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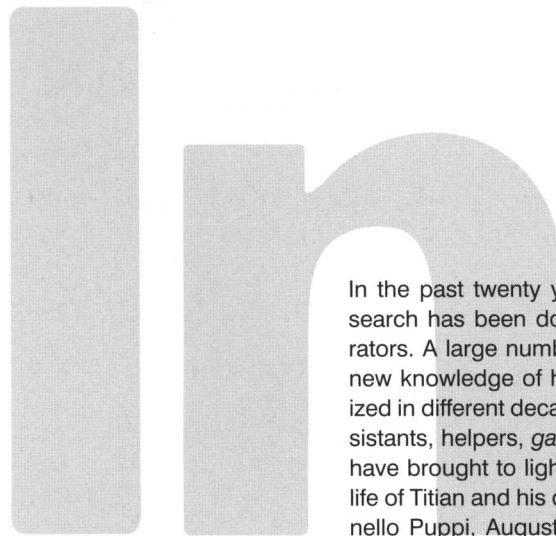
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Józef Grabski

## The Contribution of Collaborators in Titian's Late Works



In the past twenty years a lot of important, highly effective research has been done on the studio of Titian and his collaborators. A large number of high quality publications has brought new knowledge of how the work in Titian's *bottega* was organized in different decades, and who his collaborators were: the assistants, helpers, *garzoni*. These valuable archival investigations have brought to light many new, unknown facts concerning the life of Titian and his close collaborators. The studies done by Lionello Puppi, Augusto Gentili, Bernard Aikema, David Rosand<sup>1</sup>, but also by the younger generation of incisive scholars, including Giorgio Tagliaferro, Andrew John Martin and Matteo Mancini<sup>2</sup>, to mention only a few of them, have given us better insight into the studio of the master from Pieve di Cadore. In particular, the research programme started at the Fondazione Centro Studi Tiziano e Cadore with its seat in Titian's native city has offered scholars the possibility to carry out many valuable studies. The exhibitions, books and periodicals promoted and published by the foundation in Pieve di Cadore, especially the journal *Studi tizianeschi*<sup>3</sup>, have continuously brought out new, critical essays, shedding new light on the process of creation, the marketing of the works of art produced in the studio, and their commercialization on the Italian and European art markets during Titian's lifetime and after his death.

Particularly numerous in the past few years were publications dedicated to the last two decades of the activity in Titian's



1. Titian, «Pietà», c. 1575–1576, Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia



2. Titian, «Pietà» (detail of Fig. 1): putto holding a torch



3. Titian, «Pietà» (detail of Fig. 1): putto holding the scent jug of Magdalene

studio. Some important exhibitions, especially in London (2003), Vienna (2007), Belluno and Pieve di Cadore (2007–2008), and Venice (2008)<sup>4</sup> have brought together works of the artist's final period, allowing a confrontation of three groups of paintings: 1) those that are the product of his labour, 2) those executed in major part by the master himself, but with important contributions from his collaborators, as well as 3) those being copies and variants by his collaborators and assistants.

However, even if we know today much more about the organization of Titian's studio than we knew twenty years ago, there are still key questions related to the contribution of the master's collaborators in his paintings, questions which require further investigation and answers.

I would like to focus here on a few late works produced in the studio of Titian, started after 1560, already in the time after the death of the artist's brother and collaborator Francesco Vecellio. There are two groups of Titian's late paintings in which his assistants intervened: to the first belong the compositions executed in Titian's studio during the last years of his life and done under his personal control; to the second – his paintings finished and 'enhanced' after his death.

In the first group of special interest are such paintings as, among others, the *Portrait of Jacopo Strada*, 1566 (Vienna); *Tarquin and Lucretia*, c. 1570–1571 (Cambridge); *Religion Succoured by Spain*, 1570–1575 (Madrid) and *Philip II Offering Don Fernando to Victory*, 1575 (Madrid). To the second group, which



4. Titian, «Portrait of Jacopo Strada», 1566, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

will be taken here into consideration, belong such paintings as *The Flaying of Marsyas*, c. 1575 (Kroměříž); *Ecce Homo*, c. 1570–1576 (Saint Louis) and the *Pietà*, c. 1570–1576 (Venice).

A great effort has been made by many art historians to distinguish in different works the hand of the artist himself from those of his studio assistants. In many of these late works different artists' contributions have been observed. However, it is not possible to determine exactly who the painter or painters was or were, nor who executed which parts. Surely they were not entirely painted by Titian's own hand. We know the names of the artists from Titian's closest entourage. It is, however, almost impossible, to concretely determine who executed specific parts of the canvases' surfaces.

Among those in Titian's studio who made up his closest assistants and helpers were: his son Orazio (1522/25–1576), Valerio Zuccato, Damiano Mazza, Marco (1545–1611) and Cesare Vecellio (1521 – c. 1601), Girolamo Dente (1510 – c. 1565/70), Giovanni Maria Verdizzotti (1537/40–1604/07), and two Germans, Christoph Schwarz and Emanuel Amberger.

Only in a few cases can we tell with approximate certainty who, besides Titian himself, put his hand to a specific painting. One exception to this, in which we know exactly who the painter that finished the work was, is the *Pietà* [Fig. 1], today in the Gallerie dell'Accademia, which Titian wanted to place on his tomb in the Frari church in Venice. Palma il Giovane justly confirmed his later intervention on the painting with the inscription: 'What Titian left, Palma finished'.<sup>5</sup> Palma came into possession of the painting in unknown circumstances. It is possible that he took it as remuneration for previously unpaid work in Titian's studio. It is also possible that he had bought it from one of Titian's heirs, either his son Pomponio or Cornelio Sarcinelli. However, he didn't complete the unfinished painting for commercial purposes, in order to sell it, but rather more for ambition's sake. In putting this inscription on Titian's *Pietà* Palma il Giovane declared himself an artistic heir of Titian, hoping that part of Titian's glory would fall on him. Many stylistic, technological and archival studies have helped to indicate Palma's contribution. We can distinguish some parts of the painting as surely not by Titian, for example the putto holding the torch in the upper right-hand side of the painting [Fig. 2], as well as the wings of the putto holding the scent jug of Magdalene in the lower left-hand corner [Fig. 3].

