[87] See Oppel, Ben-Aryeh Debby, and Newhauser (as in note 23). See Antoninus on Avarice in his *Summa theologia*, Paris, 1521, pt.II, title I and on charity as restitution in '*De restitutionibus*', pt.IV, title 5, ch. 17.

part of the *lavabo*, consisting of the monstrous forms of serpents and bat wings, were indeed inserted in the upper basin and are not attached, but they are carved in precisely the same technique and style as the hybrid creatures below. It may consequently be assumed that the uppermost section was broken off and damaged (i.e. the serpent heads were broken off), with some of the lower parts irreparably destroyed, probably during the Medici exile of 1495–97 or that of 1527 when their monuments were defaced, and was incorrectly reattached by someone who had no idea of its original form and was incapable of restoring its missing parts. In addition, the lower and upper basins seem to be carved from one piece of white marble together with the lower section of the wall panel, indicating that the latter is not a later addition and that the lavabo was originally created in its present structural form as a wall monument. There is no reason to doubt, based on these observations, as well as the documentation, and the logical placement of the lavabo in a space annexed to the *Sagrestia Vecchia* for just such purpose, that this was its original location. Historical and artistic evidence suggests that the *lavabo* was commissioned by Cosimo de' Medici (d.1464) as part of the symbolic and artistic complex of the *Sagrestia Vecchia*, which had been converted by him, together with his brother Lorenzo (d.1440), into a memorial chapel for their parents. The relief carvings of Medici emblems, the wreath and the original porphyry *rota* on the wall panel behind the lavabo, all of different style and workmanship, were probably added later by Piero de' Medici (d.1469). The porphyry *rota* which repeated the motif on the altar-table over Giovanni di Bicci's tomb, was traditionally associated with homage in funerary contexts.[88]

At the very beginning of this chapter it was stated that the San Lorenzo *lavabo* is unique and that its complex decoration is unparalleled in fifteenth century Florence. Let us examine this unique iconography in view of its function as a Medici commission in the *Sagrestia Vecchia* complex. It should be emphasized, first of all, that the altar chapel and its two side rooms, which were not part of the original design, were added to the cubical structure of the *Sagrestia Vecchia* about six years after its initial completion in 1429. The burial of Giovanni de' Bicci (d. 1429) and Piccarda Bueri in the very center of the room marked

[88] See S. McKillop, "Dante and Lumen Christi: A Proposal for the Meaning of the Tomb of Cosimo de' Medici," in F. Ames-Lewis, *Cosimo "il Vecchio" de' Medici, 1389–1464; essays in commemoration of the 600th anniversary*, Oxford, 1992, 245–303, esp. appendix, 289–91.

its conversion into a private burial chapel for the Medici.[89] While the tradition of using chapels as burial places for prominent families developed from the thirteenth century, a precedent for using the sacristy as a private memorial place was established only in the fifteenth century, when Pala Strozzi buried his father in the sacristy of Santa Trinità. The San Lorenzo sacristy, in addition to being a room for the preparation of church services, was consequently conceived as an independent memorial chapel (creating a precedent for Michelangelo's New Sacristy), thus requiring its own service rooms. The *lavabo*, introduced into the service room on the left side of the altar, was consequently designed as part of the Medici memorial complex of the sacristy.[90] This fact has interesting implications when one considers the personalized nature of the monument and its role in Medici propaganda, as demonstrated by the conspicuous placement of the Medici arms on the upper basin, together with the heraldic diamond ring and the banner inscribed SEMPER. The anachronistic animal/sin images were thus juxtaposed with heraldic symbols of spiritual triumph (the garland on the basin), invincibility and perseverance (the diamond) and immortality (the motto SEMPER), reiterating and extending the symbolism of purification and spiritual renewal embodied in the *lavabo* ritual. One might also note the paired dolphins, carved on the inside of the larger basin, which appear to symbolize souls striving for salvation.[91]

An architectural motif of the *lavabo* decoration, that has been entirely overlooked, actually evokes historical associations of resurrection symbolism. The spiral cover of the *lavabo*'s conical structure is a miniature replica of the same design that terminated the original lantern of the *Sagrestia Vecchia*.[92] The latter, in turn, was among the architectural features adopted by Florentines from the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

[89] On the history of the *Sagrestia Vecchia* and its adaptation as a Medici memorial, see E. Battisti, *Brunelleschi, The Complete Works*, London, 1981, 79–97 and H. Klotz, *Filippo Brunelleschi, The Early Works and the Medici Tradition*, London, 1990, 140–.

[90] Klotz (as above) has compared the San Lorenzo lavabo in the annexed service room to one in the baptistery of Padua, which also had a sacristy attached and bore the initials of the patron.

[91] The Romanesque font or water stoup, cited as Dinan no. 1 (BSA), from the church of Saint-Sauveur (Côtes-d'Armor), has a similar depiction of fish 'swimming clockwise' carved on the ribbed interior of the basin. In *France*, *a Phaidon cultural guide*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1985, 240, a 12th c. font is mentioned in the basilica of Saint-Saveur. This is probably the same object identified by A. Chastel (*Histoire général des églises de France*, *Belgique*, *Luxembourg*, *Suisse*, 1966, 288) as a holy water stoup.

[92] See E. Battisti (as in note 89), 81 & fig. 62, 355, note 14.

The form of the mausoleum of Christ, with its inherent connotations of resurrection, was well known in fifteenth century Florence.[93] It served as a model for the sepulchral monument of Giovanni Ruccellai, who had sent to Jerusalem for exact measurements. According to Vespasiano da Bisticci, Cosimo de' Medici was petitioned from Jerusalem to rebuild the mausoleum.[94] The repetition of this architectural motif in the context of the sacristy *lavabo* design underlines its broader symbolic associations, indicating once again that the iconography was conceived in relation to the sacristy complex with its unique function as a Medici memorial.

In his biography of Cosimo de' Medici, Vespasiano gave two motives for the ruler's architectural patronage.[95] The first motive was connected to usury and the expiation of guilt; the second to his desire to construct an enduring monument to himself and his family. Usury, as noted above, was the most censured aspect of avarice in the *Quattrocento* and Cosimo, as co-manager of the Medici bank from 1420, was amassing Medici wealth through profits from financial loans. Furthermore, the assertion of Medici prominence through patronage of religious buildings and institutions, though it may have been aimed towards the expiation of sins and redemption through pious charity, also involved the use of personal and family iconographic propaganda, which constituted another expression of avarice and pride.[96] The *lavabo* was created during a period of transition, just before medieval traditions were largely eclipsed by classicizing form and content. In the spirit of the daily masses held in the sacristy for the souls of the Medici dead, the living patron (i.e. Cosimo) and benefactors of the church,[97] the issues of sin and salvation were confronted through the iconography of the *lavabo*. But the next generation superimposed the eagle above the medieval images of sin, proclaiming the victory of renewal and apotheosis, in keeping with the contemporary slogans of Medici dynastic propaganda.

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[93] See D.V. Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance*, New Haven & London, 2000, 186–97.

[94] *Ibid.*, 188.

[95] Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le Vite*, 2 vols., Florence, 1970–76, ii, 177–78. See C. Elam, "Cosimo de' Medici and San Lorenzo," in F. Ames-Lewis (as in note 88), 157–80 and McKillop (as in note 88), esp. 253–63.

[96] See J. Paoletti, "Fraternal Piety and Family Power: The Artistic Patronage of Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici," in Ames-Lewis (as in note 88), 195–219.

[97] On liturgy and cult in San Lorenzo and its relationship to the sepulchral iconography, see McKillop, (as in note 88), esp. 251–53, 269–70, note 107 & 280.

CHAPTER NINE

ANDREA DEL SARTO'S *MADONNA OF THE HARPIES* AND THE HUMAN-ANIMAL HYBRID IN THE RENAISSANCE

The misleading title, quoted above, that has long been associated with Andrea del Sarto's *Madonna and Child with Saints Francis and John the Evangelist* (signed on the pedestal and dated 1517) (Fig. 79) derives from Vasari's description in the *Vite* of 1550.[1] Thirty-three years after the painting was completed and twenty years after the artist's death, Vasari wrote: 'in una tavola per la chiesa di dette monache [di S. Francesco in via Pentolini], la Nostra Donna ritta e rilevata sopra una base di otto faccie: in sulle cantonate della quale sono alcune arpie che seggono quasi adorando la vergine'.[2] Vasari was frequently oblivious to the iconographic complexities of paintings he described, a failing to which he sometimes admitted but more often concealed, as in this case, beneath his own imprecise and subjective interpretations.

Despite the tenacious title, some modern authors have recognized Vasari's error in identifying the creatures on the Madonna's octagonal pedestal as harpies. In art-historical literature they have been described as harpies, sphinxes or apocalyptic locusts.[3] There has been little consensus regarding their nature or function in del Sarto's painting. The present study will attempt to clarify the function of these eccentric creatures in the iconography of the altarpiece, based on relevant literary and artistic precedents where hybrid creatures are featured in sacred iconography, comparisons in contemporary Italian art, and evidence related to the patronage of a women's monastic community.

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[1] Vasari, G., *Le vite de' più eccelenti architetti, pittori, et scultori*, Firenze, 1550, edited by L. Bellosi & A. Rossi, Torino, 1986, 745 and Firenze, 1568, edited by G. Milanesi, Firenze, 1878–1885, V, 20.

[2] Vasari (as above): '*In a panel for the church of the said nuns [of St. Francis in via Pentoli], Our Lady is erect and elevated above an eight-sided base, on the corners of which are several harpies that are seated as if adoring the Virgin.*' (my translation).

[3] The harpy identification was repeated by I. Fraenckel, *Andrea del Sarto*, Strasbourg, 1935, 216; S.J. Freedberg, *Andrea del Sarto*, 2 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1963, II, 74–78 and R. Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, New York, 1963, 290–91. They were discussed as sphinxes by J. Shearman, *Andrea del Sarto*, Oxford, 1965, 2 vols., I, 47–51. The locust theory was first presented by A. Natali in "L'angelo del sesto sigillo e 'l'altro amico del sposo," *Gli Uffizi, Studi e Ricerche*, 1, 1984, 46–54 and then in his *Andrea del Sarto*, Milano, 1998, 83–87.

Fig. 79. Andrea del Sarto, *Madonna of the Harpies*, 1517, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi. Photograph: Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino.

Documentation of the Painting

From the contract of 14 May 1515 we know that the altarpiece was commissioned from Andrea del Sarto for the high altar of the monastic church of San Francesco in Florence by a monk of the Minorite order who represented the abbess, Sister Iohannis de Meleto.[4] The contract called for a depiction of the blessed Mary 'semper Virginis' with the child in her arms, flanked by two angels who are crowning her. The crowning angels were replaced by two adoring angels who are hugging the Virgin's legs. On either side should have stood St. John the Evangelist and St. Bonaventure, but instead of the latter the artist executed the image of St. Francis. Since no mention is made of a pedestal or its decoration, we may presume these to be Andrea's idea. On the upper

[4] The contract of 1515 was published by Freedberg, II, 74–5 and Shearman, II, 391–92 (as in note 3).

section of the pedestal, below the signature of the artist, is a cartouche that reads AD SUMMŪ. REG(I)NA TRO/NŪ. DEFER/TUR IN AL/TUM (The Queen is Transported to the Supreme Throne High Above) from an antiphon for the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin (written about 1300).[5] Under this inscription is the date M.D.XVII.

Vasari's description included '*un fumo di nuvoli trasparenti sopra il casamento*' (A haze of transparent clouds above the architecture). These clouds, which were no longer visible to the modern viewer, were rediscovered by the restorer Alfio del Serra when he cleaned the painting in 1983.[6] In his biography of Jacopo Sansovino, Vasari described a terracotta model by the sculptor that was used by Del Sarto in designing the figure of Saint John.[7] It has been shown that another of Sansovino's statues, that of St. James in the Florentine Duomo, was a prototype for the Virgin, but these statues did not supply a precedent for the painter's pedestal.[8]

Any interpretation of the painting must take into account the damages it has undergone through the centuries and the restorations that have been undertaken (Fig. 80). The earliest restoration was in the 1600s, after the infiltration of water damaged the entire lower section, followed by one in the 1800s (after it was moved to the Uffizi in 1795), and the thorough cleaning and restoration by Del Serra in 1983 in anticipation of the Del Sarto centennial exhibition of 1986.[9] The *Madonna of the Harpies* was the most damaged of this artist's works during the floods of the Arno in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[10] At that time the so-called harpy on the right side of the pedestal was almost entirely destroyed; the only traces remaining were the border of the right wing and her upper face. These had already been repainted

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[5] The antiphon was composed by Jacopo Gaetani de' Stefaneschi, the patron of Giotto in the Cappella Arena, Padua and is listed in U. Chavalier, *Repertorium Hymnologicum, Catalogue des Chantes, Hymnes, Proses, Sequences, Tropes en Usage dans L'eglise Latine*, 6 vols., Louvain, 1892–1919, IV, 7, no. 34946. The wording there is: '*Ad summi regina thronum defertur in altum. Angelicis Assumptio Beatae Mariae*'. Another version of the text is quoted by Freedeberg (as in note 3), 78.

[6] Alfio Del Serra, "Relazione tecnica sul restauro della Madonna delle arpie di Andrea del Sarto," *Gli Uffizi, Studi e Ricerche*, 1, 1984, 55–59.

[7] Vasari, *Vite*, 1568 (as in note 1), VII, 488.

[8] Natali, 1998 (as in note 3), 86–7.

[9] For a review of the restorations, see Del Serra (as in note 6). The brief review of the restorations presented here is based on a personal communication from Mr. Del Serra, to whom I am indebted for his kind explanations.

[10] See A. Conti, "Quadri Alluvionati 1333, 1557, 1966," in *Paragone*, XIX, 1968, 2, 3–27, esp. 13.

Fig. 80. *Madonna of the Harpies*, Photograph showing areas repainted prior to 1983 restoration. Photograph: Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino.

by the 1600s, presumably based on lines of the original painting or in accordance with the surviving figure on the left. Del Serra did not remove any of the previous restorations but painted over them. We may consequently assume that, despite the severe damage caused to the lower section and subsequent repainting, the original design of the pedestal and its hybrid creatures has been maintained.

