PAINTING DANAË, DIANA, EUROPA AND VENUS: TITIAN AND ARGENSOLA'S *A NUÑO DE MENDOZA*

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While Spanish literature of the Golden Age is replete with scenes and allusions from classical mythology, Spanish art of the period reveals a notable absence of the mythological, a topic most popular in Italian Renaissance art. This paper seeks to explore the tensions between literature and art in Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola's satirical poem *A Nuño de Mendoza*, showing how Titian's art becomes, for the Spanish moralist, a symptom of the decadence and effeminacy of Spanish society. At the same time, the classical education and the antique models utilized by Argensola often undermine his moralistic verse, while his use of allegorical interpretations of Titian's paintings subvert his contrast between the pagan sensuality of Renaissance Italian art and the ascetic teachings of the Christian writers.

Spanish painting of the Golden Age was for the most part religious in nature. Pacheco's dictum that painting was to "induce men to piety and bring them to God," was not, according to Jonathan Brown, a mere platitude. Rather, it voiced "a conviction universally held in his society. And the consensus was that this goal was best achieved through direct, unambiguous, dogmatic imagery that inspired intense involvement in the events of the New Testament, the lives of saints, and the doctrines of the church" (312). Mythological subjects, on the other hand, were "nearly absent" from Spanish art of the period, since the "home market was confined mainly to an ecclesiastical clientele" (Brown 4). The secular and even "immoral" character of classical mythology together with the propensity of the ancients and their imitators to sculpt or paint these figures as nudes, made the ecclesiastical clients shun this type of art. Indeed, as Rosa López Torrijos notes, these characteristics made them subject to the church's censorship, following the dictates of the Council of Trent (19).[1]

And yet, the Spanish Court, its kings and nobles, were well aware of the beauty, sensuality and value of Italian Renaissance paintings, which often depicted mythological and allegorical subjects through partly clothed and nude human figures. Indeed, it has been argued that many Renaissance paintings use the "cloak of mythology" to revel in sensuality and sexuality.[2] Titian's *Danaë*, for example, was commissioned for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in Rome, with the express command that

CALÍOPE Vol. 6, Nos. 1-2 (2000): pages 181-197

she be given the face of the cardinal's mistress. As Bette Talvacchia asserts: "the nude image with the features of a recognizable courtesan would have been more than unseemly in the prelate's residence; but with the sanctioning cover of Danaë's story, the existence of the figure was justified on a moral level by a literary reference, even if its visual impact remained the same" (46). It may come as a surprise, then, to learn that the Spanish Counter-Reformation king par excellence, Philip II, was delighted to receive, among other mythologies, a version of Titian's *Danaë* in 1554, while he was still Crown Prince (Panofsky 149). But, responding to "the growing militancy of Philip's defense of the faith" and the building of the Escorial (Brown 58), Titian generally refrained from sending him mythological paintings after *The Rape of Europa* arrived in Spain in 1562. From then on, "most of his paintings for the king were on religious subjects" (Brown 57).

In spite of these late religious paintings, Spanish writers would remember Titian for his sensuous mythological works. Whether exhibiting on stage Titian's portrait of *Rossa Sultana*, the Russian red-head who came to control the sultan's heart, the harem and the politics of Constantinople (De Armas "The Allure"); or comparing the beauty of the fainting and crying Dorotea to Titian's Andromeda,[3] Lope de Vega often evoked Titian to further charge his plays with the force of sensuality and desire. At least on one occasion, however, he did use the sensuality of Titian as the negative counterpart to Christian piety. In *Virtud, pobreza y mujer*, the virtuous but poor Isabel, who is deceived by don Carlos with a promise of marriage, is surrounded by pius images:

> Imágenes tenía que no eran
> Del Mudo, de Bassano ni del Ticiano,
> El mayor de los tres contrario humano:
> Dar devoción sospecho que pudieran . . . (*Comedias* 215).

