Emulating sensual beauty: representations of Danaë from Gossaert to Rembrandt

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For Julius Held’s 94th birthday

Any study of Danaë representations from Gossaert to Rembrandt must begin with the first truly iconological article on a Dutch subject in a Dutch periodical. Erwin Panofsky’s famous “Dier geefseelde Eros: zur Genealogie von Rembrandts Danae,” which was published in 1933 in *Oud Holland*, in the course of his study of traditions in the portrayal of Danaë, Panofsky stated—more or less in passing—that Jan Gossaert’s Danaë *impressata by Jupiter in the form of golden rain* of 1527 (fig. 1) must be seen as the outcome of a medieval, moralistic and didactic interpretation of the Danaë myth, in which Danaë, locked up in a tower, is an allegory of chastity. More than 35 years later he stressed this point again—also as an aside—in his book on Titian: “Jan Gossaert would develop a charming, child-like Danaë from the medieval ‘Pudicitia type.’” In this context Panofsky pointed to an illustration from a manuscript of around 1420 accompanying a passage in the *Falculgins metaphorali*, a treatise with moralizations of myths compiled by the English Franciscan John Ridewell in the first half of the fourteenth century (fig. 2). There we see Danaë, dressed as a princess, seated atop a fortified tower and heavily guarded by a great many soldiers, while drops of rain fall from a little cloud above her. “That Jan Gossaert owes much to the manner of representation of the *Falculgins* hardly needs mentioning,” in Panofsky’s words. What he neglected to say, however, was that there she did not function merely as a symbol of chastity, but as an image of chastity violated.

From the end of the 1940s until today—from Leonplod Erfinger and William Hecker, via Sadja Herzog and Madlyn Kahr, to Larry Silver and Craig Harbi-
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caption of Heckscher—did make the link, however, often comparing Gossaert's Danaë with the figure of Mary in his St Luke draws the Virgin in Prague (fig. 4). By pointing out that both women are seated on the ground, are dressed in blue cloaks and have one breast bare, they stressed that Gossaert was acounting Danaë's humility, thus placing her in the medieval tradition of pagas prefigurations of Christian virgins,” or even citing her as a direct parallel to the Maria humilisatis.

The bare breast caused Madlyn Kahr to connect her to the Maria lactans type as well, whereas Larry Silver associated her specifically with the humble Virgin of the Annunciation (he even likened the golden rain to the beam of light, like the one coming through the window in the Annunciation of the Miracolo albergati). The Danaë representations by Correggio and Titian were often cited to emphasize the extraordinary contrast of Gossaert's figure with the serene nudes of these artists.

In a few cases the above-mentioned writers drew attention to Danaë's chaste appearance: Panofsky called her "...a quite decently dressed... Danaë," while Sadja Herzog even described her as "...almost fully clothed—only one breast is bare". Madlyn Kahr, on the other hand, remarked that "...the breast, like her bare legs, could also be construed as sexually suggestive" (without alluding to any possible consequences), and Larry Silver even thought that Gossaert "...walks a precarious tightrope between overt erotic appeal and a transcendent canon of beauty as the embodiment of a moral ideal." Craig Harbison, finally, concluded his passage on Gossaert's Danaë with the words: "A pure murthering Virgin has been transformed into an object of extreme sensual beauty." Nevertheless, he also saw her primarily as a parallel to the Maria humilisatis type (Virgin of Humility). Opinions on the decency of Danaë's appearance, however, appear to diverge considerably.

The idea repeatedly stressed by Panofsky, Heckscher and many other art historians of that generation—as a reaction to older views of the Renaissance—that many medieval notions continued to flourish undiminished, especially in the north, was evidently so compelling that Panofsky's interpretation was not only accepted without reservation, but was even subscribed to with ever-increasing conviction. My question now is whether we ought to look at Gossaert's Danaë from a completely different perspective, one that links it more closely to the Italian paintings of Danaë of slightly later date. Neither the outward appearance of Gossaert's painting, the milieu in which the work originated, nor Gossaert's other paintings of mythological representa-

6 Panofsky, op. cit. (note 65), p. 49.
7 In addition to the authors cited in notes 12 and 13, see also J. Snyders, Northern Renaissance Art, New York 1976, p. 464.
8 M. Kahr, "Danaë virustra, voluptuosa, vorac woman," in Bulle.
9 In addition to the authors cited in notes 12 and 13, see also J. Snyders, Northern Renaissance Art, New York 1976, p. 464.
10 Typical of this are pronouncements by Kahr, op. cit. (note 12), p. 106, and Harbison, op. cit. (note 13), p. 162, who see this Danaë as an example of the continuing adherence to medieval ideas in the north.
Gossart’s large panel (114 x 95 cm), dated 1527 and preserved in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, is the first independent painting with a depiction of the imprisoned Danaé being impregnated by Jupiter in the form of golden rain. The painting originated only three to five years before Correggio’s work, which was painted around 1531. Gossart’s Danaé therefore heads a long series of paintings, several of which—those by Correggio, Titian and Rembrandt in particular—are among the most sensual paintings in the history of European art. This, as we shall see, is no coincidence.

If, already familiar with the famous Danaé by Correggio, Titian and Rembrandt, one looks back at Gossart’s painting, then his Danaé does make a rather timid impression. But is this justifiable? If one compares her with medieval illustrations, then one cannot help but notice—in spite of Panofsky and Heckscher’s certainty—that the similarities are minimal. A comparison of Gossart’s figure with his Virgin in the St Luke altarpiece (fig. 4) reveals just how profound the differences are: Danaé’s naked, spread legs seem to make any comparison unnecessary. The erotic effect is strengthened by the cloak gliding off her shoulders and the gesture she makes with her hands, which can be interpreted either as catching the golden rain in her cloak or as pulling it back to let the golden rain enter. Moreover, her breast has no reason to be bare, in contrast to that of Mary in St Luke drawing the Virgin, whereas its nudity is much more strongly accentuated—by the dark ribbon hanging from her neck, for example. Finally, her glance, with wide open eyes and slightly open mouth, in no way indicates virginal humility.

Danaé’s nakedness was not the least self-evident at the time: in every late-medieval precedent which Gossart could have known—and these would have been illustrations—she was completely clothed. Viewed from this angle, therefore, Danaé was not all so “decently dressed.” And even if we look at two sixteenth-century Italian Danaés in paintings originating before Gossart’s work—which he could not possibly have known—they prove to be completely dressed. The first is a sleeping Danaé stretched out on a canopy bed by Baldassare Peruzzi (fig. 3), a fresco—part of a fresco dating from around 1510 that includes a number of Jupiter’s loves—in the Sala di Fregio of the Villa Farnesina. The second is a lost fresco by Polidoro da Caravaggio known only through later drawings, which was part of a fresco cycle of around 1525 representing the life of Perseus, Danaé’s son (fig. 6). There a seated Danaé, again modestly dressed, stretches out her arms toward the golden rain.

In comparing all these works we are in fact struck by the daring of Gossart’s Danaé. Not only is she more naked, but her demeanor even suggests that this is the moment of impregnation. The profound difference between this representation and the others mentioned above simultaneously demonstrates the work’s surprising similarity in a number of respects to Correggio’s Danaé, which was painted about four years later and has always been viewed as presenting the greatest possible contrast (fig. 5). When one considers that these two Danaés originated independently from one another, and observes how their style was formed and developed against a background of completely different formal and technical stylistic conventions—and these were crucial in determining the totally different ways in which the image of a beautiful young woman was rendered—then the similarities are more remarkable than the differences. The seated pose turned three-quarters toward Danaé, which, seen among others, E. Verheem, “Correggio’s amore di Giove,” Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 29 (1966), pp. 260–64; C. Golds, The paintings of Correggio, London 1975, pp. 203–12 and 205–21; G. D. Giuntoli and A. Mutti, Correggio: catalogo completo dei dipinti, Florence 1983, pp. 98–100, N.G. Bernadini, “La Danaé del Correggio e il mito della Torcita d’oro,” in idem (ed.), La Danaé e le pitture di lei: un esempio di Anche Alticheri attorno al Correggio centenario, Rome 1991, pp. 13–26, L. Venturi, in C. Ceri Vicioli, ed., cat. Pau-9. See C. L. Fristenl, Baldassare Peruzzi alle Mura e Zeichner, Munich 1969–70, pp. 64–66. A medallion dating from 1550 bears the image of Elisabetta Gonzaga on one side and a recumbent nude on the other, which seems, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 207–18, interpreted as Danaé. If this does indeed represent a Danaé, then she was here rendered more

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10. Danaë, drawn after a chased silver gorgoneion, fourth century B.C., Present whereabouts unknown.


By some quirk of fate both works were presumably in the same collection at one time. Rudolf bought the painting by Correggio in 1542 (it remained in Prague until 1549); see S. Stazs, "Le manierismo in Grazia Danae," in "Boccaccio," op. cit. (note 20), pp. 12-14. The painting by Gossaert was probably in the same hands as well, see C. W. Frankl, "Et Invenyisse nec ad aetatem familiaris, Munich 1982, p. 242. Rudolf also owned a version of Titian's Danaë, which he had received in 1515. For the Vienna version see E.H. Weitsch, "The paintings of Titian," vol. 2, The mythological & historical paintings, London 1975, p. 135.