### The Contribution of Emanuel Amberger in the *Portrait of Jacopo Strada*

It seems that in the *Portrait of Jacopo Strada* [Fig. 4], today in Vienna, we can observe a specific contribution of an assistant. In 1566 Titian was almost eighty years old, and already then a great deal of the pictorial work in his atelier was done by his assistants under his supervision. The picture portrays the Flemish art ex-



5. Titian, «Portrait of Jacopo Strada» (detail of Fig. 4): the cartouche

pert and collector, writer, architect and art dealer born in Mantua, who did business in art with Titian and helped the artist in selling his works. Jacopo Strada was as tough and hard-nosed in his affairs as Titian was. With his influential contacts to the German courts, the popes in Rome and the Habsburg emperors, Jacopo Strada was a link between Italy and the Northern markets. This late portrait by Titian recalls the German tradition of representing important people, characterising them with many significant elements and signifying attributes. Jacopo Strada is represented here wearing a gold chain with an imperial medal, a sword; various pieces of sculpture, books and a pomegranate on an architectonic shelf, coins, a letter on the table addressed with Titian's handwriting to the artist himself, a cartouche on a pillar complete the painting. The composition of this portrait with its many symbolic objects pays tribute to the Northern, and especially German tradition of portraiture.<sup>6</sup>

The scrollwork cartouche in the upper right-hand part of the composition serves as a frame for the inscription in Roman *all'antica* lettering, which identifies the sitter [Fig. 5]. The richly sculptured form of this cartouche with its Mannerist rollwork

ornaments, masks and small garlands seems to be artificially placed on the wall, or rather pillar, and doesn't really fit into the painting's space. It looks like an alien element added later, without any relation to the inner architecture. It partly sticks out over the edge of the pillar in an atectonic, illogical way. This almost Baroque shape is painted in a completely different manner, with small touches of the brush and fine precise strokes of golden colour on the brownish frame. This manner of precise painting is in contrast to the style of painting in the rest of the portrait, executed in Titian's late style. This secondary element seems to have been painted by a different hand than did the rest of the painting.

Almost at the same time when this portrait was being painted, Nicolo Stoppio, the rival in affairs of Jacopo Strada and another agent of Titian in his art sales, wrote on 29 February 1568 about Titian to Hans Jacob Fugger in Augsburg:

[...] et ogniuno dice che non vede piu quello qu'el fa, et li trema tanto la mano che stenta a ridurre cosa alcuna a perfettione, et lo fa fare alli suoi giovani, ha un Todescho in casa, Emanuel [...] che e eccellente et li fa molte cose che con due botte di penello che lui vi fa poi, le vende per sue [...].<sup>7</sup>

I wonder whether the painter who completed the cartouche in such a way that we feel it is a clumsy addition which does not fit well into the picture's space could be Emanuel Amberger, educated in his father's studio in Germany.<sup>8</sup> He would have brought a German knowledge of precise drawing, the skill of how to exactly determine the outlines of the objects he painted. Similar insertions, meticulously drawn objects foreign to Titian's late style, can be found in several of Titian's late compositions.

### Three Versions of *Tarquin and Lucretia*

Comparing the three versions of *Tarquin and Lucretia*, we can assume that the Vienna version [Fig. 6] is the one that is completely of the master's hand, even if the painting is not finished and executed intentionally with large brush touches, such that it was criticized by Titian's contemporaries as *non finito*. Both other versions of this composition bear traces of contributions from assistants. In both the Cambridge [Fig. 7] and Bordeaux [Fig. 10] versions we can observe a great contrast in stylistic execution, resulting in two very different ways of painting. Especially in the Cambridge version the body of Lucretia, the bed fabric and the big, white pillows are treated with large brush strokes, while the red trousers are heightened with energetic, pink lines. The boots of Tarquin, as well as the white, rolled-up sleeves of Tarquin's shirt, are painted smoothly but with dynamic strokes, and the white collar contrasts with the fine, linear and meticulous execution of the jewels on Lucretia's hand, neck and ear, as Sylvia

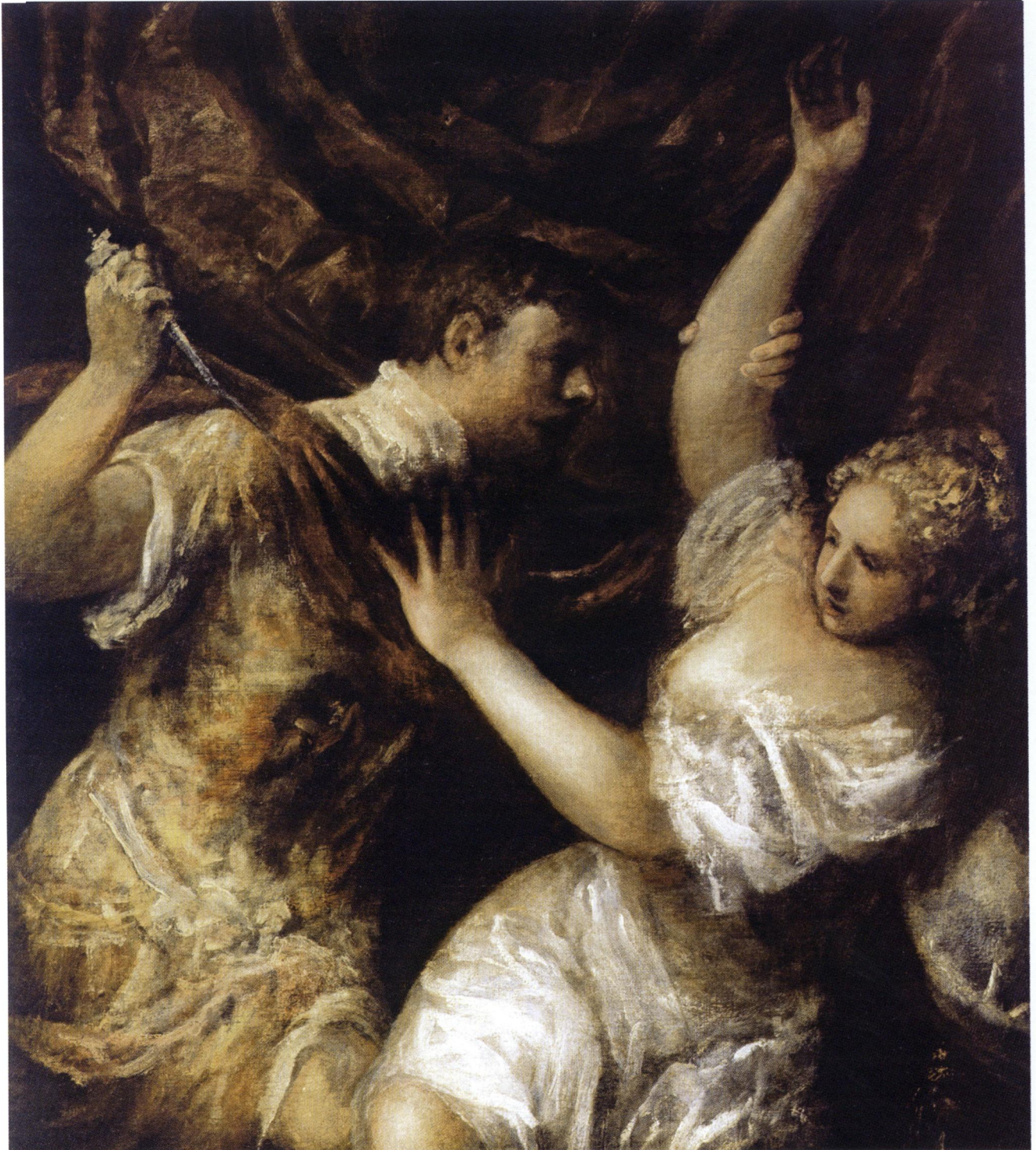
Ferino-Pagden has observed.<sup>9</sup> Particularly characteristic is the precise execution of the brownish waistcoat of Tarquin, covered with lace like a golden net.