Thus, she possesses the pius images that would turn her to virtue, and not the profane paintings of Jacopo dal Ponte (called Bassano) or Titian, painters of the Venetian school, whose sensuous colors are more suited to pagan desires.[4] Although this play has been dated by Morley and Bruerton as belonging to the period 1610-1618, it is possible that an earlier version was composed around 1604 (Morley and Bruerton 268). If such is the case, Lope de Vega's contrast may well echo Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola's epistle *A Nuño de Mendoza, que después fue Conde de Val de Reyes* which was written around 1600 (Argensola 91-92, n. 13).

For Juan Manuel Blecua this may well be one of Argensola's most outstanding poem: "La que ofrece un interés más subido, limada muchas veces, a juzgar por las versiones manuscritas, es la dirigida a don Nuño de Mendoza sobre los vicios de la Corte, que ha merecido siempre los

mejores elogios de la crítica" (xxxiv). This epistle includes numerous ideas that parallel Argensola's *memorial* to Philip III *De cómo se remediarán los vicios de la Corte* (Blecua xxxv). It also imitates Horace's epistles and Juvenal's satire on the perils of ancient Rome (Cirot 48-60; Blecua xxxv). Although these aspects have been studied by critics, little has been said of the pictoric content of Argensola's *A Nuño de Mendoza*.

Argensola's poem begins with a statement of its purpose, to persuade Nuño de Mendoza not to send his children to Madrid, the site of the Spanish Court, since such a move will endanger these youths (92, vv. 19-21). The poetic voice in this work assumes the role of a moralistic philosopher, although conceding that Nuño may call him a "filósofo molesto" (93 v. 39). After this brief introductory section (vv. 1-42), the epistle turns to the question of education. Turning aside examples from the ancients "del padre que a sus hijos disciplina" (93 v. 46), the fictive Argensola presents Nuño with two main images that are intended to show how a child must be disciplined so as to grow into a virtuous adult. The two examples given, although common in literature, are part of the emblematic tradition of the Renaissance, thus foregrounding the pictoric impulse of the verses. The first image is of the eagle who tests her young by having them gaze directly at the sun: "¿quién dirá que es prueba / de la águila, que al sol los examina?" (93, vv. 47-48). The ones that turn away from the sunbeam are cast off. The story appears in Sebastián de Covarrubias' *Emblemas morales* (I.79, fol. 79). Other emblem writers utilize this pictorial anecdote, including Alonso Remón, Andrés Ferrer de Valdecebro and Hernando de Soto (Vistarini and Cull 50-56; De Armas, *The Return of Astraea* 128). The latter graphically depicts a dead eaglet in his *Emblemas moralizadas*. But Argensola, although using the emblems' pictorial qualities, transforms their meaning by blaming the father for the children's shortcomings, for their fall. In other words, the father is responsible for the children's education and virtuous upbringing.

To make his message even clearer Argensola tells the tale of the farmer who knows that a young tree must not be exposed to the rigors of winter, meaning that Nuño's children should not be exposed to the rigors of the Court. Again turning to Covarrubias' *Emblemas morales* we discover the picture of a strong and mature tree next to a tender plant being pulled by a child. The commentary explains that "La niñez està representada en una postura nueua y tierna planta, y la edad varonil en essa mesma, quando se ha hecho arbol gruesso y robusto" (III.52, fol. 252). Covarrubias adds that while some children grow up to succeed in arms or letters, others "han quedado inábiles y apocados" (III.52, fol. 252). Argensola uses the image of the tender tree from the emblematic tradition to stress the weakness of children and the power of education to strengthen and perfect them: "pues los crías / para que excedan a los más perfetos" (93, vv. 59-60). This is accomplished through learning history and philoso-

phy in seclusion rather than going to the court. And letters must be balanced by arms: "tomen espadas negras" (94, v. 73).