For the discussions regarding this see the literature mentioned in note 20. It is fairly certain that the four "Loves of Jupiter" were given by Federico II Gonzaga to Charles V (who visited Mantua in 1535 and 1536), and it seems likely that Federico originally had them made for himself. A connection with his marriage in 1531 to Margherita Pasten- dou seems highly likely.


24. For the mythological works made by Gossaert for Philip of Burgundy see J. S. Trex, Philip van Busschoote's /1501-1552/, Boeken Visser, Leuven 1991, and H. Miedema, "Het portret van de renaissance: een leven en wisselen," Zee-Uithoorn 1989, pp. 127-43 and 2:18-24. For publications with Philip of Bussche see "J. van de Bussche," op. cit. (note 24), pp. 17-23, and "Philip de Buysel," op. cit. (note 24), pp. 28-35. The latter must have received the second painting - one with nude Mars and Venus and the other with "una bella figura che si debutta," probably both made by Gossaert - as well as from Philip of Burgundy. Other representations of this sort which included both paintings of Venus, Diana and Actaeon, are fewer that four paintings of Louis le Breton, another female nude and further specified, two depictions of an unspecified nude couple, as well as a naked woman with an old torn (the last three were also in "Les ombres du boucher"), and "une femme qui fait baissir sont cuir sur leur ment." For the inventories of Wyndham Colman and the visiting Italian of 1570, see P. J. Foreman, "Inventaire du comte de Paris," Bull. de l'Institut française de Belgique Belge 32 (1937), pp. 309-42. Both men also possessed impressive libraries containing many works of classical literature.


26. Mander, Gossaert served at Adolfs court for several years (probably from 1542 onwards), where he supposedly "deceived" Charles V with a witty orpe fidei, when the latter was in Middelburg visiting Adolfs.

The only explanation for the similarities between the paintings by Correggio and Gossaert seems to me to be that both were intended as a revival of the famous Danaë depictions of classical antiquity, and were both derived from similar antique examples. Although it has usually been assumed that there could have been no such examples, this possibility nevertheless deserves closer consideration.
In those days, people must certainly have been aware that portrayals of Danaë were a very popular subject in antiquity. Pliney mentions a Danaë by the renowned Nicias (ca. 350–300 BCE), a painter whom Pliney introduced with the statement that he concentrated on painting women in particular. Moreover, they may have read Martial’s witty epigram on a painting of Danaë. Much better known, however, and often cited in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was the mention of a painting of Danaë in Terence’s comedy *The Eunuch*. Both Martial and Terence probably had in mind a composition such as that by Nicias or a derivation thereof.

The popularity of this theme in antiquity is confirmed by vase paintings, murrals and mosaics, works which were unknown in the Renaissance, however. A mural like the one in the Casa di Pasca in Pompeii (fig. 8) probably reflects the once-famous work by Nicias. The seated pose, the bared upper body, the held-up tails of the drapery, the spread legs and the drops falling from the cloud directly above Danaë are elements which we also noted in the Danaë paintings by Gossaert and Correggio.

Although a portrayal such as this was not known, people might well have been aware of gems, medals and coins, small objets d’art which would often reflect motifs from the high arts of painting and sculpture. A Danaë, standing or seated, who holds up the edges of her skirt while receiving the golden rain, appears to occur from the fifth century BC onwards (fig. 9), and the bare-breasted Danaë, again standing or seated, from the fourth century BC (fig. 10). All these elements are united on the back of a bronze mirror (fig. 11), as well as on a bronze coin dating from the time of Hadrian. In the first case she receives help from Cupid and is accompanied by a terrified servant. A voluptuous Danaë in a late-antique, fourth-century tile with graffito from Rome still shows the motif of holding up the tails of the garment and even brings to mind Correggio’s painting (fig. 12). And finally, on a terracotta cake mold dating from the third century AD, a completely naked Danaë is portrayed in an almost pornographic way (fig. 13).

Much of what we know then has been lost, and much of what we know now would have been unknown then. It seems highly likely to me, though, that both Gossaert and Correggio knew a representation on a gem, medallion or other small objet d’art, on which the same motifs are often to be seen. Both frequent circles of eager collectors of antique medallions and gems. Not only did Federico II Gonzaga own great numbers of them (most of which had been collected by his mother, Isabella d’Este, and his uncle, Cardinal Francesco), but Philip of Burgundy also had a considerable collection, the basis of which had undoubtedly been laid during his travels in Italy (ca. 1408–09). Gossaert had gone along on that trip to make drawings of antique monuments.

At Philip’s court—first at Souburg Castle and later at Duurstede Castle—Gossaert was given the specific task of reviving antiquity through his depictions, in close collaboration with Philip himself and his young court humanist, Gerrit Gelenholzer, called Noviomagus.

As far as paintings were concerned, this resulted chiefly in mythological nudes of which a few survive, such as the large Neptune and Amphitrite in Berlin and the small *Venus and Cupid* in Brussels (fig. 14). In addition, we know several works of this type which ended up in the collections of others of his acquaintance, such as the *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* in Rotterdam and the *Hercules and Deianira* in now in Birmingham (fig. 15). It appears from Philip's inventory that he had several paintings which he must have valued chiefly for their erotic content. In a room that he probably used as a study there was a large *Venus and Cupid*, in front of which hung a blue and yellow curtain. Hanging in a small, sumptuously appointed house where, as Steck remarked, Philip probably amused himself in the company of young ladies, were two "exquisite scenes with the *bolschak*": presumably depictions of Venus and Mars making love. Venus and Mars was also the theme first mentioned by Gelenholzer when, in a poem in praise of painting written in 1514, he listed the pleasant subjects painting could visualize.

33 Cook, op. cit. (note 16), p. 60. Cook also mentions that the engravings of Martial and Terence referred to the compositions by Nicias. Similar poses are also found on Etruscan vases dating from the fourth century BC, see Settie, op. cit. (note 32), figs. 46 and 49.
34 Cook, op. cit. (note 16), fig. 506 (silver ring) and 507 (a wax seal), Furtwängler, op. cit. (note 20), vol. 2, pl. 64, nos. 36, and pl. 50, nos. 7 (seals).
35 Cook, op. cit. (note 22), fig. 270 (eclauetta); the same in Furtwängler, op. cit. (note 28), vol. 2, pl. 14, nos. 25, and pl. 34, nos. 10 (partly). Settie, op. cit. (note 55), fig. 11.
36 See S. Papapetridis-Karousos, "Sur un miroir du Musée Bruxel- liens," *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 70 (1946), pp. 439–44. Regarding the coin see Cook, op. cit. (note 16), pp. 36; 37. Papapetridis-Karousos, op. cit., fig. 10, had already reproduced this graffito tile, strangely enough only because of the circle around the head of Jupiter, which in his opinion could indicate that this representation had a Christian connotation. This possibility can be excluded, however, considering the vulgarity inherent in Danaë and the fact that nothing in the text of this period by such Christian authors as Lactantius, Augustine and Pelagius points in this direction. The story cited precisely as an example of pagan morality, we see also Settie, op. cit. (note 32), p. 247. 38 See J.M. Fischer, "Isabella d’Este patron and collector," in J. Chambers and J. Martinez (eds.), *Exhib. cat. ...of the Greece*, London (Victoria & Albert Museum) 1986-88, pp. 61–63.
39 Steck, op. cit. (note 23), pp. 121, 239 and 230. Philip owned 158 or 159 antique medallions, coins and caesars.
41 Steck, op. cit. (note 23), pp. 177–78, and 159–60. "ostentatious tasteless- ness van de bolschak." One of the paintings had a provocative cover or case. In my opinion Steck interpreted the *bolschak* incorrectly as a portrayal of Venus; the work could mean either a loose woman or the act of making love (especially extramarital love). It is therefore more likely that the clerk was referring to lovemaking, which makes a depic- tion of Venus and Mars the obvious interpretation.
42 For the text translated from the Latin see Steck, op. cit. (note 23), p. 111.
In the same poem Gildenhouen compared the artists on whom bestowed commissions with Parma-
hus, Zeuxis and Apelles—painters of antiquity who, as he
has, deserved true fame, were much-loved by prin-
cess, and were praised in the songs of poets.40 He was
doubtless referring to Jacopo de' Barbari and Jan Gou-
saert. When he wrote in 1510 about the painters who
worked for Philip at Sousburg, he spoke of de' Barbari
and Gossaert as "the Zeuxis and Apelles of our day."
In a text dating from 1529 the selfsame Gildenhouen
called Gossaert "the Apelles of our century."41 The
artist himself must therefore have been very conscious in-
deed that he was following in the footsteps of the classi-
cal painters, especially Apelles. In this milieu they must
also have been aware that the fame of Apelles, who sup-
posedly surpassed all other painters of antiquity, was
based primarily on his ability to paint women with un-
paralleled charm and grace: it was this observation that
formed the opening of Pliny's long account of Apelles,42
whose most renowned works were paintings of the nu-
ked Venus,43 of which subject there is still a painting
known by Gossaert (fig. 14).
Gossaert's statement made in 1529, repeated a year
later by Vasari and in 1604 yet again by van Mander —
that Gossaert was the first Netherlander coming from
Italy to introduce the art of painting "historic & poesie
can figure made"—probably reflects an opinion already
current in Gossaert's day.44 Reviving and competing
with the painting of antiquity, as Gossaert's task was
explicitly defined when he was working for Philip of
Borgundy at Sousburg, must have meant primarily the
painting of "poesie with figure made." These were the
very subjects occurring in large numbers in Pliny's well-
known accounts of painters like Apelles, Zeuxis, Par-
mahus and many others. Such depictions therefore
bore fruit of great prestige, which also sanctioned their
portrayal.
One of them was Danaë, of whom, as already men-
tioned, there had been a famous painting by Nicias, while
Leucippus had written an epitaph on a painting of this
theme. It was also a subject, according to Ovid's account
in the Metamorphoses, which was depicted on the tape-
stry with which Arachne challenged Minerva, success-
fully but to her everlasting misfortune. There it was one
of the many scenes of innocent young women who were
deceived by Jupiter and other gods of Olympus.
Through Terence's mention of a painting of Danaë,
however, it became more than just one of the many ap-
pealing classical subjects to be imitated and emulated.
Terence described in The carnax how a young man na-
med Charaxes recounts that, disguised as a eunuch, he
had managed to enter the house of a courtezan, where,
as he had hoped, he was left alone with a young girl, still
a virgin, with whom he had fallen in love. On the wall
of the room where they were sitting hung a painting with
a depiction of Jupiter descending as golden rain into
Danaë's lap. Looking at this painting he became aroused
and thought that if the supreme ruler of the gods was
permitted to do such a thing, why should he, a mere
moistal, not be allowed to imitate him? Incited by this
painting he then raped the girl.45