In the Cambridge version the dark green curtain with the graphic pattern is also executed with many golden points on the fabric. The precision of the execution indicates another hand, not that of Titian himself. The assistant who painted these parts did so in a more artisanal way, with great patience, which he would have needed in order to draw this meticulous pattern with its hundreds of small points of colour [Fig. 8]. Titian's collaborator who painted this part of the composition, as well as the golden lace pattern on Tarquin's clothes [Fig. 9], did it very precisely, with a sure hand, certainly not a trembling one. Here again I would suggest Emanuel Amberger with his German tradition in the background as the contributor to this painting. Looking at the servant to the left on the Cambridge version we can assume that another assistant was probably at work here. The left hand of the servant holding the curtain is anatomically completely out of place.

Titian's assistants contributed heavily to the Bordeaux version. Despite the bad restoration of the painting following the 1870 fire in the Hôtel de Ville of Bordeaux, when the painting was damaged<sup>10</sup>, we can distinguish with certainty the work of three different artists' hands (besides the fourth, that of the restorer). The rather clumsily depicted bed with its pillows, the curtain in the background, the legs, the boots and the trousers of Tarquin, the white linen crossing the left leg of Lucretia, as well as some parts of her body and her face are the work of a painter in the manner of Titian, perhaps Orazio Vecellio. The waistcoat [Fig. 11] and precisely painted curls [Fig. 10] of Tarquin's hair represent the same meticulousness in execution as that of the Cambridge painting and might be the work of Emanuel Amberger. However, there are some touches of brush characteristic of Titian himself: the white sleeves of Tarquin's shirt as well as the white collar, which looks like the master's *pittura di macchie* in other late works of Titian.

Titian, over eighty years old and increasingly weak, surely wanted to fulfil his promise made to Philip II of Spain on 26 October 1568: 'Le prometto ch'io vado componendo un'altra invenzione di pittura di molto maggior fatica'.

And in fact he did it. 'Credo che fin'hora la Maesta Vostra habbia ricevuta la pittura di Lucretia Romana violata da Tarquinio' was his message of 1 August 1571 to the Spanish monarch. He kept his promise, but surely did so with the help of his assistants, probably mostly thanks to contributions of his son Orazio and Emanuel Amberger. Titian mentions both of them in his correspondence to the Spanish court, recommending their services as his best assistants and future followers, capable of creating works in his – Titian's – style.<sup>11</sup> An analysis and comparison of the three Lucretia versions helps us understand how the studio of Titian functioned in the last years of its activity.



6. Titian, «Tarquin and Lucretia», c. 1570–1575, Vienna, Akademie der bildenden Künste



7. Titian, «Tarquin and Lucretia», c. 1570–1571, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum

8. Titian, «Tarquin and Lucretia»  
(detail of Fig. 7): graphic  
pattern painted with golden  
points on a fabric

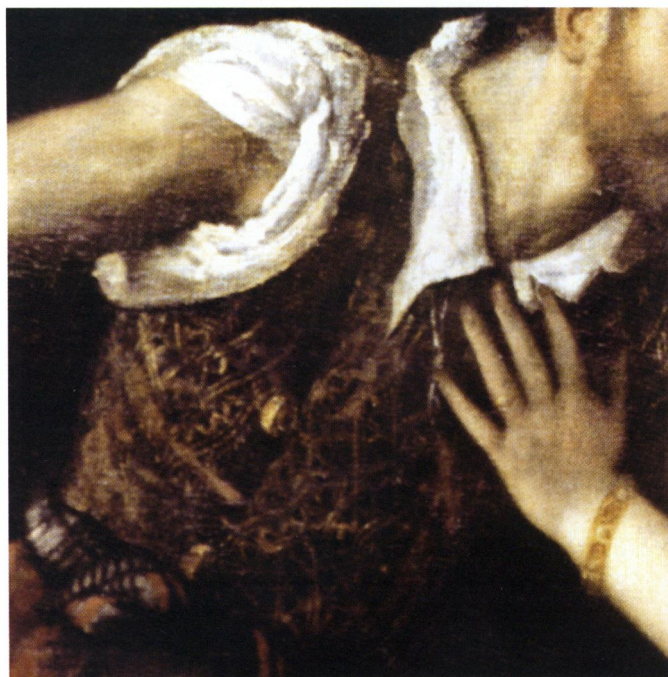


9. Titian, «Tarquin and Lucretia»  
(detail of Fig. 7): golden lace  
pattern on Tarquin's clothes





10. Titian (and assistants), «Tarquin and Lucretia», c. 1568–1571, Bordeaux, Musée des Beaux-Arts



11. Titian (and assistants), «Tarquin and Lucretia» (detail of Fig. 10): the waistcoat

### The Share of Emanuel Amberger and Orazio in the *Religion Succoured by Spain*

The allegory of *Religion Succoured by Spain* (1570–1575) was sent to Philip II in September 1575 [Fig. 12]. The composition is signed 'TITIANVS' on the stone behind the personification of Religion. Titian's signature on the painting means that the artist confirmed the authenticity and accomplishment of the work, putting the mark of his studio on it. However, the allegory is another good example of a collaborative work and the obvious contributions of the artist's assistants to the painting. The idea for this composition was first invented over forty years before the Madrid version was sent to Philip II. It was intended as a mythological painting of Minerva and Neptune, conceived by Titian in the 1530s for Alfonso I d'Este.<sup>12</sup> The painting was left unfinished due to the duke's death. One version of the composition evolved from a mythological into a religious allegory later entitled *Religion*, and was sent in 1568 to Emperor Maximilian II with an offer of acquisition.<sup>13</sup>

The problem of the various versions was presented in a persuasive way by Miguel Falomir.<sup>14</sup> In the context of the present paper it is more interesting to analyze the presence of other artists' hands, besides that of Titian, in the Madrid painting. There

is a fundamental difference between some very painstakingly executed objects and the parts painted with large strokes, like the background with its cloudy sky, the ocean with its reflected light, the dark brown tree trunk painted with energetic brush strokes of yellow mixed with orange, not to mention the leaves on the tree, painted with *macchie*, which are trembling in the air, as well as the general shapes of the three main allegorical female figures. First of all, the coat of arms of Philip II on the shield held by the allegory of Spain is meticulously painted in graphic detail [Fig. 13], as are the jewels of both female figures at the left [Fig. 14], not to mention the panoply with its military reference [Fig. 15]. The head of Medusa on the rich armour is drawn very precisely in an almost identical way to the Mannerist cartouche frame of the inscription in the *Portrait of Jacopo Strada* from Vienna. The same assistant's hand is also responsible for a very decorative bunch of feathers at the top of the helmet placed centrally in the painting. The steel helmet itself, painted in large strokes of white and pink, represents the best of Titian's effects of light and reflecting space from all around. The way the feathers are executed, however, is very different, with very linear, parallel, graphically painted yellow lines on the red and orange ground, much in the Northern tradition going back to Dürer, Christoph Amberger and Anthonis Mor, as can be seen in the graphically rendered feathers of the helmet in the latter's *Portrait of Maximilian of Austria* (1550), today in Madrid, Museo del Prado.