At this point, the text warns of the dangers that lurk even in such a secluded educational process, for the page or servant can show the youth the "effeminate ways" of the court. These include the lascivious music and song that comes from the Indies (95, vv. 90-91); the ways men now wear their hair, much like women; and lastly, the lascivious paintings that hang on the walls. The moralistic emblematic tradition used to uphold a strict education is thus contrasted with lascivious paintings, which as will be shown, are synonymous with Italian mythological art. In labeling negatively the new ways of the court as effeminate, Argensola was not alone. Numerous writers of the period contrasted the new ways with the masculinity of old. As José Cartagena-Calderón has shown: "El siglo XVII vio en España una creciente preocupación por la masculinidad. La opinión cada vez más extendida era que el imperio se había ido irremediablemente a la ruina por haberse presuntamente desvirilizado" (139). Cartagena-Calderón cites, among others, Sancho de Moncada's *Restauración política de España* (1616) where the author rails against "la gente tan regalada y afeminada" (139) and Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa who in 1621 calls courtiers "mariquillas" and "afeminados" (Cartagena-Calderón 140). Argensola's epistle and his *memorial* cited above, are even earlier examples of this tendency. Argensola is rejecting the changes taking place throughout Europe and represented in Castiglioni's *Courtier*: "la construcción de una nueva masculinidad de carácter urbano y cortesano" (Cartagena-Calderón 141). The new courtier must go beyond the traditional role of warrior and learn of courtly speech, of poetry and of manners. To know how to wage war is less important in the urban courtier than to know how to follow courtly protocol and evince the power of leisure as seen in dress, speech, and ornamentation.

Among the displays needed to show power and taste, was the need to own and be conversant with the art of painting. As Jonathan Brown asserts, "the possession of fine pictures became a badge of identity for the social elite" (244). In fact, painting was superior to other forms of luxury and wealth: "Jewelry and table settings made of gold and silver and finely spun cloth hangings and fancy clothing could be acquired by anyone with wealth, but they were not cultural creations. Fine paintings, on the other hand, were now immersed in the mainstream of European civilization and thus it behooved princes . . . to own and understand them" (Brown 243-44). Thus, when Argensola argues against owning certain types of painting in the education of future courtiers, he is promoting an antiquated type of masculinity, one that is satirized in *Don Quixote*:

El cuadro que no fuere casto y bueno
en ningún caso por sus puertas entre,
porque parece almíbar y es veneno (95, vv. 97-99)

Argensola, then, rejects paintings that do not seem to promote chastity and goodness. He claims that the taste in appreciating or owning them may appear sweet but is actually poisonous. Earlier in the poem he had admonished Nuño's children to learn "las dos filosofías" (94, v. 63), that of Plato and Aristotle. It is of the first he now speaks, pointing to the banishment of poetry from the Republic. Argensola had used Plato to censor theatrical practices in his *memorial* (Blecua xxx). Now, he is recalling Plato's *Republic* and claiming that painting, like most poetry, is nothing but an imitation of an imitation, and a *pharmakon* or poison that must be censored or banished. Like Plato, Argensola would preserve certain works. For the Spanish writer, moral and satirical poetry and religious paintings as well as moral emblems can be preserved since they serve the republic and help educate the young.

The new courtier, however, values the paintings that do not appear to be chaste, that is, many of the mythological paintings of the Italian Renaissance. Such a courtier would also know how to decipher the mythological tale being portrayed and he or she would also be able to interpret in an allegorical or platonizing manner the sensual nature of the work in order to provide it with a lofty meaning. Argensola, then, rejects the new uses of Plato, preferring the philosopher as censor. He also contrasts differing visual traditions: the emblematic and moralizing which he uses in his arguments, and the mythological and unchaste, which he banishes.

The third and longest section of Argensola's poem (96, v. 127ff) focuses on what would happen to Nuño's children if they went to court. This part then foregrounds the excesses and vices of Philip III's Madrid. This section, which contains many lengthy satirical descriptions and digressions, also incorporates a key passage on painting. Indeed, painting is at the very center of effeminacy and decadence. The poetic voice in Argensola's poem imagines how a youth is quickly corrupted at court. Once he is part of the new "sect" of *narcisos* (99, v. 190), he is invited to their places of opulence:

Convídale otro a visitar los senos
desta gran población de seda y oro
y de pinturas admirables llenos,
que a ley de ingenio valen un tesoro,
en la de Dios, él sabe lo que cuesta
Leda en el cisne, Europa sobre el toro,
Venus pródigamente deshonesta,
sátiros torpes, ninfas fugitivas,

y entre las suyas Cintia descompuesta (100 vv. 214-22).