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., pp. 112, 130.
42 Ibid., p. 132.
voce, Florence 1978, pp. 3, 139. Van Mander, op. cit. (note 25), bl. 223. Gossaert often refers simply to the paintings of nude as something sim-
tilar, distinguishing between "intens" and "poesie"; biblical history paintings with nude (Adam and Eve, Barbatius, etc.) as opposed to mythological stories and other poetic "fabrications." Gossaert miscon-
strues this somewhat; he interprets in as meaning that Gossaert had intuited the true manner of making history paintings with nude, as well as the painting of "poesie" (recreating in the first place mythological tales taken from the poetic tales of antiquity). Van Mander adopt-
ed this from "... en to maken Historien van watte bedelen, ende
Dichter Portret'ten" and to make histories full of nude, and all kinds of subjects from poetic tales." It seems to me not entirely correct to take this "pictures full of nude and all kinds of allegory," as is done in Microterra, op. cit. (note 27), p. 186.
44 Ibid., p. 225.
45 Ovid, Metamorphoses, trans. F.J. Miller, a vol. London & New
guard, 1984, pp. 371-372, and in Decker and Witten with Europa, Alti
er Altes, Alzheim geal.
46 Terence, op. cit. (note 31).

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This is a passage which must have been known to many in the sixteenth century, in the first place because Terence's comedies—if the large number of editions spanning in the early sixteenth century (and these use the Latin schools) is anything to go by—were undoubtedly among the most frequently read classical litera-
ture.46 This passage in particular, however, became fa-
mous because Augustine quoted it no less than four times:
In the Confessions, in The City of God, and in his Let-
ters.47 It was one of his favorite examples of the scat-
dalous nature of many of the lascivious fables about pagan gods; evil inventions, so he said, which, as Terence had clearly shown, kindled the flames of passion and spurred one on to imitate them (in this case via a portrayal of the story). In The city of God he cited the Danaë story yet again—along with that of the rape of Ganyne—
as an example of the outrageous and slanderous stories that were made up about the gods. He also remarked in pass-
ing that the fabrication that Jupiter, in the form of gold-
en rain, lay with Danaë naturally means that female
chastity is easily corrupted by gold.48

46 See P.J.M. van Alphen, Nederlandsche Titelverslagen en de titel van 9. van Alphen, Nijmegen 1974, pp. 11-12, and P. Minnema and C.A. Zoon, A. van 
Noord, ”Terence," in J. Leiden 1976, pp. 10-13. Comedies by Terence were so popular at the Latin schools because they were "the perfect vehicles for the exaltation of pure and elegant Latin. From the beginning of the sixteenth century onwards, countless anthologies and editions were published—most of them intended for use
in schools—of all the comedies together and of the seven separately.
48 St. Augustine, City of God, op. cit. (note 53), p. 494: "... in
telligere pudicitia mulierum non formar suspecta est." In
steep green which deep waters have quite protected impressed Danaë from nocturnallover, had not Juno and Venus laughed at Acrisius, acti
or keeper of the hidden reader. For they knew the way would be safe and
open, when the god had turned to gold. Gold leaves to make no turn in
the midst of woulds and to break through for, for 'no
majesty than the thunderbolt'—G Boccaccio, Genealogia deorum gen-
177-179.
49 O. Vann, Metamorphoses, trans. F.J. Miller, a vol. London & New
guard, 1984, pp. 33, 41, and 53, and in Decker and Witten with Europa, Alti
er Altes, Alzheim geal.
51 Van Mander, op. cit. (note 25), p. 225. Gossaert's statement in various passages in the Greek anthology (933, 34, 817, 7, "Zeus bouget Danaé for a gold coin. I can't give more than Zeus did") and it was adopted and embellished upon in early Christian times by the mythographers Fulgentius, p. 1, p. 2... when Danaë was seduced by a golden shorn! it was, he explains
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"... when Danaë was seduced by a golden shorn! it was, he explains
story do not recur.29

The Danai story was therefore seen mainly as an example of the corrupting power of gold, which nothing, not even feminine honor and virtue, could withstand—obviously a suitable subject for a painting on display in the house of a courtesan, the place where the work described by Terence in The Cancello was hanging. For Marial as well, a painting of Danai had been the topic of a humorous reference to a representation capable of arousing intense erotic feelings in the viewer. At various times in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this passage would be cited again as proof of the power of the image over the senses, particularly of the provocative effect of erotic paintings, and it must have been precisely this quality that made the subject so appealing. Not only could one compete with famous painters of antiquity, as a truly contemporary Apelles or Zeuxis, by portraying "poesie con figure nude," and above all the naked female grace for which Apelles was so renowned, but it was also a challenge to vie with the classic prototype of a painting that was said to have had such a powerful effect on the senses.

If one wanted to, one could also tie it in with a cautionary moral about the corrupting power of money and the weakness of the female sex. If we were to imagine that Gossaert's painting was accepted as a text expressing a moral (and we know that this was sometimes the case from Geldenhouwer's account, who said that Gossaert was assisted at Souburg by poets employed to provide the paintings with verses),30 then such a humanist versifier would undoubtedly have chosen in this case an ingenious paraphrase of the moral expressed by Horace, Augustine and Boccaccio. This was not, after all, was constantly repeated in sixteenth-century mythological commentaries, and is also incorporated into the inscriptions of all Danai prints bearing a text which were produced later on in the sixteenth century.31 In this way Danai, too, could be assimilated into the long series of suggestive, sinful or fallen women which were such popular subjects in the sixteenth century—such as the women in other mythological love scenes depicted by Gossaert: the lustful Salmacis, the jealous Dianètra, and Venus, the embodiment of female temptation and the instigator of it all. According to Boccaccio, Danai also showed that women were not merely objects of desire, and, fickle, unfaithful and wanton to boot.32

A gem or medallion would have been the starting point in devising a composition that would ultimately have to compete with the great paintings upon which these small objets d'art from antiquity were based. This idea must have occurred at practically the same time to both Gossaert, Correggio and or their patrons. Correggio—who employed new forms and techniques developed mainly in Venice and Lombardy to render the human body and human skin convincingly—achieved a much more sensual effect than did Gossaert. Yet this should not detract from the fact that the latter must also have driven to do the same, using the methods given him by his own background.

It is remarkable that Erasmus, in his De Ciceroniana of 1528, cited the representation of Danai as an example, when, in his discourse criticizing unquestioning "Ciceronianism," he complained about lovers and connois- seurs of antiquity who were no longer interested in Christian images and representations, showing interest and admiration only for what had been produced by pagans, including the most thrilling medallions and inscriptions.33 They justified this by citing the immense prestige enjoyed at that time by all things antique, but Erasmus said this was only a front, a pretext to lead innocent young people astray. In the "sanctuaries" of such Ciceroians one would find no representations of the Crucifixion, the Holy Trinity, or the apostles. After all, they found Jupiter raining down into Danae's lap much more attractive a theme than Gabriel announcing the incarnation of God to the Virgin, and Ganymede being abducted by the eagle more appealing than Christ's Ascension.34 Erasmus' mention of Danai was of course an implicit reference to Terence and Augustine. Moreover, Augustine had already cited Danai and Gamy- mede when railing against the scandalousness of pagan fables. What both of them could have had in mind was the existence of a passage regarding a portray-

29 This mention was at least voiced officially at the Council of Trent, where the "idealism or inessentialism" commentaries on Ovid's Metamorphoses were put on the blacklist. B. Gottschalk, Ovids Metempsychosis. Veneden und Fabellegenden des vorderchristlichen Westens. Leipzig 1916, p. 195, pointed out that this was not a rejection of "idealizing" in general, as Semler thought, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 243-245; see also pp. 44-48, but of Christian allegiance in particular. For Erasmus' opinion see E. P. Rawcliffe, "Erasmus and the visual arts," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute 32 (1969), p. 671-132. Erasmus was greatly pleased by Philip Galle's engraving who tried to connect him into his service and by his court humanist Geldenhouwer, see Snod, op. cit. (note 12), pp. 63-67. Furthermore, this kind of allegorizing was strongly condemned by Martin Luther, Erasmus in Genua, Venezia, etetro, in Holzs. g. Illustrat. Georg Anton Distel, pp. 53-54. The comparison with the Virgin is still to be found in the Metamorphosis adaptation by Coloman Misamis, C. commere Ovidis, Bruges 1516, fol. 139r; see also G. Distel, op. cit. (note 12), pp. 59-61. The comparison with the power of the eyes is also found in the Ovidian moralization by Bunsen (both datting from the first half of the sixteenth century). Such editions were severely frowned upon by humanist critics, however, see Suter, p. 296-98.


