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### Botticelli's *Hypnerotomachia* in The National Gallery, London: A Problem of the Use of Classical Sources in Renaissance Art

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In one sense Botticelli's *Mars and Venus* [Figure 1] in the National Gallery, London, is perfectly intelligible.<sup>1</sup> The elegant young beauty is at ease and awake: her elegant young beau is asleep, and funny little satyrs are playing tricks on him. He is, to use late twentieth-century terms, "knocked out loaded"; she is "in control." There is a statement about love.

The problems begin when one asks why this painting should have been made in fifteenth-century Florence, and what more exactly the painting was about then. These problems are both general: what kind of object is it? — and particular: what are the satyrs doing? In what kind of slumber does the young man recline? Why the insects round the tree? Why the conch blown into his ear? And so on. These problems are the greater because nothing is known of the history or context of the picture before the nineteenth century.

The picture bears no more than an attribution to Botticelli, though the attribution has long been accepted.<sup>2</sup> There is a general consensus that the picture belongs to the early 1480s, which, purely on grounds

<sup>1</sup> This article has been improved after discussion with Michael Baxandall, Charles Hope, Jill Kraye, Amanda Lillie, Elizabeth McGrath and Letizia Panizza. This does not mean that they endorse its ideas; but that I thank them.

<sup>2</sup> M. Davies, *The Early Italian Schools* (National Gallery, London 1961), pp. 99 ff.

of style, remains possible, if not likely.<sup>3</sup> However, the evidence by which this assessment is supported I intend to show to be false. There are hints in the linear mannerisms of the woman's dress of the style of the 1489 Cestello *Annunciation* in the Uffizi, though the rhythms are here less rapid, less contrived. Horne found the "quality and accent" of the draughtsmanship close to that of the Bardi altarpiece of 1485.<sup>4</sup> The modelling of the young man also seems much like the modelling of Botticelli's *St. Sebastian* in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, which has been identified with a *St. Sebastian* installed in Santa Maria Maggiore, Florence, in 1474. But the identification is supposition and I would prefer to suppose rather that the *St. Sebastian* was a quite different commission than that the National Gallery picture was painted before Botticelli's visit to Rome in 1481-82. The picture first re-appeared in Florence, and so was presumably painted there.

Gombrich suggested further that the patron might have been the prominent Florentine family of the Vespucci, for whom Botticelli painted his fresco of *St. Jerome* in Ognissanti in 1480, and that the picture might have been a marriage gift.<sup>5</sup> His logic was that Piero di Cosimo painted a pair of pictures for the Vespucci illustrating Ovid, *Fasti* III. 725 ff., featuring therefore bees and hornets and also satyrs. He argued that Botticelli's picture was "clearly an offspring" of *cazioni* or trousseau chests given on the occasion of a marriage, and often featuring coats of arms. The Vespucci coat of arms featured wasps (*vespe*). Botticelli's picture featured wasps; and the picture probably had something to do with marriage because the games the little satyrs play are largely based on the games played by the *erotes* in Lucian's description (in the work often called *Herodotus*) of Aetion's picture of the marriage of Alexander and Roxana, which picture, Lucian goes on to say, earned Aetion himself a good marriage. The suggestion is plausible, though it is only a suggestion, and everything in this article should serve to support it. The kind of pun involved can be paralleled, for instance, in the Porcari of Rome having deliberately collected antique sculpture featuring pigs;<sup>6</sup> or in the little stones

<sup>3</sup> R. Lightbown, *Botticelli* (London 1978), I, pp. 90 ff.; II, pp. 56 ff.

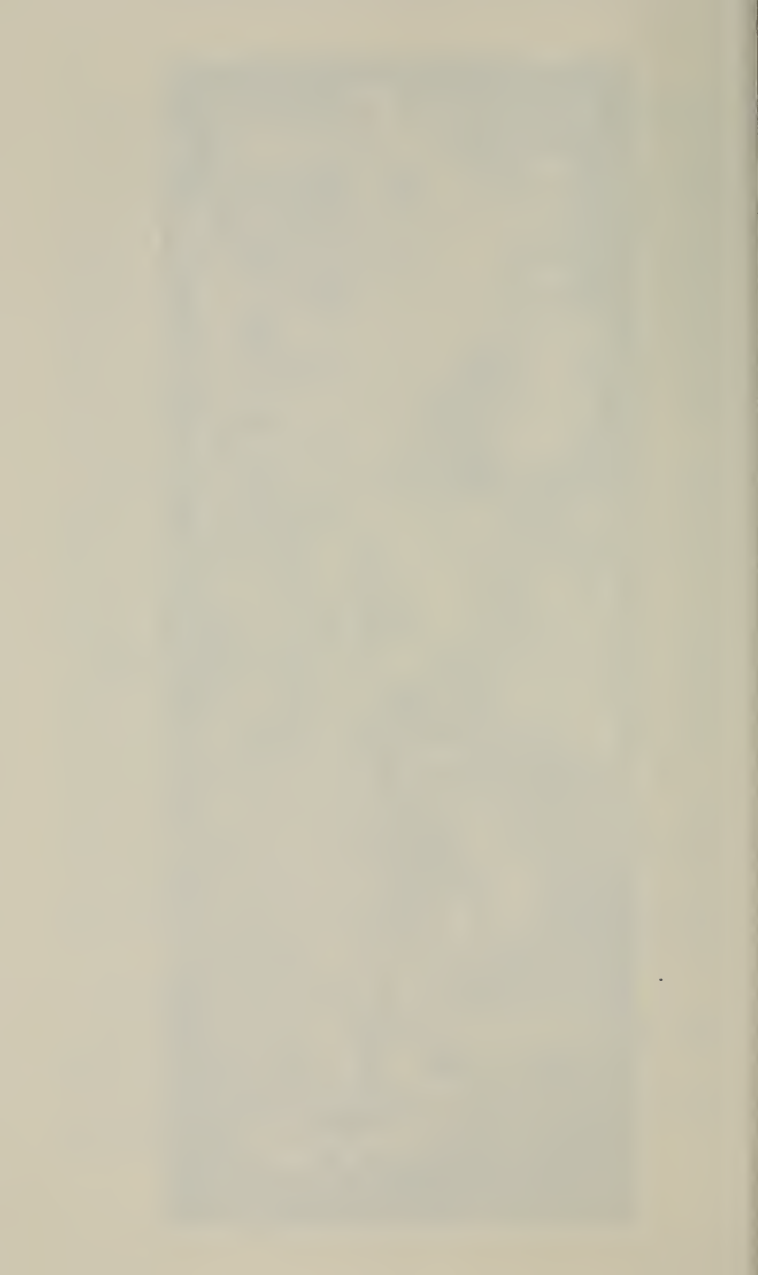
<sup>4</sup> H. Horne, *Alessandro Filipepi . . . Botticelli* (London 1908), p. 140.

<sup>5</sup> E. H. Gombrich, "Botticelli's Mythologies," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 8 (1945), pp. 7-60; reprinted in *Symbolic Images* (Oxford 1972), pp. 31-81, 201-19; in particular pp. 66-69.

<sup>6</sup> P. P. Bober, paper given at the Colloquium on the Study and Use of Ancient Art and Architecture in the Renaissance held at the Warburg Institute, London, 29-30 November 1983.



Figure 1



(*sassetti*) for David's sling on the wall outside the Sassetti chapel painted by Ghirlandaio in Santa Trinità in Florence.<sup>7</sup>

I intend in the course of this article first to establish the genre to which Botticelli's picture belongs; secondly to discuss the classical sources used in it; thirdly to point out its relationship to contemporary vernacular literature (in particular Dante's *Vita Nuova*) and the way in which the classical sources have been used.

An interpretation of Botticelli's picture should be aided by a very similar painting attributed to Piero di Cosimo [Figure 2] in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin: the similarity is not only of composition — two opposed figures reclining in a landscape, the male asleep, nude, with *amori* playing with his armor — but also of format and size.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately Piero's picture is not documented before the nineteenth century, either, except that it almost perfectly accords with a description by Vasari of a picture by Piero:<sup>9</sup>

Dipinse ancora un quadro, dov' è una Venere ignuda con un Marte parimente, che spogliato nudo dorme sopra un prato pien di fiori; ed attorno son diversi amori, che chi in qua chi in là traportano la celata, i bracciali e l'altre arme di Marte. Evvi un bosco di mirto, ed un Cupido che ha paura d'un coniglio; così vi sono le colombe di Venere e l'altre cose di amore. Questo quadro è in Fiorenza in casa Giorgio Vasari, tenuto in memoria sua di lui, perchè sempre gli piacquer i capricci di questo maestro.

He also painted a picture where there is a nude Venus with a Mars likewise, who sleeps stripped naked in a meadow full of flowers; and about them are several loves, who — one here, one there — carry about Mars's helmet, arm-guards and other armor. There is a grove of myrtle, and a Cupid who is frightened of a rabbit; in the same vein the doves of Venus and the other appurtenances of love are there. This picture is in Florence in the house of Giorgio Vasari, who has it as a keepsake of Piero, because he has always been fond of the fancies of this artist.

The only discrepancy appears to be Cupid's fear of the rabbit, which is hardly possible in the Berlin picture, since he is pointing beyond it. However, he could appear to be drawing back from it, and I presume this caused misreading.

Vasari's description is not much more than that, and where it is

<sup>7</sup> Cf. E. Borsook, J. Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence* (London 1979), p. 32.

<sup>8</sup> The Botticelli is 69 × 173 cm; the Piero 72 × 182 cm (*Gemäldegalerie . . . Katalog der ausgestellten Gemälde des 13. - 18. Jahrhunderts* [Berlin-Dahlem 1975], p. 318).

<sup>9</sup> Ed. Milanese (Florence 1906, repr. 1973), vol. IV, p. 140 (Life of Piero).

more it may depend on inference: for instance that the protagonists are Mars and Venus (from which it has been supposed that Botticelli's protagonists are Mars and Venus), or that Piero's picture is a "caprice." Is Botticelli's also a caprice? What did Vasari mean by "capriccio"? The answer to this latter question at least is clear enough from the context: he means one of those inventions typical of Piero in Vasari's characterization of him — charming, bizarre, original, not to be taken too seriously. Piero's picture was therefore according to Vasari neither an *ecphrasis* or a relation of a classical event, nor an *invenzione* of a grand, high order.