If the earlier passage on painting had failed to tell precisely what works were to be shunned, here the topic is revealed. The youth is shown the sensuous and sexual paintings that have mythology as their subject. Since these works "valen un tesoro" (100, v. 217), they must be by Renaissance masters. As noted above, the best known of all Italian painters in Spain was Titian, since his works were commissioned by both Charles V and Philip II. They were exhibited in both the Alcázar and the Pardo hunting lodge. For those unable to see the originals, prints were available.

Argensola's passage lists four mythological topics. It should come as no surprise that Titian had painted three of the four. These paintings were in Spain, at the royal palaces. I will argue that Argensola's text is pointedly referring to Titian's works. The second topic mentioned by Argensola alludes to *The Rape of Europa* painted by Titian and sent to Philip II in Madrid in 1562. Panofsky explains that this painting faithfully follows Ovid, but deviates in portraying Europa's pose: "The most obvious anomaly is the pose of Europa herself. She reclines rather than sits on the bull, displaying, as has been said, 'her ample charms in a pose of an ungainliness which only fear could sanction'" (166). Leonard Barkan adds that her "skewed physical position" is a corporeal manifestation of "fear and passion" (199). This mythology by Titian particularly interested Velázquez since it redefines pagan metamorphosis, determining "that it be psychological and humane rather than merely frivolous and Olympian" (Panofsky 200). While Velázquez renders tribute to Titian's painting by including it in his *Fable of Arachne,* Argensola ignores the originality of the work in order to include it as one more vision of pagan immorality.

Using this painting, Argensola shows that corruption has reached the highest level of the court, the king. Not only does the king possess the painting—the painting also reflects the king's desires. First of all, the image of Jupiter raping Europa has imperial connotations. The king as Jupiter takes possession of Europe/Europa and of the world. In France, for example, the triumphant entry of Charles IX's queen in 1571 included Europa and the Bull (Yates 137); while in England, Elizabeth's imperial aspirations were praised through the emblem of Europa as a ship accompanied by a bull (Yates 49). In Spain, an emblem of Europa and the bull by Francisco Antonio de Montalvo includes in the commentary reference to the relation between woman and geography: "Para simbolizar esta felicíssima Región en todo mejorada por menor parte del Mundo" (Vistarini and Cull 775). The fact that Philip II received the *Rape of Europa* from Titian and that he and his son Philip III proudly exhibited it in their

palace was well known.[5] While Argensola would praise the imperial ideal, he would not accept that imperial desire could be represented in terms of a naked woman. This conflation of desires would contaminate the king and his court. When a most pagan, immoral, and lascivious story is displayed in order to represent the aims of the Spanish monarchy, then the king and the court must be "poisoned" by the passion and effeminacy of the painting.

Following his allusion to *The Rape of Europa*, Argensola's epistle envisions: "Venus pródigamente deshonesta, / sátiros torpes" (100, vv.220-21). These verses succinctly point to Titian's *Pardo Venus*. Although after 1562 Philip had turned away from pagan subjects and required religious paintings of the Venetian painter, an exception was made in 1567. Titian, who according to Panofsky worked on the *Pardo Venus* "for almost half a century" (192), finally finished it and sent it to Philip, who placed it in the luxurious hunting lodge of the king, El Pardo. This intriguing composition exhibits in the right foreground a slumbering nude Venus. A satyr, inflamed with desire, extends his right arm towards her. In the left foreground a second satyr is to be found, but he stares into space rather than pay attention to his female companion. Next to them, a young man and a hound heeding the call of a hornblower, rush to the hunt. Although Titian worked for so long on this intriguing and alluring work, we have few clues as to its iconography. Does it represent the three forms of human life, active, sensual and contemplative (Panofsky 192)? Is the huntsman Adonis and his companion a second Venus (Panofsky 191)? Is the second satyr to be equated with Pan, "discloser and mover of all things" (Panofsky 193)?