32 Strick, op. cit. (note 23), p. 110. A nice example of the combination of text and image to a painting by Gossaert as the so-called Freus in Brussels (fig. 14), which has double frame with a verse in Latin on the outermost frame: "Nuna effert homines suacesco quo lacerant sedes / cum consuetudine, parvo ad modum popini" (Strick repro. not, you are close to seeing sex and gods, you don't even your mother step at once so much)."

33 Compare the prints with Donal depictions by Giulio Bonasone (fig. 17); see also nos. 24, 28, 75. Jacques Viollet (fig. 23, see also nos. 191, 193). Boccaccio, De casibus, op. cit. (note 37), vol. 2, pp. 42-67: "Squaminum quater animal est homines, mammalium, insetum, infelix, filumost," which is quoted by Hecksher, op. cit. (note 37), p. 194.


35 It is remarkable that Erasmus, in giving these two examples as opposed to don't u can't even same biblical sense between which a "typo- logical" connection had at one time been created. In order to lend weight to his arguments he seems implicitly to ridicule what he thinks of the stories post-Anachronistic, that seemed to be made between pagan and sacred stories (see note 35), and perhaps still worse by less highly educated readers if the copies of the Ovidian moralist that appeared in the vernacular from time to time.

19 Correggio, The rape of st. Jeann, Kunsthistorisches Museum
al of Ganymede which somewhat recalled Terence’s remarks concerning Danaë. This was an episode from the Satyricon by Petronius, where a young man is intensely aroused by seeing a number of “loves of the gods” by the hand of Apelles, of which the first one mentioned was the eagle who carried Ganymede off to Olympus.

One may well ask whether these two provocative passages from antiquity actually served as the point of departure for Correggio’s Danaë and Ganymede, after which the series of four Amori di Giove (Loves of Jupiter) was completed with Lea and the Swan and The Rape of Io (fig. 16), as logical choices from the oil-referenced loves of Jupiter.67 These are also subjects which, like the Danaë depiction, show the god making love to mortal beauties—beauties taken by Jupiter in a false, seemingly innocent shape. They are representations which, through their lifelike portrayal of sensuality, seem to have the intention of eliciting the response described by Aretino ten years later after seeing Michelangelo’s Lea: any nude viewer would naturally wish to take Jupiter’s place.68 And this was of course exactly what Terence had described as happening to Chaeura upon beholding the painting of Danaë. The very fact that the divine violator did not appear in human form made it possible to depict the moment of intercourse: sexual fantasies were all the more stimulated by this implicit manner of portrayal. On the other hand, the palpable sensuality of these depictions is relieved by the unmistakably conical nature of the forms in which Jupiter makes love. Humor seems to be an important ingredient in Correggio’s paintings.

Federico Gognazza, who probably had these works made for himself, must have been a lover of erotic art, as witnessed by a letter addressed to him by Aretino in 1527, containing an enthusiastic description of a Venus by Sansovino which he, Federico, would find very pleasing: “...a Venus so real and so lifelike that she fills the thoughts of all who admire her with lust.” Such literary pronouncements concerning the erotic effect of seemingly “real” depictions—and several others will be cited below—were either inspired by, or were variations of, texts from antiquity. In this case implicit reference was made to Pliny’s account of Praxiteles’ Venus of Knidos, on which a statue of young Jupiter had left the traces of Venus by Sansovino which he, Federico, would find very

67 Petronius, trans. M. Hadde, London & Cambridge (Mass.) 1944, p. 163. Francesco Sforza, The painting of the ancients, ed. K. Altich and P. and R. Fohr, 2 vols., Berkeley, Los Angeles & Oxford 1991, vol. I, pp. 216-17, would later quote them together as examples of morose squalid episodes which one should not depict, the more so because they even incited imitation. Peter Ackroyd pointed this passage out to me. Samuel van Hoogstraten borrowed this from Janus nearly word for word in his De Iustitia et de bange schoole der wiskundet, Rotterdam 1668, p. 194.

68 See Verheyen, op. cit. (note 20), p. 183-86, for Jupiter’s lives in Italian Renaissance literature. For the divergent hypotheses regarding the origins of the four paintings by Correggio, see, among others, Verheyen, Jasson, Guidi, op. cit. (note 23), pp. 130-35; Bernardini, op. cit. (note 21), p. 42. The fact that they depict two male figures seen from the back (vertical format) and two nude figures seen frontally (horizontal format) demonstrates, in my opinion, that Correggio was also interested in combining nude seen from various angles, as was Titian later on whom he combined Danaë with Venus and Io. See also P. Fohr, Dasveld and in: the poetry of Venusian painting, Vienna 1992, p. 130.


produced a Donatello as the central representation in the Galleria Nazionale in Firenze, Italy. Eventually, Titian created the most successful work to Correggio's work with his masterpiece dating from 1544—his first Donatello, now in the Galleria Nazionale in Firenze.

What subject was more suited to Titian, who had competed in his blood—"painting as a mastication" (pinturicchi), as Ludovico Dolce called Titian's permanent mastication with classical and contemporary artists—when he was commissioned to paint the most sensual nude possible for a princely patron? For this was surely the point when Alessandro Farnese commissioned him in 1544 to paint a nude, after seeing the one he had made several years earlier for the Duke of Urbino (fig. 207).

Roberto Zappari assumed, on the basis of X-radiographs, that the commission was not originally for a Donatello, but rather for a nude in the manner of the Duke of Urbino's, and therefore with no reference to a specific mythological theme. While Titian was still working on the painting for Alessandro Farnese, Monsignor Giovanni della Casa, papal nuncio to Venice, wrote in the autumn of 1544 the oft-quoted letter in which he assures Alessandro Farnese that, upon seeing the nude that Titian was now painting for him, even Cardinal San Sylvestro (official theologian of the Carafa and the church's chief censor) would be possessed by the devil. Della Casa added that the nude which Farnese had seen at the Duke of Urbino's was a "Theatine nun in comparison to the woman that Titian was now painting. In the same letter della Casa also asked about a sketch of a certain young woman by the miniaturist Giulio Clovio, so that Titian might make a portrait of her, and moreover give the nude her face. Zappari argued that this must have been a portrait of a certain Angela, a courtesan favored by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese. It must have been at a later stage—when Titian had produced a Donatello as the central representation in the Galleria Nazionale in Firenze, Italy. Eventually, Titian created the most successful work to Correggio's work with his masterpiece dating from 1544—his first Donatello, now in the Galleria Nazionale in Firenze.
arrived with the painting in Rome, where he had set up a studio in the Belvedere in 1543 at the invitation of Alessandro Farnese—that the artist decided to turn the motif into a Danae, so that she would be framed by a poem: "una femina ignuda figura per una Danae," as Vasari aptly described her. If Titian actually effected the change by giving the figure the features of the courtesan, as della Casa’s letter suggests, then the myth of Danae naturally offered a classically inspired context which could not have been more appropriate. Indeed, in the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, fictional courtesans occasionally compared themselves to Danae. Titian’s interpretation, repeated and varied endlessly since the time of Horace and Augustine, that Jupiter, the supreme god, availed himself of gold and money to seduce this great beauty, made the image a self-evident one. It is therefore understandable that Titian—after Bonasone and Primaticcio who had already imposed upon the idea—depicted the golden rain as a shower of gold coins.

Zappetti thought that the idea of clothing the nude in mythological trappings, whereby Titian understood an image code that transform into a Danae, had been inspired by the need to give a pretext sanctified by antiquity to a painting that would otherwise have been too compromising for a cardinal. In my opinion, the most important stimulus for Titian at this crucial juncture in his career would have been the many possibilities this theme offered to compete with both antiquity and his contemporaries. Correggio’s breastfeeding Danae—would have provided the most powerful impetus, a painting which, after all, could compete in sensuality with Titian’s own Venus in Urbino. Titian would certainly have admired Correggio’s Danae in Mantua. A century later Marco Bouchini even wrote that Titian, who was deeply impressed by Correggio’s work, admired his Danae most of all. Philip Fehl described beautifully how it must have been viewed in the competition that

...the great Cupid (who is, of course, not in Ovid) has entered Titian’s painting and, with a gesture that seems to complete the beheading gesture of Correggio’s turn to leave the scene of this violence and triumph, ready to exert his power on another willing victim. At that time Titian would also have seen the print which Léon Davent made after the fresco by Primaticcio in the Galerie Francois (fig. 18), for he must certainly have been aware of this composition when he created his own Danae.

Titian could not have chosen a more suitable subject with which to establish his name once and for all in the highest Roman circles of connoisseurs and artists as the painter of the most beautiful, most lifelike female nudes imaginable. It was a subject that could be seen not only as a response to Nicias, the famous specialist in feminine beauty of classical times, and to the "prototype" described by Terence of a sexually provocative painting, but also as an emulation of the most sensuous modes of contemporary reality: those of Correggio and Primaticcio as well as his own. The words of della Casa certainly made one thing clear: everyone concerned took it for granted that this painting would surpass the nude, apparently already famous, which he had made for the Duke of Urbino and which had so impressed Alessandro Farnese.