Further, it is implicit in Vasari's description that he thought the picture was about love. Two indications are his rather exaggerated "meadow full of flowers," which surely derives less from what he saw than from the tradition with which he associated what he saw, and his relation of the various objects he describes — myrtle, rabbit, doves, etc. — to Venus and to love ("the other things of love"). It follows that this is an allegory: which is also virtually a corollary of its not being a story or an illustration. Hence these appurtenances are there not so much to identify the woman as Venus, as to make her a venereal personification. Some of her attributes — the butterfly, the rabbit — are not classical, and therefore all the more clearly moralize about love. It is something pretty, fluttery, insubstantial;<sup>10</sup> something sexually frequentative and cuddly (for the rabbit does seem to be nudging Cupid with his nose).<sup>11</sup> In the same way, though they have classical precedent, the turtle-doves may stand for love's fervor and lovers' inseparability (they were meant to pine to death if separated);<sup>12</sup> and Cupid, as he is shown here, represents not only the fondness (in his relationship to his mother)<sup>13</sup> and fondling of love

<sup>10</sup> This is conjectural, but consistent both with what is said about love and with the role of butterflies in the Renaissance dialogue *Virtus Dea* interpolated into the selected Latin Lucian of Venice 1494 and Milan 1497; the gods paint their wings while keeping Virtue waiting for Justice. Cf. the flowers in the Raphael mentioned below. There may be an allusion to the amatory topos of the butterfly / moth which prefers to die in love's flame. This was at least as old as the troubadours (e.g. Folquet de Marseilles), and is taken up by Petrarch (*RS* xix and cxli). Dante had made a characteristic adaptation: *Purg.* x, 121 ff.

<sup>11</sup> G. de Tervarent, *Attributs et Symboles dans l'Art Profane 1450-1600* (Geneva 1959), s.v. Lapin / Lièvre.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. Colombe.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Leonardo Giustinian's "Per gran forza d'amor commosso e spinto," *Cancionete* (Venice c. 1472 etc.); this includes a sexual fantasy, in which from "Lì dove il primo liquor il fantin piglia" he moves "alla dolcezza che avanza / tutti i piacer d'ogni triumpho e regno." Cf. also on the one hand the image of Charity, on the other suckling satyr mothers.



Figure 2



(in his relationship to the rabbit) but also a certain double-edged jocularity. He grins and points, "mostra a dito," which is how Renaissance Italian society behaved towards lovers, at least sometimes.<sup>14</sup> He refers then to the lover's individualization, a source not only of pride and joy but also of shame (cf. Petrarch, *Rime Sparse* i). The myrtle may be a specifically venereal qualification of the shrubbery that might anyway belong to a love garden.

What about the *amori* who play with Mars's armor? In one sense they continue and expand on Cupid's gesture. They hardly suggest the dignity of the young man's knightly calling, rather its abandonment or even defeat. Childishly they introduce disorder, scattering their toys "chi in qua chi in là." They fancifully elaborate the poetic metaphor of love overcoming the spiritual defenses (protecting armor) of the lover, who then, disarmed, despoiled, becomes the vassal and victim of the god (cf. Petrarch, *RS* ii, iii). The classical references of the *amori* amount to the same theme. In classical art they had appeared, for instance, heaving at the club of Hercules, or playing in one way or another round Bacchic sarcophagi.<sup>15</sup> They had similarly manifested the sweet power of an ecstatic god, even over stalwart heroes.

In classical literature such *amori* had appeared in particular as the agents of Venus in epithalamia, busy or having been busy about the bridegroom (or also bride) in this same sort of way. With little doubt this is the convention which Piero has revived, or rather in the revival of which he has followed others. For he (or his purchaser) does not seem to have used a particular classical text. Nor need he have done so, since Botticelli's or other images might have been accessible to him, and the convention had already been revived in vernacular literature. Politian's *Stanze* for the Giostra of 1475 are a prime example. At one particular point (I, cxxii) Politian seems to have used Lucretius I. 31 ff., where Mars lies in Venus's arms, a passage that Panofsky suggested had a bearing on Piero's picture (Gombrich then suggested it had been used by Politian).<sup>16</sup> Politian used the Lucretius, however, I submit, only in passing. A much more important source was Statius's epithalamium for Stella and Violentilla (*Silvae*, I. 2). The basis for the excursus on the realm of love (I, lxxviii ff.) was

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Battista Stabellino writing to Isabella d'Este 28. 5. 1512 and l. 6. 1512 describing the enamorment of Fabrizio Colonna for Nicola de Trotta, published by A. Luzio and R. Renier, *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana* 39 (1902), i, pp. 236-37.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der gr. und röm. Mythologie* (Leipzig 1884-90), columns 2248-50; F. Matz, *Die dionysischen Sarkophage* (Berlin 1968-75), *passim*.

<sup>16</sup> E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (Oxford 1939), p. 63, note 77; Gombrich, *op. cit.* (above, note 5), p. 215, note 133.

of course Petrarch's *Trionfi*. Politian used other sources again, but from the *Silvae* (on which his commentary survives) he could have taken at one and the same time Mars and Venus in the bliss of the morning after, and the *amori* who play such a fervid part in both poems. There seems in fact to be no visual or other reason to make a connection between Lucretius and Piero di Cosimo.

Politian's poem, for all its epithalamial imagery, celebrates not a marriage but chivalric love: developing the idea that love enhances prowess, the *Stanze* are a eulogy of Giuliano de' Medici's nobility. Piero di Cosimo's picture need not either perhaps be connubial, though it surely celebrates the sweets of achieved love. In calling it a caprice, Vasari seems to have responded accurately enough to its mood.

Horne also classed with Botticelli's picture two pictures of similar period and origin, called now "school of Botticelli," in the Louvre (M. I. 546) and in the National Gallery, London (no. 916), in which a woman, draped or semi-draped (Venus de Milo fashion), reclines similarly in a landscape with again *amori* festive about her.<sup>17</sup> One could add the picture in the Ca'd'Oro in Venice (Fototeca O. Böhm no. 668) attributed to Bugiardini or (formerly) to Franciabigio, in which the nymph is entirely nude, sleeps, and is accompanied by a single *amor* who takes her by her right-hand index-finger and also points — like Piero di Cosimo's Cupid. Giorgione's sleeping *Venus* in Dresden, in which there was originally a Cupid, since painted out, presumably also belongs to this class, along with the later pictures which are related to the Giorgione, including Titian's *Venus of Urbino* in the Uffizi.<sup>18</sup> All these images, including Botticelli's, are with little doubt about carnal love.<sup>19</sup>

Both men and women reclining like this are also found in other kinds of object produced in late fifteenth-century Florence. First may be mentioned the inner lids of marriage *cassoni*: two pairs, each with a woman painted in one and a man painted in the other, survive (Schubring nos. 156, 157; 289, 290), and two isolated examples, one of a woman (Schubring 185), one of a man, inscribed Paris (Schubring

<sup>17</sup> Horne, *op. cit.* (above, note 4), p. 141.

<sup>18</sup> On Titian's figure not as Venus but as a generic nude, see C. Hope, "Problems of Interpretation in Titian's Erotic Paintings," in *Tiziano e Venezia* (Venice 1980), pp. 111 ff., especially pp. 118-19; *idem*, "A Neglected Document about Titian's *Danaë* in Naples," *Arte Veneta* 31 (1977), pp. 188 ff.; for epithalamial parallels (but with conclusions I find unacceptable) J. Anderson, "Giorgione, Titian and the Sleeping Venus," *Tiziano e Venezia*, pp. 337 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Several drawings of this theme are also cited by A. Novak, *La Nympe Couchée* (diss., Paris 1969).

184).<sup>20</sup> All these recline, leaning on one elbow; some are awake, some are asleep; some are nude, some are clothed. Secondly, there is the series of early Florentine engravings mostly of circular format known loosely as the Otto prints (Hind A. IV).<sup>21</sup> One print (Hind A. IV. 13) [Figure 3] shows a couple reclining in the same way opposite each other with their legs overlapping, rather closer together than in Botticelli's picture: he holds out to her a flower (the mark of so many northern marriage portraits); another print (Hind A. IV. 20) shows a nude woman reclining similarly with three *amori* about her, one of whom blows a horn.<sup>22</sup> Both these are subsidiary images, accompanying, in the main field, lovers plighting their troth on some object symbolic of their faith: they occur among other subsidiary images which emblematically or suggestively accompany the main image, and the other subsidiary images in the print with a couple consist of music-making *amori*. In the center of these prints was often left a blank space in which an individual coat of arms might be colored in, and it has been presumed that they were intended to be stuck onto circular boxes, such as might be or might contain lovers' tokens. In several of the prints the motto "Amor vuol fè" ("Love needs faith") occurs, sometimes continued "e dove fè nonne Amor non può" ("and where there is no faith Love has no power"). On one print (Hind A. IV. 6) the lovers are identified as Jason and Medea; another couple (Hind A. IV. 11) was believed by Warburg to represent Lorenzo de' Medici and his courtly-beloved Lucrezia Donati,<sup>23</sup> but the emblem on the coat of the man, a ring enclosing feathers, has been shown by Ames-Lewis to have been adopted by the Medici rather than to have belonged to them.<sup>24</sup> This emblem presumably signifies hard faith binding the soft, the light, the luxurious — a variant on "Amor vuol fè." Another variant is the "Ame droit" on the sleeve of the young man in the print with the reclining couple.

It is therefore obviously possible that Botticelli's picture is not only sexual but also epithalamial, in the exact sense of celebrating a prospective marriage. Given the evidence formulated by Gombrich, we might say that it is certainly about "Amor" but may very well also involve "Fè," or troth. Horne also adduced a gesso relief in the Victoria and Albert Museum (no. 5887-1859) [Figure 4] in which

<sup>20</sup> P. Schubring, *Cassoni* (Leipzig 1915).

<sup>21</sup> A. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving* (London 1948).

<sup>22</sup> This connection also in Novak, *op. cit.* (above, note 19).

<sup>23</sup> A. Warburg, "Delle 'Imprese Amoroze' nelle più antiche Incisioni Fiorentine," *Gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig — Berlin 1932), 1, pp. 81 ff.

<sup>24</sup> F. Ames-Lewis, "Early Medicean Devices," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (1979), p. 131.

there are again reclining figures, again *amori*, and the man leans back asleep just like Botticelli's figure.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand the circular format, in particular with a blank center, and the motif of the ring repeat these features in the Otto prints; the coat of arms and the encircling ring again suggest the occasion of a marriage. This object surely confirms a connection between the Otto prints and Botticelli's picture.

Given this much, the supposition by Tietze-Conrat that two reclining figures on the lid of a Bacchic sarcophagus not otherwise related to the picture constituted the specific source for Botticelli's picture should be rejected.<sup>26</sup> There is also no evidence that the sarcophagus to which she pointed was known to the Renaissance.<sup>27</sup>

Doubt may also be raised whether Botticelli's figures are necessarily Mars and Venus. When the picture first came to light in the nineteenth century they were assumed to be Mars and Venus because all secular Renaissance pictures were assumed to be mythological. Later the assumption was buttressed by comparison with the Piero di Cosimo, which Vasari said to be *Mars and Venus*. But it is not certain to me even that Vasari was correct about the Piero di Cosimo. If Piero had intended no more than a generic knight — as it were a figure on the stage whose type is clear but whose name is never given — Vasari even so would still very likely have called the knight Mars, because Vasari did not expect in Italian paintings genre figures of the kind painted in the north.<sup>28</sup> He expected literary or historical representatives or personifications.<sup>29</sup> Not that the line between personifications and generic figures need be hard and fast: Marcantonio Michiel, for instance, described a picture by Palma Vecchio when he first saw it as "la Nympha," when he saw it next as "la Cerere."<sup>30</sup> Despite Vasari,

<sup>25</sup> J. Pope-Hennessy, *Catalogue of the Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London 1964), catalogue no. 129. The center is presumed to have held a mirror. The object is dated to the third quarter of the fifteenth century — to the same period as the Otto prints.