Whatever the answer to these questions may be, it is clear that Titian's painting was known and held in high esteem in Spain and throughout Europe. When Philip III was notified that a fire at the palace or hunting lodge of El Pardo destroyed numerous works of art, he asked only about the *Pardo Venus*. On hearing that it survived, he stated "pues lo demás no importa, que se volverá a hacer" (López Torrijos 71). The painting remained at El Pardo until 1623 when it was given as a gift to the Prince of Wales, the future Charles I of England, who had come to Spain to court to seek the hand of the infanta María, sister of Philip IV. At the death of Charles I, the painting was bought by Cardinal Mazarin for 4900 pounds, an astronomical sum for the period (Brown 90). The Cardinal eventually bequeathed it to Louis XIV of France. This valued painting, owned by royalty in Spain, France and England, also had its detractors. The painter Vicente Carducho, on hearing that the painting had survived the fire at the Pardo palace, "comenta con un cierto reproche que 'con ser tan profana' pudo escapar del fuego'" (López Torrijos 20). It is in this vein that we must interpret Argensola's reference to it. Since the painting includes elements of the hunt and it was placed in a hunting lodge, this theme

Titian [Tiziano Vecellio] (1488/89-1576)
The Venus of Pardo, incorrectly called *Jupiter and Antiope*
Louvre, Paris

Courtesy: Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY

was foregrounded. And writers of the period often conflated the hunt with the hunt of love. The fact that through the painting, El Pardo is transformed into a place where lustful satyrs can hunt nude pagan goddesses (courtesans?) hardly escaped Argensola's moral indictments.

The fourth and last painting is described by Argensola as follows: "ninfas fugitivas, / y entre las suyas Cintia descompuesta" (100, vv. 221-22). Two mythologies were sent by Titian to Philip II in 1559: *Diana and Acteon* and *Diana and Callisto*. These paintings, like *The Rape of Europa*, derive from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In both of the Diana paintings Cintia, that is, the goddess Diana herself, is surrounded by her nymphs but is also "descompuesta." In the first Diana's reaction is the result of a hunter's intrusion upon the nude Diana and her nymphs at their bath. The painting focuses on the discovery rather than on the eventual transformation of Acteon into a stag and his death as he is torn to pieces by his hounds. The second also delights in discovery rather than in subsequent transformation and punishment. Once again, the goddess and her nymphs are at the bath, and they discover the pregnancy of the nymph Callisto—who had been deceived by Jupiter. As Barkan explains: "The emphasis upon nakedness reminds us that both are stories of the revealed flesh; but the subject of love by eyesight in the Acteon picture is balanced in the *Callisto* by carnal love fulfilled in pregnancy" (201). This emphasis on the flesh and on carnal love must have been particularly abhorrent to the moralistic priest Argensola, who used this pair of paintings to conclude his journey through the mythological world of Titian.

It is possible that Argensola may have also been conscious of even less acceptable interpretations of these two paintings. Discussing representations of homoerotic desire in the early modern period Alain Saint-Saëns singles out these two paintings: "In the first painting, symbolically Acteon epitomizes also the interference and intrusion of the heterosexual danger within a female homosocial protected group arranged by Diana . . . The ultimate punishment of Acteon . . . marks also the possible victory of homoeroticism over the phallic power" (58-59). Although in a lengthy diatribe against women included in his epistle Argensola says nothing of lesbian desire, he does seem to point to the perils of male homoeroticism in the section of the epistle that precedes the discussion of Titian's paintings. Here, he shows how a youth coming to court can be corrupted by a Ganymede ("un Ganimedes / destos que andan perdidos a remate" [98 vv. 176-77). As James Saslow has noted "the very word *ganymede* was used from medieval times well into the seventeenth century to mean an object of homosexual desire" (*Ganymede* 2), and writers of the Golden Age frequently alluded to Ganymede to represent homoeroticism.[6] This Ganymede takes the youth to the Prado, where "la gran reina de Gnido" (98, v. 185) presides. This is of course Venus, whose statue at Gnidus was