We can also compare and confirm how differently these feathers are painted in very similar helmet feathers, which Titian painted on the emperor's helmet in the *Portrait of Charles V at Mühlberg* of 1548. I track down in all of these precisely painted details in the allegory of *Religion* the hand of Emanuel Amberger. We know that his father, Christoph Amberger, was asked to restore a damaged portrait by Titian of Charles V in 1548, but he also executed a copy of the fragment representing the half-figure of the emperor in armour and the same helmet with red feathers. The young Emanuel, who worked in his father's studio, could also have copied the *Portrait of Charles V with Helmet* by Titian.<sup>15</sup> The graphical elements of the helmet's red feathers are painted in an identical way to the allegory of *Religion* from Madrid.

In the Madrid version of this allegorical painting there is one new element which can be seen neither in the Doria Pamphilj version [Fig. 16], nor on the engraving of Giulio Fontana after Titian's composition [Fig. 17]. Strangely enough, amongst all of the female figures appearing in this final version of this allegory there is only one male figure. Or rather it is only the man's face, which appears at the left edge of the painting, just behind the sword held by the personification of Justice [Fig. 14]. This man stares at the viewer intensively, his face bearing all the characteristics of a self-portrait. This ugly face with its crooked, perhaps broken, nose looks at us as if it were looking in the mirror. Possibly it is a self-portrait of that 'Todescho [...] Emanuel [...] che e eccellente et li fa molte cose'<sup>16</sup>, in other words, a self-portrait of Emanuel Amberger.



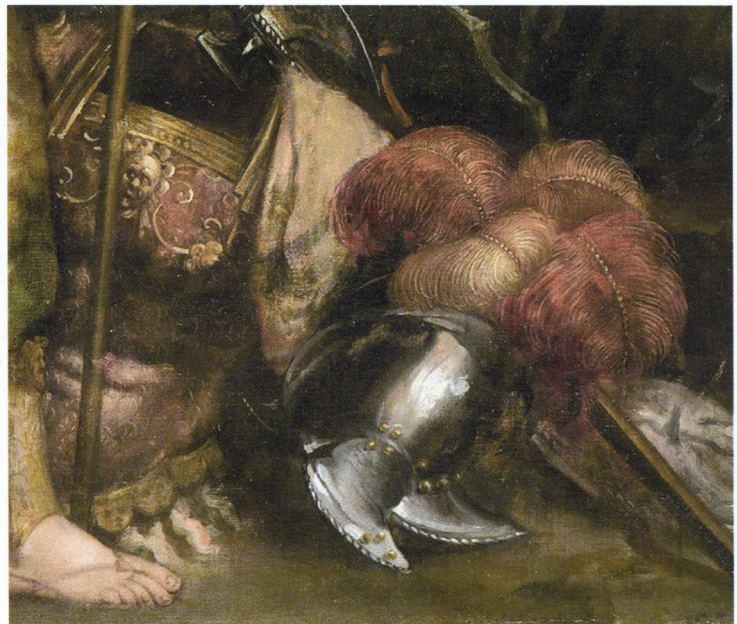
12. Titian, «Religion Succoured by Spain», 1570–1575, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado



13. Titian, «Religion Succoured by Spain» (detail of Fig. 12): the coat of arms of Philip II on the shield



14. Titian, «Religion Succoured by Spain» (detail of Fig. 12): the jewels of female figures on the left



15. Titian, «Religion Succoured by Spain» (detail of Fig. 12): the panoply and its military reference



16. Titian (and workshop), «Religion Succoured by Spain», Rome, Galleria Doria Pamphilj



17. Giulio Fontana (after Titian), «Religion Succoured by Virtue and Peace», engraving, Bassano, Museo Biblioteca Archivio



18. Titian, «Philip II Offering Don Fernando to Victory», 1575, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

## A Collective Studio Work for the King of Spain

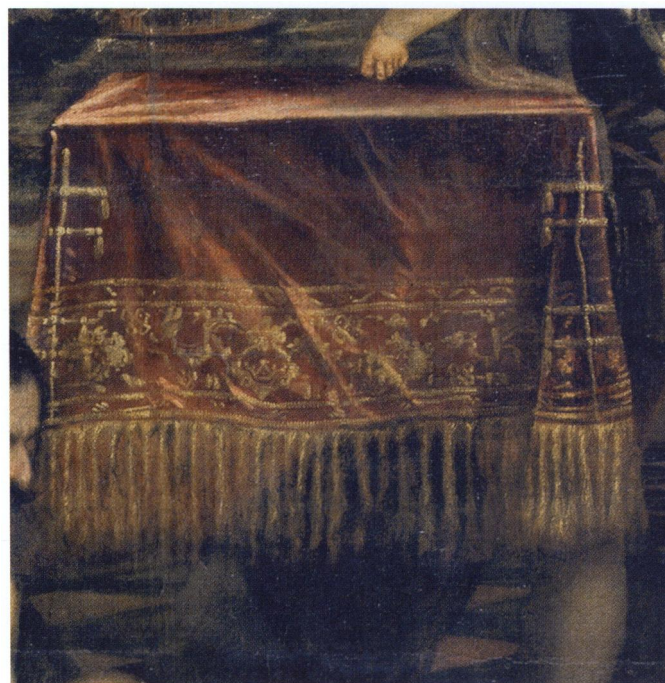
Together with the allegory of *Religion Succoured by Spain*, Titian sent another painting to Philip II, referring to the king as *Defensor Ecclesiae*, representing *Philip II Offering Don Fernando to Victory*, 1575 (Madrid) [Fig. 18]. This huge painting was obviously executed in its different parts with considerable participation of the assistants of the already old and weak master, surely incapable of executing such large canvases as this one and that of the *Allegory of Religion* on his own. When comparing the columns to the right in *Philip II Offering Don Fernando to Victory* with the columns of *Pala Pesaro* in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice there is not the slightest doubt that they were painted (or perhaps more accurately: covered with colour) by the assistants. Also, the figure of the defeated Turk, as well as the legs of the king dressed in red tights and yellow boots were executed by the collaborators, and then, later re-painted by a Spanish painter in the seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup>

I would like to draw attention to another element, to the centrally placed table functioning as an offering altar. It is covered with a red fabric ornamented with a golden, lacelike decoration [Fig. 19]. However, the golden decorative application is employed in an artificial way on the red fabric, not fitting with the arrangement of the pleats of the tablecloth. The yellow lines on the clear parts of the fabric are of almost the same intensity as the dark parts of the pleats in the shadow where one would expect them to be much darker. The clumsy way of painting this golden application is in obvious contrast to the masterly painted armour of the king and the explosive vision of the battle of Lepanto in the background. Here we are surely dealing with the work of an assistant, probably the same one who finished some elements in the allegory of the *Religion Succoured by Spain*.