<sup>26</sup> E. Tietze-Conrat, "Botticelli and the Antique," *Burlington Magazine* 47 (Sept. 1925), p. 124.

<sup>27</sup> F. Matz, *op. cit.* (above, note 15), catalogue no. 218. Not known before 1828.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Bartolomeo Fazio's report of genre nudes by Jan van Eyck, edited M. Baxandall, "Bartholomaeus Facius on Painting," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1964), pp. 102-03.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Vasari's criticism in his neighboring *Life of Giorgione's* frescoes on the Fondaco de' Tedeschi in Venice, ed. cit. (above, note 9), IV, p. 96: "che nel vero non si ritrova storie che abbino ordine o che rappresentino i fatti di nessuna persona segnalata antica o moderna."

<sup>30</sup> Ed. P. Barocchi, *Scritti dell' Arte del Cinquecento* (Milan — Naples 1977), III, pp. 2879 (collection of Andrea Oddoni) and 2881 (collection of Francesco Zio). Cf. also Hope, *op. cit.* (above, note 18).



M. 10. 11. 12.  
W. 1887. 4. 11. 14.

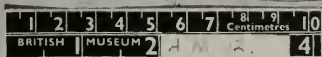


Figure 3



Figure 4

and despite the fact that many Renaissance representations of classical mythology exist, it may very well not have been necessary for Botticelli's picture to have had named protagonists.<sup>31</sup> It does not follow either that, because the woman is Venus, the knight in Piero's picture need be Mars. He might be a sleeping knight like the one in Raphael's *Dream of the Knight* in the National Gallery, London,<sup>32</sup> who sleeps between the figures of Gravititas(?) and Voluptas, except that Piero's knight has chosen Voluptas, figured in his picture as Venus. Piero's knight looks too adolescent to be Mars. Further, rather than being a product of it, Piero's picture would run counter to the epithalamial convention if his knight were Mars, since Mars when he appears is half awake in Venus's arms rather than fast asleep, and the *amori* strip not Mars of his armor but the husband.

Piero's picture is therefore not sufficient argument that Botticelli's earlier couple are Mars and Venus; and here not only is the knight not particularly martial, but also the woman is not like Venus: her white robes would bear rather an association with virtue. In the still earlier Victoria and Albert relief, onto which the argument should logically impose these identities once again, the sleeping man has no armor whatsoever. It is anyway the more normal practice to follow developments forward. Therefore, I suggest, we see in the relief a representation of the joy of a wedding night. (The man's pose has been supposed to have been taken from that of Endymion on sarcophagi,<sup>33</sup> but why should one suppose their influence here? Surely a contemporary image of the Creation of Eve has been adapted.) In the Botticelli, the mocking games played with the young man's armor by little satyrs indicate, I submit, more specifically the nature of that joy and of the young man's feelings. This is the idea I intend to develop. In the Piero, the indications of the young man's joy are less allusive, and there is no need here to elaborate on the explanation already given above.

Again, even if the protagonists of Botticelli's picture were Mars and Venus, they would surely be so by mere antonomasia, in the same way that one of the Otto-print couples was dubbed Jason and Medea and one of the  *cassone*-lid lovers was called Paris. These names are not going to explain what is happening to them. Whoever heard of little satyrs playing about Mars?

Why the little satyrs? Not this question, but the question, what

<sup>31</sup> I argue this again in an article, "Of Antique and Other Figures: Metaphor in Early Renaissance Art," forthcoming in *Word and Image*, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Proposals that the knight is Scipio or Hercules fail: see C. Gould, *The Sixteenth-Century Italian Schools* (National Gallery, London 1975), pp. 212 ff.

<sup>33</sup> So Pope-Hennessy, *op. cit.* (above, note 25).

they may be doing, can be answered partially by the passage from Lucian already referred to:

ἐτέρωθι δὲ τῆς εἰκόνας ἄλλοι Ἔρωτες παίζουσιν ἐν τοῖς ὄπλοις τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου, δύο μὲν τὴν λόγχην αὐτοῦ φέροντες, μιμούμενοι τοὺς ἀχθοφόρους ὅποτε δοκὸν φέροντες βαραῖντο· ἄλλοι δὲ δύο ἓνα τινὰ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀσπίδος κατακείμενον, βασιλέα δῆθεν καὶ αὐτόν, σύρουσι τῶν ὀχάνων τῆς ἀσπίδος ἐπειλημμένοι· εἷς δὲ δὴ ἐς τὸν θώρακα ἐσελθὼν ὑπτιον κείμενον λοχῶντι ἕοικεν, ὡς φοβήσειεν αὐτούς, ὅποτε κατ' αὐτὸν γένοιτο σύροντες. Οὐ παιδιὰ δὲ ἄλλως ταῦτ' ἔστιν οὐδὲ περιεῖργασται ἐν αὐταῖς ὁ Ἀετίων, ἀλλὰ δηλοῖ τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ τὸν ἐς τὰ πολεμικὰ ἔρωτα, καὶ ὅτι ἅμα καὶ Ῥωξῶνης ἦρα καὶ τῶν ὄπλων οὐκ ἐπελέληστο.

And on the other side of the picture other loves are playing in Alexander's armor, two of them carrying his spear, aping bearers when they take the weight of the pole; another two drag a single one reclining on his shield — he too must be a king then — having taken hold of the straps of the shield; and one has gone inside the breastplate, which is lying upside down, and looks as if he is hiding so as to frighten them when they come up to him dragging the shield. Yet this is not empty playfulness, and Aetion has not expended his art on them to no purpose, for in fact they underline Alexander's equal love for war, and tell us that at one and the same time he loved Roxana and had not forgotten arms.

Some of the details in the picture are so close to the Lucian that scholars generally have been persuaded that the artist must have had some sort of access to Lucian's text. But that cannot be the whole story. There is nothing to do with the Lucian in the transformation of the *erotes* into *satirelli*, the conch being blown into the young man's ear, the wasps, the tree, the laurel grove, the cushion on which she sits, her appearance, the cloak in which he is wrapped, the fruit or vegetable held by the satyr in the breastplate, the helmet over the head of one of the satyrs, the ululating tongues of two of the satyrs. Other details not in the Lucian seem rather to be divergent from it than extraneous to it, and may be explained as contingencies of its translation into contemporary terms — into contemporary armor, into the format of a contemporary lovers' idyll. Even the way the satyrs carry the lance can be explained similarly. The two who drag a third on a shield — βασιλέα δῆθεν καὶ αὐτόν: this one, too, a king in little — might have recalled the *amori* who pull the shaft of the chariot (on which another *amor* is "king") on the helmet of Goliath in Donatello's bronze *David* in the Bargello, Florence. The lance-bearers may amalgamate and syncopate Lucian's spear-carriers and shield-draggers.

The satyr blowing the conch may be in one sense part of the amorous convention, in so far as he repeats the *amor* blowing a horn

in the Otto prints, although blowing horns belongs of course to a broader tradition of pageantry, carnival and festival celebration in general. However, it is widely believed, following Duren, that the satyr and his conch reflect a report by a scholiast to Aratus that Pan during the Gigantomachy induced panic among the opposing host by blowing a conch-shell.<sup>34</sup> The report was mentioned by Politian in his *Miscellanea (Centuria Prima)*, no. 28, on panic terror;<sup>35</sup> and it became known to him from a manuscript he purchased in 1483, thus providing a circumstantial date or at least a probable *terminus post quem* for Botticelli's picture. Duren's thesis was accepted for several reasons, primarily because such a direct connection between Politian and Botticelli seemed very attractive. Duren argues that virtually no one else could have known this text in 1483 except Politian. Secondly, however, it built on Panofsky's proof that Correggio used this source in providing his figure of Pan in the Camera di San Paolo in Parma with a conch.<sup>36</sup> Thirdly, in the absence of other evidence, it seemed quite possible that the young man was having a nightmare. Indeed recently Dempsey in a public lecture connected this panic with Lucian's *ὡς φοβήσσειεν*, "in order to frighten."<sup>37</sup> I wondered then if the wasps might not represent the "bombus," or buzzing, of Pan's whip to which Politian went on to refer in *Miscellanea* no. 28. Even if this source were to be rejected, it seems to be a property of the conch, when blown, to induce terror, as in *Aeneid* X. 209-10:

hunc vehit immanis Triton et caerula concha  
exterrens freta . . .

A Triton carries him, enormous, and terrifying the blue straits with his conch. . . .

This might look as if it supported the thesis. However, the idea of nightmare seems irreconcilably to conflict both with an amorous context and with the soundness of the young man's sleep in Botticelli's picture, and the whole construction can be dismantled as follows. Panofsky was incorrect in supposing Correggio to have used the scholiast to Aratus as a source for his conch-blowing Pan in the Camera di San Paolo. It is difficult to conceive any motive for resort to this text, except for "an almost compulsive propensity to cryptic

<sup>34</sup> V. Duren, "'Pan Terrificus' de Politien," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 33 (1971), pp. 641 ff.

<sup>35</sup> First printed Florence 1489.

<sup>36</sup> E. Panofsky, *The Iconography of Correggio's Camera di San Paolo* (London 1961), pp. 39 ff. Correggio's work has been dated c. 1518-20.

<sup>37</sup> C. Dempsey, "Botticelli's Mars and Venus," paper given at the Warburg Institute, London, 2 June 1982.

allusion," a supposition to which Panofsky was forced by his own interpretation.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand it is not difficult to see why Panofsky should have been led to think Correggio was using this source.

First, as he says, he knew of no parallel. Secondly, he assumed a fundamental Renaissance movement towards the "re-integration of classical form and classical subject matter."<sup>39</sup> Thirdly, Cartari's *Imagini de i Dei de gli Antichi*, published in an illustrated edition in Venice in 1571, has an image of Pan with a conch, as the attribute with which he causes terror.<sup>40</sup> Fourthly, the Aratus account is both unique and was demonstrably used by Cartari.

Let us be clear that references to panic terror abound in antique literature. Politian collected several, and Gyraldus, *De Deis Gentium* XV, added more.<sup>41</sup> Alciati, *Emblemata*, no. cxxii, "in subitum terrorem," is proof of the diffusion of the idea.<sup>42</sup> Most of these references are to panic in battle, and Alciati's *Emblem*, though it is improvised and does not depend on a specific source, reflects this fact:

Effuso cernens fugientes agmine turmas  
Quis mea nunc inflat cornua? Faunus ait

Seeing the platoons flee with broken ranks  
Says Faunus: Who is blowing my horns this time?

Accordingly the image above shows the god with a large serpentine military-looking trumpet. Panofsky suggested that Pan had been changed to Faunus for no more than a metrical reason. In fact it seems to me clear that the Renaissance did not distinguish between the bestial gods.<sup>43</sup>

Then came Cartari's *Imagini*, and Cartari here as elsewhere followed Gyraldus. He translated some of Gyraldus's sources, and also, following Gyraldus's precise reference, looked up Politian. Gyraldus first

<sup>38</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. E. Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Stockholm 1960), p. 100 and *passim*.