Identifying the 'Harpies'

Harpies are 'foul birds' with the head and breasts of a woman and body and limbs of a vulture. The creatures seated on Del Sarto's pedestal indeed have large wings which replace their arms, but their elongated female bodies are entirely human and their long legs become goat-feet at the ankle and end with hooves. The torso is scantily clothed accentu-

ating the large breasts. The knees are parted, exposing the pubic area. Overt eroticism and the blatant defiance of contemporary iconographic codes of feminine decorum signify their sinfulness. The heads are raised towards the Madonna and Child with what appears to be expressions of anguish or despair. The eyes are hollow sockets buried in shadow, as are the round gaping mouths. The erotic tension and the spread legs are common in Andrea's childlike angels, but the lost expression and the tortured sensuality were not typical of his painting and would reach a peak in that of his highly disturbed pupil Pontormo, who worked with him roughly between 1513 and 1518.

John Shearman claimed 'the animals are not harpies, but sphinxes'.[11] According to him, harpies should have female heads, birds' wings and feet and a serpent's tail. The sphinx, however, is part human and part lion, as Renaissance artists well knew, which excludes this definition as well. Ingeborg Fraenckel compared Del Sarto's 'harpies' with those on the sacrificial altar in Raphael's tapestry cartoon for *Paul at Lystra*, as subsequently noted by S.J. Freedberg.[12] There, however, they are lion-footed, which indicates that they are sphinxes.

According to Antonio Natali's theory, [13] the creatures represent the apocalyptic vision, where locusts with powers like scorpions, emerge from a smoking abyss to torment those who lack the seal of God on their foreheads (*Apocalypse* 9, 1–11). The author provided no evidence in the way of visual prototypes or comparative imagery to justify this theory. My own examination of the pictorial sources convinced me that there is no iconographic basis for linking Del Sarto's hybrid figures with the apocalyptic creatures. The original text supplied the following description: 'And the shape of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their foreheads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions' (*Apocalypse* 9, 7–8). The Beatus illustrations of the *Apocalypse*, which established a visual tradition from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, were faithful to the textual description and depicted hybrid animals, based on a leonine body with a horses neck, a horned animal head, strands of human hair and

[11] Shearman (as in note 3), 48.
[12] Fraenckel (as in note 3), 216, n. 48 and Freedberg, (as in note 3), 75.
[13] See Natali, 1998 (as in note 3), 84.

a scorpion's tail.[14] Some variations included the hind legs and wings of the locust or scorpion figures. But I found only one case where there was a suggestion of human facial figures. In other words, there was no precedent for depicting the 'locust' with a human physiognomy. Furthermore, I found no relevant innovations in Renaissance illustrations of the same text.[15] These conclusions only strengthen my conviction that there can be no relationship between Del Sarto's Madonna and such an isolated apocalyptic theme, taken out of context.

Rudolf Wittkower noted that harpies, sirens and sphinxes in similar positions are rather common in religious imagery of the period. He and other authors have stressed that the function of the creature in Andrea's painting was to symbolize paganism superseded by Christianity and/or the triumph of purity over sin.[16] As a theoretical interpretation this might be correct, but such a generalization does not differentiate between specific forms or contexts and it entirely ignores questions raised by the unique and eccentric iconography.

The theories mentioned above were all based upon an identification of the hybrid image. Technically speaking, however, we may conclude that the figures are neither harpies nor sphinxes, and there is no iconographic tradition to support the theory of the apocalyptic locusts. I propose that we first examine the significance of the human-animal hybrid as an expression of attitudes and concepts in late medieval and Renaissance culture and then attempt to analyze the specific physiognomic peculiarities of this figure.

Human-Animal Hybrids

Joyce Salisbury, in her discussion of 'humans as animals', underlined the assumption that humans feel discomfort with ambiguous creatures,

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[14] See J. Williams, *The Illustrated Beatus, A Corpus of the Illustrations of the Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 5 vols., London 1994. For examles of the 'locust' depiction, see the following illustrations: Silos Beatus, I, fig. 33; Urgell Beatus, II, fig. 41; Escorial Beatus, II, fig. 183; Osma Beatus, IV, fig. 33; Turin Beatus, IV, fig. 155. Only the Escorial illumination shows a suggestion of human facial features. See also J. Williams & B.A. Shailor, *A Spanish Apocalypse. The Morgan Beatus Manuscript*, New York, 1991, 88 & fol.142v.

[15] Among the Renaissance Apocalypse illustrations, see 14 woodcuts by Dürer, the Wittenberg Bible of 1522, a series of engravings by Jean de Tournes of 1556 and 24 plates issued by Jean Duvet in 1561. See descriptions in M.R. James, *The Apocalypse in Art*, London, 1931.

[16] This was suggested by Vasari, in 1550 (as in note 1), 745 and was repeated by Fraenckel (as in note 3), 216 and Wittkower (as in note 3), 291.

especially those that violate the boundaries between the categories of human and animal.[17] The early medieval definition of humans by what they were not (i.e. animals) altered, she claims, with the metaphoric linking of humans and animals in the twelfth century. Despite the taboos established to protect the boundaries between the two, they exerted a fascination that usually accompanies the forbidden. The concept of hybridization was related in various ways to abnormal or sinful behavior. The monstrous conjoining of part human and part animal expressed a threatening dualism or hypocrisy, which found expression in Medieval and Renaissance literature and art.[18] In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the association of human-animal metaphors and hybrid imagery with conceptions of sin found new artistic expression, notably in Franciscan circles. The late medieval revival and reinterpretation of the classical myths of metamorphosis, as reflected for example in the popularity of the *Ovid Moralisé*, brought to the fore issues of psychologically linked physical transformations.[19] Moralizing interpretations generally explained physical metamorphosis as the external manifestation of the bestial nature within. We have noted that the increased internalization of the metamorphosis myths and the popularity of human-animal metaphors in Renaissance literature and art may be associated with introspective practices of the mendicant orders.

No less significant for the rediscovery of the human-animal hybrid was the Renaissance of classical antiquity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Hybrid creatures, such as sphinxes, harpies, sirens, griffons and centaurs, carved on Roman sarcophagi, candelabras, altars and temple friezes, were a direct source of artistic inspiration. Renewed interest in classical literary sources, and their translation and diffusion through the medium of the printing press, facilitated a direct approach to the mythical hybrid creatures, unmediated by centuries of medieval interpretation. A new ambivalence resulted. The sphinx, for example, (literally 'strangler' in Greek) was the malicious female demon of the Oedipus legend, who posed a riddle to trap and destroy her male victims. She was also associated in antiquity with both wisdom and ignorance,

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[17] J. Salisbury, *The Beast Within, Animals in the Middle Ages*, New York & London, 1994, esp. Ch. 5: 137–66.

[18] See W.J. Travis, "Of Sirens and Onocentaurs; A Romanesque Apocalypse at Montceaux-L'Etoile," *Artibus et historiae*, 45, 2002, 29–52.

[19] See C. Lord, *Some Ovidian Themes in Italian Renaissance Art*, (Phd. Dissertation, Columbia University) Ann Arbor, 1969 and H. Walter & H.J. Horn (eds.), *Die Rezeption der Metormophosen des Ovid in der Neuzeit: Der Antike Mythos in Text und Bild*, (Int. Symposium, Hamburg, 1991), Berlin, 1995.

as well as with the mysteries of religion.[20] Probably due to her association with Athena-Minerva as the goddess of wisdom, the sphinx was appropriated for the throne of the Madonna in her symbolic role as *Sedes Sapientiae* (the throne of Wisdom) by Renaissance sculptors, such as Donatello (Sant'Antonio, Padua) and Agostino di Duccio (marble relief, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).[21] The Renaissance sphinx, however, was basically ambivalent and, following its association with the myth of the enigma, continued to represent both wisdom and ignorance.[22] Mantegna depicted two female sphinxes in an allegory of Virtue and Vice, known as *Virtus Combusta* (about 1490–1500), as part of the spherical base supporting a nude, obese female who represents Ignorance and Fortune combined (Fig. 81).[23] Alciati, in his *Emblemata liber* (Augsburg, 1531), made the sphinx, with a girls face and torso, bird's feathers and lion's claws, the very personification of Ignorance (Fig. 82).[24] He listed the causes of this vice as frivolity, promiscuity and pride, vices that were traditionally assigned to the female nature in general. In 1559 Paolo Giovio, in his *Dialogo dell'imprese militari ed amorose*, created an emblem of the sphinx with the motto *Incerta animi decreta resolvet* (She resolves uncertain decrees of the soul) based on the saying by Erasmus of Rotterdam '*Sphingis aenigmata dissolvit*' (He solves the enigmas of the sphinx).[25]

The harpy (*harpia*), whose name was derived from the Greek word *arpázo*, 'to seize', was a female monster of insatiable hunger, known as

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[20] On aspects of the sphinx in antiquity, see S. Hassan, *The Great Sphinx and its Secrets*, Cairo, 1953.

[21] See L. Goldsheider, *Donatello*, London, 1941, 31–32, figs. 90–94; H.W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello*, Princeton, 1963, 184–85 & pl.82 and M. Greenhalgh, *Donatello and His Sources*, London, 1982, 148–56, figs. 97–100. Greenhalgh elaborates on the question of the sphinx and sphinx-throne in ancient and medieval art. The throne of Antonio Lombardo's Madonna in the Cappella Zen, San Marco, Venice, is an interesting variant, where the bodies of hybrid females on the arm-rest are transformed into floral motifs rather than lions. See N. Huse & W. Wolters, *The Art of Renaissance Venice*, Chicago & London, 1990, pl.12.

[22] On aspects of the sphinx in High Renaissance literature and art, see L. Piovano, "La Sphinge di Valerio Saluzzo della Manta. Un manoscritto illustrato della Biblioteca Reale di Torino per Margherita di Valois," *Bolletino di Cuneo*, 102–103, 1990, 5–24.

[23] See R. Lightbown, *Mantegna*, Oxford, 1986, 485–86 & figs. 222 & 239A & B.

[24] M.A. De Angelis, *Gli emblemi di Andrea Alciato nella edizione Steyner del 1531. Fonti e simbologie*, Salerno, 1984, 190–93.

[25] P. Giovio, *Dialogo dell'imprese militari ed amorose*, 1559, edited by M.L. Doglio, Roma, 1978, 15 & 142.

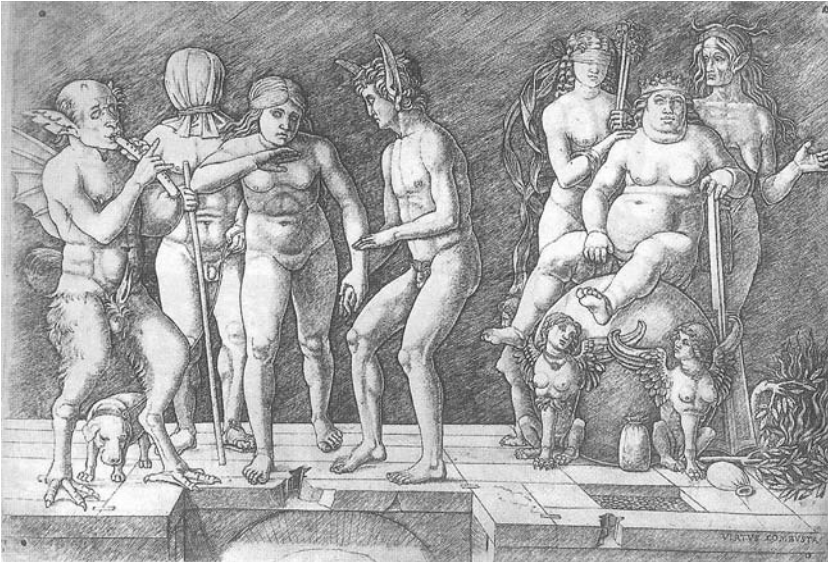
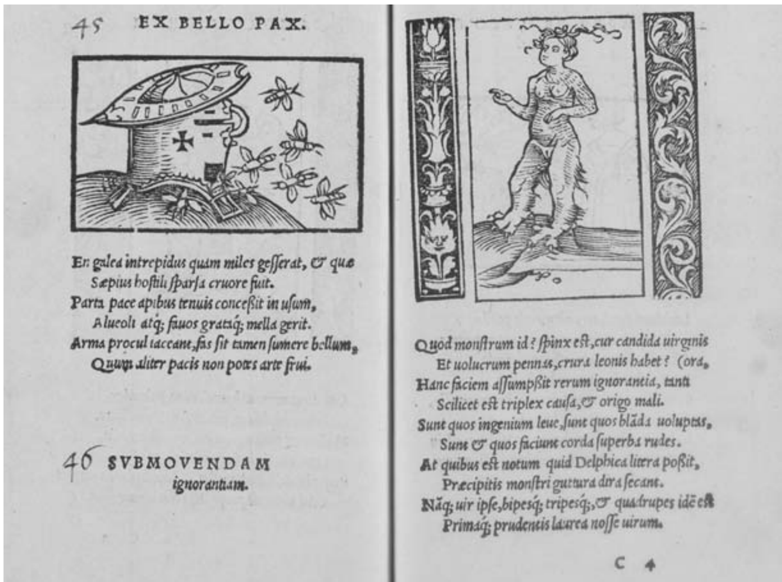


Fig. 81. Engraving based on Andrea Mantegna's drawing *Virtus Combusta*, ca.1490–1500, London, British Museum.



45 EX BELLO PAX.

En galea intrepidus quam miles geſſerat, & quæ
Sæpius hoſtili ſparſa cruore fuit.
Parta pace apibus tenuis conceßit in uſum,
Alueoli atq; fauos grataq; mella gerit.
Arma procul iaceant, fas ſit tamen ſumere bellum,
Quum aliter pacis non potes arte frui.