particularly famous in antiquity for its beauty and sensuality. Once the youth is at home in the wooded areas of the Prado presided over by the goddess of love, he is admitted to the sect: "Los narcisos le admiten a la seta" (99, 190). Since Narcissus fell in love with his own image as reflected in a pool, Italian Renaissance artists often associate him with homoeroticism (De Armas, "Deflecting Desire" 235). Consequently, Argensola's passage could be interpreted to mean that the youth is now part of a homosexual subculture. Argensola goes on to give as a chief characteristic of sodomites/homosexuals[7] excesses in dress: "que más por randas y almidón suspira / que por la perdición de la Goleta" (99, vv. 191-92). By opposing an imperial and warlike matter (the loss of la Goleta) to the concern with dress and appearance, Argensola seeks to contrast "appropriate" masculine interests with the effeminate longings of sodomites and other courtly types.[8]

Argensola's poem, then, discusses and condemns effeminate behavior, linking it to homoerotic practices. While the text condemns male ganymedes, it turns away from their pictorial representation, although it was very common in Italian Renaissance art. Argensola's own professed sexual orientation leads him to picture the nude as women. By alluding to Titian's Diana mythologies he could well have been suggesting male voyeurism, but the paintings also point to the often silenced relations between women.

If indeed Argensola is using Titian's mythological paintings to show the immorality and effeminacy of the Spanish court, why is the first allusion, that of "Leda con el cisne? (100 v. 219) a topic that is absent from Titian's pictorial repertoire? I would argue that this initial reference must be linked to a fifth allusion to Titian in Argensola's *A Nuño de Mendoza*. Immediately following the section on art, the poem turns to gambling, showing a Genoese at play:

> Tiene nuestra española con tan fuerte
> mágica preso al ligurino bravo,
> que en la lluvia de Dánae lo convierte (101 vv. 232-34)

To the four mythologies by Titian already discussed, a fifth one must be added. As stated at the beginning of this essay, Philip, while still Crown Prince in 1554, received a version of Titian's *Danaë*. The painting differs from the once commissioned for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in that instead of a Cupid, the painter includes a hideous nursemaid who is intent in collecting some of the gold that descends from the heavens. As Barkan states: "this activity is virtually a parody of the Ovidian myth, since it materializes the golden shower as literal wealth for which the hag can compete with Danaë" (193). It is the greed elicited by the golden shower

Titian [Tiziano Vecellio] (1488/89-1576)
Danaë
Prado Museum, Madrid

Courtesy: Prado Museum/Art Resource, NY

that is utilized by Argensola. The wealthy Genoese merchant, through his excessive gambling, becomes Jupiter's golden shower that is gathered by the other greedy players. Thus, the poem would transform Spanish courtiers into this old hag who searches for gold.[9] Not only are Spanish courtiers feminized in this phallocentric reading of the court, but they are also shown through the ugliness of greed, through the hideousness of the nursemaid.

There is another major change made by Titian to this second version of the *Danaë*. This one is even more sexually explicit than the first since, "the omission of the loin cloth in favor of a *Venus pudica* gesture (which, as so often, emphasizes what it pretends to conceal) lend a more intimate character to the scene" (Panofsky 149). For Argensola, such a representation must have reconfirmed his view of Titian as an indecent and immoral painter. Although Danaë seems to gaze upwards with an enraptured expression, her pose is sexually suggestive. As Barkan summarizes, she represents "the unresolved dualities between erotic fabliau and divine manifestation" (193). In addition, the golden coins point to economic gain as an incentive in amorous relations. Mythographers of the period, attempting to explain Jupiter's transformation, ask: "¿qué otra cosa significa sino que todo está al servicio de la avaricia y las dádivas y que no está seguro nada que sea asediado por ricos insignes?" (Conti 115). In his epistle, Argensola shows time and again how the power of gold corrupts women: "anhelan al metal más grato / y en figuras de ninfas son harpías" (103, vv. 272-73). His image of Danaë, then, is one enraptured by gold—one that reflects women's excessive concern with economic gain at the court of Philip III.[10]