<sup>40</sup> In this edition pp. 132 ff. Cartari was first published, without illustrations, in 1556.

<sup>41</sup> Lilius Gregorius Gyraldus, *Opera Omnia* (Lyons 1696), column 454; the *De Deis Gentium* had been previously published in full at Basle in 1548.

<sup>42</sup> Not one of the original collection of emblems, "in subitum terrorem" first appeared in the 1534 edition of Alciati. It is the 1534 woodcut, on which subsequent woodcuts in the period in question all seem to have been based, that I describe. See H. Green, ed., Alciati's *Emblemata* (Manchester 1870-71).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. E. McGrath, "Pan and the Wool," *The Ringling Museum of Art Journal* (1983), pp. 52 ff., for a sketch of Pan and satyrs in Renaissance art.

reports that Politian has an entire chapter on the subject, then he says:

Sed et Theon in Arati comment. ἤχον id est sonitum hunc cochlea factum scribit . . .

But Theon in his commentary to Aratus also writes that this echo, that is sound, was made by a conch.

Cartari certainly then looked up Politian, because his words follow Politian, not Gyraldus. Cartari writes:

overo perchè Pan fu creduto il primo, che trovasse di sonare quella gran conchiglia che portano i Tritoni, con la quale ei fece sì gran romore nella guerra contra i Titani . . . (ed. 1571, p. 132)

or because Pan was believed to be the first to have discovered how to sound that great conch which Tritons carry, with which he made a great noise in the war against the Titans . . .

Politian's note reads:

. . . militasse ait Pana deum adversus Titanas, primumque eum videri concham illam tortilem et turbinatam qua pro tuba utuntur invenisse, quae Graece cochlos appellatur.

. . . He says that the god Pan fought against the Titans, and that he seems to have been the first to have discovered that twisted, spiral conch which they use for a trumpet, which is called cochlos in Greek.

According to Panofsky, however, "Cartari, a mere compiler, apparently owed his information to the more scholarly Natale Conti," whose *Mythologiae* was published in 1551.<sup>44</sup> But Conti's words (VI, xxi) are quite different. Panofsky never refers to Politian.

I submit therefore that the idea that Pan induced terror by blowing a conch had been registered, like a word in a dictionary, but had not circulated, had not as it were entered parlance, before Cartari. I think it significant that the connection to the conch blown by a triton is Cartari's, not Gyraldus's and not Politian's. It would have helped the illustrator pick the reference up. If the notion were unknown to Correggio, the transmission Politian-Gyraldus-Cartari is clear; but if it were known to him, I do not see how one can explain Alciati, except by denying transmission to be linear. Others may. I think it is worth pointing out that in neither case is the process a "re-integration" of classical form and classical subject matter. There never had been known before the Renaissance an image of Pan blowing a conch. The Renaissance term *invenzione* is accurate.

<sup>44</sup> Panofsky, *op. cit.* (above, note 36), p. 42.

What alternative explanation then is available for Correggio's Pan? Duren has already found one parallel Panofsky overlooked. It seems to me it is one of very many. I submit that shells referred, if to anything at all, then to Venus.<sup>45</sup> A shell was the object on which she was carried to the island of Cyprus after her birth from the genitals of Saturn. Although always such a meaning is corroborated by the context, the shell seems to have been a venereal symbol much as a vase was a symbol of the Bacchic. This will be so even for tritons when they appear in art.<sup>46</sup> Transmission was undoubtedly through Fulgentius II, i. Thence it passes to Bernardus Sylvester's allegorizing commentary to the first six books of the *Aeneid*. Explaining Aeolus's storm and the calming of it by Neptune, Bernardus says:

Mare corpus humanum intelligitur quia ebrietates et libidines que per aquas intelliguntur ab eo defluunt et in eo sunt commotiones vitiorum et per ipsum ciborum et potus meatus fit. Secundum hoc legimus Venerem ex virilibus Saturni natam fuisse in mari. Virilia enim Saturni qualitates temporis quibus creatur: calor et humor. Hec virilia in mare deiciuntur quoniam ciborum et potus superfluitates in corpore aguntur. Hec autem in corpore per cibos acta libidinem movent. Ideo dictum est: sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus.<sup>47</sup>

The sea stands for the human body because drunkenness and lust, which are to be understood by its waters, issue from the body and the disturbances of the vices are located in it and through it there is passage of food and drink. Accordingly we read that Venus was born in the sea from the genitals of Saturn. For the genitals of Saturn are the qualities of the season which give rise to Venus: heat and moisture. These genitals are thrown into the sea in reflection of the fact that the products of food and drink circulate in the body. These movements, however, produced in the body by food, stir lust. Therefore the saying: without Ceres or Bacchus Venus is cold.

Shells and vases, I suggest, are emblems of "libido" and "ebrietas" equivalent to their ossified personifications. Urged to find one for Ceres, I would suggest it was a bowl of natural produce, or a cornucopia; the personification *Copia* was more usual.

In the later development of the mythographical tradition, Venus emerges with the scallop or conch as her prime attribute: in Mythographus III; in Petrarch's *Africa*, where she is so described (III. 212-13):

<sup>45</sup> Except of course when the shell is the pilgrim shell of St. James.

<sup>46</sup> This would be consistent with Raphael's *Galatea*, for instance. The first deviation from the Bernardus Sylvester tradition (on which he depends) might be Cristoforo Landino's in his *Camaldulensian Disputations* (ed. Lohe, Florence 1980), p. 170.

<sup>47</sup> J. W. and E. F. Jones, edd. (Lincoln, Nebr. 1977), p. 10, lines 15-22.

nuda Venus pelagoque natans, ubi prima refertur  
turpis origo dee, concam lasciva gerebat

Venus naked, swimming in the sea (whence, we are told, in base circumstances she originated) bore, lascivious, her conch;

in Boccaccio's *Genealogia*, III. xxiii (Venus secunda); in the Ferrarese Tarocchi prints (Hind E. I. 43); in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* in the Uffizi.

By the second half of the fifteenth century these easily comprehensible and familiar attributes have started to appear as it were adjectivally in other contexts, so that in Mantegna's engraving, *Battle of the Sea-Gods*, the figure of Neptune is accompanied on his plinth by a vase and a shell. (The whole print is evidently founded on the idea in Bernardus Sylvester that the sea may stand for the "commotions" or passions.) Two other instances are Giovanni Bellini's *Allegories* in the Accademia, Venice, in one of which Bacchus appears, in another (I submit, its pair) porters carrying a conch, that is, laboring basely under the burden of lust; and a statuette by Riccio in the Bargello, Florence, of a naked woman holding in one hand a shell, in the other a drinking horn, while a child invites from her breast. I suppose her to be an image of Luxuria.<sup>48</sup> In other images, for instance in Lotto's *Allegory* in the National Gallery, Washington, a vase occurs without Bacchus — here beside a satyr, and, clearly, by the context, meant to indicate his intemperance. So in the Botticelli I presume the shell to occur without Venus, in the hand of a satyr, and to be clearly shown by the context to indicate his concupiscence; and in the Correggio I presume it to occur similarly again, in the hand of an arch-satyr, although I cannot go into the details now. Linear transmission through Botticelli to Correggio is perfectly possible. Perhaps I may also reward the argument by the observation that the nymph in the lunette beside Correggio's Pan, whom Panofsky believed to be related to him and to be Hope against his terror, holds a dove.<sup>49</sup> So all this also agrees with the Piero di Cosimo.

In fact it seems clear to me that semi-animal creatures were naturally interpreted in the Renaissance as base, as embodiments of the passions. This was either because they were all varieties of incubus or devil (if you believed in their existence)<sup>50</sup> or (if you did not) because they

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Royal Academy of Arts, *The Genius of Venice* (London 1983), catalogue no. S25.

<sup>49</sup> For doubts about Panofsky's interpretation, see E. H. Gombrich, *Topos and Topicality in Renaissance Art* (London 1975), pp. 11 ff.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. R. Bernheimer, *Wildmen in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge 1952), pp. 96 ff.

were products of the lower imagination<sup>51</sup> — “velut aegri somnia,” like the dreams of a sick man, to recall the opening lines of Horace’s *Ars Poetica* with its description of a painting of a centaur, of a chimaera, and of a satyr, if a satyr may stand described as a creature whose head and foot do not make one form (“ut nec pes nec caput uni / reddatur formae”). Similarly laughter, like the laughter Horace supposed such a painting would occasion, was a normal response to ungoverned lechery and infatuation;<sup>52</sup> one also laughed at monkeys.<sup>53</sup> Is not the satyr with the helmet over his head both comic and indicative of the kind of blindness which earned Cupid his blindfold? His companion blows venereal dreams with his conch into the young man’s ear, venereal dreams that after Horace one might characterize as “vanae species”; and does he not recall quite strongly the devil blowing the hot air of lust into other dreamers’ ears — for instance in Dürer’s print, *The Dream of the Doctor*?<sup>54</sup> There, too, the *amor* is ridiculous on stilts. If one should wish to show a man inveigled by a sensual dream, to show satyrs leaping round him might seem a good way to do it. Certainly there are pictures in which Pan looms behind a ripe sleeping nude.<sup>55</sup>

Of course it remains possible that Politian might have provided the Aratus scholion. But is it at all likely that if terror had been meant by the satyr’s conch, its proper possessor, a devilish adult Pan, should have been transformed into a childish satyrlet? And why should Politian recommend the conch as an indication of nightmare when it is clear from his discussion and citations in *Miscellanea* no. 28 that he understood it as a waking fear — something indeed from which philosophy may protect, as Cicero writes to Tiro (*Ad Fam.* XVI. 23), in the passage that the entry sets out to explain? Philosophy cannot protect against sleep. Nor is there reason to suppose he would think panic relevant to an amorous context, since there is no hint of it in the *Stanze*.

The connection between “bombus” and conch will also then fail, given that there is no association between Latin “bombus” and the

<sup>51</sup> This is consistent with the theory expounded by Synesius, *De Somniis*, published in Florence in 1497 in Ficino’s translation; and with Ficino’s dedication (dated 1489) to the collection, in which he includes Proclus’s *De Daemonibus*.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Petrarch, *De Remediis Fortunae*, I, xxxvii, *ad finem*, on ungoverned *luxuria* for precious stones, and the letter by Stabellino, mentioned above, note 14.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. H. W. Janson, *Apes and Ape-Lore* (London 1952), p. 202.