46 SVBMOVENDAM ignorantiam.

Quod monſtrum id? ſphinx eſt, cur candida uirginis
Et uolucrum pennas, crura leonis habet? (ora,
Hanc faciem aſſumpßit rerum ignorantia, tanti
Scilicet eſt triplex cauſa, & origo mali.
Sunt quos ingenium leue, ſunt quos blãda uoluptas,
Sunt & quos faciunt corda ſuperba rudes.
At quibus eſt notum quid Delphica litera poßit,
Præcipitis monſtri guttura dira ſecant.
Nãq; uir ipſe, bipesq; tripesq;, & quadrupes idẽ eſt
Primaq; prudentis laurea noſſe uirum.

C 4

Fig. 82. *Submovendam ignorantiam*, illustration from Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum Liber*, Augsburg, 1534, Glasgow University Library, Department of Special collections, Sp Coll S.M. 20, emblem 46, C4r.

temptress, seductress and tormenter of victims.[26] These human-headed birds punished the blind seer Phineus because of his hubris. In the early church the harpy, like the siren, became an image of the harlot.[27] In the later medieval period it conveyed a moralization that was still described in German literature of the fifteenth century.[28] According to a legend, harpies that have human faces but no human virtues, kill the first people they meet. Later they come to a pond and see there not only their own reflections, but also those of the people they have slain. Stricken with remorse, they weep for the rest of their lives. This moralization was conveyed by two un-classical looking harpies, one male and the other female, in Lucas Cranach's *St. Jerome in Penitence* (Fig. 4).[29] Thus the monstrous seizer of antiquity was appropriated as a Christian image of seduction and then of penitence and remorse. Concurrently, however, the '*brutte Arpie*' reappeared as tormenting female monsters in Dante's *Inferno* (canto XIII, 10–12 & 90–102) and their demonic classical identity was revived by the Italian Renaissance.

It should be emphasized that most of the hybrid creatures discussed above were characterized as feminine and personified aspects of bestiality, inhumanity and inferiority, which were ingrained in gender perception. The threat of female sexuality to the male victim is reasserted as a *leitmotif* in legends of the sphinx, the harpy, the siren, and various conflations thereof, from classical antiquity until the Renaissance. I suggest that these connotations, reiterated and readapted in the context of Marian doctrine and female monasticism is the key to Andrea del Sarto's altarpiece.

The Franciscans and Marian Iconography

Del Sarto's altarpiece was commissioned for the church of a Franciscan convent. We have noted that the contract for the painting originally called for the image of the Franciscan theologian St. Bonaventure (1221–74), who served as the second general of this Order, and that

[26] It is interesting to note that in Sanskrit the word *grāhi* (from *grāha*—to seize) denoted a female spirit who seized men and caused death and diseases, and *grābha* was 'one who seizes'—a demon causing diseases, while *grāhaka* was a hawk or falcon (i.e. a rapacious bird).

[27] See D. Hassig, "The Harlot: the Siren," in her *Medieval Bestiaries*, Cambridge, 1995, ch. 10: 104–15.

[28] See H. Friedmann, *A Bestiary for Saint Jerome*, Washington D.C., 1980, 128–29.

[29] Friedmann (as above), 222–23 & figs. 94–101.

the artist replaced him with St. Francis as one of the saints flanking the Madonna. To what extent is Franciscan patronage reflected in the iconography? Can we find evidence in Franciscan sources for the kind of gender perceptions discussed above? And how does the hybrid creature relate to the Marian theme of the altarpiece?

In his *Life of St. Francis* Bonaventure described how his predecessor had transformed the bestial in wild creatures.[30] His animal miracles were in the same tradition as those of the early Christian saints whose sanctity was marked by such powers. While communication with the animal world presented no obstacle to his mystical strivings, contact with women was deemed treacherous. St. Francis commanded the friars to avoid contacts with women, 'which have led many to a fall'.[31] He claimed that it is as easy for one who has much contact with women, unless he be a man of the most proven virtue, to avoid contamination from them as to walk in fire and not to burn one's feet. And he warned: 'Out of too much self confidence one is less on guard against the enemy, and if the devil can claim as his own even one hair from a man, he will soon make it grow into a beam'.[32] In *The Soul's Journey into God*, Bonaventure wrote that we are 'deformed by sin and reformed by grace…whoever wishes to ascend to God must first avoid sin, which deforms our nature'.[33] The Franciscan Alexander de Hales, who had taught St. Bonaventure in Paris, claimed that monstrous men were human because such deformity could only result from sin and only humans could sin.[34]

I would like to underline the connection between the iconography of Del Sarto's Madonna altarpiece and that of the theme of the Immaculate Conception. Throughout the centuries the Franciscan Order promoted the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which sought to absolve the Virgin of Original Sin, supposedly transmitted to her by St. Anne.[35] The Feast of the Conception was officially

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[30] See *Major and Minor Life of St. Francis with Excerpts from other Works*, trans. from the Latin by B. Fahy, Chicago, 1973 and Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God. The Tree of Life. The Life of St. Francis*, trans. by E. Cousins, New York, 1978, 177 and A. Linzey & T. Regan, *Animals and Christianity; A Book of Readings*, New York, 1988.

[31] Bonaventure, 1978 (as above), 221.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Ibid.*, 62–63.

[34] Alexander de Hales, *Summa Theologia*, vol. III, Secunda Pars, Secundi Libri, Florence, 1930.

[35] For this theme in history and art, see A.M. Lepicier, *L'Immaculée Conception dans l'Art et L'Iconographie*, Liège, 1956; N. Mayberry, "The Controversy over the Immaculate Conception in Medieval and Renaissance Art, Literature and Society," *Journal of*

accepted by the Franciscans at the Council of the Order in 1263. A late thirteenth century treatise attributed to the Franciscan Ramon Lull proclaims '*beatae Virginis Mariae sine labe conceptae*' (Blessed Virgin Mary spotlessly conceived). Although the Dominicans rejected the concept, the Immaculist Franciscans persisted in the debate, and the doctrine was officially proclaimed in the council of Basel in 1439 and was recognized by Pope Innocent VIII in 1491. The cult of the Immaculate Conception was propagated primarily in Spain from the late fifteenth century on, and it was there in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that the iconography took on its definitive form as the vision of the Apocalyptic Woman standing, with or without the child in her arms, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head (*Apocalypse*, XII. 1). In some versions of this iconography the standing Virgin tramples a large dragon, symbol of her triumph over sin. Prior to the late sixteenth century the Apocalyptic Woman was accepted as an image of the Virgin of the Assumption. The inscription on Del Sarto's pedestal, as we recall, is taken from an antiphon for the Feast of the Assumption.

In Italy of the early 1500s the theme of the Immaculate Conception had not yet taken on a conventional artistic form and was still depicted in various ways. A Franciscan altarpiece of the *Madonna* (1504) by Marco Melone, where she is enthroned on a high base ornamented with two sphinxes and is crowned by angels, was identified by Shearman as Immaculist.[36] A sculpted altarpiece of the *Immaculate Conception* by Giovanni della Robbia (S. Lucchese, 1514/15) provides valuable evidence of Franciscan Immaculist iconography in Tuscany precisely at the time of Andrea del Sarto's Franciscan commission (Fig. 83).[37] At the center is St. Anne, flanked on the left by St. Francis and on the right by St. Anthony of Padua, presenting Mary, the immaculate infant. She is standing on a pedestal adorned with two well endowed sphinxes, whose wings flank a cartouche bearing the inscription *Qui elucidant me vitam eternam haberunt* (Those who elucidate me will have eternal life) (Fig. 84).

The predella reliefs depict narratives from the legends of Saints Francis, Bonaventure, Louis of Toulouse and Anthony of Padua. St.

Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 21, 2, 1991, 207–24 and S.L. Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art*, Cambridge, 1994.

[36] Shearman (as in note 3), I, 49 & note 1.

[37] See A. Marquand, *Luca della Robbia. Giovanni della Robbia*, New York, 1972, 81–82.

Fig. 83. Giovanni della Robbia, *The Immaculate Conception*, ca.1515. Glazed Terracotta Altarpiece, Church of San Lucchese near Poggibonsi. Author's photograph.

Fig. 84. Detail of Giovanni della Robbia, *The Immaculate Conception*, ca.1515. Author's photograph.

Ambrose and St. Augustine appear in roundels above. Inscriptions on scrolls held by the various saints all relate to the immaculacy of the Virgin and her power to redeem from sin. The quotation '*Tota pulcra es amica mea et macula no(n) est in te*' (Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee; *Song of Solomon*, IV, 7) was a standard verse applied to Immaculist iconography in the fifteenth century and is suitably presented here by King Solomon who stands above the entablature. Opposite is King David who presents the quotation '*Queretur pecata illus no(n) invenietur*' (Seek out his wickedness till thou find non; *Psalms*, X, 15). Although the central figure is St. Anne, she is comparable to the Madonna of Del Sarto in that she is standing with the child on a pedestal that is decorated by female hybrid creatures, which frame a ritual inscription in a cartouche. Both altarpieces contain references to the Virgin as Queen of Heaven; Della Robbia quotes the appellation '*alt(issima) regina*' (Most Sublime Queen), which is echoed in Del Sarto's '*Ad summum Regina tronum defertur in altum*', and St. Francis is depicted on the left side of the Virgin in both. It is my contention that the hybrid creatures in Del Sarto's painting fulfill the same function as the references to Original Sin in Della Robbia's altar.

A hybrid creature, comparable to that of Del Sarto, is located under the throne of a seated *Madonna* painted by Giovanni Mansueti in Venice during the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century (Fig. 85).[38] Unlike the elegant sphinxes that adorn the Virgin's *sedes sapientiae* (throne of Wisdom), this crouching figure of uncertain gender appears to be a satyr with horns and goat-legs. Like the goat-legged females on Del Sarto's pedestal the figure seems to convey despair. In contemporary Italian paintings of the *Madonna del Soccorso* (Madonna of Succor), similar satyr-like creatures, combining a human torso with goat-legs and horns, represented the devilish powers of evil that are vanquished by the Virgin.

Before the mid sixteenth century an innovative Italian version of the *Immaculate Conception* included a winged hybrid monster that represented Original Sin. Giorgio Vasari's *Allegory of the Immaculate Conception* (about 1543) shows the Virgin as Queen of Heaven with one foot on the head of a winged monster that is, in fact, the serpent of the Garden of Eden

[38] This drawing was reproduced in F. Heinemann, *Bellini e i Belliniani*, Venice, 1962, 633 as ex. Coll., Amsterdam. The present location is unknown to me.

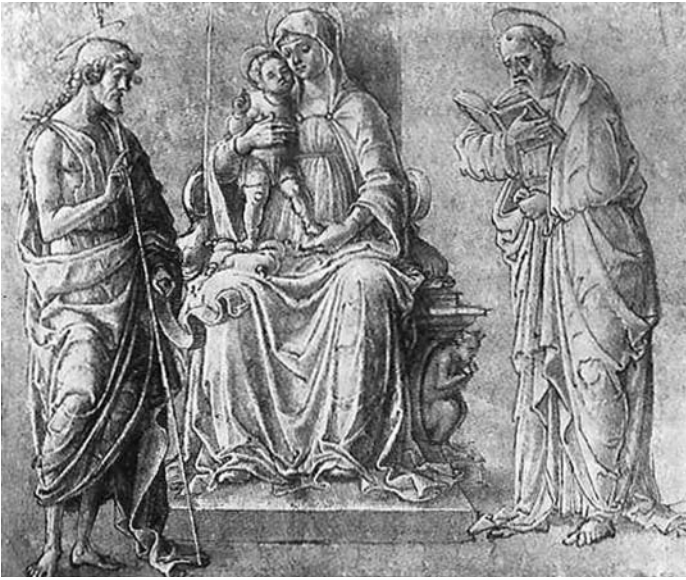

Fig. 85. Giovanni Mansueti (d.ca.1527), *Madonna and Child with Saints*, early 16th c., location unknown (photograph reproduced from Fritz Heinemann, *Giovanni Bellini e I Belliniani*, 2 vols., Venezia, 1962, 633).

with a human torso (Fig. 86).[39] Below lie the contorted bodies of Adam and Eve and the early sinners entwined in the branches of the dead tree from which the Virgin ascends to bestow her grace. The message borne by angels says QUOS EVAE CULPA DAMNAT/MARIAE GRATIA SOLVIT (Those condemned by the sin of Eve are saved by the grace of Mary). The human-animal monster, as the traditional signifier of sin and inhumanity, reflects the internalization of the myth of the Fall of Man. We read that it was the single-handed 'sin of Eve' by which humanity was condemned.

We might note one more aspect of Franciscan iconography that is relevant to the Del Sarto altarpiece before summarizing the significance of the so-called 'harpies' on the pedestal. As noted above, crowning angels that were specified in the contract were replaced by adoring angels that caress the legs of the Virgin. Expressions of ecstatic, unmediated emotional identification with a sacred figure were common in the art

[39] See J. Dunkerton, S. Foister and N. Penny, *Dürer to Veronese, Sixteenth Century Painting in the National Gallery*, New Haven & London, 1999, 32–35.

Fig. 86. Giorgio Vasari, *Allegory of the Immaculate Conception*, ca.1543. Copyright Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

of the mendicant orders in general and in that of the Franciscans in particular. In a later version of the *Immaculate Conception* by the Spaniard Vicente Carducho (1631) St. Francis is depicted in adoration, embracing the trunk of the tree that supports the Virgin and Child and nearby is the serpent, depicted to signify Original Sin.[40]

Iconography for Nuns

It has been demonstrated that the iconography of the Del Sarto altarpiece reflects Franciscan doctrine and artistic conventions. The identification of the Franciscan theme of the Immaculate Conception may be further supported by the depiction of St. John the Evangelist holding the book in which he had supposedly described his vision of the Apocalyptic Woman. Although specific elements of that vision are not depicted here, the source was already used at that time to prove that Mary was conceived in the mind of God.

[40] Stratton (as in note 35), 20, fig. 9: This was the main canvas for the altarpiece of the Conception in the church of San Gil, Madrid.

