

Verones and Ovidio: Procris, Céfaló and the Brisa

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ABSTRACT

The painting Venus and Adonis de Veranes (Madrid, Museo del Prado) was paired with La Muerte de Procris (Musées des Beaux Arts. Strasbourg). Since Borghini (W Riposo, 1584) saw it, it has been considered a representation of Venus and Adonis. But the relationship with The Death of Procris makes it possible to ensure that its theme is another. Cephalus and the Breeze, described in Ovid's Metamorphoses in connection with the Procris story.

ABSTRACT

The picture venus and Adonis, painted by Veronése (Madrid. Prado Museum) was a companion to the one with the Death of Procris (Strasbourg. Musées des Beaux Arts). From Borghini (W riposo, 1584), all the scholars believe that this picture was a representation of Venus and the sleeping Adonis. Otherwise the subject of picture is Cefalus and the breeze that Ovidius describes in the Metamorphosis.

When Paolo Cagliari (1528-1588), called Veronese, arrived in Venice in 1551, other great masters had defined a Venetian Maniera based on the primacy of color, in which two languages dominated: Titian's classicist and Tintoretto's expressive ^ Veronese decided on the former, understanding it as an option that, far from being exhausted, offered infinite possibilities that had not yet been experienced, not only formally, but also in the development of a mythological theme. Through it, Veronés identified with images force before the emergence of mannerist forms, interpreted

"The content of this article was discussed at the conference, "Venus and Adonis by Veronese" pronounced on 8 November 2004, at the Museum Prado, organized by the Fundación Amigos del Museo del Prado. A preview of it was published in the magazine Conocer el Arte, no. 71, January 2005, with the title An error of four centuries.

tándolas with a new playful sense, profane and vital. With his painting, Veronese with it tributed to develop the apotheosis autobiography of Venice in the that the pictorial decoration of the churches, palaces and villas, even the painted scenographies of the facades, created a golden and triumphant image of the city.

In keeping with this sentiment, Veronés undertook various works of love and love themes from the 1970s onwards. profane, motivated by a demand that will increase as a result of the emptiness that will occur with the death of Titian in 1576. In these paintings, among which the representations of Venus and Mars and of Venus and Adonis abound, important changes were produced in the painter's palette. Color becomes lighter and more aerial and transparent. Veronés achieves an unprecedented play of color that reaches one of its culminating and definitive moments in the early eighties. From this experience we have an eloquent testimony in the Prado Museum ^ in the painting Venus and Adonis in which the new treatment conferred by the painter to color and to the mythological image in these years is revealed.

VENUS AND ADONIS

This painting by Veronese, the subject of which is traditionally identified as Venus and Adonis, was part of the royal collections from the 17th century. Quite possibly it was acquired by Velázquez on the second trip to Italy, wherewould buy in Venice as the news transmitted by Palomino: "He bought tam like an Adonis and Venus cuddled with a cupidillo to toe, hand Paolo Veronese" ^. In the years 1666,1686 and 1700 it appears in the Galería del Mediodía in the Alcázar of Madrid.

The execution of the painting has been placed between 1580 and 1584 based on the fact that Raffaello Borghini quotes it in // Riposo, together with another painting by Veronese The Death of Procris. Borghini, was in Paris between 1579 and 1580, and on his return to Italy, he wrote his treatise in 1582, although it was published in Florence in 1584 *. Borghini, after mentioning the aforementioned paintings, says: «Paolo, today is 52 years old and does not stop

^ Museo del Prado. Catalog of paintings, Madrid. Ministry of Education and Culture, 1996, p. 436, n. ° 482.

^ PALOMINO, Antonio: El Parnaso Español Picturesque and laureate. Volume Third. With the lives of Painters Spanish Eminentand Statuary, Madrid, 1724, 5. ^. ed., Madrid, Aguilar, 1947, p. 911. * // Riposo di Raffaello Borghini. In cui della pittura, e della Scultura si favella, de'piu illustri Pittori, e Scultori, e delle piu famose opera parrot si fa mentione; It sews the main appartenenti á dette arti s'in segnano. Florence Giorgio Marescotti. 1584. For a critical edition see M. Roscí: R. Borghini: Il Ri poso. 2 vols. Milan 1967. Facsimile edition // Riposo (1584). Hildesheim. Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhand lung, 1969. PAOLA BAROCCHI: Scritti d'Arte del Cinquecento. III. Pittura e Scultura, Turin, Einaudi, 1978, pp. 674 et seq.

dedicate themselves continuously to painting with great benefit » ^. All of which accredits,

as the date of the painting, the first years of the eighties.