The nature of the theme, concerning one of Jupiter’s loves, also made it the perfect subject with which to challenge Michelangelo’s Leda (fig. 21), perhaps not so much the painting itself as Artemio’s description of it dating from 1542. In this way he could show that his painting was much more worthy of Artemio’s elogio. Artemio described Michelangelo’s work as follows: "One of the two pictures is a Leda, but in a manner tenderer of flesh, elegant limine and slender figure of figure, and so sweet, soft and gentle of attitude, and with so much naught grace in all parts of the nude that one cannot gaze upon her without envying the swan who takes pleasure in it with a tenderness so lifelike that it seems, as he extends his neck to kiss her, that he wishes to exalt into her mouth the spirit of his divinity." If one forgets for a minute that it is the subject of nudity that Leda, then this description of the effect of such verisimilitude is naturally much more applicable to Titian’s Danae—certainly where he speaks of "naughty swan, or tender dove, para e saeva d’attitudine, e con tanta grazia ignuda da tutte le parti di lo ignudo, che non si può mirar senza rispettare arre e ignere, che ne goda certo affetto tanto simile a l’occhi pare, mentre stende i colli opus bacillaci, che le voglia esercitare in loco di spiritus de ignudo." 

Titan had probably done his utmost at just this time in order to provoke the connoisseurs in this bastion of Michelangelesque design with his amazingly innovative (especially to Roman eyes) and illusionistic painting technique, which must have been absolutely dazzling. The clash between these different conceptions would have been the immediate result, if we can believe what Vasari wrote many years later. He described the visit that he and Michelangelo made to Titian’s studio in the Belvedere, where they admired his Danza. He went on to say that Michelangelo “... praised it greatly as was polite. After they had gone, I conversed, talking about Titian’s work, praised him a good deal, saying he liked his coloring and style, but that it was a pity good design was not taught in Venice from the first, and that her painters did not have a better method of study. Such that if this man, said he, were aided by art and design as he is by Nature, especially in imitating from life, he would not be surpassed, having a very fine wit and a most charming and lifelike style. This is very true, for without design and a study of selected ancient and modern work, skill is useless, and it is impossible by mere drawing from life to impart the grace and perfection of Nature so that certain parts frequently lack beauty.”

In response, therefore, to this sensuous Danza—the painting in which Titian, in Rome of all places, had perfected his style of painting nude—Vasari clearly articulated the contrast between the Florentine-Roman and the Venetian notions, design as opposed to colorito, and vehemently criticized the latter by invoking the author of this essay's praise of his friend Pietro Aretino, who spoke of “the glorious, marvellous, and great Titian, whose coloring breathes no differently from flesh that has pulse and life.” In 1557 Dolce described the objective of Titian’s style in the following words: “Titian... moves in step with nature, so that every one of his figures has life, movement and flesh which palpitate. He has shown in his works no empty gracefulness, but a palette which is properly appropriate; no artificiality in ornament, but a masterly concreteness; no crudity, but the mellowness and softness of nature. And the highlights and shadows in his creations always contend and interplay with one another, and fade out and decrease in the very same way as nature itself has them do.”

The fact the Michelangelo-admiring Titian’s Danza in Rome was already mentioned by Dolce in his Dolci, published in 1557, see Cassioli, op. cit. (note 86), p. 119-121. It is possible, as suggested by Goffen, op. cit. (note 75), p. 249, that Vasari reacted to Dolci’s description of Michelangelo’s positive reaction by ‘correcting’ the matter according to Florentine-Roman views, many years after the fact, in his second edition of 1568. See Wedgwood Kennedy, op. cit. (note 72) Annoni. Dolce wrote that Titian was superior to all past masters of antiquity and the present day, and that even Apelles would not refuse to honor him, see Cassioli, op. cit. (note 86), p. 121-122. According to Ridolfo, when Titian was made a knight in 1533 he was called “il suo sacro Apelles” by Charles V. Titian himself wrote to Charles V: “What painter ancient or modern can boast and glory more than I, being graciously chosen by such a king, and with so much of art and science, as I have displayed in order to serve him? I certainly hold myself to be that good and give myself to understand to have been so for a long time, so that I dare to say I do not envy that famous Apelles so dear to Al- exander the Great and I am as much as can be. {Note Alexander 200 oth- er has ever been more like him than Vasari Major. Even if it is true my little value be greatly insufficient to compare the excellence of that singular man (Apelles), for me, however, it is sufficient that, as he was in the good graces of his king, I likewise feel myself to be in the good graces of mine. Because the authority of his badge judgment makes me comparable to and perhaps even more than Apelles was in the opinion of men.” The letter is dated 25 September 1535, and is quoted from Goffen, op. cit. (note 75), p. 21. In this context it can hardly be a coincidence that Pliny had written the following, precisely about Nicias: “... inem et umbra constant subre eminentibus et umbra lapis picturae maxima currit” (“Nicias kept a strict watch on light and shade, and the greatest pains to make his paintings stand out from the panel.”), Pliny, op. cit. (note 23), vol. 9, p. 317.
he had detected an omission, he compared Titian and Charles v to Apelles and Alexander. When van Mander was in the process of writing his Levens, he would surely have spoken with Goltzius, who in 1603 made his life-size "Danaë, a work which van Mander also praised copiously in the biography he wrote of his friend (fig. 22). One can think of various reasons to explain why Goltzius, who had only recently turned to painting, chose the Danaë theme for his first lifesize nude—precisely when he wanted to present himself as a master in painting such nudes. Elsewhere I have attempted to show in detail that Goltzius was preoccupied with ideas regarding the effect of portrayals of nudes on the viewer, owing to ever-present notions concerning the powerful effect attributed to the sense of sight, especially when it involved the arousal of love and lust. And, as we shall see further on, he would have been only too aware of the fact that Danaë was an exemplary theme for a painting which purported to cause intense stimulation of the viewer's senses. This even gave him the opportunity to play a clever and amusing game with the subject—a subject, moreover, which enabled him to assume a place among the most famous painters of nudes, at the same time taking up a position in the dispute as to the correct manner of painting, all of which the very ambitious Goltzius must have found irresistible.

He was, after all, a well-nigh compulsive emulator, and one for whom style, the manner of depiction itself, was also an important element of imitation and emulation. When Van Mander emphasized this several times in his biography, he wrote that Goltzius, from a very young age, not only tried to imitate the beauty and diversity of nature, "...but he has also admirably applied himself to imitate the various styles of the best masters such as those of Harmerskerck, Frans Floris, Blocklandt and Frederik [Federico Zuccaro] and finally Snyperande, whose lively manner he imitated very truly. And after having mentioned his series of prints with depictions of the life of the Virgin (in which Goltzius imitated, in his own inventions, the styles of six different masters), van Mander stated that Goltzius was a veritable Proteus or Vermuthmen in art, "because he can take on the different shapes of all possible styles." Van Mander went on to say that Goltzius, after returning from Italy, was no longer so satisfied with the art that he saw in his own country, because "he had impressed the beautiful Italian paintings as firmly in his memory as in a mirror, so that wherever he went he still saw them continuously before him; now it was the soft graciousness of Raphael that he enjoyed, then the natural freshness of Correggio, then the advancing highlights and deep-retiring, rubbed-back shadows of Titian, the beautiful silken materials and well-painted things of Verones and others in Venice." Other painters were fond of hearing him talk about this, continued van Mander, "for he spoke all about glowing flesh parts, glowing shadows and such unfamiliar or little-heard expressions." Van Mander suggested that for this reason it was inevitable that Goltzius would turn to painting, and these words definitely suggest that it was Titian in particular who had made the deepest impression on him: "glowing flesh parts" and "glowing shadows" are, after all, terms which are eminently suited to describing this master's art.

In his first large nude, therefore, Goltzius joined battle with the painter of female nudes par excellence. Admittedly he did not adopt the pose of Titian's Danaë—he was probably not familiar with the composition—but this nude, turned toward the viewer and stretched out on a bed, would have represented for him a preeminent Venetian type. A print by Hieronymus Wierix (fig. 23) was presumably the formal source of inspiration. In this print Danaë is portrayed by means of the Titianesque type; her pose is a direct reflection of the many versions produced by Titian and his workshop in the late 1540s and early 1550s (fig. 24). Goltzius, who adopted this Venetian type, did his best to work like a Dutch Titian in "the newest beautiful manner of working" and to render "glowing flesh parts" and "advancing highlights and deep-retiring, rubbed-back shadows." He also made an effort, however, to heed Vasari's criticism: he took pains to portray his nude with clear and precisely drawn contours, while ensuring that the anatomy within those contours was clearly structured. He also lent extra emphasis, within the framework of this Venetian Venus type, to his study of Michelangelesque design by incorporating the pose of Michelangelo's Danaë (fig. 25): the shoulder pressed...
Emulating sensual beauty

Her presence in a scene concerning money and lust, and the inscriptions on the print after Floris and on the one by Wierix underscore such connotations, is obviously very apt. A brooch scene with a procureress and a portrait of Danae even occur together in an early seventeenth-century depiction of the Carousing of the Prodigal Son by Frans Francken II (fig. 27), which is surrounded by a series of other representations of the parable. In the center, a "modern" Prodigal Son sits on the right, embracing a courtesan while being addressed by an old large number of sixteenth-century examples of Prodigal Sons and brothel scenes, with the old woman as procureress set the illustrations in K. Regen, Liefere Grafischil, Berlin, 1979. The traditional portrayal of the prostitute of the procuress or madam as an old woman probably evolved as a way of incorporating the image of Avra in the print depicting the squandering in the brothel from the allegorical Prodigal Son series by Cornelis van Haarlem, 1600-60. The word "Avra" above the old procureress (Regen, fig. 4). In her first appearance in representations of Danae, in Primaticcio and in Titian’s later versions, she clearly represents both a procureress and—gracefully catching coins or gathering them together—an image of Avra.
Emulating sensual beauty

Correggio had created an image full of light-hearted humor (and Borassone one with coarse humor). Goltzius, in his painting, clearly turned the whole scene into a talon-purse, and other things...