This theme had special relevance for monastic women, who took the vows of chastity and undertook the asceticism of the cloister in the desire for Redemption from Original Sin. The burden of guilt and intense preoccupation with penance was not unrelated to misogynist conceptions, which many nuns assimilated.[41] Asceticism and enclaustration was designed to control those seductive and contaminating traits inherent in all females. But even monastic women, after taking the vows of chastity, obedience and poverty, could not be cleansed of the stigma of Eve.[42] Thomas of Celano, in his legends of St. Francis, related that when he heard a friar call the nuns sisters, the saint claimed 'God has taken away our wives, and now the devil gives us Sisters'.[43] The Virgin Mary, because of her sex, virginal purity and redemption of another woman (Eve), was conceived as the savior of women in general and as the advocate of consecrated women in particular.[44]

We have seen that the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception was depicted in the sixteenth century in a standing and elevated position, frequently trampling a hybrid monster. It should be noted that female saints, venerated by nuns and other female members of mendicant religious orders, were generally depicted in the same manner—as standing figures, elevated on platforms above their kneeling adherents, and trampling a monster. Such paintings were commissioned by convents. The altarpiece of the Blessed Osanna Andreasi, probably painted for a Dominican convent by Francesco Bonsignori (about 1519), follows this pattern (Fig. 87). The fact that Del Sarto's Virgin is standing like a statue (and actually patterned on one), and is placed upon a pedestal as well as a platform, emphasizes this aspect of ritual veneration. This is not the seated Madonna of the *Sacra Conversazione* but a cult figure, and it remains for us to imagine the community of Franciscan nuns kneeling before the transcendental image on their high altar to pray for Redemption.

Why then are the hybrids females? Because female hybrids traditionally represented and personified treacherous aspects of female sexuality and seduction, which is precisely the connotation they bear here. It is

[41] On conceptions of Original Sin in relation to consecrated women, see A. Dunlop, "Flesh and the Feminine; Early Renaissance Images of the Madonna with Eve at her Feet," *Oxford Art Journal*, 25, 2, 2002, 127–48.

[42] See J.M. Wood, *Women, Art and Spirituality, the Poor Clares of Modern Italy*, Cambridge, 1996, esp. 22–24.

[43] *Ibid.*, 23.

[44] Dunlop (as in note 41), 145.

Fig. 87. Francesco Bonsignori, *The Blessed Osanna Andreasi*, ca.1519, Mantua, Palazzo Ducale.

interesting to compare this with an *Assumption* that was painted by Del Sarto in the 1520s for the wealthy Florentine merchant Bartolomeo Panciatichi (Fig. 88). There too a pseudo-classical hybrid is symbolically pictured as a monumental relief in the lower section of the painting. A powerful vertical axis emphasizes the contrast between the terrestrial below and the celestial above. The figure on the empty sarcophagus of the Madonna, however, is a muscular male herm, half human and half stone; he has no arms and his feet are tied by a rope—signifying the terrestrial shackles of sensual existence that Michelangelo in his poetry called the '*carcer terreno*' (the earthly prison).[45] The fact that a male hybrid was an apt expression of the human condition here, as in

[45] See e.g. *per ritornar là donde venne fora,/l'immortal forma al tuo carcer terreno/venne com'angel di pietà sì pieno, che sana ogn'intelletto e 'l mondo onora'* (In order to return to where it came from, the immortal form came down to your earthly prison like an angel so full of compassion that it heals every mind and honors the world) translated by J.M. Saslow, *The Poetry of Michelangelo*, New Haven and London, 1991, 238.

Fig. 88. Andrea del Sarto, *Assumption of the Virgin*, 1520s, Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina. Photograph: Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino.

most comparable contexts, further highlights the gender implications of the sinful female creatures and the misogynic message they conveyed to their female spectators.

We may assume that Del Sarto conceived of eight identical figures on the corners of the octagonal pedestal. Besides the two frontal figures there are two additional ones partially visible in profile. These eight creatures are not simply replacements for the monster trampled by Mary. One can only speculate on their multiplication and the meaning of their number. Sixteenth century penitential books, which played an enormous part in popularizing the cardinal sins through sermons and penance, continued to list eight sins rather than seven.[46] Perhaps the number eight has a cosmic significance, signifying the proliferation

[46] See H.W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, East Landsing, MI, 1967, 99.

Fig. 89. *Chidbirth scodella*, Patanazzi workshop, Faenza, 16th c., Maiolica, Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche, Faenza.

Fig. 90. *Ceramic Apothecary Jar*, siena, ca.1515. Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres, Photo RMN.

Fig. 91. *Ceramic Flask*, Urbino, second half of the 16th c., Florence, Museo Nationale de Bargello.

of sin in the terrestrial domain below as opposed to the Immaculate Virgin's Assumption in the celestial realm above.

Images of Eroticism and Fertility

The specific physical characteristics of the hybrid creatures on the pedestal, with their voluptuous torsos, wings and satyr-like goat-feet, do not entirely conform to any of the classically derived images that were discussed above. The fact that they were a capricious and eclectic variant created by the artist should not surprise us. This period ushered in the flowering of so-called grotesque ornamentation, where erotic

hybrids abounded in uninhibited decorative fantasies. The sphinx, the harpy, the satyr, the centaur, and free variations thereof, multiplied in sculpture, painting and prints. It is significant that Andrea del Sarto, in his frescoes of the Chiostro del Scalzo (ca.1507–1515 and 1521–22), did not reproduce the so-called 'harpy' image when he framed Stories of the Baptist with grotesque motifs on illusionary pilasters. But painted decorations on sixteenth century Italian *maiolica* (ceramics), particularly on objects created for feminine consumption, further illustrate its iconographic associations. A contemporary childbirth plate, for example, depicts a nude woman in a birth position, with spread legs that become transformed into goat-feet and sprout wings (Fig. 89). The similarity of this to Del Sarto's figure raises the question of the childbirth theme (*a propos* Original Sin) as a possible connotation there. A double-bodied female sphinx with goat-feet painted on an *albarello* (apothecary jar) also appears related to the theme of female fertility, and the jar may have contained a relevant herb or medication (Fig. 90). By the second half of the sixteenth century many of the female hybrids painted on *maiolica* products, especially those of the Urbino School, followed the type shown on Del Sarto's pedestal. One such example can be seen on a flask, where the winged female hybrid, with spread goat-legs is suggestively positioned above an erotic scene (Fig. 91). As this female hybrid was transformed into a pseudo-classical image of erotic fantasy, her sinful connotations were sublimated under the veil of poetic license.

CHAPTER TEN

THE AMBIVALENT SCORPIO IN BRONZINO'S LONDON ALLEGORY

There is more concealed than revealed in the Allegory by Agnolo Bronzino (ca.1545) now in the National Gallery of London (Fig. 92). Concealment is a strategy of the painter's iconography but it also defines the nature of its theme. The Allegory is unique, even among Bronzino's paintings, in its subject and approach, and in the way that it deals with an aspect of obscurity by means which are themselves obscured. This statement may initially appear farfetched when we consider that the main protagonists of Bronzino's narrative are easily identified and their illicit behavior seems to leave little to the imagination. The nude figures of Venus and her son Cupid are revealed in an incestuous erotic relationship. The hand of Cupid on the nipple, the protruding tongue of Venus and the suggestive interrelated positions of the two figures, especially that of Cupid on the pillow, allude to the inevitable gratification of their lust. What appears to be a golden apple in the lowered left hand of Venus is juxtaposed with the arrow in her raised right hand. Above looms the winged Father Time, typically aged and bearing his hourglass. There is nothing concealed about him, except for what lies behind his villainous smile. By pulling back a blue curtain he is actually in the act of revealing.

The identities and roles of the four subordinate figures are controversial. At the upper left is the Classical profile of a woman whose facial expression seems to proclaim her shocked distaste as she aids Father Time. Restorations have altered the original form of her head which, judging from early copies, carried a wig-like mass of wavy hair.[1] Below her is a tortured figure of doubtful gender, only partly visible behind the protruding buttocks of Cupid, with a phallic sheath jutting out below.[2]

[1] This head was identified as Truth (Panofsy), Fraud (Levey), Oblivion (Hope & Conway) and Virtue as Chastity (Cheney). For these and other bibliographical references, see note 5 below.

[2] Cupid's buttocks were masked by a myrtle plant which was added, probably in the seventeenth century, and was still described by Panofsky (1939). On the changes made by restorers in different periods and the affect these have had on interpretations,

Fig. 92. Agnolo Bronzino, *Allegory*, ca.1545.
Copyright London, National Gallery.

The face of this hidden figure is characterized by distorted features; his mouth expresses a gaping cry, his eyes are glazed in delirium and his claw-like fingers grasp a mass of disheveled hair from which sweat-soaked strands are falling out.[3] The figure is not only obstructed, it recedes into the dark shadows of the background in contrast to Venus and Cupid who are starkly illuminated in the foreground. The next unidentified figure is that of the jolly, golden-haired boy who is about

see J. Anderson, "A 'most improper picture': Transformations of Bronzino's Erotic Allegory," *Apollo*, 139, 1994, 19–28 and C. Plazzotta and L. Keith, "Bronzino's 'Allegory': New evidence of the Artist's Revisions," *Burlington Magazine*, vol. CXLI, no. 1151, February 1999, 89–99.

[3] This figure was identified as Vasari's *Gelosia* (Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccelenti pittori, sculptori ed architettori*, G. Milanesi ed., Florence, 1907, 9 vols., VII, 598) by Levey, Gould, Hope, Smith and Moffitt and as a victim of syphilis by Conway and Healy (as in note 5 below).

Fig. 93. Agnolo Bronzino, *Allegory*, ca.1545, detail of monster-girl. Copyright London, National Gallery.

to throw roses on the amorous couple. He is nude but for the bells on one foot. Finally, we come to the most intriguing protagonist—the monster-girl whose hybrid shape is hidden in the shadows behind the nude boy as she crouches to glimpse the action (Fig. 93). She has the face of an innocent young girl,[4] and is attired in colorful, precious silks with a large gold broach on her shoulder and a string of pearls in her modest coiffure. But her upper limbs are distorted, especially on her

[4] This figure was identified as Vasari's *Gelosia* (Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccelenti pittori, sculptori ed architettori*, G. Milanesi ed., Florence, 1907, 9 vols., VII, 598) by Levey, Gould, Hope, Smith and Moffitt and as a victim of syphilis by Conway and Healy (as in note 5 below).

left side where the hand does not appear to be attached to a normal arm. In her right hand she offers a honey-comb; in her left she hides a scorpion whose curved tail protrudes between her fingers. Her body is covered with alligator scales and she has the legs of a lion and the tail of a serpent. This tail leads the eye to two masks which are differentiated by gender and color. Additional attributes on the left are the two doves of Venus, a plant and laurel leaves in the upper corner.

Despite ongoing debates concerning the identification of the subordinate figures, there has been a considerable amount of consensus regarding the overall message conveyed by the painting. Erwin Panofsky's perception of the theme as a moralization has not been questioned. What he called the Exposure of Luxury (1939), has been perceived by Michael Levey (1962) as the triumph of Venus and the double aspect of pleasure, by Cecil Gould (1975) as the erotic power of Venus, by J.F. Conway (1986) as Time revealing illicit love, by Iris Cheney (1987) as the duplicity of sexuality, by Lynette M.F. Bosch (1990) as the battle between Love and Time, by Paul Barolsky and Andrew Ladis (1991) as Time exposing wantonness, and by John F. Moffitt (1993 & 1996) as Time revealing the duplex nature of nearly all amorous endeavors.[5] Most scholars agreed that the painting somehow depicts the themes of

[5] On Bronzino's *Allegory* see the following: E. Panofsky, "Father Time" in *Studies in Iconology*, London, (1939) 1972, 69–93, esp. 84–86; C. Gould, *National Gallery Catalogues. The Sixteenth Century Italian Schools* (*excluding the Venetian*), London, 1962, 21–24; W. Keach, "Cupid Disarmed or Venus Wounded? An Ovidian Source for Michelangelo and Bronzino," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 41, 1978, 327–31; C.P. McCorquodale, *Bronzino*, London, 1981; G. Smith, "Jealousy, Pain and Pleasure in Agnolo Bronzino's Allegory of Venus and Cupid," *Pantheon*, 39, 1981, 250–58; C. Hope, "Bronzino's Allegory in the National Gallery," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 45, 1982, 239–43; J.F. Conway, "Syphilis and Bronzino's London Allegory," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 49, 1986, 250–56; L.M.F. Bosch, "Bronzino's London Allegory: Love Versus Time," *Source*, 9, 1990, 30–35; P. Barolsky & A. Ladis, "The Pleasurable Deceits of Bronzino's So-Called London Allegory," *Source*, 10, 1991, 32–36; R. Gaston, "Love's Sweet Poison: A New Reading of Bronzino's London Allegory," *I Tatti Studies*, 4, 1991, 247–88; L. Mendelsohn, "Saturnian Allusions in Bronzino's London Allegory," in M. Ciarabella and A.A. Ianucci, *Saturn from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Ottawa, 1992, 101–39 and "L'Allegoria di Londra del Bronzino e la retorica di carnevale," in M. Cammerer (ed.), *Kunst des Cinquecento in der Toskana*, Munich, 1992, 154–66; J.F. Moffitt, "A Hidden Sphinx by Agnolo Bronzino, 'ex tabula Cebetis Thebani'," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 46, 1993, 277–307 and "An Exemplary Humanist Hybrid: Vasari's 'Fraude' with reference to Bronzino's 'Sphinx'," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 49, 2, 1996, 303–33; Anderson (as in note 2); M. Healy, "Bronzino's London Allegory and the Art of Syphilis," *Oxford Art Journal*, 20, 1997, 3–11; Plazzotta and Keith (1999) (as in note 2).

fraudulence (suggested by Vasari),[6] feminine duplicity, deception, wantonness, lust (*Luxuria*) and illicit love. Robert W. Gaston (1991) compared the painting with analogous contemporary poetry in the vernacular, including some by Bronzino himself, clearly demonstrating the literary context of these themes and their popularity during the1540s.[7]

A new approach to the interpretation of Bronzino's Allegory will be proposed here, based on the attribute of the scorpion as the key to the allegorical concept as a whole and the means for deciphering its particular iconographic components. Previous writers have sought to decipher this enigmatic picture with the aid of Vasari's description, by resorting to sixteenth century emblematic sources, and/or by comparison with vernacular literature. This study, by contrast, will demonstrate that the complex ideas conveyed in Bronzino's Allegory were derived from an astrological tradition related to the sign of Scorpio, which had been transmitted and developed from antiquity till the Renaissance. The connection of Bronzino's Allegory with this astrological tradition, which has gone unnoticed till now, demonstrates the broader iconographic context of the painting and explains many of its enigmatic elements. The astrological sources also provide new evidence for some extremely important ideas that were presented in an earlier study and yet have been largely ignored or rejected in recent literature.[8]

The Terrestrial and Celestial Scorpions

The most essential characteristic of the scorpion as a universal, or archetypal, symbol is probably its ambivalence. From its known origins as a visual symbol,[9] the awe-inspiring scorpion has embodied contrasting meanings, though often in terms that convey a kind of synthesis of opposites, rather than mutually unrelated oppositions. The scorpion symbol, as we shall see, united life and death, generation and corruption, the overt and the covert, sacred and profane, licit and illicit, and the gifts of life as well as the lurking dangers that render it so precarious. At a very early stage the terrestrial scorpion transmitted

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[6] Vasari (as in note 3).
[7] Gaston (as in note 5), esp. 276–82.
[8] See my discussion of Conway's Syphilis theory below.
[9] On the scorpion in antiquity, see D. Van Buren, "The Scorpion in Mesopotamian Art and Religion," *Archiv fur Orientforschung*, XII, 1937, 1–26; W. Deonna, "Mercure et le Scorpion," *Latomus*, XVII, 1958, 641–55 and XVIII, 1959, 52–66 & 249–61.

these associations to its celestial counterpart, to the astral constellation called Scorpio.[10] By the late Roman period astrological tradition had formulated a Scorpio type or native who represented the human equivalent of the animal symbol and thus acquired from it his physical, psychological and moral traits.[11] Just like the celestial animal, under whom he was born, the Scorpio native could be amicable and pure at one moment, but inimical and malevolent the next. During the middle Ages and the Renaissance these conceptions were further augmented by new connotations.