## Titian's Heritage

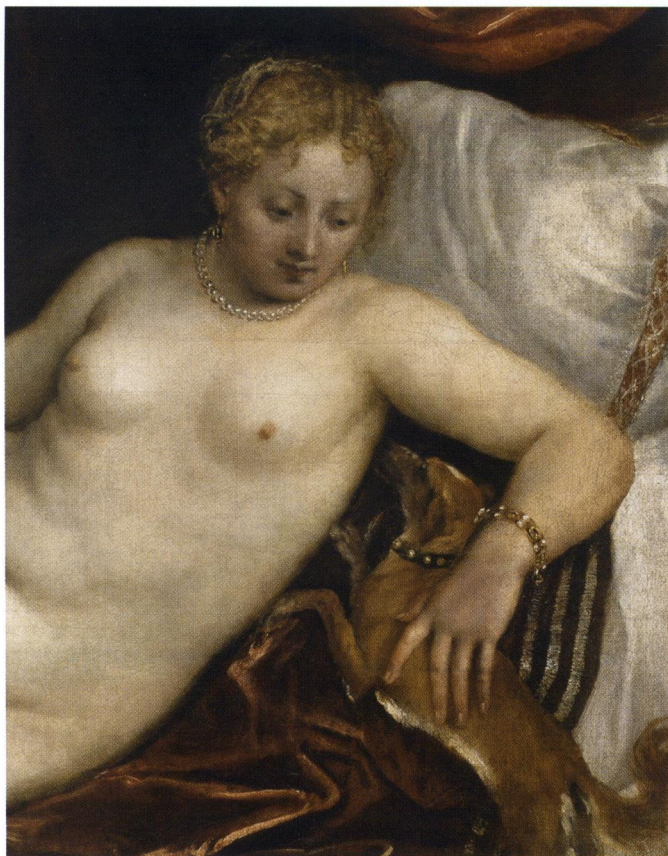
Our knowledge about the situation at the moment of Titian's death is obscured due to lacking archival evidence or other testimonies. During the great plague of 1576, which took the lives of thousands of people staying then in Venice, in such a stressful situation the city authorities weren't able to follow and document all of the events that would normally have been registered. We don't know what happened exactly after Titian's death in his house in Biri Grande, nor do we know exactly what happened to Titian's heritage. We know that after his death and the death of Orazio, both deaths occurring within a short span of time one after another, the house and studio of the artist were closed and sealed by the health office.

Strangely enough, it was only more than a year after Titian's death that his elder son Pomponio and the other heir, Cornelio Sarcinelli, reported to the authorities of Venice that a robbery

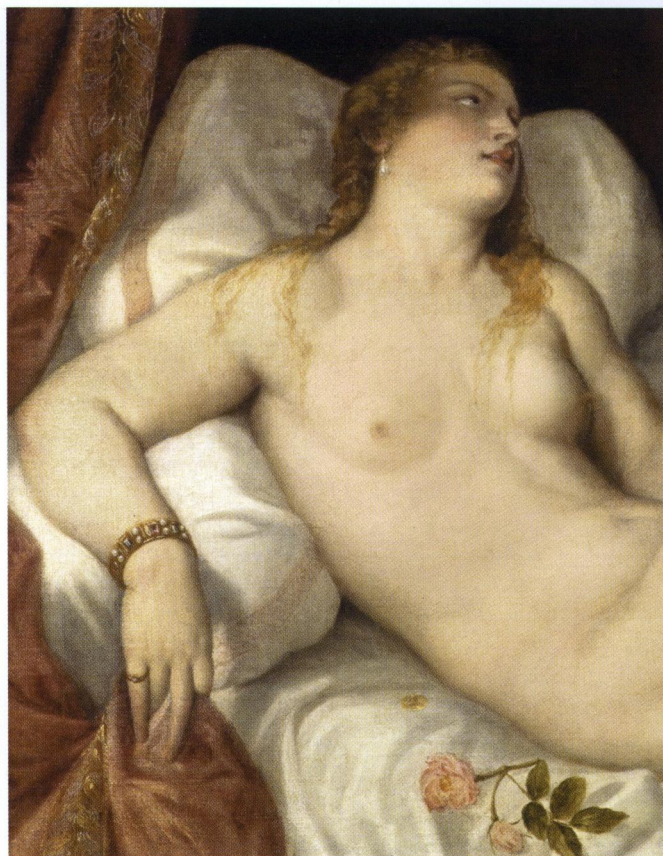


19. Titian, «Philip II Offering Don Fernando to Victory» (detail of Fig. 18): golden application on the red fabric

had occurred in Titian's house. According to this document, unknown thieves broke into the sealed house and many valuable objects were stolen. However, we cannot be certain that it was not a document agreed upon between Pomponio and Cornelio for formal reasons, in order to cover up their informally having taken possession of the equipment and objects in the house of Biri Grande belonging to the inheritance after Titian. Thanks to this denunciation we have evidence: a general inventory and a description – unfortunately not very specific – of what was stolen. These include objects of value collected by the artist which served as models for his paintings, such as jewels, bracelets, pearls and silver and gold chains. The same jewels appear in different paintings, valuables which surely belonged to Titian's collection, which he liked and appreciated, perhaps not only as jewels, but also as a personal memory of the women he loved and painted. Some of the jewels probably belonged to his late wife Cecilia. Titian painted the same valuables on various paintings over several decades. Exactly the same jewels are visible on various paintings representing *Venus* [Fig. 20], *Danae* [Fig. 21], *Lucretia* [Fig. 22], *Bella* and *Woman in White*. Even these valuables were probably mentioned in the document concerning the robbery. However, besides the thieves (if, in fact, there were any), also Titian's son Pomponio had easy access to the house



20. Titian, «Venus», c. 1550, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado (detail): the jewels



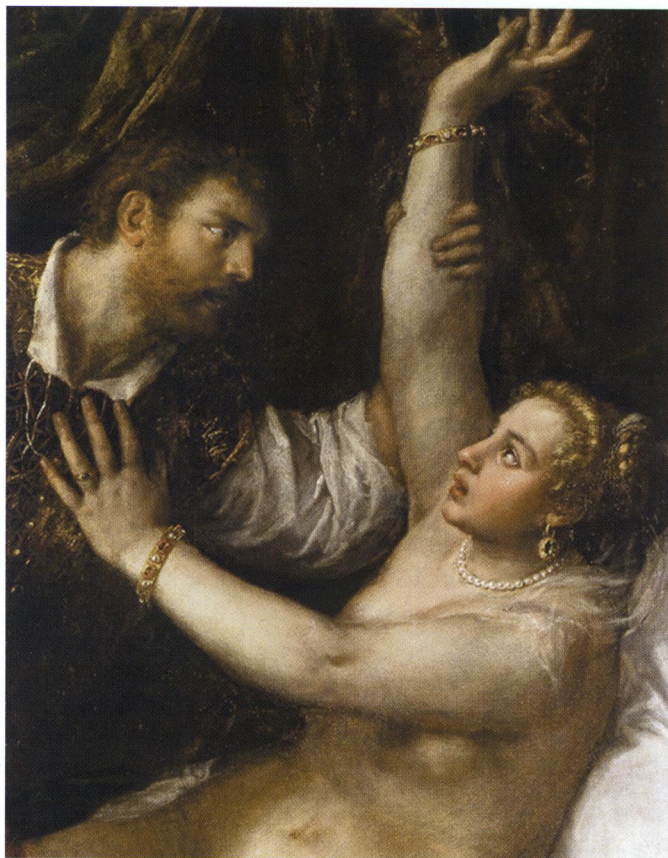
21. Titian, «Danae», 1560–1565, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (detail): the jewels

at Biri Grande. As a priest he could have received permission to enter the sealed house of his father even during the pest, which, in fact, he did.