<sup>54</sup> Bartsch 76. The imagery was not new: cf. Petrarch, *RS* cxxxvi, 9-11.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. F. Gibbons, *Dosso and Battista Dossi* (Princeton 1968), catalogue nos. 11, 92; also M. Meiss, “Sleep in Venice,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 110 (1966), pp. 348 ff.

noise made by a conch except in *Miscellanea* no. 28, where "bombus" translates Greek βόμβος in fact not quite accurately (the Greek word, meaning in Homer always a crash or bang, is by no means parallel); and even Greek βόμβος, meaning then more than a blast on the conch, is associated with a conch only in Nonnus.<sup>56</sup>

However, there are associations of Latin "bombus" with satyrs and with knighthood. The hypothesis that the wasps might also be there for the sake of the noise they make seems worth testing beside the venereal reading I have put forward. The association of Latin "bombus" is firmly and equally to bees and to horns.<sup>57</sup> The passage in Pliny (*Natural History* XI. 10. 20 ff.) in which a hive is compared to a camp and bees' buzzing to bugling was presumably well known in the Renaissance, given the circulation of Pliny. A horn was part of the equipment of a knight: its use recurs in Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, and the echo of that most moving tragedy of Roncisvalle had not yet died. The other satyrs play laughably and lasciviously with the rest of his armor. May not the one with the conch underline the knight's condition by the implicit contrast between the lustful, nacreous dreams he blows and the mighty summons of a clarion? An association between satyrs and "bombus" can be found in at least three texts, provided that the satyrs are understood as followers of Bacchus. This, however, does not seem unreasonable, in view of the resemblance of both them and their antics to the satyrs who play on Bacchic sarcophagi. The motif of a snake underfoot in Donatello's *Atys-Amorino* in the Bargello, which is surely kin to Botticelli's "satyr-amorini," proves such sarcophagi to have been observed.<sup>58</sup>

The texts are first Ovid's *Fasti* III. 725 ff., in which the followers of Bacchus discover honey and Silenus, thinking to do the same, rouses a hornet's nest: these two episodes were of course illustrated for the Vespucci by Piero di Cosimo.<sup>59</sup> The second, which was illustrated by Titian in his *Bacchus and Ariadne* now in the National Gallery, London, is Catullus 64. 263:

multis raucisonos efflabant cornua bombos

The horns of many blew hoarse-sounding buzzes . . .

<sup>56</sup> *LSJ*<sup>9</sup>, s.v. βόμβος; βομβεῖν; ἐπιβομβεῖν; Nonnus XL. 503.

<sup>57</sup> *OLD*, s.v. bombus.

<sup>58</sup> Matz, *op. cit.* (above, note 15), nos. 45, 90, 115 etc.; H. W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello* (Princeton 1957), II, p. 145; M. Greenhalgh, *Donatello and his Sources* (London 1982), says its source is "clear" without further reference.

<sup>59</sup> The pictures are now in the Art Museum, Worcester, Mass., and in the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, respectively. Cf. Panofsky, *op. cit.* (above, note 16), pp. 58 ff.

It is part of the description of the train of the god as he comes upon Ariadne. I see no reason to suppose that either of these is in any way involved in Botticelli's picture, although the recurrence of Bacchic allusions in two supposedly punning Vespucci commissions may be significant.

The third text is Persius I. 99 ff.:

Torva Mimalloneis implerunt cornua bombis

They filled their rasping horns with Mimallonean buzz . . .

This is again a Bacchic description, inserted as an exercise in a particular style. The Persius might very well have been more to hand than the Catullus. Persius was more widely read, a favorite medieval author, frequently printed from the early 1470s;<sup>60</sup> furthermore, this passage (unlike the Catullus) was often cited to illustrate Bacchic texts by Renaissance commentators, for instance by Landino to Horace, *Carmina* III. 18, and by Bernardino da Verona to Tibullus I. 7.<sup>61</sup> All commentators of the period cite Persius to Catullus 64;<sup>62</sup> on the other hand Catullus 64. 251 ff. was not cited to the Persius by anyone before Casaubon.

Further evidence of the circulation of the Persius is provided by sonnet no. cxxviii in the Milanese poet Gasparo Visconti's *Canzoniere* of the mid-1490s, which includes the lines:<sup>63</sup>

poi ch'è'l tuo stil così suave bomba  
che nectare et ambrosia par che versa

Since your tenor hums so suavely  
that it seems to pour nectar and ambrosia

to which Visconti, explaining his use of the word (forced by the difficult "-omba" rhyme), glosses:

bomba: apum sonus dicitur teste Plynio libro XI, et est vocabulum factitium, unde plerumque etiam pro alio sonitus genere usurpatur. Persius de Bachis:

Torva Mimalloneis implerunt cornua bombis

bomba: said to be the sound made by bees, according to Pliny, Book XI. It is an onomatopoeic word; hence it is also commonly used for other kinds of sound. Persius on Maenads:

<sup>60</sup> Cf. F. E. Crantz and others, edd., *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum* (Washington, D.C. 1976), III, pp. 201 ff. (Persius).

<sup>61</sup> First published Florence 1482; Brescia 1486.

<sup>62</sup> Antonio Parthenio, Brescia 1485, etc.: Palladio Fosco, Venice 1496; Battista Guarino, Venice 1521 (but made before 1492).

<sup>63</sup> P. Bongrani, ed. (Milan 1979).

They filled their rasping horns with Mimalloean hums. . . .

Visconti appears to have overlooked the fact that "torva" means "harsh, rough, fierce"; but Botticelli's patron, if he was using this text, did not, for he has replaced the "torva cornua" with a much more nectarous conch.

Visconti's gloss was necessary, not because "bombare" was a neologism, but because otherwise it would have meant "drink avidly, copiously and merrily," though "bombare" is apparently obsolete or dialect in modern Italian.<sup>64</sup> This further sense of "bombing" accords with both the Bacchic and the venereal connotations of satyrs, with the drunkenness of epithalamia in general (a figure Lucian thinks might be Hymen lolls on Hephaestion's shoulder in Aetion's picture) and with the appearance of the young man himself. Confirmation that his general demeanor and situation would have been read as an intoxication like that of wine is available in an anonymous contemporary print representing the pedlar Pieterlin, drunk (so an inscription in one of the two versions) and set about by monkeys, two of whom play with his clothing (Hind A. I. 76, 77) [Figure 5].<sup>65</sup>

This line from Persius could provide with the Lucian the ingredients that are unique to this picture. With the Lucian would come the satyrs with the lance and the one in the breastplate; with the Persius the satyr blowing and the wasps to make a "bombus." In both allusions the satyrs ape or mimic, μιμῆσθαι. This is the word used by Lucian for their games, and this is the etymological gloss put upon "Mimallonean" both by the scholiast and by Renaissance commentators to the Persius.<sup>66</sup> Besides this, Bartolomeo Fonizio in his commentary (first published Florence 1477) says that the Mimalloneans imitated "father Liber"; so there would be logic from this in their being children. A spectator might even have been referred to the Persius by their being satyr-children. The possibility can be corroborated to some extent by the recurrence of a child-satyr in the foreground of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* mentioned earlier, who is dragging the head of a bullock. It seems plausible that he is present in the Titian not because Catullus mentions such creatures, but because, to Catullus's "divolso iuvenco" of 64. 257, Persius's "raptum vitulo caput ablatura superbo" was cited. Whether there was between the Botticelli and

<sup>64</sup> *Grande Dizionario Della Lingua Italiana*, S. Battaglia, ed. (Turin 1961-); *Novissimo Dizionario*, G. Folena, ed. (Milan 1980, etc.); s.v. bombare.

<sup>65</sup> The story discussed by Janson, *op. cit.* (above, note 53), pp. 216 ff.

<sup>66</sup> That is, Fonizio and Giovanni Britannico (1486); the fifteenth-century Italian MS commentary, British Library Harleian 3989, folio 19<sup>r</sup>, has "Mimallones" only as "ministri Bacchi," and shows no knowledge of the scholiast.

the Titian some visual transmission, or whether the word "Mimallonean," understood as "imitating father Liber," evoked child-satyrs, or both, it may be the same image connoting the same entity in both places.

It may be worth investigating the passage in which the Persius line occurs. Persius is arguing what kind of poetry he should be writing:

'sed numeris decor est et iunctura addita crudis.  
 cludere sic versum didicit "Berecyntius Attis"  
 et "qui caeruleum dirimebat Nerea delphin,"  
 sic "costam longo subduximus Appennino."  
 "Arma virum", nonne hoc spumosum et cortice pingui  
 ut ramale vetus vegrandi subere coctum?  
 quidnam igitur tenerum et laxa cervice legendum?  
 'torva Mimalloneis inplerunt cornua bombis,  
 et raptum vitulo caput ablaturo superbo  
 Bassaris et lyncem Maenas flexura corymbis  
 euhion ingeminat, reparabilis adsonat echo.'  
 haec fierent si testiculi vena ulla paterni  
 viveret in nobis? summa delumbe saliva  
 hoc natat in labris et in udo est Maenas et Attis  
 nec pluteum caedit nec demorsos sapit unguis.  
 'sed quid opus teneras mordaci radere vero  
 auriculas? . . .' (I. 92-108, Clausen)

'But grace and counterpoint have been laid over raw meter. [The modern poet] has learned to round off a line with "Berecynthian Atys," and with "the dolphin that cleft the Nerean blue," likewise "we have sloped a chine down tall Appennine." *Arma virum* — isn't this full of foam and with a thick bark like old branches from an enormous cork-tree cooked up? So what about something tender and to be read with a lolling neck? 'They filled their rasping horns with Mimallonean buzz, and the Bassarid with a bellicose bullock's ripped head and the Maenad in the act of entwining a lynx in ivy-clusters redouble euhion, euhion: there sounds back the boomeranging echo.' Would this be going on if there were one drop of our fathers' spunk alive in us? This eunuch stuff floats on the lips, on the surface of the spittle, and the Maenads and Atys are wet. This stuff makes no mark on the couch-back; it has no taste of the quick of nails.

'But what need is there to score tender lobes with the bite of truth?'