It is my contention that the little scorpion, which is barely legible at the far right of Bronzino's painting, actually conveys the essence of the allegorical message, with all its complexities, in a deliberately veiled manner. Concomitantly, the theme is elaborated in the narrative and by use of Scorpio-related symbolism. In other words, the message of the entire allegory is succinctly conveyed by this one seemingly insignificant detail. The fact that the scorpion's sting is easily interpreted in its juxtaposition to the honey comb (e.g. as the rewards and dangers of love) explains why his presence in the painting has not inspired additional levels of reading. A brief review of Scorpio's history will provide the evidence necessary to substantiate my theory regarding Bronzino's Allegory.

An archaic astrological tradition, probably originating in Mesopotamia and documented in the artistic remains of the third millennium B.C. in South East Asia and the Near East, already transmitted the characteristics of the chthonian animal with its tendency to prolificacy, its unsuspected behavior and its noxious tail, to the constellation Scorpio. Ptolemy described Scorpio as *polyspermon* (who enriches and sows), a clear application of the animal's behavior to the astral sign, and one which indicates the association with agricultural fecundity and autumnal rejuvenation. He also transmitted the Hellenistic Egyptian doctrine of the astrological *melothesia*, with its theory of universal sympathy, assigning astral control over each of the human limbs.[12] In the *Tetrabiblos* he claimed Ares governed the genital organs, the 'secret

[10] Deonna (as above) 1958, 648 & 1959, 55–61.

[11] L. Aurigemma, *Le Signe Zodiacal du Scorpion: dans les traditions occidentales de l'Antiquité gréco-latine à la Renaissance*, Paris, 1976, 15–43.

[12] For Ptolemy's references to Scorpio, see *Tetrabiblos*, edited by F.E. Robbins, London & Cambridge, Mass., 1940, I, 11–15, 22; II, 8, 10, 18; III, 10–13; IV, 6, 9 and the excellent review by Aurigemma (as above), 21–27.

Fig. 94. *The Feminine Sign of Scorpio with the "virginal" Face*, Tomb Painting, ca. 2nd c., El-Salamuni, Egypt.

parts' of the body, a function also assigned to Scorpio as the sign of this planet. Although the word denoting genitals, here as in other related ancient texts, does not differentiate between male and female,[13] the qualification of Scorpio's sign as 'feminine' established a precedent which already found artistic expression in a second century Egyptian tomb painting (Fig. 94). There the virginal face and menacing tail are already illustrated.[14] In the *Tetrabiblos* Scorpio is already identified, due to its connection to Ares, with a series of maladies, including melancholy, hemorrhoid, tumors, enflamed ulcers, plague and those ailments that cause pain in the genitals.[15] It should be noted that the connection

[13] The Greek word *aidoia*, the Latin *inguen* and the Sanskrit *guhyani* are similarly used in astrological texts to denote secret or hidden parts (i.e. genital organs).

[14] The Greek word *aidoia*, the Latin *inguen* and the Sanskrit *guhyani* are similarly used in astrological texts to denote secret or hidden parts (i.e. genital organs).

[15] Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, II, 12; IV, 9.

of the scorpion with genitals, as symbols of generation, and with agricultural renewal, both derive from its archaic identification with fertility and fecundity.

The *Astronomicon* by Marcus Manilius, significantly contributed to the immediate transmission of astrological conceptions in general, and those regarding the scorpion in particular, to subsequent generations both in the West and the East.[16] Poggio Bracciolino rediscovered the *Astronomicon* in a manuscript of Saint-Gall in 1416, a second manuscript was discovered fifty years later, and a commentary by Lorenzo Bonincontri was published in 1484.[17] Besides the traditional assignation of both creative and destructive energy to the Scorpio native, Manilius introduced additional identifying characteristics, such as hypocrisy, deceit and the fraudulent pretense of good intentions. He also conveyed the idea that Scorpio rules the genitals in keeping with conceptions of the zodiacal *melothesia*. The iconographic implications of the Scorpio-genital identification, which spread throughout the Roman Empire, and well beyond, with the writings of Manilius, have hardly been explored. It is noteworthy that the portrait of Scorpio which he described already contained the basic elements illustrated by Bronzino.

Another author whose influence can be observed throughout the Medieval and Renaissance periods was Iulii Firmicus Maternus.[18] In his *Matheseos* he emphasized Scorpio's constructive and energetic aspect as well as qualities of universal generation, amorous passion and fecundity, which are linked to the constellation's traditional connection with the planets of the Sun and Venus. Firmicus also transmitted the eastern doctrine of the thirty-six decans, whereby each sign of 30 degrees on the zodiacal band is subdivided into three parts of 10 degrees each,

[16] Marcus Manilius, *Astronomica*, trans. G.P. Gould, Cambridge, Mass., 1992; on the scorpion: II, 462; IV, 217 & 707. For a review of Classical astrological concepts which were transmitted to Indian sources, with references to Scorpio's control of the genitals, sexual passion, etc., see D. Pingree, The *Yavanajataka of Sphujidhvaja*, 2 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1978, 3–41. For my theories regarding the influence of these concepts in Indian art, see S. Cohen, "The Scorpion Apsarās at Khajuraho: Migrations of a Symbol," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, Vol. 74, 2000, 19–38.

[17] *Laurentii Bonincontri Miniatensis in Manilium Commentum*, Rome, 1484. For information on these manuscripts, see Aurigemma (as in note 11), 81–82; for an extensive bibliography, including manuscripts and *incunabola* in western libraries with references to Scorpio, *ibid.*, 111–13.

[18] *Iulii Firmici Materni Matheseos Libri VIII*, Leipzig, 1897 & 1913. On references to Firmicus by sixteenth century authors, see L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, New York, 1966, vol. IV, 244.

thus establishing astrological subdivisions.[19] The first decan of Scorpio belongs to Mars, the second to the Sun, and the third to Venus and, consequently, to the power of love.[20] A further division of Scorpio natives on each of the 360 degrees defines physical and moral traits and professional potentialities, combining the positive and the negative, the sacred and profane, the elevated and the debased, and so forth. Among these are homosexuals and prostitutes of the 21st degree or sorcerers and poisoners of the 30th degree. Such examples illustrate how basic conceptions of the scorpion, such as its primeval association with the fertility of the earth and by analogy with genitals, or its poisonous tail, inspired an ever expanding series of physical, psychological, moral and even professional qualifications for the Scorpio portrait.

The *Philosophumena*, a Gnostic work assigned to the third century A.D., formulated a portrait for the Scorpio native that remarkably anticipates some of the salient qualities of Bronzino's monster-girl. This figure has a virginal face, beautiful eyes, an elevated forehead, pointed nose, and tiny ears, but is characterized by deceit, cunning, dishonesty, mistrust, hypocrisy, malevolence and contempt. He or she is inclined to adultery, good health and learning, but is incapable of friendship.[21] Adultery, which is mentioned by many later authors, is one of the variants on the theme of sexuality, particularly illicit or aberrant sexuality, which appears as a leitmotif in the astrological literature. Good health is probably related to Scorpio's Martian energy and inclination to learning may be related to his notorious cunning.

The Medieval Scorpio

Classically derived characteristics of Scorpio, such as its feminine nature, its control over the genitals and associated maladies, and the connection of its third decan to Venus and to love, were mediated by Hermetic texts from the early medieval period. In one Hermetic text, for example, control over feminine genital organs and venereal disease is attributed to the first decan, that of the male genital organs and their diseases belongs to the second decan, while the third has equal control over male and female genitals, ovaries and testicles and related

[19] *Matheseos* (as above), II, IV, 3.
[20] *Ibid.*, I, 4 & III, 13.
[21] Aurigemma (as in note 11), 38.

infirmities.[22] There appears to be a connection between these beliefs and the function of the scorpion as a magical and apotropaic symbol, the importance of which is attested by its widespread use, not only in Hermetic practice, but throughout history in both East and West, where scorpions were depicted on gems, rings, amulets and statues.[23]

The astrological conceptions also had a marked affect on the animal symbolism and metaphors which became so popular in medieval culture, frequently to convey the bestiality of human vices. The curved tail of the scorpion, already described by Pliny,[24] was interpreted by St. Jerome to represent *arcuato vulnere*, or one who attacks his victim in an indirect manner.[25] St. Gregory defined this as attacking from behind: '*Nec mordet a facie a posterioribus nocet. Scorpiones ergo suntqui bland et innoxi in facie videntur*'.[26] Thus by the fourth century the image of the cunning hypocrite, innocent *a facie* but noxious *a posterioribus*, was explicitly associated with the symbol of the scorpion. Moralistic bestiaries, encyclopedias and literary works continued to associate the scorpion image with the concept of duplicity.

Medieval Jewish scholars, like Rabbi Sahl Ibn Bashr Ibn Habid (9th c.) and Abraham Ibn Esra (12th c.), were instrumental in transmitting many of the traditional astrological conceptions of Scorpio to the Renaissance.[27] Ibn Esra's *Beginning of Wisdom*, written in Hebrew about 1146, was translated into French in 1273 and from the French into three

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[22] *Ibid.*, 39–40.

[23] *Ibid.*, 40–43. There is an interesting example of a Sassanian amulet with a lion and scorpion that was used to cure Boniface VIII of kidney stones. Kidneys were also said to be ruled by Scorpio. See A.D.H. Bivar, "Towards an integrated picture of Ancient Mithraism," in J. Hinnells (ed.), *Studies in Mithraism*, Rome, 1994, 73, figs. 9A & 10A. Paracelsus, in his *Archidoxes Magicae*, advised that a scorpion talisman be worn by those suffering from any derangement of the reproductive system.

[24] *Semper cauda in ictu, nulloque momento meditari cessat, ne quando desit occasioni. Ferit et obliquo ictu, et inflexo.* (The tail is always ready to strike and it does not halt a single observable instant in order not to miss a chance. It wounds by an oblique and curved strike.) Pliny, *Naturalis historiae*, XI, 87. See also X, 72 (93) & XI, 25 (30), Leipzig, 1875, 198–99 & 86–91. He transmitted many ideas on the scorpion and Scorpio. This and the following sources were cited by Aurigemma (as in note 11), 59ff.

[25] St. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Joelem prophetam Liber Unus*, in Migne, *P.L.*25, col.948B. Cited in Aurigemma (as in note 11), 59. This idea is found in a French bestiary that claims to quote Plinius and Isidore of Seville. According to M. Bulard (*Le Scorpion, Symbole du Peuple Juif dans l'Art Religieux des XIVe, XVe et XVIe Siècles*, Paris, 1935, 59–62) the actual source was Bartolomeus Anglicus, *Liber proprietatibus rerum*, (ca.1230), printed in Heidelberg, 1488.

[26] *Homiliarum in Ezechielem Prophetam Libri duo*, I, 9, 21, in Migne, *P.L.*67, col.879C & D & col.800A & B.

[27] See Aurigemma (as in note 11), 46–56.

Latin versions in the late thirteenth century and had its first printing in Venice in 1507, thus becoming one of the most cited astrological texts until the seventeenth century. He wrote a long passage on Scorpio, in which he established that it was aquatic, female and nocturnal. According to Ibn Esra the native of Scorpio

> will have many children; he will be destructive, deceitful, irascible, a prevaricator, a calumniator, melancholy, generous, refined, unreliable and astute... He who is born at the end of the sign will be a bastard or a hermaphrodite. To its share of the indecent places correspond the secret place and the sexual organs of males and females. It is one of the signs of deformities, since it denoted defective vision, scurvy, the sickness called cancer, scabies, leprosy, pock-marks, and baldness. For women its horoscope is baleful...Its human group embraces every perverted despicable man. The house of Mars and the shame of the Moon are the third degree and likewise the house of the hatred of Venus.[28]

These excerpts were selected from Ibn Esra's text to underline the recurrent themes of fecundity, generation, noxiousness, deceit, duplicity, aberrant and perverse behavior, especially that of a sexual nature, venereal disease and the connection to Venus. It is interesting, furthermore to note the pertinacity of contrarieties or opposing qualities. The native of Scorpio is destructive and deceitful but also generous and refined. Despite the emphasis on negative moral traits, a certain ambivalence is always inherent.