This fifth Titian takes us back to the reference to "Leda en el cisne" (100 v. 219). Most art historians are in agreement that Titian's *Danaë* "was intended to compete with the *Leda* of Michelangelo" (Panofsky 146). And this connection was known in Spain, as it was Diego Hurtado de Mendoza who took Titian a copy by Vasari of the *Leda*.[11] Michelangelo's statue, "whose own origins were in the otherworldly atmosphere of antique funerary monuments" (Barkan 190) is also a work filled with contradictions and contrasts. While Leda appears in a state of sleep or deep contemplation, the work is not static. Jupiter, metamorphosed as a swan, seems to be enjoying the sexual pleasures of the sleeping beauty. As Barkan asserts: "For the first time since antiquity (I believe) an artist pictures the metamorphic union as the act of intercourse itself" (192). It is this pagan eros that Argensola criticizes, from its origins in Michelangelo's *Leda* to its great flowering in Titian's Danaë.

In Argensola's *A Nuño de Mendoza*, Titian serves as model for the immoral and indecent paintings enjoyed by the effeminate courtiers of Madrid. Titian was the most famous of Italian mythological artists in Spain—a country where such subjects were often not used by native art-

ists since they followed their church patrons' request for religious art. And many of Titian's mythological works were readily available in Spain since they decorated royal palaces and hunting lodges. Spanish courtly collectors also prized works by this and other Italian masters. Those who could not see the originals, were often regaled with prints and copies that could be bought at an inexpensive price. Even though Argensola was a classicist, his taste turned towards ancient philosophy and history. Mythology represented for him a pagan and alien discourse which reveled in what a strict Christian of the Counter Reformation would label as immoral and indecent practices. The pleasures of nudity, voyeurism, bestiality, copulation with a pagan god, homoeroticism and other desires which existed outside Christian heterosexual marriage, as seen in Titian's mythological works, typified for Argensola the decadence of the court in Madrid. It was a court which the poet compares unfavorably to the excesses of Rome in the times of its most notorious emperors such as Tiberius, Caligula and Nero (97, vv. 144-47). Like the moralist Suetonius (135-36), Argensola points to indecent paintings in order to condemn practices at the imperial court. Indeed, Argensola must have thought of Titian as the artist who fostered the representation of intercourse in art, a topic he had derived from an experiment with funerary art by Michelangelo.

And, his thesis of the feminization of the Spanish empire was well supported by the interest shown by Spanish kings and courtiers for Titian. Through the *Tractado de Pintura antigua* of the portuguese Francisco de Holanda, and through Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*, Argensola would have learned of the "masculinity" of Michelangelo's works, which emphasized order and design; and of the femininity of Titian's paintings which were mostly based on sensuous coloring (Sohm 784). Indeed, there was an intense debate during the Spanish Golden Age over the value of *dibujo* vs. *colorido*. Often the latter assumed the role of an alluring temptress: "No sólo tapa las faltas en el dibujo, sino es un tentador de los sentidos, la ramera de Babilonia, que llevará al espectador al pecado sensual" (Darst 23). It is fitting that Titian and his colorist school had its source in Venice since this city shared the humidity of women according to the humoral theories of the time. Furthermore "Venice and Venus, almost homonymic as Venezia and Venere, were both born from the sea. Usually Venice was cast as voluptuary—'a soft, effeminate city" (Sohm 785).

An advocate of a return to the "masculine" past, where kings and nobles were warriors above all, Argensola condemns the transformations that are taking place at the court in Madrid. These transformations recall those of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a book that provided Titian with so many of his subjects. The king is as the center of vertiginous change,[12] as new male courtiers are metamorphosed into femininity, becoming interested in the beautiful, in art, manners and dress. Appropriating Castiglioni's misogynistic discourse, Argensola sees these well-dressed courtiers versed

in the art of verbal and physical seduction, as approximating the figure of a courtesan/prostitute (Cartagena-Calderón 168). The nude figures of Titian's paintings represent, then, a dangerous beauty, the allure of Venus or Danaë as courtesan. This seductive yet pecuniary image, he argues, was becoming a mirror for the courtiers of Madrid, a magical mirror that turned men into women (Ganymedes), women into men, and both into monsters of avarice. These textual transformations hide a core of anxiety in Argensola's poetry, for they attempt to hide that which is being exposed—the precarious construction of gender, worth and imperial ideologies at a time when Spain's imperial power could no longer be compared to that of Jupiter raping Europa.