In his painting, Goltzius shows not only a shower of coins; all around Danaë's piles of coins and other golden objects are portrayed, a painted reference to the idea—repeated in detail by van Mander in his Houtvaet in het Metamorphosa—that nothing can resist the power of money and gold.111 This idea is represented very literally in an emblem by Otto van Veen in his Q. Horatii Flacci emblemata of 1667 (fig. 28):112 money breaks through walls and soldiers give themselves up, while Danaë and the old woman are visible in the background. Pieter Isaac de did something similar in a Danaë which he drew in an album amicorum: in the background, seen through a window, cannons are firing at strong town walls, in contrast to the gold which easily overcomes "the highest walls... strongest chains, iron barriers, locks, bolts, gates and doors" (fig. 29).

It was certainly not Goltzius's aim, however, to provide us with a moralizing lesson in this vein. He was concerned with much more amusing and amusing matters.113

While, in antiquity, Terence had already placed a painting of Danaë in a comic context and Martian had provided witty commentary on a painted Danaë, while

111 There are more representations with a painting of Danaë on the wall: in the eighteenth-century house housed a print of the Fordyce version, which is reproduced in Heckendorf, op. cit. (note 95), fig. 8. The girl occupies with all its pleasures such as sitting, playing cards and looking at themselves in the mirror; in the middle above the mantelpiece in a prominent place, hangs a painting of Danaë also by an old woman. There is also a treated scene with a Danaë by Frans Francken II in M. Haring, Frans Francken de Jonge, 2 vols., Prcrct, 1989, vol. 2, pp. 186, 189 (Rem Kool) draws my attention to this. At first sight, this also seems to be the case in a palace interior as illustrated by Bartokornak van Bos (Copenhagen, Statens Museum), in which five couples portray the Five Senses. However, the painting hanging above the dancing couple who represent the sense of touch is not Danaë but the Eros.

112 Van Mander, Franspiets, cit. (note 105), fol. 397 v, with one of anders arte, den dammen door rijtjes en geelkosten, zowel de enkele als de aller minstesten geschenken alsje welkende en te woord brengen: war so onthoudelijk hoppen daer aen wie de ruit, en zoo vaer Boel, met groote gowt van goud, zoodaen in court, en behouden; dammen en sassen magh, al van weer en всё so he-

113 The inscription unadorned with a window: as the Fordyce version, which is reproduced in Heckendorf, op. cit. (note 95), fig. 8. The girl occupies with all its pleasures such as sitting, playing cards and looking at themselves in the mirror; in the middle above the mantelpiece in a prominent place, hangs a painting of Danaë also by an old woman. There is also a treated scene with a Danaë by Frans Francken II in M. Haring, Frans Francken de Jonge, 2 vols., Prcrct, 1989, vol. 2, pp. 186, 189 (Rem Kool) draws my attention to this. At first sight, this also seems to be the case in a palace interior as illustrated by Bartokornak van Bos (Copenhagen, Statens Museum), in which five couples portray the Five Senses. However, the painting hanging above the dancing couple who represent the sense of touch is not Danaë but the Eros.

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115 What follows is a more detailed version of the interpretation of this painting given in Shippe, op. cit. (note 49), pp. 279-281.


118 See what van Mander has to say about Mercury in Rhetorica de ingenio, in idem, Lexicon teubnerianum, Hafniae 1884, fol. 177. For Mercury as promotor of the arts and the ideal of "kunstenaars", see

119 T. de Costi Kauffmam, "The eloquent artist: toward an understanding of the 15th-century painting at the court of Rudolf II," Lat. Kunsstwis-

120 The inscription, translated from the Latin, reads: "The charm of my asquersen tongue is my recommendation to the gods, and I teach the various arts to primitive mouths."
painter, with a palette and brushes in one hand and in the other his caduceus as if it were a maulstick (fig. 31). That Goztius would be depicted in a portrait engraved posthumously by his stepson Jacob Matham (fig. 32) flanked by Mercury as the representative of Spiritus (as written above Mercury's head), almost seems self-evident, considering the fact that the caduceus also formed the central motif in the emblematic representation of Goztius's own device "Eer boven Gelo" ("Honor above gold"; fig. 33). There the caduceus, symbol of intellect and eloquence, stands on a mountain of coins, gold objects and a sash, all referring to his name. The caduceus is crowned by the laureled cherub's head turned toward the sun, a sign of honor and virtue. 120 This "cunning Mercury," god of commerce and financial gain, but also of sagacity and eloquence and at the same time patron of the painter, points—with a broad grin on his face—his caduceus as the eagle, symbol of Jupiter whose lust was aroused at the sight of Danaé and from whom emanates a flash of lightning which turns into a shower of coins as it falls. This eagle, however—and Goztius was the first to introduce it into a Danaé depiction—undoubtedly refers simultaneously and cleverly to the sense of sight, of which the eagle was the most common attribute. Goztius in particular portrayed Visus many times (fig. 34, for example). 121 As appears from countless texts (including the inscriptions to the prints engraved after Goztius's Vívas inventions), it is the sense that is regarded at once as the highest and the most dangerous, because it is capable of kindling lust as no other, and of provoking sinful thoughts and deeds. 122

In this way Goztius wittily shows that the eloquence and power of persuasion of the painter—represented by Mercury—is capable, by means of the desirable beauty he has created, of enticing the highest of the gods into pouring forth golden rain, or rather of presenting the true connoisseur with such a tempting sight that he is lured into buying the painting, for it is he who ultimately falls in love with this Danaé and is willing to pay a lot of money to own her. Goztius's signature—this was the only time he signed a painting with his full name—is
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Greedy Danaë has also been deceived, because for her the coins are after all, only an illusion. Vondel ends the verse with the lines: "Thus the maiden lets trade flourish/Then her heart envies a god." The picture of the beautiful Danae therefore ensures that financial transactions take place, while the "god" who has let himself be taken in by art is of course also in this case the owner who paid to possess this beautiful illusion.

In the case of Gozzi's Danae we know that: 1) this piece is in Leiden with the art-loving Mr Bartholomeus Ferrers, to be seen in his cabinet or collection together with other handsome works; writes van Mander. This Bartholomeus Ferrers, who undoubtedly had north Italian roots, was the manager of the Leiden Leendert Bank. He had at one time been trained as a painter—according to van Mander, by none other than Anthonis Mor and the Pourbus brothers—and had also practiced art for his own pleasure. Van Mander had dedicated his lives of the Italian painters to him. Well-acquainted with the power of money through his job as a financier, and knowing the value of art works from his experience as a collector, Ferrers undoubtedly found this painting highly amusing. He would certainly have been able to appreciate the erotic appeal of the nude, which must have dangled a little resemblance to life hitherto unknown to Dutch eyes: "painting marvelously fleshily," as van Mander said of it.

...8th Ed., vol. ii, pp. 409-410. "Wat schat grotste deeltens spotten/De liefde en recht van schone wat/Man vreest van een der neef, en droomt /En In 't schild van rode schijven Zou lui de Maag het handel drijven /Zoo vliet de kasteel/ Goed is kloek." 139 By 1494 about the modest ladies trade fourteen, Vondel was perhaps also implying that the real nude is often a pose for which one would pay a lot, especially when one sees what the painter earns with her image. On the motif of the immortal model see Shulteis, op. cit. (note 49), p. 71, esp. note 167 (pp. 390-91), with further references.


Remarkable indeed is the fact that van Mander, in his dedication of Vita fidelem a sopola, op. cit. (note 96), fol. 307v (wrongly printed as fol. 320), emphasizes on this relationship between arts and money, stating, among other things, that even lead was worth more than gold if it is painted by a great artist, concluding: "It has thus been shown that those who find money useless cannot value art for what it is worth. According to van Mander, Ferrers owned a number of rather valuable works by great masters. Luise van Leyden, Quentin Massys, Hans Holbein, Michael van Meerendonck and Cornelis Cornelisz van Haerem (fol. 242v, 249r, 252r, 289v and 293 respectively). Van Beul also had glowing praise for a Crucifixio by Bruegel of 1551, see C.J. Hoogewerff and J.van Regteren Altenga, Schilder Beschouwen. "Re-picturae," The Hague 1968, p. 78.