The hypocrite whose innocent face veils malicious intent became the dominant aspect of Scorpio during the middle Ages. In keeping with the moralizing and didactic tendencies of medieval commentaries in general, this cunning hypocrite and master of duplicity became an archetype for all kinds of traitors and heretics, especially the Jews to whom all the negative Scorpio traits were attached.[29]

Alain de Lille, who adapted the duplex image to the personification of Logic in his *Anticlaudianus* (late 12th c.), illustrates how this Scorpio image could be entirely divorced from its astrological context in a philosophically oriented Christian allegory without losing its basic symbolic components. In his description,

[28] See A. Ibn Esra, *The Beginning of Wisdom, An Astrological Treatise*. An Addition to the Old French Version of 1273 and the English Translation of the Hebrew Original by R. Levy, Baltimore & Paris, 1939, 175–77.

[29] Bulard (as in note 25).

> the gift of flowers decorates her right hand; a scorpion encircling her left threatens with pointed tail. One hand savors of honey, one bears the juice of venom; one promises laughter, the other ends in tears; one attracts, the other repels, one salves, the other stings, one smites, the other soothes; one graces, the other taints.[30]

According to Alain

> a new painter, with a new art . . . shows how the power of logic flashes its two-edged sword and when the face of truth has been maimed, cuts down the false, refusing to allow falsehood to be hidden beneath the appearance of truth.[31]

The visual allusions were to inspire illustrators of the Liberal Arts throughout the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, among them Andrea da Firenze in the Capellone degli Spagnoli (Fig. 95), Andrea del Pollaiuolo in his Monument for Sixtus IV and Botticelli in his fresco for Villa Lemmi.[32] The duplicity of falsehood is represented by the two hands, one bearing honey, the other venom, by the two-edged sword and the series of juxtaposed concepts, all anticipating Bronzino.

It was probably this tradition of the Scorpio image, found in the non-astrological context of allegorical literature, which influenced Dante in his passage of the *Inferno* where Fraud is described as a male with a just face and the tail of the scorpion.[33] Dante has been cited as the source for depictions of Fraud in Renaissance emblem books and literary descriptions as well as for that of Bronzino's Allegory.[34] Both claims are clearly incorrect, judging from the evidence presented here. This is further indicated by discrepancies between the image of Dante's male Fraud and that of Bronzino's monster-girl. One is male, the other female; one has a scorpion tail, the other has the scorpion in the left hand juxtaposed with a honeycomb in the right. Dante and Boccaccio,[35] like Alain de Lille about two centuries earlier, extracted

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[30] Alanus de Insulis, *Anticlaudianus*, in Migne, *P.L.*210, col.509; Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus or The Good and Perfect Man*, trans. & comm. by J.J. Sheriden, Toronto, 1973, Bk. III, 91–2.

[31] *Ibid.*, 1973, 92.

[32] See Aurigemma (as in note 11), figs. 21 & 22; Bulard (as in note 25), plates X & XI.

[33] Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia, Inferno* 17, 7–15, 25–27.

[34] See e.g. Moffitt's discussion of what he calls the 'Dante derived hybrid figure of Deceit' in Bronzino's painting (1996, 310–11).

[35] See G. Boccaccio, *Geneologia de gli Dei* (ca.1359), XV, 6, regarding the Scorpio natives.

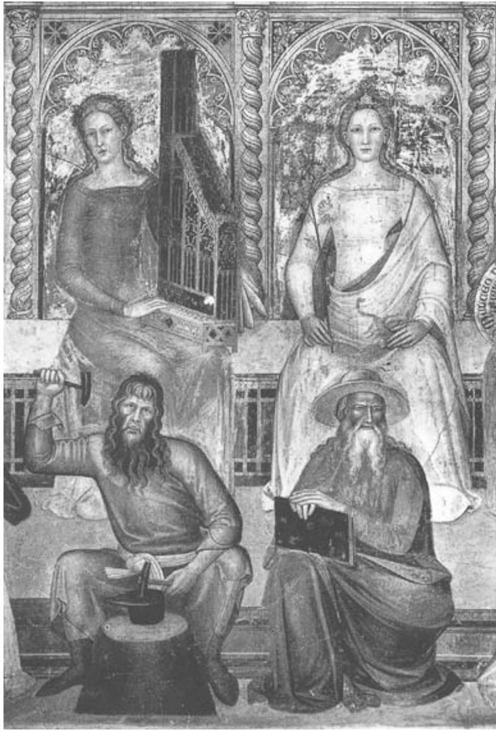

Fig. 95. Andrea da Firenze, *Dialectica*, detail of the *Liberal Arts*, mid 14th c., fresco, Florence, Santa Maria Novella, Capellone degli Spagnoli.

a limited number of attributes from the Scorpio portrait in order to characterize their personified abstractions. In doing so they chose to ignore the original context and some of the ramifications which, by contrast, are still preserved in Bronzino's painting.

Concurrent with these selective literary borrowings from the mainstream Scorpio tradition, was an uninterrupted production of astrological literature which assured the survival of the multi-faceted Scorpio type. In the fourteenth century *Introductoris ad indica astrologiae* by Andalo di Negro, for example, we still find the Scorpionic *melothesia* as well as the complete catalogue of traits and professional types, like those listed by Ibn Esra.[36]

[36] See Aurigemma (as in note 11), 71–75.

Scorpio in the Renaissance

The major importance of astrological concepts in the Renaissance is well known and their expressions in art have inspired numerous studies.[37] Renaissance astrological literature amassed in its pages all the Scorpio-related concepts that had accumulated over the centuries. The portrait of the Scorpio was consequently an eclectic compilation, where conflicting conceptions of Classical and Medieval derivation were elaborated and augmented. Renaissance modifications found in the literature and iconography of Scorpio stem from two main factors. The first involves the rediscovery of Classical texts (such as that by Manilius), translations (like that of the *Pimander* of Hermes Trismegistus by Ficino in 1471), and the printing of these from the 1470s.[38] Negative associations of the scorpion image and Scorpio-related concepts in the middle Ages were mitigated by a revival of the ancient agricultural and fertility symbolism. Agricultural associations were diffused by illustrated calendars, where the sign of Scorpio was shown to prevail over the activities of plowing and sowing in the autumn.[39] In 1524 Antonio Correggio adopted the auspicious scorpion for his personification of fecundity as *Terra* or *Tellus* in the Camera di San Paolo in Parma. The revival of the scorpion's fertility symbolism is also attested by Renaissance descriptions of the Mithraic bull-slaying scene, where a scorpion attacks the testicles of the bull at the moment of sacrifice (Fig. 96). This is especially interesting because it illustrates the traditional association between the scorpion and genitals. Antonio Lafreri, in his *Speculum Romanae magnificentiae* (Rome, 1548) identified this scorpion image, which he knew from a private collection, as a symbol of generation.[40] A scorpion (Scorpio) with its tail linked to a fruit-bearing tree is juxtaposed in the background of the same Mithraic relief with the head of a bull (Taurus) on another tree. Here again the association with generation was made by Lafreri in what he presumed to be a moralized allegory of virtue and fecundity. Bronzino was probably familiar with this symbolism, but he was espe-

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[37] For illuminating studies of astrological symbolism in sixteenth century Italian art, see e.g. M. Tanner, *Titian: The Poesie for Philip II*, Phd. diss. (New York University), Ann Arbor, 1976 and J. Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art*, Princeton, 1984.

[38] *Mercurii Trismegisti Pimander, seu Liber de potestate et sapientia Dei, e graeco in latinum traductus a Marsilio Ficino*, Tarvisii, 1471.

[39] Aurigemma (as in note 11), 91–93.

[40] See M.J. Vermaseren, *Le monument d'Ottaviano Zeno et le culte de Mithra sur le Celius*, Leiden, 1978, 7–9.

Fig. 96. *The Mithraic Bull-Slaying Scene*, Drawing from the Mithraic monument of Ottaviano Zeno in Rome (reproduced from M.J. Vermaseren, *Mithraica IV*, Leiden, 1978, pl. XV).

cially influenced by the second factor that invested Scorpio iconography with new significance—its association with syphilis.

Scorpio and Syphilis

In 1986 J.F. Conway introduced a theory that the tortured figure in the left-hand background of Bronzino's painting represents a victim of syphilis.[41] Although the idea was reexamined by Margaret Healy (1997), most writers have ignored the implications of Conway's observations. Apparently, certain presumptions regarding Renaissance culture make it difficult for us to conceive that the theme of venereal disease could provide inspiration for a work of art. The fact that it did is attested by well known literary examples, such as Fracastoro's *Syphilis*, dedicated to

[41] Conway (as in note 5).

Pietro Bembo, which earned its author great honor as a Latin poet.[42] Traditional research in Renaissance iconography has fostered an elitist literary and philosophical orientation, often excluding approaches to social, economic or anthropological issues, for example, that relate to broader sectors of the population. There seems to be an underlying assumption that art commissioned by the elite patron is created in an intellectual hot-house that is isolated from socio-economic factors or from popular beliefs and superstitions found in contemporary middle or lower class society. Syphilis is a case in point. When reading the literature on syphilis in the Renaissance one is immediately struck by the immensity of the crisis and the implications, analogous, for example, to those of the Black Plague in the mid fourteenth century hand and to the threat of Aids in the more recent times. The aristocratic patrons of art in the sixteenth century, like the artists themselves, and the intellectuals in their circles, were far from immune to the 'new' venereal disease.[43] Francis I, the presumed recipient of Bronzino's painting, was himself a victim of the *Morbus Gallicus* or Neapolitan disease, so-called because it was said to have been introduced into Italy by the French army of Charles VIII in 1494. But syphilis was not a new disease. Dürer's woodcut of 1496, illustrating a medical poem about epidemics by Theodoricus Ulsen, recorded the disease on November 25th 1484, which was assumed to have been caused by the inauspicious planetary conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the sign of Scorpio (Fig. 97). Joseph Grunpeck (ca.1473–ca.1532), who became court historian to the emperor Maximillian II, had attributed the outbreak to this planetary conjunction in a moral and religious work called *Tractatus de Pestilentia*

[42] *Fracastoro's Syphilis*, Latin & English text. Introduction, translation and notes by G. Eatough, Liverpool, 1984. First published as: *Fracastorii Syphilis sive morbus gallicus*, Verona, 1530. On Fracastoro: Thorndike (as in note 18), vol. V, 488–97. Giovanni Francesco Bini, whose poems were published together with those of Bronzino (Florence, 1555) wrote a satirical poem praising '*il mal francese*'. On attitudes to syphilis, see C. Quetel, *History of Syphilis*, Cornwall, 1990.

[43] See J. Arrizabalaga, J. Henderson & R. French, *The Great Pox, The French Disease in Renaissance Europe*, New Haven & London, 1997: on the infected members of the ruling d'Este family of Ferrara, see note 44–50; on the disease in the Papal court, 13–14 & 142–43. Among the many famous men who contracted the disease were Cesare Borgia, Francois I, the Cardinals Juan Borgia, Ascanio Sforza and Giuliano della Rovere (later Julius II), the humanists Ulrich von Hutten and Joseph Grunpeck (see below notes 67 & 75) and the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini.

Fig. 97. Albrect Dürer, *Syphilitic under the sign of Scorpio*, 1496, woodcut. Berlin, Staatliche Museum.

Scorra sive Mala de Franzos (Augsburg, 1496).[44] The fact that modern planetary tables show that there was no significant astral conjunction when the disease occurred illustrates the confusion of fact and fancy that surrounded so many of the conceptions regarding the disease. In any case, Dürer placed Scorpio at the center of the zodiacal band, directly above the head of the unfortunate victim. Why Scorpio? We have seen that the association of Scorpio and genitals also implied, since Classical antiquity, its control over venereal diseases and other endemic

[44] See Quetel (as in note 42), 16–19; Arrizabalaga *et al.* (as above), 98–99, 109–12.

maladies, like leprosy, with related clinical symptoms. The astrological explanation for the 'outbreak' of syphilis in 1484 was only one of the theories proposed, but the literature attests its widespread acceptance.[45] This did not contradict the usual moral accusations recruited by the Judeo-Christian tradition to explain plagues and epidemics as the scourge of God brought against the sins of man. The negative moralizing aspects of Scorpio-related astrology and its ready-made identification with venereal disease created an inevitable link between Scorpio and syphilis. Conway's identification of Bronzino's syphilitic was based on the medical diagnosis of symptoms as described in the literature,[46] but he did not notice that other visual allusions in the painting also support his theory.

Descriptions in astrological and medical treatises provide evidence for the Scorpio-syphilis link which is fundamental to Bronzino's Allegory. Another author to assign the catastrophic 'outbreak' of syphilis in November 1484 to the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Scorpio was Bartolomeo della Rocca (Cocles) in his *Anastasis* (Bologna, 1504).[47] He related this event to the astrological control of Scorpio over the genitals,[48] basing his predictions for further outbreaks of syphilis in 1492 and 1495 on similar planetary conjunctions. Della Rocca also presented the usual list of negative physical and mental characteristics assigned to the Scorpio native, such as fraudulence and hypocrisy.[49] Later astrologers, such as Luca Guarico (active ca.1529–45), who served Popes Clement VII and Paul III and was a prolific writer, reiterated the established correspondences between Scorpio and the genital area (testicles, bladder, anus, pubis, vulva, etc.) and the various venereal

[45] Girolamo Fracastoro, in *Contagione et Cotagiones Morbis, et eorum curatione Libri Tres*, Lyon, 1550, I, 276, wrote: 'It is proven that the astrologists predicted the outbreak of the disease much before it appeared.'

[46] For descriptions of the symptoms in Renaissance sources, see Quetel (as in note 42), 16–29; Arrizabalaga *et al.* (as in note 43), esp. 25–27.

[47] '*Dicunt astrologi quod causa huius morbi fuit coniunctio iovis et saturni die 9 novembris 1484*', *Anastasis*, VI, 243. This work was reprinted in Latin in abbreviated form in 1515, 1533, 1534, 1554 & 1555. It was published in Italian in 1523, French in 1550 and after, and German in 1530 & 1537. See Thorndike (as in note 18), vol. V, 63–65.