Borghini, in Book IV of // Riposo, mentions the two paintings cited precisely: «Lately he has painted two very beautiful pictures, one of Procris, and the other of Adonis asleep on the lap of Venus, of figures as large as natural size » [^]. The mention of Borghini has served to establish an ante quem date for the painting, and confirm that the painting in the Prado Museum was paired with The Death of Procris, which is currently kept in the Musée des Beaux Arts in Strasbourg [^].

Since Borghini, the painting in the Prado Museum has been considered a representation of Venus and Adonis in the main studies dedicated to the painter [^]. The absence of representations of Adonis sleeping on the lap of Venus, has determined the safe identification with the painting in the Prado Museum, along with other aspects that I will analyze later. Since the appearance in // Riposo, Borghini's identification has been regarded as a testimony and source of indisputable authority with the value of almost documentary evidence. However, is a statement based on an identification by producing an impression at first sight. Borghini clearly saw both paintings. The death of Procris and another of the same format and dimensions that he identified as Venus and Adonis. Now, while the identification of The Death of Procris is correct, because its iconography presents a specific and specific thematic definition, the same cannot be said of Adonis asleep on the lap of Venus, whose thematic identification is doubtful, complex and ambiguous.

= "Trovasi hoggi Paolo d'anni 52, ne lascia co (n) tñouame (n) gave you adoperarsi with great profitto nella pittura", // Riposo, Book IV, p. 563.

[^] "Lately, it has been dipinto due quadri belūsimi i'vno di Procrim el'altro d'Adone addorme (n) tato in gre (m) bo á Venere, di figure grandi qua (n) to il naturale", // Riposo, Book IV, p. 563. ' PEDROCCO, FILIPPO: "Portraits and IVlytological Paintings of the 1580s", in Veronese. Gods, Héros and Aliegories, IVlilan, Skira, 2004, pp. 35-36. "PiGNATTi, TERISÍO: Veronese. Milan 1976, p. 250; R. PALLUCCHINI: Veronese, Milan, 1984, pp. 128-129; WR REARICK: The Art of Paolo Veronese. L 528-1588, Washington, 1988; C. GOULD Verone ".be venerated and Adone Influssi deH'Antlchitá and deH'Italia Centrale." in M.GEMIN (ed.) Nuovi Studi su Paolo Veronese Venice, 1990, pp 285-289 FILIPPO... TERISÍO PiGNATTi and PEDROCCO: Veranes catalog, Complete, Madrid, Akal, 1992, pp. 16-17 and 273, no. 195. GIANDOMENICO ROMANELLI, "Veronese and His Time. Form and Ideology of Narration in Painting", in Veronese. Gods, Héros and Aliegories, page 19. STEFANIA MA SÓN: "Heavenly Vaults of the Gods and Human Loves. Paolo Veronese and Mythological Painting", in Veronese. Gods, Heroes and Aliegories, pages 29-30.

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CEFALO AND THE BREEZE

In the Prado Museum painting, Venus is represented as a blonde woman with her hair gathered up, dressed in a half-length dress in a rich blue corada cloth with golden geometric motifs plant. On his lap is Adonis asleep. Next to him, in the foreground, is lying

on the ground a sleeping dog. Next to Venus, a cupid holds another dog. The composition takes place in a natural setting on the left side of which there are two trees, on one of which Adonis's javelin rests.

None of the elements described, neither the figures, nor the animals, nor the objects, can be interpreted as a reference that allows to identify, in a concrete way, Venus and Adonis. Furthermore, the representation of Adonis asleep on the lap of Venus would be a strange and exceptional theme in the representations of both characters. Borghini's identification with Venus and Adonis is due to the fact that he believed that it was one of the versions of this theme that Veronese had frequently undertaken in the preceding decade. The painting in the Prado Museum has elements in common with these paintings, but also presents other different ones that demonstrate that the subject of this painting is completely different from the usual representations of Venus and Adonis, and in which the moment chosen by the artist It is when Venus tries to convince Adonis, with all her might, not to go hunting because death awaits her . This is the case of Venus and Adonis (Augsburg. Städtische Kunstmuseen) made around 1564. This same passage was also chosen by Titian for several paintings made previously such as Venus and Adonis (Madrid. Prado Museum), painted in 1553, in the versions of the same theme from the National Gallery in London and the National Gallery in Rome, both from 1554, and the two later versions, from 1560, from the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

The characters, objects and animals that appear in Veronés del Prado's painting are very similar to those in the aforementioned paintings of Venus and Adonis. For this reason, it was easy to identify the Prado painting as one of the many versions of Venus and Adonis in the manner of those described or with others such as Venus and Adonis, with amorciolos and dogs (Vienna. Kunsthistorisches Museum), painted by the same Veronese, and in which both characters appear represented in a loving caress.