So too in the Skene family: Calvert, Anthony, Ferrers Gallery, London 1993, photographs; Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, tentoonstelling in Amsterdam, op. cit. (vol. 75), p. 242, and in anonymous; late sixteenth-century Janue (Dutch home, private collection, 1966), photograph NKB, as "Master of Lambert Straison."
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...poetic traditions, will only see the painting as a manifestation of the immorality of the painter and his model, who are willing to do anything for money.134 The current reading of the Danae story, which revolves around money, is used here to lend weight to this criticism for the good listener. And when such simple souls think they understand it, things only get worse: they are certain to arrive at idiotic interpretations. In this dismissive way a mockery is made of theological allegory, that was seen as perfectly ridiculous, which van Mander—and for nearly a century many others with him—was dead set against.135

At the same time van Mander showed that only a peasant—knowing nothing of decorum—could assume that the Virgin would be depicted with her legs apart.136 It seems to be a box on the ears of twentieth-century art historians who interpreted Gossaert’s Danae as a prefiguration of the Maria humilissima and who even went so far as to assume that a Danae by Joachim Wtewael...connotes modesty and chastity, as she had in the middle ages, when Danaé was viewed as a prefiguration of Mary and also as “a warning against mercenary love” (fig. 77).137 Van Mander—and Wtewael as well—would probably have found this incredibly funny, the more so because in this painting any semblance of a “miraculous” intercession is removed by showing Jupiter in a very bodily form, which would have caused even van Mander’s peasant to think twice.

Inspired perhaps by van Mander’s descriptions of the Danae by Ketel and Goltzius, Wtewael had also turned to this subject, which resulted in a truly hilarious rendering of the story on a very small copper plate.138 Not only does the eagle emerge through the ceiling of Danae’s room, but Jupiter himself descends in the midst of a shower of coins, as though he were a very corporeal and extremely glamorous angel of the Annunciation.139 With this bodily Jupiter, Wtewael probably wanted to make the depiction both especially funny and scurrilously correct. In van Mander’s detailed description of the Danae story in the Wijngaerde—a description which he copied literally from Nantel Conti’s mythological handbook and that deviates from the usual version—Jupiter actually assumes his own shape again and finally does what all lovers long to do: Jupiter...changed himself into golden rain or gold drops, slid through the roof tiles, and let himself fall into the lap of his lady friend, who tucked these golden drops into her bosom. He then assumed his true form, enjoying the desired fruit, which...
all lovers are burning to obtain.\cite{144} The large spool held up by the old woman and the bundle of arrows sticking out of the picture in the foreground indicate Jupiter's longing, while the wooden spinning frame in the crown's right hand, which we look into from above, the slippers with their openings turned toward the viewer, and the chamberpot next to the bed all display Danae's vulnerability. The bird sitting on the bars of the window undoubtedly has the same function as the birds in sixteenth-century brothel scenes which often sit in cages at the entrances to such establishments. While Goetius portrayed the old woman with a bare, withered breast—in stark contrast to Danae's firm body—Weewaat went one step further by depicting the old woman practically naked. The somewhat distasteful confrontation of young and old seems therefore to have taken on the character of a satire on the motif.

That Danae and the old woman are mightily shocked is understandable, given the great speed and unbridled energy with which Jupiter buries toward them. Danae shades her eyes from the blinding light streaming from the clouds and turns the lower part of her body away in fright, thereby exposing to view her genitals, covered merely with a diaphanous cloth. Only Càpit—"in a relaxed contrapposto and with a gesture as though he were stage-managing the whole scene—looks on in satisfaction as everything goes according to plan. Perhaps this small painting formed an ensemble with the equally amusing Mars and Venus in the Getty Museum (fig. 37).\cite{145} This is one of the very rare paintings in which copulation visibly takes place: the poor couple is rudely disturbed in this activity, however, by the gods who gather round them, laughing merrily.\cite{146}

A drawing by Weewaat that probably preceded his Danae (which would make it the depiction of an earlier

\cite{144} Van Mander, Wijngaert, op. cit. (note 107), fol. 37v: "Jupiter... verzadigd hem in golden regent of goud-en-dragelpeel glindende door de duik-tegels, het hem valt in den schoot van zijn vrouwinde, de velde de gouden-dragelpeel st discontent in hem binne. Den laatst by zijn recht ghouts, ghetannelen de beperke reddt, daer allen Minnors nae vlinderende ek." And, Oudenaarde, op. cit. (note 123), vol. 2, p. 35: S. Ander variation in which: Jupiter assumes his own shape is found in De Anguillara, op. cit. (note 112), vol. 4, p. 75-76, Jan de Jong discovered fragments in Rome with portraits of Danae (which he dated to the 1530s), in which she is seated on the bed, making love to Jupiter while golden-rain pans drop; see J. de Jong, "Love, betrayal and corruption: Mars and Venus, and Darden and Jupiters in the Palazzo Stati-Cresci and Marini di Pagana in Bologna," to be published in Source...

\cite{145} See, for instance, Boetger, op. cit. (note 210), figs. 6 (Mater of the Prodigal Son), 65 (Brunner Movee Monogrammist), and 81 (Jan Struycken van Hemessen).

\cite{146} See Louwenraad, op. cit. (note 151), p. 318, with the statement that the Danae portrays "chaotic love," as opposed to the "sentimental love" in the other scenes. The copper plates have the same format; the bees are practically mirrored images of one another. The scale of the figures is slightly different, though. More likely than the chance of their being pendants, in Louwenraad's opinion, it seems to me that they form a series of small erotic works for the decoration of an arc cabinet.

\cite{147} The deadly carnage with which this small painting—and the related vision in the Mauricebank—is usually interpreted is rather bewildering; see, among others, Louwenraad, op. cit. (note 131), pp. 98 and 118, and D. Brouws, Museo-Werkenspred. Museum Het, Hague 1947, pp. 147-210.

idea) also shows Jupiter in his own shape, although only the upper part of his body emerges from the clouds (fig. 35). Van Mander's description of the "amable little children who come flying in with a talon-purse" in Goetius's painting probably inspired Weewaat to strengthen the cosmic nature of this invention by having Jupiter himself appear with the same suggestively shaped attribute: supporting the bags with one hand and clasping the stick with the other, he shows what his intentions are, while coins are already dribbling out of the purse. Weewaat would not have seen the painting by Goetius. The pictorial scheme of the Danae motif in the background of Otto van Veen's above-mentioned emblematic print with the motto "Quid non avro pen- vium?" (What does gold not make accessible?) doubtless helped him in devising this composition (fig. 28). It must have been Weewaat's aim to amuse the owner and his male guests by exploiting to the fullest the erotic humor inherent in the subject, first in a drawing and then on a small copper plate which could be viewed while holding it in the hand.

From his fellow townsman Abraham Bloemart we know only a Danae invention engraved by Jacob Matt- ham in 1610 (fig. 59).\cite{148} Here Danae is still completely unaware of what is about to happen, even though the crowned head of Jupiter sticks out of the clouds and seems to be spewing forth coins. Bloemart must have borrowed this motif from one of Titian's later Danae versions (the one now in Vienna), of which there was an engraving.\cite{149}

A younger generation of Dutch painters, active in the second and third decades of the seventeenth century, made hardly any erotic depictions with nudes. It is no wonder, then, that no Damae are known from their hands. Starting in the 1640s, however, the subject made a comeback with several painters who began to concentra-

\cite{148} See, Louwenraad, op. cit. (note 151), p. 100, who dates the draw-
ing to the same period.

\cite{149} Perhaps it was Bloemart's friend Andreas van Bochel who en-
couraged Bloemart to do this. We know that van Bochel saw Galeni-
au's Danae in June 1602 at Farnese's in Lucca, see Houwesvve of van Reijnen Alken, op. cit. (note 131), p. 78.

The old woman seen in full profile, who holds up her gown to catch the coins, is also a motif inspired directly by Titian, but then by another version. It seems most likely that Bloemart knew a workshop version that united both motifs, such as the one now in the Hamburger Kunsthalle, see H.E. Wefer, op. cit. (note 21), fig. 3, nr. 6-4-14, fig. 199. For the print, which dates from the second half of the seventeenth century, see M. Cardi, exhib. cat., Stampa di Tintoretto. Stamp nel se. XV-...XX, Rome (Villa Farnesina, Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe) 1967-72, nr. 58.
Rembrandt who first took up the thread (fig. 40). And
only Rembrandt—aware of all the implications of
the theme—succeeded in competing with Titian.
He would undoubtedly have had the same ambitions
as Goethe. Here was another painter—and this cannot
be accidental—who chose this subject at a crucial point
in his career. Just as in Goethe’s case, Rembrandt’s
Danæ was the first life-size nude he painted, after ex-
perimenting a number of times with nudes in a small
format.132

In painting this ambitious work, which he began in
1636 and radically revised around the mid-1640s,133 he
would certainly have been challenged and stimulated by
Vanvitelli’s critical comments (via van Mander’s version)
on Titian’s Danæ as the foremost example of Venetian
painting.134 The fact that van Hoogstraten, Rembrandt’s
pupil at the time he finished his Danæ, also cites this
anecdote twice—when speaking about imitating nature
by means of color, as opposed to depicting the most
beautiful that nature has to offer with the help of the art
of drawing—suggests that there had been lively discus-
sions on this subject in Rembrandt’s studio during his
apprenticeship.135