Botticelli's young man is certainly not bitten with the truth: he dreams vain delusions, if it was reasonable to cite the *Ars Poetica*. He lies back with a lolling neck somewhat enervately. Perhaps the satyrs who play about him may not only indicate that he is rapt in lustful dreams, but also serve to characterize the tenderness and luxuriance

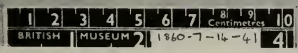
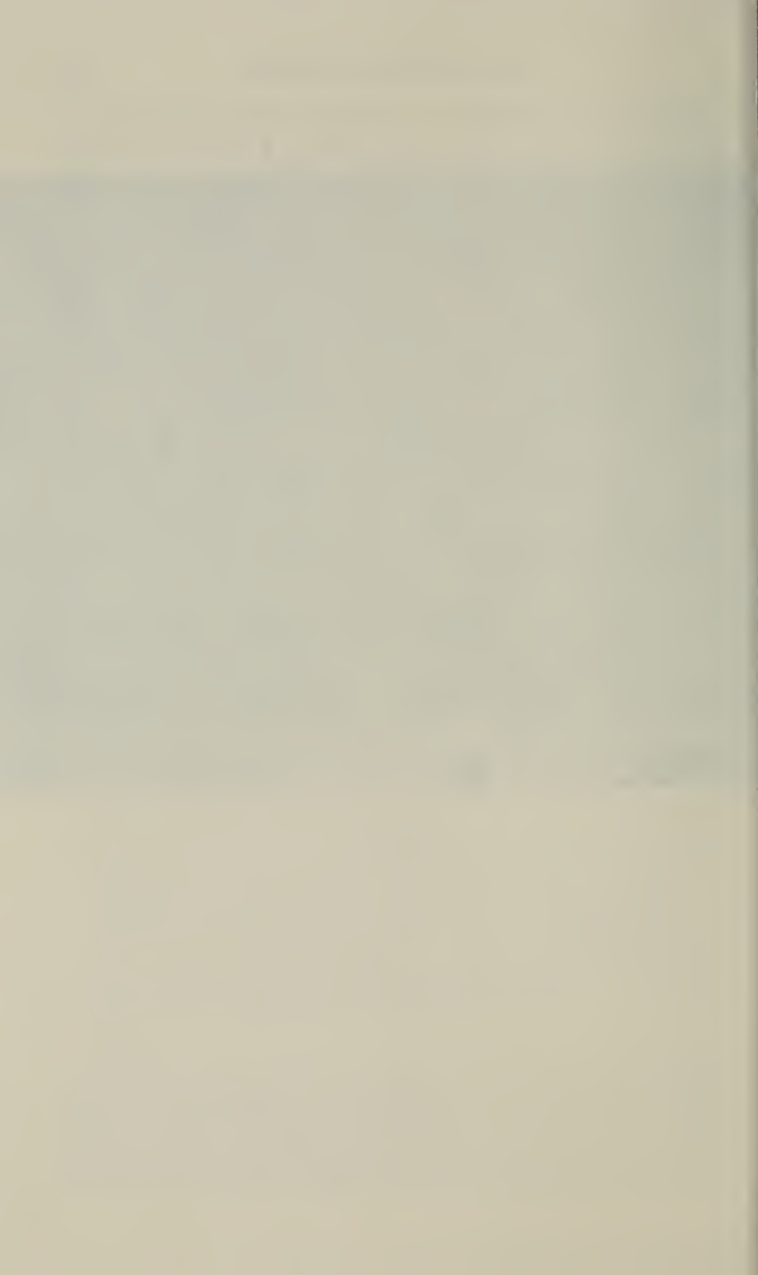


Figure 5



of those dreams? Could the fruit or vegetable — is it a squash or a citrus?<sup>67</sup> — that the satyr holds at bottom right be a further hint of their quality? It might well stand for things excessively soft, squashy, pulpy, empty, vain.<sup>68</sup> The contrast in the Persius between an excessively lush style and the true, heroic, epic style might have been used to inform a contrast between the young man's venereal rapture and the proper use of the arms with which the satyrs play.

Such a reading of the picture would be consistent with the way the Persius was read in late fifteenth-century Florence. The scholiast had remarked on Persius's spoof lines, which are often attributed to Nero:

Dicitur *ἄρωνικῶς*, carmina poetarum illius temporis plena graecisationibus nullum habere intellectum, quae tamen nescio qua modulatione resonant.

He dissimulates, meaning that the poetry of that time is full of grecisms and has no matter, even though it sounds with an attractive musicality.

Bartolomeo Fonzio remarks in his commentary:

Hos autem maxime versus poeta posuit in eorum reprehensionem qui grandiozem sonum captantes rerum sensus nequaquam advertunt.

These lines in particular Persius intended as a jibe against poets who in striving after a finer sound fail to observe any real sense.

There is also some evidence that this particular passage excited interest at this period in the manuscript notes that erupt around these lines amid the otherwise clean pages of a Venice 1480 edition of Fonzio's Persius in the British Library (IB 26730).<sup>69</sup> The notator writes beside the text:

Carmina poetarum sui temporis mordit propter molitiem quam habebant in se . . .

He criticizes the poets of his time for their essential voluptuousness.

He then cites Quintilian XI *ad finem* (sc. *Institutiones* IX. 4. 142):

<sup>67</sup> It may be a Florentine "cedro"; or alternatively a "zucca"; or a fig.

<sup>68</sup> In the dialogue *Virtus Dea* (see above, note 10) the gods not only paint butterflies but also grow gourds ("cucurbitae") while keeping Virtue waiting. The medieval sense of "cucurbita" as "adulterer" given by DuCange, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis* (Niort 1883-87), might also be relevant both to the pseudo-Lucian and to the Botticelli.

<sup>69</sup> I have assumed these to have been written shortly after the publication of the book; it is evidently a Renaissance hand.

. . . in universum autem, si sit necesse, duram potius atque asperam compositionem malim esse quam effeminatam et enervem, qualis apud multos, et cotidie magis, lascivissimis syntonorum modis saltat . . .

. . . but in general, if need be, I would prefer the development rather to be harsh and rough than effeminate and flaccid, of the kind found in many authors, and increasingly today, writhing to the most luxurious zither rhythms.

Fonzio in his commentary had glossed Persius's "delumbe" to similar effect:

Haec mollia et enervia saepe legimus crebroque in ore habemus. Genitalis autem seminis sedes in lumbis est. Unde in sacris libris lumbos ut praecingamus admonemur. Delumbem vero hominem effoeminatum et mollem ob nimiam venerem dicimus. Hinc delumbe carmen pro lascivo minimeque virili transfertur . . .

Such soft and flabby things we often read and have on our lips, he means. Now the seat of the generative seed is in the loins. Hence we are told in the Bible to gird our loins. But "delumbe" describes an effeminate man and one who has grown soft from too much Venus. Hence a poem is said by extension to be "delumbe," meaning lascivious and not at all virile.

Surely such a combination of unsexedness and oversexedness is precisely what we find in the Botticelli's ungirt youth.

The notator of IB 26730 goes on to quote Diomedes the Grammarian, indeed writes out at some length passages from Diomedes's discussion of the various kinds of hexameter line, beginning at the chapter "De pulchritudine heroici versus" (Keil, I, p. 494).<sup>70</sup>

Versus heroicus is dignitate primus est et plenae rationis perfectione firmatus ac totius gravitatis honore sublimis . . .

The heroic line is that which is foremost in dignity and solid in the perfection of the fullness of its structure and lofty in respect of all its weight. . .

The same passage was quoted by Cristoforo Landino in his commentary to *Ars Poetica* 73-74 (on epic). In fact Diomedes was Landino's principal reference for the explanation of Horace's technical terms (for instance "tragedia"). He was a useful and popular source for commentators of the time;<sup>71</sup> Politian, discussing satyrs in his *Centuria Secunda*, no. 28, remarks that contrary to the general belief "following

<sup>70</sup> H. Keil, ed., *Grammatici Latini* (Hildesheim 1961).

<sup>71</sup> Printed with several other grammarians at Florence c. 1475.

Diomedes and others," there were three different kinds of satyr.<sup>72</sup> The notator of IB 26730, continuing to quote from Diomedes, passes to the chapter "De pedibus metricis," in which hexameters are classified according to the disposition of the syntax through the feet (something perhaps subsumed in Persius's "iunctura" at I. 92). One of them is the "smooth" line ("teres") (Keil, I, p. 499, line 21):

. . . teretes sunt qui volubilem et cohaerentem continuant dictionem,  
ut torva Mimalloneis inflatur tibia bombis . . .

. . . in the "smooth" type the sentence runs through the line fluently and without interruption, for example:

The fierce flute is puffed with Mimallonean buzzes.

It does not seem unlikely that a purchaser who knew Lucian should also have known Diomedes. Visconti's "factitium" is a grammarian's term.

At the risk of repetition, it might be as well to summarize the argument so far. Botticelli's picture belongs to a general class of love pictures, some of which may refer to the bliss of the first night of marriage. It shares with other members of the group its setting, the disposition of its protagonists and the presence of love-creatures. It is individual in that its love-creatures are not straight *amori*, but are *amori-satiri*, introducing therefore Bacchic connotations. As a satyr, the one who blows has a precedent in Persius I. 99. As *amori*, those who carry the lance and the one in the breastplate have a precedent in Lucian's *Aetion*. In both there is precedent for their being imitative, or apish. Either Botticelli evolved these child satyrs and their activities freely from the convention to which the picture belongs, or their activities were suggested to him, and an allusion was intended to the Lucian and to the Persius. If an allusion was intended to the Lucian, then the picture must have celebrated a marriage. If an allusion was intended to the Persius, then its point must have been the voluptuous feeling with which the young man is seized. Whether or not these classical texts were in play, the conch blown by the satyr definitely indicates his voluptuous feeling. The hypothesis first that the wasps pun on the coat of arms of the Vespucci, secondly that the allusion to Persius puns on the noise made by wasps, awaits documentary corroboration or dismissal.

An important difference between the Persius line and the Lucian excerpt is that the Lucian is part of a description of a picture; the

<sup>72</sup> V. Branca and M. P. Stocchi, edd. (Florence 1972): "quamquam multa ex Diomede afferant aliisque."

Persius is not. But they are both vignettes. The Lucian excerpt is an example of lovely ancient painting, the Persius excerpt an example of lovely ancient poetry. If there is an aural dimension to the picture — the buzzing of the wasps, the noise of the blown conch — the principle behind its incorporation seems to be identical with the principle behind the visual incorporation of the Lucian.

It is also significant that the Persius line — witness Visconti's citation — might have been a current tag. A tag would have a much wider circulation than the text from which it came. A telling example of this is close to hand. Twice I have found commentators to Bacchic texts including, among the lines they adduce from various sources, the pentameter:

Accedant capiti cornua: Bacchus eris . . .

Let horns grow on your head: you will be Bacchus . . .

This is "illud celebratum" or it is given to Sappho.<sup>73</sup> The reason why it is cited is to show Bacchus had horns, this being typical of his libidinous nature, indicative of his "violentia cerebri."<sup>74</sup> Another place where Bacchus is said to have horns is in Bartolomeo Fonizio's comment to Persius I. 99:

Mimallones dictas aiunt quod Liberum patrem imitarentur, et ad eius imitationem cornua ferunt. Unde etiam Cassandram Lycophron "Clari Mimallonem" appellat . . .

They say that they were called "Mimallonean" because they imitated father Bacchus, and they bear horns in imitation of him. Hence also Lycophron calls Cassandra "the Mimallon of Clarus" (sc. because she imitates the prophesying of Apollo's oracle there).

Fonzio says "aiunt" and his informant was presumably at first or second hand some Byzantine, who, having been asked what "Mimallonean" might mean, looked up Tzetzes's twelfth-century commentary on Lycophron where the word occurs twice. In the second place (to Lycophron 1464) Tzetzes gives the information about Clarus; in the first (Lycophron 1237) he has the information:<sup>75</sup>

. . . αἱ ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ Βάκχαι αἱ καὶ μιμαλόνες ἐκαλοῦντο διὰ τὸ μιμῆσθαι αὐτὰς τὸν Διόνυσον. κερατοφοροῦσαι γὰρ καὶ αὐταὶ κατὰ μίμησιν Διονύσου ταυρόκρανος γὰρ φαντάζεται καὶ ζωγραφεῖται. καὶ Εὐριπίδης [Bacchae 921]

<sup>73</sup> So Beroaldo to Propertius III. 17. 19 (Bologna 1487); Landino to Horace, *Carmina* I. 18. 14 (Florence 1482).