His relationship with his father was, in the last years of Titian's life, as bad as could be. They hadn't seen each other in years, but at the news of his father's death Pomponio came immediately to Venice, neither fearful of nor caring about the plague which was decimating the residents of the Serenissima in the summer of 1576. He evidently came to take possession of what was left in Venice. We can imagine that he could easily have taken all the valuable objects, as well as some paintings, from the sealed house. At his death Titian left many finished as well as unfinished paintings in his atelier. Surely some of them were versions of compositions which were very popular and could easily be sold for a handsome profit. Some of them, however, had certainly not been finished. We know Titian's method of painting: sometimes he worked for months or even years on one com-

position, looking from time to time at the unfinished paintings, correcting what he found to be wrong, touching something up or correcting parts of a painting's surface, and then putting the painting away for weeks or months in order to allow the colours to mature and dry.

We don't know what exactly happened with all those paintings left in the atelier after Titian's death. Perhaps Pomponio considered himself the only heir after the death of his father and his younger brother Orazio. However, as Lionello Puppi<sup>18</sup> and Charles Hope<sup>19</sup> have pointed out, there were many other heirs: at the very least the daughter Emilia with her three children as well as the five children of Lavinia, Titian's late daughter, whose husband Cornelio Sarcinelli struggled for years with Pomponio over Titian's inheritance. It seems most probable that Pomponio took control of the paintings left in the house and studio in Biri Grande. However, we can imagine that the people who had access to them – Pomponio and Cornelio Sarcinelli, the husband



22. Titian, «Lucretia» (detail of Fig. 7): the jewels

of Titian's late daughter Lavinia – could easily have taken them and then disposed of them by way of sale or let them be finished by a trustworthy painter, one who could guarantee the work in the style of the master. Orazio, designated by Titian as an heir and a leader of the studio who would have been able to continue the activities of the Vecellio family in case of the artist's death, died in Lazzaretto Vecchio during the same pest in the summer of 1576. However, other pupils and Titian's assistants were still alive and quite active in the next two or three decades: Marco and Cesare Vecellio, Christoph Schwarz and Emanuel Amberger, Palma il Giovane. They all would have been able to complete the unfinished works, correcting them according to the taste of the potential purchaser in the master's style. The late style of Titian, *pittura di macchie*, was mostly regarded with some hesitation and doubts. It was sometimes openly criticized and generally wasn't pleasing to art collectors, even to the artist's friends and admirers like Pietro Aretino. An echo of the polemics about

the appreciation of Titian's late style is also known from Vasari<sup>20</sup>, as well as from the correspondence of the Spanish governor in Milan, Antonio de Guzman y Zuniga, with the imperial ambassador to Venice, Diego Guzman de Silva.<sup>21</sup> In terms of the art market, these late paintings, which looked like unfinished works, were of lower commercial value than the former, 'finished' paintings. So, in order to make a better profit, these works needed corrections; perhaps not all, but surely some of them.

It could have been Pomponio and Cornelio Sarcinelli who ordered the completion and correction of the remaining paintings. However, there were other people close to the deceased Titian's atelier who would have been able to finish the unfinished works in Titian's manner: his collaborators. After Titian's death the prices for this artist's paintings were still very high, and the paintings done in the manner of, or by, his followers, were appreciated and there was a market for them.

We have scarce knowledge about the destiny of some of the late, unfinished paintings by Titian which remained unfinished at the time of his passing away. We have neither an indication as to what happened to them, nor who completed them. Not all of the artists who received an opportunity to complete and correct unfinished works by Titian were as fair and conscientious as Palma il Giovane was with the *Pietà*. We can assume that some of Titian's former collaborators completed the unfinished works left in the studio at the order of Pomponio or some other business-oriented agents. Their goal would have been to sell these embellished paintings finished by the followers as genuine works made by Titian's hand. We can imagine that such persons would not have been interested in certifying or testifying the later pictorial contribution of other painters than Titian, in view of making the works more attractive for potential buyers. As a work of the workshop or followers the commercial value of the paintings would have been much lower.

### The Late *invenzione* by Titian: *Christ Mocked*

The *Ecce Homo* version in Saint Louis (c. 1570–1576) [Fig. 23] is one of the best of a large quantity of paintings of this subject issued from Titian's studio. Most of them are works of Titian's assistants.<sup>22</sup> A lot of copies, replicas and versions were produced in the atelier in Biri Grande due to the great interest for this composition. I would like to add some observations to the brilliant article by Miguel Falomir on different versions of *Christ Mocked*, this late *invenzione* by Titian.<sup>23</sup> It had already been observed that despite the unfinished character of the Saint Louis version there are areas which 'are very polished, such as the jewel on Pontius Pilate's cap [Fig. 24] or the fine brocade of his dress' [Fig. 25].<sup>24</sup> This contrasts enormously with the master's *non finito* of some freely painted parts, large in size, like the upper left-hand side of



23. Titian, «Ecce Homo», c. 1570–1576, Saint Louis, The Saint Louis Art Museum



24. Titian, «Ecce Homo» (detail of Fig. 23):  
the jewel on Pontius Pilate's cap



25. Titian, «Ecce Homo» (detail of Fig. 23): the fine brocade of  
Pontius Pilate's dress

the painting with the torch enlightening the night scene, and the robe around the semi-nude torso of Christ. Here again the meticulously painted pattern on the brocade robe of Pontius Pilate, as well as the jewel on his cap, could be the work of Emanuel Amberger, given its execution with typical German precision.

### Artistic Challenge: Competition and Execution

Many enlightened ideas have been written about *The Flaying of Marsyas* (c. 1575–1576, Kroměříž) [Fig. 26]. This late work by Titian poses many open questions which several prominent and important scholars have tried to answer, including, among others, Philipp Fehl, Augusto Gentili, Lubomir Konečný, Miguel Falomir and Sylvia Ferino-Pagden.<sup>25</sup> Whereas it will probably remain a secret what happened with the painting after the master's death in

1576, and how it arrived into the collection of Thomas Howard, count of Arundel, in 1620, the later history of the painting, after the count's death, is well-documented.<sup>26</sup> It is generally accepted that the painting remained unfinished in the studio of the artist and was completed after his death. The signature, visible on the stone at the bottom of the painting, between the two dogs, was also probably added later. It is very probable that the completion of the painting was also ordered by the son of the late artist, Pomponio.