Titian must have been the great example for Rem-
brandt in many respects, as evidenced by numerous
works. His intense interest in the Italian, which must
have been based at least in part on his knowledge of van
Mander’s biography of this master, was discussed in de-
tail by Amy Golabch and also splendidly elucidated by
Ernst van de Watering in his study of the development
of Rembrandt’s painting technique.136 In addition, it
seems indisputable that Rembrandt knew that the
Danæ depiction could be seen as an example of a paint-
ing with great sensual appeal. From the fact that the
best-selling authors Cats and van Beverwijck referred to
Terence’s story in their discussion of the dangers of
paintings displaying nudes and other “licentious” rep-
resentations, and that van Hoogstraten later did the
same, it appears that this would have been quite obvi-
ous, especially to a painter concerned with the portrayal
of female nudes.137

When Rembrandt chose Danæ as the subject of his
first life-size nude, he may also have done so to compete
with Goethe’s painting. He could have seen it in his
youth in Leiden at the home of Ferreris, who, as an am-
ateur painter and connoisseur, undoubtedly provided
young, talented artists with the opportunity to visit his
valuable collection.138 Perhaps it was even one of the few

132 See E. Sluijter, “Rembrandt’s early paintings of the female
nude: Andromeda and Samson,” in G. Cavalli-Björkman (ed.), Rem-
brandt and his pupils, Stockholm 1963, pp. 37-55, and for Danæ with
133 For views on the dating see J. Bernt et al., A corpus of Rem-
134 Van Hoogstraten, op. cit. (note 175), pp. 214 and 249.
135 Golabch, op. cit. (note 166), pp. 20 and 21. See also
Golabch, op. cit. (note 166), pp. 20 and 21.
136 Van de Watering, op. cit. (note 175), pp. 249-250. See also
Golabch, op. cit. (note 166), pp. 20 and 21.
137 This was already pointed out by Golabch, op. cit. (note 166), pp.
20 and 21. See also Goethe, op. cit. (note 87), p. 249.
138 See note 71.
139 In any case Ferreris must still have been alive and living in
Leiden in 1628; see Bok, op. cit. (note 130), p. 135. It appears from the
fact that van Mander and Buchelius both knew his collection that he
was probably fond of showing it to other connoisseurs.
large-scale female nudes by a renowned master which Rembrandt had actually seen, thus presenting him with a challenge, for such representations were certainly rare at that time. Although at first glance there seems to be scant resemblance, many elements may point to recollections of Goltzius's work—the scale of the nude, the lower part of the body turned outwards, the slightly raised right leg, the somewhat oblique placement of the bed in the top left corner, the white cushions with their rounded forms which bend with the shape of the nude, the draperies on the right-hand side, the Capud above Danae's head and the slippers in front of the bed. 119

When Rembrandt wanted to persuade the viewer with his answer to this "exemplary" theme, he (unlike Goltzius) wholeheartedly sided with Titian, of whom van Mander, in imitation of Vasari, had written that he had "begun to make his things softer, more three-dimensional and in a much more beautiful manner: nevertheless painting things from life without preparatory drawing as best he could, taking pains to depict the colors everything he observed, he did it so hard and soft." 120 Sel- dom has seemingly "breathing" skin been suggested with paint in such a convincing way, and seldom has such an effect of sensual beauty been achieved. Like Titian, Rembrandt must have seen as his most im- portant objective the spectacular suggestion of true-to- life corporeality by means of color and paint texture. The words of Joachim von Sandrart, who must have known Rembrandt between 1637 and 1649 when he was living in Amsterdam, certainly reflected Rembrandt's aims when he wrote (admittedly 30 years later): "...that he was capable of breaking the colors [varying the tonal val- ues] according to their own nature with great ingenuity and artfulness, and was thus able to render nature on a panel with faithful and lively genuineness and to portray it as harmoniously as in real life, whereby he opens the eyes of all who, following the common usage, tend more to fill in the colors than to paint, because they place the hard and glaring nature of colors next to one another in a most unsuitable way." 121 It is precisely this Danae which shows to such good effect Rembrandt's transition to a warmer palette, a "more subtle alternation of large fields of light and half-shade" and "a pictorial interplay between form and tonal and color values." 122

The change in Rembrandt's style during this period is also visible in the work itself: when he revised the painting around the mid-1640s he thoroughly painted over only the body of Danaë and her immediate sur- roundings, including the white bedclothes, the old woman and the table. On the other hand, the more de- tailed and more sharply modeled style in which the bed is rendered remained unchanged. 123 At the same time he must have cropped the canvas drastically: strips of con- siderable width were cut off the sides in particular, the

...most substantial being about 40 cm on the left-hand side (fig. 41). 124 The narrower framework of the definitive version compels the viewer to focus more intensely on Danaë's naked body. By removing the strip on the left containing the second-bed-post, the clear spatial positioning of the bed has been lost. 125 Cropping has however caused the remaining gilt-bed-post, the drawn-back curtain hang- ing by it, the remaining ornamented border at the upper edge and the curtain pushed back at the right to function altogether as a richly accentuated frame. They now form a luxurious setting for the nude, which rests like a jewel on cushions strongly reflecting the light.

This monumental frame is emphasized by the shimm- ering radiance of the rather sharply defined and pains- takingly painted reflections of light, contrasting with the softly modelled made which it encloses. Even its illumi- nation distinguishes this framework from what is seen inside it: the light—falling on the sculptured bed (in- cluding Capud) and the accompanying draperies—comes from the upper left and directly from the side. The light falling on the nude has been altered, however. Here the effect of back lighting was then created: a strong, golden glow brushes across Danaë from a rather low angle at rear left. The undulating contours of her body are given extra emphasis, for its strongly lit upper side stands out against the dark background and the transparent shadow of the lower side of her body is clearly visible against the bright lit bedclothes. Danaë's body is somewhat more taut and stylized than those of Rembrandt's earlier An- dromeda and Susanna, 126 but the rather stocky propor- tions—the stomach hanging down a bit and the left breast pushed up, elements not found in the work of any of his predecessors—stress the lifelike quality and ap- proachability of her naked body. Rembrandt doubtless strove in the most consummate way to elicit the sort of response from connoisseurs that we know so well from several poems on erotic paintings written by Vondel and Vos: a response, said to cause much arousal, in which the viewer imagines the nude to be alive. 127

Rembrandt maintained the image of a chained and crying Cupid, cleverly referring to Danaë's deplorable situation, locked up and therefore deprived of love. 128 This contrasts with the joyous expression on her face, which points to the dramatic change in her condition. The old woman was retained as a contract to the young beauty, but otherwise Rembrandt eliminated every- thing that might detract from the viewing of the naked body. The color gold is present in the painting in plentiful supply, but Rembrandt removed the jewels which lay on the table next to Danaë in the first version, and—in stark contrast to Goltzius and all his other eminent pre- decessors—striped the depiction of all reference to money. 129 Any hinting as to the connection between

(119) Otherwise it would have been mainly praised which he had it tinted when devising the pose and composition of this remarkable masterpiece. Many sources of inspiration have been pointed out over the years. In this opinion Rembrandt certainly knew the work by Hans van Me- rian (fig. 33), and the engraving by Jacob Matham after Abraham Bloem- mers was also of importance (fig. 39). The position of the legs and ab- domen, the placing of the old woman (especially in the first version), and the pillow recall the latter invention. The famous engraving by Amé- lior de Caravaggio with Inigo and Annibale (82) definitely inspired him as well as has often been assumed that a Dutch composition by Amé- lior de Caravaggio influenced Rembrandt; see Panofsky, op. cit. (note 2), p. 217, Kahr, op. cit. (note 42), p. 51. On this see Groch (op. cit. (note 6), p. 245-46, who, following Ann Tacke, Linge, also attributes a Danaë by Orazio Gentileschi which certainly displays similarities, though in my opinion cannot have been of direct influence. The ex- tent to which Rembrandt was inspired by a Danaë by Paez/ostenas, men- tioned in 1653 in the inventory of the art dealer Remmire, re- mains a matter for conjecture; see Brynolf (op. cit. (note 52), p. 220.

120 Van Mander, op. cit. (note 56), p. 17: "...hie zien diogen poofelijk, meer verveken, op een pick schooner maier te maken ...

121 See, E. van der Wetering, "Het format van Rembrandt's Danaë," in St. Alting et al., op. cit. (note 59), p. 151, and idem, op. cit. (note 46), p. 355-55, idem, op. cit. (note 46), p. 44-45. As noted previously, the motif of taking the image for a living being (and at the same time realizing that it is only paint) is admittedly a classic literary trope, though this in no way diminishes its significance. Both the paint- er and the poet or connoisseur and viewer would have exploited it with such Joachim. Apart from this, we must also realize that visually "boring (an image) is like" really does take place in the case of an erotic pic- ture that arouses the viewer sexually; see D. Freedberg, The power of image: studies in the history and theory of representation, Chicago & London 1989, ch. 12: "Around-by-image."


123 I cannot exclude the possibility that the coins were in fact pre- sent in the first version (I even think I see small spots around the head in the X-ray photographs; Brynolf (op. cit. (note 52), p. 151, fig. 3). An anonymous edition of Danaë, in which the coins were still visible, is mentioned by W. M. Voet (op. cit. (note 172), p. xiii-xiv. In the anonymous version of which the present copy is a reproduction, see note 226 seems to have a number of respects to reflect the first version, as may be seen in the arms, the hand and the legs; there the coins stream from an incised line, glowing light at a level far higher diagonally down to the obstructed hand of Danaë. This also would explain the original direc- tion of the light in Rembrandt's painting—from the upper left and di- rectly from the side, approximated to diagonally from the back.