In the Prado Museum painting, Venus does not appear trying to prevent Adonis from going hunting or playing a love game. The analogy of some elements of the composition, such as the cupid, the dogs, and the spear, were responsible for Borghini's hasty and erroneous interpretation. But the

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Fig. 1. Summer. Cephalus and the Breeze (2.12 x 1.91 m). Madrid. L \ / luseo del Prado. Before the 18th addition having been withdrawn century.

Cupid, the dogs and the spear are not specific and exclusive references to the figure of Adonis, a passionate lover of hunting like other characters in classical mythology. The supposed figure of Venus , sitting with a fan or fan in her hand and Adonis asleep on her lap, do not match the usual representations of Venus and Adonis either. Because, in reality, what the Prado Museum painting represents is not Venus and Adonis but a different topic related to the death of Procris, which Borghini saw pair with the pin Tura of the Prado. the issue is none other than Céfalos and Brisa, a matter of iconography rare, pertaining to the history of Céfalos and Procris.

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TWO SEQUENCES OF A STORY

Until a few years ago, the dimensions of the paintings in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Strasbourg and in the Prado Museum in Madrid were different. The reason was that the dimensions of the painting in the Prado Museum had undergone changes. A few years

ago it was a 2.12×1.91 ^ painting while the one we see today is a 1.62×1.91 painting. This change is due to the fact that in 1988 a 50 cm strip was removed. which had been added in the century

Fig. 2. Summer. The death of Procris (1.62x 1.90 m). Strasbourg.
Musées des Beaux Arts.

Museum Prado. Catalog of paintings, Madrid, 1963, p. 756, no. 482.

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XVIII, altering the measurements and proportions of the painting. In this way he recovered the original dimensions and format coinciding with the La muerte de Procris in the Strasbourg Museum (1.62×1.90).

These coincidences do not determine that they had to be two related pictures. They could be, as has been assumed until now, two compositions with different and

independent mythological passages. However, the fact that Borghini mentions them together, the identity of the dimensions of the two paintings and their subject matter, prove that they were not conceived as two independent mythological paintings, but as two sequences of the same plot, represented on two canvases. of identical format and dimensions. Moreover, the explanation and the key event of the death of Procris and cauloving sas that are determined in the Céfaló box and Brisa Mu seo of the Prado.

From a compositional point of view, the two paintings also have many elements in common. In both, the representation takes place in an outdoor setting with lush vegetation; In each frame, the protagonists are two, Cephalus and the Breeze and Cephalus and Procris. In the two paintings, two complementary opposing attitudes are represented by way of antithesis, such as rest and action, sleep and wakefulness, ataraxia and tragedy.

VERONES AND THE METAMORPHOSIS

In order to determine the source in which Veronese was inspired to make the two paintings, it is necessary to go to the story of Cephalus and Procris that Ovi gave in Book VII of his Metamorphoses. Procris was the daughter of the Athenian king Erechtheus and was married to Cephalus. She was seduced by Pteleon who had given her a golden crown. When Cephalus discovers the deception, Procris flees from Athens and goes to Crete where he cures King Minos of a strange disease. Procris, receives in exchange a hunting dog and a javelin. Back in Athens, where he reconciled with Cephalus, to whom he gave the javelin, which, according to the latter in the Metamorphoses, "reaches every target it is directed toward", and the dog that "In the race will defeat all" ^ °.

The dog and the spear appear in the two paintings, inspired by the following text of the Metamorphoses, in which Cephalus tells the story: «As soon as the sun brushed the peaks with its first rays, I used to go to hunt gamely bos-

° OVID NASON, P. : Metamorphosis. Text revised and translated by Antonio Ruiz Elvira. Barcelona, Ediciones Alma Matar, SA, 1964-1969, vol. II, Book VII, 682-684 and 692.

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that servants or horses or dogs of subtle smell did not usually go with me, nor did the doubtful linen nets accompany me: I was safe with my javelin; but when my right hand was satiated with the slaughter of wild beasts, I sought the cold and the shadows and the breeze that came from the cool valleys; I was going in search of the gentle breeze, heated, the breeze was what I expected, and she was the rest of my fatigue. «Bri sa», (I remember well) «come», I used to sing, «comfort me and come into my lap, delicious and have the kindness to relieve, as you usually do, the ardors that toast me ». It may be that I added (my destiny dragged me) more affectionate words, and that I used to say «you are my great charm, you comfort me and encourage me, you make me love the jungles and lonely places, and may that breath of yours always be drawn into my mouth ». Those