We know about the payments Pomponio made to Marco Vecellio and to Emanuel Amberger. As regards the first, Cornelio Sarcinelli declared having paid a certain amount of money to Marco on behalf of Pomponio.<sup>27</sup> As for Emanuel Amberger, Pomponio made payments to him several times. On 26 July 1580 Emanuel Amberger and Pomponio agreed to the pay of 150 ducati to the former collaborator of Titian.<sup>28</sup>

Cristoforo Barbarigo lent money to Pomponio, having also paid some instalments to Amberger on behalf of Pomponio at the beginning of 1581, as Cornelio Sarcinelli had done for him before.<sup>29</sup> On 27 October 1581 Pomponio sold the house in Biri Grande to Cristoforo Barbarigo probably with some of Titian's paintings inside. Part of the Barbarigo collection including Titian's paintings were passed on to the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg. The payments by Pomponio to the German collaborator prove that Emanuel Amberger was still active in Venice, even many years after Titian's death. He probably painted in the master's style, as Marco Vecellio and Cesare Vecellio continued to do as well. It is not known what the payments were for exactly, but it is very probable that among the works Emanuel Amberger was finishing for Pomponio was also *The Flaying of Marsyas*<sup>30</sup>, which Pomponio sold later to some unknown client.

Amberger's hand in *The Flaying of Marsyas* can be distinguished by the finished, very polished parts, such as the diadem of Midas and the laurel crown of Apollo [Figs 27–28].

Philipp P. Fehl, in his erudite paper on *The Punishment of Marsyas* asks: 'What was Titian's purpose in painting the story of so grievous a punishment?'.<sup>31</sup>

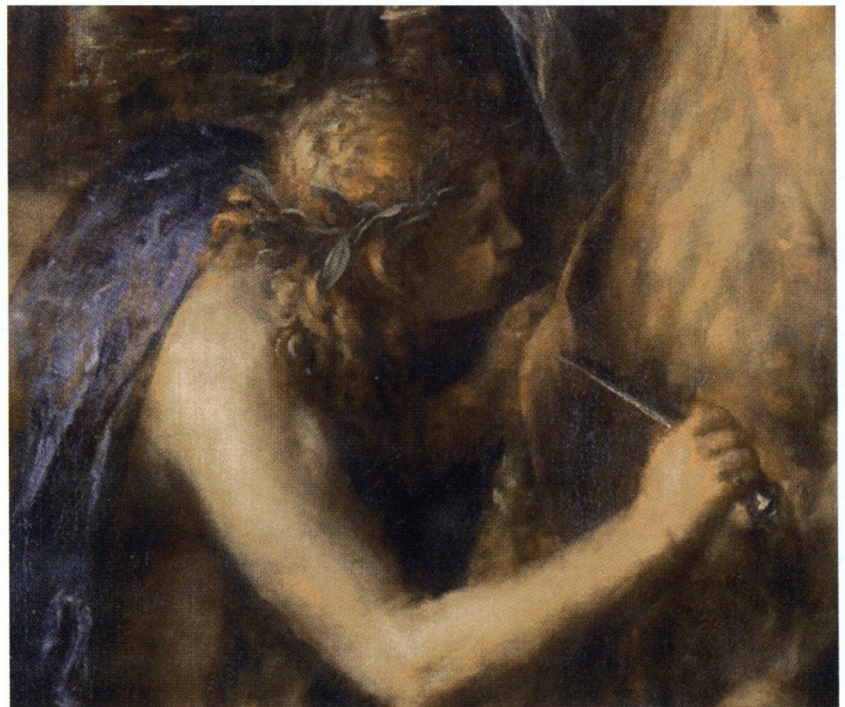


26. Titian, «The Flaying of Marsyas», c. 1575, Kroměříž, The Archbishop's Palace

27. Titian, «The Flaying of Marsyas»  
(detail of Fig. 26):  
the diadem of Midas



28. Titian, «The Flaying of Marsyas»  
(detail of Fig. 26):  
the laurel crown of Apollo





29. Titian, «The Allegory of Prudence», c. 1565 (detail): the faces of Titian, Orazio and Marco Vecellio, London, National Gallery

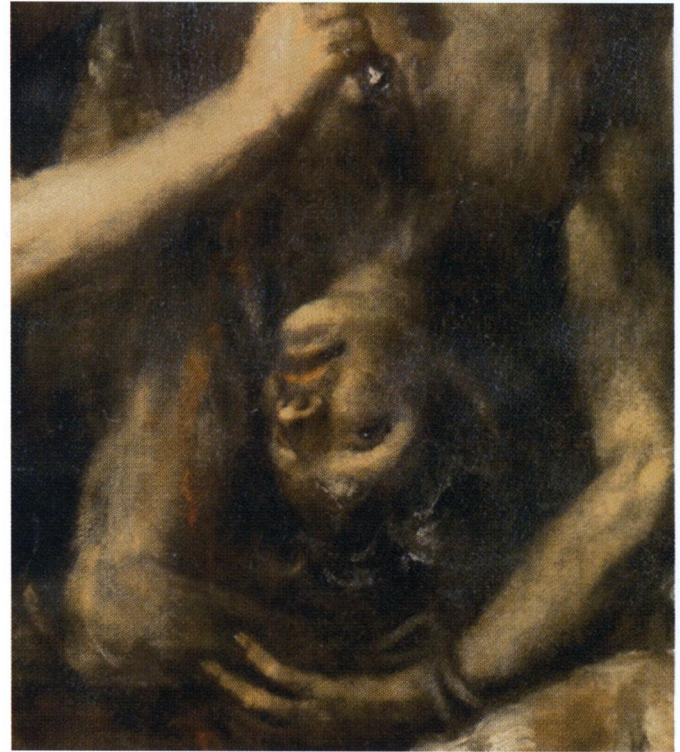
In the painting, Titian represented himself in disguise of Midas, sitting pensively, as a just judge. The crown here identifies him as a king, ruler and leader. He also wears here exactly the same purple-red mantle as St Jerome in the *Pietà*. In many of his former works Titian introduced portraits of himself, his friends, family members and other real persons disguised sometimes as mythological, biblical or sometimes as allegorical figures.

Perhaps we are dealing here with an allegory of competition in the fine arts, referring to some actual situation, where the meditating Titian observes the work of his two collaborators with working instruments, here the knives standing in for brushes, getting revenge: his son Orazio in the Phrygian cap and the young Marco in the laurel crown, both headdresses meaning Titian's successful succession.

The similarity of these three faces to the faces on the *Allegory of Prudence* from the National Gallery in London [Fig. 29] is quite obvious.

The young face of the martyred satyr with the semi-hypnotic look, as Sylvia Ferino-Pagden called it<sup>32</sup>, seems to have the characteristics of a portrait for it is not a generalized physiognomy, but an actual portrait, even if it has a horrible aspect [Fig. 30]. To the right the satyr with a very ugly face and crooked nose brings a bucket, probably with fresh water from the river. His function is that of a helper, an assistant to the deed. Is it a portrait of some other collaborator? The small dog is drinking Marsyas' blood, becoming a reversed symbol of fidelity betrayed. Marsyas' behaviour, his pride, or rather his conceit, was considered a betrayal by the god Apollo. Is there a reference here to some concrete events in Titian's life, or is it a pure allegory? A river with flashes and reflections of white and yellow light flows horizontally in the middle of the painting, visible between the torso of Marsyas and the hand with the bucket to the right, and over the shoulders of Apollo to the left. It gives to the painting space and profundity, rarely observed and considered by scholars in various descriptions and interpretations of the work. Has Titian depicted in one of his last works himself and his collaborators?