<sup>74</sup> So Beroaldo, ultimately from Porphyrio to Horace, *Carmina* III. 21. 18.

<sup>75</sup> Lycophron, *Alexandra* (Oxford 1697), p. 127; Roscher, *op. cit.* (above, note 15), s.v. Mimallones.

καὶ σῶ κέρατα κρατὶ προσπεφυκέναι. κερατοφόρος <ὁ> αὐτός ἐστιν, ἐπειδὴ ὁ οἶνος πινόμενος πολλὸς τοῦς ἄνδρας ἐκμαίνει πρὸς τὰς ἐτέρων γυναικας εἰσέρχασθαι.

. . . the Bacchantes in Macedonia who were also called Mimallons because they imitated Dionysus. For they also had horns in imitation of Bacchus. For he is represented and shown in pictures as bull-headed: Euripides [*Bacchae* 921], And horns have grown upon your head. He bears horns because when a great deal of wine is drunk it sends men into a frenzy to make advances towards the women of other men.

Bartolomeo Fonzio clearly enough repeats Tzetzes on horns, too: so is it not possible that “*accedant capiti cornua: Bacchus eris*” is a translation of *Bacchae* 921, and is another hearsay snippet of the same origin? To cite *Bacchae* 921 to a Florentine print featuring satyrs quite similar to Botticelli’s (Hind A. II. 26) in order to explain the horns Bacchus bears there would be absurd, but this tag seems just as likely a source as *Ars Amatoria* I. 232 or III. 348, Diodorus IV. 4 or Philostratus, *Imagines* I. 15. In fact its association with cuckoldry and libidinousness tallies better with the embrace in which Bacchus clasps Ariadne.

In adducing the Persius to the Botticelli I presuppose some factor of hearsay, which is not measurable but which cannot be discounted. I resort to this first because I cannot see another explanation; secondly because even though the argument may be circumstantial it does at least explain. My position is just like Panofsky’s before Pan and the conch. He knew only one parallel and therefore used it as an explanation despite its difficulties. I see only one satisfactory explanation of Botticelli’s picture within the range of sources about Bacchus and satyrs I have found cited. Welcome to another who can find again a simpler, more substantial tradition!

Much remains unexplained. I would like to know very much more about what might have been appropriate on the occasion of a marriage. One point worth making is perhaps that, if this were an epithalamial picture, it would not necessarily have to be a gift from family to family, but could have been a gift from a friend, cousin or political ally. As such it would be more exactly an epithalamium in paint. Secondly, it may not be appropriate to look for its imagery in classical sources at all, even if the epithalamium was a classical genre. It seems reasonable on the basis of its imagery to identify the following sonnet by Politian (*Rime Varie*, iv: to an unknown addressee) as epithalamial:<sup>76</sup>

Spera, signor mio car, e ormai t’affida

<sup>76</sup> B. Maier, ed. (Novara 1968), p. 234.

a l'alta impresa tua: el core nero  
 spogliato s' è, nè più l'abito fero  
 a suspirar il tristo cor diffida.  
 La Fede a la tua donna per te crida  
 e vuol mercede al tu' servir sincero,  
 crida per te l'Amor tuo puro e vero,  
 e l'uno e l'altro a bon porto te guida.

Ecco ver te la vista tua divina  
 che in candido vestir si mostra lieta  
 e par che dica ormai: "Fede vol fede."  
 Dunque la pena turbulenta acqueta:  
 vedo la tua salute esser vicina;  
 dopo la nube il sol chiaro si vede.

Take hope, dear sire, and now commit yourself  
 To your great adventure: your black heart  
 Has been stripped bare; fierce cladding no longer  
 Makes your sad heart hesitate to sigh.  
 Faith cries to your lady for you  
 And calls for favor on your guileless service;  
 Your own true, pure Love cries for you;  
 Together the one and the other lead you to haven.  
 Look, towards you comes your own divine vision,  
 Dressed in white, she reveals herself joyful  
 And she seems now to say: Faith will have faith.  
 So then, the pain and the storm quieten:  
 I see your salvation is close at hand;  
 After the cloud the sun shines brighter.

The sonnet may be Politian's, but not the vocabulary. Correspondences to the imagery already discussed are the sun image, which recurs not only in the Otto prints but also all round the man and the woman in one of the *cassone*-lid pairs (Schubring 156, 157). The ship image is a standard image of Fortune or destiny, but also recurs in another Florentine epithalamial print of the period (Hind A. I. 6).<sup>77</sup> "Fede vol fè" recalls "Amor vuol fè." This sonnet therefore seems some evidence that the white dress of the woman in Botticelli's picture stands not only for nubile purity but also for faithfulness. She watches over the young knight's fortune just as the woman in the ship print sits at the tiller.

Particularly striking is the parallel between Politian's metaphor "spogliato" and the condition of the knight in Botticelli's picture.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. A. Warburg, "Francesco Sassettis Letzwillige Verfügung," *op. cit.* (above, note 23), pp. 149-50. The Cupid shows the print is about love, whether it refers to a Rucellai marriage or not.

The opening lines of the sonnet seem to refer to a period of endurance or discretion in the early phase of courtship, in which the lover has already fallen in love but not yet communicated the fact to anyone (except by signs he cannot control) — materially at least not even to the beloved herself. This then would be the period of “black” or miserable, “triste,” heart (the metaphor is fairly common in French poetry),<sup>78</sup> in which the lover feels himself unworthy or is unwilling to profess himself. Dante, *Vita Nuova* v, 3, talks of the “schermo de la veritade,” the “shield screening the truth.” With the abandonment of dissimulation, when the committal has become frank, the lover enters on to his “alta impresa,” a recurrent Petrarchan term that comes first at *RS* v: “Quando io movo i sospiri a chiamar voi.” In both Petrarch and Dante the attempt at poetry follows immediately after spoliation (*RS* ii, iii; *RS* iv is about destiny; *Vita Nuova* xii, 3: “Fili mi, tempus est ut pretermictantur simulacra nostra”). Suppose that in Botticelli’s picture the lover is meant to be utterly despoiled of discretion, inebriately and voluptuously poetic over the beloved’s utterly seductive beauty. Is this a way in which it could be shown?<sup>79</sup>

Quite possibly both Botticelli’s picture and Politian’s sonnet were epithalamial, and drew upon a common stock of imagery. More specifically, all the metaphors of Botticelli’s picture except the buzzing can be found in the opening section of Dante’s *Vita Nuova*, that is, in chapters ii, iii, v, xi, xii, xiii, xiv, xv and xvi, after which there is a clear break; these chapters intimate the immediate effect of the revelation of the beloved. Buzzing is an alternative metaphor to the same effect, as can be shown from Petrarch’s “Aura che quelle chiome bionde e crespe” (*RS* ccxxvii).

The *Vita Nuova* has been recapitulated as follows:<sup>80</sup>

When I fell in love,

Apparve vestita di nobilissimo colore umile e onesto, sanguigno —  
She appeared dressed in most noble color, humble and honest,  
purple (ii, 3). . . .

When she spoke (iii, 1)

. . . presi tanta dolcezza che come inebriato mi partio della gente —  
I took so great sweetness that like one drunk I left the crowd (iii,  
2) . . . mi sopraggiunse uno soave sonno, ne lo quale m’apparve una  
maravigliosa visione — there overcame me a suave sleep in which  
appeared a marvelous vision (iii, 3) . . . mi pareva vedere una persona

<sup>78</sup> Cf. H. Heger, *Die Melancholie bei den Französischen Lyrikern des Spätmittelalters* (Bonn 1967), p. 220.

<sup>79</sup> For Politian’s “salute” see not only Dante (below) but also Cavalcanti, iv, 13 and Contini *ad locum* (G. Contini, ed., *Poeti del Duecento* [Milan — Naples 1960], ii).

<sup>80</sup> Annotated edition by D. De Robertis (Milan — Naples 1980).

dormire nuda, salvo che involta mi pareo in uno drappo sanguigno leggermente — I seemed to see a person sleep naked, except that she seemed to be wrapped in a purple drape lightly (iii, 4) . . . She was woken, and made to eat his heart, which she did doubtfully (“dubitosamente,” iii, 6).

So in Botticelli's picture he dreams poetically how he will taste to her: she regards him lightly and doubtfully. He, not she, is wrapped naked in a purple cloak, but then he, not she, is asleep. (The way in which the cloak comes round his left foot marks him as wrapped in it, “involto”.)

The reference to chapter v is by contrast. One day she happened to be sitting, and he happened to be sitting looking at her; and a second woman happened to be sitting in the direct line of his gaze between them. Thence began the “schermo de la veritade” (v, 3; vi, 1); the “bella difesa” (vii, 1; ix, 1; ix, 5); “la difensione” (ix, 5), “lo simulato amore” (ix, 6). This has all gone in Botticelli's picture. He is uncovered, his heart is revealed.

After the loss of Beatrice's “salute / saluto” (x), Dante turns to its effect (xi), its overwhelming enlightenment (“redundava la mia capacitate” — “overflowed my capacity,” xi, 3). In another dream he hears it is time to lay aside pretences (“simulacra,” xii, 3), and that he is to send her a ballad, in which “tu non parli a lei immediatamente, che non è degno” — “you should not speak to her directly, which is not worthy” (xii, 8) “. . . ma falle adornare di suave armonia” — “but make your words be adorned with suave harmony” (xii, 8). Then follows the ballad, “Ballata, i' voi che tu ritrovi Amore.”

After the ballad and an explanation of its “suave harmony,” which consists in the use of figures of speech, Dante continues (xiii, 1):

Appresso di questa soprascritta visione, avendo già dette le parole che Amore m'avea imposte di dire, mi cominciaro molti e diversi pensieri a combattere e a tentare, ciascuno quasi indefensibilmente: tra li quali pensieri quattro mi pareo che ingombrassero più lo riposo de la vita.

Next after this above mentioned vision, after I had said the words that Love had charged me to say, there began many and various emotions to assail me and try me, each one almost irresistibly: among which emotions four seemed to me to embarrass the quiet of my life the most.

The emotions are, love is good because . . .; love is not good because . . .; then (xiii, 4):

lo nome d'Amore è sì dolce a udire, che impossibile mi pare che la

sua propria operazione sia ne le più cose altro che dolce, con ciò sia cosa che li nomi seguitono le nominate cose, si come è scritto: *Nomina sunt consequentia rerum* . . .

the name of Love is so sweet to hear, that it seems impossible to me that his proper working should be in most things other than sweet, in reflection of the fact that names follow from the things named, just as it is written: Names are consequent upon things. . . .

In the conch of Botticelli's picture and in the "Mimallonean buzz," if it is present, there is a corresponding suavity or sweetness, and a sweetness not only in fact but also in style.<sup>81</sup>

The fourth emotion, however, is that Love is not sweet because it is so strong, because "Amore ti stringe così" — "Love binds you so" (xiii, 5). Between these emotions there is a battle (xiv, 1; xvi, 4), a battle that seems to recur in the activity of the satyrs in Botticelli's picture. These satyrs also reproduce Beatrice's "gabbare" (xiv, 7; xiv, 9; xiv, 11, line 1; xv, 7, line 12; xv, 8), her untouched teasing mockery of his "dischernevole vista" (xv, 1), his ridiculous figure.