ambiguous words came, deceiving the ears of someone who thought that the name, so often spoken, of the breeze, was that of a Nymph: and believes that a Nymph is the object of my love. And immediately, irresponsible informer of a supposed guilt, he goes to see Procris and tells him the whispers he has heard from my tongue. A credulous thing is love: it fell, as indicated to me, vanished by sudden anguish; And when, after a long time, she came to herself, called herself unhappy, a woman of adverse fate, lamented my inconstancy, and, spurred on by a nonexistent guilt, feared what is nothing, feared a name without a body, and suffered the poor as if it were a true rival. Many times, however, she doubts, and hopes, in the midst of her immense affliction, of deceiving herself, and refuses to give credence to the complaint, and is not willing to condemn her husband's faults if she does not see them herself. The following lights of Aurora had dislodged the night: I go out, I go to the jungle, and, once victorious, lying on the grass, I said: "Breeze, come and relieve my fatigue." And suddenly I thought I heard, in the middle of my words, I don't know what moans; still I said:

"Come beautiful." The fallen leaves made a slight noise again, and I thought it was a beast and I threw my flying javelin: it was Procris, and pressing the wound in the middle of the chest he yelled: "Oh, me!" When I recognized the voice of my faithful wife, I ran to her voice, hurried and horrified. Dying I find her, dirty with blood, dressed in disorder, and trying to tear her own gift from the wound (unfortunate of me!); up gently in my arms his dearest body than mine, and tearing the clothes from the chest, LIGO his wounds tremendous and tra tothe bleeding and begged him to leave me not become a criminal for his death. Deprived of strength, and about to die, she managed to say these few words: «For the bonds of our marriage, for the gods of heaven and for mine, for the good that I may have done and for the love that even now When I die, I preserve and it is the cause of my death, I beg you not to allow the breeze to become the wife of my own thalamus ». So she said, and that's when I understood, and made it known to her, that it was a name mistake. But what was the use of letting him know? "He collapses, his little strength fleeing along with his blood, and while he can still look at something, he looks at me at

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me, and in me and in my mouth his hapless spirit exhales; although due to the placid expression on her face, she seemed to die in peace »"

TEXT AND IMAGE

The transcribed text of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, typical of the libretto of an opera, is the literary source from which Veronese was inspired to undertake the representations of Cephalus and the Breeze and The death of Procris. In each painting, the natural setting is different according to the theme represented in each one of them. In the Prado Museum painting the setting, according to the story, appears represented as a lush jungle, with Cephalus's hunting dogs and his balina resting on the tree. In The Death of Procris it is a jungle of nature tu pida in which

the hidden body of Cephalus's wife would be difficult to identify. On the other hand, in *La Brisa y Céfalos* the painter has represented a space of open nature, aerial and transparent, of a crystalline chromaticism crossed by the breeze that caresses Céfalos's body.

The story, lacking the iconographic definition of other themes, such as the aforementioned Venus and Adonis, had to be represented in a much more complex way, forcing an unpublished correspondence between text and image. Veronés resorted to topoi established for other themes in which common elements such as the dogs, the javelin or the cupid of the first term were represented. However, the figure of Cephalus asleep, or the representation of the Breeze are completely different. In no composition of Venus and Adonis does he appear asleep but detaching himself from Venus to go on the hunt that will cost him his life. Likewise, the figure of the Breeze shows a very different configuration from that of Venus trying to convince Adonis not to go hunting.

Veronés has painted the Breeze as a woman and has used the same model for Cephalus in both paintings. The Breeze is represented as Procris could imagine it, dragged by jealousy: as a beautiful woman, half-length naked, wearing a pearl necklace, bracelet and a luxurious brooch collecting her hair, in the manner of a courtesan, goddess or muse. With his right hand, he moves a fan or fan decorated with a symmetrical ornamentation that produces the breeze that refreshes Cephalus.

The representation of these two sequences from the history of Cephalus and Procris shows a plot line dedicated to showing, through the mythological story, the consequences of the actions caused by the states of passion, in this

" OVIDIO NASÓN, P. : Metamorphosis, Book VII, 804-837.

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case, the destructive effect of jealousy. In *Céfalos y la Brisa*, Veronés has resorted to the emphatic and theatrical composition type with characters dressed in rich costumes, typical of a courtly world, with which he undertakes his mythological representations. The exaltation of the color and the transparency of the atmosphere are in consonance with the effect of the breeze as well as the clouds represented in the form of strata formed by the existence of wind. The natural scenery of the landscape, which contrasts with the usual architectural settings used by the painter, attacked with subtle play of lights, glades and clouds, provides the painting with an effect of ephemeral joy charged with a premonitory tension of the immediate advent of the drama of the death of Procris.