[48] *Et quia hec sub signo scorpionis fuit facta impressio ex membris hominis virgam et testiculos qui sub eo signo coegit infirmari, Anastasis*, Bologna, 1504.

[49] Talis maligna constellatio induxit etiam fraudes rapinas mendacia et pessimos mores in individuis ita quod nati sub tali constellatione sunt pessimi, (*Ibid.*). For the text of Della Rocca's *Morbus Gallicus*, see Thorndike (as in note 18), vol. V, appendix I, 671–72.

diseases, including the *Morbus Gallicus*.[50] Gaurico, like others who dealt in predictions, alluded to the imminent conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Scorpio in September1544, just about the time that Bronzino painted the Allegory.[51]

The *Intoductiones apostelesmaticae* (Frankfort and Strasbourg, 1522) of Joannes ab Indagine was very popular and underwent frequent reprintings.[52] All the positive and negative Scorpio traits were included there in a typically eclectic manner. He made the analogy between the behavior of the animal and that of the Scorpio native claiming, for example, that each of them secretly spread his poison, biting with his 'pestilent tongue'. In this respect we might note Bronzino's emphasis on the tongue of Venus. But more explicit parallels to Bronzino are found in this text. In one hand the Scorpio is said to offer bread, in the other he hides a rock, 'constantly mixing the poison with the honey' and never keeping his word. If the native is a girl, the sign of Scorpio will make her amiable, dishonest and hypocrite. The contrast between the two hands, the honey and poison and the description of this female's duplicity is followed by remarkable statement. The author states that she will suffer agonies of the spleen and be cauterized on the head, the shoulders or the arms.[53]

Cauterization was a form of treatment known in antiquity, practiced extensively during the middle Ages, and advocated for the treatment of syphilis from the Renaissance on (Fig. 98). As early as 1497, the Ferrarese physician Coradino Gilino claimed to have cured every patient whose throat was affected by the French disease by applying a cautery on the coronal suture (on top of the head).[54] Three years later

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[50] *Opera omnium quae quidem extant L. Gaurico Geophonensis Civitalensis Episcopi astronomi ac astrologi praestantissimi*... etc., 2 vols., Basel, 1575, II, fols.923–28. See Thorndike (as in note 18) vol. IV, 256–64; Aurigemma (as in note 11), 94–95.

[51] Predictions for another major conjunction in Scorpio for 1543 or 1544, with disastrous results, were made by many astrologers; see Thorndike (as in note 18), vol. V, 178–233. One might speculate on whether these prognostications encouraged Bronzino to paint this theme in the mid 1540s, after the major epidemic was over and the next one was anticipated.

[52] The three Latin printings were followed by one in German in 1523, later Latin editions in 1531, 1534, 1541, 1543, 1547, 1556, 1582, 1603, 1622 etc. in Strasbourg, Paris, Lyon, Ursel and Trier, and other French and German editions. See Thorndike (as in note 18), vol. V, 65–68, 174–76; Aurigemma (as in note 11), 89–91.

[53] '*Elle souffrira de douleurs à la rate, et sera cauterisée sur la tête, ou sur les épaules, ou sur les bras*'. Quoted by Aurigemma (as above, 90) from the French version of Indagine, *Introductiones apotelesmaticae, De Horoscopo in Scorpione*.

[54] Coradino Gilino, De Morbo Gallico, Ferrara, 1497, f. 4v; Facs. reprint by K. Sudhoff,

Fig. 98. *Removal of the Syphilitic Chancres through Cauterization*, illustration from a mid 16th century manuscript, Perugia, Biblioteca Comunale, Augusta Ms.472.

cauterization was recommended for treating syphilis by the Spanish physician Pere Pintor, in cases where the pain was intense and enduring and hard tumors appeared. Pinter differentiated between two kinds of cautery, 'actual' (fire) or 'potential' (caustic medicine). Either a hot iron was used to burn the morbific substance or a caustic agent was applied to destroy the living tissue of chancres.[55] These treatments often penetrated beyond the afflicted area and caused irreparable damage. Ulrich von Hutten, himself a victim of syphilis, reported on the use of cauterization in his *De Guiaci Medicina et Morbo Gallico* (Mainz, 1519).[56] It was still used for this purpose in the nineteenth century.

The Earliest Printed Literature on Syphilis, Being Ten Tractates from the Years 1495–1498, Florence, 1925, 253–60.

[55] Pere Pintor, *Tractatus de Morbo foedo et occulto his temporibus affligente*, Rome, 1499 & 1500, f. iv–f. 3v.

[56] See Quetel (as in note 42), 27–32; Arrizabalaga *et al.* (as in note 43), 99–103.

Having noticed the distorted hands of Bronzino's monster-girl, Panofsky was convinced that her arms were reversed.[57] Is it possible that this disfigurement of her arms actually illustrates the disabling effects of cauterization used on the syphilitic? Combined with the other attributes—the contrast of Scorpio's hands as symbols of duplicity, the mixture of poison and honey and of amiability and hypocrisy, the secret poison and the pestilent tongue, it is conceivable that references to cauterization would also be reflected in the painting. In Von Hutten's text we also learn that Scorpio natives tend to be involved in illicit activities, that they are arrogant, fornicators, unstable and have malicious thoughts, all of which aptly describes what is going on in Bronzino's painting. Whether he actually knew this text is difficult to say. Other texts expressing the same combination of ideas, with repeated references to pain in the genitals and a deformity or wound in the shoulder, include a popular description of the Scorpio native in *Le grant Kalendrier et compost des Bergiers* (Troyes, 1529).[58]

Girolamo Cardano (1501–76), a physician, philosopher and mathematician, wrote a commentary on Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* in which he expanded on the Scorpio native in all his classical ambivalence. Cardano emphasized the inauspicious nature of the celestial Scorpio and the native's characteristic treachery, violence and poisonousness.[59] He claimed that Scorpio is harmful and inimical to human nature because it is the coldest and driest of the celestial signs. This idea reappears in his later discussion of the 'French Disease'. He believed that changes or corruptions of the air were one of its causes claiming, contrary to accepted theory, that two of the four elementary qualities, cold and dry (those that characterized Scorpio), had no autonomous existence. In his approach to the 'French Disease', he rejected the traditional Aristotelian theory regarding the manifest qualities of the four humors, and emphasized the hidden causes, which he defined by the term '*subtilita*'.[60] Cardano's idea that the disease had occult and poisonous causes was further developed in France by Jean Fernel and later in Germany by Daniel Sennert.[61]

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[57] Panofsky (as in note 5), 90.

[58] See Aurigemma (as in note 11), 92.

[59] Cardano's commentary on the *Tetrabiblos* is included in his *OperaOmnia*, Lyon, 1663.

[60] Cardano, *De subtilitate libri XXI*, Basel, n.d. (address from 1552).

[61] Arrizabalaga *et al.* (as in note 43), 272–77.

Jean Fernel (ca.1497–1558) was a famous French physician, astronomer and mathematician. His significance for the present discussion lies both in his contribution to the literary tradition of Scorpio-related concepts as associated with the 'new' venereal disease, and his connection to the French court as the physician of Henry II.[62] Like Cardano, he stressed the occult aspect of the disease or its hidden causes, stating that its venom sometimes remained concealed for a long period but subsequently revealed itself in sure and infallible signs. This he compared to the poison of the scorpion which spreads through the whole body from the first infected part. Fernel also compared the nature and properties of *lues venerea* (venereal infection or pestilence), as he called it, to other contagious diseases but recognized that it was contracted through sexual contact. His professional assessments did not prevent him from advancing a moral explanation, namely that the *lues* was '*to serve as a harsh scourge to despicable leachers*'.[63] Fernel's works were published in 1548 and later, so theoretically his remark about the venom of scorpions may have been inspired by Bronzino's visual analogy between the diseased person and the scorpion. As court physician he could easily have seen the painting. Furthermore, his treatise on hidden causes was addressed to the king. At the same time, the idea that the morbific substance of syphilis was analogous to the scorpion's poison was not new, so the chronological relationship between Fernel's text and Bronzino's painting is less important than the fact that the scorpion metaphor was equally understood in the court of Fontainebleau and in that of Cosimo I in Florence.

A word should be added on gender perceptions found in the literature on syphilis and its causes as these are also reflected in Bronzino's painting. We have noted the perceived association between sin and the *Morbus Gallicus*, even in scientifically oriented circles. Physicians writing about the disease often assumed that women are the agents or active infectors.[64] Men were instructed on self-protection against contagion

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[62] See Quetel (as in note 42), 55–56; Arrizabalaga *et al.* (as in note 43), 237–44.

[63] Quoted by Quetel from *De Luis Venereae Curatione Perfectissima*. See this work, as well as Fernel, *De Abditis Rerum Causis liberi duo* (Paris, 1548) and *De Partium Morbis et Symptomatis*, in the *Universa Medicina*, Geneva, 1643.

[64] See A. Foa, "The New and the Old: The Spread of Syphilis (1494–1530)," in E. Muir & G. Ruggiero (eds.), *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective: Selections from Quaderni Storici*, Baltimore, 1990, 26–45; W. Schleiner, "Infection and Cure through Women: Renaissance Constructions of Syphilis, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 24, 3, Fall 1994, 499–517.

from women, primarily from those who were promiscuous or dealt in prostitution. The Paduan professor Gabriele Falloppio significantly referred to this type of woman as a *pulcherrima sirena* (a most beautiful siren).[65] But the disease was sometimes said to be caused by excessive heat of the vulva, and Paracelsus attributed it to *luxuria* (voluptuousness) at the moment of conception.[66] Ulrich von Hutten wrote of the danger of touching women in '*their secret places, having in those places little prety sores ful of venom poison*'.[67] Sixteenth century authors who condemned sexual contact with loose women used such expressions as '*the immoderate practice of Venus*' or simply equated this promiscuity with the name of Venus.[68] In the anonymous moralizing satire *Le triomphe de haute et puissane dame verole* (Lyons, 1539) Venus leads the triumphal procession of Dame Pox who personifies the disease. The author warns those who

> are keen to avoid suffering torment; for those whose wit is taken away/By loathsome Venus, who makes them hers/Usually end up as her camp-followers/Prey to sickness and denied pleasure.[69]

It is interesting to find that a comparison between the celestial and terrestrial scorpion and the images thereof was made by Agrippa of Nettesheim in his *De occulta philosophia* (1531, 1533). According to Agrippa

> the scorpion, because it observes among the parts of the body, the genital organs, provokes luxuria, for that reason they make its figure on the ascendant of its third face, which is for Venus.[70]

By the 1530s we thus witness the synthesis of all the components relating to the physical and psychological affects of the constellation Scorpio, including its control of the genitals, venereal disease, promiscuity and

[65] G. Falloppio, *De Morbo Gallico*, in his *Opera Omnia*, 2 vols., Frankfort, 1600, I, 737.

[66] Paracelsus (1493–1541), *Chirurgia Magna*, Strasbourg, 1536. See Schleiner (as above), 501–4.

[67] U. Von Hutten, *De Morbo Gallico*, trans. T. Paynell, London, 1833, fol.15v.

[68] Quetel (as in note 42), 62–63.

[69] Quoted from Quetel (as above), 68–69. The association of Venus and the Sign of Scorpio in Renaissance art has not been studied in this context. See e.g .the discussion of Rosso Fiorentino's presentation drawing of *Venus and Mars* (Louvre) with its Scorpio sign above and an allegory of *Venus Disarming Mars*, also with the Scorpio, in J. Cox-Rearick, *La Collection de Francois I^re^*, New York, 1996, 258–65 and fig. 288.

[70] *Scorpius vero, quia inter membra observat genitalia, provocat ad luxuriam: configurabant autem ad hoc ascendente eius facie tertia, quae est Veneris*, from *De occlta philosophia Libri tres*, 1531, 1533; Facsimile of 1533 Cologne edition, edited by K.A. Nowotny, Graz, 1967.

the whole catalogue of malevolent characteristics, combined with the conceptions of syphilis, its sinful connotations and its occult nature.

Bronzino's Satire

The *Allegory* is a learned social satire, learned because its concept and iconography is based on knowledge and interpretation of the literature, satirical because the artist wittily manipulated the conventions of visual art and poetry in order to expose the ugliness and suffering hidden behind false illusions and pretensions. Bronzino created a mocking reflection of illicit courtship, revealing moral corruption, deceit and the horrific consequences thereof, as they are hidden behind pretty fantasies. The Scorpio-related conceptions would have been familiar to him from the pages of astrological, medical and/or philosophical texts as well as from vernacular verse and poetry, some of which was produced and published in his immediate Florentine circle. From the information we have about Bronzino, there can be little doubt that he had both the vast literary knowledge and the creative talent necessary to invent the program.

Bronzino's attitude to his subject is best defined by comparison with his burlesque poetry.[71] He was a respected and prolific poet, and a member of the *Accademia Fiorentina* together with writers like Benedetto Varchi, Ugolino Martelli, Giovanni Mazzuoli and Michelangelo Buonarroti, to whom he paid homage in this painting, albeit with extreme irony. Some of Bronzino's work was included in *Il secondo libro dell'opere burlesche* (Florence, 1555), the second anthology of burlesque poetry published by Giunti. The salient characteristics of his *capitoli* have been summarized by Parker as 'notoriously elusive', incorporating 'linguistic ambiguity', a 'highly coded lexicon' with 'multiple meanings' which 'allude to cultural ideas, social practices and opinions'.[72] She identified two levels of significations in his poems, the first innocuous, the second obscene. In analyzing his use of eroticizing language, she

[71] Bronzino, *Sonetti di Angiolo Allori detto il Bronzino ed altre rime inediti*, ed. D. Moreni, Florence, 1823 and *Rime in Burla*, ed. F. Petrucci Nardelli, Rome, 1988. See A. Furno, *La vita e le rime di Angiolo Bronzino*, Pistoia, 1902; S. Longhi, *Lusus. Il capitolo burlesco nel Cinquecento*, Padua, 1983 and D. Parker, "Towards a Reading of Bronzino's Burlesque Poetry," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 50, 4, 1997, 1011–44.