However, this is not the place to present a possible iconographic reading of this artistically and semantically meaningful composition. My purpose here was to propose some observations concerning the pictorial, material contributions of Titian's collaborators during his last years of life, as well as after his death.



30. Titian, «The Flaying of Marsyas» (detail of Fig. 26): the face of the martyred satyr

<sup>1</sup> L. Puppi, *Su Tiziano (Per Tiziano)*, Milan, 2004; A. Gentili, *Da Tiziano a Tiziano*, Milan, 1980; *idem*, 'Tiziano e il non finito', *Venezia Cinquecento*, vol. II, 4, 1992, pp. 93–127; *idem*, 'Ancora sul non finito del Tiziano, materiale e linguaggio', in *Tiziano, Tecnicas y restauraciones*, Madrid, 1999, pp. 171–180; B. Aikema, 'Tiziano, la maniera e il pubblico', *Minerva triumphans. Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 39, 1995, 1, pp. 167–184; D. Rosand, 'Titian and the Eloquence of the Brush', *Artibus et Historiae*, no. 3, 1981, pp. 85–96; *idem*, *Tiziano*, Milan, 1983; *idem*, 'Titian and Pictorial Space', in *Titian. Prince of Painters*, exh. cat., Venice, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> G. Tagliaferro, 'La bottega di Tiziano: un percorso critico', *Studi tizianeschi*, IV, 2006, pp. 16–52; G. Tagliaferro, B. Aikema, M. Mancini, J. Martin, *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, Florence, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Especially the issues: III, 2005; IV, 2006; V, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> The exhibition catalogues of the past decade contributed substantially to the research on the studio of Titian: *Titian*, ed. by Ch. Hope and D. Jaffé,

exh. cat. London, National Gallery, London, 2003; *Der späte Tizian und die Sinnlichkeit der Malerei (Late Titian and the Sensuality of Painting)*, ed. by S. Ferino-Pagden, exh. cat. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 2007; *Tiziano. L'ultimo atto*, ed. by L. Puppi, exh. cat. Belluno, Palazzo Crepadona, Pieve di Cadore, Palazzo della Magnifica Comunità, Milan, 2007; *L'ultimo Tiziano e la sensualità della pittura*, ed. by S. Ferino-Pagden, exh. cat. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> The inscription on the stone base reads: QUOD TITIANVS ICHOATVM RELIQVIT | PALMA REVERENTER ABSOLVIT | DEOQ. DICAVIT OPVS.

<sup>6</sup> Titian could have seen the paintings by such artists as: A. Dürer, G. Pencz, L. Cranach, H. Holbein in Venice, or during his travels to Germany.

<sup>7</sup> Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich, Kurbayern, Äußeres Archiv, b. 4852, cc. 146'–146"; Puppi, *Su Tiziano*, pp. 29, 129; G. Tagliaferro, 'Il clan Vecellio: l'attività estrema della bottega e l'eredità artistica del maestro', in *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, Florence, 2009, p. 285.

- 8 A. Kranz, *Christoph Amberger: Bildnismaler zu Augsburg: städtische Eliten im Spiegel ihrer Porträts*, Regensburg, 2004, p. 453.
- 9 S. Ferino-Pagden, 'Tarquinio e Lucrezia', in *L'ultimo Tiziano*, pp. 218, 220.
- 10 J. Habert, 'Tarquin and Lucretia' (cat. entry for the Bordeaux version), in *L'ultimo Tiziano*, p. 221.
- 11 H. Voltellini, 'Rechnungsauszüge, Urkunden und Urkundenregesten aus dem Augsburger Stadtarchive', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses in Wien*, XIII, 1892, 2, pp. 26–174.
- 12 *Tiziano*, ed. by M. Falomir, exh. cat. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, 2003, pp. 77–91.
- 13 Voltellini, 'Rechnungsauszüge'; G. Tagliaferro, 'La religione soccorsa dalla Spagna', in: *L'ultimo Tiziano*, pp. 288–291.
- 14 M. Falomir, 'Titian's Replicas and Variants', in *Titian* (exh. cat., London, 2003), pp. 60–68.
- 15 *The Portrait of Charles V in Armour*, c. 1550, oil on canvas, Ambras Castle, Austria.
- 16 H. Zimmermann, 'Zur richtigen Datierung eines Porträts von Tizian in der Wiener kaiserlichen Gemälde-Galerie', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Oesterreichische Geschichtsforschung*, VI, 1901, p. 850; Puppi, *Su Tiziano*, pp. 29, 129, n. 69; Kranz, *Christoph Amberger*, p. 453, doc. 9; Tagliaferro, in *Le botteghe...*, p. 285.
- 17 Falomir, in *Titian* (exh. cat., London, 2003), pp. 290–291.
- 18 Puppi, *Su Tiziano*, pp. 41–44.
- 19 Ch. Hope, 'La famiglia di Tiziano e la dispersione del suo patrimonio', in *L'ultimo Tiziano*, pp. 29–30.
- 20 G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori* (1568), ed. G. Milanesi (Florence, 1878–1885), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., with additions and corrections, 9 vols, Florence, 1906, vol. VII, p. 452.
- 21 F. Checa, 'Lo stile maturo di Tiziano', in *L'ultimo Tiziano*, p. 65; L. Ferrarino, *Tiziano e la corte di Spagna nei documenti dell'Archivio Generale di Simancas*, Madrid, 1975, pp. 120–125.
- 22 M. Romberg, 'Ecce Homo', in *L'ultimo Tiziano*, pp. 295–296.
- 23 M. Falomir, 'Christ Mocked, a late 'invenzione' by Titian', *Artibus et Historiae*, no. 55, 2007, p. 59.
- 24 Romberg, 'Ecce Homo'; Falomir, 'Christ Mocked', pp. 53–61.
- 25 A. Gentili, *Da Tiziano*, pp. 147–158; L. Konečný, 'Flaying of Marsyas', in *Catalogue of the Painting Collection in the Archbishop's Palace in Kroměříž*, Kroměříž, 1999, pp. 339–350; Falomir, in *Tiziano* (exh. cat., Madrid, 2003), pp. 292–295; S. Ferino-Pagden, 'Supplizio di Marsia', in *L'ultimo Tiziano*, pp. 232–235.
- 26 Ferino-Pagden, 'Supplizio di Marsia', p. 235.
- 27 Hope, 'La famiglia di Tiziano', p. 37.
- 28 *Ibidem*, pp. 37–38.
- 29 *Ibidem*, p. 38.
- 30 *Ibidem*, p. 37.
- 31 P. P. Fehl, *Decorum and Wit: Poetry of Venetian Painting*, Vienna, 1992, p. 147.
- 32 Ferino-Pagden, 'Supplizio di Marsia', p. 232.