Notes

[1]López Torrijos argues that: "La inmoralidad se obviaba, en parte, utilizando la alegoría.... Esto no siempre era satisfactorio para la censura, y sobre ello tenemos abundantes testimonios, desde la condena en Trento, de las alegorías de los *Ovidios moralizados* ... Es pues, el segundo aspecto, el desnudo, el determinante de la escasez del tema mitológico en la pintura" (19).

[2]This "cloak" was often barely visible. Describing Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, Frederick Hartt asks: "Is this Venus at all? ... If this is Venus, then Titian has gone to considerable pains to demythologize her, to represent her as a prince's mistress, who basks in the warmth of her own flesh" (593).

[3]¡O Andrómeda del famoso Ticiano! Mira, Iulio, ¡qué lágrimas! Parece açucena con las perlas del alba. Desvíale los cabellos, Celia; veámosle los ojos, pues de dexa mirar el sol por la nube de tan mortal desmayo" (Lope de Vega, *Dorotea* 94). On this passage see De Armas, "Lope de Vega and Titian," and Trueblood 474-75.

[4]Not much is known about the Spanish painter Pedro el Mudo. The few paintings that are attributed to him are religious in nature. He died in 1648. See D. Angulo Iñiguez and A. E. Pérez Sánchez 335-38.

[5]Giorgio Vasari, in his *Lives of the Artists* asserts that: "These [mythological] paintings were in the possession of the Catholic king, and they are held most dear because of the vitality Titian gave to his figures with colours that made them seem almost alive and very natural" (503).

[6]On this subject see Heiple's essay on Góngora; De Armas' article on Arguijo; and Vélez Quiñones. Although the latter does not discuss the reference to Ganymede in *El castigo sin venganza*, he uses other methods "to read the duke [of Ferrara] as a sodomite" (108).

[7]There is a lengthy debate as to whether the term homosexuality can be used in the context of Golden Age culture since the term originated in the nineteenth century. Was there simply a notion of sodomy as a prohibited act or was there "a consciousness among these individuals of their common desires and emotions or of their problematic relation as a group to the dominant society?" (Saslow "Homosexuality" 96). Using Rafael Carrasco and others, Heiple argues that there as indeed a "homosexual society" in Golden Age Spain and that "the nature of

homosexual desires and acts were understood by both willing and unwilling participants in sodomy" ("Lope de Vega" 121).

[8]Much later in the poem, he returns to this topic, asking the reader to envision a classical hero consumed by effeminate concerns: "¿No fuera gran vergüenza ver que Aquiles / y el gran Hector trataran con ahínco / en estas travesuras femeniles? (109, vv.421-23). The irony, of course, is that Achilles dressed as a woman when he attempted to avoid going to Troy. He also had a homoerotic relationship during the war. Surely, Argensola, with his deep knowledge of classical culture must have been aware of these facts. What are we to make of these supposed lapses? Is Argensola's own discourse betraying his professed ideology?

[9]Argensola in his epistle opposes "la grave autoridad de la moneda" (114 v. 580).

[10]Summarizing the possible interpretations of Danaë, Barkan asserts: "The golden shower must be an incarnation of love: but is it the Holy Spirit, semen, or a prostitute's pay?" (191).

[11]Titian also did a portrait of Diego Hurtado de Mendoza. In a letter of November 24, 1540, the Spaniard tells that his portrait is ready (Spivakovsky 106). When he was seventy, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza wrote to Philip II, giving his advice on La Goleta (Spivakovsky 399). We have seen how Argensola refers to the defeat of La Goleta in his poem. Given the interest of Hurtado de Mendoza in Michelangelo and Titian and his writings on the defeat of La Goleta, it would be interesting to study his relationship to Argensola whose poem is addressed to another Mendoza, Nuño de Mendoza.

[12]Argensola does not fail to mention the king: "cuando hierve esta corte de Filipo" (114, v. 591).

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