Most particularly the games Botticelli's satyrs play relate closely to the sonnet "Tutti li miei penser" (xiii, 8):

Tutti li miei penser parlan d'Amore,  
 e hanno in lor sì gran varietate,  
 ch'altro mi fa voler sua potestate,  
 altro folle ragiona il suo valore,  
 altro sperando m'apporta dolzore,  
 altro pianger mi fa spesse fiate;  
 e sol s'accordano in cherer pietate,  
 tremando di paura che è nel core.  
 Ond' io non so da qual matera prenda;  
 e vorrei dire, e non so ch'io mi dica:  
 così mi trovo in amorosa erranza!  
 E se con tutti voi fare accordanza  
 convenemi chiamar la mia nemica,  
 Madonna la Pietà, che mi difenda.

All my emotions speak of Love,  
 And have in them such great variety  
 That one makes me want his power,

<sup>81</sup> The "dubitosamente" of iii, 6 is also picked up: the issue of "doubtful" words, that is figures of speech (xii; xxv) is both the problem of poetry and the problem of declaring his heart; or so I believe. The "tasting" of the heart amounts then to the fundamental poetic question, is it "utile" as well as "dolce"? This formulation (Horace, *AP* 334-35, 343) became virtually a slogan of members of Florence University such as Cristoforo Landino or Bartolomeo Fonzio. The Persius would have been understood in these terms.

Another proves that Love's power is foolish;  
 Another, hopeful, brings me sweetness;  
 Another makes me weep frequently,  
 And they agree with themselves only in begging kindness,  
 Trembling with the fear that is in my heart.  
 Hence I do not know from which to make my poem;  
 And I would like to speak, and I do not know what to say;  
 This is the amorous maze in which I find myself!  
 And if with all I would make a harmony  
 I would have to call on my enemy,  
 My lady Kindness, to protect me.

The combination of defenselessness and combat, of intoxication and of ridicule, recurs in Botticelli's picture. But also Dante's "dolzore" offers a suitable reading for the conch-blower, and the line from Persius; and the fear in his heart for the satyr in the breastplate, though only via the allusion *ὡς φοβήσειεν* ("in order to frighten") in Lucian. This fear is also drunk ("è per la ebrietà del gran tremore"; xv, 5, line 7). I hazard that the blabbering tongues of the satyrs are again a sign of drunkenness.

Into such a context the idea of wasps and buzzing would have fitted perfectly. Wasps are used as a metaphor of mental confusion by Petrarch at *RS* ccxxviii: there is also a correspondence between the wisp of the woman's hair in Botticelli's picture and the opening lines of this poem:

Aura che quelle chiome bionde e crespe  
 cercondi e movi, e se' mossa da loro  
 soavemente, e spargi quel dolce oro  
 e po' l' raccoglie e 'n bei nodi il rincespe,  
 tu stai nelli occhi ond' amorse vespe  
 mi pungon sì che 'n fin qua il sento e ploro  
 e vacillando cerco il mio tesoro  
 come animal che spesso adombre e 'ncespe;  
 ch' or me'l par ritrovar, ed or m'accorgo  
 ch' i' ne son lunge; or mi sollievo, or caggio,  
 ch' or quel ch' i' bramo or quel ch' è vero scorgo.  
 Aer felice, co'l bel vivo raggio  
 Rimanti. E tu corrente e chiaro gorgo,  
 Chè non poss'io cangiar teco viaggio?

Oh breeze, by whom that rippling blond hair  
 Is circled and stirred, and who are stirred yourself by it  
 Balmily, and scatter that sweet gold,  
 And then again gather it and tether it again in tresses,  
 You stick in my eyes, causing love's wasps  
 to sting me, so that deep inside I feel it and lament,

and unable to fix on it I hunt for my precious  
 like a frightened beast that shies and stalls;  
 For then I seem to have it, and then I come to the fact  
 That I am far from it; now I am uplifted, now I fall,  
 For now I see what I desire, and now I catch the truth.  
 Blest air, with your fair ray of life  
 Stay! And you, fluent and limpid stream,  
 Why cannot I change my course for yours?

At this point it will be useful to summarize the vernacular metaphors I suppose to be present in Botticelli's picture. First and foremost it takes its cue from the metaphor of spoliation, of being laid bare before and by the beauty of the beloved. This metaphor is alive both in Dante and in Petrarch, and continues to be used in the fifteenth century, for instance by Boiardo at *Gli Amorum Libri* I, lxxxii, or by Politian in the sonnet quoted. More specifically Dante's idea of being "indefensibly" in "battle" has been developed, and her purple cushion and his purple cloak, his sleep, his nudity, the obsession with suavity, the sense of being ridiculous and the drunkenness also recur in Botticelli's picture. The same ridicule and the idea of a struggle to find sweet words (which could be found far and wide elsewhere) are associated with metaphorical wasps in the Petrarch sonnet.

In conclusion, I may state it as my belief that both the Persius and the Lucian are present in the picture, though both have been curtailed or altered in order to fit into a prior vernacular convention. For, secondly, even if they were used, they were only flourishes: the essential script of the painting is the representation of the sensual effects of beholding the beloved.

Can one really have such powerful sensual effects merely from beholding the beloved? In the Renaissance, undoubtedly one could; in this its poetry is unanimous. Can one represent these powerful sensual effects in the kind of figuration we find in Botticelli's picture? It seems in fact to share its figuration with other images that refer by one means or another to these sensual effects. In particular, there exist two earlier works of art, one literary, the other a painted relief, that might have served directly as models for the picture: the painted relief in the Victoria and Albert Museum and Dante's *Vita Nuova*. Taken over from the relief (or the convention to which it belongs) are the form and disposition especially of the man, who is shown asleep. Taken over from Dante (or the imagery which he also uses) is the content of the man's dream, which is "keyed" in the picture by metaphors visualized either directly (the purple cloak, the undefending armor) or in classical cipher like this: satyrs = Bacchic =

ecstatic, libidinous drunkenness; or, conch = Venus = voluptuousness; or, *amori* playing with armor = the joy of Alexander's wedding night = the delightful mental confusion of the lover bare to his beloved; or, the noise of wasps plus the blowing of a wind instrument by a child satyr = Mimallonean buzzings = exquisite poetry.

I have tried to map out the classical and the vernacular coding of the picture with such materials as I could find to have been available. It is difficult to judge how available they were, but some of them were clearly in wide circulation. The last thing I propose is an "almost compulsive propensity to cryptic allusion." It is therefore incumbent to explain why a classical motif has been adopted, why an allusion has been made. To assume pure antiquarianism, pure love of the classical ideal, is in effect to assume precisely a propensity to cryptic allusion. My intention in the first place is to establish a correct reading of the picture, as if I were footnoting a poem.

In the second place I wish to challenge earlier assumptions about the ways in which classical imagery was employed by the early Renaissance. The previous explanation of Botticelli's picture had been that the couple represented Mars and Venus, and the point was essentially that love overcame ferocity. To associate this idea with Mars and Venus an astrological passage was cited from Marsilio Ficino.<sup>82</sup> My objection to this mode of interpretation is not that the notion is impossible, but that it puts the cart before the horse. If the essential point of the picture is that love overcomes ferocity, then this is its starting point. Its starting point is not Mars and Venus. For the extremely widespread idea that love overcomes aggressive valor, one might find innumerable representations: Hercules and Omphale, or the loves of Jupiter or something else in the *Metamorphoses*, or a wildman and his wife, or a centaur and his family, or an *amor* riding a lion. Or Alexander and Roxana, conceivably. Or Mars and Venus. But whatever the terms used, they are used as embodiments of the qualities concerned: strength or savagery, tenderness or beauty. It is these that emerge through the figures. What one has to do therefore with the Botticelli is not first discover the figures represented, but first discover what the figures represent. Working from the action I see in the picture, controlled as far as possible by contemporary parallels, I do not see the logic that leads to the identification of these figures as Mars and Venus.

Until some better source is discovered, I propose instead that neither the man nor the woman should be taken as classical figures

<sup>82</sup> Nesca N. Robb, *Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance* (London 1935), p. 218, followed by Gombrich, *op. cit.* (above, note 5), less tentatively.

at all. I propose that not every Renaissance secular picture is a mythological narrative or an adaptation from one. Classical sources may be used as it were not only as nouns and verbs, but also adjectivally or adverbially. So I believe them to have been used here, in a painting about sensual effects.

What then is the status of these figures? They are in a landscape; a wind must have lifted the stray wisp of the woman's hair. In a development that stems from Petrarch, the beloved has been envisaged as a nymph. He is therefore a "giovanetto." For this there are parallels. Not too distant perhaps may be a *farsa* written by the Neapolitan Antonio Ricco and performed in Venice in February 1508 in the house of the Magnifico Marino Malipiero "per la nobile Compagnia de' Fausti" — for one of the Venetian "compagnie della calza" who seem to have staged their festivals either on the occasion of a visit to Venice of an honored personage or — as here — on the occasion of the marriage of one of their members.<sup>83</sup> Here "lo Amante" and "la Donna," as they appear in the *dramatis personae*, are called in the dialogue "la ninfa" and "lo giovanetto." Closer to Botticelli's picture is the relief in the *cortile* of the *palazzo* of the Florentine Chancellor Bartolomeo Scala attributed to Bertoldo (around 1479), figuring a scene adapted from one of Bartolomeo's *Apologues* or *Fables*. Here, the lover (anonymous) pleads against Cupid before a tribunal over the harm done him by his infatuation. The lover wears armor, and also is shown led in chains by a figure whose only attribute is a helmet covering his head — just like Botticelli's little satyr.<sup>84</sup> There is no question of Mars and Venus here. And yet does not the identification with Mars and Venus in Botticelli's picture ultimately depend on no more than the fact that the man has armor?

As a title for the picture I propose "Hypnerotomachia," describing not the figures but what is going on — a kind of battle in a dream occasioned by love. The picture seems also to share with the famous book of that name (published in 1499) the use of classical sources and even perhaps its interest in polysyllables.

It seems to me likely that the picture had an association with the Vespucci, since that remains the best explanation for the otherwise out-of-the-way motif of the wasps so far advanced. It is surely possible that it was a wedding-gift, given its precedents. Its successors were, I believe, not the ecphrastic mythologies of the sixteenth-century, but

<sup>83</sup> Cf. G. Padoan, *La Commedia Rinascimentale Veneta* (Vicenza 1982), p. 35; L. Venturi, "Le Campagnie della Calza," *Nuovo Archivio Veneto* 16 (1908), pp. 161 ff.; 17 (1909), pp. 140 ff.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. A. Parronchi, "The Language of Humanism and the Language of Sculpture," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1964), pp. 108 ff.

its nymphs in landscapes and its Arcadian idylls — works such as Titian's *Three Ages of Man* on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland, or the *Concert Champêtre* in the Louvre, as well as Piero di Cosimo's *Venus and the Knight*. In fact I venture the idea that this is the earliest surviving *fête champêtre*.

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