[72] Parker (as above), 1022–23.

found that rather than a one-to-one relationship between signifier and signified, it is more a '*language considered as a system working toward an erotic affect*'.[73] I suggest that his approach to the painted *Allegory* is similar to that of the *rime in burla*. This can be illustrated in the ribald nature of the theme with its veiled allusions to contemporary social reality (e.g. syphilis), the methods of obscuring (literally and figuratively), the use of multiple meanings (revealed and concealed), ambiguities, and his parody of works by other artists. As in the case of his poems, the apparent simplicity and legibility of the painting is quite misleading.

In drawing comparisons between Bronzino's poems and his painting there is a danger of overemphasizing the literary at the expense of the visual or of implying that the painting is merely an illustration of a text. In fact, visual means of communication are basic to the *Allegory*. Contrasts, for example, between illumination and shadow, revealed and concealed, foreground and background, convex and concave, visually convey the thematic tensions of contrast, conflict and interaction. Duplication is a means for visually expressing duplicity and deception. Thus we see two doves, two hands with pairs of juxtaposed attributes—honey and venom, arrow and apple, and masks of two genders.

Another reflection of Bronzino's visual thinking is seen in his satirical reworking of Michelangelo precedents. Part of the significance of the Venus image in the *Allegory* derives from the visual analogy to the Virgin in Michelangelo's *Tondo Doni* (1503–4) (Fig. 99). Could Bronzino have intended a reference to the idea, already found in Ptolemy and Hermetic texts, that Scorpio is submissive to the sign of the Virgin? In any case, the innuendos of associating a nude courtesan with a modestly attired virgin, conflating the profane with the sacred, and the corrupt with the pure, creates the same sense of ambiguity and irreverent obscenity that is salient in his burlesque poems. Furthermore, Bronzino's Father Time is patterned on Michelangelo's Joseph, with another reversal of roles. The ornament on Cupid's sheath (a phallic symbol) contains two horned heads placed back to back (another duplication), the horns notoriously representing the *cornuto*—a cuckolded husband. This may be read as a signifier of the deception of 'father' Joseph on one hand, or the deception revealed by Father Time on the other. This example is only one of many which could be analyzed to

[73] *Ibid.*, 1024.

Fig. 99. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Tondo Doni*, 1504–1505, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, photo: Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino.

illustrate how ambiguity and multiple levels of meaning are employed by Bronzino in this painting.

The tradition of Scorpio with its ambivalent connotations, its synthesis of contrasts and polarities, the emphasis on deception, hypocrisy and duplicity, on the hidden and occult, on genitals and venereal disease, and on aberrant sexual behavior, provided the perfect frame for Bronzino's satire. Among the specific images in the painting that derive from the Scorpio literature, we have noted the two contrasting hands respectively holding honey and a venomous scorpion, the image of the deceitful and bestial female who deceives with her amicable and innocent face, the explicit and implicit emphasis on the genitals and anus, on venereal disease and deformity, and the symbolic figure of

Venus. The almost imperceptible scorpion with its hidden poison, in addition to its complex symbolic connotations is also used here as an explicit signifier of syphilis.

Among the deliberately elusive attributes is the apple of Venus, which on close scrutiny turns out not to be an apple at all but rather an onion whose skin is about to peel off. In his poem *La cipolla del Bronzino pittore* the effects of the onion are compared to those of love. But as it enters through the eyes and the nose the onion causes more tears and torment than love. He makes an analogy between the onion and the beloved: '*Amor fa che l'amato si diventa e chi si mangia di queste si trasforma in esse, se che par ch'ognun lo senta*' (Love makes you become like the beloved; he who eats onions becomes onions since it seems that everyone can smell you). In the same poem he writes: '*Amor riscalda e questa par chi ci arda; amor saetta e questa ancor s'avventa né stato o condizion d'alcun riguarda*' (Love warms and the onion seems to burn us. Love shoots arrows and this onion assails anyone without any regard for his rank or condition).[74] Bronzino may again have intended to evoke two possible readings, because the apple of Venus itself traditionally conveyed venereal and erotic meanings. In Italian literature it alluded to sexual stimulation, potency, rejuvenation and carnal delights, but because of the worms inside it, the apple could also signify the hypocrisy of feminine beauty, under which lies foul and verminous disease, '*a plaything of time and death*'.[75] The explicit association between '*the delight of apples*' and '*that common saying to fondle the nipples*' was made by Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522–1605) in his *Dendrologiae naturalis scilicet arborum historiae libri duo* in reference to the wanton acts of Venus.[76] The onion-apple and the arrow held by Venus in the painting are thus placed in the context of the social satire, not only with its sexual innuendos but also with its apparent allusion to the disease that assails without regard for rank or status. This might be compared to Joseph Grunpeck's use of the image of arrows to denote the contagion of the *Morbus Gallicus*.[77] The play on hidden parts (i.e. genitals) and

[74] Translations from *La Cipoll*a are by Parker, *Ibid.*, 1032.

[75] Quoted from Carlo Rancati by P. Camporesi, *The Anatomy of the Senses*, trans. A. Cameron, Oxford, 1994, 12; see *Ibid.*, 1–25, for related aspects of apple-symbolism in Renaissance and Baroque literature.

[76] Paracelsus (1493–1541), *Chirurgia Magna*, Strasbourg, 1536. See Schleiner (as in note 64), 501–4.

[77] Grunpeck, *Tractatus de Pestilentia Scorra sive Mala de Franzos*, Augsburg, 1496. See Arrizabalaga *et al.* (as in note 43), 98.

hidden meanings (i.e. deception in love and that of the artist) can be summarized in Bronzino's sentence '*come voi vedeste loro/mezze scoprirsi e mezze star nascose/tal voi faceste del vostro tesoro*' (just as you saw them [the onions] partly revealing and partly concealing themselves, so did you do the same with your treasure).

EPILOGUE

There is no contradiction between the metaphorical and symbolic approach, to which Renaissance animal imagery was inextricably bound, and the florescent naturalism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The two were not mutually exclusive. In fact, animal drawings, such as those by Pisanello, Dürer or Leonardo, were frequently created first and foremost as empirical studies that could subsequently be adopted in various iconographic contexts, including those of symbolism and allegory. It is curious, however, that in the late *Quattrocento*, a prolific painter of animals like Vittore Carpaccio preferred to copy the old drawings by Pisanello rather than search for models. Why? Because Carpaccio, like most Renaissance painters, was not a naturalist. His animals were conceived as disguised symbols in keeping with the norms of medieval iconography. One may argue that artists, such as Dürer and Leonardo da Vinci, approached animals with scientific curiosity and studied their anatomy in much the same way as that of humans. But when Dürer's little dog and pet parrot accompanied *Our Lady of the Animals* (ca.1503), as in a genre scene, they were nevertheless employed as Marian symbols. The question of disguised symbolism arises when an artist like Carpaccio depicts these same animals in a secular painting, apparently divorced from Marian or other religious contexts. This is one of the questions we have addressed in the case of Carpaccio's *Venetian Ladies*.

The multiplicity and prominence of animals and birds populating the landscape of Carpaccio's *Knight in a Landscape* inspired the study of that beautiful painting. The study itself led from the New Testament allegory of the *miles christianus*, and its theological tradition, to the revival of the theme as an abstract metaphor in the *Enchiridion militis christiani* by Erasmus (1501–2), illustrating how abstract concepts were reinforced and expanded by the use of animals as disguised symbols. Based on medieval sources, Carpaccio's animals and bird metaphors convey themes of moral dualism and spiritual conflict, and of worldliness versus piety, each and every creature functioning as part of a disguised catalogue of virtues and vices.

Iconographic theories and methods promoted by the German school of art-history before the Second World War, and largely promoted

through Erwin Panofsky's studies of disguised symbolism, have continued to be extremely controversial.[1] Critics have objected to what they perceive to be the superimposition of allegorical meanings and esoteric interpretations on imagery that should be taken at face value. The fact that stereotyped interpretations of animal depictions are ubiquitous in scholarly literature is one symptom of this attitude. Consequently, a dog, regardless of whether he is sleeping at the feet of his mistress, participating in a scene of secular genre, or accompanying a scholar or saint, is automatically conceived as a symbol of fidelity. Titian's art is an excellent case in point; there have been two opposing schools of thought in regard to his use of disguised symbolism. The animals he portrayed in about twenty-five of his mythological, religious and secular paintings have not been conceived by scholars as disguised symbols and consequently were not integrated as such into iconographical interpretations of his work. In two of my chapters, *Animals in the Painting of Titian* and *Titian's London Allegory*, relevant literary and artistic sources of animal iconography, combined with the exegetic methods of religious and mythological allegory, have been adduced as evidence of disguised meanings. In both studies the tenacity of medieval attitudes expressed by the traditional use of moralizing animal metaphors is particularly revealing. It elucidated what might be called anachronistic or conservative thematic elements implicit in the work of one of the greatest of Renaissance painters, whose artistic innovations had far-reaching affects both on contemporary and future generations.

Are we discussing the dialectics of anachronism versus progress, as expressed in a gap between form and content? If we put aside our preconceptions regarding the division between medieval and Renaissance iconography and concentrate on the dynamics of particular themes, it might be possible to explain why the dichotomy does not really exist. The use of symbolic medieval imagery, and animal images in particular,

[1] E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconography: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, (1939), New York, 1962 and *Early Netherlandish Painting, Its Origin and Character*, Cambridge, Mass., 1953.

Criticism of Panofsky's idea of disguised symbolism was already expressed by Otto Pächt, in his review "Panofsky's Early Netherlandish Painting", *Burlington Magazine*, 98, 1956, 278 and Creighton Gilbert, "On Subject and Non-Subject in Italian Renaissance Pictures," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 34, 1952, 202–16. See discussion in M.A. Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, Ithaca & London, 1984, esp. chapter 6: "Later Work: An Iconological Perspective," 158–93. Objections to theories of disguised symbolism in the paintings by Titian, as discussed in my Chapter Six, are symptomatic of this controversy.

was never static. As repeatedly illustrated in the preceding case studies, the applications, associations and contexts of animal imagery were constantly varied in the late medieval and early Renaissance periods. Dante, for example, in the opening lines of the *Divina Commedia*, chose to describe his confrontation with three allegorical beasts of sin, in contrast to the series of seven beasts traditionally used to depict Cardinal Sins in medieval literature and art.[2] In Dante's time these three, Lust, Pride and Avarice, were considered the most common vices. When a similar animal triad was subsequently depicted in Franciscan iconography, the beast metaphors, deprived of Dante's introspective, soul-searching context, were adopted as part of an iconic repertoire of doctrinal propaganda. The same animal triad of sins survived into the late Renaissance in secular contexts.[3] Thus the basic image, preserving its triadic structure and fundamental moralistic significance, accumulated new connotations and associations that reflected changing concepts and contemporary issues. As long as their depictions were explicitly allegorical, the basic iconographical structure was retained. The real transformation began when Renaissance artists adopted these same animal symbols as disguised symbols in unprecedented contexts. One of the startling iconographic innovations represented by Carpaccio, Titian, and some of their Venetian contemporaries, is reflected in the way they camouflaged meanings. Formal and iconographic strategies interacted in disguising the message. Animals provided a perfect medium of disguise in that, on the one hand, they appeared quite innocent as adjuncts of pastoral or mythological narrative, landscape, and portraiture, while providing, on the other, a whole range of ready-made symbolic associations to be utilized in myriad contexts.

The use of conventional beast metaphors in an autobiographical context, as seen in Titian's *London Allegory*, or the adoption of a highly charged, traditional animal motif as the key to allegorical content in an off-color social satire, such as that created by Bronzino, exemplify the unlimited range of disguised animal symbolism in the Renaissance. The interpretation of the scorpion in Bronzino's *Allegory* (1542) was based on a retrospective study of this creature's metamorphosis from its ancient iconographic origins up to the medieval sources and depictions

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[2] Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia*, *Inferno*, canto I, 31–60.

[3] Regarding the various artistic adaptations of the animal triad, see Chapter Seven.

that preceded its new association in late fifteenth and sixteenth century artistic symbolism. Here we witness an aggregation of concepts that crystallized in medieval thought and then found a whole new application during the Renaissance, in which all the varied and ambivalent connotations were integrated.

The chapter on Andrea del Sarto's *Madonna of the Harpies* has dealt with the problematic interpretation of the animal-human hybrid in Renaissance art. The ambivalence inherent in feminine hybrid images from antiquity on, medieval connotations of hybridization transmitted to the Renaissance, and the classical revival of these images during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, combine in investing the motif, as well as Del Sarto's painting as a whole, with an aura of mystification and evasiveness. The message of feminine eroticism and reflections of misogynist conceptions associated with Original Sin are shown to be implicit.

The combined depictions of feminine hybrids and animal heads on the fifteenth century marble *lavabo* of the Florentine church of San Lorenzo raise problems of animal symbolism in an entirely different context, that of purification rituals.[4] As the San Lorenzo *lavabo* is a unique example of this iconography created during the Renaissance period, my research focused on a geographical cross-section of sources, dating from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, where animals and animal-heads, in particular, were depicted in related contexts. The meanings of specific animals and birds, and combinations thereof, repeatedly associated with the iconography of ritual purification, were studied to elucidate their significance, both in the broader context of European art and that of Tuscany in particular. This study also addressed questions regarding the relevance of the animal images sculpted on the San Lorenzo *lavabo* to the function of the *Sagrestia Vecchia* of the same church, where it is located, and to contemporary issues of Medici patronage.

These case studies illustrate various ways in which Renaissance artists revived conventional animal imagery in new contexts, investing them with new meanings, whether on a social, political, ethical, religious or psychological level. We find that the accumulated appendages of traditional interpretations, and the application of exegetical methodology in creating multiple semantic and iconographical levels, were indispensable to the artist. Rather than reject what might have been considered

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[4] Chapter Eight.

anachronistic to a more critical age, the Renaissance artist constructed the very essence of his iconographic innovation upon this tradition and its methodology. From this point of view the process was evolutionary. Furthermore, by integrating the endeavors of empirical research in perfecting naturalistic form, with the immensely complex heritage of symbolism and allegory, the artist created the unique synthesis of tradition and innovation that characterizes all the great achievements of Renaissance culture.

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